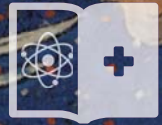




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# Visions and Voice-Hearing in Medieval and Early Modern Contexts

*Edited by*  
Hilary Powell · Corinne Saunders

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PRAISE FOR *VISIONS AND VOICE-HEARING*  
IN *MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN*  
CONTEXTS

“This invaluable collection brings readings of medieval and early modern textual sources to enrich, even transform, cultural and medical understanding of being human. It opens up the long history of voice-hearing as a range of multisensory experiences, juxtaposing trauma and hallucination with imagination, psychic energy, and religious vision, and challenging boundaries between spiritual and medical, natural and supernatural, inner and outer, waking and dreaming.”

—David Lawton, *Professor of English, Washington University  
in St. Louis, USA*

“This ambitious essay-collection challenges current biomedical perspectives whilst benefiting from them. Encompassing pre-modern religious revelations, dream-vision poems, and plays, it engages with contemporary research into auditory verbal hallucinations. Now a phenomenon often seen narrowly as a psychopathological disorder, then voice-hearing could be revered as divine annunciation or powerfully dramatized within fictions of inner experience. *Visions and Voice-Hearing* offers an impressive interdisciplinary and trans-historical model for understanding the many meanings of ‘hearing things’.”

—Alastair Minnis, *Professor Emeritus, Yale University, USA;  
University of York, UK*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have incurred many debts in the writing and preparation of this collection of essays, which has been long in the making. Our first is to our authors, who have so generously contributed their ideas and insights and so patiently borne with their editors and their many requests. The book finds its inspiration in the *Hearing the Voice* project (<http://hearingthevoice.org/>), an interdisciplinary study based at Durham University and generously funded by a Wellcome Trust Strategic Award (WT098455) and a Wellcome Trust Collaborative Award (WT108720). We are very grateful to the Trust for their support of our research over the last eight years. We have been privileged to contribute our work to the project by offering a long cultural perspective on voice-hearing and visions, and by putting past and present into conversation. We have benefitted immensely from the insights of our colleagues, from the diversity and richness of their disciplinary expertise and from the new methodologies and ways of thinking the project has offered. The book originated in a workshop, ‘Visions, Voices and Hallucinatory Experiences in Historical and Literary Contexts’, held at Durham University in April 2014, and we are grateful to *Hearing the Voice* for funding this event, to Mary Robson for facilitating it and to St Chad’s College for hosting it. We owe an immense debt to Michael Baker, for his role as editorial assistant, and his outstanding work in preparing every element of the typescript, including the index. He has been the most painstaking of copy editors. We are grateful too to our editors at Palgrave Macmillan—first to Ben Doyle, for his interest

and enthusiasm for the Medical Humanities and his support over many years, and more recently to Allie Troyanos and Rachel Jacobe. We would also like to thank Brian Halm and Meera Mithran for their care with regard to the production process. The *Hearing the Voice* project and the Department of English Studies have very generously contributed to the costs of preparing the typescript and the illustrations. We are extremely grateful to the Master and Fellows of Trinity College Cambridge for allowing us to use the cover image without cost. Finally, we would like to thank, as well as our colleagues on the *Hearing the Voice* project, the Institute for Medical Humanities and the Department of English Studies for their support of the project over several years, and our friends and families for their unfailing interest in and encouragement of *Visions and Voice-Hearing*—in particular, our husbands, David Fuller and David Grummitt.



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## CHAPTER 1

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# Medieval and Early Modern Visions and Voices: Contexts and Approaches

*Hilary Powell and Corinne Saunders*

Terrifying shouts, threatening whispers, screams and murmurs; abusive, censorious, manipulative voices; presences in the mind that warn, reproach, urge harm and encourage pain...these are some of the distressing experiences reported by voice-hearers today.<sup>1</sup> Such experiences are often understood as symptomatic of psychosis, and in particular of schizophrenia, associated in the popular imagination with personality disorder and violent behaviours. In modern Western culture, both clinical and popular, it is assumed that they possess no objective reality; hearing voices that no one else can hear and seeing things that are not there are understood as markers of pathological conditions requiring medical intervention. Within a biomedical framework, voices are classified as auditory verbal hallucinations, significant only in so far as they contribute to the diagnosis of psychopathological disorders. The content

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1

and emotional impact of such experiences are rarely explored during the clinical encounter. The voice-hearer, already disturbed and alienated by his or her ordeal, also has to shoulder the stigma of mental illness, with its accompanying anxiety, shame, and distress.

Popular and clinical attitudes to voice-hearing are predicated on the reported experiences of service users, those individuals who have sought clinical support to overcome their voices. Recent studies indicate, however, that voice-hearing may be far more prevalent within society than the figures from psychosis services indicate. Research suggests that between five and fifteen per cent of the ‘healthy’ population have heard voices at some stage of their lives.<sup>2</sup> While often distressing, the experience may also be benign or positive. Hearing the voice of a loved one after his or her death is not an uncommon, nor an unwelcome experience, and is often seen as a natural response to grief. A more positive picture of voice-hearing is also offered by contemporary accounts of Christians hearing the voice of God. T. M. Luhrmann’s study *When God Talks Back* (2012) draws on extended interviews with a North American evangelical community, while Christopher C. H. Cook in *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine* (2019) offers a wide-ranging exploration of voice-hearing in biblical, historical and scientific accounts, including numerous present-day instances.<sup>3</sup> Divine intervention can be inspiring, comforting and guiding, taking all kinds of different forms—from speaking through another human being, to internal or external voices. In certain faith communities, particularly those of an evangelical character, manifestations of God of this kind are far more usual and, indeed, may be sought after. Such experiences can be actively promoted, whether through communal, often charismatic kinds of worship or individual practices of prayer and extreme spiritual exercises. They may merge with other kinds of unusual experience, from visions to speaking in tongues, from signs to miracles. Non-Western religions may be considerably more receptive than secular Western society to manifestations of the spirit world: Islam and a number of African religions, as well as some Asian traditions, include belief in spirits, demons and the possibility of possession.<sup>4</sup>

The Western biomedical approach not only excludes the experiences of those outside its immediate purview but also, in focusing on diagnosis and treatment, privileges the voice over other sensory experiences. Qualitative research demonstrates that experiences of voice-hearers are frequently multisensory: they may include visual phenomena, such as seeing shadows, figures, bodies or faces; or unusual experiences of smell,

taste, presence and touch.<sup>5</sup> The limitations of an exclusively medical approach to voice-hearing have been highlighted within the voice-hearing community, particularly through the activism of the international Hearing Voices Movement which promotes the recognition of a diversity of causes and kinds of experience.<sup>6</sup>

The major collaborative project *Hearing the Voice* (<http://hearingthevoice.org>, funded by the Wellcome Trust and based at Durham University), takes up the issue of diversity of cause and kind of experience, across historical periods and cultures. The project brings together researchers in the arts and humanities, social science and science; healthcare professionals; and experts by experience to explore the phenomenon of hearing voices without external stimuli. *Hearing the Voice* adopts the interdisciplinary approach of the medical humanities to engage with the range and complexity of experience, including by taking a long cultural perspective.<sup>7</sup> The arts and humanities play a crucial role in extending understandings of how thought, feeling and imagination intersect to shape inner experience, and of the complex ways in which individuals intersect with the world. The arts present different models of experience and creative spaces that offer new ways of thinking about and seeing the self, opening up a dynamic dialogue with dominant psychological and neurobiological models. Literary texts can recount in richly textured ways individual experiences of voice-hearing, while their imaginative worlds offer crucial insights into the mental and affective processes that underpin such experiences. The thought worlds of the past yield new models and frameworks for thinking, extending current understandings and contextualising and challenging deeply held cultural assumptions. The perspectives on embodied experience offered by the past and by the imaginative worlds of literature and other art forms can provide a corrective to narrowly biomedical perspectives, widen the questions generated in clinical research, and present new therapeutic possibilities. They offer powerful accounts of embodied experience, animating cultural contexts and engaging thought and feeling in ways that go beyond straightforward representation. The intellectual and emotional power of literary and cultural texts can deepen and transform understanding, as well as offering new perspectives on the ideas and assumptions that underpin medicine— notions of health and illness; mind, body and emotion; gender, family and society.<sup>8</sup> Whereas historical documents can be limited in their potential to illuminate such topics, literary texts and

other kinds of cultural record can provide crucial insights into the attitudes, experiences and imaginings of the past. Putting past and present into conversation uncovers both contrasts and continuities, opening up new ways of seeing and new possibilities for understanding.

The premodern, pre-Cartesian thought world is of particular interest both because it foregrounds the connections between mind, body and emotion and because it assumes the possibility of supernatural and spiritual experience. Medieval understandings of the emotions as profoundly affective, and cognition as shaped by the emotions, look forward to the theories of contemporary neuroscientists.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, they are always coloured by the potential of engagement with the supernatural. Medicine, natural philosophy and theology intersect to produce sophisticated models for understanding inner experience which weave together physiological, psychological and spiritual ideas. Probing the parallels and contrasts between premodern and contemporary experiences of and attitudes to voice-hearing contextualises and illuminates contemporary experience, by offering new frameworks for interpretation and authorisation. The potential for supernatural causation opened up the possibility of veridical experience; premodern approaches operated on the principle that such experiences *could* be true. For this reason, in the medieval and early modern periods, hearing voices and having visions were understood and represented in terms very different from those that are most common in the twenty-first century. Not only were the medical, natural philosophical and theological frames through which these experiences were viewed radically different but also visionaries and voice-hearers were frequently accredited with preternatural knowledge and came to inhabit a social role that was as much feted as it was feared. The premodern visionary or voice-hearer therefore might enjoy an entirely different cultural identity: a potential prophet as opposed to a certified psychiatric patient. Moreover, for imaginative writers of the period, voices, visions and supernatural experience more generally offered rich creative opportunities, their potential enhanced by the seriousness with which such experiences were taken as well as their deep cultural roots.

Voices and visions have a long and complex history in Western culture that reaches back to the classical period and to the Bible. Classical writing takes for granted the possibility of encounters with the gods. Their voices are heard in oracles, prophecies and signs; they are manifest both materially, in human and animal form, and in dream. The *katabasis* or descent to the underworld is a recurrent motif: the world of the shades is sought

out by both Odysseus and Aeneas. Hebrew and Christian tradition are similarly shaped by the possibility of divine encounter—and the desire to experience divine presence in the world. From Yahweh speaking to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden onwards, the Old Testament contains repeated manifestations of the Lord in sign and miracle: while his face is veiled, concealed in fire or cloud, his voice is repeatedly heard. In the New Testament, the truth of the Incarnation is shown through the miracles worked by Jesus and by the Father's voice, 'This is my Son', and after his death, through His bodily manifestation and words to the apostles. Such voice-hearing and visionary experience are central to the lives of the saints and the writings of holy men and women from the earliest narratives onwards; they make manifest the connection with the divine and endorse the work of the faithful in the world. Religious writings also demonstrate the alienating potential of such experience, depicting it as a mark of distinction that can be disconcerting and distrusted—an unease that is echoed in much more recent experience.

If voice-hearing and vision are crucial to hagiography and visionary writing, they are also taken up in other cultural and literary genres. Philosophical and other kinds of didactic work repeatedly use the convention of visionary experience, often but by no means always presented as dream: Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*, c. 1160) established a model of Nature as divine guide, taken up, for example, in the thirteenth century in Guillaume de Lorris' and Jean de Meun's *Le Roman de la Rose*. Along with the *Roman de la Rose*, the late classical visionary narrative of Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*) and Dante's *Divina Commedia*, written in the early fourteenth century, were the building blocks of later medieval writing. Their distinctive interweavings of fiction and instruction established long-lived conventions of visionary experience and encounters with supernatural guides. In the late fourteenth century, William Langland's *Piers Plowman* takes up and complicates the idea of the instructive dream that extends back through these works to Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (*The Dream of Scipio*). Langland's series of dream-visions presents a multiplicity of conflicting instructive voices personifying interior and exterior forces. Romance, the imaginative fiction of the premodern period, adopted and developed many of the creative possibilities of visionary experience, particularly the idea of the courtly dream-vision established by the *Roman de la Rose*. The dream provided an essential framework for allegorical writing that explored and debated questions of love and grief.

Romance narratives more generally looked back to classical writers such as Ovid in their use of the supernatural. Voices and visions, dreams, visitations and miracles, and other kinds of otherworldly encounter animate the landscape of romance, both offering exotic entertainment and presenting new possibilities for writers interested in probing individual psychology and its intersections with the world. Dramatists too took inspiration from these long-standing traditions of writing the supernatural. The earliest drama stages the great narrative cycle of the Bible, figuring in material terms the spiritual revelations that shape Christian history, while the morality plays written in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries exploit the possibilities of personification, allowing the vices and virtues to speak and staging the theatre of the psyche, giving voice to the forces that battle over the human soul. For early modern dramatists, the performance of the supernatural presented both technical challenges and rich possibilities of suspense and psychological insight. Voice-hearing and visions became powerful *topoi* across the dominant literary genres of the medieval and early modern periods, both religious and secular.

This book speaks to the need to recover past perspectives on the experience of hearing voices, to reimagine the voice-hearer as a visionary, whose information (and the way he or she came by it) was not only conceivable within contemporary modes of rationality but heeded and even solicited by society. It also addresses the remarkable creative appeal of voices and visions. Contributors explore how the experience of hearing voices or seeing visions was framed within the cultural, literary and intellectual contexts of the medieval and early modern periods, from 1100 to 1700, to offer new insights into a complex, controversial and contested category of human experience. While literature is a particular focus, the book also engages with the visual arts and scientific and medical writings, and probes how such experiences were integrated and contested within the dominant medical, philosophical and theological hermeneutics of the premodern period. Because voices and visions were culturally credible phenomena, far greater attention was bestowed on the qualia of the experience, on the testimony of the visionary and on the interpretation and significance he or she attached to it. Far from being stigmatised in the manner of many contemporary voice-hearers, some of the best-known thinkers of the period were medieval voice-hearers, while visionary experiences inspired some of the greatest religious writing of the time. Occupying what was essentially an ambiguous position, plausible yet problematic, visions were also ripe for literary and creative play. Rather than on explicit

comparisons with modern Western attitudes, the focus of this volume falls on the literary, cultural, textual and material fabric of the medieval and early modern periods. By exploring the various ways in which visions and voice-hearing were represented, interpreted and mobilised in spiritual, creative, political and critical contexts between 1100 and 1700, these essays shine a new light onto a currently feared and misunderstood human phenomenon, while offering contemporary voice-hearers possible alternative perspectives on their own experience.

Medieval religious and theological texts both exploit the power of visionary experience and probe its nature. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century saints' lives demonstrate the multisensory quality of visionary experience, as well as the powerful affect and political importance of such experiences. Medieval scholastic thinkers were keenly engaged with the status, nature and physiology of visions, in particular, the connections between inner and outer senses. Hilary Powell opens this volume with a richly detailed essay exploring two miracle stories appended to the brief life of St Wilfrid by Eadmer of Canterbury (d. *ca.* 1128) found in Eadmer's *Breviloquium*. Both include experiences of angelic music but are highly multisensory. Powell shows how crucial voice-hearing and seeing visions were to the genre of hagiography, as tropes capable of being mobilised for political or spiritual purposes. She also places them within a long history of such narratives, stretching back to the Psalms through the writings of St Augustine. While it is easy for modern readers to focus on the auditory aspects of these accounts of miraculous experience, its multisensory quality played a critical role in the creation of the affect essential to the spiritual impact of the narrative on the reader. Anachronistic emphasis on one aspect of the experience ignores the multi-dimensional imaginative quality essential to the technique of *enargeia* or imaginative animation. Powell takes up medieval theories of affect, cognition and memory and modern cognitive approaches in her probing of the sophisticated techniques underpinning these miracle stories, and the ways that voices and visions function to evoke wonder and hence inspire veneration and devotion. Her work on the mobilisation and affective impact of voice-hearing in twelfth-century miracle narratives is complemented by Jacqueline Tasioulas' exploration of how the voices of angels were understood to function and their crucial role in literary texts. The role of angels is captured in the very word 'angel', meaning 'messenger': angels communicate the divine will to humankind. Yet how could non-corporeal beings speak? What was the 'voice' of an angel? Medieval

scholastic writers probed these questions in detail, asking how angels produced sound and could be heard, and how they communicated with each other. Depictions of the Annunciation to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel engage with such questions, negotiating possibilities in creative ways that reflect debate and dialogue concerning angelic voices. While Powell emphasises the imaginative power of such experiences, Tasioulas demonstrates medieval engagement with their actuality and possibility, and the ways that medieval ‘science’ might be used to elaborate complex, seemingly paradoxical theological ideas. Together these essays also engage with the powerful nexus of music, voice and the divine, and its sensory and affective impact.

Christine Cooper-Rompato takes up some of the same issues raised by Powell in her consideration of later medieval saints’ lives. Cooper-Rompato explores the representation of accounts of ‘fused’ or multi-sensory vision, the ways in which hagiographers such as the thirteenth-century writer Thomas of Cantimpré understood such experience to occur, and their connections with gender and religious identity. She places such accounts in terms of medieval cultural understandings of the senses, and in particular, the importance of touching, tasting and even smelling the Lord. Thomas of Cantimpré’s narratives engage with complex questions concerning the relationships between individual senses and between the inner, spiritual and outer, physical senses, while subtle differences between representations of saintly subjects reflect issues of gender and status.

These essays are complemented by Corinne Saunders’ consideration of the ways in which fourteenth-century secular writers, including Geoffrey Chaucer, take up the long-standing literary conventions of dream-vision, supernatural encounter and revelation, as well as drawing on medical, theological and philosophical preoccupations. While such romance narratives have typically been seen as non-mimetic, exploiting conventions of the fantastic and exotic, they also engage with serious medical and philosophical ideas concerning visionary experience and the ways in which individual lives may open onto the supernatural—taking up the possibilities suggested both by dream theory and by medieval theological and psychological models. Chaucer’s writing in particular demonstrates a sophisticated knowledge of medical theory in its use of physiological frameworks for thought and emotion. Voices and visions offer powerful creative potential, opening onto troubling yet intriguing questions concerning forces beyond the self and their intersections with the



processes of individual thinking, feeling and being in the world, from trauma to revelation to romantic love.

Profound affect and its impact on both thought and feeling are also the focus of Sarah Salih, who explores how Julian of Norwich's multisensory mystical experience, the subject of and catalyst for her *Revelations of Divine Love*, can be seen as shaped by her affective encounters with devotional art, even while her vision transforms such art. Like Powell, Salih emphasises the importance of the multisensory in spiritual experience: while the auditory has often been privileged in later accounts, medieval Christian practice was also intensely visual, dynamic and haptic, involving the colour and theatre of the liturgy and of processions, sculpture and painting, as well as music, song and preaching. The object of the crucifix was at its heart—a powerful repository of energy. Julian of Norwich recounts how, in the extreme illness in 1373 that catalyses her *Revelations*, she sees the crucifix bleed: the devotional artefact is animated, an agent of vision. Salih explores the traces of devotional art in Julian's *Revelations*, and the ways that her visionary experience processes and transforms such artefacts: they inform her vision, but do not determine it.

The next three essays return to the topic of voice. Darragh Greene analyses the linguistic features of Julian's *Revelations* and the centrality of voice to her mystical experience. Julian famously places particular emphasis on the Lord's speaking to her in homely and friendly terms. Greene demonstrates Julian's care in representing divine speech and the ways it patterns her developing relationship with the Lord. Language for Julian signals shared humanity and community: hearing and talking with God is an essential aspect of her spiritual experience and is at the heart of her faith. Hearing the Lord's voice and conversing with him betoken a deeply personal friendship and love and intimate Christ's humanity.

Julian's interpretations of her revelations hinge on how meaning is conveyed through heard voices, while her narrative must also create a strategy of how to represent divine speech through paraphrase, editing and interpretation. Barry Windeatt takes up these subjects in his consideration of the very different modes in which Margery Kempe writes the voices of the divine. For Kempe, the daily hearing of divine voices becomes almost routine, although it is typically delineated and located with care as 'in her spirit' or 'in her mind', and sometimes, as an exterior experience. Voice-hearing becomes, as Windeatt puts it, a dominant mode structuring many of the chapters of the *Book*: while multisensory visionary

experience occurs at certain times of Kempe's life, particularly earlier on in the narrative, and is central to her conversion experiences, Christ's voice is heard throughout. Paradoxically, it is the ordinariness of that voice that makes Kempe's colloquies with Christ extraordinary and revelatory. The effect is in part to dramatise Kempe's mind and spiritual development in a form of stream-of-consciousness narrative. The quality of her experience is at the same time troubling, for this divine voice is often critical, admonitory, demanding and sometimes seemingly masochistic in its urgings. Windeatt challenges ready assumptions about the benign quality of divine voice-hearing, revealing the angst such experiences may effect, and their complex relationship with the individual anxieties and neuroses that also comprise spiritual experience and the life of the mind. Julian's *Revelations* and Kempe's *Book* take the themes and questions encountered in the hagiographic and miracle narratives that are the subject of the opening essays of this volume into the sphere of the autobiographical. They demonstrate in profoundly personal terms the powerful role of affective revelatory experience in shaping spiritual life—and the challenges inherent to and in representing such experience. In the writings of both Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, as in hagiographic narratives, the multisensory quality of vision is essential, yet for both the voice plays a unique role in the unfolding and interpretation of spiritual life.

Mark Chambers' essay introduces a new genre to the volume, that of medieval drama, with its very different possibilities for portraying spiritual narratives and representing multisensory visionary experience, both divine and demonic. This is both a genre particularly conducive to the play of voices, and one where visions are required to be 'shown' as well as told. Medieval drama is characteristically representative: instances of internalised 'voices' or 'visions' are rare. Rather, the supernatural is realised in shapes and voices that are seen and heard by the audience, embodied by corporeal actors who share the physical space with those they come to haunt. Drama not only recounts but performs prophecies, visions and revelations—often with the effect of sudden conversion of the characters. The physicality of supernatural experience is integral to its affect; yet, at the same time, staging voices and visions is paradoxical, challenging the audience's sense of the strange, the ethereal and the divine, while raising difficult questions concerning physical representation.

The final three essays in the volume turn to the changing intellectual, medical, religious and literary contexts of the early modern period. Lesel Dawson considers the different models of vision and voice-hearing

proposed by natural philosophy and the ways in which the new genre of secular drama creatively engaged with these ideas. Early modern theories presuppose distinct ways of comprehending vision, imagination and subjectivity, and hence offer different frameworks for understanding hallucination, both visual and auditory. Early modern writers take up medieval theories (rooted in classical dream theory) to distinguish visions resulting from humoral imbalances from those that arise from ‘mental fixation’, a phenomenon which occurs when powerfully affective images are imprinted on the brain with particular force, obliterating all other sense perceptions. Such ideas anticipate but also complicate aspects of modern trauma theory. Dawson explores the ways these models are taken up and reconfigured by writers such as Kyd, Shakespeare, Webster and Beaumont and Fletcher, and, in particular, the powerful role played by affect and the continuities between different kinds of extreme emotional experience, positive and negative, demonstrated by their potential to cause hallucination.

Laurie Maguire and Aleksandra Thstrup take up some of these topics in their exploration of the differences between versions of one of the most influential voice-hearing dramas of the period, Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. Their analysis demonstrates that Marlowe’s radical exploration of the interior voices of the mind was replaced by his revisers with a more conservative model. While Faustus hears voices in both the A- and B-texts (neither published during Marlowe’s lifetime), he hears them differently. The revisions both reduce Faustus’ interiority and agency, and transfer that agency to external forces by augmenting the role of the devils. Maguire and Thstrup challenge the accepted critical view that these revisions reflect more Calvinist views to argue instead that the revisers resisted the radical version of the early modern mind presented in the A-text, aiming to return the play to a more familiar mental space and dramaturgy. The play exemplifies the continuities between the medieval and early modern, in particular, through Marlowe’s staging of the psychomachia, which looks back to medieval morality plays, but it also radically rewrites medieval conceptions. The portrayal of Faustus’ mind repeatedly transgresses boundaries, raising unsettling questions concerning the forces at work on the psyche and the nature of voices of the mind—questions considered potentially dangerous to contemporary audiences and therefore closed down by Marlowe’s revisers.

The radical thought, conflicting forces and intellectual upheaval of the early modern period are addressed in the final essay in this volume,

Peter Elmer's study of seventeenth-century psychic experimentation. The Restoration period saw the rise of both individuals and groups committed to radical and millenarian visions of social, intellectual, religious and political reform, including through mystical and psychic practice. Elmer traces the history of a group that first coalesced around the physician and mystic John Pordage and was then reconfigured as the Philadelphian Society under the leadership of the mystic Jane Leade, herself a voice-hearer (1624–1704). While the group has attracted interest in terms of gender, little attention has been paid to its medical interests and the wider context of the moral, social and political regeneration of Restoration society. Elmer explores in particular the religious and scientific ideas of William Boreman (d. 1707), who combined progressive political and medical views with an interest in witch-hunting and psychic experimentation, at the heart of which was the notion of battle with the devil and the concept of spiritual communication. Elmer's essay demonstrates the prevalence of such ideas far beyond the early modern stage, demonstrating, like Maguire and Thostrup's work, the complex dangers and contradictions inherent in this period of intellectual upheaval, as science, medicine and religion both coalesce and come into conflict.

Connections and continuities, then, but also intellectual and cultural shifts distinguish the remarkable six hundred years spanned by this volume. Their literary and intellectual legacies have the ability to speak powerfully to contemporary society. In its elucidation of the complexity and value of the ideas and frameworks of the past, its exploration of imaginative and cultural engagement with visions and voice-hearing, and demonstration of the insights offered by the arts and humanities, we hope this volume both complements and challenges popular and biomedical assumptions and offers a timely intervention within the wider project of the medical humanities. The past is, indeed, another country, yet one with the power not simply to illuminate but also to change the present.

## NOTES

1. See further Ben Alderson-Day, Charles Fernyhough, and Angela Woods, eds, *Voices in Psychosis: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 2021), a collection of essays based on a large multi-site empirical investigation of voice-hearing experiences amongst users of Early

Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) services. Extended phenomenological interviews were undertaken with 40 voice-hearers, with follow-up interviews one and two years later.

2. Charles Fernyhough, *The Voices Within: The History and Science of How We Talk to Ourselves* (London: Profile Books-Wellcome Collection, 2017), 130; and see further Simon McCarthy-Jones, *Hearing Voices: The Histories, Causes and Meanings of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 170–88. It is estimated that approximately one per cent of the population have more extended or complex voice-hearing experiences, but do not pursue medical treatment (Fernyhough, 131).
3. T. M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Vintage Books-Random House, 2012); Christopher C. H. Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine: Scientific and Theological Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2019), and *Christians Hearing Voices: Affirming Experience and Finding Meaning* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2020).
4. To date, little scientific research has been undertaken into voice-hearing in religions other than Christianity: see further Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine*, 24–25 and 32.
5. For a discussion of multi-sensory/emodied experience, see Angela Woods, Nev Jones, Ben Alderson-Day, Felicity Callard and Charles Fernyhough, ‘Experiences of Hearing Voices: Analysis of a Novel Phenomenological Survey’, *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2, no. 4 (2015): 323–31. Interviews with users of EIP services recount a wide range of multisensory experience: see further *Voices in Psychosis*.
6. See the extensive website of the Hearing Voices Network: <http://www.hearing-voices.org> and Intervoice, the website of the International Hearing Voices Network: <http://www.intervoiceonline.org>.
7. For recent interdisciplinary approaches to voice-hearing, see Angela Woods, Nev Jones, Marco Bernini, et al., ‘Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Phenomenology of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations’, *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 40 (2014), suppl. 4: S246–54. For a comprehensive study arising from the project, see Fernyhough, *The Voices Within*.
8. The history of medieval medicine has focused on medical theory and practice, with attention to humoral medicine, disease and surgery, the role of women and the community in medicine and care, and the social contexts of medicine and health. See further M. L. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 7 (Cambridge, 1993), Faye Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1998), Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, 1990), C. H. Talbot, *Medicine in Medieval England* (London, 1967), the work of Monica H. Green on medieval women’s medicine, and the extensive work of Carole Rawcliffe on the social history of medicine and health.

9. See, for example, the work of Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (1988; London: Vintage, 2000) and *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (1994; London: Vintage, 2006).

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## CHAPTER 2

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# Behold! The Voices of Angels: Narrative, Audience and Affect in Eadmer of Canterbury's *Breviloquium* *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*

*Hilary Powell*

At the end of his second account of St Wilfrid, Eadmer of Canterbury (d. after 1128) appended two miracle stories. The first featured an invisible choir of angels singing Wilfrid's praises, and the second comprised a vision of two monks who prostrated themselves before the saint's relics as a golden light flooded the choir of Canterbury cathedral. Although voice-hearing miracles are rare within Anglo-Latin hagiographical literature, visions are far less so. But these two stories are particularly intriguing because they are significant additions to what is, in all other regards, a carefully truncated *Vita*. Their inclusion is perplexing, turning our attention away from what such stories say about voice-hearing to consider what

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stories about voice-hearing bring to the experience of hagiography. The crafted account of angelic voices and the following vision were deemed so essential to the text that all efforts at concision were abandoned. This essay focuses on voice-hearing as a cultural form, as a concept or motif rather than lived experience. Foregrounding questions about the purpose and reception of hagiography, it explores the aesthetic and affective experience afforded by these two miracle narratives.

### THE CASE FOR SAINTS

The *Breviloquium Vita Sancti Wilfridi* survives in a single witness, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 371, where it follows a longer life of St Wilfrid.<sup>1</sup> Containing all of Eadmer's known works, it is thought to have been his personal manuscript, written in Eadmer's own hand.<sup>2</sup> It is addressed to his 'beloved brothers' [*fratres karissimi* (para. 129, p. 162)] at the cathedral priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, where Wilfrid's remains had resided since the mid-tenth century.<sup>3</sup> Eadmer apparently intended the sermon for use on Wilfrid's feast day, although, without any other extant witnesses, we cannot be sure whether the text was ever so used.<sup>4</sup> In the short prologue which precedes the two additional miracles, Eadmer repeats his address to his 'most beloved brothers' and directs the curious reader to his longer *Vita*. He also gives his reason for including these miracles: 'since I wish to enkindle you for the veneration of his feast' [*quoniam nos ad uenerationem festiuitatis eius accendere cupio* (para. 148, p. 178)]. In his *coda* which followed the second of the additional stories, Eadmer's desire becomes plangent adjuration: 'I beseech and pray you my Lords and most beloved brothers, again I say I pray you, think over how much veneration this day deserves of you' [*Exortantes itaque precamur uos, domini et fratres dilectissimi, precamur, considerate quantam ueneratione debeatis huius dei* (para. 151, p. 182)]. Just what are we to make of Eadmer's impassioned entreaty? Was this merely rhetoric or was he genuinely trying to persuade his Canterbury brethren of Wilfrid's sanctity?

This was Jay Rubenstein's argument in his reassessment of the historiographical debate concerning Archbishop Lanfranc's (d. 1089) treatment of English saints after the Conquest.<sup>5</sup> Laying aside questions of ethnic identity and national prejudice, Rubenstein reframed the debate as a difference of opinion over the value of the cult of saints. Lanfranc purged the cathedral of minor saints because he preferred a less cluttered,



more Christological liturgy. Eadmer's hagiographical works, written after Lanfranc's death, were an attempt to restore his beloved Anglo-Saxon saints to their proper places at the physical and liturgical heart of the church. He aimed his works, Rubenstein claimed, 'not at a national audience of hostile Norman churchmen and magnates, but rather at an often skeptical Christ Church community'.<sup>6</sup> Rubenstein credits the inclusion of Wilfrid's and Oda's feast days in a calendar written in the 1120s to Eadmer's *Vitae* which 'would have effectively raised the saints' spectral presence in the monks' collective imaginings'.<sup>7</sup> We should not, however, overstate Eadmer's agency in effecting liturgical change. His exhortation may sound like an impassioned cry to inaugurate a cult but Eadmer's *Vitae* probably postdate the official sanction of Wilfrid's cult, causing us to rethink his aims and objectives.<sup>8</sup>

Actually, it is our historicist reading of hagiography, which overemphasises the moment of inscription, that requires rethinking. Such readings seek to locate authorship and reception—and thus meaning—in a specific historical context. Yet we can become so caught up in establishing the social logic of the text that we fail to remember that hagiography is a cultural art form, written to be read, treasured and remembered by audiences year upon year.<sup>9</sup> Hagiographers were undoubtedly attuned to the specific concerns of their immediate audiences but they also imagined themselves writing for future generations. Eadmer's 'beloved brethren' were not only his supposedly sceptical *confrères* but also the monks who would succeed them, whom he hoped would read and use the additional stories about Wilfrid as a means to 'enkindle' [*accendere*] themselves for the feast.

Viewing hagiography not as a historical *act* but a cultural *artefact* encourages us to foreground questions about utility and aesthetic experience. Saints' lives were written to endure and, most importantly, be used. In his *Breviloquium Vita Sancti Wilfridi*, Eadmer was not simply making a case for the veneration of Wilfrid but a far more important claim for hagiography in mediating that veneration. Significantly, he articulated his case through the two additional miracles at the end of the work. Thus, the invisible choir of angels and the vision of the prostrated monks cease to be mere afterthoughts but are critical episodes in Eadmer's conceptualisation and elucidation of the hagiographical enterprise. The voice-hearing miracle is particularly significant because its form and content point towards a centuries-old doctrinal tradition outlining the centrality of saints in the Christian spiritual life.

HEARING *DULCE CARMEN*

The bewitching effect of hearing sweet melodies which draw the hearer towards the source of the sound has a well-known precedent in Augustine's spiritual interpretation of Psalm 41 ('As the deer longs for the water fountains').<sup>10</sup> This homily is widely construed as a commentary on the human soul thirsting for God. Yet within it Augustine also articulated his deep-seated conviction that the church and its members—most especially the saints—were indispensable in helping the soul achieve greater proximity to God.

The key chapters are those expounding the second half of Ps. 41.5 ('for I will cross into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, all the way to the house of God, with a voice of exultation and confession, the sound of feasting' [*quoniam transibo in locum tabernaculi admirabilis, usque ad domum Dei: In voce exultationis, et confessionis: sonus epulantis*]). Augustine explained that God cannot be found in any visible or corporeal thing, nor, indeed, within oneself. Instead the house of God lies 'above my soul' [*super animam meam*]. Access is via the earthly tabernacle, the Church: 'His tabernacle on earth is his church [...and] in his tabernacle is found the way that leads to his house' [*tabernaculum eius in terra, ecclesia eius [...] in tabernaculo inuenitur uia, per quam uenitur ad domum* (9.2–3)].

The tabernacle contains many wonders to which Augustine draws our attention: 'Behold how great are the wonders that I admire in the tabernacle!' [*Ecce quanta admiror in tabernaculo* (9.11)]. Yet our gaze is directed not towards objects but images of people, the 'faithful [who] are God's tabernacle on earth' [*tabernaculum enim dei in terra, homines sunt fideles* (9.12)]. Looking at them through Augustine's eyes, we admire their chastity, obedience, restraint, sagacity, exertion and love (9.13–20). Moreover, in beholding and admiring their deeds we find the way that leads to the house of God.

It was thus that while admiring the members of the tabernacle he [a sudden shift to the psalmist's experience] was led to the house of God, by following a certain sweetness, an unknown interior and hidden delight, as if some instrument sounded sweetly from the house of God; while he was walking in the tabernacle, he heard this inward sound; he was led on by its sweetness and following the guidance of the sound and removing himself from all noise of flesh and blood, he made his way up to the house of God.

[*Tamen dum miratur membra tabernaculi, ita perductus est ad domum dei, quamdam dulcedinem sequendo, interiorem nescio quam et occultam uoluptatem, tamquam de domo dei sonaret suauiter aliquod organum; et cum ille ambularet in tabernaculo, audito quodam interiore sono, ductus dulcedine, sequens quod sonabat, abstrahens se ab omni strepitu carnis et sanguinis, peruenit usque ad domum dei (9.36–41).*]

Admiring God's saints, His faithful living on earth, brought one to the house of God.

Augustine underscores this message by introducing an interrogative voice: 'it was as though we had said to him "You are admiring the tabernacle here on earth; how did you come to the sanctuary of the house of God?"' [*quasi diceremus ei: miraris tabernaculum in hacce terra; quomodo peruenisti ad secretum domus dei (9.42)*]. The psalmist responds with Psalm 41.5: 'In the voice of joy and praise, the sound of feasting' (9.45). Augustine adds that it is a feast day without beginning or end: 'the choir of angels make it an eternal feast' [*festum sempiternum chorus angelorum (9.55)*]. Moreover, it is possible for this joyous feast to be perceived by the human soul: 'from that everlasting and perpetual feast there sounds I know not what melody so sweet to the ears of my heart; if only the world were not so noisy' [*de illa aeterna et perpetua festiuitate sonat nescio quid canorum et dulce auribus cordis; sed si non perstrepat mundus (9.57)*]. The tabernacle provides a place of quiet for the soul, space to wander and gaze, pause and reflect and perhaps catch the soothing sound of the heavenly festivities.

The correspondences are sufficiently striking to suggest that Eadmer may well have had this homily in mind when he wrote his voice-hearing miracle for the *Breviloquium* (para. 149, pp. 178–80). Not only do both texts feature sweetly sounding melodies which draw their protagonists to a place where pleasure and admiration give way to astonishment and awe, but they also start from the same point. The miracle begins with Godwin, the recipient of this angelic audition, keeping vigil before Wilfrid's relics, thus demonstrating his admiration for the saint, a member of God's tabernacle. Godwin is drawn to the cathedral choir, the site of the sweet harmonies and like the psalmist, he is pleasantly delighted and soothed by the melodies. Yet on his arrival at the source of the sound, he is left dumbfounded.<sup>11</sup> Like the Psalmist, astonishment gives way to understanding. Augustine explains that in the *domus Dei* lies the 'fountain of understanding' [*fons intellectus*], conflating it with the 'sanctuary of

God' found in Psalm 72.16–17 where the Psalmist gained understanding of the last things (9.28–29). From his position in the choir, Godwin could see (*conspiciens*) everything clearly and yet sees (*videns*) that no one was there. The surprising absence of the anticipated sensory phenomena results in Godwin's mental apprehension and wonder. Both of these passages feature the experience of hearing heavenly voices, but what is perhaps of greater interest is their mutual emphasis on the tabernacle—or rather the admiration of its members—which initiates this experience.

### PICTURING THE TABERNACLE

The Tabernacle for the Ark built according to the measurements given on the mountain by God to Moses (Ex. 25–31) was a well-known monastic trope used for meditational composition.<sup>12</sup> Inventive meditation and prayer was a learned craft for which the monk required certain cognitive instruments: 'machines which can lift the mind and channel its movements'.<sup>13</sup> Ancient rhetoricians used elaborate architectural mnemonics as *aide-memoires* to shape and modulate their oratory.<sup>14</sup> The early medieval monastic tradition inherited these mnemotechniques but re-purposed them as tools for cognitive invention. Mental *picturae* were assembled from materials retrieved from the memory in an intentional act of will. Architectural schemes, comprising paths and routeways, provided the monk with a 'map' through which he might imagine himself walking during meditational composition.<sup>15</sup> Occasionally these *picturae* received material expression as representational drawings, which has invited a loose comparison with Buddhist mandalas as schematic frameworks for prayer.<sup>16</sup> More common, however, were verbal ekphrases based on buildings or structures found in the Bible.<sup>17</sup>

Ekphrasis is a verbal presentation which works an immediate impact on the mind of the listener through an appeal to the imagination.<sup>18</sup> Ekphrasis operates through its defining quality of *enargeia*, a quality of language which makes absent things seem present due to the vividness of its expression. Yet *enargeia* is more than a linguistic phenomenon or rhetorical trope: it is a psychological process.<sup>19</sup> It works by summoning memory images or *phantasmata* which, in the Peripatetic tradition, were understood to be sense-impressions imprinted on the soul.<sup>20</sup> Assemblages of these internal images of absent things retrieved and reconfigured under authorial instruction were called *phantasia*, or alternatively *visiones* in

Latin.<sup>21</sup> Compiled from images generated from genuine sense perceptions, *phantasiai* appear to bring the subject ‘before the eyes’ (*pro ommaton*).<sup>22</sup> The listener thus becomes a spectator, an eyewitness to events and, most significantly, is made to feel the emotions he or she would as if present.<sup>23</sup> Making the audience share the experience and the emotions of the speaker was fundamental to the persuasive success of judicial orators in the ancient world.<sup>24</sup> It was equally important in the storytelling context of hagiographical discourse.

Book Three of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin’s *Liber confortatorius* begins with an ekphrasis of the tabernacle built at God’s command and to his specifications. Considerably shorter than the account in Exodus (Bks 25–31 and 35–40), it nevertheless conjures a vivid image in the mind’s eye:

This tent was like a very large temple with purple walls, stretched widely over golden columns and posts. The world had seen nothing more beautiful, nothing more painstakingly made, nothing more artful until that time [...]. As the sky is decorated with stars, the ground with flowers, the world with various kinds of ornaments, thus this mobile palace shone with every splendor. The entire structure consisted of the whitest linen, and was adorned with twice-tinted purple cloth and golden fabric. Superb painting of every colour and every shape added to the decoration [...]. And the golden cheer of the sun would shine its rays through this most translucent structure, like a temple of solid glass in every colour, and with its light would beautify the abundant gold and the most plentiful painted figures [...].

[*Tentorium erat instar amplissimi templi parietibus purpureis, columnis ac postibus late intensum aureis. Nil speciosius, nil operosius, nil artificiosius terrarum gloria cotenus nouerat [...]. Ut celum sideribus, terra floribus, mundus uariis rerum decoratur ornatibus, sic illud mobile palatium omnium radiabat splendoribus. Universa machina ex bisso candidissimo constabat et purpura coccoque bis tincto aurosaque textura florebat. Ut omnium colorum, ita et omnium formarum pictura artificiosa decorum addiderat [...]. Tum aurea solis iocunditas perspicacissimum castrum quasi solidum ex omni colore uitreo templum suis radiis perlustrabat, aurumque copiosissimum cunctarumque figurarum insignia suo lumine decorabat [...].*]<sup>25</sup>

The *Liber confortatorius* (written ca. 1080) is an extended letter addressed to Eve, a young nun who had recently left her nunnery at Wilton for an anchorage in Angers. Its length, however, belies its personal dedication and intimate tone and it was no doubt typical of medieval epistolaries

in having been intended for a far wider audience than the immediate addressee.<sup>26</sup> This passage is a textbook example of a tabernacle ekphrasis to be ‘painted’ and placed ‘before the eyes’ as a mental *pictura* for meditative composition. Receiving detailed guidance regarding the structure (colour: purple/gold; form: cloth/columns; condition: stretched) the listener’s imagination pieces together a vivid *phantasia*. The mental effort and expertise in weaving together this *pictura* is underscored by the comparative forms of the adjectives *operosus* (‘painstaking’) and *artificiosus* (‘artful’). More interesting perhaps, are the terms associated with concepts in medieval aesthetics and, by extension, the mnemotechnical language of rhetorical invention: *uarius*, *color*, *ornatus*, *decor*. Mary Carruthers drew on the concept of rhetorical *ductus* to convey how the mind moves through a mental *pictura*:

we can think of the ornaments in a composition as causing varieties of movement: steady, slow, fast, turn, back up. They not only signal how something is to be “taken” (like a pathway)—whether straight on (literally) or obliquely (metaphorically or ironically)—but can also give an indication of temporal movement, like time signatures in written musical composition. Compositional *ductus*, moving in colors and modes, varies both in direction and in pace [...]. If a thinking human mind can be said to require “machines” made out of memory by imagination, then the ornament and decoration, the “clothing,” of a piece will indicate the ways in which these mental instruments are to be played.<sup>27</sup>

Selecting the ornaments to decorate the mental tabernacle was a matter of personal choice; they needed only to be plentiful, varied and many-coloured. Yet while the details were left unspecified, the subject matter was not. Goscelin instructed his reader to paint the tabernacle with the ‘ manifold decorations of the examples of the saints’ [*cum sanctorum exemplorum multimodo decore* (27)]. The stories of saints were the ornaments which modulated one’s movement through the tabernacle; places where one paused, looked and admired. The purpose of hagiography was to provide monks and nuns with rich and vivid ekphrases for fashioning into cognitively useful *ornamenta*. The flexible and panoptic powers of the human imagination enkindled by *enargeia* crafted these stories into spectacles played out in the mind. These splendid and irradiant scenes staged in the tabernacle were ‘wayfinders’. Not only did they guide the religious mind as it traversed the routes of meditative composition but

in attending to and admiring these scenes, the mind might even find ‘the way that leads to the house of God’.

Active, affective participation was key. The tabernacle *pictura* was not only a ‘machine’ for cognitive invention, but also it offered emotional ‘practice’. Goscelin recommended it to Eve as a measure *contra taedium* (‘against weariness’):

if you sometimes forget the homeland that you are seeking and are wearied by your solitude, your imprisonment and your enclosure; build yourself a column of faith and a tent of hope, and as a tabernacle painted in every colour with the manifold decorations of the examples of the saints, take pleasure in the law of the Lord, exercising and meditating on it day and night.

[*si oblitam petite patrie tedeat aliquando solitudinis, captiuitatis et clausule, erige tibi columnam fidei, tentorium spei, et quasi inde picto omni colore tabernaculo in lege Domini oblectare, exercitando et meditando in ea die ac nocte, cum sanctorum exemplorum multimodo decore* (24–28).]

In the Christian monastic tradition *taedium* bore decidedly negative overtones. It was a spiritual condition born of the solitary state and particularly perilous for the dangers it posed.<sup>28</sup> The devil, it was imagined, watched for the drooping eyelids and fired an arrow of evil thoughts or *phantasmata* into the ‘weary soul’.<sup>29</sup> *Taedium* was thus a gateway vice to greater sin.<sup>30</sup> It was a spiritual hardship which had to be battled, not a bad mood to be relieved by light entertainment.

Eve was to ‘take pleasure’ (*oblectare*) in re-collecting the *phantasiai* she had crafted through her reading of hagiographical writings about saints who had lived—and had struggled to live—in obedience to God’s law. Moreover, she was required to *exercitando et meditando* on these images. ‘To practise or exercise diligently’ is one meaning of *exercitare*, but a less common meaning is ‘to disquiet or agitate’.<sup>31</sup> These two meanings are not necessarily incompatible. In a letter addressed to the monks at Canterbury, Anselm explained that through the experience of having been ‘exercised’ by tribulations one advanced towards greater things.<sup>32</sup> Practising provoking and, particularly, resolving feelings of disquiet led to spiritual growth.

*Enargeia* is a trope of persuasion which not only makes listeners see the events as though ‘before their own eyes’ but makes them feel the emotions appropriate to the events described.<sup>33</sup> *Phantasiai* were sites of affective production. As these scenes played out before the mind’s inner

eye, a sequence of emotions was called forth. As Augustine ‘gazed again’ (*respicio*) at the sight of faithful souls obeying God in the tabernacle, he ‘admired’ (*admiror*) their restraint, tenacity and capacity for love. In this state of admiration or pleasurable contemplation a sweet, soothing delight was experienced which drew the soul from the tabernacle ‘unto the house of God’. There, in the sanctuary of God, admiration and pleasure gave way to astonishment and stupefaction. Eve’s mental *pictura* of the tabernacle, furnished and wreathed with *phantasiai* crafted from the lives of saints, promised similar emotional transports, through which she could walk whenever wearied or disquieted. As she paused to admire the examples of the saints, she would feel soothed and refreshed by the pleasure this brought. Enjoyment is an engine which lifts the beholder to wonder and, as the psalmist learned, wondering leads to astonishment, the sense of being dumbstruck (*stupeo*) and uncoupled from the world.<sup>34</sup> In this place, the location of the angelic choir is found the face of God [*ultus praesens dei* (9.55)].

Stories about the saints play a crucial role in preparing the soul as it reaches out in search of God. Re-collected *phantasiai* based on saints’ lives and miracles cultivate affective responses conducive to prayer and meditative composition. The more varied and vivid—and hence pleasurable and admirable—the mental sights, the better. While the reader’s mental agility is undoubtedly pivotal to the successful creation of *phantasiai*, the reader can only respond to the instructions supplied by the author. ‘Good’ or well-written hagiography has to possess *enargeia*; it has to direct the audience to paint the scene in such a way that it can both see and feel the events described.

### EADMER: A MASTER IN *ENARGEIA*

Foregrounding the cognitive and affective utility of hagiography has significant implications for its interpretation. It forces us to look beyond the immediate social or political contexts which gave rise to its production and instead consider the ongoing use of hagiographical texts as cultural art forms. Rather than concentrating on *what* the texts say, we need to pay greater attention to *how* they say it and to consider the rhetorical techniques the hagiographers used to help their audiences conjure the scenes as though before their eyes.

Eadmer was not particularly feted as a stylist by the medieval authors who succeeded him. William of Malmesbury singled out Osbern,



Eadmer's older *confrère*, for his 'Roman elegance' [*Romana elegantia*] and heaped praise on Goscelin of Saint-Bertin for his elegant rewriting of the lives of English saints.<sup>35</sup> William particularly commended Goscelin for his account of the 1091 translations at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, which he 'polished so vividly that he seemed to point the finger at every detail for his contemporaries and make future ages see it with their own eyes' [*expoluit ut eam presentibus monstrasse digito futurorumque uidetur subiecisse oculo* (l. 592)]. Eadmer was less impressed than William with Osbern's style which he felt 'exceeded the balanced style of everyday narrative' [*modum usitatae narrationis excessisse*].<sup>36</sup> He clearly felt he could do better. Apologies for his own 'simple style' [*paruitati meae*], 'limited ability' [*ingenioli*] and 'uncultivated and plain language' [*inculto plano [...] sermone*] were probably false modesty and to modern eyes, his simple style is highly commendable.<sup>37</sup> Sir Richard Southern praised Eadmer's 'clear and straightforward Latin which is easy to understand', further acknowledging that '[t]o be simple and to be vivid were achievements greater than might appear at first sight [...]. To write naturally came only from discipline and a fine balance of mind [...]'.<sup>38</sup> Eadmer certainly expended great effort in perfecting his natural style. He concerned himself, claims Southern, with 'trifling details of phraseology and the order of words'.<sup>39</sup> Andrew Turner and Bernard Muir, in their survey of the various manuscript copies of Eadmer's hagiographical works, conclude with the opinion that he showed a meticulous, almost pedantic approach, making 'constantly fussy alterations'.<sup>40</sup> Word order, however, is not a trifling matter and dismissing Eadmer's attention to detail as fussiness obscures the significant changes that can accrue from the slightest verbal adjustments.<sup>41</sup> Turner and Muir draw attention to Eadmer's interest in extended and convoluted linguistic games and his heavy use of rhetorical figures in his *Vita S. Wilfridi* to adapt and rewrite his literary sources.<sup>42</sup> They conclude that 'Eadmer was certainly familiar with many of the grammatical structures associated with the high literary style of the classical period and uses them throughout his works'.<sup>43</sup> With a thorough training in rhetorical theory, Eadmer would have been acutely aware of just how important it was to use the right word in the right way.<sup>44</sup>

Eadmer uses many of the rhetorical tropes beloved of medieval authors and particularly hagiographers. Too often these are overlooked *because* they are tropes, their ubiquity appearing to preclude the possibility of intentional use. The humility topos, used by Eadmer to self-deprecating

effect, was a particular favourite. A trope of irony, this cued the audience to anticipate and prepare to appreciate the eloquence and sophistication of the text that followed. Claims to *brevitas* similarly instruct the audience to expect the opposite. The prologue to the two miracles appended to the *Breviloquium* plays on themes of abbreviation and expansion. In fact, the very inclusion of these narratives, at some length and with no economy of language, belies the expectations set up through the title. Yet the appeal to brevity also primes the audience for their own role with respect to the text. With brevity came the expectation that the audience would ‘open up’ and ‘expand’ the text at their leisure, and, moreover, that they would take pleasure in so doing.<sup>45</sup> Eadmer’s intention ‘to recount briefly, if it pleases’ [*brevi, si placet, referre vobis* (para. 148, p. 178)] is another rhetorical commonplace—a *capitatio benevolentiae*—intended to ‘capture’ the ‘goodwill’ of the listener.<sup>46</sup> The audience’s pleasure, however, is not relief that the recitation will be of short duration but the anticipation of the delight of ‘unpacking’ and savouring a complicated and compressed text.

Indeed, pleasing the audience lay at the heart of hagiographical composition and rhetorical style was crucial in generating pleasure. Eadmer, however, declared another reason for writing. In the prologue to the two miracles he expressed a desire to enkindle the feelings of his audience [*uos ad venerationem festivitatis eius accendere cupio* (para. 148, p. 178)]. This was also standard rhetorical practice. Bene of Florence (*fl.* 1218) spoke of ‘warming’ the feelings of the audience as a means of persuasion.<sup>47</sup> Aesthetic pleasure warms the soul, motivating desire. Pleasure is a sensation which unfolds over time through one’s ongoing engagement with an art form. Pleasure builds as one proceeds or rather is led (*ductus*) through the compositional pathways and movements achieved through its stylistic choices.<sup>48</sup> Pleasure is also culturally constructed. As Jan Ziolkowski writes: ‘[I]n spite of the pronouncements in favour of stylistic clarity and humility [the medieval aesthetic] was often an aesthetic that favoured difficulty, complicated ornament, artificiality, amplification and periphrasis’.<sup>49</sup> Pleasure was found in mixture, in multiplicity, variation and complexity combined ‘in due proportion’:

For if many sensations are perceived as a rational mixture, they are made pleasurable; just so in tastes, when a thing is according to due proportion either sharp or sweet or salty; then indeed things are entirely pleasing, and all that is mixed is more pleasing than what is single [...].

[*Sed si plura sensibilia deducuntur ad proportionatam misionem, efficiuntur delectabilia: sicut in saporibus, quando aliquid secundum debitam proportionem est aut acutum, aut dulce, aut salsum; tunc enim sunt omnino delectabilia. Et omne, quod est mistum, est magis delectabile, quam quod est simplex [...].*]<sup>50</sup>

These two principles of pleasure, first being a process and second a complexion of sensations, are squarely in evidence in Eadmer's account of Godwin's experience of angelic voice-hearing. To demonstrate how pleasure builds through the course of the narrative—and how the audience is thus enkindled or warmed—it is helpful to explore the text one stage at a time.

The opening scene is very simple. The audience are directed to picture their *confrère* Godwin, the former sacristan and a man of great simplicity and innocence, in the oratory on the eve of Wilfrid's feast. The Canterbury brethren would have had no trouble in summoning sensory memories of the oratory, brother Godwin, and the sound of Matins starting. With very little prompting, they would have swiftly knitted together a vivid, personal and multisensory *pictura*.

The next sentence, however, makes greater cognitive demands of its audience.

And when the psalm 'Why, O Lord are they multiplied' had been uttered, which comes after the verse 'Lord, you will open my lips' and 'God make speed to save me,' which are usually said at the start of Matins by the monks, behold! two choristers were reciting the invitatory before the altar; and [when] the choir, as is the custom, repeated the same phrase, these two sang 'Come let us praise the Lord' following the melody of the first tone.

[*Et dicto Psalmo, 'Domine quid multiplicati sint,' qui post uersum, 'Domine labia mea aperies,' et, 'Deus in adiutorium meum intende,' a monachis in principio uigiliarum dici solet, ecce duo cantores coram altari inuitatorium pronuntiabant; et choro, uti mos est, hoc ipsum repetente, ipsi 'Uenite,' secundum cantum primi toni, decantabant* (para. 149, p. 178).]<sup>51</sup>

Initially, the audience's experience seems not dissimilar to Godwin's: we hear the versicles almost in their entirety, without any visual content. The monk reading this text aloud may well have sung these verses out of habit. Crossing between different modes of performance demands greater attention and readerly involvement, slowing and moderating our *ductus*

through the narrative.<sup>52</sup> Yet the audience's experience is significantly different because the psalms are not listed in the correct order.<sup>53</sup> *Anastrophe*, the inversion of the usual order of words or clauses, is used to great effect here. The inverted psalms are laborious to process, necessitating a high degree of engagement from the monastic listener.

Our perspective shifts in the second half of the sentence. The *asterismos* 'behold!' [*ecce*] invites the audience to exercise their visual imagination. We are instructed to paint in our mind's eye two choristers. Eadmer's brethren would once again have been able to furnish their *picturae* using their own experience. The number of cantors and the place they sang from was significant for the status of the feast and rank of the day. Lanfranc's *Monastic Constitutions* record that feasts of the third rank at Christ Church featured two monks dressed in copes for the invitatory.<sup>54</sup> Eadmer then instructs the audience to place these monks 'before the altar'. Placing a background behind our figures instantly adds depth to our mental *pictura*. With our mind's eye trained on these two monks, the choir, which takes up the refrain, must be placed behind or in our peripheral vision. Immediately our *pictura* bursts into stereophony.

Located centrally in this vivid scene, the reader then receives a sign that everything is not as it seems: 'However the invitatory was this: "Let us faithfully worship on God in the Trinity, through faith in whom the holy Bishop Wilfrid lives in God"' [*Inuitatorium autem hoc erat: Unum Deum in Trinitate fideliter adoremus, cuius fide Deo uiuit sanctus presul Wilfridus* (para. 149, p. 178)]. But before we have time to process this information, we are snatched out of our *pictura* of Matins proper to watch Godwin's response: 'Upon hearing this, the brother rose immediately' [*Quod ille frater audiens, ilico surrexit* (para. 149, p. 178)]. The emphatic 'this' has turned the audience's attention but the significance of the invitatory has been lost on Godwin. From observing him rise, we suddenly find ourselves privy to his internal thought processes: 'and [after] a stringent self-examination found himself guilty of sloth, which he calculated had detained him and caused him to rise later' [*segnitiem qua se detentum tardius surrexisse estimabat, districta in se examinatione redarguens* (para. 149, p. 178)]. Impersonation (*ethopoeia*) which involves putting oneself into the character of another helps convey the person's thoughts and feelings more vividly. It makes the character more plausible and authentic and thus available for psychological guesswork and empathy.<sup>55</sup>

The text forces the audience to switch back and forth between multiple perspectives, to create and juggle several different *picturae*. Yet instead of

leaving us dazed, this multiperspectival experience works seamlessly; our mind tracks between vantage points with ease. We enjoy watching the multiple, varied and complex sights to which we have omniscient access.

We depart from Godwin's mind to see him arrive at the entrance to the choir, where we observe him pause and, on hearing Psalm 94.8, 'Today if you shall hear his voice', look inside the choir. Immediately, we return to impersonating Godwin, reproducing in our mind the contents of his perception: 'When he saw no one within and yet the sweetness of their singing and charm of their voices remained wondrously soothing, he thought this was because of the cloudiness of his vision, which normally occurs after just awakening from recent sleep' [*Qui cum neminem intus uideret, et tamen suauitas concertuum, necnon dulcedo uocum eum mirifice demulceret, ratus est hoc sibi contigisse ex oculorum obscuratione que fieri solet ex recenti dormitione* (para. 149, p. 178)]. The *tamen* draws our attention to the second part of the clause, so the most salient element of this sentence is not the visual lack of singers but the sweet and soothing quality of the music. Like Godwin, we are 'soothed' into not really noticing. Everything about this clause seeks to give pleasure. The noun *suauitas* and its near-synonym *dulcedo* ('sweetness' or 'charm') refer back to a sensory phenomenon which works to reproduce those effects in the mind and, hence, body of the perceiver.<sup>56</sup> *Demulceo* similarly recruits and mimetically reproduces tactile sensations of being stroked and physically soothed. A *punctus elevatus* in the manuscript after *demulceret* indicates a suspended sentence requiring an emphatic climax and a rise in pitch, an arrangement that is pleasing to the ears.<sup>57</sup>

The sentence turns from Godwin's sensory perception to his deductive reasoning. Soothed by the sweet music, he explains his experience as a common ocular condition, a cloudiness that comes from sleeping. We instinctively find our mental *pictura* darkening and becoming blurred. Our vision clears as the choir sings the *Gloria Patri* and Godwin takes his space in the stalls: 'standing there, and feeling pleasantly delighted by the melody of those singing, and observing everything clearly, and seeing nobody [there], he was filled with wonder' [*ubi stans, et melodia cantantium suauiter iocundabatur, et clare omnia conspiciens, et neminem uidens, mirabatur* (para. 149, pp. 178–80)]. Unlike earlier, when the audience had direct access to Godwin's perception and thought processes, here we remain on the outside. We do not join Godwin in 'seeing nobody'; instead we are instructed to see Godwin standing by himself. Mental *picturae*

painted under authorial instruction, that is, with *enargeia*, are surprisingly robust. ‘Forgetting’ requires a conscious act of erasure or redaction. As we join Godwin in rubbing the eyes (of our minds) we are erasing our original *pictura* of the two choristers singing before the altar. But the erasing is not effective until the image is replaced by the solitary figure of Godwin *ubi stans*. Even then, it is impossible to delete this image entirely; Godwin stands solid amid the faint, ghostly forms of our earlier *phantasia*. Overlaying in this way produces an interesting mental effect. Although assembled from sensory memories, the spectral effect exceeds sensory perception. Nor is it an intentional act of imaginative creation.<sup>58</sup> It is an unexpected outcome produced by the rhetorical *ductus* which surprises and delights the audience.

Our earlier *phantasia* lingers in our mind because of the sweet melody which not only continues but grows in volume, complexity and beauty: ‘And as he was thus standing astounded, listening (or rather not listening) to the singers [...] the hymn *Confessor* was begun by one of them, and taken up and sung by a multitude of harmonious voices’ [*Cum itaque sic stupens staret, necne canentes auscultaret [...] ymnus iste, Confessor, ab uno incipitur, atque a multitudine susceptus canoris uocibus decantatur* (para. 149, p. 180)].<sup>59</sup> The sound grows stronger, but the ghostly figures begin to recede from our sight. Switching back to Godwin’s perspective: ‘[I]t seemed to him that he was not hearing those singing psalms next to him but from above, in the rafters of the church’ [*non iam iuxta se, sed desuper quasi in laquearibus ecclesie psallentes sibi uidebatur audire* (para. 149, p. 180)]. We automatically reorient our gaze upwards, duly conjuring wooden rafters but no more. The polyphony, however, persists, but we track its upwards trajectory: ‘and so, ascending as they sang and escaping as they ascended out of the hearing of the brother listening, these holy angels [...] returned to the heavens’ [*sicque canendo ascendentes, et ascendendo auditum fratris intendentis fugientes ipsi sancti angeli [...] celestia repetebant* (para. 149, p. 180)]. Punning on a word by varying the cases or tenses (*traductio*) was one of Eadmer’s favourite tropes of repetition.<sup>60</sup> Here ‘ascendentes’/‘ascendendo’ helps the sentence build to a climax, in effect, to mimic the angels’ ascent. It also builds our desire; as the voices move out of earshot, we strain more to hear them.

As the singing leaves Godwin feeling ‘sweetly delighted’ [*suauius iocundabatur*], the audience is left similarly pleased. Pleasure is conjured not only in the choice of words which reproduce those sensations in the listener, but in their deliberate ordering and the creation of

pleasing cadences. The multiperspectival presentation offers variation and complexity which gives the audience time to pause and truly inhabit the scenes they have fashioned. The greatest delight, however, derives from the overlaying of the *phantasii* which surprises, pleases and allows the meaning of the miracle to be fully realised: these are angelic voices. This is a truly ekphrastic miracle story in which, through figures of speech and use of *enargeia*, events are brought ‘before the eyes’ of the audience, working a profound impact on the mind of the listener. Pleasure enkindles desire as we yearn for the sweet song; the angels’ escape is a bittersweet loss. We emerge from the experience full of admiration for God and his saint.

This analysis has led to a second important realisation with significant implications for this volume. Stories about hearing voices rely on visual tropes to make them ‘work’. ‘Seeing nobody there’, the defining feature of the experience of voice-hearing, requires an impossible feat of imagination. It involves not bringing but banishing something from ‘before the eyes’. This can only be achieved through prior visualisation and an equally visual act of creative ‘erasing’. Efforts to categorise miracles by type, for example into visions and auditions, fail to recognise that aesthetic experience in the Middle Ages was both multisensory and whole.<sup>61</sup> They also lose sight of the cognitive purposes undergirding hagiographical composition. The more colourful, varied, complicated, and multisensory the stories, the more powerfully they performed in the mind as sites of affective production and meditational invention.

The second miracle shows considerable overlap with the first, recruiting sensory memories pertaining to the layout of Christ Church, a senior member of the community and the festal form of Matins. It differs, however, in casting the recipient, the sacristan Ælfwine, as the storyteller, who ‘vows that this was seen by him’ [*sibi uisum esse testatur* (para. 150, p. 180)]. The conceit continues: ‘He says that on the very night of the feast he was resting outside the choir in a certain elevated place in this church’ [*Ait enim quia dum ipsa nocte festiuitatis extra chorum in quodam edito ipsius ecclesie loco* (para. 150, p. 180)]. His words take us back to our *pictura* of Godwin in the oratory.<sup>62</sup> They also transport us into a particular disposition or frame of mind. The *ipsa* is emphatic and reminiscent of the opening lines of a folk or fairy tale.<sup>63</sup> It is a verbal formula which invites us to suspend disbelief, to lay aside doubt for the sake of enjoyment.

Our entry into this world that is betwixt and between is further signalled by the use of familiar linguistic forms: Ælfwine ‘lay neither fully awake nor fully asleep’ [*et nec plene uigilans nec plene dormiens iaceret* (para. 150, p. 180)]. The singsong cadence is again evocative of genres that straddle reality and fiction. While Ælfwine hovers on the threshold of consciousness, we have taken up space in the land of the uncanny, awaiting further instruction. It continues: ‘looking up he saw the whole church shining with a wonderful and indescribable brightness’ [*aspiciens uidit totam ecclesiam miro et ineffabili fulgore splendere* (para. 150, p. 180)]. Shrugging off all sense of drowsiness, the audience sets to work assembling a *pictura* of a shining church. Declaring sights to be ‘ineffable’, beyond capacity for description, is a common form of *aporia*, but it is also an effective trope for amplifying readerly involvement. With the author lost for words, the reader has to take greater pains to fill the gap, not only recruiting but creatively enhancing sensory memories of a brightly lit church. Again, it is a device which slows and modulates the pace at which the reader moves through the text.

Instructions for decorating our shining church swiftly follow:

Moreover, the altar itself seemed to be entirely made of gold and to be gleaming in an abundant array of precious stones. Meanwhile, in the choir he heard a great multitude of people pressed together singing the nightly vigils for Saint Wilfrid with festal music.

[*Altare autem ipsum quasi totum aureum eximio preciosorum lapidum nitens ornatu uidebatur. Preterea in choro quendam magne multitudinis cuneum audiuit nocturnas uigilias de sancto Wilfrido festiuis concentibus decantantem* (para. 150, p. 180).]

The *autem* and *preterea* draw our attention in two directions in quick succession, forcing our mind to simultaneously process and produce a *phantasia* of a sparkling altar and another of jubilant singing. This produces a polyfocal *pictura* and a somewhat dazzled sensation. As we saw with the previous story, aural images often possess a strong visual component. A large crowd might be inferred from the volume and complexity of the sound but the word *cuneus* (‘wedge’) is primarily visual. Ælfwine (and the audience) enjoy a panoptic vision of the whole church.

It is the first of these two images, the far more enargeic gleaming altar, which demands our attention. The combination of *uidebatur* and the present participle *nitens* conjure both quality and mode: we mentally



reproduce the perceptual process through which precious stones seem to gleam. Elaine Scarry has termed this effect ‘radiant ignition’; it makes the image more real.<sup>64</sup> We might say it brings the altar ‘before the eyes’. This impression is intensified by the figures passing before it: ‘And when it came to the lections and responses, he noticed that those whose duty it was to read or sing were mounting up the spiral staircase and bending down in front of the altar and before the blessed man’s body as if to receive a blessing’ [*Cumque ad lectiones et responsoria uentum esset, eos qui uel legere uel cantare debebant, per cocleam ascendere, ac coram altari et corpore beati uiri quasi pro benedictione supplicare contemplatus est* (para. 150, p. 180)]. With our panoptic vision, the stone staircase recedes and we observe the monks’ every step. We continue to watch as they cross in front of the altar. In his discussion of metaphor, Aristotle claims that subjects perceived in action (with *energeia*) are more vivid and that *energeia* was strongly correlated with *enargeia*.<sup>65</sup> Scarry argues that it is actually the perception of movement, often fleeting, *in front of* another surface or object that brings it ‘before the eyes’.<sup>66</sup> Imagining the movement of the monks obscuring our view of the gleaming altar lends greater solidity to both the altar and the monastic figures.

The story concludes somewhat perfunctorily: ‘With this done, they turned around and came down, [where] they carried out in a most fitting manner the ritual of reading and singing where it is usually done in this church’ [*Quo facto, mox redeundo descendebant, et officium legendi atque cantandi, ubi mos est in ecclesia ipsa decentissime persoluebant* (para. 150, p. 180)]. We barely register the monks’ departure because our eyes remain fixed on the altar, taking delight in our now uninterrupted view. The altar was one of three distinct images, together with the shining church and joyful singing, that the audience was required simultaneously to conjure. Yet this was the image to which we were directed to return and flesh out under authorial instruction. The gleaming altar is the miracle’s takeaway image which remains long after the miracle has been read.

These miracles appended to the *Breviloquium* are far from brief. They are stories to which readers must return in their minds, recreating and re-enacting their *phantasiai*, to provoke pleasure, produce delight and enkindle a love for Wilfrid and desire for God. Wonderfully *enargeic*, they represent significant additions to the ‘manifold decorations of the examples of the saints’ with which we adorn our personal *pictura* of the tabernacle.

Eadmer's use of auditory and visionary motifs speaks not only of the interest and acceptance of such experiences within monastic circles but also of the aesthetic and affective opportunities they afforded. Writing literary hagiography was an exercise in persuasion. Readers had to be instructed to visualise the scene in such a way that they could both see and, more importantly, feel the events described. Through the right stories, skilfully told, the hagiographer could cultivate in his readers affective responses conducive to prayer and meditational composition. The prevalence of visionary motifs within hagiography suggests this was a device particularly apposite for this task. A fine-grained reading of two such narratives has shown this to be the case. The skilful conjuration of mental imagery gives pleasure, incites admiration and arouses wonder. In short, it reproduces in the reader the preparatory affective transports required for the soul to stretch out towards God.

The comparable outcome, however, should not deflect from the subtle, yet significant differences in the cognitive effort required in apprehending auditory or voice-hearing miracle narratives in contrast to visions. Visions are far more prevalent in saints' lives or miracle collections than auditions.<sup>67</sup> Yet the label 'vision' is usually a misnomer, since most involve a blend of sensory elements. Ælfwine's 'vision', for example, directed the audience to fashion a polyfocal *pictura*, comprised of *phantasiai* recruited from both visual and aural *phantasmata*. The more complex and varied the ornamentation, the more vivid the visualisation and the stronger the sense of something being 'brought before the eyes'. Each of the *phantasiai* in Ælfwine's 'vision'—the shining church, the joyful singing, the gleaming altar—combines to make the overall *pictura* strikingly energeic. The cognitive process is one of simple addition. Significantly, the reality of these sights (or lack thereof) is never put under pressure.

Voice-hearing miracles, wherein voices are heard in the absence of a speaker, rest on the principle of negation. In Godwin's case, the miracle pivots on the fact he 'sees nobody there'. In order for readers to perform this *apophasis*, they first need to conjure the sight of somebody in their minds. Not only does this underscore the important visual element in the successful staging of a voice-hearing miracle but also it requires readers to tear down the images they had been encouraged to create. Mental erasure is far harder to achieve than mental embellishment and its success is heavily contingent on the skill of the author in supplying appropriate instruction. The portrayal of voice-hearing not only makes greater cognitive demands on the reader but it also takes great dexterity on the part of

the author. The paucity of voice-hearing miracles is perhaps less surprising when we consider the challenges of bringing voice-hearing ‘before the eyes’.

## NOTES

1. The *Breviloquium* is at fols. 39<sup>v</sup>–44<sup>r</sup>; the *Vita* at fols. 12<sup>f</sup>–39<sup>v</sup>. For the *Breviloquium* see *Vita Sancti Wilfridi Auctore Edmero: The Life of Saint Wilfrid by Edmer*, ed. and trans. by Bernard J. Muir and Andrew J. Turner (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), para. 129–51, pp. 163–83. The *Vita* precedes it (para. 1–128, pp. 8–161). Subsequent citations will be by paragraph and page number. My translation, being more literal, occasionally departs from that of Turner and Muir.
2. See R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm and His Biographer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 367.
3. Wilfrid was a seventh-century Bishop of York whose long and controversial career is known to us primarily through Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica*. After his death in 709/10, he was buried in Ripon where he remained until Archbishop Oda (941–58) translated his relics to Canterbury because of the devastation following the Viking occupation. See *Vita*, paras 115–17, pp. 142–46.
4. The prologue addresses the monks ‘coming here together as one today for this feast’ [*bodierna die in unum conuenientes exultatis* (para. 129, p. 162)].
5. Jay Rubenstein, ‘Liturgy against History: The Competing Visions of Lanfranc and Eadmer of Canterbury’, *Speculum* 74, no. 2 (April, 1999): 279–309. For a summary of the early historiographical debate see Susan Ridyard, ‘*Condigna veneratio*: Post-conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons’, *Anglo-Norman Studies* 9 (1987): 179–206.
6. Rubenstein, ‘Liturgy against History’, 301.
7. Rubenstein, ‘Liturgy against History’, 306.
8. The *Breviloquium* postdates the *Vita* wherein Wilfrid’s final resting place is noted as ‘on the northern side of the altar’ [*in aquilonali parte altaris* (para. 117, p. 146)]. This honourable location is surely indicative of his venerable status. Sir Richard Southern speculated that the *Vita*, which refers to Lanfranc retrospectively but not his successor Anselm, may date to the interregnum (1089–93), when a ‘relic hunt’ revealing the bones of St Ouen on a bier in an upstairs gallery suggests there was renewed interest in the community’s relics: see R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 408. A date after 1104, however, seems far more plausible. The resting place given in the *Vita* corresponds with the site of Wilfrid’s tomb in

- Anselm's church, not begun until after 1096: see Gervase of Canterbury, *Historical Works, the Chronicle of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. by W. Stubbs, Rolls Series 73, 2 vols (London, 1879–80), 1. 14. There is also evidence for a fresh wave of interest in the cathedral's relics in this first decade of the twelfth century: see Eadmer, *De reliquiis S. Audoeni*, ed. by André Wilmart, 'Edmeri Cantuariensis cantoris nova opuscula de sanctorum veneration et obsecratione', *Revue des sciences religieuses* 15 (1935): 184–219 and 354–79, at 369 and Felix Liebermann, *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1879), 1–8, at 5. The omission of Anselm from the *Vita* need not establish a date within the interregnum; it could merely point to a date during Anselm's years of exile. A letter from Anselm to Prior Ernulf in August 1104 cedes full authority to the prior to make changes to the community's liturgical observances: see *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. by F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1946–1961), 4. ep. 331, p. 41. The translation of saints into the Cathedral's newly completed east end would have necessitated new liturgical materials and hagiography, thus providing a context for the composition of Eadmer's Lives of Wilfrid and Oda.
9. The phrase belongs to Gabriella M. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 65, no. 1 (January, 1990): 59–86.
  10. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini. Enarrationes in Psalmos i-l*, ed. by D.E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, Corpus Christianorum series latina (CCSL) 38 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956) XLI. Subsequent references are to this edition and psalm, cited by part and line number.
  11. Both use the adjective *suauitas* and its synonym *dulcedo* ('sweetness') and the verbs *de/mulceo* ('soothe') and *stupeo* ('be astounded') to describe the melody and its effects. The experience is a 'pleasure' (*voluptas*) for Augustine, while Eadmer uses the verb *iocundo*.
  12. This section draws on the work of Mary Carruthers in *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400–1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), in particular ch. 5, 221–76.
  13. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 221.
  14. For a discussion of architectural mnemonics see Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 2nd edn (London: Pimlico, 1992), particularly ch. 1, 17–41. This technique is also discussed by Mary Carruthers in *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 10, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89–98.
  15. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 228–31.

16. The plan of St Gall, discussed by Carruthers, is the most well-known example of a rhetorical artefact for mental composition. For parallels with eastern meditational practices see Grover A. Zinn Jr. ‘Mandala Symbolism and Use in the Mysticism of Hugh of St. Victor’, *History of Religions* 12 (1972): 317–41.
17. Besides the Exodus tabernacle medieval commentators used the temple-citadel of Ezekiel’s vision (Ez. 40–42), Noah’s Ark (Gen. 6–9), and John’s vision of the Heavenly City (Rev. 21) to frame their meditational compositions. See, for example, Gregory the Great’s sermons on the first 47 verses of Ezekiel 40 in book two of his *Homiliae in Hiezechihielem prophetam*, ed. by M. Adriaen, CCSL 143–143B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979–1985) and Hugh of St Victor’s mystical treatise based on Noah’s ark, *De arca Noe mystica (De pictura Arche)*, ed. by J.-P. Migne, Patrologia Latina 176 (1854): 681–702.
18. Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009; London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 193.
19. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 94.
20. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 111; Richard Sorabji, *Aristotle on Memory* (London: Duckworth, 1972), 11.
21. Quintilian, the first-century Roman educator and orator, saw the capacity to assemble vivid *phantasiai* at will as a distinct advantage in forensic oratory and praised the person who has properly formed ‘what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them “visions”), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us’ [*Quas φαντασίας Graeci uocant (nos sane uisiones appellemus), per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere uideamur*], *The Orator’s Education*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library [LCL] 126 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) 6.2.
22. For Aristotle’s use of the term see *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. by J. H. Freese, LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991): esp. 3.11.1. On the importance of being able to bring scenes ‘before the eyes’ in ancient rhetorical and poetic arts, see Kathy Eden, *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), esp. ch. 3, 62–111.
23. Quintilian explained how this works in a legal context: ‘Suppose I am complaining that someone has been murdered. Am I not to have before my eyes all the circumstances which one can believe to have happened during the event? [...] will not the blood, the pallor, the groans [...] be imprinted on my mind? The result will be *enargeia*, which Cicero calls *illustratio* and *evidentia*, by which we seem to show what happened

rather than to tell it and this gives rise to the same emotions as if we were present at the event itself [*Occisum queror: non omnia quae in re praesenti accidisse credibile est in oculis habebō? [...] Non animo sanguis et pallor et gemitus [...] insidet? Insequitur εναργεια, quae a Cicerone inlustratio et evidentia nominatur, quae non tam dicere uidetur quam ostendere, et adfectus non aliter quam si rebus ipsis intersimus sequentur*], *The Orator's Education*, 6.2, trans. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 94: see also more generally ch. 4, 87–106.

24. See Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 131–65.
25. Goscelin, *Liber confortatorius*, ed. by C. H. Talbot, 'The *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin', *Analecta monastica*, series 3, Studia Anselmiana, 37, ed. by M. M. Lebreton, J. Leclercq, and C. H. Talbot (Rome: Pontifical Institute of St Anselm, 1955), 1–117, at 69, lines 5–16. Subsequent references are to this edition and page, cited by line number. Trans. by M. Otter, *Goscelin of St Bertin: The Book of Encouragement and Consolation (Liber Confortatorius)* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 80.
26. For the background to the *Liber confortatorius* and its possible readership see Stephanie Hollis, ed., *Writing the Wilton Women: Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004) and Otter, *Goscelin of St Bertin*, 1–16.
27. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 116–17. See also Mary Carruthers, 'The Concept of *Ductus*, or, Journeying through a Work of Art', in *Rhetoric beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 190–213.
28. For a comprehensive discussion of this subject, see Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967).
29. See the advice of Peter Damian to his fellow monks in Kurt Reindel, *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani*, MGH Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit, 4 vols (München: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1983–1993), 2. letter 50.58.
30. *Tædium* was the Latin gloss for the Greek term 'acedia', the sixth of the eight principal vices listed by John Cassian in his fifth *Conference*: '*sextum acedia, id est, anxietas, sive tædium cordis*' (5.2), *Collationes patrum in scythica eremo*, PL 49 (1850): 477–1328, at 0611A.
31. '*exercito*', in Charlton T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879; reprint 1998).
32. '*per hanc [tribulationem] exercitati ad maiora proficitis*', *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis*, ed. by Schmitt, 5. ep. 332, p. 268.
33. Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 90.

34. Crossing to the house of God, Augustine's psalmist separates himself from all earthly clamour: '*abstrahens se ab omni strepitu carnis et sanguinis*' (9.39).
35. For Osbern, see William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1.241. He revised his opinion, however, when he came to write his own life of Dunstan.
36. Eadmer of Canterbury, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. by Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 44–45.
37. Eadmer, *Lives*, 48–49, 216–17 and Eadmer, *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Southern (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 1.
38. Eadmer, *Life of Anselm*, xxvi–ii.
39. Eadmer, *Life of Anselm*, xi.
40. Eadmer, *Lives*, xxxi.
41. For the significant impact that Eadmer's slight changes brought to his *Vita S. Dunstani*, see Hilary Powell, 'Demonic Daydreams: Mind-Wandering and Mental Imagery in the Medieval Hagiography of St Dunstan', in *New Medieval Literatures* 18, ed. by Laura Ashe, Philip Knox, David Lawton, and Wendy Scase (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), 44–74.
42. See Eadmer, *Lives*, xxxii and *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*, xxxvii–xliii.
43. Eadmer, *Lives*, xxx. Eadmer was familiar with works by Cicero, even quoting from *De inventione* (i.2) in his prologue to the *Vita S. Wilfridi* (para. 2, 8).
44. In his *Historia novorum*, Eadmer quotes from a letter of recommendation written on his behalf by Archbishop Ralph to King Alexander stating that Eadmer had been educated from his childhood in both 'divine and where necessary secular literature' [*litteris divinis et, si opus fuerit saecularibus*], *Historia novorum in Anglia*, ed. by M. Rule, Rolls Series 81 (London, 1884), 282.
45. For 'games of obscurity', see Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61–70.
46. Moving the audience towards a disposition favourable to the orator was a fundamental aspect of classical oratory: see Cicero, *De inventione*, ed. and trans. by H. M. Hubbell, LCL 386 (London, Heinemann, 1976), 1.22, pp. 44–45. See also Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, 54.
47. '[U]t concilietur auditor et ad fidem persuasione ducatur, ut animorum motibus incalescat'; for Bene of Florence see Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, 85.
48. Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, 79.

49. Jan Ziolkowski, 'Theories of Obscurity in the Latin Tradition', *Mediaevalia* 19 (1996): 101–70, at 138.
50. Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia de anima*, 3, lectio 2, n. 15, in *Opera omnia*, Corpus Thomisticum database, accessed 19 August, 2019, <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/can3.html>. On sensory and stylistic complexion, see Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, 45–79.
51. Ps. 3.1, Ps. 50.17, and Ps. 69.2 (in the order they appear in the *Breviloquium*).
52. This technique in the modern field of cognitive aesthetics is known for adding 'texture' to a literary work: for details see Peter Stockwell, *Texture: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), in particular ch. 4, 106–33: for textual 'crossings' see 107.
53. Monastic Matins typically began with Ps. 69.2 (versicle and response), followed by *Gloria Patri*, *Alleluia*, and Ps. 50.17 (versicle and response, sung three times). Ps. 3 (sung without antiphon) would then follow, succeeded by the Invitatory and Ps. 94: for details see John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy. From the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 93.
54. *The Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc*, ed. and trans. by Dom David Knowles and Christopher N. L. Brooke (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002), 99.
55. See Stockwell, *Texture*, 115–23.
56. For a discussion of the medieval concepts of *suavis* and *dulcis* and the sensory basis of human persuasion, see Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, 80–107.
57. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 371, fol. 43<sup>v</sup>. Online database, accessed 19 August, 2019, <https://parker.stanford.edu>.
58. This is phenomenologically quite different from intentioned acts of imagining the impossible (or unknown). Consider Augustine's willed and deliberate *phantasia* of the black swan he discusses in book 11 of *De trinitate*, ed. by W. J. Mountain, CCSL 50–50A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), 11.10.17.
59. *Stupeo* suggests a loss of sensory awareness; he is incapable of hearing. He regains his senses when the hymn begins.
60. Eadmer, *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*, xxxviii.
61. Carruthers, *Experience of Beauty*, 47.
62. The upstairs location recalls the location of St Ouen's relics, see above note 8.
63. For medieval fairy tales see Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales: The Medieval Latin Past of Wonderful Lies* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
64. Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 77–78.



65. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 3.11.1, see Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 85–86.  
 66. Scarry terms this ‘kinetic occlusion’; see *Dreaming*, 12–13.  
 67. See Christine Cooper-Rompato’s essay in this volume.

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## Gabriel's Annunciation and the Problems of Angelic Voice

*Jacqueline Tasioulas*

The Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary was regarded in the Middle Ages as perhaps the most crucial utterance in human history. It was at this moment of angelic speech that the Word became Incarnate and Mary conceived the Son of God. The account of the Gospel of Luke contains both the voice of an angel and doubt about the nature of the message being conveyed:

And the angel being come in said to her, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.' And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.

[*Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit, 'Have, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus.' Quae cum audisset, turbata est in sermone eius et cogitabat qualis esset ista salutatio.*]<sup>1</sup>

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It is a moment that is repeatedly re-enacted in medieval literature and art, the words of the angel so familiar and so crucial that they are present even when neither heard nor seen in the lyrics, plays and images that presented the Annunciation to medieval audiences. The focus might have been expected to be on the body of the newly pregnant Virgin, but time and again artistic representations bring to the fore the voice of Gabriel, drawing attention not simply to the message imparted but to the act of voice that made the message possible. While the implications of angelic speech were of interest generally to the scholastic philosophers of the Middle Ages, it was the moment of annunciation that prompted the greatest urgency and the greatest artistic creativity, for before there was an angelic voice available to dramatists and artists the exact form of that voice had to be established and sanctioned by the theologians.<sup>2</sup>

The first major difficulty concerned all angelic voices, not just that of Gabriel, for there was a potential incompatibility between sound as the Middle Ages conceived of it and angelic form as it was popularly held to be. Essentially, from Aristotle onwards, the production of sound is thought of in terms of physical disruption of some kind. Scholars were divided as to whether sound, like vision, travelled by means of species, and thus moved like ripples in a pool with each wave striking the air next to it; or whether sound was in fact a material substance, albeit a very subtle one formed of *spiritus*, that reached the ear as a form of touch.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle imagined the air as being unable to escape the pressure built up between the striker and the thing struck, and Avicenna followed him to show how even the softest of bodily forms could still become concentrated enough to produce the necessary resistance for the production of sound.<sup>4</sup> Essentially, the air is forcibly squeezed between two bodies, the vocal cords being ideally suited to the task. But how do angels, incorporeal beings that they are, disturb, squeeze and resist? Fundamentally, how can angelic voices ever exist at all? And yet, there are obviously many examples of angels speaking in the Bible, not just in the Old Testament, but also in the New. Abraham, Lot and Tobias, for example, are all involved in some form of communication with angels long before Mary encounters Gabriel. It is clear that angels must communicate, but it is also clear that the 'voices' of angels were not a straightforward matter. Indeed, investigation of what appears at first to be an interesting physical phenomenon is very revealing in terms of the perceived limitations of speech, limitations that emerge as problematic in the most crucial act of angelic communication of them all, the Annunciation.

The very word 'angel' means, of course, 'messenger'. The great medieval encyclopaedia *De proprietatibus rerum* begins its account of the nature of all things with a lengthy discussion of the nine orders of angels, and explains that the term 'angel' rightly applies only to the lowest of the orders and only when they are performing the function that the word denotes. No matter in what language one encounters them, these beings are always described in terms of their ability to deliver the word of God:

Angelis in grewe, malach in Hebrew, nuncijs in latyn, and is to menyng  
 'a messenger' in englisch and in frensche; for angelis were iwont to come  
 in message and warne prophetis of oure lordis wille. Angelis is a name  
 of office and nouzt of kynde, for an angel is alwey a spirit, and is iclepid  
 angelus first whanne he is isend in message.<sup>5</sup>

While John Trevisa's main concern is to classify and rank the nine orders of angels and explain how the term 'angel' both designates the lowest order and defines the group as a whole, his discussion also contains an allusion to the 'solidification' of the spiritual essence that goes with the role of messenger. At issue here are the pains taken by the theologians to stress that angels did not appear in some kind of imaginative capacity: they were not seen only in the minds of those who encountered them, but were, rather, perceived in sensory form, often by more than one person, and involving both sight and sound. For John Trevisa, this means that the angels, incorporeal in themselves, have to go to the lengths of occupying a corporeal body for the duration of time necessary to deliver their earthly message, without vivifying the host they temporarily occupy:

Also an angel whan he wole takeþ a body couenabil to his worching, þat  
 he may be iseye; and whanne he hath ido his office, he leueþ þat body þat  
 was itake [...] Also þey an angel take a body for eny nedeful doinge, he  
 makeþ it nozt liue, neþir zeueþ þerto lif, but onliche he meueþ it.<sup>6</sup>

The inhabited body functions like a musical instrument: not itself sentient, but, at the will of another, producing a sensory experience in those in its vicinity. This idea—that the physical senses had to be involved in human engagement with angels, that they were in fact essential—was important in most of the accounts of angelic interaction but became crucial in the case of the Annunciation.<sup>7</sup>

It was widely held that intellectual vision, the mind's eye, was superior to physical vision and that this must be the case in terms of the apparition of an angel: the mind's eye sees an angel in its substance, but the corporeal eye sees only an assumed bodily form.<sup>8</sup> It was logical that the divine conception should be delivered in a superlative form; this, after all, is the moment at which the redemption of all mankind is effectively announced and is, therefore, the most important of all angelic utterances on earth. It would, therefore, have been natural to assume that Gabriel would have appeared to Mary at the Annunciation in an intellectual vision. However, Thomas Aquinas puts forward several arguments against this, arguments that require instead an angel that could be perceived by the senses. The first of these is that Mary, being herself a corporeal being, derives her knowledge from the evidence of her senses:

We grant that the imagination is a higher faculty than the exterior senses. Still, because the senses are the beginning of knowledge our greatest certitude lies there, since the principles of knowledge are more certain. [...*imaginatio quidem est altior potential quam sensus exterior; quia tamen principium humanae cognitionis est sensus, in eo consistit maxima certitudo.*]<sup>9</sup>

The notion that corporeal sight, and even more crucially, corporeal sound, must be involved is essential. Mary had to be certain that the Annunciation was real and, flawed as the evidence of the senses might sometimes be, the reality of what was being conveyed was more readily acceptable if perceived by the senses. This in turn links to Aquinas' second argument: the notion that the medium itself is fundamentally the message of the Annunciation. In essence, the way in which the message is given has as much impact as the message itself:

The angel appeared bodily to the blessed Virgin. This fitted in first with the message itself, since he came to tell of the incarnation of the invisible God. It was appropriate then in delivering this news that an invisible being assume a visible form. This would fit in also with the apparitions of the Old Testament, which all point to the appearance of the Son of God in human flesh

[...*angelus annuntians apparuit matri Dei corporea visione. Et hoc conveniens fuit, primo quidem, quantum ad id quod annuntiabatur. Venerat enim angelus annuntiare incarnationem invisibilis Dei. Unde etiam conveniens fuit ut ad hujus rei declarationem invisibilis creatura formam*



*assumeret in qua visibiliter appareret: cum etiam omnes apparitiones veteris Testamenti ad hanc apparitionem ordinentur, qua Filius Dei in carne apparuit.]]<sup>10</sup>*

The angel, it is argued, is somehow incarnate in order to exemplify the Incarnation. This crucial moment of the enfleshing of Christ and his assumption of corporeal form is potentially fraught, the very humanity of Christ being at issue. While some artistic representations of the Annunciation have a homunculus Christ visibly present in the scene, the vast majority do not, the only two visible participants being Mary and the angel.<sup>11</sup> This being the case, Gabriel becomes proof that such miracles can occur, and indeed that such an event is occurring at that moment in the womb of the Virgin. Therefore, the utterance of the angel, the voice that Mary hears, is not important simply on account of the message that it conveys, but also because it is a voice that can be experienced in normal sensory terms.

This is likely to be the explanation too for the way in which the Annunciation is presented in the N-Town play, the fifteenth-century collection of plays known as N-Town being the most theologically rich of the four extant English mystery cycles. Like the other cycles, it is a series of plays that begins with the creation of the world and ends with Judgement Day, but it contains Marian material not present in the other collections, some of it laying bare the crucial issues attendant upon divinity's engagement with human form.<sup>12</sup> Its 'Salutation and Conception' is a play in which Mary, at the moment of Incarnation, describes in detail how the foetal Christ is formed in her womb, the author feeling the need to explain a theological and scientific complexity in the middle of a dramatic narrative.<sup>13</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, it is also a play in which the Angel Gabriel insists on drawing attention to his own ability to speak. No other angel in N-Town does this, but it is noteworthy in Gabriel's first words to the Virgin:

Heyl, ful of grace, God is with the.  
 Amonge all women blyssyd art thu.  
 Here þis name Eva is turnyd Aue;  
 Pat is to say, withote sorwe ar 3e now.

Thow sorwe in 3ow hath no place,  
 3ett of joy, lady, 3e nede more.  
 Therefore I adde and sey 'ful of grace',

For so ful of grace was nevyr non bore.  
 zett who hath grace, he nedyth kepyng sore;  
 Therefore I sey God is with the,  
 Whiche xal kepe zow endlessly thore.  
 So amonge all women blyssyd are ze.<sup>14</sup>

The words are not so much spoken as performed. Partly, this derives from a desire to explain them, this being, after all, a crucial utterance. But there is also a delight in them, a joy taken in the act of saying by a creature that would not normally have a voice of this kind. The Ave/Eva palindrome is a commonplace, but one normally inferred from Gabriel's greeting of 'Ave Maria' rather than overtly present in his message. It is a verbal possibility, however, that this Gabriel wants to explore, the evident joy in his speech being due not just to the news he brings, but to the possibilities of the medium in which it is conveyed. Angels do not normally have words, but given the opportunity, this angel shows what they can do: turning them backwards and forwards so that they mean different things and, having completed an utterance of no more than fifty words, he begins to quote himself—'I adde and sey', 'I sey'—in a manner that conveys not just a desire for clarity, but an enjoyment of his own capacity to speak. The effect of this is that the words are displayed, rather in the way that they appear in scrolls on images of the Annunciation, held up for scrutiny (Plate 3.1). The words themselves are to be contemplated and, as the source of redemption and joy, they are to be enjoyed, not simply for the message that they carry but on account of what they themselves are: the proof of incarnation, and not merely the overcoming by the divine of the limitations of the flesh, but an embracing of and delight in the assumption of corporeal form.

A further source of joy is that this fallen state of communication, earthly language, can still convey truth at the exacting level of angelic standards. One of the key questions surrounding angels was whether or not they would have used words of any kind in order to communicate among themselves. It was widely held that angels were not dependent upon any sort of corporeal speech organ and could converse independently of space and without relying on any sort of intervening media.<sup>15</sup> What was more controversial was the question of whether or not angels among themselves even had any need to communicate, there being a strong case for the idea that their superior knowledge would simply make such a need redundant, their thoughts being instantly known to one



**Plate 3.1** The Annunciation, British Library, MS 18850 (The Bedford Hours), f. 32 (Reproduced by kind permission of the British Library. Copyright the British Library Board)

another.<sup>16</sup> But assuming that this was not the case, and that they did desire to communicate to one another, would their speaking and thinking be identical? As Augustine explains, words are, in the first instance, signs, and these signs can only be defined by means of other signs: they are slightly arbitrary copies of the internal thought that the speaker is attempting to convey. According to Augustine, these thoughts are turned by mind and heart into a language of truth, but this language is not external, and a process of translation must occur to bring some version of its words into the world. Necessarily, such imperfect symbols cannot fully convey the meaning that they represent.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Augustine assumed here that a human speaker already somehow speaks in thought before transmitting his mental content to the world through an audible or visible sign. Augustine's concern was to find a way round the loss of meaning that inevitably occurred during the passage from thought to word.

This perceived gap between thought and word forms the basis of a great deal of discussion about the communication of angels. Augustine himself explicitly rejected any attempt to define what angelic language must be like (he claims that the human intellect would simply be unable to grasp the concept), but this did not prevent other scholars from tackling the issue. Among these, Aquinas is the most influential. It is his model of angelic locution that proves to be the dominant one, though others, such as that of Giles of Rome, with its hypothesis that angels had a language based on mental *signa*, would prove to be a significant challenge.<sup>18</sup> For Aquinas' angels, signs such as words are superfluous. There is nothing to prevent angels communicating directly by disclosing the thought, without resorting to any kind of *signa*. Indeed, in Aquinas' scheme of things the difficulty would appear to be the prevention of instantly revealing what was in one angelic mind to another angel.

However, as with much of Aquinas' philosophy, it is the action of the will that is paramount. That being the case, a Thomist angel will select a species from its memory out of which it generates a concept, an *internal* word (not a *signum*). If it then wishes to make known to another angel this internal word, then it must *will* the removal of the veil that surrounds its mind:

We have to make use of an outward, vocalized communication because of the interference of the body. Hence among the angels there is no place for outward, but only for inward speech; this includes the thought's being directed by the will towards communicating with another. Accordingly,

the tongues of angels is a metaphor for the power they have to make their thoughts known.

[...quod locutio exterior quae fit per vocem est nobis necessaria propter obstaculum corporis. Unde non convenit angelo sed sola locutio interior, ad quam pertinet non solum quod loquatur sibi interiori concipiendo sed etiam quod ordinet per voluntatem ad alterius manifestationem. Et sic lingua angelorum metaphorice dicitur ipsa virtus angeli qua conceptum suum manifestat.]<sup>19</sup>

There are no tongues involved, no audible words: the speech of angels is a mental concept conveyed by means of the will alone. As for the metaphorical interpretation of 'the tongues of angels', this is typical of Aquinas. One thing that no theologian at this point calls into question is that angelic language is purely mental.

Some theologians, such as Giles of Rome, were willing to contemplate the scenario earlier described by John Trevisa, in which angels could assume human bodies and use them to produce human speech. They might even cause human bodies to make sounds and thus communicate among themselves.<sup>20</sup> However, Aquinas does not entertain such possibilities. While angels can assume bodies, they are not human bodies, but are instead forms of condensed air. If these airy bodies have ears, eyes and other sensory faculties, then that is merely so that we can understand intelligible properties on our own terms. Angels themselves, according to Aquinas, do not have sensations in spite of occasionally appearing to have bodies through which sensory perception might be achieved:

To have sensations is a vital function from every point of view; hence it is quite inadmissible that the angels have sensations through the bodies they assume. Yet the sense organs of these bodies are not simply superfluous: they signify the angels' spiritual faculties; the eyes mean angelic knowledge, and the other organs other angelic powers.

[...sentire est totaliter opus vitae. Unde nullo modo est dicendum quod angeli per organa assumptorum corporum sentiant. Nec tamen superflue sunt formata; non enim ad hoc sunt formata ut per ea sentiantur, sed ad hoc ut per huiusmodi organa virtutes spirituales angelorum designentur, sicut per oculum designatur virtus cognitiva angeli, et per alia membra aliae ejus virtutes.]<sup>21</sup>

So when an angel appears to be eating, it is indeed only the appearance of eating. Food cannot be ingested by the assumed angelic bodies. This is somehow straightforward: they looked as though they were eating

but they were not.<sup>22</sup> Speech, on the other hand, is slightly more difficult, because it is not an omission: something, some sound, is produced in some way in order for the angelic role as messenger to be fulfilled. Aquinas, though, is categorical that it is not a voice emanating from a body as we know it:

An angel does not really speak through his assumed body; he only imitates speech, forming sounds in the air corresponding to human words.

[...*angeli proprie non loquuntur per corpora assumpta, sed est aliquid simile locutioni, inquantum formant sonos in aëre similes vocibus humanis.*]<sup>23</sup>

As justification for this, he briefly refers to the fact that speech is only noise, and that it is not only living organisms that produce noise; inanimate things do, too. He does not specify what these inanimate noises are, but presumably because this is a commonplace about sound: everything produces noise, starting with the spheres whose music is so loud that the human ear cannot even negotiate the noise that they create. So, bodies do not have to be vital bodies in order to produce a noise, even a noise that approximates human speech. This, essentially, is the end of the line for Aquinas.

We would not expect to find this level of scholasticism replicated in art, and yet, as we have seen, N-Town's Gabriel takes significant delight and interest in his self-conscious speech. As for depictions of the Annunciation, they really need no more than an angel and a kneeling woman for us to understand what they are intended to convey. Nevertheless, countless examples make manifest the actual words—*Ave Maria, gratia plena*—making it clear that the words existed outside the minds of women and angels: that they were spoken. Sometimes the words act as frames for the image, but more frequently they are contained within the picture itself, scrolling forth from Gabriel.

In some cases, the scroll functions almost as a letter: the angel depicted in the manner of a herald reading his lines, the scroll becoming a missive from God (see Plate 3.2).

But there is also something else happening here, or, rather, trying not to happen. It was a medieval commonplace that Mary conceived through the ear. Conception occurs at the Annunciation, as the fifteenth-century sermon cycle *Jacob's Well* puts it, 'in the heryng of Gabreyellys woordys'.<sup>24</sup> This is, of course, a slightly ambiguous phrase. It can either mean that conception occurs *when* the Virgin hears Gabriel's words, in





Plate 3.2 Angel as Herald, Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.8.2, f. 27v  
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library)

the sense of ‘at the same time as’; or it can be interpreted as meaning that the Virgin conceives *because* she hears the words, in the sense that the words themselves have a causal relation to the Incarnation.

The Towneley Annunciation play offers less ambiguity than *Jacob’s Well*. Here, God summons Gabriel, instructing him to:

[...] hayls that madyn, my lemman,  
 As hendly as thou can;  
 Of my behalf thou shall hyr grete;  
 I haue hyr chosen, that madyn swete.  
 She shall conceyf my derlyng  
 Through thy word and hyr heryng.<sup>25</sup>

This is not what the Church fathers had in mind. The Word is made flesh in the body of the Virgin, but, in the theological texts, that word is God’s word, not Gabriel’s. The difficulty lies in the nature of sound itself, because even if, following Aquinas, the angel is somehow imitating a human voice, the Virgin’s faculty of hearing is still a human one.

It is a theological imperative that she must be wholly human, and as such her sense perception has to be ordinary—superlative, if you like—but functioning in the normal way. The question is, therefore: how do angelic voices function in terms of human hearing? Aquinas may say that angels only imitate voice, but whatever they do produce still has to be heard, and hearing raises a difficulty in this context that vision does not.

Whereas with sight, species are usually thought of as emanating *from* the eye, in a process of extramission, sound must be taken *into* the ears. According to Adelard of Bath, William of Conches and Vincent of Beauvais what happens with speech is that the sound is formed in the mouth of the speaker. This then shapes the air closest to itself with the same form, and this parcel of air then shapes the next one until it reaches the ear of the hearer.<sup>26</sup> What enters the ear is, therefore, something with a physical shape. Not all theories went that far, but what the natural philosophers were agreed upon is that hearing is more like touch than like sight. Some even went so far as to suggest it was more like the sense of taste, the Latin verb *gustare* (to taste) coming to mean ‘to listen to’ in medieval England.<sup>27</sup> Certainly, there is some contact necessary in hearing, and even more so than with the sense of touch itself. Hearing is intimate because there must be internal contact. The disturbed air must enter the ear, specifically the hollow part inside the ear where there was thought to be a pocket of stationary air.



The study of angels was one of the great scholastic topics of the Middle Ages, a required subject at some medieval universities, and yet also a focus of much wider interest, ideas about angels and images of them pervading medieval life at the most popular level. The limitations of earthly bodies gave rise to speculation about God's other created beings, their non-corporeal forms allowing for exploration of possibilities beyond that of the human. The great theological treatises probed every detail of angelic existence, but there was, inevitably, more focus on the angelic capacities that were given biblical sanction. Among these, the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Mary was, without doubt, the key moment of angelic interaction with the human race. The body of Gabriel became the site for the most intense scholarly and popular interest, this angelic form, from among the whole heavenly host, having been chosen to deliver the message of Incarnation and redemption. It was known that words were used, for these were present in the account given in the gospels. However, portraying an angelic voice at such a critical moment was not without difficulties and behind every literary or artistic representation of this moment, lies an awareness of the implications of angelic voice for human history.

## NOTES

1. *The Vulgate Bible: The New Testament, Douay-Rheims Translation*, ed. by Angela M. Kinney (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 294–95.
2. For the history of angelology in this period, see David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
3. See C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 64.
4. See Charles Burnett, 'Sound and Its Perception in the Middle Ages', in *The Second Sense: Studies in Hearing and Musical Judgement from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Charles Burnett, Michael Fend, and Penelope Gouk (London: Warburg Institute, 1991), 52–54.
5. John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De proprietatibus rerum*, ed. by M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II. 18. 81.
6. Trevisa, *Properties*, II. 18. 84.
7. For the importance of the senses in knowledge of God for the early Church, see G. Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 12–16.

8. See Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 46–47.
9. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. and trans. by Thomas R. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3a, 30, 3, 78–79.
10. Aquinas, *Summa*, 3a, 30, 3, 76–77.
11. For examples of the homunculus Christ in Annunciation scenes, see Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, trans. by Janet Seligman (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), pp. 99–105.
12. For a summary of the complex issues surrounding *N-Town*, see Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles: Textual, Contextual, and Critical Interpretations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 181–82. The Marian material is dealt with as a distinct entity by Peter Meredith, *The Mary Play from the N-Town Manuscript* (London: Longman, 1987).
13. Stephen Spector, ed., *The N-Town Play* (London: Early English Text Society, 1991) I, 11, 291–98. For discussion, see J. A. Tasioulas, ‘Heaven and Earth in Little Space: The Foetal Existence of Christ in Medieval Literature and Thought’, *Medium Aevum* 76, no. 1 (2007): 24–48.
14. Spector, *N-Town*, I, 11, 217–28.
15. For discussion of this, see Theo Kobusch, ‘The Language of Angels: On the Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity of Pure Spirits,’ in *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance*, ed. by Isabel Iribarren and Martin Lenz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 131–42.
16. For Augustine’s doctrine of the internal word, see Bernd Roling, ‘Angelic Language and Communication’, in *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy* ed. by Tobias Hoffmann (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 223–60.
17. Augustine, *De trinitate*, ed. by W. J. Mountain, CCL 50A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968) 483–84, 486–87. See the discussion in Roling, ‘Angelic Language’, 228–31.
18. See Roling, ‘Angelic Language’, 226.
19. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. and trans. by T. C. O’Brien (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Ia, 107, 1, 108–09.
20. See Roling, ‘Angelic Language’, 238–46.
21. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. and trans. by Kenelm Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), Ia, 51, 3, 40–41.
22. For Trevisa’s account of this in Middle English, see *Properties*, 84.
23. Aquinas, *Summa*, Ia, 51, 3, 42–43.
24. *Jacob’s Well: An English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man’s Conscience*, ed. by A. Brandeis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900), 146.
25. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, eds., *The Towneley Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10, 94, ll. 65–70.

26. Burnett, 'Sound', 57–58.  
 27. See Woolgar, *The Senses*, 3–7.

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## CHAPTER 4

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# Hearing, Seeing, Smelling, Tasting and Touching the Voice: Gender and Multimodal Visions in the *Lives* of Thomas of Cantimpré

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Modern psychology has defined a hallucination that incorporates more than one bodily sense (the visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile and/or olfactory) as a ‘fused hallucination’, or more recently, as a ‘simultaneous multi-modal hallucination’.<sup>1</sup> As Dudley et al. (2018) argue, ‘Historically, greater attention has been paid to single sensory modality experiences with a comparative neglect of hallucinations that occur across two or more sensory modalities (multi-modal hallucinations)’.<sup>2</sup> In an essay published in 2017, Corinne Saunders and Charles Fernyhough were the first to borrow the concept of ‘fused hallucination’ from modern psychology and apply the label ‘fused vision’ to describe Margery Kempe’s multisensory

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experiences of the divine.<sup>3</sup> This essay pursues the nature of the multimodal vision in medieval religious writings by examining such visions in the hagiographic narratives of the thirteenth-century Dominican theologian Thomas of Cantimpré (*ca.* 1200–*ca.* 1270). Thomas' saints' *Lives* not only offer a rich store of multisensory visions, but they are also valuable to scholars because Thomas is an identifiable author writing a body of hagiographic narratives that feature both genders and a range of religious occupations. Thomas wrote five hagiographic narratives about contemporary or near contemporary holy figures in Flanders and France: the *Lives* of the Augustinian Abbot John of Cantimpré (d. 1205/1209), the lay or semi-religious Christine the Astonishing (d. 1224), the Dominican tertiary Margaret of Ypres (d. 1237) and the Cistercian Lutgard of Aywières (d. 1246),<sup>4</sup> as well as a supplement to Jacques de Vitry's *Life* of the beguine Marie d'Oignies (d. 1213).<sup>5</sup> Thomas' work can offer potential comparisons of visions as experienced by both genders and different religious occupations and/or status.

Based on a number of studies that came out in the 1980s and 1990s, it is often asserted that medieval women's spirituality was rooted in the body and that women had a special connection to the divine through Christ's humanity. Thus, while men could seek a mystical connection to the divine through intellectual study, women more often connected mystically through their flesh and their practice of affective piety.<sup>6</sup> However, Barbara Zimbalist's recent essay, 'Christ, Creature, and Reader: Verbal Devotion in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', challenges this commonly accepted view; using the example of Margery Kempe, Zimbalist argues that scholars have devoted too much attention to women's bodily connection to the divine, and to women's 'affective corporeality', which has caused them to overlook women's exemplary speaking roles.<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the *Lives* of Thomas of Cantimpré, previous to the publication of Zimbalist's essay it seemed safe to assume that not only would the women in his hagiographic narratives experience more visions than men would, but that the women would also experience the majority of (if not all of) the multimodal visions because of medieval women's connection to the physical senses.<sup>8</sup> In mapping out the visions in the *Lives*, however, this assumption proves not to be true. John of Cantimpré, as well as other men who appear in the *Lives*, experiences unimodal visions as well as multimodal visions that combine a number of senses. In addition, both

men and women receive the majority of the visions for similar reasons—for consolation, for confirmation of blessedness and for receiving and imparting wisdom to others.

Although the specific details of the visions can suggest gendered experiences, the visions overall not so much assert women's affective, corporeal piety and their special relationship to the Lord's body as they assert women's roles as exemplary speakers and translators of the Divine Word, something that Zimbalist has also recently argued in her forthcoming book, *Translating Christ in the Middle Ages*.<sup>9</sup> Whereas Zimbalist makes this argument for Lutgard and Marie, it can be extended to the other *Lives* of Thomas as well; for Thomas, visions allow both male and female recipients to receive divine messages and authorise their speakers to translate those messages to a community of listeners.

Before discussing the results in detail, a fundamental challenge in this study must be addressed: identifying which experiences can be clearly deemed visions. Of course, the word 'vision' is not ideal to describe a range of medieval mystical experiences, for it would suggest that the event is only being perceived through the eyes (either physical eyes or with the 'eyes of the mind').<sup>10</sup> Consider the following scenarios. A devil appears to a monk and taunts him, and the monk perceives the devil with his bodily senses. Is this a vision or rather a supernatural event in which the devil was believed to be physically present? Next, a bystander notices a statue of Mary inclining its head and smiling at a man who prays at its base. Is this a vision or a physical miracle involving the statue? Last but not least, a woman 'knows in her spirit' that the Christians have lost Jerusalem in battle occurring over two thousand miles away. Is this a vision or an example of divinely infused knowledge? Many of the experiences described in these saints' lives may give one pause when trying to classify them as visions or as other kinds of miraculous experiences. A number of scholars have attempted to define the medieval vision, and these definitions are employed in this essay—although even with a firm definition, not all events can be clearly labelled as visionary experience or not.

Medieval visions could be experienced by either the bodily senses (vision, audition, olfaction, taste and touch) or the spiritual senses, in which a sense perception is modified by a spiritual reference: 'ears of the heart', one's 'inward eye', etc.<sup>11</sup> According to Gwenfair Walters Adams, 'Visions could involve visits from saints, angels, ghosts, or demons' and

could also refer to auditory experiences, as well as visits to purgatory or heaven.<sup>12</sup> She defines medieval visions as follows:

Thus the term vision was used to describe visitations or apparitions, auditions, predictive and/or symbolic dreams, eucharistic sights, and glimpses of and journeys to the otherworld. What united all of these categories was that they were *stories of what were believed to be direct encounters with or communications from the supernatural world.*<sup>13</sup>

Using this broad definition of visions as ‘encounters with’ or ‘communications from the supernatural world’, the three examples given above (the devil, the statue of Mary and infused knowledge of the fall of Jerusalem) all would be classified as visions, even if the word ‘vision’ may not have been used by the original recipient or hagiographer who wrote down the experience. Thomas of Cantimpré, for example, appears to use the word *visio* in a more limited sense than Adams does. Thomas himself generally labels a ‘vision’ (*visio* in Latin) an experience that is either unimodal visual (*i.e.* purely visual) or multimodal, combining the visual and other senses. Thus, for Thomas, to label an event a vision would suggest the experience must have a *visual* component. However, Thomas also labels one of Lutgard’s experiences as a ‘prophetic vision’, which would indicate that for him prophecies could also be a kind of vision. Thomas’ reluctance to label most experiences as visions, except for those that are fully or partially received by the eyes (and once, a prophecy), is significant because it challenges Adams’ definition of vision as referring to a wide variety of sense perceptions. However, Thomas does not use the term consistently; he may label one event a *visio* but not use the label for an almost identical circumstance. For example, he tends to use *visio* more often when people other than the subjects of the *Lives* are experiencing the event. Perhaps because the others observing are more often male than female (particularly in John’s *Life*), Thomas actually credits more men with *visiones* than women. Or, perhaps more men claimed to have had visions when Thomas spoke with them, and therefore, their word choice is included in the narratives. Moreover, Thomas may be using the term *visio* when people other than the subject of the hagiographical narrative have witnessed the miraculous event because he is lending authority to their experiences by calling them visions.



## THE VISIONS

Overall, when using the definition suggested by Adams, visions in the four *Lives* and the *Supplement* number approximately 140, although this does not include all the passing references to prophetic knowledge in the lives; those references to prophecy in which the mode of delivery (in sleep, through a divine voice, etc.) is not mentioned are not counted in this study as a vision.<sup>14</sup> The *Life* of Lutgard contains about as many visions as the other four texts combined. Lutgard's *Life* details approximately 70 visions (more if all references to prophetic knowledge were included), Margaret of Ypres' approximately 25, John of Cantimpré's *Life* and Marie de Oignies' *Supplement* approximately 20 each, and Christine five or so (one of which was added after her death, not by Thomas); if references to Christine's prophecies were included, the number would rise higher as well. Even working with Adams' general definition, it is difficult to define exactly how many visions there are in each narrative, as sometimes single events are comprised of two separate visions, one right after the other (these are called 'serial visions' in modern psychology);<sup>15</sup> on other occasions, it is not always clear if an experience can be classified as a vision or simply a striking metaphor. For example, when a visiting abbot tries to kiss the reluctant Lutgard, Thomas writes, 'The most courteous Jesus, however, placed the hand of his mercy between them so that she did not feel the taint of even the first carnal stirring in the man's kiss' (235).<sup>16</sup> One could imagine this scene in two ways, with Lutgard perceiving bodily or spiritually that Jesus stepped in to block the kiss with his hand (which would suggest a vision), or with Thomas invoking the language of the body and senses as a way to express the assertion that Jesus' love protected Lutgard from feeling any sin invoked by the kiss. Either way, vision or not, the result of this event is a *lack* of tactile experience that might have sparked lust and/or shame.

Of the approximately 140 visions recorded in the *Lives*, two women, Lutgard and Margaret, are the recipients of the majority. Other people receive almost half of the visions in Marie's *Supplement*, and John personally receives only two of the *circa* 20 visions described in his *Life*, with other religious men and women experiencing the majority of the visions. As Rachel J. D. Smith explains in her recently published study, John's *Life* is different from Thomas' other *Lives* because rather than focusing on John's biography, it contains narratives of other people who are inspired

by John's exemplary preaching.<sup>17</sup> In his *Life* of Christine, Christine experiences four of the five visions herself, and the fifth is received by a priest. Although Christine's *Life* records the fewest visions of the group, her initial vision is a catalyst for the rest of the narrative—after her initial death Christine has a vision of purgatory and heaven in which the Lord gives her the choice to return to earthly life to save others from purgatory. She chooses to return to earth, and this vision propels her spiritual practices throughout the rest of the narrative, as she repeatedly attempts to create purgatory on earth (she willingly throws herself into ovens, tortures herself with pincers, etc.) in order to save others.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the sheer number of visions in each of Thomas' *Lives* is not always the best predictor of the importance of visions in the narratives, since Christine's vision of purgatory is arguably the most significant episode of her spiritual biography.

The overall numbers of visions in Thomas' writings are significant in that they support Barbara Newman's general assessment that visionary experience is more often associated with medieval women than men. As Newman argues, 'Saints' lives corroborate the perception of visions as a female specialty: later medieval hagiographers devoted more space to women's visions and ecstasies than to men's'.<sup>19</sup> Thomas' numbers can be broken down further by looking specifically at *who* is said to have experienced the visions within each *Life*. In John's *Life*, four visions are experienced by women and the remainder by men; in Lutgard's *Life*, eight events are experienced by men. In Margaret's *Life*, men receive at least three of the visions, and as previously stated, one vision in Christine's *Life* is witnessed by a monastic priest. In Marie's *Supplement*, men receive seven visions. Thus, even though women in Thomas' *Lives* receive more visions than men, male witnessing and receiving of visions is still an important aspect within the women's narratives. For example, after her death, Margaret appears in a vision to a male spiritual friend 'with a transparent, crystalline body and a rosy colour in her breast' (205),<sup>20</sup> which affirms Margaret's exemplary blessedness as well as her spiritual fulfilment in being joined with Christ in heaven.

However, even though women in these *Lives* do receive more visions than John (Christine excepted), both men and women receive unimodal (single sense) and multimodal visions for similar reasons. Among the visions, unimodal visual experiences outnumber unimodal auditory experiences in all the *Lives*. Purely visual visions occur for a number of reasons and call attention to exemplary strengths of the subjects: in John's *Life*,

for example, a canon who has recently joined the order and is assisting John at Mass sees Pope Gregory standing by John's side after John reads the Gospel. The pope remains silently by John's side for the duration of the Mass. As Smith suggests, John was exemplary for his preaching and his inspiration of others through his words;<sup>21</sup> thus, this vision affirms the power of his speech as he reads the Gospel and celebrates the Mass. Similarly, a unimodal visual experience in the *Life* of Christine calls attention to one of her exceptional gifts—the gift of prophecy. Christine has a vision at the time of a battle ‘between the duke of Brabant and his enemies’ and cries out, ‘I see the air full of swords and blood!’ (143).<sup>22</sup> Because Christine is ‘in the world’ and on the periphery of a religious order, and because she engages in such extreme physical torture, she appears to have fewer visions than the other hagiographic subjects of Thomas: her spiritual practice is not to seek communion with Mary, Christ, or the saints, or to preach, but rather to act out purgatory on earth and lead through physical example. In this way, one could say that Thomas' visions do not so much suggest gender difference as differences between those who are within a religious order and those who are without. However, even Christine claims a certain verbal authority in the world through her gift of prophecy.

Moreover, the unimodal visual experience can serve to assert a woman's verbal and/or preaching authority within the order; Margaret's *Life* draws to a close with the account of how, after her death, a Dominican friar ‘rose to preach to the people’ when ‘Margaret was plainly seen standing before him in the hall with an open book, as if to show the preacher what he should say. After the friar had preached, she seemed to close the book and suddenly disappear, penetrating into the heights of heaven’ (205–6).<sup>23</sup> In this example, Margaret does not preach directly to the audience, but rather inspires another preacher to be more effective by showing him what to say, and hence an audience who sees her as an exemplary speaker and interpreter of scripture.<sup>24</sup>

The majority of Thomas' *Lives* feature far fewer purely auditory experiences (or unimodal auditory experiences) than visual ones. For Lutgard, however, the ratio of purely visual events to auditory events is much closer. Lutgard receives several of her unimodal auditory revelations from the Lord, and she also prays for many souls and is answered by the Lord. The auditory nature of her miracles, therefore, owes much to her important role as an intercessor for others.<sup>25</sup> Purely visual experiences in her life feature visits from the dead, saints and the Virgin Mary: Lutgard is

even said to be visited almost daily by the ‘Mother of Christ, the apostle, or other special saints, not counting continual visits from angels’ for a total of five years (269),<sup>26</sup> which would indicate a repeated emphasis on the visual. If sound and/or speech was present, this is not indicated by Thomas. Of John a similar statement is made: Thomas records that ‘his inner eyes never turned away from contemplating a spiritual vision, no matter how his outer eyes were occupied’ (108).<sup>27</sup> This would suggest that the visual is privileged in many of these accounts. However, ‘inner eye’ in this sense may indicate perceiving an internalised image, or it may serve as a metaphor for appreciating an internal idea or infused knowledge that extends beyond the visual. Note too that it is unclear how a number of ‘visionary’ experiences (including prophecies received ‘in the spirit’) are received—they may be auditory experiences or they may not be, for Thomas does not define them. The lack of attention to how they are received indicates Thomas’ emphasis on the message of the vision rather than the particular sensory mode; Thomas is more interested in what is revealed about the nature of the vision’s recipient and the *Life’s* subject. In the above examples, Thomas is asserting that both Lutgard and John were especially blessed and fully embraced their roles as vision-receivers and interpreters.

Frequently in Thomas’ hagiographic narratives another person other than the *Life’s* subject receives the unimodal visual experience, which often serves to confirm the subject’s blessedness, as well as the spiritual state of the recipient. For instance, Thomas describes how, when Lutgard and other nuns were being consecrated, a ‘holy and simple man who was standing nearby saw the bishop quite clearly place a huge golden crown on Lutgard’s head’.<sup>28</sup> The man, who thought the event had been witnessed by everyone present, then asked the assisting priest why the bishop had honoured Lutgard this way. The priest ‘jeered’, but there was another witness to the crowning, a nun who had also been consecrated that day (232).<sup>29</sup> In this narrative, not only is Lutgard’s blessedness affirmed, but also the holy man and the newly consecrated nun (but not the jeering priest) are proved worthy to receive the same vision. At another point, Thomas relates how ‘one day when she was chanting vespers in choir, a nun standing on the opposite side of the choir saw with her bodily eyes a flame of material light rising from Lutgard’s mouth’ and almost fainted (253).<sup>30</sup> The flame emphasises Lutgard’s burning spiritual love and her divinely inspired singing, while also emphasising the other nun’s ability to recognise Lutgard’s blessedness. Moreover, as

Zimbalist argues, the visions in Thomas' narrative emphasise Lutgard's exemplary speaking role, as she translates divine words and wisdom into speech.<sup>31</sup> The tongue of fire emitting from her mouth speaks directly to her reputation as an inspired speaker and translator of the divine word.<sup>32</sup>

This same pattern of others witnessing unimodal visual experience also occurs in the other *Lives*. This suggests that Thomas was either more likely to record a vision received by another person if it was purely visual, or that unimodal visual experiences were the ones that were remembered or deemed worthy to be related to Thomas when he interviewed others during his narratives' composition process. Barbara Zimbalist and others have emphasised Thomas' collaborative process of authorship, in which he drew from written sources as well as from interviews and narratives of community members close to the subject.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the unimodal visual vision serves as strong evidence of the subject's blessedness because the figures featured are easily identifiable visually, perhaps more easily identifiable than if the experiences were unimodal auditory in nature and the recipients relied only upon identifying voices.

Two *Lives*, those of Margaret and Lutgard, also include unimodal tactile, gustatory or olfactory 'visionary' experiences, but these are quite rare and again serve to emphasise the subjects' unusual blessedness. For example, Margaret's *Life* opens with the young Margaret's first visionary experience, of smelling 'a wonderful odour' when she witnesses a community of nuns receiving the sacrament (165). Lutgard's *Life* records how her hands appeared to drip oil (231).<sup>34</sup> No other person in the *Lives* receives these singular sense visions of smell, taste or touch.<sup>35</sup> Although these two examples are experienced by women, the small sample size in this study makes it difficult to assert that they are particularly gendered experiences suggesting the association of women's visionary experiences with corporality, especially as before John of Cantimpré's death, he smells sweet odours as well; sweet odours, of course, are often reported as surrounding the bodies of saints after death.<sup>36</sup> Rather, the overall emphasis on the visual and auditory experiences in Thomas' *Lives* reflects the general hierarchy of senses as articulated in the Middle Ages; sight and hearing were considered the most important senses, and smell, taste and touch 'lower' senses.<sup>37</sup>

## SIMULTANEOUS MULTIMODAL VISIONS: TWO MODALITIES

While unimodal visual visions occur with some frequency in the *Lives*, by far the most common visionary experiences described are combined visual and auditory experiences.<sup>38</sup> Of the total 140 or so visions described in the *Lives*, over one-third are simultaneous multimodal verbal and auditory experiences. Here again it is difficult to discern gendered difference in the frequency of the multimodal vision. John's *Life* includes six such visions, and the majority of visions described in Christine's *Life* are visual and auditory in nature, with the visual element taking precedence. Lutgard experiences about 30 combined visual and auditory experiences (almost double the number of unimodal visual events she receives). Marie d'Oignies experiences one more combined auditory and visual event than unimodal visual. Only Margaret's *Life* describes fewer multimodal visual and auditory visions (six) than purely visual events (eight). The predominance of the combined visual and auditory experience can often be explained by the need for the holy figure who appears to explain something significant to the recipient so that he or she can translate it to others. For example, after Christine's death, nuns witnessed 'one who seemed like an aged woman dressed in white' knocking at their door; the woman asked to speak to the monastic priest and told him that she was 'sent by divine revelation' to tell them that Christine's body needed to be translated to a better location (156).<sup>39</sup> In this case, the auditory and the visual must work hand in hand for the vision's full meaning to be expressed.

Of course, the location and nature of visions are at times gendered because of the different daily spheres and activities of men and women, but visions are often granted for the same reason: as an answer to prayer. For example, when Margaret of Ypres' sister was struggling in childbirth, the Virgin Mary appeared to the praying Margaret to deliver a most important message: 'Go and tell your sister, "You will be healed at once, and the baby will be born safe and sound"'. Margaret did as she was told, and her sister safely delivered a baby boy (188).<sup>40</sup> In this multimodal visual and auditory vision, the emphasis of the vision is on the efficacy of Margaret's prayer, as well as her ability to receive and share the Virgin's message. Similarly, in John's *Life* a vision shows the efficacy of prayer. As Thomas explains, one night while a canon named Julian was walking to the church for service, the devil appeared and 'with a horrible voice' asked him, 'Where are you going? What are you seeking? Why do you labour in

vain? You cannot be saved!’ Terribly frightened, the canon then prays to the Lord and receives a purely visual sign as an answer:

He had scarcely finished these words when suddenly, raising his eyes above, he saw the sky open up like a wheel, and his surroundings sparkled like sunlight. The vision remained without a change for the space of an hour, and by giving such proof of the divine condescensions, it comforted the man. (72)<sup>41</sup>

In the accounts of both Margaret and Julian, the divine vision comes as a comfort in answer to a prayer. Several visions in John’s *Life* feature the devil, who appears more frequently here than in other *Lives*; this may be because many of the visions in the abbot’s *Life* are experienced by wayward men and women who must be inspired or saved by John’s intercessory prayers and preaching.

Thomas does include in his narratives several multimodal visions that combine the visual with a sense other than the auditory. These visions offer remarkably intimate experiences that heighten emotional response and can be received by both men and women. A striking example of this appears in the *Life* of John, in which a widow named Katherine is said to have been tormented by the devil ‘in the form of a little dog’. This dog, which could not be removed by holy water or other means, lay ‘on her bed at night’ and sat ‘in her lap by day’ (103–4).<sup>42</sup> In this account, only Katherine can see the dog, and by implication, only she can feel it sit on her lap; even with John’s aid, the horrified widow cannot be saved from the dog because she has not truly repented of all her sins and must suffer the repeated physical contact of the devil. In addition, John’s *Life* records another remarkable and physically disturbing multimodal visual and tactile experience. Thomas writes of a dream vision experienced by a religious named Matthew, who was chosen as the abbot to succeed John: ‘He dreamed that a shaggy bed full of stinging goads had been prepared for him, and he was laid in it trembling and horribly afraid. Nor did the outcome seem far from the vision after he was entangled in pastoral responsibilities’ (113).<sup>43</sup> Although the features of the visions are quite different (a lap dog indicating the more domestic, ‘inside life’ of the widow; a bed of goads indicating the abbot’s difficult pastoral responsibilities), in both cases the multimodal tactile and visual experience emphasises significant challenges faced by the recipients.

## MULTIMODAL VISIONS: THREE OR MORE MODALITIES

Thomas' saints' *Lives* also contain several striking accounts of multimodal visions that feature three or more senses experienced simultaneously. These multimodal visions offer a particularly profound and intimate experience of the divine and are also received by both men and women. Christine has no multimodal visions that feature three or four senses, unless we imagine that her original vision of purgatory and heaven involved more than sight and sound. Instead, Christine's self-inflicted physical tortures (like throwing herself into a burning oven) serve to fulfil her desire to experience the sensory punishments of Purgatory. John's *Life* recounts two multimodal visions featuring three or more senses; Margaret's and Lutgard's *Lives*, three each; and the *Supplement* to Marie d'Oignies' *Life*, one. The most common multimodal vision of this group features the visual, auditory and tactile senses; the next most common fuses vision, hearing and taste. As Richard Newhauser argues, 'mystical visions also imply multisensory encounters with the divinity', and require 'elasticity in understanding the relationship between the senses'.<sup>44</sup> Many of the visions Thomas describes can be explained through the metaphorical language of scripture and the mingling of inner and outer senses. For example, Thomas writes of Lutgard, 'for the more ardently she sought him, the more tightly she holds him' (270)<sup>45</sup>; *holding* implies not only a physical holding but also a 'holding in heart' and a 'holding in spirit'.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Thomas writes that 'Whenever she was burdened with by any disquiet', Lutgard stood before the image of Christ until she fainted, 'then completely rapt in spirit, she would see Christ with the bloody wound in his side and, pressing the mouth of her heart against it, she would suck such sweetness that nothing at all could distress her' (229).<sup>47</sup> Thus, Lutgard's spiritual senses are invoked as her heart sucks Christ's sweetness with her 'mouth'; as Christ's wound in his side is often pictured as a wound directly to his heart, Lutgard's heart is drinking directly from Christ's heart. At another point in her narrative, Lutgard states that her heart is filled with such sweetness that she need not eat (254), indicating that her spiritual sensory satisfaction fulfils bodily need.

This idea of filling up with Christ's sweetness is crucial to Lutgard's *Life*, particularly in relation to her role as an inspired speaker and translator of the Lord's wisdom. In a multimodal vision combining the visual, tactile and gustatory, Lutgard relates to Thomas how John the Evangelist appeared to her in the form of an eagle:



[...] she had to wait until the Lord tempered the glory of so great a spectacle to the capacity of her weak sight [...]. When the mode of the vision had been moderated, she saw in contemplation that the eagle was placing its beak in her mouth and filling her soul with flashes of such ineffable light that no secrets of divinity lay hidden from her [...]. For the more abundantly she drank from the torrent of pleasure in the house of God, the more magnificently the eagle found the capacity of her heart increased by her desire. (230)<sup>48</sup>

Thomas then elaborates on the sweetness of Lutgard's words and the illumination of her soul that occurred after the vision. At another point in the *Life*, when commanded to do penance for sinners, Lutgard also sucks sweetness directly from Christ. When she hurries to church during matins, the crucified Christ, 'all bloody and nailed to the Cross', meets her at the door. 'Lowering his arm which was attached to the Cross, he embraced her who was standing opposite and pressed her mouth against the wound in his right side. There she drank in so much sweetness that, from that time forward, she was always stronger and quicker in the service of God' (228).<sup>49</sup> The effect of that vision was such that even her own saliva tasted like honey long afterwards: 'Those to whom she revealed this event have reported and certified that then for a long time afterwards the saliva in her mouth tasted mellower than the sweetest honey' (228).<sup>50</sup> The description invokes the Song of Songs 4:11 ('Thy lips, O my bride, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue') (229), suggesting that the biblical verse inspired this 'elastic' multimodal vision.

But this *Life* is not the only one that requires elasticity in understanding the mingling of both inner and outer senses. Margaret also receives consolation from the Lord through consuming his body in a multimodal vision featuring four senses. When Margaret is distressed because her spiritual father is not present, the Lord appears to her, promising 'you will receive consolation from your Beloved'. Then a marvellous event occurs with Margaret tasting the Eucharist: 'The Lord gave her a share in his own body under the species of bread, and afterward she revealed to her spiritual father this certain proof: what she received outwardly in her mouth, she chewed with her teeth and tasted for as long as its material form remained' (186). The result of this multimodal vision is that her outer, bodily senses are affected: 'Afterwards she could not bear to see or hear anything trivial or secular' (186).<sup>51</sup> This kind of Eucharistic experience could also be encouraged by devotional practice.

As Béatrice Caseau has argued, ‘seeing and hearing were clearly not the only senses called for during the Christian liturgy and around the cult of saints. Although they were less often emphasized, touch, smell, and taste also played an important role in connecting the faithful to spiritual realities’.<sup>52</sup>

Given the similarity of Lutgard’s and Margaret’s experiences, it does appear as if such Eucharistic devotion and attachment to drinking Christ’s blood and consuming his body could be gendered feminine. John’s *Life*, however, also includes Eucharistic visions featuring Christ’s blood, although they focus on the visual rather than the gustatory. For example, Thomas writes about an elderly priest who ‘could not believe in the angelic ministry said to be present at the celebration of mass’. While he was about to celebrate Mass one day, ‘with his bodily eyes he saw such a great host of angels—above, below, before, and beside him—that no human reckoning could count them’. He fell down in terror and suddenly he heard a loud crack as the chalice spilled on the altar, giving way as it ‘could not bear the force of Christ’s blood’. Christ’s blood then dripped down a path into the crypt onto the lower altar (64).<sup>53</sup> Perhaps what is gendered feminine in the visions, therefore, is not the focus on Christ’s blood but rather the focus on consuming it, and the ‘elasticity’ with which we must understand sensorial experience. To understand the old priest’s experience at Mass requires little elasticity by contrast to Lutgard’s and Margaret’s Eucharistic feasting with its intermingling of the senses. As Hugh of St Victor, quoting from St Augustine of Hippo, explained, ‘The Body of Christ is eaten in the sacrament in order that we might be incorporated into Him [...]. Augustine heard a voice from heaven [...] “Grow that you might feed on me, not that you might turn me into you, like the food of the body, but that you might be changed into me”’.<sup>54</sup> Both Lutgard and Margaret are focused on consuming Christ’s blood and body as a way to unite with him, whereas the Eucharistic miracles in John’s *Life* focus on the power of seeing the host to effect change in participants, as in the example of a former heretic named Walter who, after being prayed for by John, saw the new-born Christ in the hands of the priest at Mass (66).<sup>55</sup>

Multimodal visions featuring the tactile can also deliver intense experiences of forgiveness and consolation by the Lord and Virgin Mary. For example, one day when Lutgard was weeping intensely over sinners, the Lord appeared. He then reached out to comfort the holy woman with his touch: ‘he wiped the tears from her face with his own hand, which he had

stretched out on the cross for sinners, saying, “I wish you to be consoled in these lamentations for my sinners, nor will I allow you any longer to weary yourself in tears [...]” (269).<sup>56</sup> Similarly, when Margaret is feeling particularly distressed about her sins for three days and nights, the Virgin Mary heals the woman’s body with her divine touch:

the most blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her and, as it seemed to her in spirit, the venerable Lady placed a hand on Margaret’s breast and asked if this was the place of the sorrow and evil by which she was burdened [...]. Without delay the Blessed Mother approached at once, drawing near as if to a fellow sufferer, and drew her hand through her entire heart and breast, saying these exact words [...] “I heal you in soul and body.” (172–3)<sup>57</sup>

In both cases, the holy figure physically removes the pain and cheers the recipient, alleviating their sorrow and guilt and leaving the women with a deep sense of peace. The visual, auditory and tactile work together to create a more intimate feeling of divine love for the recipient.

For men, the fused visual, auditory and tactile experience could also give assurance of a loved one’s escape from Purgatory and the efficacy of a blessed person’s intercessory prayers. As Thomas describes in the opening chapter of Book II, after the death of John of Cantimpré’s mother, the monk Vacellus was praying before the altar when an eagle ‘lifted his spirit as if on its shoulders to a broad, beautiful region’, where St Benedict meets him and shows Vacellus ‘the many mansions Christ had prepared for his faithful there in accord with their merits’. Hearing ‘the voice of a woman giving thanks on high’, the monk inquires of St. Benedict who she is, to which Benedict responds, ‘This is the mother of Dom John of Cantimpré, who was recently delivered from purgatorial fire by the prayers of her devoted son’. The eagle then returns Vacellus to earth (79).<sup>58</sup> Whereas the eagle (St John the Evangelist) in Lutgard’s vision feeds her wisdom from its beak, in Vacellus’ vision the eagle carries the monk off to meet St Benedict so that he can bear witness to John’s mother having reached heaven. Rather than focusing on the many sights and wonders that the monk experiences while on his journey (indeed, there is no description of Christ’s ‘many mansions’), Thomas emphasises the point of this vision: the power of John’s prayers.

There is also one example in the *Lives* of a man receiving a multi-modal vision as a way to try to dissuade him from doing something, or to convince him to take another course of action. When Jacques de

Vitry was returning to Rome to see the new pope, all in the community surrounding Marie worried that Jacques would never return to France. Jacques then had a dream in which Marie tried to dissuade him from returning to Rome; in the dream she appeared as a sick person, and he felt as if he was anointing her with oil on her deathbed. She, however, then rebuked him, telling him, ‘Since your book of rites does not contain my kind of anointing, you certainly can’t anoint me. But anoint our prior and the brothers since, like me, they are gravely weakened by your departure’ (160).<sup>59</sup> Jacques decided to ignore the vision as well as another vision related to him by a prior in which Marie appeared, leading Thomas to devote the following chapters to a complaint longing for Jacques’ return. Thomas concludes the *Supplement* with a discussion of the meaning of two visions—one that Jacques has of Gregory handing him two beautiful but dead birds, and the other a vision that Marie has of Jacques crowned by St Lambert, the meaning of which Thomas interprets as a call back to the diocese of Liège. Hugh Feiss argues that these passages suggest Thomas is implying that Marie ‘should be a model for Jacques de Vitry’, who ‘had felt the spiritual power of this handmaid of Christ who had left all to lead the *vita apostolica*. Jacques had emulated Marie by leaving Paris and joining the community at Oignies. But now he had become a cardinal at Rome; he was risking betrayal of the ideals he had espoused with Marie’.<sup>60</sup> However, as Walter Simons observes, despite the efforts of Marie, Thomas and others, Jacques remained in Rome as a member of the Curia, ‘and kept abreast of what happened to the *mulieres religiosae* only through correspondence with friends’.<sup>61</sup> One might be tempted to interpret the inability of these visions to persuade Jacques to return as an exemplary gendered experience (*i.e.* only a man such as Jacques can ignore visions); as I argued earlier with regard to Christine the Astonishing, however, it seems more likely to be an example of how religious occupation can influence the response to visions (*i.e.* only a member of the Roman Curia such as Jacques can disregard such visions).

Indeed, the most developed description of an efficacious multimodal vision involving four senses is experienced by the abbot John. This remarkable vision attests to his blessedness and also gives him the will and strength to carry on preaching for a little while longer. Not long before his death, John has a fully developed vision complete with seeing, hearing, touch and smell; this vision is all the more powerful to read because it is the only specific vision experienced by John in the *Life* (as we saw

before, the other reference is to a generic vision of his ‘inner eye’ contemplating visions). Thomas relates John’s account of lying in bed near death when he saw the Virgin Mary and Apostle Andrew appear: ‘Behold! our venerable patroness, the Virgin Mary, stood before me with a man of marvellous beauty’. Mary speaks, asking John how he is: ‘Looking on my sickness with her merciful eyes, she asked how or where I felt pain’. Mary touches John to heal him: ‘As soon as I had indicated the place, she stretched forth a vial that she carried in her hands, full of holy medicine, and drew it from side to side across my belly. At her touch came healing [...]’. Then he experienced a wondrous smell: ‘and the blessed Martin arrived with a thurible, vested as a bishop. Circling my bed, he censed it with an odour like balsam and cinnamon’ (114–15).<sup>62</sup> Thomas’ description of John’s remarkable deathbed experience would suggest that the multimodal vision is not the domain of women only. The most important vision of John’s text is this particular multimodal vision and it serves as a strong sign of his holiness; the vision also revives him sufficiently to continue on for a little while in his exemplary preaching role. John (via Thomas) moves the reader through his sensory experiences step by step (first the visual, then the auditory, then the tactile and finally the olfactory), thereby ensuring that readers would not neglect to appreciate the vision’s fused nature. This vision is doubly important because his narrative is really focused on his efficacy as a preacher, not on his miracles or other exemplary behaviour, so this deathbed miracle is crucial to building his hagiographic case.

In conclusion, this essay has argued that in terms of unimodal visionary experiences in these *Lives*, those involving the sense of vision were more common than auditions, but on the whole multimodal experiences were reported and recorded far more frequently. These multimodal visions were usually a combination of the visual and auditory but in some circumstances, tactile, gustatory or olfactory sensations were also combined. Unimodal visual experiences were often witnessed by other community members who observed something miraculous occurring to the hagiographical subject. That men and women, particularly the hagiographical subjects of these *Lives*, receive multimodal visions suggests that men and women were both expected and encouraged to have multisensory experiences of the divine that supported and promoted their exemplary speech. Both men and women were corporeally inclined in their visionary experiences, and these sensorial experiences of the divine were promoted as the basis of their exemplary speech. Although Thomas does focus on

how Lutgard and Margaret consume Christ's body and blood in their visions, John's *Life* also contains several Eucharistic miracles that involve either priests celebrating Mass or worshippers observing the celebration. In these cases, Lutgard and Margaret may present examples of a particularly feminised affective piety, or their examples may be the result of the women's roles as recipients or observers of the Eucharist versus celebrators of the Mass. Experiences of corporeal connection to the divine in Thomas' *Lives* may be gendered in some ways—a woman receiving assurance that her sister will not die while giving birth, a man being called back from Rome to administer last unction—but they all serve to assert the exemplary speech of the hagiographical subject.

## NOTES

1. R. E. Hoffman and M. Varanko, "‘Seeing Voices’: Fused Visual/Auditory Verbal Hallucinations Reported by Three Persons with Schizophrenia-Spectrum Disorder", *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 114, no. 4 (2006): 290–92.
2. R. Dudley, C. Aynsworth, R. Cheetham, S. McCarthy-Jones, and D. Collerton, 'Prevalence and Characteristics of Multi-Modal Hallucinations in People with Psychosis Who Experience Visual hallucinations', *Psychiatry Research* 269 (2018): 25–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2018.08.032>. See also S. McCarthy-Jones, D. Smailes, A. Corvin, M. Gill, D. W. Morris, et al., 'Occurrence and Co-occurrence of Hallucinations by Modality in Schizophrenia-Spectrum Disorders', *Psychiatry Research* 252 (2017): 154–60; Anastasia Lim, Hans W. Hoek, Mathijs L. Dean, Jan Dirk Blom, et al., 'Prevalence and Classification of Hallucinations in Multiple Sensory Modalities in Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders', *Schizophrenia Research* 176, no. 2–3 (2016): 493–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.schres.2016.06.010>.
3. Corinne Saunders and Charles Fernyhough, 'Reading Margery Kempe's Inner Voices', *postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (2017): 209–17.
4. For the English translation of these lives, see *Thomas of Cantimpré: The Collected Saints' Lives: Abbot John of Cantimpré, Christina the Astonishing, Margaret of Ypres, and Lugard of Aywières*, ed. by Barbara Newman, trans. by Margot H. King and Barbara Newman (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), and *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation*, ed. by Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006). For the Latin sources of the *Lives*, see Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Christinae mirabilis*, ed. by J. Pinius, in *Acta sanctorum*, ed. by J. Bolland, et al.,

- 3rd edn (Paris: Palmé, 1863–1925), 24 July, XXXII, 637–60; Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by G. Henschen, in *AASS*, 16 June, XXIV, 187–209; Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis*, Supplementum, ed. by A. Raysse, in *AASS*, 23 June, XXV, 572–81; Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by G. Meersseman, in ‘Les Frères Prêcheurs et le mouvement dévot in Flandres au XIIIe siècle’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 (1948): 106–30; Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, in ‘Une oeuvre inédite de Thomas de Cantimpré: La “Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis”’, ed. by Robert Godding, *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 76 (1981): 241–316.
5. For an overview of these *Lives* in addition to that found in the above editions, see Rachel J. D. Smith’s recent monograph study, *Excessive Saints: Gender, Narrative, and Theological Invention in Thomas of Cantimpré’s Mystical Hagiographies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).
  6. For discussion of the idea of women’s affinity for affective piety, see, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Daniel Bornstein, ‘Women and Religion in Medieval Italy’, *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Bornstein and Roberto Rusconi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8–10; Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2004); Rachel Fulton, *From Judgement to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), and more recently, Robert L. A. Clark, ‘Affective Piety and Devotional Presence’, in the chapter titled ‘Spiritual Exercises: The Making of Interior Faith’, *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. by John H. Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 271–88.
  7. Barbara Zimbalist, ‘Christ, Creature, and Reader: Verbal Devotion in *The Book of Margery Kempe*’, *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41, no.1 (2015): 1–23.
  8. Of course, when I originally approached this topic, I recognised there were exceptions to this theory of women identifying with the divine through the body rather than the intellect, but I assumed, having written previously about the *Lives* of Christine and her amazing physical torments, and of Lutgard, who voluntarily gives up a gift of inner knowledge of the Psalter for the love of Christ, that their visions would privilege the sensorial.
  9. Barbara Zimbalist, *Translating Christ in the Middle Ages*, forthcoming from the University of Notre Dame Press. I would like to express my

- gratitude to Dr Zimbalist for sharing her working chapter with me ahead of publication.
10. For bodily and spiritual senses, see Richard G. Newhauser, 'Introduction: The Sensual Middle Ages', in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard G. Newhauser (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 1–22.
  11. Paul L. Gavriluk and Sarah Coakley, eds., *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2014), 2.
  12. Gwenfair Walters Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England: Lay Spirituality and Sacred Glimpses of the Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Brill, 2007), 2 and 213. Augustine defined three kinds of visions: corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual. See Rosalynn Voaden, 'Mysticism and the Body', *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. by John H. Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 396–412.
  13. Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England*, 214. See also the definition of vision in Barbara Newman's *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005): 'An epiphanic vision can be defined as a spiritual or imaginative experience, often mysterious and unexpected, whose meaning can be teased out by meditation, theological reflection, and exegetical practices such as allegoresis [...]. The epiphanic vision is the mainstay of the sole medieval genre dominated by women—the visionary recital or book of revelations' (300).
  14. In this way, I am applying Adams' definition of the word 'vision' because the method of delivery (e.g. while sleeping or in a trance) is not defined.
  15. For the concept of serial visions, see Dudley et al., 'Prevalence and Characteristics', 25.
  16. '*Cumque ad Priorissam Lutgardem ventum esset, ut Abbati osculum daret, illa constanter renuit. Sed omnium in joco, manibus tenta, violentiamque passa, sustinuit. Sed summæ benignitatis Jesus misericordie suæ manum ita mediam posuit, ut nec primi motus contagium in viri osculo senserit*' (241C). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by G. Henschen, in *Acta sanctorum*, ed. by J. Bolland et al., 3rd edn (Paris: Palmé, 1863–1925), 16 June, XXIV, 187–209. All citations from the Latin *Acta Sanctorum* are from the online version and are cited by page and column number; note that the online version page numbers do not necessarily agree with the printed version.
  17. Rachel J. D. Smith, *Excessive Saints: Gender, Narrative, and Theological Invention in Thomas of Cantimpré's Mystical Hagiographies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 84.
  18. For the importance of Christine as an intercessor for those in purgatory, see, for example, Robert Sweetman, 'Christina of St. Trond's Preaching



- Apostolate: Thomas of Cantimpré's Hagiographical Method Revisited', in Margot H. King, ed., *On Pilgrimage: The Best of Vox Benedictina, 1984–1993* (Toronto: Peregrina Press, 1994), 415–23. More recently, Rachel Smith argues that Christina's 'return served three functions': the intercessory, the exemplary, and the 'self-sanctifying function' (*Excessive Saints*, 54).
19. Barbara Newman, 'The Visionary Texts and Visual Worlds of Religious Women', in *Crown and Veil: Female Monasticism from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Jeffrey E. Hamburger and Susan Marti, trans. by Dietlinde Hamburger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) 151–71, at 153.
  20. '*Non diu post mortem ipsius, quidam amicorum eius spiritualium eam cum diaphano, idest cristallino corpore et rubicundam in pectore vidit*' (129). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by G. Meersseman, 'Les Frères Prêcheurs et le mouvement dévot in Flandres au XIIIe siècle', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 (1948): 106–30.
  21. For a consideration of John as an exemplary preacher and speaker, see Smith, ch. 3, 'Gendering Particularity: A Comparison of *The Life of Christina the Astonishing* and *The Life of Abbot John of Cantimpré*', in *Excessive Saints*, 83–91.
  22. '*Quando illa miserabilis congressio facta est [anno Domini MCCXXII mense Octobri] inter duces Brabantia & ejus adversarios, ubi in loco, qui dicitur Steps tot centena hominum occisa sunt, ipsa Beata mulier eadem die clamabat quasi parturiens atque dicebat: Heu, heu! video aërem gladiis & sanguine plenum*' (655D). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Christinae mirabilis*, ed. by J. Pinius, in *Acta sanctorum*, ed. by J. Bolland et al., 3rd edn (Paris: Palmé, 1863–1925), 24 July, XXXII, 637–60.
  23. '*Cum quidam ex fratribus nostris in ordine predicatorum in populo predicaturus exsurgeret, visa est manifeste Margareta cum libro aperto stare in exedra coram eo, et quasi predicanti ostendere quod dicebat. Postquam vero predicaverat frater, librum claudere visa est, subitoque disprensens celorum ardua penetravit*' (130). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by Meersseman.
  24. Here I am borrowing an idea from Barbara Zimbalist, who argues that Thomas' *Lives* (particularly the visions) of Lutgard and Marie show them to be exemplary speakers. Barbara Zimbalist argues in her forthcoming book that Thomas' *Lives* 'demonstrate authorial collaboration'—between previous narratives and living witnesses—which depict the visionary subjects' speech as having exemplary spiritual authority.
  25. For more on Lutgard's role as intercessor, see Dyan Elliot, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200–1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 200–1.

26. ‘*Hinc anni quinque fluxerunt, quibus (ut ipsa mihi in magnis lacrymis dixit) quotidie fere ab ipsa matre Christi visitata fuit, sive ab Apostolis, vel ab aliis specialibus Sanctis, exceptis continuis visitationibus Angelorum*’ (252E). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
27. ‘*Et quidem dicitur ab his qui uirum optime cognouerunt, et uere sic credimus, quod interiores oculi eius, quamquam aliorum forinsecus occupatis, numquam a contemplatione spiritalis uisionis auersi erant*’ (304–5). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
28. ‘[...] *cuidam viro sancto & simplici, qui astabat, manifestissime visum est Episcopum coronam auream maximam capiti Lutgardis imponere, & eam præ aliis singulariter honorare*’ (240E–F). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
29. ‘*Quem presbyter, rei nescius, irrisit, dicens: Numquid oculos inversos habes, ut auream coronam dicas, quam lineam omnes vident. Siluit ergo vir beatus & risit, & in Lutgarde meritum singulare notavit. Sed & hinc testes duos veritas habuit, quoniam hoc idem quedam de consecratis Monialibus vidit. Mirandis plus miranda succedunt*’ (240F). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
30. ‘*Cum ergo die quadam in Vesperis cantaret in choro, Monialis quedam, que ab opposita parte in choro stabat, visibilibus oculis corporalis luminis, flammam de ore ejus vidit ascendere, & in sublimi aère penetrare*’ (247F–248A). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
31. Zimbalist, *Translating Christ* (forthcoming, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021).
32. Margaret also receives a vision that confirms her religious occupation and offers proofs of blessedness. After Margaret took the veil, she described to her spiritual father, ‘I saw [...] as if in a dream [...] I say that I saw my Lord Jesus Christ standing before me with three golden crowns and, placing one on my head, he said, “I confer this on you, daughter, for the vow of chastity you made to me”’ (170). ‘*Vidi, ait, quasi in sompniis, sed, ut certissime scio, evidentius tamen, vidi, inquam, lucidissime Dominum meum Iesum Christum, cum tribus michi aureis coronis astare et unam capiti meo imponens dixit: “Hanc tibi, filia, pro voto, quod michi fecisti, confero castitatis”*’ (120). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by Meersseman.
33. Thomas’ composition process has been the focus of much scholarly attention. His is a process that relied on direct conversation and interviews with those who personally knew and/or knew of the holy persons, as well as the use of earlier written sources when they were available. An early scholar to address his process is Simone Roisine, ‘La méthode hagiographique de Thomas de Cantimpré’, in *Miscellanea Historica in Honorem Alberti*

*de Meyer. Universitatis Catholicae in Oppido Lovaniensi Iam Annos XXV Professoris*, 2 Vols (Leuven: Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1946), 1: 546–57. Recently, Barbara Zimbalist emphasizes the idea of collaborative authorship in the *Lives*, as Thomas draws on direct conversation with the holy person or witnesses as well as written sources. For example, for his supplement to the *Life* of Marie d'Oignies, Thomas collaborated with the written *Life* by Jacques de Vitry (who had known Marie personally) and also collaborated with others in the Oignies community, who related their accounts to Thomas (Zimbalist, *Translating Christ*, no page number). Rachel Smith also elaborates on Thomas' composition process in her book *Excessive Saints*. Smith argues that in the *Life* of Christine, Thomas relies heavily on the authority generated by Jacques de Vitry's description of an unnamed holy woman (who is probably Christine) from the *Life* of Marie d'Oignies (53). For the *Life* of the Abbot John of Cantimpré, Smith asserts that Thomas also incorporated written material from an earlier hagiographical text, the *Vita Ioannis de Monte-Mirabili* (84).

34. See 'XVI *Quomodo videbatur ei quod manus suae oleum distillarent*'. Regarding this passage, Jutta Gisela Sperling argues in *Roman Charity: Queer Lactations in Early Modern Visual Culture* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2016) that 'milk, blood, the body of Christ' (and even oil) 'were interchangeable substances to be ingested' (322).
35. Christine's *Life* does report that she was nourished from oil that lactated from her breasts ('*Virginea enim ubera ejus clarissimi olei liquorem ceperunt effluere*' [254A]), but this is presented by Thomas as a miracle and not labeled a vision. I, however, include it as a 'vision' using Adams' definition.
36. For the odour of sanctity, see Andre Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age* (Rome: École Française du Rome, 1981), 500–1.
37. For the hierarchy of the senses, see, for example, Robert Jütte, *History of the Senses*, trans. by James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Richard G. Newhauser, *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages*; Annette Kern-Stähler, Beatrix Busse, and Wietse de Boer, eds., *The Five Senses in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
38. As Dudley et al. argue, combined visual-audio multimodal hallucinations are quite common among people experiencing hallucinations. See Dudley et al., 'Prevalence and Characteristics', 25.
39. '*Accidit autem post haec anno ab Incarnatione Domini MCCXLIX, ut die quadam summo mane ad portam mulier, ut videbatur, annosa corpore & habitu candidata pulsaret. Intromissa ergo, pro monacho & sacerdote quaesivit. Ad quem cum fuisset adducta, dixit illi: Missa sum ex revelatione divina, ut annuntiem vobis, quatinus corpus cujusdam sanctissimae femine,*

- Christinae nomine, sub negligentia positum releuetis a loco. Quod si feceritis, ipsius meritis & precibus gratiam locus iste consequetur & gloriam: si autem neglexeritis, offensam divini numinis incurretis*' (659F–660A). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Christinae mirabilis*, ed. by Pinius.
40. *'Oranti apparuit beatissima Virgo Maria dicens: "Vade et dic sorori tue: "Sanaberis in momento", et nascens infans, vitam incolumni consequetur" [...]' 'Nec temporis intersticiu[m] excessit verbum ancille Christi, et in momento, vivente puero, pariens liberantur'* (120). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by Meerssemann.
41. *'[...] nocte quadam, ut in infirmariam iacens et ad sonitum campanarum surgens, per claustrum medium iter ad ecclesiam haberet, et ecce inimicus humani generis diabolus, horribilitate uoce eunti obuiam factus, dixit: "Quo uadis: Quid queris: Quid laboras in uanum? Saluari non poteris!" Qua uoce uir nimirum turbatur immodice, ad matutinas tamen sic affectus progreditur. [Julian prays.] [...] Vix uerba compleuit, et ecce, sursum intentus oculis, celum in similitudinem rote patere uidet, et ad instar solaris lucis circa se choruscare iacentia. Sic per unius hore spacium uisio permansit immobilis, uirumque diuina dignatione probatum ad spem meliorem tanto rei indicio confortauit'* (271–72). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
42. *'Hanc diabolus permultis in specie modici caniculi diebus ac noctibus vexabat, nec ullo crucis signo uel aqua benedicta uel alicuius sanctificationis uirtute poterat amoueri quin semper, nocturnis horis in lecto cubantis, diurnis uero in sinu eius uel gremio male hospes insisteret. Inuisibilis erat omnibus: singularis eum mulier et sola uidebat'* (301). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
43. *'Et uidit idem uenerabilis Matheus, nocte precedenti qua subsequenti committenda erat, huiusmodi uisionem. Vidit enim sibi lectum undique irsutum stimulis preparari, atque in eodem se horrentem nimium formidantemque deponi. Nec ab re uisionis apparuit effectus, cum pastoralis cure implicatus est'* (308). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
44. Newhauser, 'Introduction', *A Cultural History of the Senses*, 5.
45. *'Quanto enim quis uisum ardentius, tanto strictius tenet: felix querens, sed felicior tenens'* (252E). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
46. As Newman points out, this passage draws on the Song of Songs 3.4 (Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Lives*, fn 226, p. 270).
47. *'Cum aliquo incommodo cordis aut corporis gravaretur, stabat ante imaginem Crucifixi: & cum diu fixis oculis imaginem inspexisset, clausis oculis & resolutis in terram membris, instar Danielis uiri desideriorum, super pedes suos stare non poterat; sed elanguens prorsus rapiebatur in spiritu, & uidebat Christum cum uulnere lateris cruentato; & exinde tantam*

*dulcedinem apposito cordis ore sugebat, ut in nullo posset penitus tribulari. Unde aliquando accidit, ut acutissima febre laborans, statim ubi die debito criticavit, de lecto surgens, sine omni difficultate, conventum & chorum ad cantandum intraret*' (240A–B). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.

48. Newman notes that this passage draws on Psalms 35.9 (Thomas of Cantimpré, *The Collected Lives*, fn 84, p. 230). 'Proinde ad recordationem illius acutissimæ visionis aquila, Joannis scilicet Euangeliste, qui fluenta Euangelii de ipso sacro Dominici pectoris fonte potavit; apparuit ei in spiritu aquila, tanto pennarum nitore refulgens, ut totus potuisset orbis illius claritatis radiis illustrari. Ad visionem ergo illius super id quod dici potest admiratione nimia stupefacta; præstolabatur ut Dominus, secundum capacitatem debilis aciei, tanti speculationis gloriam temperaret. Et factum est ita. Visionis ergo modum moderatius contemplata, vidit quod aquila ori suo rostrum imponeret, & animam ejus tam ineffabilis luminis coruscatione repleret, ut secundum id quod viventibus possibile est (quia Moysi dictum est; Non videbit me homo, & vivet) nulla eam divinitatis secreta laterent. Tanto enim de torrente voluptatis abundantius hausit in domo, quanto magnificentior aquila vas cordis ejus extensum desiderio magis inuenit' (240B–C). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
49. 'In ipso ostio ecclesie ei Christus cruci affixus cruentatus occurrit: deponensque brachium cruci affixum, amplexatus est occurrentem, & os ejus vulneri dextri lateris applicavit. Ubi tantum dulcedinis hausit, quod semper ex tunc in Dei servitio robustior & alacrior fuit' (239E). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
50. 'Referebant qui hæc, illa revelante, illo in tempore & diu postea probaverunt, quod saliva oris ejus super omnem mellis dulcorem suavius sapiebat' (239E). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
51. '[...] ei Dominus apparuit dicens: 'Noi flere, filia mi! Hodie a dilecto tuo consolationem recipies.'...Cui quippe Dominus sub corporali specie panis participationem sui Corporis dedit, et hoc certum indicium veritatis patri suo spirituali postea revelavit, quia quod ore foris accepit, dentibus mastica vit, et secundum quod in specie remanet, saporem distinxit. Hec ei per quindecim dies gracia permansit. Nec hec sola probacio, sed id quo maius est, in hoc beneficio Domini talem gratiam hausit, ut nulla postmodum ociosa, nulla eciam mundo communia audire potuit vel videre' (118–19). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by Meersseman.
52. Béatrice Caseau, 'The Senses in Religion: Liturgy, Devotion, and Deprivation', in *A Cultural History of the Senses*, ed. by Newhauser, 90–91.
53. 'Venerabili Waltero archidiacono in Anduerpia, uiro utique scientia et uirtute conspicuo, referente cognoui in confinio Brabantie quemdam senilem etatis prope suis temporibus fuisse presbiterum, uirum etsi castum corpore,

- erga mentem tamen qua in celebratione missarum angelorum ministeria adesse dicuntur, satis incredulum... Igitur senex presbiter, die quadam in ipso summo altari celebraturus sollennia, ubi post uerba dominica in confectionem corporis et sanguinis Domini uentum est, uidit ipsis corporalibus oculis sursum, deorsum, anterius et in parte tantas multitudines angelorum, ut nullatenus humana estimatio comprehendere potuisset. Quo in uiso nimio terrore correptus, sicut adhuc calicem tenebat in manibus, cecidit resupinus continuo, acciditque mirabile ac horrendum prodigium, ut effuso calice coram altario, uim sanguinis Christi sustinere non posset, sed dato immenso crepitu per medium late discussus, locum stillanti faceret, ut in cripta transiret inferius, ibique de contra sedem in altari reciperet, quo sue dignationis erat in sacramento libari?* (263–64). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
54. See Anne W. Astell, *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 38. From Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramento corporis et sanguinis Christi*, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. by J. P. Migne, 176, column 471.
55. ‘*Tertia igitur die reuersus miles, cum famulum Christi digna celebrantem attenderet, repente eleuationis hora inter manus eius tam elegantis forme puerum uidit, ut nequaquam posset ambigere hunc esse nouam progeniem qui olim e celo in salutem humani generis in uterum Virginis descendisset*’ (265). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
56. ‘*Cum igitur placuit misericordiarum Domino eam in talibus mitigari, apparuit ei in fletibus rugienti; & congratulans ei, quod miserorum negotium diu fideliter egisset; manu ipsa, quam pro peccatoribus in cruce extendit, a facie ejus lacrymas tersit, dicens: Consolatam te esse in his lamentis pro meis peccatoribus volo; nec sustinebo te in fletibus ulterius fatigari: sed placido cordis fervore in oratione persistes; & per hoc, sicut quondam per lacrymas, iram Patris dignanter avertes*’ (252D–E). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Lutgardis Aquiriensis*, ed. by Henschen.
57. ‘[...] apparuit ei beatissima Virgo Maria et, ut ei in spiritu uidebatur, venerabilis Domina manum posuit ad pectus eius, querens si hic esset locus doloris et mali, quo gravaretur [...] Nec mora, beata mater quasi compacienti simul, appropinquat et manu traxit per totum cordis et pectoris locum, dicens hec propria uerba que scribo: “Sano te in anima et corpore [...]”’ (111). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Margarete de Ypres*, ed. by Meersseman.
58. ‘*Post cuius obitum, cum monachus quidam Vacellus, contemplationi deditus coram altari in ecclesia ad orationem procumberet, subito illi astans aquilla, pennarum nitore mirabiliter decorata, orantis spiritum quasi in humeris ad loca speciosa et lata transuolans sublimauit. Cui santus Domini Benedictus occurrens, ad loca pulchriora monachum sublimioraque*

- deduxit. Cumque illis multas meritorum ostenderet mansiones quas suis illic Christus parauerat, ecce subito in sublimi uocem femine gratulantis intelligit. Tunc monachus beato Benedicto: 'Cuius est, inquit, o domine, uox illa quam audio in tanta leticia gratulantis?' Et beatus Benedictus: 'Hec est, inquit, mater domini Ioannis Cantipratensis que, nuper a purgatorii igne deuote filii precibus erepeta, nunc gratulabunda in celestibus cum ceteris fidelium animabus exultat'* (277). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.
59. *'Igitur cum dies immineret, quod idem Episcopus ad urbem Romanam iter arriperet, post Matutinorum laudes cum se paululum sopori dedisset; ecce Ancilla Christi Maria venerabilis, Episcopo, quasi infirmanti similis, in somnis apparuit. Cumque Episcopo videretur se magna cura satagere, ut eam oleo quasi graviter ægotantem inungeret; illa toruo vultu, similis indignanti, satagentem intuita dixit: Non me quidem inungere poteris, cum modum inunctionis meæ Ordinarius tuus non habeat: sed inunge Priorem nostrum cum Fratribus, qui ex tuo discessu sicut & ego, graviter infirmantur. Nec mora: expergefactus Episcopus Priorem cum Fratribus advocat, & quid sibi ab Ancilla Christi in somnis dictum sit, indicat, a proposito tamen nihilominus'* (674F). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis*, Supplementum, ed. by A. Raysse.
60. Thomas of Cantimpré, Supplement to the Life of Marie d'Oignies, trans. by Hugh Feiss, *Vox Benedictina: A Journal of Translations from Monastic Sources* 7 (1990): 53–72.
61. Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 38.
62. *'Cumque iam ad exitum appropinquarem, formidaretque anima mea, ecce uenerabilis patrona nostra Dei genitrix Virgo Maria, cum quodam admirabilis uenustatis uiro, coram me astitit, egrumque me piis oculis intuens, ubi uel quid dolerem corpore requisiiuit. Mox, cum designassem locum, illa, phialam extendens, quam sacro medicamine plenam penes se gestabat in manibus, per uentris medium traxit a latere usque ad latus, cuius tactum salus insecuta continuo morti me condonauit et uite [...]. Et beata Virgo: "Hic est comitatus nostri Andreas apostolus." Et adieci: "O dulcissima, inquit, domina, magnum michi desiderium est sanctum Christi confessorem videre Martinum." Qua resonante: "Et hunc quoque uidebis", ecce beatus Martinus cum thuribulo, pontificaliter infulatus, aduenit, stratumque meum circuiens, sicut balsasnum et cynamomum aromatizans odorem dedit'* (309–10). Thomas of Cantimpré, *Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, ed. by Godding.

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## Thinking Fantasies: Visions and Voices in Medieval English Secular Writing

*Corinne Saunders*

Visions and voices are most often associated with religious experience, but they also have a prominent part to play in romance, the imaginative fiction of the later medieval period. Romances offer scope for creative engagement with the long-standing literary conventions of dream vision, supernatural encounter and revelation, as well as with medical, theological and philosophical preoccupations of the period. They repeatedly depict supernatural experience of different kinds—dreams and prophecies, visions and voices, marvels and miracles, ghostly and demonic visitations, and encounters with the faery. In part, such narratives respond to an impulse towards escapism and the fantastic, and they have typically been seen as non-mimetic. Yet they also engage with serious ideas concerning visionary experience and the ways in which individual lives may open onto the supernatural, taking up the possibilities suggested by both dream theory and the psychological models of the period. Visions and voices can be catalysts for change and self-realisation; they can also destabilise

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and call into question identity. They allow writers to explore fearful and fascinating questions concerning forces beyond the self and their intersections with the processes of individual thinking, feeling and being in the world. Middle English romances weave together the possibilities of dream, marvel, miracle and supernatural encounter in narratives of individual realisation. Chaucer's romance writing takes these motifs into new realms through its intellectual engagement with the complex forces that shape mental experience.

### FRAMEWORKS FOR THINKING

Romance, like religious writing, depends on ideas of mind, body, and affect that are rooted in classical thought but also shaped by a Christian world view.<sup>1</sup> The humoural theory that informed medieval medicine necessitated the idea of a mind-body continuum: both physical and mental health depended on the balance of the four humours. This interdependence was also essential to the Galenic theory of the spirits inherited by the Middle Ages, according to which *pneuma*, the life breath or vital force, was modified by the three principal organs of the body into three kinds: in the liver the 'natural spirits' enabling generation, growth and nutrition; in the heart the 'vital spirits' heating and animating the body and controlling breath; in the brain the 'animal spirits' governing sensation, movement and thought.<sup>2</sup> Emotions were understood to occur through the movements of the vital spirits produced in the heart and travelling through the arteries, and to have both physiological and mental consequences. The Galenic model was complemented by late thirteenth-century medical and philosophical thought, including that of Thomas Aquinas, which elaborated the processes of thought and feeling underpinned by the vital and animal spirits.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Aristotle had situated thought and feeling in the heart, Galen identified the motor and sensory functions of the brain. Arabic medical theorists, most influentially Avicenna, associated the ventricles or cells of the brain with mental processes. Thoughts were made up of 'forms', sense impressions involving perception and response, variously termed *imagines*, *simulacra* or *phantasmata* (Aristotle employs the term *eikón*, copy).<sup>4</sup> Avicenna's influential treatise on the rational soul, *De anima*, translated into Latin in the twelfth century, describes five cells of the brain, each connected with a particular faculty. The *sensus communis*, inner senses, where sense perceptions were

processed, was placed at the front along with the *imaginatio*, a temporary memory; the *imaginativa*, which, similar to modern imagination, put together forms in creative ways, was situated in the middle along with the faculty of *estimativa*, which made cognitive assessments; and *memorialis*, the storehouse of *imagines* or memory-pictures, was located at the back.<sup>5</sup> *Imagines* were understood to be multisensory and as having affective weight; they were ‘emotionally charged’.<sup>6</sup> The quality of *imaginativa*, with its power to retrieve from memory and combine such thought-images, was both creative and dangerous, with the potential to deceive reason.

Humoural theory intersected with this psychological model: thus, an excess of the melancholy humour might affect the *estimativa*, resulting in depressive illness, lethargy and withdrawal, while an excess of the choleric humour might cause the imaginative faculty to body forth too many images, causing mania.<sup>7</sup> In a world that assumed the possibility of visions, spirit visitations and demonic intervention and temptation, supernatural influences on the brain were also eminently possible. Thought-images or *phantasmata* might be produced by the imprint of the divine or demonic on the susceptible imagination, as well as through sensory processes or the workings of memory. The ability of the devil to influence the psyche was discussed by theologians from Augustine onwards—though the thirteenth-century medical theorists Gilbertus Anglicus and Bartholomeus Anglicus also suggested that belief in demons might result from disturbances of the brain.<sup>8</sup> The five categories of dream identified by Macrobius (c. 430) in his widely circulated commentary on Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* included such possibilities, and similar ideas were contained in commentaries on Cato’s *Distichs*, a popular schools text.<sup>9</sup> The model of the inner senses allowed for the concept of an inner eye and ear, and hence offered a physiological framework for visionary or voice-hearing experience, whatever its origin. Medieval understandings, then, figure the imagination and memory as shaped by affective and cognitive responses and potentially influenced by the supernatural, giving rise to visual images, voices and other kinds of unbidden sensory experience: felt presence, even taste and smell. The dominance of sight in hierarchies of the senses from ancient to modern masks the multisensory quality of medieval conceptions of thinking and imagining and of visionary experience. Mary Carruthers notes, that while the idea of an ‘ear of the mind’ was not usual, and that the visual is often emphasised in discussions of thought-images, the Rule of St Benedict urges ‘incline the ear of your heart’ (*inclina aurem cordis tua*), a phrase adapted from Psalm 44, also

used by St Jerome.<sup>10</sup> Such constructions coincide with the concept of the inner senses that dates back to Aristotle, is developed through Arabic medicine, and underpins notions of thought-images as multisensory. The *Hearing the Voice* project has demonstrated that this multisensory quality may be much more typical of modern-day experiences of voice-hearing than has been assumed.<sup>11</sup>

Medieval romance writing takes up the notion that physiological processes and exterior influences can interweave to produce powerful psychological experiences. Such experiences are rarely exclusively visual or aural, but rather multisensory, involving some form of material or felt presence or entry into a three-dimensional dream world. While they are most commonly connected with destiny and the divine, they may be more troubling, opening on to the demonic or evoking the eerie realm of the undead. Romance can also model how the imagination and memory may be shaped by affective and cognitive responses to produce both images and voices, often unsolicited, sometimes with the power to unbalance the mind—ideas that can resonate powerfully with contemporary notions of trauma. The blurring of interior and exterior forces to shape such thinking fantasies is especially evident in the writings of Chaucer, which animate romance conventions through their engagement with physiological and psychological processes.

It is a critical commonplace that in English romance (by contrast, for example, to the twelfth-century French romances of Chrétien de Troyes, which engage extensively with individual psychology) ideas of character are shaped not through the exploration of the inner psyche but by the gradual accruing of action. Yet while references to mental experience are often brief, romance writing is engaged with processes of emotion and cognition, and the ways that external and internal forces shape being in the world—treating voices and visions of and beyond the mind. Romance treatments of visionary experience are nuanced and complex. Supernatural experience is treated less in terms of its particularities than of the individual responses it evokes, its shaping of morality and action, and its creation of narrative movement. At the same time romances take for granted the presence of forces beyond the self, sometimes personified through visions and voices; sometimes experienced in dreams; sometimes simply felt in extreme and sudden passion.<sup>12</sup> Such responses are part of the mesh and are treated seriously, as moments in which the larger forces of the cosmos come into contact with the individual. Sleep is of special interest because it allows for the internalisation of forces ‘out there’: they

enter into the individual mind in dream, stimulating both affective and cognitive responses. The imagination too may perform such a function, acting to shape thought-fantasies of both waking and sleeping kinds. Inner and exterior forces defend and reveal, urge penance and action, warn and inspire—though the supernatural is rarely manifest as just a voice.

### DREAMING INTO LIFE

The movement from disorder to order, dark to light, winter to spring, as Northrop Frye argued, is essential to the structure of romance, though it may occur in many different ways—and occasionally, is thwarted.<sup>13</sup> Revelatory experience can play a key role in that movement, advancing the destiny of the protagonist and hence the reassertion of moral and/or political order. Such experience signals the tension at the heart of the genre, between the workings of fortune and the individual virtues of romance protagonists, a tension essential to the pattern of quest and test. One of the earliest romances in English, the late thirteenth-century *Havelok the Dane*, offers a positive version of this pattern, in which providence is actively manifest. This is not a work renowned for psychological exploration: rather, miracle, visitation and dream combine to authorise the hero, contributing to the strongly folkloric tone. Yet the supernatural endorsement of Havelok through the kinglight that emanates from his body to communicate his royal origins and preserve his life also shapes affect, thought and action. Most striking is the princess Goldboru's experience of the kinglight, which combines different types of revelation. Married to Havelok against her will, she lies awake 'sorry and sorrowful', to see the light emerging from Havelok's mouth and the gold-red cross on his shoulder, while 'Of an angel she herde a voiz: "Goldeboru, lat thy sorrwe be"<sup>14</sup> Overcome with joy at the heavenly 'stevene' ('voice', 1275), she kisses Havelok, who in turn wakes to recount his own dream of ruling Denmark. The combination of interior and exterior voices and miraculous signs both offers a powerful endorsement of Havelok, and stimulates individual responses and actions: Havelok is moved to regain his kingdom; Goldboru interprets the dream and plans his return to Denmark. Voice, vision, sign interweave to effect this crucial turning-point in the text.

The merging of interior and exterior, dreaming into life, is especially marked in *The Siege of Milan* (ca. 1400), which recounts a popular legend

of Charlemagne. Multisensory experience crosses the boundaries of voice and vision, dreaming and waking. The grief of the lord of Milan for his besieged city occasions such weariness that he falls asleep, to experience a vision of ‘Ane angelle that unto hym gane saye: / ‘Ryse up, sir kynge’, directing him to Charlemagne.<sup>15</sup> Dream and actuality merge when Charlemagne ‘The same nyghte byfore the daye’ (109) dreams that an angel presents him with the sword of Christ, inciting him to vengeance; on waking, he sees ‘a bryghtenes of a beme / Up unto hevenwarde glyde’ and discovers the sword ‘Appon his bedde syde’ (134–38). The dream is presented as both an angelic vision and a product of the active mind: ‘A swevn than gan he mete; / Hym thoghte ane angele lyghte als leven / Spake to hym with mylde steven’ (111–13). Inner thought, exterior action and supernatural forces seem to align in the ensuing battle between Roland’s army and the Saracens. The angelic visitant is the first in a series of miracles that defend the Christians and mark their victory. But the narrative also ends in deep loss, with Charlemagne’s grief at the death of Bishop Turpin and much of his army. Despite the divine approval betokened by the miracles, the terrible destruction of the Christian forces reflects Charlemagne’s failure to attend fully to his warning dream and to send enough of his men against the Saracen army.

In these works, waking and dreaming blur, as dreams both foretell the future and become manifest, merging with signs and miracles to authorise, endorse and reveal. The workings of such revelatory experience are not questioned; rather, it is the responses of individual protagonists that are the focus, and sometimes too the difficulty of interpretation. Revelation is both certain and obscure.

### SENT TO TEST

Revelation may also serve to test, catalysing individual journeys towards moral perfection and inspiring penance. Such revelation again merges interior and exterior aspects. The late thirteenth-century *Amis and Amiloun*, one of the most widely circulated romances, with versions in several languages, combines vision and voice-hearing, both dreaming and waking, with the structuring motifs of illness and bodily transformation. Exterior and interior are connected from the start through the reflection of the intimate friendship of Amis and Amiloun in their physical likeness. Friendship is tested to the limits when Amiloun takes on a battle in place of Amis, who has been accused of seducing the Duke’s daughter



Belisant. Though the pair's relationship will be authorised in marriage, they are indeed lovers, meaning that Amis will swear a false oath of innocence if he defends himself in a trial by combat. The mental intimacy of the pair is reiterated through Amiloun's warning dream of his friend as set upon by wild beasts and at risk of death.<sup>16</sup> The dream follows a description of Amis, who has fled into the forest and is overcome by 'so stronge slepe' he cannot resist (994); time is collapsed as Amiloun, now responding to his dream, discovers him sleeping. The sequence implies a deep communication of thought between the friends, further enacted in Amiloun's decision to take on the battle in place of his friend. The idea of the all-seeing supernatural inherent in the concept of trial by combat and suggested by the dream becomes manifest in the waking world: Amiloun hears 'a voice fram heven adoun / That no man herd bot he' (1250–51), warning him that he will become 'a ffouler man' than any other if he fights in place of Amis. When the threatened punishment of leprosy occurs, the voice is reinterpreted and given shape: 'Also that angel hadde him told, / Fouler messel [leper] thar nas non hold / In world than was he' (1543–45). External forces are profoundly physical, manifesting illness on the body, as well as taking auditory and visible form—but they also enter the mind through dream to prognosticate and shape the future.

The illness that begins as divine punishment becomes the means of testing moral virtue, of Amiloun and those around him. In the denouement, body and blood are sacrificed to purify body and blood through the killing of Amis's children, which echoes but surpasses Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Again this is presaged by visionary experience that both authorises the act and demonstrates the deep psychical connections between Amis and Amiloun. For three nights while Amis 'in slepe thought as he lay', an angel 'stode biforn his bed ful right', to reveal that the blood of his children will cure his friend (2187, 2189); Amiloun is similarly 'warned' by an angel (2210). Waking and dreaming again seem to merge, further authorising the appearance of the angel. Suspense is situated less in the divine visitation, however, than in the inner conflict it occasions in Amis, whose 'gret rewethe' (2276) for his children is set against his carefully constructed argument concerning his brother's sacrifice for him; crucial too is Amiloun's horrified response. The children's innocent blood, like Christ's, restores the sufferer, and the sacrifice—deeply disturbing as it is—functions to prove Amis' love for his friend above himself, re-enacting Christ's sacrifice for mankind. The supernatural is then manifest in miracle as the children are restored 'Without wemme [blemish] and wound'

(2407). Voices, visitations and visions, miracles and signs, govern the transformations of the narrative, allowing for the exploration of thought and feeling in the most extreme circumstances. The romance dramatises the ultimate testing of friendship, yet in troubling ways. Amis must undertake a dishonest battle, enduring an illness that is also a punishment, his sacrifice not only his venturing of his own body but the murder of his children. This is also, then, a romance of impossible choices, occasioned by the voices and visions that reveal and warn, choices that test love to the extreme and that require miracle to resolve their conflicted nature.

Testing is also the subject of early fourteenth-century *Sir Isumbras*, where an exterior voice is again the catalyst for a narrative of loss, penance and miracle. The protagonist is introduced with little detail, but is characterised as proud, having lived long without thinking of God. His conversion is occasioned by ‘a stevenne’ (voice, 42) sent by Jesus, who ‘wolde no lengur abyde’ (41) his suffering.<sup>17</sup> This voice, however, is given earthly form as a singing bird which offers the choice of suffering in youth or age—the stimulus for Isumbras’ redemptive quest. The bird’s voice provokes in Isumbras ‘carefull herte and sykyngre sore’ (55) and ‘drurye’ (68) mode; ‘pleye’ is turned to ‘peyne’ (78). Much of the rest of the romance focuses on enduring suffering with steadfastness and ultimately on the power of pity and generosity. The power of prayer, faith and virtuous action are proven through Isumbras’ battle against the pagans and his lost queen’s charity, which are the catalysts for their reunion. The protective power of God and the benign workings of providence are directly articulated in the visitation ‘abowte hygh mydnyghte’ to Isumbras by ‘an angell bryghte’ who brings him bread and wine (523–24). While the reference to night seems to align the experience with dream, this is presented as a waking vision, as material as the voice of the bird, manifest in physical miracle. The divine opens onto a broader sense of the fantastic and the supernatural, as the angel’s intervention is complemented by that of the noble legendary animals who nurture Isumbras’ lost children. The intersection of celestial and marvellous echoes the merging of the Christ-sent ‘stevenne’ of the start with the voice of the singing bird.

### FEARFUL HAUNTINGS

Visibly manifest voices recur—most prominently angelic visitations, but also ghosts, spirits, and revenants, from the ghost of Guinevere’s mother in the alliterative romance *The Awntyrs of Arthure*, who rises from hell

to warn of the corruption of the court, to the White Knight in *Sir Amadace*, the ghost of a dead merchant whose body the protagonist has buried.<sup>18</sup> All are manifestations of a spirit world whose workings enact providence and prove the virtue of the individual: they are divine agents or divinely sent. More alarming are manifestations of the demonic or otherworldly that challenge order and virtue. The late fourteenth-century didactic romance of *Sir Gowther* follows a pattern of sin, conversion and penitence but in terms very different from *Sir Isumbras*. Here not a ‘stevenne’ sent by Christ but a demon is the catalyst. The tale makes exterior what is often presented as interior, the tempting force of the devil. The narrative begins with a prayer for protection against ‘the fowle fende / That is about mannys sowle to shende / All tymes of the yere’—including through the ability to take the form of the incubus and thus to beget demonic children.<sup>19</sup> The romancier refers both to the authority of ‘clerkus’ (19) and the example of Merlin to contextualise his own story of ‘a warlocke greytt’ (22), a version of the thirteenth-century French tale *Robert le Diable*.<sup>20</sup> The devil is summoned through the rash prayer of a barren wife who prays for a child ‘On what maner scho ne roghth’ (63); in her orchard she is approached by a man ‘As lyke hur lorde as he myght be’ (67), who after making love to her rises up a ‘felturd [shaggy] fende’ (71). The version of the encounter which she gives to her husband uses the positive romance pattern of *Isumbras* and *Amis*, ‘An angell com fro hevon bryght’ (82), but the child she bears lives out his demonic origin in a series of violent deeds, culminating in the rape and burning of a convent of nuns. The demonic is terrifyingly embodied in the boy who furthers the devil’s work of betraying mankind. Yet Gowther also retains a human aspect: his mind has the potential to hear the voice of God. The suspicion aroused in him by an old earl’s statement that he is ‘sum fendys son’ (206) leads him to question his mother about his origins, and on hearing her story, to his conversion: ‘This thought come on hym sodenly: / “Lorde, mercy” con he cry’ (235–36). The moment is given a providential force: the ‘thought’ is not unlike the voice of the singing bird in *Sir Isumbras*, but its interiorisation suggests a writer keenly aware of the workings of both divine and demonic on the individual mind. As the rash prayer of the start takes embodied force in the demonic child, so transformative thought is fully embodied in Gowther’s penitential journey to Rome and acceptance of penance from the Pope. Evil intent is replaced by true prayer to God ‘in his hart’ (401), which leads directly to miraculous intervention, three times providing him with horse and armour that

vanish away when battle is won for the emperor. Their colour progression from black to white signals his redemption, which is affirmed in the miraculous revival of the emperor's seemingly dead daughter, who, once mute, now speaks the direct message of Gowther's forgiveness, 'My lord of heyvon gretys the well' (655). Her death-like swoon, occasioned by her fall from a tower in distress at Gowther's danger, is a liminal state in which she hears directly the voice of God. Once 'tho cursod knyght', now he is 'inspyrd with tho Holy Gost', his holy status written after his death in the cures of those who seek his shrine (731–32). The work is infused with a sense of shaping influences, demonic and divine, on the mind, of the shifting boundary between spiritual and physical worlds, and the ease with which divine and demonic forces can take embodied form.

Most eerie in its depiction of the intervention of the supernatural is the early fourteenth-century romance of *Sir Orfeo*, a reworking of the Orpheus and Eurydice story, in which the otherworld of faery replaces the kingdom of the dead. Heurodis wakes from her sleep beneath an 'ympe-tree' to recount a strange invasion of her psyche by the King of Faery.<sup>21</sup> She describes this as if occurring within waking reality: two knights summon her to their King, who appears with his hundred knights, placing her on a horse, taking her to his palace, showing her 'castels and tours, / Rivers, forestes, frith with flours' (135–36) and bringing her home to her own orchard. Yet the narrative makes clear that the encounter occurs as she sleeps, a fully multisensory vision from which she wakes in a state of madness. The episode is menacing in its depiction of the invasive power of the supernatural, and the violence of the King of Faery's summons is written by Heurodis on her own body:

Ac as sone as she gan awake,	
She crid and lothly bere* gan make;	*noise
She froted* hir honden and hir feet	*rubbed
And crached hir visage—it bled wete.	
Hir riche robe hie all to-rett*	*tore
And was reveysed* out of hir wit. (53-58)	*driven

That the attack is on the mind is made explicit by the reference to the flight of the wits, and self-mutilation reflects the disorder of the psyche.

The invisible force of the otherworld is again manifest as, despite the guard of a thousand armed knights, Heurodis is 'oway y-twight, / With fairy forth y-nome' (snatched away, taken by fairy forces, 168–69). In his grief at the loss of his wife, Orfeo flees into the forest, becoming a

Wild Man figure, a consciously chosen state that responds to Heurodis' madness and taking. In this transformative, liminal space, vision is manifest in the waking world: Orfeo catches sight of the faery hunt and follows it through a dark cave to a preternaturally bright otherworld that evokes 'the proude court of paradys' (352). Mysteriously, the figures in the hunt appear also to be the figures frozen there in seeming death, his wife among them, 'folk that were thider y-brought / And thought dede and nare nought' (365–66). The description is graphic: bodies mutilated, mad, strangled, drowned, burned or in childbirth, but also the many who, like Heurodis, have been taken as they slept at noontime, 'with fairy thider y-come' (380). The possibility of psychic intervention is deeply troubling, while the boundary between death and life is called into question by this other, parallel space that is neither heaven nor hell, eerily peopled by the undead who can ride again in the faery hunt. Ultimately, Heurodis' body, seized and unmade through the sinister, unruly forces of supernatural desire, is regained, remade through Orfeo's virtuous love and the power of his music. But it is her uncanny disappearance, the writing of all-consuming, three-dimensional vision on her body, the sinister depiction of the taken in the world of faery and the ways the story speaks to fears of madness, possession and death that we retain.

### FAST IMAGINING: CHAUCERIAN VOICES AND VISIONS

Chaucer's *oeuvre* takes up many of these emphases but also reflects a keen interest in physiology and psychology, in particular, the ways that feeling and thought interweave, and the play of love and loss on the imagination.<sup>22</sup> The creative possibilities of interweaving the supernatural with psychology are vividly realised in his earliest works, all of which engage with the dream vision. These works take up a conventional French courtly form that finds its origins in the thirteenth-century *Le Roman de la Rose*, with Guillaume de Lorris' narrative of the Lover-Dreamer struck by the arrow of the God of Love and his quest for the Rose, and Jean de Meun's satirical continuation recounting the debate on love and nature between the allegorical figures encountered by the dreamer. The courtly *dits* of Machaut and Deschamps use a similar framework to open onto dialogues and debates concerning love, overheard by the dreaming narrator. Chaucer both translated parts of the *Roman de la Rose* and adopted the dream form, characteristically injecting it with a new realism and ambiguity, and capitalising on its polyvocal, unruly quality to depict

voices in and beyond the mind. The opening of the *Roman de la Rose*, translated in the English fragment most securely attributed to Chaucer, addresses the question of the interpretation of dreams, setting the view that they are ‘but fables and lesynges’ against the concept of ‘avysioun’ taken up by Macrobius in his commentary on Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*.<sup>23</sup> Dream theory and the impossibility of absolute classification and interpretation of dreams are revisited by Chaucer across his *oeuvre*. It is precisely in the ambiguity of dreams, their blurring between exterior and interior, supernatural and natural, that their potential to mean is rooted.

*The Book of the Duchess* enacts these questions in its opening. Its grieving narrator’s processes of thought are carefully depicted: ‘sorrowful ymagynacioun / Ys alway hooly in [his] mynde’ (14–15). Image-pictures held in his memory are repeatedly revisited, creating ‘fantasies’ (28) in his head and causing a melancholy which has ‘sleyn [his] spirit of quyknese’ (26). The ‘romaunce’ (48) he reads, which includes the Ovidian tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, opens onto a sequence of supernatural experiences: an invocation that summons the gods, a descent to the underworld, a visitation from the dead. In answer to Alcyone’s prayer for a dream revealing the fate of her husband, Juno instructs her messenger to bid Morpheus ‘take up Seys body the kyng, / That lyeth ful pale and nothyng rody. / Bid hym crepe into the body / And doo hit goon to Alcione’ (142–45). The classical tale depicts a world where gods can be summoned, revelations sought and corpses reanimated, not through nefarious human arts of necromancy but divine transformative powers that will lead to Alcyone’s metamorphosis. In Chaucer’s version, however, Alcyone dies and there is no transformation. Morpheus, summoned from his infernal region, takes up the drowned body, eerily speaking through it to Alcyone. Inner and outer worlds blur, as Chaucer describes Alcyone lying in bed, but also the corpse standing ‘ryght at hyr beddes fet’ (199), calling her by name, ‘My swete wyf’ (201). That this is not the revenant it seems, however, underlines the king’s inability to return. Alcyone’s sorrow on waking, as she ‘saw noght’ (213), leads to her death, and the narrator reminds us too of the opacity of sleep and dream, ‘what she sayede more in that swow / I may not telle yow as now’ (215–16).

The narrator’s consequent, comic prayer to Morpheus leads in turn to his own dream vision, a complex dream-dialogue which probes the psychology of the mysterious Man in Black. Are we to read this as inspired by his own sorrow, his reading, or his prayer to a god? Is the Man in Black

an alter ego or a dream guide? Chaucer merges these possible interpretations in an inset narrative of loss and reanimation of the dead, not through divine intervention but the ‘fantasies’ of memory. The Man in Black, like the Dreamer at the start, is lost in his ‘sorwful ymagynacioun’. The poem describes first his spoken complaint and then his silent, inner dialogue:

[...] he spak noght,  
 But argued with his owne thought,  
 And in hys wyt disputed faste  
 Why and how hys lyf myght laste [...].  
 (503–6)

So absorbed is the Man in Black by the voices in his mind that he is oblivious to external voices, a description that corresponds with recent accounts in cognitive psychology of the workings of inner speech and its connections with voice-hearing.<sup>24</sup> As he responds to the Dreamer’s bumbling questions images are gradually retrieved from the storehouse of his memory to create a picture of his lost duchess Blanche. By contrast to the turbulent mental experience of grief with its images and voices that arise unbidden, this is a willed process, producing a multisensory and embodied picture of Blanche’s ‘lokyng’ (870), movement, voice and touch. The poem does not offer consolation, yet it affords resolution of a kind through the Man in Black’s articulation of Blanche’s death. While Alcyone realises Ceyx’s death through god-sent revelation that results in her death, the Man in Black’s revelation is shaped by the power of human thought processes and leads to a re-entry to life. The process of image-making reanimates Blanche within the narrative, allowing the Man in Black to move beyond his traumatised, dissociative state of profound withdrawal. The insomniac narrator too is restored to action, and to the writing of the poem, a further reanimation and memorial of the beloved. The poem, then, might be seen as containing the disruptive images and voices of grief through the processes of the mind, while it also gestures to the opaque external forces that shape the mind: desires, dreams and books provide occasions for imaginative encounters with the supernatural and for visionary experience. Where inspiration ends and interpretation begins, how far those imaginative voices are shaped by the mind or come from beyond it, is left for the reader to ponder.

Chaucer’s other dream vision poems are more light-hearted, but engage in sustained and serious ways with the complexities of external

and internal mental influences. The *House of Fame* takes up the model of the *Roman de la Rose* to open with a commentary on dream interpretation, but with considerably less certainty than the *Rose*'s narrator: 'this trowe I [...] / That dremes signifaunce be / Of good and harm to many wightes / That dremen in her slep a-nyghtes / Ful many thynges covertly / That fallen after al openly' (Fragment A, 15–20). The *House of Fame*'s narrator emphasises the difficulty of assessing the 'signifaunce' of dream and of assigning Macrobius' categories: 'Why that is an avision / And why this a revelacion, / Why this a drem, why that a sweven, / [...] Why this a fantome, why these oracles' (7–11). Dreams may be caused by 'spirites' (41) or inspired by the soul, but they may also be the result of 'complexions' (21), the balance of bodily humours; they may be caused by 'gret feblenesse' (24) of the brain, abstinence or illness, imprisonment or distress, intense feeling or excessive study, or melancholy produced by the brain itself, 'That purely her impressions [thought-images or emotions imprinted on the mind] / Causeth hem avisions' (39–40)—perhaps the situation of the *Book of the Duchess*'s narrator. Supernatural warnings may occur but too 'derkly' (51) to be understood. William MacLehose explores the serious potential for conflict between a dreamer's perception of a demon assaulting and crushing him, and medieval medical explanations of the condition they term 'epialtes' or 'incubus'.<sup>25</sup> While Chaucer treats the topic comically, his dream visions dramatise both the conflicting possibilities of dream interpretation and the embodied quality of dreams, drawing attention to the complex physiology of sleep and its connections with creativity. In the *House of Fame*, the narrator's marvellous dream in which he is swept up to the heavens by a great eagle, a comic dream-guide speaking 'in mannes vois' (556) to recall the dazed dreamer to his senses, but to whose offer to explicate the universe he responds that he prefers to read books, resolves none of his uncertainties. The eagle's elaboration of the theory of sounds multiplying and rising up to the House of Fame finds its complement in the narrator's experience of the House itself, where the goddess' decrees are arbitrarily enacted according to the horns of fame and slander blown by Eolus, god of winds, while in the turning House of Rumour sounds of speech and rumours whirl around uncontrolled; the poem breaks off before the 'man of gret auctoritee' can be revealed. The narrator invokes the God of Sleep to help him 'telle aryght' (79) his dream, presented as surpassing the 'avisyon[s]' (513) of a series of biblical and classical figures, but interpretation of its whirling multisensory images is another matter. The poem is vividly visual, yet its



vision is most defined by sounds and voices, in a creative disorder that approaches cacophony.

This polyvocal effect also characterises the *Parliament of Fowls*, with its dream vision of a parliament of birds that descends into disarray. Here too Chaucer addresses the question of interpretation of dreams: the poem's narrator reads Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, which recounts the Roman general Scipio's dream encounter with his celebrated grandfather, Scipio the Elder ('the African'), who foretells his destruction of Carthage but also elaborates on the theory of the celestial spheres, whose music Scipio hears. The narrator in turn dreams that Scipio Africanus 'Was come and stod right at my beddes syde' (98)—a characteristic experience of dream visitation—but cannot say whether his reading 'the cause were' (106), in the same way that the hunter dreams he is in the woods or the lover of his lady. Is this a '*somnium*', a naturally caused dream, or an '*oraculum*', a prophetic dream? It seems fittingly portentous, as 'Affrican' leads the narrator to gates reminiscent of those entered by Dante, one promising bliss, the other destruction—but within, the dreamer finds not inferno or paradise, but the garden and temple of Venus and beyond it, the goddess Nature presiding over a debate between the suitors of the beautiful 'formel' (373) eagle. As in the *House of Fame*, the debate is unresolved, her choice deferred for a year, and the narrator is awakened with the 'shoutyng' (693) of the birds, to read on in his books. This vision too is full of sound: the songs and voices of the birds that debate so animatedly and so inconclusively. Ultimately, like the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*, the poem is about creativity, the mysterious processes of inspiration that arise vision-like in the psyche, and the skill that is needed to order, recount and interpret that multiplicity of multivalent, multisensory images. Whereas in courtly love visions dream is typically a framework that plays no part in the ensuing narrative, Chaucer's narratives are continuously dreamlike in their chaotic, kaleidoscopic quality and their resistance to unified interpretation. In this sense, they evoke the experience of hearing voices as it is frequently described by contemporary voice-hearers, but for Chaucer, the experience is one of creative play, offering the potential for radical literary experimentation and the merging of mimetic and fantastic, serious and comic.

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* with the many voices of its tellers in dialogue—and debate—might be seen as taking up the notion of voice-hearing as a fictional device, extending the play of the dream vision into the imaginative world of the Canterbury pilgrimage, a framework for the

multiple worlds and voices of the tales told by its idiosyncratic participants. Within their narratives, Chaucer returns to the motifs of dream, vision and voice-hearing. The *Knight's Tale*, the first of the tales and the most extended romance of the collection, includes both dream and waking voices and visions, but complicates them through an emphasis on the workings of mind and feeling. The tale takes up the convention of the God of Love firing his arrow into the heart of the lover to cause a deeply physical passion of love-sickness, but here there is no mention of supernatural force: the lady stands in directly for the deity. Chaucer employs the neo-Platonic conception of love as striking through the eyes to wound the heart, but distinguishes his two lovers through his use of contemporary medical theory: whereas Palamon is 'chronically smitten' in conventional terms, Arcite is 'morbidly lovesick'.<sup>26</sup> Arcite's malady is an illness of the brain with extreme physiological effects:

[...] lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;  
 His eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,  
 His hewe falow and pal as asshen colde [...]  
 So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,  
 And changed so, that no man koude knowe  
 His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.  
 And in his geere [conduct] for al the world he ferde  
 Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye  
 Of Hereos,<sup>27</sup> but rather lyk manye,  
 Engendred of humour malencolik  
 Biforen, in his celle fantastik. (I, 1362–76)

This model of melancholy mania was available to Chaucer through, for example, the work of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, translated in the late fourteenth century by John Trevisa.<sup>28</sup> Trevisa describes how the passions of the soul engender the melancholy humour, which works on the 'celle fantastik', the front ventricle of the brain controlling the imagination. In a state of melancholy, the subject loses the ability to judge and reason; in a state of mania, as here, the imagination cannot perceive new images but sees only the beloved. The thirteenth-century physician Gerard de Berry describes how the *estimatio* becomes overactive, so 'struck by the pleasurable sensation' of perceiving the beloved that it keeps ordering the senses to repeat the process; heat is thus drawn away so that *imaginativa* is colder and more retentive.<sup>29</sup> So in the *Knight's Tale* the withdrawing

of the vital spirit weakens Arcite's body and voice, while loss of heat occasioned by the overactive imagination causes his eyes to grow hollow and his countenance pale, fixing the image of the beloved more firmly in the brain. While this is not a voice-hearing or visionary experience, it offers a model for the ways that unsummoned, multisensory thought-images can dominate the mind in an obsessive cycle of mental experience very like that recounted by voice-hearers.

The tale combines interiority with the idea of supernatural influence: external arbitrary forces beyond individual control play on the inner senses and imagination. So Arcite in sleep 'thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie / Biforn hym stood and bad hym to be murie', commanding him to return to Athens (1384–92). The dream vision of the messenger of the gods is conventional, but Chaucer's use of the verb 'thoughte' is suggestive, implying the workings of the mind in dream, and the imprint of the supernatural on the imagination. The gods are also manifest materially and multisensorily, responding to the prayers of each of the lovers—from the shaking and 'signe' (2266) of Venus' statue; to Mars' ringing hauberk and murmuring of 'Victorie!' (2433), accompanied by clattering rings, brighter-burning flames and a sweet fragrance; to the fire and whistling brands dripping blood that presage the appearance and speech of Diana. The debate between the gods is enacted in the temporal world: Arcite wins the battle, reflecting Mars' military strength, but is thrown from his horse through the Fury sent by Saturn at Venus' urging. In this tale, the workings of the mind occur in a world where free will seem deeply curtailed, as supernatural forces dominate the fates of the lovers.

Other tales return more briefly to the idea of supernatural visitation and intervention. The *Nun's Priest's Tale* offers a brilliantly comic treatment of dream theory in its account of the cock Chanticleer's terrifying dream of a hound-like beast and the response of his mate Pertelote, who dismisses the dream as the result of unbalanced humours, 'Nothyng, God woot, but vanitee in sweven is'; they are caused by 'replecciouns', 'fume', and 'complecciouns', over-eating, vapour from the stomach, and humoral complexions (VII, 2922–24), and Chanticleer's dream of a red beast is a result of excessive choler, to be cured by 'som laxatyf' (2943) that will restore melancholy and choleric humours. Yet Chanticleer's comically learned response with its series of examples of the truth of dreams is lived out in his confrontation with the fox. Despite

the parodic context, the possibility of revelation through dream is taken seriously.

Supernatural intervention also goes beyond dream. The *Physician's Tale* takes up the idea of demonic influence on the senses and imagination, as the fiend runs into Appius' 'herte' (VI, 130) to urge him on to rape: 'And taughte hym sodeynly that he by slyghte / The mayden to his purpos wyne myghte' (131–32). The line recalls theological discussions of the possibility that the devil may enter the senses and imagination, influencing individual choices and acts. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, by contrast, divine intervention preserves the heroine Custance when she is falsely accused of murder. On being required by the king to swear on a Bible, her accuser is violently struck down: 'An hand hym smoot upon the nekke-boon' (II, 669); his eyes burst from their sockets and 'A voys was herd in general audience' declaring Custance's innocence (673). That all hear the voice marks its status as 'miracle' (684). Chaucer is also careful, however, to emphasise Custance's agency: 'So stant Custance and looketh hire aboute' (651). She finds her nearest parallel in Saint Cecilia in Chaucer's *Second Nun's Tale*, who actively accepts her torment, preaching and teaching as she sits unharmed in a bath of fire. In these works, miraculous intervention accompanies and endorses active faith. As with Middle English popular romances, genre shapes the treatment of voice-hearing and vision: miraculous, direct intervention is more characteristic of religious narratives—hagiography or hagiographic romance—while the courtly convention of love as supernaturally effected and the allegorical play typical of dream vision open up many other possibilities.

Vision, revelation, divine and demonic intervention, all these signal the limits of free will, the constraints placed on individuals by arbitrary external influences, and the complexity of mental processes as they respond to, interpret, refine, and recollect experience. In Chaucer's great epic romance, *Troilus and Criseyde*, supernatural influences are signalled throughout, pointing up the conflict between predestination and free will, a tension central to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, with which the poem engages closely and which Chaucer was translating at approximately the same time. Emphasis on the supernatural is especially marked in the proems to each book which evoke the gods, but also in the repeated references to astrology and to the turning wheel of fortune, which will ultimately bring about the fall of Troy itself, the city doomed by the gods. Troilus' double sorrow, his love for and loss of Criseyde, is a punishment

inflicted by the God of Love for laughter at the folly of lovers. The fatedness of love is pointed up by the ominous dreams experienced by both Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer's depiction of falling in love, however, engages with medieval psychology in alert detail. Alongside his portrayal of love as an extreme, physical malady, Chaucer employs contemporary psychological ideas: Troilus' thought 'gan quiken and encesse'; and he makes 'a mirour of his mynde' in which he sees 'al holly [Criseyde's] figure' (I, 443, 365–66). Throughout, Troilus' affective experience is manifest in both mind and body: when Criseyde fails to return from the Greek camp, he is literally unmade by love, so 'defet' (enfeebled) that he is unrecognisable (V, 1219). But Chaucer also emphasises cognitive processes: Troilus' 'herte thoughte' is so constantly on Criseyde, 'so faste ymagenyng' (V, 453–54) that he cannot be distracted by feasting and revelry. Imagining is, literally, image-making of a multisensory kind: Troilus, re-reading Criseyde's letters, 'refigures' 'hire shap, hire wommanhede, / Withinne his herte' (V, 473–74). He has the 'proces', the course of events, 'lik a storie' in his memory (V, 583, 585). Memory circles back not only to images but also to the voice of his beloved: he hears her melodious singing, 'so cleere / That in my soule yet me thynketh ich here / The blisful sown' (V, 578–80). He sees in his mind's eye himself as emaciated and pale, and hears in his mind's ear the comments of onlookers, 'men seyden softe' (619), on his transformed, melancholy state. Like the man in black, he repeatedly sings to himself of his lady, and his grief too leads him to 'argue with his owne thought' and dispute in his wits. While memory is so often conceived of as working through visual images, then, these can as readily be sounds retrieved from the storehouse of the mind, recreated in the imagination, heard by the inner ear, but in a way that is intrusive and all-consuming. The idea of voices bodied forth in the mind as a result of extreme emotion resonates powerfully with recent psychological theories of voices as originating in traumatic experience, and as aspects of dissociative behaviour.<sup>30</sup> In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the voices of trauma inscribe the unruly forces of fortune and desire on the individual mind.

Romance treatments of visions and voice-hearing, then, go far beyond convention. They reflect general familiarity with contemporaneous physiological models, rooted in late classical medical theory and a worldview that endorsed the possibility of supernatural experience. For romance writers, visionary experience, through dream, visitation, marvel or miracle, plays an essential role in authorising the hero and catalysing events,

in inspiring penance and showing the workings of grace. It can also, however, be challenging, unjust or dangerous, opening onto encounters with the supernatural that threaten to undo rather than fulfil the individual, and that suggest mysterious, menacing, as well as providential forces at work in the cosmos. Chaucer extends these explorations by engaging in detail with late medieval interest in psychology, the processes of thought and the nature of dream. His dream visions exploit the opacity of dream experience and its potential connections with the workings of imagination, while his *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde* probe further, in both comic and tragic ways, the complex intersections of interior and exterior worlds. The notion of being subject to powerful affective forces from within and without allows romance writers to explore in creative and original ways the experiences of spiritual revelation and conversion; the intersections of thought, feeling and exterior influences; the constraints placed on individual will; and the creative yet menacing possibilities offered by visions and voices. The imaginative worlds of romance play freely with those possibilities in constructing their narratives of thinking, feeling and being in the world.

## NOTES

1. On medieval models of mind, body, and affect, see also my essays ‘Voices and Visions: Mind, Body and Affect in Medieval Writing’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, ed. by Anne Whitehead and Angela Woods (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 411–27: 412–14, and ‘Mind, Breath, and Voice in Chaucer’s Romance Writing’, in *New Directions in Literature and Medicine Studies*, ed. by Stephanie M. Hilger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 119–41: 121–26. I am grateful to the editors for permission to draw on this work. On the long history of voice-hearing in religious writing, see Christopher C. H. Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine: Scientific and Theological Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2019).
2. See further Roy Porter’s discussion of classical and medieval medicine, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 44–134.
3. See further Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology*, Contributions in Psychology 14 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).
4. See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), in particular, chs 1–2 on models of memory and neuropsychology, 16–79.

5. See the summary in Jacqueline Tasioulas, “Dying of Imagination” in the First Fragment of the *Canterbury Tales*, *Medium Ævum* 82 (2013), 212–35: 216–17; and further Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Warburg Institute Surveys 6 (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1975), 43–64 and Edwin Clarke and Kenneth Dewhurst, *An Illustrated History of Brain Function: Imaging the Brain from Antiquity to the Present*, 2nd edn (San Francisco: Norman Publishing, 1996), 8–53. For the definitive work on medieval memory, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*; Mary Carruthers and Jan M. Ziolkowski, eds., *The Medieval Craft of Memory: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, Material Texts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), and Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400–1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
6. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 59.
7. See further my essay “‘The thoughtful maladie’: Madness and Vision in Medieval Writing”, in *Madness and Creativity in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Corinne Saunders and Jane Macnaughton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 67–87: 70–71.
8. Kemp, *Medieval Psychology*, 98.
9. See Macrobius, *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, in *Opera*, ed. by James Willis, vol. 2, Academia Scientiarum Germanica Berolinensis, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1963), 8–9.
10. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 27.
11. See further Angela Woods, Nev Jones, Ben Alderson-Day, Felicity Callard, and Charles Fernyhough, ‘What Is It Like to Hear Voices? Analysis of a Novel Phenomenological Survey’, *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2, no. 4 (April 2015): 323–31.
12. On the supernatural in romance, see my *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), in particular, chs 5 and 6, on otherworlds, Christian marvel, and demonic intervention.
13. Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1974–75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 53–54.
14. *Havelok the Dane*, in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. by Donald B. Sands, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (1966; Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1986), 55–129: ll. 1248, 1264–65. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number. The work exists in

- two fourteenth-century manuscript versions and adapts the late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Lai d' Haveloc*; the legend is also recounted in Geffrei Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (1135–40).
15. *The Sege of Melayne*, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1973), 1–45: ll. 91–92. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number. The romance is found in a single manuscript and appears to be based on a lost French source.
  16. *Amis and Amiloun*, in *Of Love and Chivalry: An Anthology of Middle English Romance*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows, Everyman's Library (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), 73–146: l. 1010–20. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number. The story exists in numerous versions, including an eleventh-century Latin verse epistle and a *chanson de geste* of ca. 1200. The Middle English expands a version of the Anglo-Norman *Amys e Amillyoun* (ca. 1200) and exists in four manuscript versions.
  17. *Sir Isumbras*, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. by Mills, 125–47, ll. 41–42. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number. The work exists in nine manuscripts, more than any other Middle English romance. It has no known source but is related to the legend of St Eustace.
  18. These works date from the early fifteenth century and 1350–1400, respectively.
  19. *Sir Gowther*, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. by Mills, 148–68: ll. 4–6. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number. The work exists in two manuscripts.
  20. In *Robert le Diable*, the child is yielded to the devil's power at birth and thus drawn towards evil; *Sir Gowther* adds the detail of Gowther's demonic conception. On clerical contexts, see further my *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 218–28, and Neil Cartlidge, "Therof seyus clerkus": Slander, Rape and *Sir Gowther*, in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 135–47.
  21. *Sir Orfeo*, in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. by Sands, 185–200: l. 46. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number. The work exists in three manuscripts, including the Auchinleck manuscript.
  22. On Chaucer, see also my 'Voices and Visions', 416–18, and 'Mind, Breath, and Voice', 126–32.
  23. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (1987; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Fragment A, ll. 2, 9. All subsequent references to Chaucer's works are to this edition, cited by line number.



24. See further the work of Charles Fernyhough, including ‘The Dialogic Mind: A Dialogic Approach to the Higher Mental Functions’, *New Ideas in Psychology* 14 (1996): 47–62, ‘Alien Voices and Inner Dialogue: Towards a Developmental Account of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations’, *New Ideas in Psychology* 22 (2004): 49–68, *Pieces of Light: The New Science of Memory* (London: Profile, 2012), and, in particular, *The Voices Within: The History and Science of How We Talk to Ourselves* (London: Profile Books-Wellcome Collection, 2017).
25. See William F. MacLehose, ‘Fear, Fantasy and Sleep in Medieval Medicine’, in *Emotions and Health, 1200–1700*, ed. by Elena Carrera, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Traditions* 168 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 67–94.
26. See Tasioulas, “‘Dying of Imagination’”, in particular, 213–19.
27. Love-sickness is termed *amor hereos* in a number of medieval medical texts: the term originates in Greek *eros*, but is influenced by Latin *heros*, hero, and *herus*, master; Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* uses the term ‘heroick love’. See further explanatory notes to *The Knight’s Tale*, lines 1355–76, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 831.
28. See Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De rerum proprietatibus* (1601; Frankfurt, 1964) 5.3 and John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things*, ed. by M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1.73. Trevisa instances ‘grete thoughtes of sorwe, and of to grete studie and of drede’, but not love specifically.
29. Gerard de Berry, *Glosses on the Viaticum*, in Mary Frances Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and Its Commentaries* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 198ff, and Tasioulas, “‘Dying of Imagination’”, 218.
30. See further the review paper by Eleanor Longden, Anna Madill and Mitch G. Waterman, ‘Dissociation, Trauma, and the Role of Lived Experience: Toward a New Conceptualization of Voice Hearing’, *Psychological Bulletin* 138 (2012): 28–76.

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## Staging Conversion: Preternatural Voices and Visions in the Medieval Drama

*Mark Chambers*

At the turning point in the Middle Dutch play of *Jan van Beverley* (*John of Beverley*, printed ca. 1512), the titular saint finds himself wholly in a state of sin, having raped and murdered his own sister, burying her body in a pit.<sup>1</sup> A narrator relates how John, after committing these terrible deeds, ‘was seized with such a great fatigue that he had to sleep, and when he sat and slept, a voice cried out from heaven [*riep er een stemme wten hemel*] and spoke to him in this manner’:

Oh John, what sin you have wrought,  
You were once a holy hermit,  
Now you have lost all your sanctity,  
And are bereft of all your virtue,  
Because you have believed the devil,  
Who falsely has deceived you.<sup>2</sup>

John then wakes up afraid (*verscricht*), exclaiming:

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I grow fearful in my soul,  
 Here where I sat and slept  
 I heard a voice call to me [*me een stemme toe riep*],  
 So that from within I am afraid.  
 I have done a thing that sorely afflicts me  
 Because my conscience was totally overwhelmed.<sup>3</sup>

Here, the (presumably) Flemish playwright employs a well-established theatrical device for representing the process of active conversion in the late-medieval drama: a heavenly voice calling, in this case under the guise of a divinely initiated dream, whilst the errant sinner is sleeping. The nature of the play's survival means that we do not have stage directions, and there are few extra-dialogical indications of its staging.<sup>4</sup> However, the text lends itself to a setting involving some sort of heavenly locus near to John—such as a heaven-stage, scaffold or similar—from which the heavenly voice may 'cry out'. Whatever the nature of the staging, the effect of the voice-hearing is immediate and results in the play's primary dramatic turn: John wakes fearful and repentant, fully acknowledging the preternatural intervention which has left his conscience 'totally overwhelmed' (*al versaecht*). Knowledge of his sinfulness eventually causes John to go out into the wilderness in a state of apparent madness. Going about on all fours 'like an animal / On hands and on feet like a beast', the would-be saint is transformed into a wild man, echoing the popular Nebuchadnezzar or 'hairy penitent' tradition (Plate 6.1).<sup>5</sup>

### THE DIGBY MAGDALEN'S 'GOST OF GOODNESSE'

The overwhelming of the sinner's conscience by an otherworldly voice or vision (or both) is a frequently employed means of representing and effecting conversion in the late-medieval drama, carrying on into the early modern period. A version of this sequence, for example, informs the chief dramatic turn in the late fifteenth-century English 'hybrid' play of *Mary Magdalene*, found in the Digby manuscript.<sup>6</sup> This ostensive saint's or 'miracle' play about the Magdalen brings in a range of allegorical and supernatural characters in its dramatising of Mary's legend, including the World, the Flesh, the Devil (Satan) and the seven Deadly Sins. The opening of the play also brings in a novel psychological motivation for Mary's fall, and one which differs from other versions of the story: it suggests that Mary's spiritually weakened state is caused by the death of her father, Cyrus: 'For my father I haue had grett heuynesse— / Whan I rememyr, my mynd waxit mort' (ll. 454–55).<sup>7</sup> Taking advantage of



**Plate 6.1** The devil appearing to St. John disguised as an angel; woodcut from *Die Historie van Jan van Beverley*, orig. printed by Thomas van der Noot (Brussels, ca. 1512) (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren [dbnl.org])

her vulnerability, Satan and his minions mount their attack on Mary, first through a physical assault on Magdalen Castle in an allegorising scene which momentarily transforms the castle into a figurative moral redoubt.<sup>8</sup> When this fails, the evil characters focus on tempting Mary, sending in the vice Lechery to coax her out of the castle (ll. 415ff.). Once Mary is won over by flattery, she goes to a tavern where she is wooed by Lechery's fellow vice, Pride, masquerading as the gallant 'Curiosity'.<sup>9</sup> Like John of Beverley in the Flemish play who had also been falsely deceived by 'the devil', the Digby Mary Magdalen finds herself tempted into sin by a literal devil-in-disguise. It is telling that in both plays, the protagonists' conversions, either to sin or to repentance, are initiated by some manner of otherworldly intervention: an angel, a devil, heavenly voices, vigorous personifications and so on. Of course, in the drama such extra-terrestrial characters are inevitably staged. In the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, in fact, many of these preternatural machinations may function, to some degree, to distance the saint from the more scurrilous details of her legendary portrayal.<sup>10</sup>

Mary eventually departs from the tavern alone but shadowed by her Bad Angel. She makes her way to an arbour near the house of Simon the Leper, remaining seemingly unaware of Bad Angel's presence. Here she lies down in 'an arbour', beneath Bad Angel's gaze, in order to await 'some lovyr [...] / That me is wont to halse and kysse' (ll. 570–71). Mary's Good Angel then enters the playing space to deliver a short *planctus* over the sleeping, would-be saint:

Woman, woman, why art þou so onstabyll?  
 Ful bytterly thys blysse it wol be bowth!  
 Why art þou aʒens God so veryabyll?  
 [...] Salue for þi sowle must be sowth,  
 And leve þi werkys wayn and veryabyll! (ll. 588–95)

Good Angel here establishes his character's nature in relation to the availability of mercy, saying, 'Remembyr þe on *mercy*, make þi sowle clyre! / *I am þe gost of goodnesse þat so wold þe gydde*' (ll. 600–01, my emphasis). As a dramatic tableau, this image of her Good Angel standing over Mary, in 'þe place' (l. 563, s.d.), offering to 'gydde' her to mercy, represents a literalising of detail from the play's primary source. In the *Legenda aurea* (*Golden Legend*), the wayward Mary is described as being '*nutu inspirata divino*' (guided by the divine will), which prompts her to travel to the



house of Simon the Leper where she will eventually encounter Jesus.<sup>11</sup> In the Digby play, however, this acting of the Holy Spirit on Mary is actualised *in platea*, ‘on the stage’ as it were, through borrowing a stock character from the morality play genre to impersonate and body forth the operation of supernatural inspiration: the action of the divine will.

Joanne Findon has suggested similarities between Good Angel in this scene and some of the otherworldly figures who affect change on sleeping protagonists in the medieval ‘penitential’ romances: Dame Tryamour and her serving women in *Sir Launfal*, for example, or the lady and her handmaidens with the healing ointment for Gawain in *Ywain and Gawain*.<sup>12</sup> However, it is clear that a dynamic is at work in the Digby play wholly different than from that of these medieval romances. Good Angel’s role is limited to this speech in the arbour and to a brief prayer later on (ll. 705–21), and he is (at least) visually opposed by his moral contrary: Bad Angel is present in the scene throughout. Yet Bad Angel remains oddly passive. Like the two tutelary angels in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, neither angel addresses the other, nor do they acknowledge one another’s presence.<sup>13</sup> Bad Angel simply stands idly by whilst Good Angel’s oneiric reprimand works on Mary subliminally, disabling the pernicious achievements made by the vices earlier in the play. When she wakes, Mary seems to recognise Good Angel’s efforts, as she acknowledges the ‘speryt of goodnesse’ as the cause of her conversion: ‘A, *how þe speryt of goodnesse hat promyt me þis tyde, / And temtyd me with tytyll of trew perfythnesse!*’ (ll. 602–3, my emphasis). However, her subsequent lines call the nature of Good Angel’s agency into question: ‘O Lord, wo xall put me from þis peynfulnesse? / A, *woo xal to mercy be my gostly gyde?*’ (ll. 608–9, my emphasis). In a matter of a few lines, Mary’s Good Angel becomes reconfigured as a product of her dream, despite his apparent agency in prompting Mary to ‘goodnesse’ and tempting her towards ‘trew perfythnesse’. Unlike the heavenly voice in the play of *Jan van Beverley*, a voice both heard and consciously acknowledged by the protagonist, the oneiric counsel Mary receives in the Digby play is staged in the manner of a kind of compellingly recollected dream. The play’s use of morality-play character types fades away after her conversion, just in time for Mary’s new ‘gostly’ (*i.e.* ‘spiritual’, rather than ‘supernatural’) guide, Jesus, to make his entrance (ll. 610ff.).

Having a guardian or guiding angel prompt oneiric conversion is a common feature of saints and miracle plays, including other versions of the Magdalen legend. In a late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century passion play from Benediktbeuern, for example, Mary is visited by an

angel no fewer than three times whilst asleep, rather than just the once.<sup>14</sup> In this early Continental play, however, the repeated angelic visits to Mary cannot be considered attempts at a dramatic mimesis of ‘voice-hearing’. The whole feel and quality of the *Benediktbeuern* production differ from the later English play, including aspects of its dramaturgy. In *Benediktbeuern*, the angel enters the playing space in solemn fashion, singing ‘*O Maria Magdalena, nova tibi nuntio*’ (‘O Mary Magdalen, I proclaim news to you’). It then relates to the audience that the saviour Jesus has arrived at the house of Simon the Leper (ll. 56ff.). The angel’s song has no apparent effect on Mary: she wakes up oblivious and goes to find a merchant in order to buy more cosmetics. The same formal sequence of action is repeated using the exact same text, Mary neither acknowledging the angel’s presence nor responding to its song (nor is the angel even provided with an exit).<sup>15</sup> Compared to the Digby play, then, the action of the *Benediktbeuern* Passion remains static, a series of *tableaux vivants* played out to music with the sung Latin dialogue punctuated by regular interjections from the choir (*e.g.* ll. 76ff.). The *Benediktbeuern* play represents an earlier, more ritualistic liturgical drama, with the details of Mary’s conversion staged in a highly stylised manner. The Digby play, on the other hand, seems to attempt a degree of pseudo-psychological representation in its staging of the workings of preternatural inspiration. Mary’s Good Angel, in essence, ‘enacts’ the process of conversion thought to be initiated by the intervention of the divine will. Whilst its mimesis is far from naturalistic, the Digby play does offer passing figurations of the operation of preternatural forces on the psyche of its protagonist.

### ON THE WAYS OF (STAGE) ANGELS

A nuanced discussion of late-medieval angelology would be too lengthy for the present essay. Theologically, the necessity of *seeing* divine representatives such as angels is in part necessitated by apophatic considerations of scriptural authority. In the light of Exodus 33:20—‘Thou canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live’—angels become necessary deifying objects of contemplation.<sup>16</sup> They are the comprehensible representatives of the divine.

Suffice it to say that angels and their counterpart devils and demons are ubiquitous to all medieval dramatic genres, and angels frequent the drama’s *locis* and *plateas*, fulfilling a number of important roles: divine messengers, bearers of theopathic revelations, tutelary guardians and so

forth. As suggested for the Digby *Mary Magdalene* and *Jan van Beverley*, the role of tutelary or inspiring angel can serve as a means to dramatise a phenomenon that would be rendered abstract in non-dramatic narratives (such as chronicles or legends). In fact, putting embodied, spiritual agents on the stage can serve to literalise contemporary conceptualisations of active conversion. In allegorical drama, the so-called morality plays, for example, the action of conversion is typically represented by an act of stage violence, performed by a character who represents and embodies an abstract spiritual agent. For instance, in the epic play of *The Castle of Perseverance* (ca. 1425), the protagonist Humanum Genus' initial repentance is only achieved when a character named Penitencia rides into the acting space and literally pierces him through the heart with a lance (the 'poynt of penaunce').<sup>17</sup> The effect is the conversion of the sinner by an unsolicited act of stage violence. Similarly, in *Mankind* (ca. 1465), the character Mercy rescues the suicidal Mankind at the very last moment by chasing away the play's vice characters with a *bales* (a scourge or whip for shiving).<sup>18</sup> This is, in fact, a defining feature of allegorical drama: a personified virtue, vice, holy sacrament, spiritual agent, *etc.*, intervening physically to prompt a character's conversion and initiate a turning point in the play's action.

In the morality plays, then, the activity of preternatural voice-hearing and vision is often manifested as an act of violence performed by personified abstraction. Peopled with active personifications like 'Penitence' and universals like a 'Mankind', the morality genre often employs a violent *physical* act or full-blown psychomachia as a means of initiating a character's necessary change-of-heart. However, for plays set in the ostensible 'real' world—biblical plays, saints' plays, miracle plays and so forth—visions and voice-hearings do the converting. And these are typically realised by a set of conventional otherworldly characters, such as the guardian or tutelary angel. As we have seen, the legendary-historical protagonists in plays such as *Mary Magdalene* or *Jan van Beverley* are converted not by some direct physical assault, but by voice and vision—by a spiritual 'overwhelming' of the character's reason, rather than by force.

The use of such characters reflects a commonplace of late-medieval religious belief, expressed in St Augustine's dictum in *De diversis quaestionibus* that 'each and every visible thing in this world has an angelic power set over it' [*unaquaeque res visibilis in hoc mundo habet potestatem angelicam sibi praepositam*].<sup>19</sup> On the medieval and early modern stage,

their visibility and audibility being a given, such characters become useful sources of motivation and conversion, proving an extremely popular character type. In the English drama alone, the Digby Mary, *Humanum Genus* and *Dr Faustus* are all framed and affected by a pair of ‘proper’ (*i.e.* assigned to individual) angels. With Mary—with a saint—it is telling that her angels act on her oneirically.

### STAGING DREAM VISIONS

Following late-antique and patristic tradition, medieval dream theory tended to make a distinction between those dreams that were thought to have somatic aetiologies (*i.e.* those caused by an individual’s physical state) and those attributed to some sort of external spiritual agent, such as an angel or demon.<sup>20</sup> There is little scope in this essay to address the various sources at length, but it is clear that medieval dramatists, as with their non-dramatic antecedents and analogues, were at least obliquely influenced by the major works on medieval vision and dream theory. The plays they crafted often feature novel dramaturgical choices which reflect this influence. Macrobian dream theory, in particular, had a profound and lasting influence. Such theory posited a hierarchy of dream types ranging from those caused by physiological conditions (and therefore ‘false’) to those caused by divine or spiritual influence. According to Macrobius’ hierarchy, Mary’s dream in the Digby play could thus be characterised as a manner of *oraculum* (rather than *visio*, *sominum*, *visum*, *etc.*): a dream presenting a true revelation by an authoritative, otherworldly figure—in Mary’s case her ‘proper’ or guardian angel.<sup>21</sup>

Another highly influential late antique theorist, the Neoplatonist Calcidius, identifies a near-identical dream category he terms *admonitio*, representing the kind of dreams that ‘*diuinis potestatibus consulentibus praemonstrantur [...] cum angelicae bonitatis consiliis regimur atque admonemur*’ (‘are shown as predictions by divine powers looking out [for us] [...] when we are ruled or admonished by the counsels of angelic goodness’).<sup>22</sup> In Calcidius’ hierarchy, the *admonitio* was a category below that of *spectaculum* or ‘waking revelation’. One might suggest that this is the kind of vision John of Beverley ultimately experiences in the Flemish play, with its ‘heavenly voice’ (*stemme wten hemel*), dreamt by the protagonist before he awakes to acknowledge its presence consciously. Moreover, both the Digby Mary and Johns’ dreams can be seen to accord with Calcidius’ category *admonitio*, with John’s vision transformed into

a *spectaculum* or ‘waking revelation’ upon his waking. Both playwrights employ elements of stagecraft that serve to literalise the particularities of their saint’s ‘hearings’: the Digby play through the mouth of the morality genre’s Good Angel, and *Jan van Beverley* through its ‘heavenly voice’, an effect undoubtedly staged *ad locum* near the *platea* where the protagonist is sleeping. Voices and visions are necessarily placed ‘on the stage’, acting inside the same physical frame as the actors playing their recipients.

Macrobean and Calcidian categories of divinely inspired vision, both oneiric and waking, were perpetuated and further developed by later patristic writers, including such influential theologians as Tertullian (AD ca. 160–230), St Augustine (AD 354–430) and Gregory the Great (AD ca. 540–604). Each of these authorities has something to say about the activity of external agents.<sup>23</sup> At the end of his *De Genesi ad litteram* (*The Meaning of Genesis*), Augustine attempts to categorise ‘spiritual’ visions through their epistemological relationship to human perception more generally. When he discusses the various somatic and supernatural causes of dreams and visions, Augustine posits a clear moral distinction between the types of external agents acting on the psyche: ‘*per corporalem visionem, et per imagines corporalium quae demonstrantur in spiritu, et boni instruunt, et mali fallunt*’ (‘by bodily vision, and by the images of bodily realities exhibited in the spirit, good spirits instruct and evil ones deceive’).<sup>24</sup> Whilst Augustine’s interest here is primarily epistemological, his theory foregrounds the idea of a bifurcation of such external agents. In fact, one of Augustine’s chief contributions to medieval dream theory was to emphasise the moral dimension of earlier models by defining the ‘good’ and ‘evil’ spirits that work either to instruct or deceive.<sup>25</sup>

Gregory the Great built on the work of earlier theorists to construct his six-part hierarchical classification, including what he calls ‘*reuelatio*’: a species of Macrobius’ *oraculum* and Calcidius’ *admonitio*. Gregory’s *reuelatio* refers to dreams which he says arise ‘*ex mysterio reuelationis*’ (‘from the mystery of a revelation’).<sup>26</sup> Such belief in revelatory dream visions caused by angels continued throughout the medieval period, with later theologians such as Raymond Lull (1232–1316) attempting to offer reasons why oneiric visitations were preferable to waking ones:

A good angel sometimes makes men dream about doing certain good works, so that they take care to do those [works] when they are awake. [...] God reveals many truths to men in dreams, because they are more innocent while asleep than while awake, and therefore a good angel can

better share with men in sleeping than in waking and reveal to them truth on the part of God.

[*Onus Angelus Aliquando facit homines Somniare ad faciendum aliqua bona opera, ut illa procurent facere, quando vigilabunt. [...] DEUS in somniis revelat multas veritates hominibus, quia in dormiendo sunt magis innocents, quam in vigilando; & ideo bonus Angelus meliùs potest participare cum hominibus in dormiendo, quàm in vigilando, & illis revelare veritatem ex parte DEI.*]<sup>27</sup>

In his defining of *reuelatio*, Gregory referred to Joseph's dream from Matthew 2:13 as the prime scriptural example of visions arising 'ex mysterio reuelationis'. This brief biblical episode—in which the angel warns Joseph to take the Holy Family and flee into Egypt ('The Flight into Egypt')—became the archetypal precedent for the oneiric activity of 'good spirits' for later theologians and natural philosophers. The English Dominican Robert Holcot (ca. 1290–1349), for example, echoes Gregory in referring to Joseph's dream in his influential work on the *Book of Wisdom* (*In librum Sapientiae*):

dreams are sometimes begun in us by good spirits, as is clear in Matthew 2, concerning the angel that appeared in Joseph's sleep, and in other parts of scripture.

[*originantur in nobis nonnunquam somnia spiritibus bonis, sicut patet Mat. ij. de angelo quae apparuit in somnis ioseph & in alijs scripture locis.*]<sup>28</sup>

Writing in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Robert Holcot and Raymund Lull belonged to that generation of later medieval scholars who attempted to reconcile the late antique and patristic traditions with the 'new' style Aristotelian dream theory, with its preference for somatic aetiologies.<sup>29</sup> Despite an increasing conviction in physiological and other natural causes for dreams, however, Holcot and other natural philosophers continued to cite Joseph's angelic encounter in Matthew as proof of the possibility of external spiritual causation.

Of course, this brief episode in Matthew's Gospel would find elaborate and repeated treatment on the late-medieval stage: Joseph's dream of the angel features in all of the great, extant English 'mystery play' collections, including York, Towneley, Chester, and N-Town, proving one of the more popular biblical episodes for medieval playwrights.<sup>30</sup> The dramaturgy employed in the 'Joseph' plays demonstrates another response to the contemporary drama's conceptualisation of preternatural vision

and voice-hearing. The York Marshalls' play on the 'Flight into Egypt' is typical: it presents an angel, later identified as Gabriel, rousing Joseph and commanding him to pay attention:

**ANGELUS:** Wakyn, Joseph, and take entent.  
 My sawes schall seece thy sorowe sare;  
 Be noght hevy, thi happe is hentte,  
 Therefore I bidde thee slepe no mare.<sup>31</sup>

Joseph's timorous response shows that he hears, but initially does not see the angelic messenger. Indeed, he comes across as one confused and only half awake:

**JOSEPH:** A, myghtfull Lorde, whatevere that mente?  
 So swete a voyce herde I nevere ayre.  
 But what arte thou with steven so shyлле  
 Thus in my slepe that spekis me till?  
 To me appere  
 And late me here  
 What that thou was. (ll. 41–47)

Joseph's 'A, myghtfull Lorde' is of that sort of ubiquitous apostrophic address common to medieval dramatic monologue. On stage, such prayers to heaven positively cry out for a realised, enacted response—a staged voice or visitation by a heavenly figure—as the saint or deity is directly importuned *ex machina*. Joseph's acknowledgement of the 'sweetness' of the angel's voice also gives some indication of proper casting: although Gabriel is not required to sing at this point in the play, the actor playing him would have been chosen in part for his pleasing voice quality. Often, beardless young men or (male) choristers were cast as angels.<sup>32</sup> Despite the voice being 'swete', however, Joseph's initial appeal 'to me appere' demands a *visual* response, on the stage, by the heretofore unseen 'steven so shyлле' ('voice so melodious'). At this point in the dialogue, the angel's voice remains unrecognised, its message undelivered, its intended hearer befuddled. It may be so evident that it scarcely needs pointing out, but in scenes such as these, there is a passing *frisson* of dramatic irony created, with the audience permitted to see as well as hear the familiar biblical miracle whilst the protagonist lingers in his confusion.

Richard Rastall's analysis of the use of angelic music in the drama demonstrates that characters who are initially lacking in faith or in need

of reformation are normally visited by speaking, rather than singing, angels. What is more, such characters' reactions are almost always those of stunned confusion.<sup>33</sup> This is certainly the case for York's Joseph. As Gabriel makes himself fully apparent to Joseph, he anticipates Joseph's fear at the sight of his angelic 'brightness' and tells him not to be afraid. In fact, visiting angels in the drama frequently begin with the phrase 'fear not' or 'have no dread', echoing Christ's words from Luke 24:36 ('*Pax vobis [...] nolite timere*')<sup>34</sup>:

**ANGELUS:** Joseph, have thou no drede,  
 Thou shalte witte or I passe;  
 Therfore to me take hede.  
 For I am sente to thee,  
 Gabriell, Goddis aungell bright,  
 Is comen to bidde thee flee  
 With Marie and hir worthy wight, [...] (ll. 48–54)

Here Gabriel refers to himself as God's 'bright' angel. Any casual survey of the biblical plays will show that descriptions of dread-inspiring 'brightness' are commonplace for angelic visions on the early stage. In general terms, an angel's appearance to humankind was fashioned to reflect the theological notion that heavenly light was not normally accorded to mortal perception.<sup>35</sup> The appearance of angels to human sight was thought to be a means of making visible the uncreated, and therefore unseeable, light of the Creator. The brightness of angelic appearance was a visual effect of the angel's role as a theophany: a 'divine apparition or a self-manifestation of God'.<sup>36</sup> In the medieval drama, this visual effect was represented sartorially: messenger angels are typically costumed in white or brilliant clerical garments worn with a silver- or gold-painted face, or else with a gilded mask.<sup>37</sup> Later Joseph reflects on Gabriel's 'bright' and potentially 'dreadful' appearance, telling Mary that 'An aungell bright that come fro blisse / This tythandis tolde withouten drede, / And wakynnd me oute of my slepe' (ll. 125–27).

Once he has seen and recognised the angel, Joseph exclaims, 'Ayelastand Lorde, loved mott thou be / That thy swete sande wolde to me sende' (ll. 63–64). Again, he emphasises the pleasing quality of Gabriel's voice: both 'swete' and 'shylle'. His term 'sande' (*sond*, *sonde*, *sounde*, etc.) is used elsewhere in the drama to address angelic visitors, evoking the origin of Latin *angelus*, 'messenger'.<sup>38</sup> Gabriel, the archetypal



celestial emissary, becomes, in the York play, a staged representation of Gregory's *reuelatio*: the oneiric voice or vision appearing 'ex mysterio reuelationis'. In rousing Joseph, his role transforms into one representing Calcidius' *spectaculum* or 'waking vision', complete with melodious voice and 'dreadfully' bright costume. Casting, costume and other dramaturgical choices such as these indicate some of the ways in which the drama responded creatively to medieval conceptualisations of preternatural visions and voice-hearing found in medieval and legendary precedent. And, in the biblical drama, representing such voices and visions 'on stage' came to be achieved by a set of conventions that were inevitably inspired by, and inspiring other forms of popular art.<sup>39</sup> In the drama, however, both voice and vision coalesce in these representations, creating living, breathing embodiments of the phenomenon of spiritual visitation that are unique to the dramatic art.

Other episodes in the drama reflect the widespread belief in the bifurcation of the external spiritual agents thought to inspire dreams, reflecting Augustine's '*boni instruunt, et mali fallunt*'. As mentioned above, Robert Holcot, following Gregory the Great, refers to Joseph's dream at the Flight into Egypt as an example of 'good' oneiric instruction. Holcot goes on to cite another infamous dream as scriptural archetype for 'bad' dream visions, noting that 'sometimes dreams are begun by evil spirits, as is clear concerning Pilate's wife' [*originantur nonnunquam somnia a malis spiritibus: sicut patet de vxore Pilati*].<sup>40</sup> Like Joseph's dream from the same gospel, the 'Dream of Pilate's Wife' from Matthew 27:19 was another popular scriptural episode, and one frequently dramatised. In the English drama, it appears in both the N-Town collection and the York cycle.<sup>41</sup> The York Tapiters' and Couchers' play is the more sustained of the two. It has the character of Diabolus (Devil) go to Pilate's wife, Percula, and whisper in her ear whilst she slumbers. Diabolus wants Percula to stop Jesus' trial before her husband Pilate, in order to sabotage the impending salvific Crucifixion and Resurrection:

**DIABOLUS:** [...] I will on stiffely in þis stounde  
 Unto ser Pilate wiffe, pertely, and putte me in prese.  
 O woman, be wise and ware, and wonne in þi witte  
 Ther schall a gentilman, Jesu, unjustely be juged  
 Byfore thy husband in haste, [...]. (ll. 166–70)

Percula then wakes up in a panic, ‘drecchid [tormented] with a dreme full dredfully to dowte’ (l. 177), and again, the immediate effect of the staged dream vision is confusion and dread. She asks her son to relay the dream to Pilate, expressing the disturbing nature of her oneiric voice-hearing:

All naked þis nyght as I napped  
 With tene [trouble] and with trayne [deception] was I trapped,  
 With a swevene þat swiftly me swapped [struck me]  
 Of one Jesu, þe juste man þe Jewes will undoo. (ll. 187–90)

Percula’s son then travels to Pilate’s court where he relates the dream to his father. However, the scheming villains Annas and Caiaphas reject the dream as a deception, suggesting that Jesus must have used some kind of witchcraft to summon a demonic familiar or *sand*:

**CAYPHAS:** [...] but þis is but a skaunce [trick],  
 He with wicchecrafte þis wile has he wrought.  
 Some feende of his sand [as his agent] has he sente  
 And warned youre wiffe or he wente. (ll. 292–95)  
 [...]

**ANNA:** Yha, thurgh his fantome [magic] and falshed and fendes-craft  
 He has wrought many wondir where he walked full wyde,  
 Wherefore, my lorde, it wer leeffull his liffe were hym rafte. (ll. 298–300)

Again, reports of externally inspired dreams result in incredulity and fear, here rendering Diabolus’ attempt to forestall Jesus’ mission unsuccessful.

In his work *De anima*, the early Christian theologian Tertullian says a great deal about the spiritual attacks of malign spirits. He suggests, for example, that a sleeping saint is a much more pliable mark for an evil spirit’s influence than one awake and ‘vigorous’:

Therefore, just as the mercy of God abounds for the pagans, so the temptations of the Devil attack the saints; he never relaxes his vigour, trying to trap them while they are asleep, if he is unsuccessful while they are awake. [*Sicut ergo dignatio dei et in ethnicos, ita et temptatio mali et in sanctos, a quibus nec interdiu absistit, ut uel dormientibus obrepat qua potest, si uigilantibus non potest.*]<sup>42</sup>

Such devilish machinations are of course a mainstay of the medieval drama. Just as Diabolus in the York Tapiters’ and Couchers’ play takes

advantage of Pilate's wife's sleeping to try and manipulate her behaviour, so other supernatural villains on the medieval stage work to affect the unguarded sleeper. In the morality play *Mankind*, for instance, the devil Titivillus appears unable to convert Mankind to sinning whilst he is awake. When the dutiful Mankind is out working in his field, Titivillus goes invisible, sewing the earth 'wyth drawke and wyth durnell' (l. 537) to make his work more laborious. This causes Mankind to despair and lay down his spade, which Titivillus symbolically removes. Next, Titivillus causes Mankind to abandon his prayers in order to go and relieve himself (ll. 560–68)—an instance of the play's frequent scatological humour. In the end, however, Titivillus only succeeds in converting Mankind once he has fallen asleep: the devil whispers in Mankind's ear whilst he dreams, telling him that his 'Ghostly Father' Mercy has been killed and is therefore no longer available, either literally or spiritually (ll. 594–600).<sup>43</sup> Echoing Tertullian's precept that the '*temptio mali*' will attempt to 'trap them while they are asleep, if he is unsuccessful while they are awake', Titivillus succeeds in effecting Mankind's conversion through a dream when his waking efforts have proven ineffective.

There are several examples in the biblical drama where oneiric visitations are played even more broadly for laughs. Joseph's other famous angelic vision, the so-called Joseph's Trouble About Mary episode drawn from Matthew 1:18–25, becomes a vehicle for farce. In the York *Pewterers'* and *Founders'* play, the character of Joseph is represented as an exhausted old man, which ratchets up his inevitable confusion and leads to a stereotypical crankiness:

**ANGELUS:** Waken, Joseph, and take bettir kepe  
To Marie, þat is þi felawe fest.

**JOSEPH:** A, I am full werie, lefe, late me slepe,  
Forwandered and walked in þis forest.

**ANGELUS:** Rise uppe, and slepe na mare,  
þou makist her herte full sare  
þat loves þe[e] alther best.

**JOSEPH:** We! Now es þis a farly fare  
For to be cached bathe here and þare,  
And nowhere may have rest.  
Say, what arte þou? Tell my this thyng.

**ANGELUS:** I, Gabriell, Goddis aungell full even,  
 þat has tane Marie to my kepyng,  
 And sente es þe[e] to say with steven [openly]  
 In lele wedlak þo lede þe[e] [...].<sup>44</sup>

Despite Joseph's characteristic disbelief ('And is this soth, aungell, þou saise?'), l. 276), the vision or 'sight' of the angel quickly pacifies him, prompting a change of heart: 'Nowe lorde God full wele is me / That evyr þat I þis sight suld see, / I was never ar so light' (ll. 283–85). Once again, the oneiric visitation is first met with fear and incredulity, here played to encourage the audience's laughter. Again, it results in the conversion of the protagonist, that necessary *metanoia* or 'change of heart' that will initiate the subsequent action. Again and again in the medieval drama, conversion initiated by an external voice and/or vision results in the play's dramatic turning point.<sup>45</sup>

### 'SHEPHERDING' VISIONS AND VOICE-HEARING

One of the most infamous examples of the comic confusion caused by angelic visitation—in this case in the manner of a *spectaculum*—occurs in the Chester Painters' and Glaziers' play of the 'Shepherds' (from Luke 2:8–14). Midway through the play, the three *pastors* and their *garcius* (boy/servant) kneel down to pray. They ask for some sort of explanation for the miraculous star they see shining in the distance. 'Send us some sight', pleads Garcius:

Why that it is sent.  
 Before this night  
 Was I never soe afright  
 Of the firmament.<sup>46</sup>

As each of the shepherds offers a verse prayer requesting a response, the expectation of a staged preternatural voice or vision, or some manner of *deus ex machina*, builds to dramatic inevitability. Suddenly they hear the singing of Luke 2.13–14: '*Tunc cantet Angelus: "Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis"*' (s.d., l. 358), and this results in the customary fear and confusion:

**I PASTOR:** [...]
 Fellowes in feare,  
 May yee not here  
 This muting [singing] on highe?

**II PASTOR:** In 'glore' and in 'glere' [nonsense words]:

Yett noe man was nere  
Within our sight.

**III PASTOR:** Naye, yt was a 'glorye'.

Nowe am I sorye  
Bowt [That there is not] more songe.

**GARCIUS:** Of this strange storye

Such mirth is merye;  
I would have amonge [share of it].

**I PASTOR:** As I then deemed,

'Selsis' it seemed  
That hee songe soe.

**II PASTOR:** Whyle the light leemed,

A wreaking [vengeance] mee weened;  
I wyst never whoo. (ll. 359–76)

In this case, the shepherds and their *garcio* have heard but not fully comprehended the angelic singing, and they have seen but not fully understood the heavenly light which 'leemed' ('gleamed'). Much comic business is made out of their resultant confusion. After the experience, they spend over fifty lines trying to work out exactly what they have heard, what the words sung by the angel could mean:

**III PASTOR:** What songe was this, saye yee,

That he sange to us all three?  
Expounded shall yt bee  
Erre wee hethen passe;  
For I am eldest of degree  
And alsoe best, as seemes mee,  
Hit was 'grorus glorus' with a 'glee'.  
Hit was neyther more nor lasse.

**GARCIUS:** Nay, yt was 'glorus glarus glorius';

Methinke that note went over the howse,  
A seemely man hee was, and curiouse;  
But soone awaye hee was.

**I PASTOR:** Nay, yt was ‘glorus glarus’ with a ‘glo’,  
 And mych of ‘celsis’ was thereto.  
 As ever have I rest or woo,  
 Much hee spake of ‘glas’. (ll. 377–92)

Much is also made of the quality of the angel’s singing, with Pastor I saying, ‘Up as a pye hee pyped; / Such a loden [voice], this no lesse, / Never in my life me so lyked’ (ll. 418–20). Pastor II adds, ‘I quoked when hee so whewted [called out]’ (l. 423), reflecting the gospel accounts’ ‘*et timuerunt timore magno*’ (and they were sore afraid) whilst expressing the customary dread experienced by the receiver of unearthly visions. Pastor II is suspicious of the alien visitor: ‘By my faith, hee was some spy, / Our sheepe for to steale’ (ll. 395–96),<sup>47</sup> but the other shepherds recognise the angel as Gabriel by the quality of his voice. They continue to try to work out the significance of his message:

**I PASTOR:** Naye, on a ‘glor’ and on ‘glay’ and a ‘gly’  
 Gurd Gabryell when hee so gloryd.  
 When hee sange I might not be sorye;  
 Through my brest-bonne bletinge hee bored.

**II PASTOR:** Nay, by God, yt was a ‘gloria’,  
 Sayde Gabryell when hee sayde soe.  
 He had a mych better voyce then I have,  
 As in Heaven all other have soe. (ll. 401–8)

The confusion about the text of the Angel’s song appears, to a lesser degree, in the N-Town version as well (ll. 361–435 *passim*). In fact, variations of this same sequence of action are found in all of the biblical play collections, including N-Town, the (incomplete) York Chandelers’ play, the two Towneley ‘Shepherds’ plays (including the much-studied *Secunda pastorum*), and the Shearmen and Tailors’ play surviving from Coventry.<sup>48</sup> The Shepherds’ inability to comprehend the music of the heavens becomes the dramatic centre of these plays and is also a complete departure from the biblical narrative. In fact, confronted with the bare facts of Luke’s gospel, the ‘mystery’ playwrights found novel ways of creating dramatic interest whilst emphasising the overarching theme of naïve innocence finding its evangelical voice.

It may also be worth contemplating—although again it is a topic beyond the scope of the current essay—how the civic drama’s response

to the complexity raised by considerations of visions and voice-hearing is to treat it comically. Joseph's 'trouble' with his young wife Mary is an inherently comic episode; hence, it was played for laughs. Undoubtedly, the old man's confusion at being roused by an angel is one of the play's funniest moments and key to its comedic success. Similarly, the Shepherds' inability to comprehend the angelic voices they encounter whilst guarding their flocks by night is turned into pure farce, with one of the bumpkin Shepherds cited above concluding, matter-of-factly, that 'He had a mych better voyce then I have, / As in Heaven all other have soe'. It could very well be that the civic drama's response to 'formal attempts to disambiguate authentic from inauthentic visionary experience'<sup>49</sup> was to humanise it through comedy: to universalise such experience through the audience's shared laughter.

In the event, the staged *spectaculum* experienced by the mystery play Shepherds transforms them into the very first Christian pilgrims and evangelists.<sup>50</sup> Following its source material but adapting it freely, the biblical drama is full of such instances, where visions and/or voice-hearing mark the interaction between the mortal and the divine. Moreover, such experiences are almost always used in the plays as a means of effecting a conversion of the protagonists, prompting the primary dramatic turn and initiating the action to follow. Of course, such biblically inspired plays are replete with visions of angels, devils and other super- or preternatural characters.<sup>51</sup> However, on the medieval stage, such characters are necessarily realised by flesh-and-blood actors who would have been cast, costumed and coached to represent, through the mimesis of drama, some of the period's popular ideations of externally derived visions and voice-hearing. By its very nature, of all medieval forms of art, the drama is able to most closely mimic the perceived 'reality' of visionary experience.

### THE 'FIDELES MYSTERIA LOQUENTES'

In his discussion of visions in *De Genesi*, Augustine notes the transformative nature of preternatural experiences, which could effectively turn their recipient into either a 'true' or 'false' prophet:

But when it is an evil spirit that snatches souls away like this, it makes them into demoniacs or fanatical enthusiasts or false prophets, while when a good spirit does so, it makes them faithful speakers of mysteries or true prophets if their understanding is also enlightened.

[*Sed cum malus in haec arripit spiritus, aut daemonicos facit, aut arripitios, aut falsos prophetas: cum autem bonus, fideles mysteria loquentes, aut accedente etiam intelligentia veros prophetas.*]<sup>52</sup>

We noted above how in the Digby play of *Mary Magdalene*, the titular saint's conversion is initiated by means of a staged *oraculum*: Mary's Good Angel appearing to her and admonishing her in a dream. When she wakes, Mary refigures that interaction into an externally-derived psychological impulse, the effect of the 'speryt of goodnesse', prompting her to seek out Jesus and complete her reformation. As the play progresses, we see Mary transform not only into Augustine's *verum prophetum* or 'true prophet' through her visionary experience, but also into an agent of converting visions herself.

After the play takes the reformed Mary through her various brushes with the gospel narrative, it draws again from legendary material for the latter part of her staged life. After Jesus' Ascension, he orders an angelic messenger to appear to Mary, this time whilst she is awake, instructing her to go and convert the kingdom of Marseilles (l. 1375, s.d. and ff.). Following an extraordinary bit of stage business involving a full sailing ship and a comic exchange between the Shipman and his Boy, Mary is deposited on the shores of Marseilles where she proceeds to try to convert the King and Queen. Unable to persuade them to abandon their paganism and follow Christ through argument, Mary turns to miracles. First she destroys the temple with an earthquake in another spectacular piece of stage business, this one departing from the account in *The Golden Legend*. When this fails to convert, Mary transforms herself into an oneiric visitor in order to take the lead part in an elaborately staged dream vision: '*Here goth Mary, wyth þe angelys before hyre, to þe kynnggys bed, with lythys beryng, [...]*' (l. 1609, s.d.).<sup>53</sup> The saint's 'marvelous shewyng' works, and the King and Queen awaken, full of dread and inspired to reform:

**REX:** [...]

A marvelows shewyng in my slep I had,  
That sore me trobelyd þis same nyth—  
A fayer woman I saw in my syth,  
All in whyte was she cladd;  
Led she was wyth an angyll bryth,  
To me she spake wyth wordys sad.



**REGINA:** I trow from Good þat þey were sentt!  
 In ower hartys we may have dowte.  
 I wentt ower chambyr sholld a brentt,  
 For þe lyth þat þer was all abowth!  
 To vs she spake wordys of dred,  
 That we xuld help þem þat haue nede,  
 Wyth ower godys, so God ded byd,  
 I tell yow wythwowyntyn dowthe. (ll. 1620–33)

Appearing ‘*ex mysterio reuelationis*’, the Digby vision of Mary Magdalen, then, is transformed into a stage version of Macrobius’ *oraculum*, or Calcidius’ *admonitio*, a visionary dream arising ‘*cum angelicae bonitatis consiliis regimur atque admonemur*’. The recipient has become the voice and vision, one of the ‘*fideles mysteria loquentem*’.

Clearly, any narrative involving a saint will have elements of the miraculous, but in the medieval drama, aspects of dramaturgy and stagecraft work alongside the necessities of the form to refigure popular conceptualisations of vision and voice-hearing for the stage. The drama’s overriding ‘incarnational aesthetic’,<sup>54</sup> and its tendency towards iconographic representation, work together towards unique, dramatic expressions of visionary experience. It goes without saying that on the stage, embodied visionary agents must share the physical space with the humans they come to haunt. However, it is fascinating how such characters become the primary agents of dramatic turns, frequently positioned alongside specific elements of medieval dramaturgy, in the art form’s often unique and imaginative responses to the experience of vision and voice-hearing.

## NOTES

1. The play survives in the Dutch chapbook known as the *Historie van Jan van Beverley*, printed by Thomas van der Noot in Brussels ca. 1512; see *Historie van Jan van Beverley*, ed. by G. J. Boekenooogen (Leiden: Brill, 1903), 1–35, online edn (DBNL: 2007), accessed July 1, 2019, [https://dbnl.org/tekst/\\_jan002janv01\\_01/\\_jan002janv01\\_01.pdf](https://dbnl.org/tekst/_jan002janv01_01/_jan002janv01_01.pdf); the English translation is from Ben Parsons and Bas Jongenelen’s “‘In Which Land Were You Born?’: Cultural Transmission in the *History van Jan van Beverley*”, *Medieval English Theatre* 34 (2012): 30–76.
2. Parsons and Jongenelen, ‘In Which Land Were You Born?’, 56.
3. Ibid.

4. For background and discussion of the chapbook *Historie* as drama, as well as possible English antecedents, see Parsons and Jongenelen, 'In Which Land Were You Born?', 33–40.
5. *Ibid.*, 63 and ff. Other prominent medieval 'hairy penitents' include Sir Orfeo in the romance of *Sir Orfeo* and the eponymous hero of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain, ou Le chevalier au lion*. See also Werner Sundermann 'On Human Races, Semi-Human Beings and Monsters', in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and Its World*, ed. by Paul Allan Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 181–99; Corinne Saunders, "'The Thoughtful Maladie": Madness and Vision in Medieval Writing', in *Madness and Creativity in Literature and Culture*, ed. by Saunders and Jane Macnaughton (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2005), 67–87 at 72–78; Penelope B. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale UP, 1974), 54–94.
6. *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and E Museo 160*, EETS, OS 283, ed. by Donald C. Baker and Louis B. Hall, Jr. (Oxford: OUP, 1982), 24–95. Further references to this edition will be cited by line number(s). For discussion of the play's genre classification, see Darryll Grantley, 'Saints and Miracles', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Alan Fletcher, 2nd ed. (Cambridge and New York: CUP, 2008), 266–74.
7. In the play's primary non-biblical source, *The Golden Legend (Legenda Aurea)*; thirteenth century; attrib. Jacobus de Voragine), Mary sins because of her wealth and beauty, as 'sensuous pleasure keeps company with great wealth'; *Jacobus de Voragine: The Golden Legend, Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton UP, 1993), 375. The same motivation was adopted by most later versions (*cf. The South English Legendary*, Osborn Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wumman, etc.*), although another strand of the legend sees Mary motivated by revenge after the breaking off of her betrothal to John the Evangelist: *cf. Mirk's Festial*, EETS, ES 96, part 1, ed. by Theodor Erbe (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1905), 203.
8. Similar to the one which features, for example, in the morality play *The Castle of Perseverance; The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, EETS, OS 262 (London and New York: OUP, 1969), 1–111.
9. For more on this scene, see Robert H. Bowers, 'The Tavern Scene in the Middle English Digby Play of *Mary Magdalene*', in *All These to Teach: Essays in Honor of C. A. Robertson*, ed. by Robert A. Bryan (Gainesville, FL: U of Florida P, 1965), 15–32.
10. The account in Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wumman* (ca. 1445) may suggest a tradition which pre-empted the literal 'bringing in' of vices in the Digby play: 'Youthe, abundaunce, & eek beute, / Wych oftyn for lak

- of deu dylygence / Mynystrys bene vn-to insolence, / And of alle vycys  
 þe bryngers yn, / And so þei were in Mary Mawdelyn', *Legendys of booly  
 wumman*, by Osbern Bokenham; ed. from ms. Arundel 327, ed. by Mary S.  
 Serjeantson, EETS, OS 206 (London: OUP, 1938), 148, ll. 5397–5401.
11. *The Golden Legend*, 375; Latin text from *Legenda aurea sanctorum, sive Lombardica historia* (Strasbourg, 1481), Boston Public Library, accessed July 1, 2019, [https://archive.org/details/legendaureasanc00jaco\\_0/page/n0](https://archive.org/details/legendaureasanc00jaco_0/page/n0).
  12. Joanne Findon, 'Napping in the Arbour in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* Play', *Early Theatre* 9, no. 2 (2006): 35–55 at 40–1.
  13. For more on Faustus' Angels, see Maguire's/Thostrup's "'Fearful echoes thunder in mine ears": Hearing Voices in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*', in this volume.
  14. 'The Passion Play (Benediktbeuern)', in *Medieval Drama*, ed. and trans. by David Bevington (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge: Hackett, 2012 [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975]), 208–9, ll. 56ff. This Bavarian liturgical drama is preserved in the famous *Carmina Burana* manuscript. See Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), vol. 1, 535. Further references from Bevington's edition are cited with line numbers.
  15. This need not surprise: as the play was likely performed by a monastic community, the brother or chorister playing the angel need only 'assume' the role to sing his few lines and simply revert back to a participating audience member once they are delivered.
  16. *The Holy Bible, Conteyning the Old Testament, and the New* (London: Robert Barker, 1611), Schoenberg Centre for Electronic Text & Image (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), accessed 1 January 2020, <http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/index.cfm?TextID=kjbible>.
  17. *The Castle of Perseverance*, in *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles, EETS, OS 262 (London, New York, Toronto: OUP, 1969) 1–111 at 43, l. 1377.
  18. *Mankind*, *The Macro Plays*, EETS, OS 262, ed. by Mark Eccles (London and New York: OUP, 1969), 153–184 at 180, ll. 806–07; further references cited by line number(s). See also Mark Chambers, 'Weapons of Conversion: Mankind and Medieval Stage Properties', *Philological Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (2004): 1–11.
  19. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: De Diversis Quaestionibus Ocgintia Tribus*, ed. by Almut Mutzenbecher, Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina 44A (Brepols: Turnholt, 1975), 225, my translation.
  20. Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 21ff. Much of the following draws from Kruger's discussion.

21. As set out in Macrobius' fifth-century *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, arguably the period's most influential text on dream theory; see Kruger, *Dreaming*, 23.
22. Calcidius' '*tractus somniorum*' (fourth century) in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*; quoted from Kruger, *Dreaming*, 30–31.
23. See, for example, relevant passages in Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*, Gregory's *Dialogues* and his *Moralia in Iob*. For discussion and analysis, see Kruger, *Dreaming*, 35–82; A. H. M. Kessels, 'Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification', *Mnemosyne* series 4, no. 22 (1969): 389–424; R. A. Markus, 'The Eclipse of a Neo-Platonic Theme: Augustine and Gregory the Great on Visions and Prophecies', in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in Honour of A. H. Armstrong* (London: Variorum, 1981), 204–11.
24. *Opera Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina* [OP], ed. by J.-P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1841–79), vol. 34, 29 [liber duodecimus, caput XIV], my translation.
25. Kruger, *Dreaming*, 44–46. Augustine was echoed by numerous later medieval theorists. To give one passing but very influential example: the thirteenth-century theologian and 'Doctor universalis' Albertus Magnus (ca. 1190–1280) says that, '*in somniis fiunt revelations ab intelligentiis quae dicuntur Angeli [...], et fiunt a bonis et malis, sicut dicit Agustinus*' ('in dreams, revelations are caused by intelligences called Angels [...], and these are caused by good and evil [angels], as Augustine has said'.); *Opera omnia*, ed. by S. C. A. Borgnet, 38 vols. (Paris: Apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1890–99), XXXV, 442, my translation.
26. *Dialogues* IV.50.4: *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues*, trans. by Odo John Zimmerman, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, vol. 39 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002 [1959]), 261; Kruger, *Dreaming*, 45–47.
27. Raymundus Lullus [Raymond Lull], *Liber proverbiorum*, *Opera*, VI (Mainz, 1737; Frankfurt: Minerva, 1965), 368; Kruger, *Dreaming*, 98.
28. Robert Holcott: *Super libros sapientiae: Hagenau 1494* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1974), cap. xviii, *lectio* cci, 665, my transcription and translation. Holcot's *Book of Wisdom* was apparently a major influence on the discussion of dreams in Chaucer's *Nun's Priest Tale*: see Robert A. Pratt, 'Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams', *Speculum* 52, no. 3 (1977): 538–70.
29. Including, for example, Albertus Magnus and his fellow Aristotelian theorist Vincent of Beauvais (ca. 1190–ca. 1264); see Kruger, *Dreaming*, 93–115.
30. Of the four, York is the only true medieval, biblical play 'cycle' *per se*. Towneley is largely made up of material from York and not certainly identified with any one location (*e.g.*, Wakefield), Chester is really a

- post-Reformation antiquarian collection, whilst N-Town is hodgepodge of plays including, at its core, a separate group of plays on the life of the Virgin Mary. For a brief overview, see Peter Meredith's introduction to *The Mary Play from the N. Town Manuscript* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 1–2.
31. 'Play 18: *The Flight into Egypt*', in *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), ll. 37–40, accessed July 1, 2019, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/davidson-play-18-the-flight-to-egypt>; further references to the play will be from this edition and cited by line number(s).
  32. Richard Rastall, *The Heavenly Singing: Music in Early English Religious Drama* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 189. For more on vocal quality in early drama, see Rastall, *The Heavenly Singing*, 179–93; Audrey Ekdahl Davidson, 'High, Clear, and Sweet: Singing Early Music', in *Aspects of Early Music and Performance* (New York: AMS, 2008), 75–78.
  33. Rastall, *Heavenly Singing*, 189.
  34. *Biblia Sacra, iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam* (Rome, Tornai, Paris: Typis Societatis S. Joannis Evang., 1927).
  35. Steven Chase, *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspectives on the Ways of Angels* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 35–39.
  36. The definition is from Chase's translation of John Scotus' (Eriugena's) ninth-century work *De divisione naturae / Periphyseon* (39); discussed by Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, 35–39.
  37. Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Early Tudor England* (Aldershot, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 222–23. Incidentally, a 1392 entry in the (unpublished) *Great Guild Book* of Beverley records 'ij viseres, ij winges angeli' (2 masks and 2 [pairs of] wings for angels) for the Paradise set in the town's Corpus Christi play (East Riding Archives MS BC.II.3, f. 13r; I am grateful to Diana Wyatt for drawing this reference to my attention).
  38. Cf. the Brome play of *Abraham*: 'Owre Lord wyll send me onto thys sted / Summ maner a best for to take, / Throw his *swet sond*'; *Non-cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. by Norman Davis, EETS, SS 1 (London, New York, Toronto: OUP, 1970), 47, ll. 144–46, my emphasis. S.v. 'sond(e, n.', *Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan Digital Library Production Service (Anne Arbor, MI, 1998+), accessed July 1, 2019, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>. For discussion of the etymology of *angel* (from Latin *angelus*, 'messenger', with Greek cognate), see s.v. 'angel, n.', OED Online (OUP, July 2018), accessed July 1, 2019, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7458>; also Chase, *Angelic Spirituality*, 6.
  39. For a general discussion of the possible influence of visual art on the drama, and vice versa, see Clifford Davidson's *Drama and Art: An Introduction to the Use of Evidence from the Visual Arts for the Study of Early Drama* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1977).

40. *Robert Holcott: Super libros sapientiae*, cap. xviii, *lectio cci*, 666, my transcription and translation.
41. ‘Play 31, Satan and Pilate’s Wife; Second Trial Before Pilate’, in *The N-Town Plays*, ed. by Douglas Sugano, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), accessed July 1, 2019, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays>; ‘York (The Tapiters and Couchers), *Christ Before Pilate I: The Dream of Pilate’s Wife*’, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000) 99–111; further references from this edition cited by line number(s).
42. *Tertullianus: De anima*, ed. by J. H. Waszink [1954], Library of Latin Text, Series A (Brepols: Turnhout, 2018), cap. 47, linea 1, accessed July 1, 2019, [http://clt.brepolis.net/LLTA/pages/TextSearch.aspx?key=PTE RT0017\\_](http://clt.brepolis.net/LLTA/pages/TextSearch.aspx?key=PTE RT0017_); trans. by Kruger, *Dreaming*, 49.
43. See Chambers, ‘Weapons of Conversion’.
44. ‘York (The Pewterers and Founders), *Joseph’s Trouble About Mary*’, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*, ed. by Greg Walker (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000) 32–37; ll. 246–60; further references from this edition cited by line number(s).
45. There are, of course, many similar instances in the Continental drama. To give an isolated, non-biblical example: in the early sixteenth-century *Mystère des trois doms*, Saints Exuperius, Felician and Severinus are all simultaneously converted to Christianity by a troubling vision in their sleep whilst on an ambassadorial mission for the emperor; see Vicki L. Hamblin, *Saints at Play: The Performance Features of French Hagiographic Mystery Plays* (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, Medieval Institute Publications, 2012), 41.
46. ‘Chester (Paynters and Glaziers), *The Shepherds*’, in Walker, *Medieval Drama*, 58–69 at 64, ll. 349–52; further references from this edition cited by line number(s).
47. The threat posed by the nefarious sheep-stealer features in the Towneley *Secunda pastorum* when the character Mak steals the shepherds’ sheep and attempts to pass it off as his wife’s new-born child, hence parodying the figuring of the Christ-child as ‘Lamb of God’; ‘The Shepherds (2)’, in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by Garrett P. J. Epp, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), ll. 387ff., accessed July 1, 2019, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/epp-the-towneley-plays>.
48. ‘Play 15, The Offering of the Shepherds’, in *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), accessed July 1, 2019, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/davidson-play-15-the-offering-of-the-shepherds>; ‘The Shepherds (1)’ and ‘The Shepherds (2)’, in *The Towneley Plays*, accessed July 1, 2019, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/epp-the-tow>

- neley-plays; 'Play 16, Shepherds', *The N-Town Plays*, accessed July 1, 2019, <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sugano-n-town-plays-play-16-shepherds>; 'The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors in Coventry', in *The Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. by Pamela M. King and Clifford Davidson, EDAM Series 27 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000). The encounter with the angel in the York play text is missing, but the resulting action follows the familiar pattern.
49. I am grateful to my colleague Hilary Powell for this suggestion; email message to author, July 8, 2019.
50. Rastall, *Heavenly Singing*, 344.
51. In *Heavenly Singing* (184–86), Rastall helpfully identifies the appearances of angels in both the York and Chester cycles (184–86, Tables 7 & 8). Germane to the present study, St Paul's miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus (2 Corinthians 2–12; Acts 9:3–9) features in another stand-alone play from the Digby manuscript: *The Conversion of St Paul* (in *Late Medieval Religious Plays*, 1–24).
52. Augustine, *De Genesi*, in OP, cap. XIX, 41; trans. by Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century: On Genesis: I/13*, ed. by John E. Rotelle (NY: New City Press for the Augustinian Heritage Institute, 2002), XII.13.28, 479.
53. In *The Golden Legend*, Mary appears as a vision to the King and Queen on three consecutive nights (376–77). In the Digby play, only the last of these is dramatized.
54. The phrase is used repeatedly with regard to the biblical drama by Beatrice Groves in *Texts and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare 1592–1604* (Oxford: OUP, 2006); see also Helen Cooper, 'Shakespeare and the Mystery Plays', in *Shakespeare and Popular Culture*, ed. by S. Gillespie and N. Rhodes, Arden Critical Companions (London: Arden, 2006), 18–41.

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## Julian of Norwich, the Carrow Psalter and Embodied Cinema

*Sarah Salih*

The human being is the natural *locus of images*, a living organ for images, as it were. Notwithstanding all the devices that we use today to send and store images, it is within the human being, and only within the human being, that images are received and interpreted in a living sense; that is to say, in a sense that is ever changing and difficult to control no matter how forcefully our machines might seek to enforce certain norms.<sup>1</sup>

And after this, I saw with bodely sight in the face of the crucifixe that hung before me, in the which I beheld continually a parte of his passion: dispite, spitting, solewing, and buffeting, and many languring paines, mo than I can tell, and often changing of colour. And one time I saw how halfe the face, beginning at the ere, overeyede with drye bloud till it beclosed into the mid face. And after that the other halfe beclosed on the same wise, and therewhiles it vanished in this party, even as it cam.<sup>2</sup>

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## VISUALISING THE INVISIBLE, ENLIVENING THE INANIMATE

In the Bible, God's manifestations are typically aural. To convert St Paul, he speaks

And as he went on his journey, it came to pass that he drew nigh to Damascus; and suddenly a light from heaven shined round about him. And falling on the ground, he heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Who said: Who art thou, Lord? And he: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.<sup>3</sup>

Visual manifestations, including this light, are baffling and untransparent. God appears as a voice in a burning bush, as pillars of cloud and fire, telling Moses, 'Thou canst not see my face: for man shall not see me and live. [...] thou shalt see my back parts: but my face thou canst not see.'<sup>4</sup> Medieval Christians, however, overcame the aniconic character of the Biblical deity and insistently, creatively, variously, visualised their invisible God. Incarnation changed the rules; Christ in his historical human persona could be represented like anyone else.<sup>5</sup> The crucifix was, in Sara Ahmed's term, a 'happy object': 'Groups cohere around a shared orientation towards some things as being good'.<sup>6</sup> The crucifix, hanging in every church, was a focal point around which Christian community cohered; people learnt, collectively, how to look at it.<sup>7</sup> The entire Trinity became visible too in compound anthropomorphic forms, such as the Throne of Grace Trinity, and in diagrammatic form, such as the Trinity Shield.

Julian of Norwich describes her revelation as multisensory and extrasensory, conveyed 'by bodely sight, and by worde formed in mine understanding, and by gostely sighte' (*RL*, ch. 73, 351); the demonic visitation is accompanied 'with his heet and with his stinch', adding smell and temperature perception to the sensory mixture (*RL*, ch. 69, 341). As Claire Barbetti argues, 'vision' is an inadequate term for such synesthetic effects: 'Culturally naming, in effect, fixing these mystical experiences as "visions" leaves out a whole array of perception, feeling, and thought'.<sup>8</sup> Julian moves fluidly between the visible and the invisible. Yet the revelation begins with visual enlivening of an artefactual image of Christ that had already travelled to meet her, the portable crucifix that the priest brought to comfort the dying woman.<sup>9</sup> Barbetti proposes that a vision-text, whether it recounts fictive dream vision or truth-claiming mystical vision, should be understood as an 'ekphrastic work of art'.<sup>10</sup> Julian's

text is a meditation on the potentials and limitations of visual access to the transcendent.

As Kathryn Smith argues, ‘it is now universally recognized that visual imagery played a central role in the visionary experience of late medieval monastics, and that the visions of many late medieval mystics conformed to conventional images and formulae in contemporary art’.<sup>11</sup> Julian’s shift from mundane to revelatory sight is marked by the transformation of a static artefact into a moving image, ‘sodenly I saw the red bloud trekile downe from under the garlande’ (*RL*, ch. 4, 135). Orthodox image theory justified the use of such art as ‘signes and tokens, if þei be vsid nat as for hem silf, but if þei be dressed to remembre vs of þo þinges whiche þei ben ordeyned to signifie and bitokene’.<sup>12</sup> Yet Reginald Pecock here underestimates the vitality of artefacts; they did act for themselves. Gregorian image theory, allowing art to have ‘didactic, affective, or mnemonic functions’, was, Jeffrey Hamburger shows, inadequate to the richness and complexity of late medieval devotional culture.<sup>13</sup> Art was not only a sign; liveliness was the normal condition of devotional art. Julian’s crucifix is more than a reminder or representation of the Passion: it is a real, agential thing that ‘sodenly’, spontaneously, manifests itself to her with a live showing.

Devotional art aligns so well with revelation because it was, characteristically, kinetic; that is, movement of either the viewer or the object was built into the situations in which people looked at these artworks. Artefacts were actors in Bruno Latour’s terms, ‘*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference’, things that might ‘authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid’.<sup>14</sup> They participated in networks of activity, both as the products of human artisanal work and as the instigators of human attentions. Miracle stories in which artefacts came to life were popular, and not out of line with people’s normal experience of them.<sup>15</sup> Artefacts were designed to be mobile; some Christ-figures were jointed so that they could participate in rituals, others rode wheeled donkeys in processions.<sup>16</sup> Mechanically operated artworks, such as the Boxley Rood of Grace or the angels that descended to the altar in Lynn, intensified devotional experience.<sup>17</sup> Polyptychs were opened and closed in variable combinations throughout the liturgical year; their changes made up an ultra-slow cinematic loop. Or artworks might induce movement in human spectators. Margery Kempe’s viewing of a *pietà* triggered visions and an outburst of weeping.<sup>18</sup> Movement is built into the narrative sequences of the

bosses in the nave and cloisters of Norwich Cathedral. Viewers following the great Biblical sequence of the nave must physically move, tracing a looping path from East to West, making the journey between creation and judgement in real time, getting fractionally closer to the end in time as they approach it in space.

Even apparently static gazing on art might constitute an embodiment and enlivenment of it. The Berger Crucifixion (Plate 7.1), made for the nuns of Crabhouse Priory, Norfolk, in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, is not just an image of the historic event of the crucifixion, but also an image of devotional gazing.<sup>19</sup> It builds in its own audience, including nunlike women looking on the cross in the scene. Sandy Heslop notices that ‘With the exceptions of St John looking at Christ, and the man on the far right edge contemplating the Bad Thief, the eyes of the viewers are down-turned and contemplative as though they were seeing the event in their hearts rather than outwardly’.<sup>20</sup> These spectators are, that is, internalising the image of the crucifixion; this dead metaphor in modern English is a specific and literal account of how medieval theorists understood the process of viewing. Looking was ‘deemed to effect a corporeal mingling of self and other, a process in which one is altered by the things at which one looks’.<sup>21</sup> As John Trevisa’s translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* explains the process, images pass through the chambers of the brain, until they reach the faculty of *memorativa*, which ‘holdiþ and kepþ in þe tresour of mynde þingis þat beþ apprehendid and iknowe bi þe ymaginatif and *racio*’.<sup>22</sup> So viewers of images such as this crucifixion took it within themselves, allowing it to merge with their body; they became transhuman hybrids of body and artwork. With her ghostly eye, Julian saw God enthroned within her soul (*RL*, ch. 68, 335) and understood the soul to be ‘oned to God’ (*RL*, ch. 49, 271); she conceived herself as porous and collective: images, and indeed God, exist within Julian.

## THE CARROW PSALTER AS STORYBOARD

Scholarship on Julian has long connected her texts’ intense visuality to the flourishing artistic culture of late medieval East Anglia. In 2004, Susan K. Hagen identified ‘pictorial and textual sources for Julian’s visions’ as an important strand of Julian criticism, and work on this topic has continued at a steady pace.<sup>23</sup> Denise N. Baker compares the affect of Julian’s revelation to late medieval crucifixion images.<sup>24</sup> Cate Gunn and



**Plate 7.1** British artist, The Crucifixion, about 1395. Promised Gift of the Berger Collection Educational Trust, TL-18011 (Photograph courtesy of the Denver Art Museum)

Alexandra Barratt argue that Julian's Trinitarian thinking was informed by, respectively, the Throne of Grace iconography in Norwich Cathedral, and the '*Dixit Dominus*' iconography more common in manuscript illuminations.<sup>25</sup> Barry Windeatt also cites Trinities and Crucifixions, adding a discussion of Julian's description of the Vernicle and comparing her revelation of the 'little thing the quantity of an haselnot' to images of God holding the orb of the world.<sup>26</sup> Katherine Kerby-Fulton traces Julian's revision of her comments in the Short Text on the truth-content of crucifixions and suggests that her perception of the youth of the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation was informed by the development of the iconography of the St Anne trinity.<sup>27</sup> Juliana Dresvina identifies possible visual sources of more of the revelation's images, such as carved prayer-nuts and Psalter illuminations of David in the water, analysing Julian's use of them in the light of neuroscience.<sup>28</sup> Although there is nothing so monumental as Colledge and Walsh's identification of Julian's possible textual sources, her visual sources are acknowledged and broadly agreed upon.<sup>29</sup>

It is hard to identify many specific objects that Julian might have seen. East Anglia's late medieval devotional art has a better survival rate than that of most other regions, but much has still been lost, to the Reformation or to indifferent history. Moreover, much of the extant art is just too late for Julian to have seen. She was certainly enclosed by 1393/4, when Roger Reed bequeathed two shillings to 'Julian anchorite', and most Julianists go along with the traditional guess that she sought enclosure in the aftermath of the showings in 1373.<sup>30</sup> Once in the anchorhold, she would have been largely cut off from developments in visual culture and could have seen only the artworks installed in St Julian's and any portable items—books, perhaps, badges, jewellery—that her confessor and visitors brought or showed her. She probably had a crucifix in her anchorhold, as Aelred recommended, and an anchoress following the devotions recommended by *Ancrene Wisse* would need a Psalter, which need not be illustrated, though East Anglia had a tradition of luxuriously illuminated prayer books.<sup>31</sup>

The Carrow Psalter, a mid-thirteenth century manuscript, now Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery W. 34, has not featured prominently in previous discussions of Julian's possible visual sources.<sup>32</sup> It was already over a century old at the time of Julian's revelation, and thus may have been tacitly excluded from examinations of the possible influence of contemporary art; also, its connection to Carrow Priory is qualified. The book was probably originally made for the layman depicted in an initial at f.



298, making its way to the nunnery at some unknown date between its making and the fifteenth century, when Carrow's ownership inscription was added.<sup>33</sup> So we cannot be certain that Julian saw this book. She may or may not have been a Carrow nun before her enclosure, although a pious gentlewoman of Norwich might well have visited the nuns of Carrow and shared in their devotions.<sup>34</sup> However, the Psalter is similar in style to another of similar date that was certainly made for Carrow, suggesting that both were made at the same centre, in Norwich.<sup>35</sup> While the Psalter is not of Julian's period, it or things like it certainly were components of the 'broad present' of her visual environment.<sup>36</sup> Despite the Carrow connection, it is in a sense an arbitrary choice of comparator, but it is at the very least an example of an East Anglian devotional book that circulated between the *milieux* of wealthy laity and monastic houses. It would have looked visibly old-fashioned in Julian's day, but the inscription and fifteenth-century additions of heraldry show that the book was still used and treasured. Carrow probably did not have a large library—only three Psalters are now known of—so any book it did possess would have been viewed repeatedly.<sup>37</sup>

The Psalter's full-page images are gathered towards the front of the book: saints at ff. 1v–20, followed by two narrative cycles, Creation, Fall, Annunciation, Nativity, Passion, Judgement at ff. 21v–30v, then a second partial cycle of the Annunciation to the Passion at ff. 31v–35. An image in a manuscript is not mobile in the way that a processional artefact, or a mechanical one, might be. Yet, as Beth Williamson argues, 'proper and productive engagement with religious imagery necessarily took place over a span of time'; duration, mobility, temporality are built into the use of a prayer book.<sup>38</sup> The user may gaze at an image while she recites a devotion. She uses the book intensively, repeatedly; every use of it reiterates the previous use. Speaking the psalms is a technology of self: the nun or anchoress puts prayer at the centre of her life; chanting the half-understood Latin, she is susceptible to entering a trance-like state. Her fingers move through the book, skin brushing skin as she turns the folios, making its scenes appear and disappear. She controls the pace of its narrative, speeding or slowing its time, moving forwards or backwards, or bringing it to a pause. Holy objects were known to radiate light, so the gilding marks the book as a sacred thing.<sup>39</sup> Gilding catches the light, so the folios shift and shimmer, and the figures seem to move against them. At the opening of f. 9v–f. 10, for example, Saints Simon and Jude (Plate 7.2) are poised on the edge of movement, about to step forward from



**Plate 7.2** Saints Simon and Jude in the Carrow Psalter, MS W.34, f. 9v (Photograph courtesy of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore)

their glowing heaven into the reader's own world, their bare feet gently testing the borders, while the reader's attention flickers between these images and the prayers that speak directly to them.

The Psalter is a possible visual contributor to Julian's revelation, but by no means a full key to it. In positing it as a hypothetical storyboard of the revelation, I am as interested in departures, differences and distortions as in correspondence. Imagining how it might have contributed to

the revelation assumes that the process of internalising and mobilising it was transformative. Works of art, as Amy Knight Powell proposes, ‘*do not belong* to their makers [...] form is too promiscuous to remain faithful to its author’s intentions’.<sup>40</sup> There is plenty of common ground between the Psalter and the revelation. There is the Annunciation, twice (f. 23, f. 31v); the Crucifixion with the Virgin sorrowing under the cross (f. 27); the Trinity (f. 29, f. 200). But this shared material is not necessarily significant, for these are central themes of late medieval devotion. Demons at f. 26v (Plate 7.3), f. 28v, and f. 30v might show a more precise connection. Julian’s demon is ‘red, like the tilestone whan that it is new brent, with blacke spottes therin like freknes’ and has bestial ‘pawes’ rather than hands (*RL*, ch. 67, 333); so too the Psalter’s demons are consistently terracotta with black speckles and have paws. ‘He grinned upon me with a shrewde loke’, continues Julian; the demons at f. 28v and f. 30v display wide-mouthed grins, while those that tempt Christ at f. 26v have something of the unsettling intimacy with their victim that Julian describes. But even here, when the correspondence is closest, it is not total: the Psalter’s devils are oddly endearing teddy-bearish creatures, lacking the sinister energy and long humanoid face of Julian’s. If the book were her source, then its form has promiscuously mingled with other materials.

Comparison with the Psalter’s visual narrative brings Julian’s omissions into view: her Passion is, as Windeatt argues, ‘strikingly selective’, out of narrative order and omitting key scenes.<sup>41</sup> The famous lacunae of Julian’s text are fully present in the Psalter images at the normal places in the narrative sequence. The omission of Eve from Julian’s version of the Fall, as Jessica Barr argues, ‘shifts the responsibility for humankind’s sinful state away from the female body [...] effacing the link between female corporeality and sin’.<sup>42</sup> But in the Psalter a bony, naked, vulnerable Eve is tempted and expelled, along with Adam, at f. 22, with her face smudged, perhaps by someone who blamed her, as Julian did not. Julian herself calls attention to these absences and thus to the expectations formed by devotional art and reading: she did not, as she expected, see Christ die (*RL*, ch. 21); because ‘the revelation was shewde of goodnes, in which was made litlle mention of eville’, she did not see Hell or Purgatory, and her revelation of the Passion excluded ‘the Jewes that did him to deth’ (*RL*, ch. 33, 225), thus avoiding ‘the contemporary trend of naming and demonizing the Jews’.<sup>43</sup> But these uglier sights appear in the Psalter’s images: grotesque tormentors at f. 27, the Deposition and Harrowing at f. 28v. The smudger has been at work again on the image of the tormentors; the



**Plate 7.3** The Carrow Psalter's demons, MS W.34, f. 26v (Photograph courtesy of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore)

figure on the left, who would have been looking Christ straight in the eye as he wields his whip, has been blinded; this reader perhaps agreed with Julian that focus on evil was not conducive to devotion. Visual cycles very like the Psalter's must have informed Julian's expectations, but appeared only selectively in her revelation.

The Psalter's illustrative cycle is most like Julian's revelations in structural principle, rather than in specific details. It juxtaposes rapid, detailed, sequential narratives with iconic images of figures abstracted from temporal specificity. At the start of the first picture sequence, Creation and Fall have two two-panelled folios (21v–22), then Adam and Eve are depicted in a minimally narrative full-page image (22v), receiving their gendered tools: this is a statement about postlapsarian human life, with its labours and its gender divisions. Human life then continues in busy four-panelled narrative scenes, culminating in a final full-page image of Judgement (30v). These four-panelled folios are a storyboard of clearly sequential images, separated by architectural features. Time does not progress steadily, however, but bunches, slows and speeds. At f. 25 two simultaneous scenes, the Flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents, are side by side in the upper register, while the lower makes two sudden jumps forward through decades, to Christ and the Doctors and then to the Baptism. Its narrative offers repetitions with variation, generating shifting perspectives on figures and scenes. The partial second cycle makes the visual narrative of the Psalter repeat and circle back on itself, in a way comparable to Julian's repeated interlacing of key themes and images.<sup>44</sup> Following the Judgement, the story starts again with a second Annunciation (Plate 7.4). The repetition and multiplication of scenes allow a visual reading experience in which any single image is only a provisional truth, for another may happen along to complement it. The first Annunciation, at f. 23, is economically placed in both personal and sacred history. It belongs to a four-image sequence that follows and shares an opening with the full-page image of Adam and Eve, receiving spade and distaff; the paired standing figures set up a visual echo between the two scenes, emphasising the typological relation of Eva/Ave. The narrative then continues Mary's life, with Visitation, Nativity and angels appearing to shepherds. The second Annunciation, however, at f. 31v, is arrestingly out of sequence, for it follows Judgement. As a full-page image, this second is more easily extracted from temporal sequence and contemplated as an iconic scene.

As in the image sequence, Julian views the Virgin repeatedly and in different formats: narrative and iconic in the images, concrete and abstract in Julian's text. She likewise sees Mary out of chronological sequence, when the Crucifixion is followed by a flashback to the Annunciate Virgin (*RL*, ch. 4). The Psalter's repetition of the Annunciation corresponds, though imperfectly, to Julian's repeated returns to sightings of the Virgin.



**Plate 7.4** The Carrow Psalter's 'second' Annunciation, MS W.34, f. 31v  
(Photograph courtesy of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore)

I wend to have seen her in bodely likenes. But I saw her not so. And Jhesu  
in that worde showed me a gostly sight of her. Right as I had seen her  
before litille and simple, right so he shewed her than high and noble and  
glorious and plesing to him above all creatures.

[...]



And her he shewed thre times: the furst was as she conceived; the secunde was as she was in her sorowes under the crosse; and the thurde was as she is now, in likinge, worshipe and joy. (RL, ch. 25, 205)

In the Psalter Mary appears in that first Annunciation, in her bodily, narrative life, just as Julian saw her first ‘in bodily likenes, a simple maiden and a meeke, yong of age, a little waxen above a childe, in the stature as she was when she conceivede’ (RL, ch. 4, 137). Mary’s life continues to be played out in the four-panelled narrative folios of the first picture sequence, including one of her in the usual position ‘in her sorowes under the crosse’ at f. 27. As Watson and Jenkins suggest in their note to Mary’s ‘high and noble and glorious’ manifestation, ‘Cycles of paintings and sculptures of the life of Mary end with her Assumption and coronation, the scenes evoked here’.<sup>45</sup> Yet these scenes are indeed evoked, rather than directly cited; Julian’s sight of Mary is not iconographic, nor representable in mimetic art, for it is not a sight of her bodily likeness. It is not actually a Coronation of the Virgin; it is not an Annunciation either, but the Psalter’s temporally displaced Annunciation, repeating and supplementing that which had already taken place in a linear temporal sequence, might conceivably spark a line of thought that leads to this perception. This second Annunciation scene marks a change of scale; after the much smaller figures of the narrative sequence (including the full-page Judgement at f. 30v, which is so busy that the figure scale is unchanged) Mary and Gabriel appear as towering superhumans. Although the iconography of the two Annunciation scenes is similar, the different experiences of encountering them in the book might produce a perception of the distance between Mary’s personal, lived humility and her eternal glory.

### JULIAN’S EMBODIED CINEMA

When the inherent mobility of devotional art is internalised and launched into narrative by the living organ, it becomes cinema. ‘Medieval film [...] is (of course) an impossibility’, write Bettina Bildhauer and Anke Bernau, but story-telling moving images have a long cultural history prior to the technological innovations of photography and projection that enabled modern cinema—beginning, perhaps, with the animation of cave paintings by firelight.<sup>46</sup> Late medieval courtly entertainment used mirrors, torches and fireworks to produce spectacular moving narratives.<sup>47</sup> Lázló Moholy-Nagy identified the stained glass of medieval churches, animated

by sunlight to cast coloured moving images around the church, as a cinematic precursor; the technology yokes human ingenuity to cosmic energy.<sup>48</sup> Anchoritic material culture used a minimalist version of that effect: *Ancrene Wisse* recommends window curtains with ‘blac thet clath, the cros hwit withinnen ant withuten’ (‘a black ground with a white cross showing both inside and outside’), which would project a cross in light onto the wall when the curtain was closed against sunlight, an effect that the anchoress could have built into her schedule of withdrawal for prayer.<sup>49</sup>

Like the gilded prayerbook, like stained glass, like the window cross, like cinema, Julian’s revelation is an art of the movement of light in time. Like cinema, it is not mere representation, but witness to an actual event. Her exercise of her embodied ‘organ for images’ to set the crucifix into narrative motion produces cinematic effects. As the revelation begins ‘it was alle dyrke aboute me in the chaumber and mirke as it hadde bene night, save in the image of the crosse there helde a comon light’: the darkened everyday world retreats, as Julian’s attention focuses on the single mysterious light source that shows her moving images (*RL*, ch. 3, 133). Later, in the eighth revelation, she begins with a close-up of Christ’s face, ‘lippes’ and ‘nose’, then pulls back to see ‘the swete body waxid browne and blacke’, then back again to place the Crucifixion in time and space, seeing the ‘dry, harre wind, wonder colde’ blow in (*RL*, ch. 16, 179). The crucifix morphs into a personal screening, seen with her bodily eyes, which is later interspersed with purely interior cinema.

Julian even describes an actual, material, moving image, the Vernicle, interrupting the narration of the revelation to discuss a specific object. Watson and Jenkins take this ‘rare digression from the material of the revelation’ as a self-reflexive moment, suggesting ‘Perhaps the vernicle, a woman’s cloth imprinted by Christ, is to be taken as a figure for the revelation’; Alicia Spencer-Hall draws on the same image to describe the holy women of Liège as ‘living Veronicas’, ‘imprinted with the reality of God’s magnificence and Christ’s suffering’.<sup>50</sup> Julian’s body and consciousness are the cloth on which the image of Christ is imprinted, which merges with him in bodily substance. Pictorial representations of the vernicle, such as a devotional scene in Lydgate’s *Life of St Edmund*, may show a static object; Dresvina, however, points to a fifteenth-century Vernicle ‘where Christ’s face is painted in silver and literally changes colour depending on how the light reflects on the page’; its owner could encounter this living image of Christ whenever they opened the book.<sup>51</sup>



Julian's Vernicle is moving, indeed, it seems, living, displaying 'diverse changing of colour and chere, sometime more comfortable and lively, and sometime more reful and deadly' (*RL*, ch. 10, 161), and referring forward to her revelatory witness to Christ's changing colour as he suffers. The Vernicle is an *acheiropoieton*, an image not made by human hands; such images have long been recognised as conceptual photographs, indices to a specific moment in time as well as historical representations of it. Roland Barthes cites the Vernicle to consider the distinctive claim of the photograph to show 'not a memory, an imagination, a reconstruction, a piece of Maya, such as art lavishes upon us, but reality in a past state: at once the past and the real'.<sup>52</sup> Julian's version of the Vernicle is both the past and the real, but even more untimely. It is not just a photograph, nor even a GIF or film, for there is no indication of its finitude; it does not finish and restart on a loop, but is in eternal movement. It captures not only Christ's image, but a trace of his life, a passage of time; it is not a representation, but a livestream of the continual enactment of the Passion into the present day. It lives on in Julian's present; it is like her contemplative life, like her book, 'not yet performed' (*RL*, ch. 86, 379).

The cinematic moving image also relies on the human organ to do the work of animating juxtaposed images into moving ones: 'in writing its images on the silver screen, the cinema writes them on the retina of the eye, and thus on the mind of the viewer'.<sup>53</sup> Such seeing, whether cinematic or visionary, has the capacity to seek out that which is not normally visible. Thus, Gerard Loughlin argues for the fundamental alignment of religion and cinema:

It is the camera on wheels, running on tracks, mounted on cranes, and, more recently, on the steadicam, that produces the ecstasy of the fluid, sinuous shot, that soars up or swoops down, or follows characters in and out of rooms, across roads, passing through otherwise impenetrable objects, to deliver an effortless constancy of vision; a spectator who sees all while remaining unseen.

But since film viewers know that they are not the camera/projector, that what they see is a kind of hallucination, and yet that they are seeing with their own eyes what the film is showing, they identify themselves as all-perceiving, thus constituting the cinematic illusion, a 'religious' or transcendental state.<sup>54</sup>

Viewers see something utterly convincing that they know to be impossible. The mobility of the cinematic image thus supplements human

vision, producing for its duration a transhuman position and capacity. This perception is founded in human embodiment, processed by bodily organs, yet offers the lived experience of exceeding the limitations of human perception. Julian's revelation too is a transient awareness of a capacity and a position beyond the human. From the bed where she lies paralysed, gazing at the crucifix, a dizzying swoop takes her outside the bed, the room, the world, the cosmos, as she momentarily stands beside God:

And in this, he shewed a little thing the quantity of an haselnot, lying in the palme of my hand as me semide, and it was as rounde as any balle. I looked theran with the eye of my understanding, and thought: 'What may this be?' And it was answered generally thus: 'It is all that is made.' I marvayled how it might laste, for methoughte it might sodenly have fallen to nought for littlenes. (*RL*, ch. 5, 139)

This God's-eye view is also an embodied sight, refocused at the distance between an eye and an outstretched hand. Julian, like the cinematic spectator, is at once in her mere human body and in a shared, transhuman position.

Setting artworks in cinematic motion makes them unpredictable. In the earlier version of her text, Julian assents to the theory that Christian art such as that of the Carrow Psalter or the portable crucifix is primarily mimetic and didactic: 'I leaved sadlye alle the peynes of Criste as halye kyrke shewes and teches, and also the paintinges of crucifexes that er made be the grace of God aftere the techinge of haly kyrke to the liknes of Cristes passion, als farfurthe as manes witte maye reche' (*VSDW*, section 1, 63). Yet, she writes, that is not enough; she wanted to contemplate the crucifixion with more emotion, 'that I might have sene bodilye the passion of oure lorde' (*VSDW*, section 1, 63). The later retelling retains the desire for more feeling and for bodily sight, but drops the affirmation of the utility of the crucifix (*RL*, ch. 2). It may have occurred to Julian as she meditated on the revelations that the crucifix had not in fact shown her Christ's passion quite as she had expected; for it omitted his death, the climactic topos of affective piety. And her most innovative ideas generate or arrive in the form of unfamiliar iconography, such as the scene of the lord and servant, described in precise visual detail, that leads her to collapse the Fall and the Incarnation (*RL*, ch. 51). Julian's vision, as she tells it, is spontaneous and unsought; departing from the

expectations built up through years of contemplative practice, it works with images that do not materially exist as well as with those that do.

Critics who have studied Julian's visual sources point out that her text does not simply replicate iconography. Kathleen Kamerick emphasises Julian's desire to supplement visual art with fuller and truer sights, for 'Human artifacts cannot substitute for divine visions'.<sup>55</sup> Barratt notes Julian's remark that the Father and Son are not to be understood to be literally seated side-by-side: the iconography is a symbolic statement, not a mimetic one.<sup>56</sup> Baker argues that:

Although the corporeal showings are probably an amalgam of devotional works of art that she had seen in her Norwich environment and her own imaginative reenactment of the Passion narrative, her practice of meditation focussed her eye and trained her powers of visualization. While contemporary visual art certainly shaped what Julian saw, such images were not the primary catalyst for her visionary experience.<sup>57</sup>

Windeatt agrees that 'Julian's possible references to specific instances of contemporary visual culture rarely involve less than a transformation'.<sup>58</sup> Julian, the consensus goes, was informed by images but they continued to be active as they played themselves out in her living organ. Julian's plethora of textual images of God, argues Denys Turner, is eventually effectively a kind of negative theology: 'Julian gets to the same apophatic place as does the *Cloud* author by the opposite literary strategy, precisely by an excess of affirmation that, as it were, collapses under the weight of that very excessiveness'.<sup>59</sup> The same is true of her visual sights; however vivid, they are transient, dissolving, liable at any moment to flicker, change and vanish. Even an apparently static image such as the hazelnut vision has implicit movement; although no actual motion is visible at this scale, Julian thinks immediately of its fragility and mutability. The visible, Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross argue, repeatedly gives way to the invisible in Julian's text: she develops 'a new way with the liminal imagery of her showings which constantly leads her into the timeless and imageless world of the apophatic'.<sup>60</sup> Julian's revelation begins with the visible image and regularly returns to it, but its fluid motion does not permit any single image to be a stable truth. The movement characteristic of Julian's images means that each one is transient, and thus no one image may be

taken as the truth: her revelations concern what Latour names ‘the disappointment of the visible’ as much as they endorse it.<sup>61</sup> The image once received into the living body is ever-changing.

That is, Julian, in Latour’s terms, observes the injunction ‘Thou shall not ‘freeze-frame’.<sup>62</sup> Amongst the studies of Julian’s visuality, Windeatt is most attentive to the ‘almost cinematic’ quality of Julian’s visuality and the ‘mysteriously mobile, fluctuating quality’ of the Vernicle.<sup>63</sup> Yet the liveliness and motility of Julian’s revelation is a quality already inherent in visual art. Latour’s metaphor proposes that an apparently static artform such as a statue or altarpiece nevertheless can be conceived as essentially mobile. Citing the art historian Louis Marin, Latour argues that Christian art does not communicate by representing the world—Christ and the apostles, say, in their embodied historical lives—but by exposing the limitations of such representations:

What imagery has tried to achieve through countless feats of art is the opposite of turning the spectator’s eyes to the model far away: on the contrary, incredible pains have been taken to *break* the habitual gaze of the viewer, so as to attract salvation to the *present* state, the only one which can be seen to offer salvation. [...] The aim is not to add an invisible world to the visible one, but to distort, to opacify the visible world enough that one is not led to misunderstand the Scriptures, but to re-enact them truthfully.<sup>64</sup>

It is not uniformly true that Christian art refuses mimesis: there are many Christian artworks that do not use the visual trap doors of Marin’s and Latour’s examples, and many that have been made and understood to convey information. In Julian’s day, debate on the proper use of devotional art focused attention on how art communicated. The Wycliffite author of the treatise edited by Anne Hudson as ‘Images and Pilgrimages’, furiously resisting visual seduction, relies upon a mimetic model to declare devotional art illegitimate, claiming, implausibly, that jewelled crucifixes make a historical statement that ‘Crist was naylid on þe crosse wip þus myche gold and siluer and precious clopis, as a breeche of gold endentid wip perry, and schoon of siluer and a croune fretted ful of precious iewellis’.<sup>65</sup> Pauper’s orthodox defence of devotional art on this point, meanwhile, concedes that such stylings do not communicate mimetically, for ‘Soth it is þat þey wentyn nought in sueche aray’, but invite embodied and affective attention: ‘al þis may be doon for deuocioun þat men han to þe seyntys [...] And here feet been shoodde wyt syluer for here feet suldyn ellys been solyid ouyrmychil wyt mennys

mouthys þat kyssen hem'.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, the artist of an artefact such as the Carrow Psalter had concerns that overrode reproducing what things look like: he did not literally think, or convey, that the Magi wore their crowns to bed (f. 24v), and the gilded backgrounds of the scenes militate against mistaking the narrative for a straightforward depiction of what happened in history.

Latour's analysis of Christian art treats it not as a medium for information, but as an agent that effects a result in the viewer, becoming thereafter a component of their living selves: this is the process that Heslop sees at work in the spectators at the Berger Crucifixion. Spencer-Hall discusses how 'Holy women fuse with the divine object of their visions, a process which destabilizes seemingly fixed labels of active and passive, viewer and viewed'; as she shows, this process of fusing can take place through the mediation of artefacts.<sup>67</sup> Art, that is, is to be lived, not scrutinised. Latour's account of what such truthful re-enactment might consist of is somewhat opaque, but Julian's transformation of visual art offers a concrete example of the process. The metaphor of 'freeze-framing' locates the mobility of art not in the materiality of the image, but in its reception by a (presumed Christian) spectator, who then carries it with them into social interaction. Julian carries images into revelation, which shows her that art is something more than a mimetic container for information. Christ's bleeding head, for example, shows her not, or not only, the historical moment of the Passion, but a proposition about being human to take away and live with:

In this same time that I saw this sight of the head bleeding, our good lord shewed a ghostly sight of his homely loving. I saw that he is to us all thing that is good and comfortable to our helpe. He is oure clothing, that for love wrappeth us and windeth us, halseth us and all becloseth us, hangeth about us for tender love, that he may never leeve us. (*RL*, ch. 5, 139)

She then carries that revelation into a text which continues to cascade its images to new readers centuries later. Derek Jarman, Robert Mills writes, responded to Julian's text with 'a revelation of his own': 'For years the Middle Ages have formed the paradise of my imagination, the archaic half-smile on the Apostles' lips at Chartres, the blisse [sic] that unlocks. It is not William Morris' Journeyman Eden, but something subterranean,

like the seaweed and coral that floats in the arcade of a jewelled reliquary'.<sup>68</sup> Jarman's image, citing yet varying Julian's sight of the verdant 'sea ground', is a further continuation of Julian's revelation.

Julian carefully edited and curated her revelation, continually replaying it in her internal cinema as she parsed its meanings. Alone in her anchorhold, a space where, like the Annunciate Virgin, she could be touched by the eternal and the extrasensory, she patiently worked for years and decades to develop her art.<sup>69</sup> She was a critic, conducting a close reading, 'seeing inwardly, with advisement, all the pointes and the propertes that were shewed in the same time', to interrogate the lord and servant revelation (*RL*, ch. 51, 277). She was both editor and filmmaker: the Long Text is her Director's Cut, the product of a revision and reordering of the raw material. The artwork is not just the revelation, not just the texts, but the whole life, the ongoing contemplative process, forever unfinished, that continues to this day in the embodied perception of Julian's readers.

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## NOTES

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2. *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Shown to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), *RL*, ch. 10, 157–59.
3. Acts 9.3–5, Douay Rheims Bible (Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1899), <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.
4. Exodus 3.2–4; 13.21; 33.20–23, Douay Rheims.
5. Kathleen Kameron, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350–1500* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 29.

6. Sara Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 35.
7. Sara Lipton, "'The Sweet Lean of his Head": Writing About Looking at the Crucifix in the High Middle Ages', *Speculum* 80, no. 4 (2005): 1172–1208.
8. Claire Barbetti, *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 101.
9. Several Norwich parishes and Carrow Priory are recorded as having owned processional crosses: Ann Eljenholm Nichols, *The Early Art of Norfolk: A Subject List of Early and Lost Art Including Items Relevant to Early Drama* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 2002), 77–80.
10. Barbetti, *Ekphrastic Medieval Visions*, 12.
11. Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and their Books of Hours* (London: British Library, 2003), 234.
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13. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 112.
14. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71–72.
15. For example, the stories of animated crucifixes in 'Exaltation of the Cross', *Gilte Legende*, vol. 2, ed. by Richard Hamer and Vida Russell, EETS, OS 328 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 670–78; see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 220–41 on miraculous images.
16. Christopher Swift, 'Robot Saints', *Preternature* 4, no. 1 (2015): 52–77; e.g., V&A A.1030–1910, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O73843/christ-on-an-ass-statue-unknown>.
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18. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, EETS, OS 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), I.60, p. 148; Laura Varnam, 'The Crucifix, the Pietà, and the Female Mystic: Devotional Objects and Performative Identity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41, no. 2 (2015): 208–37.

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22. John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus ‘De proprietatibus rerum’; A Critical Text*, ed. by M. C. Seymour, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 1.98.
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24. Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich’s Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 40.
25. Cate Gunn, ‘“A recluse atte Norwyche”: Images of Medieval Norwich and Julian’s Revelations’, in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 38–41; Alexandra Barratt, ‘“No Such Sitting”: Julian Tropes the Trinity’, in *Companion to Julian*, ed. by McAvoy, 46–52.
26. Barry Windeatt, ‘Julian of Norwich and Medieval English Visual Culture’, in *‘Truthe is the beste’: A Festschrift in Honour of A. V. C. Schmidt*, ed. by Nicolas Jacobs and Gerald Morgan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 190–93, 197.
27. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books Under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 315–23.
28. Juliana Dresvina, ‘What Julian Saw: The Embodied *Showings* and the Items for Private Devotion’, *Religions* 10, no. 4 (2019), 245, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10040245>. Thanks to Julie for sharing prior to publication and for our conversations on this subject.
29. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, eds, *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978).
30. *Writings of Julian*, p. 341; Hagen, ‘Visual Theology’, 147.
31. Gunn, ‘A Recluse’, 36; Dresvina, ‘What Julian Saw’, 5–6.



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33. Nigel Morgan, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles v. 4: Early Gothic Manuscripts II 1250–1285* (London: Harvey Miller, 1998), 91.
34. Benedicta Ward argues that Julian was not a nun but a widowed laywoman before her enclosure: Benedicta Ward, 'Julian the Solitary', in *Julian Reconsidered*, ed. by Kenneth Leech and Sr Benedicta Ward, S.L.G. (Oxford: Sisters of the Love of God Press, 1988), 23; Watson and Jenkins prefer the more traditional assumption that she was a nun; Watson and Jenkins, 'Introduction', in *Writings of Julian*, p. 4. Everyone acknowledges the evidence to be inconclusive. Felicity Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God": A Late Medieval Sub-Culture', in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150–1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 104–27 discusses the shared culture of nuns and pious laywomen.
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49. *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by Robert Hasenfratz (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 96; *Ancrene Riwe*, trans. by M. B. Salu (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990), 21. Michelle Sauer has made and demonstrated the curtain.
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55. Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art*, 134.
56. Barratt, 'Julian Tropes the Trinity', 45; see also Windeatt, 'Julian of Norwich and Medieval English Visual Culture', 199.
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# Writing and Reading the Word: Patterns of Divine Speech in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*

*Darragh Greene*

'You can't hear God speak to someone else, you can hear him only if you are being addressed.'—That is a grammatical remark.—Ludwig Wittgenstein<sup>1</sup>

In *A Revelation of Love*, Julian of Norwich claims to have had a series of sixteen visions during which God in the person of Jesus Christ spoke to her in homely and friendly language. Throughout the Middle Ages, theologians endeavoured to make sense of the central Gospel revelation that God became man and spoke to humans in human terms. The central mysterious fact of medieval Christian faith and reason, the Incarnation, must and does underpin the startling confidence of Ricardian—pre-eminently of William Langland and the *Pearl*-poet—and later medieval English representations of divine speech, including those of Julian herself

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and Margery Kempe. In this essay, I describe and explore Julian's strategies for representing divine speech in *A Revelation* and move ultimately to an original evaluation of the crucial significance of such speech to her theology. The patterns of divine speech express a developing relationship between Julian and God that is finally perfected in her full, personal and intimate friendship with Christ.

The distinctive capacity of the human being is the ability to acquire and use language.<sup>2</sup> As Herbert McCabe asserts: 'the human animal belongs to [...] a culture, a *linguistic* community [...and...] to have symbols and words is to have a particular way of belonging to a community'.<sup>3</sup> And so it is entirely *behovely*, to use Julian's own phrase, that the high point and fulfilment of her revelation should come in *homely* conversation with Jesus, who combines in his person both human and divine natures, and thereby fosters friendly communion between human beings and God. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, the grammar of humankind's language-games both shows and tracks the activities that constitute a human form of life.<sup>4</sup> The remark quoted in the epigraph to this essay, 'You can't hear God speak to someone else, you can hear him only if you are being addressed', is grammatical in Wittgenstein's sense insofar as it reveals not a metaphysics but a cultural practice regarding the relationship of humanity to God. Among other things, this statement bespeaks a personal relationship between God and addressee, and my analysis of Julian's revelation, its order and content, shows an equivalent principle at work. At the same time, because Julian records and interprets God's address to her, her readers do share in the treasures of God talking. In this sense, *A Revelation* extends God's personal address of Julian to the community of all her *evenchristen*.

## MODES OF DIVINE COMMUNICATION

Kevin J. Magill criticises three of Julian's most influential critics, namely, Denys Turner, Grace Jantzen, and Nicholas Watson, when he argues that all three privilege Julian's categorisation as a mystic to the detriment of her status as a visionary. He seeks, instead, to emphasise and explore 'The pictorial quality of the *Showings of Love*, the sights, sounds and colour of the visionary sequence'.<sup>5</sup> Yet, his corrective focus on the visual element of Julian's text misses another salient but equally neglected aspect of her work, which is her experience of divine locutions. As Julian notes, her experience of God's communication is perceived according to three



modes: bodily sight, words formed in her understanding, and ghostly sight.<sup>6</sup> Magill admirably elucidates the visual perceptual modes of her intellection of God, but the work in this essay will both complement and correct his narrow focus by emphasising the concomitant importance of the words formed in her understanding: that is, those divine locutions.

In Chapter 2 of *A Revelation*, Julian reveals three fervent desires that she petitioned God to fulfil at some unspecified time prior to her illness of May 1373: 'The first was mind of the passion. The second was bodily sicknes. The thurde was to have of Godes gifte thre woundes' (2.3–4).<sup>7</sup> She expands on the first desire: 'I desired a bodely sight, wherin I might have more knowinge of the bodily paines of our saviour, and of the compassion of our lady, and of all of his true lovers that were living that time and saw his paines' (2.10–14). At this point, there is no mention of any process beyond the purely visual, and even that mode of perception is limited to corporeal vision or *bodely sight*. Indeed, her expectations are predicated on meditative practices of *ruminatio* that might lead to an affective engagement with central scriptural episodes such as the Nativity and Passion, comparable to the expansive envisioning of these in popular works such as the fourteenth-century *Meditationes de Vitae Christi*.<sup>8</sup> In any case, Julian's petitionary horizon of expectations prior to undergoing her series of showings does not encompass an articulated desire to experience divine speech.

Julian's first showing immediately presents itself according to three modes of perception, and these modes operate throughout the whole revelation. The modes are discrete yet complementary, and their object, 'Gods mening' (9.23), is unitary. The modes, Julian writes, operate 'by bodily sight, and by worde formede in my understanding, and by gostely sight' (9.24–25). In the first showing, Julian declares that God shows her 'without any meane' (4.5) a bodily sight of the wounded and bleeding Christ crowned with thorns. Her claim, therefore, is for direct divine illumination. Since the vision is 'without any meane', she marvels at how 'homely' (4.15) or familiar God should be with her. The notion of God's *homeliness*, his equality and intimacy with human beings, is a key ground of Julian's visionary experience.

In Chapter 7, for instance, she draws comfort from the first vision, for 'that oure good lorde, that is so reverent and dredfulle, is so homely and so curteyse' (7.25–26). She then develops the intimacy of the God-given vision:

This bodely exsample was shewde so high that this mannes hart might be ravished and almost forget himselfe for joy of this grete homelyhede. Thus it fareth by oure lorde Jhesu and by us. For sothly it is most joy that may be, as to my sight, that he that is highest and mightiest, nobliest and wurthiest, is lowest and mekest, hamliest and curtysest. (7.33–38)

In Chapter 54, the metaphysical reasons for God's *homelyhede* or special intimacy with human beings are revealed:

Our soule is made to be Goddes wonning; and the wonning of oure soule is God, which is unmade [...]. And I sawe no difference between God and oure substance, but as it were all God. And yet my understanding toke that oure substance is in God: that is to sey, that God is God and oure substance is a creature in God. (54.8–15)

This striking emphasis on God's closeness to his creatures, such that his dwelling place is in the human soul, and that his substance—what it is to be God—is the same as, although prior to, that of the human being, permeates the text.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Julian proceeds to qualify who may experience such spiritual intimacy: 'But this marvelous homelyhede may no man know in this life, but if he have it by specielle shewing of oure lorde, or of gret plenty of grace inwardly given of the holy gost. But faith and beleve with charite deserve the mede, and so it is had by grace' (7.45–48). In other words, God favours whom he will. These are invariably his true lovers, those who fervently practise the theological virtues, and who in key respects share a common form of life, which naturally necessitates and nurtures communication. The nascent line of this communication first proceeds visually by bodily sight of the crowning with thorns, followed by a 'ghostly [sight] in bodily likenes' (4.25) of the Virgin Mary in her youth. In *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, St Augustine posits a tripartite division of the perceptual modes of contemplation into those of bodily sight, imaginative sight and intellectual sight:

Hence let us call the first kind of vision corporeal, because it is perceived through the body and presented to the senses of the body. The second will be spiritual, for whatever is not a body, and yet is something, is rightly called spirit: and certainly the image of an absent body, though it resembles a body, is not itself a body any more than is the act of vision by which it is perceived. The third kind will be intellectual, from the word intellect.<sup>10</sup>

Julian's 'ghostly [sight] in bodily likenes' corresponds to Augustine's second classification of visionary experience, namely, the imaginative mode of spiritual vision. Subsequent to these "lower" modes of visionary experience, in Chapter 5, the communication between God and Julian proceeds for the first time by locution or linguistic mode. However, the exact epistemic status of this locution is puzzling.

God shows Julian 'a little thing the quantity of an hazelnot' (5.7), which she ponders, training the eye of her understanding on it, and thinks: "What may this be?" And it was answered generally thus: "It is all that is made" (5.9–10). Although Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins in the notes to their edition of *A Revelation* identify the responding locution as produced by 'intuition', they do not identify any 'particular speaker'.<sup>11</sup> However, they are perhaps mistaken because even though the clause, 'And it was answered generally thus', is in the passive voice, it may be the case that an ultimate particular speaker—in this case, God—is communicating *by* the intermediary intellectual faculty of intuition. So while the adverb 'generally' indicates the general or broad scope of the mode of answer she receives to her question, 'What may this be?', it does not rule out God as ultimate agent of the answer. Instead, it indicates that Julian at that point does not perceive any specific origin of the answer that she receives. Moreover, Julian's visionary experiences are not the result of any effort of her own. Her psychological faculties are not the efficient causes of the experiences because, as noted above, the experiences are 'by specialle shewing of oure lorde' (7.46). Insofar as she passively undergoes these experiences, it is not satisfactory to identify the answering locution as being produced by intuition *tout court*. If the proposition, 'It is all that is made', is true, then the origin of the intuition must be divine. In other words, this locution is an example of God speaking to Julian by means of the intermediary psychological faculty of intuition. God is the actual efficient cause of the intuition, so the locution represents a species of covert divine discourse. Furthermore, as Julian sees it, the 'soule is made to be Goddes wonning', so God may speak through an exercise of any of the relevant psychological faculties. Julian's gradual induction to divine discourse proceeds by such discrete, cumulative stages, which, as will be seen, ultimately move towards dialogue proper.

In the second vision, Julian sees the discolouration of the suffering Christ's face. But the vision presents itself 'darkely' (10.8), so she reports desiring 'mor bodely light to have seen more clerly' (10.8–9). Concerning this desire, she reports the receipt of a response: 'And I was answerede

in my reson: “If God will shew thee more, he shal be thy light. Thee nedeth none but him” (10.9–10). That she presents this response, ‘I was answered’, in the passive voice implies its external origin. As in the case of the earlier intuition, ‘It is all that is made’, this new speech amounts to another instance of covert divine discourse, which operates by way of the rational faculty, and fittingly so, given the speech’s conditional logic. This mode of divine discourse continues in Chapter 19, wherein regarding the vision of the dying Christ, Julian perceives ‘a profer in my reason, as it had ben frendely, saide to me: “Loke uppe to heven to his father”’ (19.4–5). Elisabeth Dutton reads this as implying an exterior rather than interior voice. She writes: ‘The third person possessive of “hys father” makes it clear that this is not the voice of Christ, and though the injunction to look up is at first appealing, since Julian feels there is nothing to hinder her view of heaven, there is a warning in that the words are spoken *as if* by a friendly voice’.<sup>12</sup> If one follows the editorial punctuation of Watson and Jenkins—‘a profer in my reason, as it had ben frendely, said to me’—then the origin of this proposition is obscure. Even so, taking the statement in the context of the developing revelation, the injunction to look up to the Father in heaven can be read as a benign one, figuring Julian’s dawning recognition that Jesus himself is looking up at heaven and, therefore, that he is her heaven. At the same time, while she thinks she is lying on her deathbed, it is in her cleaving to the eighth vision of the crucified, dying Christ that she feels ‘seker and safe’ (19.2). Thus, that she does not acquiesce to the ‘profer’ at this point in the unfolding revelation indicates precisely that her revelation is a process, involving several stages of readiness on her part.

To return to the third vision and an earlier stage in the preparation for full verbal communication between Julian and God, she sees ‘God in a pointe’ (11.1). He is revealed as being ‘in al thing [...and...] he doth alle that is done’ (11.2–3). In other words, everything that exists is a function of God, for God is what the Scholastics would call First Cause, or as Terry Eagleton puts it: ‘the reason why there is something rather than nothing, the condition of possibility of any entity whatsoever’.<sup>13</sup> Julian sums up the vision by attributing an expository speech to God:

And all this shewed he full blissefully, meaning thus: ‘See, I am God. See, I am in all thing. See, I do all thing. See, I never lefte my handes of my workes, ne never shalle without ende. See, I lede all thing to the end that

I ordaine it to, fro without beginning, by the same might, wisdom, and love that I made it with. How shoulde any thing be amisse?’ (11.42–46)

The fabulated speech constitutes an interpretation of the preceding vision, translating, as Watson and Jenkins note, the ‘shewing’ into ‘meaning’.<sup>14</sup> No such attributed speech is included in the earlier, shorter version of *A Revelation*. Thus, the fabulated speech is the fruit of long meditation, which crystallises the vision’s essential *sentence*, by modulating from one aspect of divine discourse, vision, to another: voiced locution. In this way, vision’s *sentence* is authorised emphatically and memorably by the powerful vehicle of the diegetic representation of divine speech. Furthermore, it marks another advanced stage on the way to the full representation of what Julian regards as authentic divine locutions.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the first explicit representation of authentic divine speech comes in the fifth vision:

And after, or God shewed any wordes, he sufferde me to beholde him a conveniable time, and all that I had seen, and all the understanding that was therin, as the simplines of the soule might take it. Then he, without voys and opening of lippes, formed in my soule these wordes: ‘Herewith is the feende overcome’. (13.1–5)

The use of the verb ‘shewed’ applied to God’s verbal communication should be noted. The ‘wordes’ that God ‘shewed’ are grounded in Julian’s graced contemplation of him. They are bound up with the visionary experience, and as such, they are vehicles of revelation comparable to visions of physical or ghostly sight. There is a period of preparation before God himself speaks to his creature, before her soul and intellect are ready to bear the direct impression of divine discourse. Concerning this passage, Vincent Gillespie writes: ‘God’s words to [Julian] eschew physical means: He means (or speaks) without means (or intermediary) and his meaning (intention and signification) is resonant for the meaning of all the showings of the passion’.<sup>16</sup> It should be noted too that the voiceless and non-physical locution of words formed in the soul matches both those of her intuition and reason and, most interestingly, those authorised by Pope Gregory the Great who in the *Chastising of God’s Children* is quoted as saying: ‘whanne [God] spekith to us by himsilf, thanne is the hert enformed and taught of his worde, withoute any worde or sillable’.<sup>17</sup> Julian’s reported locutions, however,

are not indirectly mediated by intuition or reason, and they are not ‘without any worde or sillable’, for she plainly perceives words that she is able to report in precise verbal form: ‘Herewith is the feende overcome’. Moreover, this speech is in English. God does not speak to his creature in a prestige language like Hebrew, Greek or Latin; rather, he speaks in the vernacular, the vulgar or mother tongue known to his interlocutor intimately. Julian immediately comments on this speech, explaining its reference: ‘This worde saide our lorde mening his blessed passion, as he shewed before’ (13.5–6). In reflecting on the reported locution, she moves from ‘shewed’ and ‘formed’ to ‘saide’ as her chosen conception of the delivery of God’s words. Furthermore, the interpretation reveals Christ, ‘oure lorde’, to be the speaker rather than God the Father. In this way, the communication between creature and Creator proceeds by virtue of the human nature of God incarnate who moves to speak to his beloved creature in an intimate and intelligible fashion. This highlights the Christocentric modality of divine discourse in Julian’s experience and writing. The speech itself, as she elucidates it, is Christ’s explanation of the fourth vision of his streaming blood, and so he teaches the significance of his paschal blood sacrifice. He speaks, then, in order to clarify the import of the prior visionary experiences. He does not wish to be misconstrued. His first speech, in effect, is motivated by didactic concern.

Christ speaks again to Julian in the sixth vision, but this time without didactic intent. She reports the experience: ‘After this, oure lorde saide: “I thanke the of thy servys and of thy travelle and namely of thy youthe”’ (14.1–2). He commends Julian for her devotion, proving his ‘curteyse’ and proffering a social channel of reciprocity between God and man. The speech is followed by Julian’s soul being lifted into heaven where she says she ‘saw our lorde God as a lorde in his owne house, which lorde hath called alle his dereworthy frendes to a solempne fest’ (14.3–4). The thanks offered in Christ’s second speech are thus accompanied by a reward, the ‘fest’ which is a foretaste of beatitude, the goal of every contemplative.

In Chapter 17, which develops the eighth vision of Christ’s lingering, agonised death on the cross, Julian recalls his speech as recorded in scripture: ‘*sitio*’, ‘I thirst’.<sup>18</sup> She writes: ‘And in this drying was brought to my minde this worde that Crist said: “I thirst”. For I sawe in Crist a doubille thirst: on bodely, and another gostly. This worde was shewed for the bodily thurst, and for the gostely thurst was shewed as I shalle sey after’ (17.1–4). Christ’s speech is brought to her mind in such a way that she remembers that it is from scripture. Her careful commentary on

Christ's words implies that they are of perennial interest, for even though these words were uttered in the past, they do not fade in importance. All divine speech resonates with authority, demanding continued attention and remembrance. In this vein, Julian recognises two significances for Christ's self-acknowledged thirst: on the one hand, there is the physical thirst, and, on the other, a spiritual thirst. Thus, Christ's speech is polysemous, signifying more than the literal sense. God's discourse demands interpretation and translation, and the devout reader or auditor of his words, whether *lered* or *lewed*, will meditate on them in Latin or English in order to divine their deep *sentence*. This, of course, is what Julian herself has done for many years in the wake of her original visions and voice-hearing experience.

### TALKING WITH GOD

The ninth vision of three heavens and the Trinity introduces for the first time a direct dialogue between Julian and Christ:

Than saide oure good lorde, asking: 'Arte thou well apaid that I suffered for thee?' I saide: 'Ye, good lorde, gramercy. Ye, good lorde, blessed mot thou be'. Then saide Jhesu, our good lord: 'If thou art apaide, I am apaide. It is a joy, a blisse, an endlesse liking to me that ever I sufferd passion for the. And if I might suffer more, I wolde suffer more'. (22.1–5)

Dutton reads the dialogue between Julian and Christ as being modelled on that of student and master, in which Julian ventriloquises Church doctrine that is in tension with Christ's teaching.<sup>19</sup> But her reading does not take adequate account of the pervasive markers of intimacy, homeliness and friendship in the dialogue. Furthermore, whether there *is* tension in the text between Church doctrine and Christ's teaching is debatable. On this question, Denys Turner argues, in my view persuasively, that the work contains no such conflicts: 'For the aporia is internal to a single, complex, indivisible whole—*her shewings as mediated to her through the teaching of the Church*'.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this dialogue further proves Julian's claim to intimate relationship with God as she and Christ become sociable interlocutors. In this connection, Jesus addresses Julian in the familiar 'thou' form, and she responds in similar fashion although she twice addresses him respectfully as 'good lorde'. She does not address him as 'Jhesu' in dialogue, but she does report his responses to her by reference

to his personal name. The overall effect of this first piece of dialogue is, *pace* Dutton, one of familiar friendship between Julian and Jesus, which is nevertheless qualified by Julian's proper awe for her saviour.

In the course of the same chapter, Julian dwells on and interprets Christ's speech with respect to the concomitant vision:

This that I sey is so grete blisse to Jhesu that he setteth at naught all his traveyle and his harde passion, and his cruelle and shamfulle deth. And in these wordes—'If I might suffer more, I wolde suffer more'—I saw sothly that as often as he might die, as often as he wolde, and love shulde never let him have rest tille he had done it. (22.19–23)

Once again, she teases out the *sentence* beneath the literal sense of Christ's words, for of themselves they invite reflection. Additionally, Julian's meditation on his words produces a creative paraphrase and interpretation whereby she attributes to him a speech of explication: "Than meneth he thus: "How shulde it than be that I shulde not for thy love do all that I might? Which deed greveth me nought, sethen that I wolde for thy love die so often, having no regard to my harde paines"" (22.34–36). Her attribution of this speech, which expresses the *sentence* of the original, to Christ serves to show the freedom with which she can treat the later interpretation of her visionary experience. She works on its elements—its *matter*—over the years, and produces an interpretative commentary that works to frame and, moreover, amplify the bare record of the original experience.<sup>21</sup>

The report of divine speech in *A Revelation* is never merely casual: rather, it is always understood to be brimming with meaning. The conclusion to Chapter 23 serves to illustrate the fine degree to which every precise word of Christ's speech in the ninth vision has been pored over to expound fully its significance. Julian says that Christ said to her, "It is a joy, a blisse, an endlesse liking to me that ever I sufferd passion for the", and she dwells on the importance of the adverb 'ever': "Think also wisely of the gretnesse of this worde: "Ever". For in that was shewed an high knowing of love that he hath in our salvation, with manifolde joyes that folowen of the passion of Crist' (23.35–37). Julian's concern for each of Christ's words entails a concomitant concern for the preservation of the precise verbal form of his locutions in her writing. If each word bears such profound significance, then she is bound to reproduce the speech as accurately as her memory allows. Indeed, when she concludes her account



of the sixteen visions, she insists that she has reproduced faithfully the specific words uttered by Christ in the revelation (73.4).

By the image of Christ's cloven heart that is glimpsed spiritually through the wound in his side, the tenth vision reveals to Julian's understanding 'in part, the blessed godhede' (24.8). She reports Christ's words that accompany the spiritual vision:

And with this, oure good lorde saide full blissefully, 'Lo, how I loved the', as if he had saide: 'My darling, behold and see thy lorde, thy God, that is thy maker and thy endlesse joy. See thin owne brother, thy savioure. My childe, behold and see what liking and blisse I have in thy salvation, and for my love enjoye with me'. (24.11–14)

Once more, Julian amplifies the authentic locution by expanding, elaborating and elucidating it, and attributing its interpretative, analytic paraphrase to Christ himself. She interprets the effect of the Godhead, which is love, in terms of intimacy, and so she imagines Christ meaning to address her as 'My darling', gesturing towards, perhaps, a romantic or erotic relationship. Yet, the contiguity of such terms like 'brother' and 'My childe', which imply Christ's fatherly or sibling relation to Julian, provide, rather, a familial connotation to the address, 'My darling'. Julian further expands the original locution:

And also, to more understanding: this blessed worde was saide, 'Lo, how I loved thee', as if he had saide: 'Behold and see that I loved thee so much, or that I died for thee, that I wolde die for the. [...] How shulde it now be that thou shuldest anything pray me that liketh me, but if I shulde fulle gladly grante it the? For my liking is thine holinesse and thy endlesse joy and blisse with me'. (24.15–21)

Clearly, the interpretative depth and richness of each of Christ's locutions runs deep in Julian's meditative reading and rumination. Each locution bears a plenitude of meaning, which demands close reading and exegesis. And, of course, again and again, the *sentence* of such speech signifies God's closeness to his creation and special creature, the human being.

To this point, each instance of divine speech has been identified and discussed in turn as it is sequentially presented in the text, and this has revealed a definite scheme to the representations of such speech. Julian's visionary experiences begin with visual images of 'bodily sight',

which are subsequently followed by ‘words formed in the understanding’. Initially, these words present themselves via Julian’s own intellectual faculties of intuition and reason, but then they are formed without intermediary, and she perceives their non-physical utterance by Christ. Finally, she engages Christ in dialogue, reciprocally addressing him in the same familiar terms as those in which he addresses her; developing this familiarity, she interprets his speeches to the point of attributing expositional paraphrases to him. These kinds of divine locution represent the major types of the sixteen visions that comprise the whole revelation. For the remainder of this essay, only those remaining instances of divine speech that enhance or qualify the overall understanding of Julian’s conception and representation of such discourse will be discussed.

### THE INEFFABILITY OF DIVINE ESSENCE

In the twelfth vision, Julian beholds the glorified Christ, but she emphasises that he is the ‘fullhede of joye: homely and curteys and blisseful and very life’ (26.3–4). This serves to remind the reader of the *homely* nature of Christ, despite his transcendence. In his glorified state, Christ speaks:

I it am, I it am. I it am that is highest. I it am that thou lovest. I it am that thou likest. I it am that thou servest. I it am that thou longest. I it am that thou desirest. I it am that thou meneste. I it am that is alle. I it am that holy church precheth the and techeth thee. I it am that shewde me ere to the. (26.4–8)

The anaphora of the phrase, ‘I it am’, recalls and amplifies God’s identification of himself to Moses in Exodus 3.14, ‘*ego sum qui sum*’, ‘I am who am’, although the Middle English phrase, ‘I it am’, meaning, ‘It’s me’, is more *homely* and reassuring than the austere profundity of the Latin.<sup>22</sup> Julian says that Christ repeated these phrases ‘Often times’ (26.4). Their multiplication emphasises their subject, which is the concentrated, superabundant self-affirmation of self-subsistent but relational and communicating Being.

Having reported this revelatory speech of Christ, Julian, in a state of hitherto unoccasional aporia, confesses:

The number of words passeth my wittes and my understanding and alle my mightes, for they were in the highest, as to my sight. For therein is

comprehended I can not telle what. But the joy that I saw in the shewing of them passeth alle that hart can think or soule may desire. And therefore these wordes be not declared here. But every man, after the grace that God geveth him in understanding and loving receive them in our lordes mening. (26.8–13)

In this way, she qualifies the foregoing represented speech by invoking the inexpressibility topos. As Gillespie writes: ‘Mystical writing can only ever be about thresholds: the thresholds of language, the thresholds of perception, the thresholds of interpretation. Interpreting the ineffable strains human endeavour to the limit. God cannot be comprehended or circumscribed within the repertoires of human hermeneutics. Human language and human understanding fall away when faced with the glory of the revealed Word’.<sup>23</sup> If the ‘number of words’ surpasses the ordinary psychological capacities, then Julian’s reader can infer that not all those words uttered by Christ are recorded in her writing. The presented speech represents a mere sample of those words uttered ‘in the highest’. Furthermore, departing from her practice in previous chapters, Julian decides not to ‘declare’ or expound the recorded words on account of their subtle difficulty, at least at this stage of the writing. She returns to them later in Chapters 59 and 60 in the light of later visions. At this point, though, she invites her reader to read them, ruminate on them, and interpret them ‘in our lordes mening’. Christ’s words, thus, are meant to be heard or read by more than Julian alone. They are intended for a wider audience, and their interpretation lies open to that audience too.

Yet, Julian is careful to offset the possibility of unlimited or heretical reading when she implies that any such interpretation is to be delimited by ‘our lordes mening’, that is, *intentio* or intent. Christ as *auctor* determines the *sentence* of his spoken text. Perhaps Julian conceives of contemporary or—like Dante, mindful of the readers of his *Commedia* to come—future readers divining greater depths in Christ’s words than even she has the grace to discover.<sup>24</sup> In any case, her intention to share those words and thereby invite wider interpretation implies a belief that they ought to become part of the tradition of God’s ongoing friendship with, and his continuing self-disclosure to, human beings through perennial divine discourse. At the same time, this speech of Christ’s marks the limits of linguistic intellection for human understanding. As Wittgenstein remarks concerning, in particular, the language-games of theology: ‘How words are understood is not told by words alone’.<sup>25</sup> From a medieval

theological perspective, only God can meaningfully utter the phrase, ‘I it am’, but the full significance of this eludes the finite intellect of a contingent being who can never say ‘I it am’ without qualification.<sup>26</sup>

Theological mystery also informs the revelation of the thirteenth vision. Julian wonders why God in his prescience allowed the existence of sin. She yearns for nothing less than a theodicy, and she gets it when Christ tells her: ‘Sinne is behovely, but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thinge shalle be wel’ (27.9–11). It turns out that sin is necessary or fitting, but there is no further explanation offered as to why this should be.<sup>27</sup> The key response, however, and the foundation of the theodicy amounts to Christ’s thrice repeated promise, ‘alle shalle be wele’. Concerning the grammar of this phrase, Watson and Jenkins note: “‘Shall’ implies necessity at least as strongly as futurity”.<sup>28</sup> As such, the phrase is illocutionary; in other words, its utterance effects its reference. When Christ the Word, who exists outside of time, says that all shall be well, then it is a done deed. Even so, Christ later assuages Julian’s human-level incredulity concerning the logical impossibility that all should be well: ‘That that is impossible to the is not impossible to me. I shalle save my worde in alle thing, and I shall make althing wele’ (32.41–42). The implication is, God keeps his promises, and so is to be trusted.

What is the perlocutionary effect—the effect on the addressee—of the specific promise that all will or must be well?<sup>29</sup> Julian reflects: ‘Theyse wordes were shewde fulle tenderly, shewing no maner of blame to me, ne none to none that shalle be safe. Than were it a gret unkindnesse of me to blame or wonder on God for my sinne, sithen he blameth not me for sinne’ (27.29–32). Their effect, then, is to suspend anxious questioning, to alleviate doubt, by effecting a serene equanimity that rests in the assurance of God’s Word. So, when Christ assures Julian that what is impossible for her is not so for him, as noted above, she faithfully concludes: ‘And in this was I taught by the grace of God that I shuld stedfastly holde me in the faith as I had before understand, and therwith that I shulde stonde and sadly beleve that alle maner thing shall be well’ (32.43–45). The perlocutionary effect actualises in the augmentation and bolstering of faith.

## THE HOMELINESS OF GOD TALKING

In the final four visions, there is increasing dialogue between Julian and Christ. Julian's role is to ask theological questions; Christ's to answer either by explanation or affirmation of some consoling proposition. The roles are those of pupil and master. Julian makes this explicit when she considers the reasons behind God's gracious visions and revelation, and she asserts that 'he is the teching, he is the techer' (34.14). Yet, there is much more to the nature of this dialogue than didacticism. As Julian points out, God speaks and teaches in order that 'we may knowe him and love him and cleve to him' (34.8-9). The visions constitute an invitation to beatitude, but they are transitory and do not compare to the authentic process. Consequently, Julian contrasts the nature of her visionary experience to that of genuine beatitude: 'And than shall we alle come into oure lorde, ourselfe clerely knowing and God fulsomly having; and we endlessly be alle had in God, him verely seyeng and fulsomly feling, and him gostly hering, and him delectably smelling, and him swetly swelwing. And than shall we se God face to face, homely and fulsomly' (43.40-43). For Julian, there is a gap between the transient experience of God in time and the full and illimitable experience of God in eternity, which mitigates the possibility of offering any complete rational account of his nature or the experience of his effects now. This is why in Chapter 26 she admitted of Christ's locutions that 'The number of words passeth my wittes and my understanding and alle my mightes, for they were in the highest, as to my sight' (26.8-9).

Christ's final words spoken to Julian come as a coda at the conclusion of the sixteenth and ultimate vision. His *homeliness* derives from his intimacy with the human soul as was made plain by Julian in Chapter 54. Now Julian sees by spiritual vision the soul as a citadel or city in the middle of her heart, and in its midst, she sees Christ who 'sitteth in the soule even righte in peas and rest, and he ruleth and yemeth heven and erth and all that is' (68.7-8). She elaborates, interpretatively: 'The place that Jhesu taketh in oure soule he shall never remove it withouten ende, as to my sight, for in us is his homeliest home and his endless wonning' (68.12-13). In the context of the punning intimacy of Christ's 'homeliest home' in the human soul, he confirms in speech the authenticity of the whole revelation. Echoing the introduction of Christ's first words spoken *in propria persona*, Julian records:

And whan I had behold this with avisement, then shewed oure good lorde wordes fulle mekely, without voice and without opening of lippes, right as he had done afore, and saide full swetely: ‘Wit now wele, it was no raving that thou saw today. But take it and beleve it, and kepe thee therin, and comfort thee therwith, and trust thee therto, and thou shalt not be overcome’. (68.43–47)

Christ is once again identified as ‘oure good lorde’, and he speaks voicelessly and without opening of lips as in 13.3–4. The words console and promise comfort. Further, the quality of the delivery of the speech, its humility and sweetness, connotes the close friendship of God with his creature. The imperatives are not threatening, but instruct in order to bring both Julian and her readers faith, confidence and security. She herself decides:

Theyse last wordes were saide for lerning of full tru sekernesse, that it is oure lorde Jhesu that shewed me alle. And right as in the furst worde that oure good lorde shewde, mening his blessed passion—‘Herewith is the fende overcome’—right so he saide in the last worde with full tru sekernesse, mening us alle: ‘Thou shalt not be overcome’. (68.47–51)

She notes the concatenation of the words of Christ’s first and last uttered speech. The circularity or circumscription of the utterances connotes the unity of their *sentence* and by extension the unity of the whole revelation. For Julian, this is the coherent *intentio* of ‘our lordes mening’.

Although the experience and its showings have been deeply personal to Julian and have been a sign of her favour and intimacy with Christ, the relevance of the revelation is not merely personal, and so she continues: ‘And alle this lerning and this tru comfort, it is generale to alle mine even-cristen, as it is afore saide, and so is Gods wille’ (68.51–53). If the tone of the final speech was, at first, gentle and sweet, she qualifies its concluding clause: ‘And this worde, “Thou shalt not be overcome”, was saide fulle sharply and full mightly for sekernesse and comfort against all tribulations that may come’ (68.54–55). The final phrase rings out its illocutionary force as it breaks free of the preceding implied hypothetical clauses and syntax; that is, *if* you do this, *then* you will not be overcome. Christ’s final utterance crystallises the *sentence* of universal salvation, namely, that all should be well. Its illocutionary force effects a guarantee, and so it resounds ‘fulle sharply and full mightly’. Julian, nevertheless, ponders on what Christ does *not* say: ‘He saide not, “Thou shalt not be tempestid,

thou shalt not be traveyled, thou shalle not be dissesed”, but he saide, “Thou shalt not be overcome”. She reads between the lines of his speech, critically reflecting on the full implicature of its *sentence*. The theodicy of the whole text turns on cleaving in faith to God’s promise despite the *per accidens* miseries of mortal life. Julian conceives the fittingness of Christ’s final words in such faith-filled terms, and so she concludes: ‘God wille that we take hede at this worde, and that we be ever mighty in seker trust, in wele and wo. For he loveth us and liketh us, and so wille he that we love him and like him and mightely trust in him, and all shall be welle’ (68.57–60). Reflecting again on the authenticity of her experiences and the whole revelation, she binds herself to Christ’s words of promise: ‘he lefte me his owne blessed worde in tru understanding, bidding me fulle mightly that I shulde beleve it, and so I do’ (70.4–5). Clearly and emphatically, the divine speech of her visionary experience, and in particular how it has powerfully illuminated her understanding and deepened her faith, serves to confirm the authenticity of the revelation.

Christ’s words and the representation of such divine speech are essential to the *sentence* of the message communicated by Julian’s individual visionary experiences and total revelation, and so, as noted above, she insists that she has represented them faithfully (73.4). Moreover, as has been shown, Christ assumes the roles of teacher, counsellor, friend, and family relation (be it father, mother, or sibling), to Julian. In this way, he reveals his closeness to his creature, and the most fitting epitome of such closeness comes in the conversational dialogue of God and creature as reciprocal interlocutors. All his roles are subsumed in that of caring friendship, and so Julian asserts that God is man’s ‘highest sovereyn frende. This blessedde frend is Jesu’ (76.21). On the subject of friendship, Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* says, ‘where there is a great gulf, as between God and man, friendship becomes impossible’.<sup>30</sup> By stark contrast, Julian, secure in the conviction of her revelation, asserts that God in the person of Jesus is ‘oure everlasting frende’ (76.37). Above all, it should be clear that it is speech that constitutes the key medium of revelation in the visions and by which the ‘gulf’ between God and human being is bridged. For it is through speech that Christ explains the significance of the *matter* of the visions. Time and again, he answers Julian’s questions, and, in this way, guides the direction of her own meditation on and interpretation of the visions. She notes this and so extends Christ’s tuition and concern beyond her own case: ‘oure precious lover helpeth us with gostely lighte and tru teching on diverse manner within and withoute, whereby that we

may know him' (70.26–27). The writing Julian produces to record and represent her visionary experiences is designed to be more than a history or piece of life-writing. Instead, the whole book is constructed to be 'performed' by its prospective readers: 'This boke is begonne by Goddes gifte and his grace, but it is not yet performed, as to my sight [...] For truly I saw and understode in oure lordes mening that he shewde it for he will it knowen more than it is' (86.1–7). Christ's words are intended for and directed to all. Hence, Julian's text inscribes the conviction that divine discourse directs human beings perennially by virtue of its *homely* operations and intimate address.

### CONCLUSION

Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love* bespeaks a theology in which personal relationship to God develops with respect to human forms of life, and, in particular, that most human activity of intimate, friendly conversation. Moreover, her conception of God as close to the human being essentially licenses her experience and representation of divine speech. That God speaks to her in the vernacular adds to the experience of intimacy and *homlyhede*. In addition, the illocutionary force of Christ's connected promises that all shall be well and that none shall be overcome amounts to the deep *sentence* of the whole revelation. Indeed, fifteen years subsequent to the original series of showings, Julian records that she received a supplementary communication mediated by spiritual understanding: 'What, woldest thou wit thy lordes mening in this thing? Wit it wele, love was his mening. Who shewed it the? Love. What shewid he the? Love. Wherefore shewed he it the? For love. Holde the therin, thou shalt wit more in the same. But thou shalt never wit therin other withouten ende' (86.13–16). The ground of the promises is love because, of course, '*Deus caritas est*', 'God is Love'.<sup>31</sup> Love gives rise to these promises, and they, in turn, are the grounds of every other locution and image presented in the whole text of the revelation. These illocutionary words, 'alle shall be wele' and 'thou shalt not be overcome', which both describe and effect their meaning and reference, are for Julian elevated to the hypostatic status of the Word itself, that is, the eternal divine locution. Consequently, they represent the astonishing apotheosis of visionary mediated and textually represented divine speech.

Concerning Julian's theology, Turner writes: 'it is only through the human nature of Christ that the Trinity is known to her at all. Jesus



is the revelation of the Trinity. Jesus' humanity is how the Trinity is revealed to us, and in no other way'.<sup>32</sup> The principal, distinctive property of human nature is reason, which is itself subtended by the capacity for language. Theologically, the *Logos* comprehends both language and the rational account. Moreover, the *Logos* is both the metaphysical and moral principle of intelligent substance and moral relationship. In Julian's own terms, then, it is *behovely* that the pre-mortem perfection—which is a paradoxically fragmentary perfection—of her revelation of love is expressed in *homely* discourse with Jesus. For Julian, divine speech is both Christologogenetic and Christologocentric. In other words, the inspiration for such represented speech derives from the very person of Christ, who unites human and divine natures, and, at the same time, the orientation of such representations relates back to Christ. Thus, the Christ-*Logos* circumscribes all art. All language ultimately bespeaks him, and the record or representation of divine speech in Julian's text effectively makes such universal circumscription and relation explicit.

In *A Revelation*, talking with God effects a communion that is characteristically human. The bonds of human community are grounded in all those activities that language makes possible: making plans, parenting, passing on values, and so on. For language is not merely a tool of communication: rather, it is the very ground of communication and community, and it makes possible ethical relationship, including that of moral love. The priority given to speech in Julian's visionary experience goes to the heart of what is at stake in faith in God. Hence, as a consequence of her visionary and mystical revelations, Julian experiences a deepening of her personal relationship to God. In showing after showing, she finds herself brought into relation to God by God, most particularly when she is drawn into dialogue with Christ. He reveals himself to be the principle of life and love, who dwells intimately in the soul of his beloved creature, speaking with her in *homely* fashion and, above all, as a friend.

## NOTES

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 2nd edn, ed. by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 123, § 717.
2. See P. M. S. Hacker, *The Intellectual Powers: A Study of Human Nature* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 101–44. While Hacker's philosophical anthropology is in one way modern, in another it is grounded in and

- continuous with Aristotelian philosophy, including that of the medieval Schoolmen (in particular, Aquinas), all of which underpins, in part, Julian's own theology.
3. Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas*, ed. by Brian Davies (London: Burns & Oates, 2008), 33.
  4. For an account of Wittgenstein's concept of the language-game, see Anthony Kenny, *Wittgenstein*, rev. edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 126–40.
  5. Kevin J. Magill, *Julian of Norwich: Visionary or Mystic?* (London: Routledge, 2006), 130.
  6. See *A Revelation*, 9.24–25, in Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins, eds, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).
  7. All quotations from *A Revelation* are taken from Watson and Jenkins, eds, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*; references are to chapter and line number.
  8. The *Meditationes* was erroneously ascribed to Saint Bonaventure and translated with cuts and additions in the early fifteenth century into Middle English by the Carthusian prior Nicholas Love as *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. For more on Love's popular translation, see Elizabeth Salter, *Nicholas Love's 'Myrrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ'*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 10 (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1974); Shoichi Oguro et al., eds, *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference, 20–22 July, 1995* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997); and Michelle Karnes, 'Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ', *Speculum* 82, no. 2 (2007): 380–408.
  9. Compare Aquinas, in *Summa Theologiae* Ia, 4, 3, who insists that while creatures are in some sense or by analogy like God, God is unlike all creatures; in *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 2nd and revised edn, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920): online edn, ed. by Kevin Knight, accessed October 7, 2018, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>.
  10. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, XLI–II, trans. by John Hammond Taylor (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 186.
  11. *The Writings of Julian*, 138, n. 10.
  12. Elisabeth Dutton, *Julian of Norwich: The Influence of Late-Medieval Devotional Compilations* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 111; see 111–12 for her full discussion of this passage.
  13. Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 7. See also Aquinas,

- Summa Theologiae*, Ia, 44, 1, and William of Ockham, *Quodlibeta Septem*, 3, 3, in *Opera Theologica*, IX, *Quodlibeta Septem*, ed. by Josephus C. Wey (New York: St Bonaventure, 1980).
14. *The Writings of Julian*, 164, n. 42: ‘The speech that follows is a crystallization of the revelation and the chapter that describes it, “seeing” translated into “meaning”. This mode of exposition by attributed speech is derived from medieval biblical exegesis and is common in *A Revelation*, often tending to diminish the distance between revelation and exposition’. *MED* offers a number of senses of the verb, ‘menen’, including: 1 (a) ‘To intend to convey (sth.), mean’; and 3 (a) ‘To say (sth.), to speak’. In the context of Julian’s use of the term in *A Revelation*, 11.42 and elsewhere, arguably, sense 1 (a) applies. See *MED s.v.* ‘menen’: accessed October 7, 2018, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED27327>.
  15. Compare Christ’s expositional speech in *Piers Plowman* B.18, which goes to the heart of the *sentence* of that text: William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text Based on Trinity College MS B.15.17*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1995).
  16. Vincent Gillespie, ‘Postcards from the Edge: Interpreting the Ineffable in the Middle English Mystics’, in *Interpretation: Medieval and Modern*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 137–65, 159.
  17. Joyce Bazire and E. Colledge, eds, *The Chastising of God’s Children and The Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, EETS (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 172.
  18. John 19:28. All quotations from the Bible are taken from the Latin Vulgate and the Douay-Rheims English translation; *The Holie Bible Faithfully Translated into English, Out of the Authentical Latin. Diligently Conferred with Hebrew, Greeke, and Other Editions in Diuers Languages. With Arguments of the Bookes, and Chapters: Annotations, Tables: and Other Helpes...By the English Colledge of Doway*, trans. by Gregory Martin (Douay, 1609–10).
  19. See Dutton, *Julian of Norwich*, 88–122, esp. 107–11.
  20. Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 82 (his emphasis).
  21. Note that this interpretative paraphrase of attributed speech does not appear in the corresponding section of the earlier short text, *Vision*, 12.
  22. I owe this point concerning the colloquial sense of the Middle English phrase to Ad Putter. There are also here echoes of Isaiah 43:11, ‘*ego sum ego sum Dominus et non est absque me salvator*’, ‘I am, I am the Lord: and there is no saviour besides me’; and Isaiah 43:25, ‘*ego sum ego sum ipse qui deleo iniquitates tuas propter me et peccatorum tuorum non recordabor*’, ‘I am, I am he that blots out thy iniquities for my own sake, and I will

- not remember thy sins'. These scriptural self-identifications by God go to the heart of the mystery of his essence and nature. Indeed, the Douay-Rheims 1609 gloss of Exodus 3:14, openly grounded in the medieval theology of Saint John Damascene and Saint Thomas Aquinas, confirms this view: 'Onlie God eternally is without beginning, ending, limitation, dependence, or mutation, consisting only of himselfe, and al other things are of him. Therefore this name, Qui est, He Which Is, is most proper to God, not determining anie maner, but indeterminately signifying al maners of being, for so it importeth the very infinite immensitie of Gods substance. S. Damascen, li.i.5.12, *Orthodoxa fidei*. S. Tho. p.i.q.13.a.11'.
23. Gillespie, 'Postcards from the Edge', 140–41.
  24. See, for instance, Dante's *Inferno*, 16.127–29; Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno*, ed. and trans. by Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). See also Anna Lewis, who argues that Julian composes her text mindful of an interpretative community that would read it aright, 'A Picture of Christendom: The Creation of an Interpretative Community in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*', *Parergon* 26, no. 1: 75–90.
  25. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 125, § 144.
  26. Shakespeare, though, in Sonnet 121 boldly claims, 'I am that I am', precisely in the context of a critique of judgement that plays with notions of relativism; Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 353.
  27. There may be a connection to the Easter Liturgy's Exultet hymn's attitude to the Fall: '*O felix culpa, O necessarium peccatum Ade*', 'O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam'. The fullest analysis of Julian's theology of sin, in which the question of sin's being *behovely* is central, is by Turner in *Julian of Norwich, Theologian*; see esp. 68–134.
  28. *The Writings of Julian*, 208.
  29. In speech act theory, the perlocutionary act refers to the effect made on the addressee; in other words, how the addressee is affected by speech intended to scare, persuade, inspire and so on. For further explanation, see Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 273. Anthony Kenny adroitly summarises the distinctions between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts: 'Suppose someone says to me "Shoot her!" The locutionary act is defined by specifying the sense of 'shoot' and the reference of 'her'. The illocutionary act is one of ordering, or urging, etc. The perlocutionary act (which takes place only if the illocutionary act achieves its goal) would be described by, for example, "He made me shoot her!"; Kenny, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, IV, *Philosophy in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 91.

30. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, vii, in Aristotle, *Ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thomson (London: Penguin, 1976), 270.
31. 1 John 4:16. Compare *Piers Plowman* B, 1.86.
32. Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian*, 132.

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## Sounds Like God: The Elephant in *The Book of Margery Kempe*

*Barry Windeatt*

Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, ‘Go, lie down; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, “Speak LORD; for thy servant heareth”’. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, ‘Samuel, Samuel’. Then Samuel answered, ‘Speak; for thy servant heareth’.

And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Behold I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle’. (I Samuel 3: 9–11; King James Bible)

The seyd creatur, lying in hir bed the next nyth folwyng, herd wyth hir bodily crys a lowde voys clepyng: ‘Margery’. Wyth that voys sche woke, gretly aferyd, and lying stille in sylens, sche mad hir preyerys ... And sone owr merciful Lord, ovyral present ... seyd unto hir: ‘Dowtyr ...’ (*The Book of Margery Kempe*, 54: 4380–86)<sup>1</sup>

The ‘elephant in the room’ in current discussions of *The Book of Margery Kempe* is Kempe’s God—or rather, Christ as the manipulative bully whose

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voice Kempe records hearing throughout her text. To the significance of voice-hearing in the texts left by the visionaries Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, modern commentary has been curiously deaf. Yet while Julian is indeed the recipient of arresting visions, her revelations also hinge importantly on words heard, and in her *Book* Kempe's heard voices are much more extensive and telling than her other visionary experiences. Most locutions in Julian's revelations are brief and lapidary pronouncements—'Herewith is the fend overcome', 'Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel'—and few initiate a dialogue with Julian ('Art thou wele payed that I suffrid for thee?', ch. 22).<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Kempe's voices engage in a continuing, even prolix, inner conversation with her. Julian records locutions as much as fifteen and twenty years later which offer guidance on understanding her revelations and insights (chs 51, 86), and the *Book* comparably records experiences of hearing Christ's voice that extend over decades. This essay will map not only the incidence and function of Kempe's hearing of voices, but also the characterisation of Christ that her voice-hearing reveals.

Kempe's role as a voice-hearer defines her identity. The *Book* reports Kempe as hearing and conversing with both Christ and Mary, but Christ is overwhelmingly Kempe's main interlocutor.<sup>3</sup> Kempe also questions various saints who 'answeryd to what that sche wolde askyn of hem' (87: 7251–52); she hears that any saint to whom she speaks will reply (65: 5391–93).<sup>4</sup> Kempe's reputation as a voice-hearer precedes her: a monk in Canterbury remarks 'Damsel, I her seyn God spekyth onto the' (12: 812), and in the Holy Land 'on of the frerys askyd [...] yf that wer the woman of Inglond the which, thei had herd seyde, spak wyth God' (29: 2390–92). But by reporting her voice-hearing Kempe makes further claims that her own voice is transmitting God's voice (as she hears Christ confirming to her: 'And thei that heryn the, thei heryn the voys of God', 10: 702). The sheer frequency of Kempe's hearing of voices and her interactions with them turn her account into an intense inward colloquy. The *Book* records in excess of 110 instances of Kempe's hearing of divine voices where the heard words are recorded in direct speech, ostensibly given in full and verbatim. Divine voices as heard by Kempe account for around 17% of the text of Book I (whereas heard voices are infrequent in Book II, accounting for only about 3.5% of the text).<sup>5</sup> In other instances, Kempe's hearing of divine voices is reported without the words being recorded, including summary references to Kempe's habitual hearing of divine converse. Even so, this extraordinarily full record must be highly



selective, since Kempe mentions customarily having four hours of holy conversations with God in a morning (59: 4855–56), ‘many holy spech and dalyawns of owyr Lord [...] bothe afornoon and aftyrnoon’ (13: 925–26), and how five or six hours could flash by in such holy conversations with Christ without her realising (87: 7254–57). Such absorption in inward colloquy evidently occurs at a more advanced stage than ‘as sche began fyrst’ (87: 7262). Divine voices that Kempe records as if recalled verbatim clearly represent further editorialising and stylisation, as in the convention whereby many repeated instances of hearing the same divine message are represented by verbatim reporting of one lengthy speech (13: 931–37; cf. 78: 6227–28). It is ambiguous how much Kempe’s account records dictation by the divine voices, because of the time-lapse before their recording in the *Book*.

In this, the *Book* differs in method and form from St Bridget of Sweden’s *Revelations*, which provided one influential model for a text made up of reports of divine voices. Most chapters in St Bridget’s voluminous revelations are comprised of direct speech by Christ and Mary, speeches addressed to Bridget, or speeches between divine persons overheard by Bridget, along with Bridget’s responses and petitions (Plate 9.1). This dominant mode of Bridget’s text in the form of heard voices is acknowledged in Alfonso of Jaén’s *Epistola solitarii ad reges* (written ca. 1376/7 in defence of Bridget’s revelations), as if in an afterthought to its discussion of visions:

However, most of the time, she saw no one but only heard the voice of the Son of God or the Virgin Mother or of some angel or saint speaking wonderful words to her in order to benefit humankind, to give moral guidance, to convert the nations and to reveal mysteries [...]. The chapters in the greater part of them begin in this way: ‘The Son speaks’ or ‘The Mother speaks to the bride’.<sup>6</sup>

The influence on Kempe more largely of Bridget’s example included emulating Bridget’s in the form of heard voices. Kempe hears Christ say ‘rygth as I spak to Seynt Bryde, ryte so I speke to the’ (20: 1529). Yet voices in Kempe’s *Book* differ from the impersonal didactic pronouncements in Bridget’s revelations. Bridget wrote down herself in Swedish the words given her by God, which her confessor then translated into Latin. But when illness intervened, Bridget confided God’s words in Swedish to a confessor ‘in a kind of attentive mental elevation as if she were reading them in a book’. In both processes, Bridget subsequently checked the text



**Plate 9.1** St Bridget of Sweden, shown in mid-page of writing down her revelations as the dove of the Holy Spirit speeds towards her—an angel on her left shoulder perhaps represents the angel that dictated to Bridget her *Sermo Angelicus*. From *The Dyetary of Ghostly Helthe*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde (London, 1520); Cambridge University Library, Sel.5.30, frontispiece (Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library)

closely ‘to make sure that not one word was added or subtracted, but was exactly what she had heard and seen in the divine vision’.<sup>7</sup> The preface to an English version of St Catherine of Siena’s revelations presents its text as preserving even more directly the outcome of divine dictation:

Here begynneþ þe boke of diuine doctrine [...] ȝouen bi þe persone of God þe fader to þe intellecte of [...] Seint Katerine of Seene [...] whiche was write as sche endited in her moder tunge, when sche was in contemplacioun inrapt of spirit, and sche heringe actueli and in þe same tyme tellinge tofore meny what oure Lord God spake in her.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, Kempe’s voices speak as if reacting to Kempe’s own personal and immediate concerns, enmeshed in a narrative recollecting her experience, with reiterations registering her recurring anxieties. As such, these voices form one half of a reported stream of consciousness that represents a record of Kempe’s inner life.<sup>9</sup>

Kempe’s Christ can sound like a tyrant: the voice of Christ that Kempe hears is usually demanding and often domineering. For Kempe, hearing her voices represents as much of a debate as she ever records having with herself about her exceptionalism—her singular favour and its troublesome consequences in her eccentric behaviour—but the voices endorse how she is and explore no alternative. These are one-sided inner dialogues where one party claims credit for everything the other party is or does, and where the other party has no choice and no escape. These are dialogues where one party insists on causing the other to be abjectly humiliated and socially isolated for years on end because it gratifies that party. The voices profess to be supportive when saying what Kempe needs to hear: they damn her detractors (63: 5216–18) but they also repeatedly belittle her fears. Kempe’s voices proffer justification and endorsement for the difficult life Christ demands, but with scant empathy for the emotional travails these demands entail: Kempe hears Christ querulously indignant when she is momentarily reluctant to suffer anymore (50: 3970–72). The voices may expound love, but they express it only sparingly: Kempe is variously reminded of reasons for her to love God (65: 5403–16), but Christ’s love is expressed in terms of Kempe’s obligations in return. Kempe hears instead that Christ’s love is too great for her to experience in more than partial measure, as if it is something held back for her own good (64: 5290–94). If she asks Christ how she should love him, she

hears Christ snap back the answer ‘Have mende of thi wykydnesse and thynk on my goodnes’ (21: 1582). Expression of Christ’s love for Kempe is in proportion to Kempe’s earning that love through severe psychological tribulations: ‘the mor envye [thyn enmys] han to the for my grace, the bettyr schal I lofe the’ (20: 1532–33). Her mystical marriage to the Godhead is abruptly instigated by God’s proposal (‘Dowtyr, I wil han the weddyd to my Godhede’, 35: 2816–17), and both the wedding and the bedding (‘Therefore most I nedys be homly wyth the and lyn in thi bed wyth the’, 36: 2949–50) are simply notified by one party without prior consultation with the other, in a fashion scarcely more consultative than John Kempe’s ‘than schal I medyl yow ageyn’ during that sultry day on the road to Bridlington (11: 753).

Kempe hears Christ’s dominant voice reminding her that he is omnipotent, omnipresent, and that they can never be parted: ‘thynk alwey that I sitte in thin hert and knowe every thowt that is therin, bothe good and ylle, and that I parceyve the lest thynkyng and twynkelyng of thyn eye’ (77: 6174–76). This is professedly consoling and supportive, yet incipiently oppressive. Christ’s voice repeatedly asserts and exercises power, along with demands for recognition, since Christ never forgoes claiming credit for that grace in Kempe which makes her deserving in his eyes: ‘and yet I am cause of that charite myself’ (36: 2977–78). Kempe’s voices insist that she has been constructed by God as an exceptional and exemplary figure: she is a mirror (78: 6242); she is singular in love (22: 1679–82). Yet Christ’s beneficence to Kempe always redounds to his own glory. Kempe hears Christ saying ‘I schal makyn al the werld to wondryn of the’, but the wonderment is a credit to himself: ‘and many man and many woman schal spekyn of me for lofe of the’ (29: 2395–96). Kempe later hears Christ saying, ‘I schal werkyn so mech grace for the, that al the werld schal wondryn and merveylyn of my goodnes’ (63: 5256–57). When Christ hints that Kempe will be venerated as a saint in her own Lynn church, what he really intends is that ‘in this place I schal ben worschepyd in the’ (63: 5253–54). Never backward in insisting, Christ spells out the power relationship: ‘It is my worschep, dowtyr, that I schal do, and therefore I wil that thou have no wyl but my wyl’ (63: 5262–63). Any prospective reciprocity sounds strictly conditional: ‘And yf thou wilt be buxom to my wil, I schal be buxom to thi wil, dowtyr [...]’ (88: 7366–67; also 64: 5302–3). Kempe hears Christ thank her ‘that thou hast suffryd me to werkyn my wil in the’, for she cannot please him better than let him speak to her in her soul, because the point of these inner dialogues

is ‘for that tyme thu undirstondyst my wyl and I undirstond thi wyl’ (86: 7071–72). His understanding of her will sounds entirely ancillary to her allowing him what he wills and pleases.

Both Kempe’s voice-hearing and tears are, Christ reminds her bluntly, at his absolute discretion, regardless of any deserts or rights of hers (14: 968–71). Kempe’s torturingly troublesome gift of tears and cries is—she hears Christ say—an imposition of his will: ‘for I schal make the buxom to my wil, that thu schalt criyn whan I wil, and wher I wil’ (77: 6105–7). Christ claims her tears as his goodness, for which she is obligated to thank him (65: 5370–1). Kempe’s antisocial behaviours, such as her tears and screams, cannot be moderated out of any consideration for her well-being, because of what they make manifest about God: ‘I wil not han my grace hyd that I yeve the’ (56: 4667). Indeed, when Kempe prays Christ to take away her troublesome cries she is firmly answered ‘prey not therfor; thu schalt not han thy desyr in this’ (77: 6104) in an unusual recorded instance of a prayer refused. The social humiliations and sense of exposure brought upon Kempe by the uncontrollable symptoms that Christ gives her are expressly a source of pleasure to him: Christ insists ‘the mor wondryng that thow hast for my lofe, the mor thu plesyst me’ (15: 1023–24). Kempe hears Christ saying it is more pleasing to him that she suffers shame and rebuke than if she were repeatedly martyred by beheading (54: 4386–88): this Christ whom Kempe hears speaking is evidently a connoisseur of sadistic pleasures. Yet Kempe’s voices abruptly withdraw her supposedly unstoppable screams when this most discredits Kempe, compounding her consequent social ostracism as a hypocrite by forbidding her to divulge the voices’ ‘prevy cownsel’ (63: 5245). Kempe’s voices successfully oppress and control her both with and without her cries. Comparably suddenly, Kempe’s voices tell her to abandon her vegetarianism, inviting ridicule for hypocrisy, as an exercise in Christ’s subjugation of her will to his (66: 5427–37). Throughout, Kempe hears Christ insistently vindicating the relentless humiliation and ostracism that she suffers through his doing. Along with this insistence on the value in being reprovved and humiliated, the voices reiterate a sadistic algorithm whereby ‘the mor schame and mor despite that thu hast for my lofe, the mor joy schalt thu have wyth me in hevyn’ (78: 6221–22).

The unilateral omnipotence of the Christ whom Kempe hears speaking is felt in the markedly non-dialogic nature of their interactions. With her contemporaries, Kempe reports many back-and-forth exchanges of

dialogue, but this is not generally how the *Book* records Kempe's interactions with the divine voices she hears. The exceptions are those infrequent occasions when Kempe dares query the divine voice, as when she is apprehensive over how to tell a monk his sins (ch. 12), how to cope with her pregnancy (ch. 21), or how to combine devotion with caring for her husband (ch. 74). Here, there are exchanges of dialogue with the divine voice. More usually, a substantial divine speech comprises the last word on the subject, and lengthy divine speeches fill much or all of some chapters, or flow over several chapters (*e.g.* chs 5, 14, 22, 36, 63–66, 77, 84, 86, 88). These one-sided conversations mostly occur regardless of place. Predictably, the location for hearing divine voices is frequently in church during prayer (chs 5, 12, 15, 52, 56, 85, 87, 89, II.2), or during mass (20: 1512; 74: 5905–22), sometimes during meditation (69: 5662–63), occasionally while in bed (39: 3143; 71: 5756–57), or even as she went 'be the wey' (43: 3413). Yet the location of most instances of Kempe's hearing of divine voices remains unspecified, as if the voices consume her inner life without regard to place.

Kempe's very vocation and identity depend on her hearing of divine voices, but the unmanageable extent and inexpressible content make them intensely challenging to receive. Kempe must deal with a Christ whom she hears declaring reproachfully that he wants to speak to her 'oftynar than thu wilt latyn me' (69: 5677–78). Indeed, Christ implies that Kempe should submit to hearing his voice continuously: 'yvf thu knew [...] how meche thu plesyst me whan thu suffyrst me wilfully to spekyn in the, thu schuldist nevyr do otherwyse [...]' (35: 2916–18). The Virgin Mary's voice is consistently less inconsiderate than Christ's, but Mary's conversation far exceeds what can be recorded (29: 2380–81). The *Book* declares it 'in maner unpossibyl to writyn al the holy thowtys, holy spechys, and the hy revelacyons which owr Lord schewyd unto hir' (59: 4834–36). These heard voices elude recording afterwards (29: 2326–30). By late in the *Book*, the amanuensis also experiences this inability (II.3: 7750–51). Such superabundance of voices is at times almost confounding: Kempe can only repeat that she cannot repeat them all, whether because of their volume or their material. Christ boasts petulantly that he is worthier of her soul than all the absent confidants that she is missing (69: 5675–76), and he overwhelms her with hearing of voices whose content Kempe feels unequal to expressing. The *Book* inevitably struggles to provide any account, when the greatest spiritual books fall short by comparison with Kempe's voices: 'sche herd nevyr boke [...] that spak so hily of lofe of

God but that sche felt as hily in werkyng in hir sowle, yf sche coud or ellys mygth a schewyd as sche felt' (17: 1257–61). Later, Kempe acknowledges the selectivity of her record: she had so many 'holy spechys and dalyawns in hir sowle [...] that sche cowde nevyr rehersyn but fewe of hem' (83: 6789–92). This is partly because she is too 'abaschyd' to impart them, but also because, as spiritual communication, they surpass what human speech can express in language: 'it weryn so hy abovyn hir bodily wittys that sche myth nevyr expressyn hem wyth hir bodily tunge liche as sche felt hem—sche undirstod hem bettyr in hir sowle than sche cowde uttyr hem' (83: 6793–96). With this, Kempe can pre-empt criticism that her recording of divine speech does not make it sound convincingly divine. Indeed, Kempe implies that these divine voices have a kind of self-deleting function, reminiscent of dream experience; unless she imparts them to a confidant straight after they occur, her power to recollect them soon fades (83: 6796–801), as if to confirm how little control and ownership Christ allows Kempe over what she hears.

The *Book* leaves no doubt of the intimidation to which Kempe is subjected by her hearing of voices: unless she accepts unquestioningly that she is apprehending divine voices she is oppressed by a miserable absence of grace and devotion 'tyl sche was ... compellyd to belevyn stedfastly, wythowtyn any dowtyng, that it was God spak in hir and wolde be magnyfiid in hir' (83: 6783–85). On one occasion, a peevish-sounding Christ repeats his prophecy to Kempe every day for a week until it proves true: 'than our Lord seyde to hir as sche lay in hir bed: "Dowtyr, as loth as thu art to levyn my steryngys, yet schal thu se [...]"' (71: 5758–59). On one recorded occasion, Kempe experiences a loss of voice-hearing when she will not listen to voices saying some should be damned and so loses 'alle good mendys of holy spechys and dalyawns [...] which sche had ben usyd to befortyme' (59: 4851–52). This is infinitely more serious than her occasional lapses of confidence in her voices' assurances that she will survive illnesses (44: 3455–57). Diabolical torment by obscene imaginings ensues, with visions of religious and secular men flashing their penises at her. Christ abjectly humiliates her by reducing her to an admission that she fancies one more than the others—causing Kempe, exceptionally, to hear the voice of the devil accusing her of this and to accept the devil's accusations. Kempe desperately promises that 'I schal belevyn that it is God wech that hath spokyn to me afortyme' (59: 4898–99), but Christ calculatedly lets her stew for twelve days. By the time her capacity for hearing divine voices is restored, Kempe has been taught (brutally, by

a form of sexual and psychological destabilisation) that to hear divine voices is conditional upon accepting their instruction absolutely—there can be no picking and choosing which to hear or heed—and Kempe, duly terrified into compliance, prays humbly ‘Lord, speke in me what that is most plesawns to the’ (59: 4918–19). Yet throughout the *Book*, in an indifferent exercise of power, the voices repeatedly discount Kempe’s very human fears. On at least fourteen occasions Kempe hears Christ issuing curt injunctions that she is not to be afraid (*e.g.* ‘Owr mercyful Lord, spekyng in hir mende, blamyd hir of hyr feerdnes, seying: “Why dredist the? Why art thou so aferd?”’, II.3: 7740–42).<sup>10</sup> The *Book*’s spiritual purpose may be to comment on Kempe’s fear as lack of faith, yet Christ’s repeated belittling of Kempe’s terrors underlines in just how many bewildering and humiliating predicaments he has caused her to be.

Fear of diabolical delusion is always real, but Kempe consistently ‘belevyd that it was God that spak in hir sowle and non evyl spiryte’ (87: 7239–40) because of the divine voices’ beneficial effect upon her, morally and spiritually. Kempe avoids reporting hearing any but divine and saintly voices. More confidently perhaps, Julian records hearing advice inwardly, as if voiced by unidentified benevolent intermediaries (‘I had a profir in my reason, as it had be frendly seyde to me’, ch. 19; ‘I was answerid in my reson, as it were by a freindful mene’, ch. 35), while the locutions Julian hears when contemplating ‘a littil thing the quantyete of an hesil nutt in the palme of my hand’ are unattributed (‘it was generally answered thus [...] I was answered in my understandyng’, ch. 5). Mention of Kempe’s own spirit as a site of voices is rare (‘Criste seyde unto hir spyrite’, 23: 1697; ‘owre Lord spak to the sayd creatur [...] seying to hyr gostly undirstondyng’, 86: 7057–58; also II.4: 7832–33), but one of her most important early voices is heard when ‘Cryst Jhesu [...] ravysched hir spyryt and seyde [...]’ (5: 494–95). The *Book*’s diction appears intermittently influenced by fears over ‘discernment of spirits’.<sup>11</sup> Even so, Kempe records few occasions where she hesitates over crediting her uncompromising voices: when she hears Christ’s voice commanding her to wear white clothes, she replies in her mind that she will obey the divine voice ‘Yyf thou be the spiryte of God that spekyst in my sowle, and I may prevyn the for a trewe spiryte’ (30: 2472–73). Elsewhere, words initially recorded as Christ’s are reattributed to ‘a ryth trewe spiryte’ once they have proved true: Kempe first records Christ’s words answering in her soul to her wish for a cleric to bring her God’s word, but when the young priest arrives



who reads to her for many years ‘than wist sche that it was a spirit sent of God which seyde to hir [...] thes wordys’ (58: 4821–23).

Kempe’s abject humiliation in return for resisting even one unwelcome aspect of her voices prompts the question of how hearing voices relates to her own will. The *Book* is structured as a record of how Kempe’s prayers are answered by her voices, since this endorses Kempe to the reader. How Kempe’s hearing of divine voices begins in each instance is significant in defining the voices’ nature and function. Specific prayers receive specific answers: Kempe prays to live in chastity and Christ replies to her mind, saying she will have her wish (9: 646–48); Kempe asks in prayer how to deal with her husband’s pressing demand for sex and Christ speaks, giving her a plan (11: 758–74); Kempe requests and receives from Christ the information to confront an errant monk with his sins (12: 819–32), and the confirmation that she should wear white clothes (44: 3417–23); she asks and is told how to answer the Bishop of Lincoln (15: 1116–26), and how long she must remain on earth (74: 5908–10). One recurrent theme in what Kempe hears is divine assurance that she will survive illness, and that others will or will not survive (whereby the voices support Kempe’s role as a local prophet). Kempe also implies that her movements are governed by what divine voices advise (84: 6823–26). Sometimes Christ’s voice responds to Kempe’s various expressions of bewilderment and dissatisfaction. On other occasions, the relation between prayer and subsequently heard voice may be more oblique. Christ encourages Kempe to trust that any prayer of hers would be granted (57: 4738), although some of the voices she hears challenge the terms and assumptions of her prayers and are not responding to any prior prayer by Kempe. From Bridget’s revelations Kempe could absorb a model of divine voices authoritatively setting the agenda and proceeding between topics with their own mysterious logic. Comparably, Kempe records how ‘On a tyme owre Lord spak to the sayd creatur when it plesyd hym’ (86: 7057–58). Other divine voices start new subjects without prior prayers by Kempe (63: 5239–40; 78: 6227–32; 84: 6844–47) or dispense unexpected instructions (17: 1208–11). This lends a powerful initiative, leadership, and autonomy to the heard voices. The *Book*’s focus on divine voices makes the hearing of voices a revelation of Kempe’s habitual states of mind: there are reiterations, hints of frustration on both sides of the dialogue, and a lifelike absence of straightforward progression.

What might a sceptical spiritual adviser have made of Kempe’s voices? To Walter Hilton or the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, they might

have sounded worryingly corporeal and sensual. Kempe's insistence on the voices' lifelike immediacy might give pause, as might her constant hearing of sounds and melodies as intimations of paradise, evidently emulating Richard Rolle's conversion by miraculous hearing of heavenly song.<sup>12</sup> The *Cloud*-author scorns those who artificially contort their bodily senses, including hearing, towards delusions of inward sensation.<sup>13</sup> Hilton disparages all sensory experience, including sounds, as limited and secondary compared to true contemplation.<sup>14</sup> Hilton writes against Rolle, without naming him, when observing that true angels' song is not heard as easily as brainsick delusions.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, the *Book* positions itself carefully, as if alert to deflecting potential charges, by specifying how Kempe's voices are apprehended inwardly, and by contrast how the sounds and music belong to her bodily hearing. Throughout, the *Book* is precise in stipulating how Kempe hears voices 'in her soul' or 'in her mind' although, for Kempe, soul and mind serve interchangeably as sites for hearing voices: she once describes herself 'heryng and undirstondyng this swet dalyawnce in hir sowle' (87: 7215–16) but then responds to Christ's words by 'seyng in hir mende' (7220). Comparably, Christ first tells her 'to hir sowle' to visit the nuns of Denny but, when she resists, he repeats his instruction 'to hir mende ayen' (84: 6808, 6812–13), which rather suggests Kempe's *Book* makes no great distinction between soul and mind as locations for her hearing of voices. Both terms emphasise such hearing's inwardness. In this, Kempe complies with Christ's express wish for interaction by means of unspoken prayer: 'whan thou preyist be thowt, thou undirstondist thiselfe what thou askyst of me, and thou undirstondist also what I sey to the' (88: 7290–92). The *Book* records cautiously how Kempe 'thought' she heard in her soul something said: 'And than hir thowt in hir sowle sche herd owr Lady seyn ...' (80: 6462–63; also 81: 6612). Kempe also takes care to note that when her divine voices fall silent due to her own disobedience, communication is maintained through conversation between Kempe and 'hir good awngel' (59: 4887, 4895, 4901). As the *Book* progresses, a more sophisticated alertness develops to how the hearing of voices is accounted for.

For Kempe, her hearing of marvellous sounds is a reminder of heavenly harmony, implicitly surpassing the hearing of voices in an unmediated interaction with the divine. By contrast, Kempe's thoughts of the Passion are accompanied by such a terrible dissonance that Kempe collapses (17: 1241–44). The *Book* implies that the marvellous sounds are experienced

as frequently as Kempe's voices, although the *Book* lacks means to represent this continuous experience of sounds. For Kempe, the key moment of her conversion to a spiritual life is a unique experience of listening: her miraculous hearing of an incomparably melodious sound of otherworldly sweetness, which hearing any music recalls to her ever afterwards (3: 324–35). Kempe's other key moments are comparably accompanied by her hearing of unearthly sounds: reporting her mystical marriage prompts Kempe to recall twice in successive chapters her almost-daily experience of sounds and melodies over twenty-five years (chs 35, 36), which also accompany the process of transcribing the *Book* (89: 7375–78). Sounds that initially unnerve her she comes to understand as the dove and rushing wind of the Holy Spirit (36: 2965–74), and she hears marvellous birdsong during the *Book's* writing (89: 7376–77). The *Book* is notably careful to stipulate that these are 'tokenys in hir bodily heryng' (36: 2965), and that she hears sounds and melodies reminding her of heaven 'wyth hir bodily crys' (35: 2868; 78: 6224–25). Indeed, such sounds so fill her hearing that she is deaf to what anyone says to her unless they speak up (35: 2867–70). The *Book* thus risks no confusion about the corporeal nature of such hearing, careful to say only that Kempe 'thinks' she hears heavenly songs during her vision of the Presentation (82: 6675–77). Sometimes her hearing of voices coincides with other sensory experiences, as if to confirm her hearing of those voices; a heavenly sweet smell accompanies one of Christ's speeches: 'Dowtyr, be this swet smel thu mayst wel knowyn [...]' (71: 5748–53); Kempe nearly falls off her donkey near Jerusalem and later staggers like a drunk because of the sweetness in Christ's conversation (28: 2186–89; 41: 3239–41); and heavenly voices impart sensations of heat in the fire of love (13: 924–31; 41: 3239–44). Kempe's sensation of white specks flying around her both day and night is not only explained to her by Christ as the presence of angels but specifically as validating her voices: 'Be this tokyn, dowtyr, beleve it is God that spekyth in the' (35: 2884).

While so careful to locate precisely its voices and sounds—whether in soul, mind or ears—the *Book* avoids speculation about the origins of the voices it records so fully, commenting once, 'And thow hys voys be herd, it is not wyst of the werld fro when it comyth er whedyr it goth' (17: 1281–83).<sup>16</sup> Curiously, Kempe's Christ quotes to her his own words in the Gospel but attributes them to 'owyr Lord' (14: 991–95). Nevertheless, in her earlier career Kempe seems impelled to consult eminent authorities about her hearing of voices, as if seeking endorsement for her

exceptional experience. To Archbishop Arundel ‘sche teld hym [...] the maner of dalyawns that owyr Lord dalyid to hyr sowle’ (16: 1170–71). To Richard Caister, she ‘schewyd hym all the wordys which God had revelyd to hyr in hyr sowle’ (17: 1231–32). To Julian of Norwich Kempe confides (among other things): ‘ful many holy spechys and dalyawns that owyr Lord spak to hir sowle’ (18: 1339–40). In Assisi, a sympathetic English Franciscan has never heard of anyone ‘to be so homly wyth God be lofe and homly dalyawnce as sche was’ after Kempe tells him ‘how owyr Lord dalyed to hir sowle in a maner of spekyng’ (31: 2577–78). This suggests some alertness to the modes in which divine speech is manifested, yet the *Book* records Kempe’s consultations about her voices without divulging much about the content. Instead, Kempe foregrounds the spiritual benefit she derives from her voices, which provided a traditional test for locutions’ orthodoxy.<sup>17</sup>

What might have unsettled Hilton further is Kempe’s insistence on valuing her voices in terms of their likeness to human speech. Kempe finds authenticity in the voices’ remarkable auditory clarity: she overhears an exchange between the Virgin and St John as clearly ‘in the undirstondyng of hir sowle as sche schulde undirstondyn o man spekyn to another’ (81: 6577–78). The clarity of Kempe’s voices resembles plain-speaking between friends: Christ converses in her soul ‘as clerly as on frende schulde spekyn to another’ (87: 7216–17), and Kempe tells Richard Caister that God speaks ‘to hir sowle as pleyntly and as veryly as o frend spekyth to another be bodyly spech’ (17: 1251–53). By contrast, when Julian hears two voices simultaneously muttering and wrangling, almost inaudibly, she concludes ‘al this was to drive me to dispeir’ (ch. 69). The authenticity of Kempe’s voices is their human and bodily character. For Kempe, her experience of divine voices is that they have no distinctive auditory properties other than likeness to human speech. The *Book* rarely attempts to characterise the voices or distinguish any qualities they have as voices: Kempe learns to distinguish the individual voices of the saints that ‘spokyn to the undirstondyng of hir sowle [...]’ (87: 7246–53); unsurprisingly perhaps, Christ’s is a ‘melydiows voys, sweettest of alle savowrys, softly sowndyng in hir sowle’ (41: 3235–36). Inconsistently, Christ thanks Kempe for rebuking swearers of oaths by Christ (65: 5378–83) yet swears to her an oath by himself (5: 518–19). Her voices’ ‘dalyawns’, familiar in tone while serious in content, does not express a divinity that speaks recognisably differently, mysteriously, or other than plainly. Kempe’s point is the easy familiarity of the voices, regardless of

those inequalities in rank and status which would determine the manner of speaking in Kempe's daily social interactions. Voices are Kempe's manifestation of God's homeliness with us. Julian notes cautiously how God 'without voice and openyng of lippis formys in my soule these words' (ch. 13), or how 'shewid our good Lord words ful mekely, withouten voice and withouten openyng of lipps' (ch. 68). But to Hilton's reservations, Kempe might retort that since she almost always identifies her voices with those who have had bodily form—Christ, Mary, the saints—she hears their voices like customary human speech, and that she hears Christ declaring 'I come to the [...] and telle the wyth myn owyn mowth' (88: 7355–56).

For Kempe, this immediacy of her voices, representing direct communications with her, makes her locutions much more individual to her than most of her visions. Her locutions and visions also differ in their temporal dimension. Kempe's visionary experiences, such as witnessing events in Christ's life re-enacted in her mind's eye, are declared to occur habitually, in observance of devout meditation. Such visions are derivative from the meditative tradition represented by the *Stimulus Amoris* that Kempe has heard read (17: 1258; 58: 4820), and the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*. Only a handful of Kempe's visionary experiences are once-only incidents specific to her imagining: she sees the Virgin Mary begging food for Kempe (38: 3049–51); she sees Christ's dead body being mutilated (85: 7005–10); she is shown her name in the Book of Life (85: 6960–70). By contrast, Kempe's heard voices represent unique historical occurrences in time and can be archived verbatim like witness testimonies. Moreover, some of Kempe's principal visionary experiences become primarily visions of hearing: her mystical marriage (chs 35–36) consists of conversational exchanges and makes little appeal to a reader's visual imagination; when St John appears to hear her confession this miracle depends more on hearing than seeing (32: 2637–48); and Kempe's re-enactments in her mind's eye of the Passion are most originally her own in how they involve her overhearing of dialogue between the protagonists, or even participating herself. Kempe eavesdrops on a heartbreaking (if unscriptural) parting exchange between Christ and Mary, which apparently takes place between the Last Supper and the Agony in the Garden (79: 6285–361). She then hears speeches that are not in the *Meditationes* before Christ addresses Kempe directly, underscoring her obligation to him: 'owr Lord seyde to hir sowle: "Dowtyr, thes sorwys [...] suffyrd I for thi lofe [...]"' (79: 6407–8).

In her visions, Kempe may see only the passive Christ of devotional tradition, but in her voice-hearing this gentle Christ becomes instead a possessive bully. Throughout her *Book*, Kempe records hearing the voice of an unrelentingly coercive and repugnantly manipulative masculinity, insistent that Kempe should suffer for what it determines is her good. It is a daunting inward voicing of what Kempe understands to be demanded of her by the Christ she loves so desperately. What Kempe believes she hears as a self-revelation by Christ can now be read more as an unwitting self-revelation by Kempe, through her characterisation of Christ in the voices she hears. As such, this records an unusually sustained medieval construction of Christ's personality through his direct speech. What Kempe hears in Christ's voice resembles a ventriloquising back to her of her own fixation with Christ's earthly suffering, which plays on Kempe's consequent sense of obligation. Divine omnipotence and omniscient wisdom are heard by Kempe in her own terms. Christ's boasting that he can teach her better than any clerk (64: 5301–2) translates divine omniscience into Kempe's everyday culture, while Kempe's understandings of divine omnipotence and omniscience sound unnervingly controlling and conceited when ventriloquised into Christ's voice. This can make for uncomfortably unequal colloquies, where Kempe feels that even if her tears saved the whole world she would still be worthless, and Christ says nothing to contradict her (57: 4770–72), or where Christ reminds Kempe, in a desolatingly circular speech, that she cannot forgo his love, even if he taunted her that she would never have it (37: 2983–91). Kempe hears Christ claiming that if he were still on earth he would openly support her in person (36: 2939–43), which implies her painful awareness that such support is unforthcoming. This is a Christ whose voice can sound so intimidatingly vengeful that Kempe records herself begging him not to avenge her (64: 5336–40), typical of the negotiations of power in the colloquies. When Kempe hears Christ equating her tension before receiving his body into her body at the mass with a wife's tense feelings before a husband's return home after an absence (86: 7191–8), her voice-hearing bespeaks an internalised disempowerment and sexual objectification. In an unsettling melange, Kempe hears Christ's exactions alongside assurances and blandishments. Kempe recurrently hears Christ reassuring her that her good intentions in this life will be rewarded in the next as if actually accomplished: all Kempe's fantasies about endowing abbeys and sponsoring priests will be rewarded (she hears) as if they were done indeed (84: 6857–66).<sup>18</sup> This is just as well, since following Christ's

commands has reduced Kempe to impotence in this world. In the same vein, Kempe hears Christ promising that married women's longing to live chaste lives will be rewarded as though they did (21: 1568–70), while Christ variously insists that Kempe is loved as much as any virgin and her past sexual experience does not count against her. Hearing divine assurances on this point, which crucially affects her sense of self-worth, should be liberating. Revealingly, Kempe hears more of her menacingly directive voices than this enabling power of divine voices to substitute for Kempe's powerlessness, transmuting will into deed, voicing pledges that her 'mynde and meditacyon' have a transformative potential to be rewarded for her spiritual ambition (84: 6844–47).

Most exemplary of the transformative power of voice-hearings is the moment the Virgin Mary hears the angel speak; the Annunciation is often depicted with the dove of the Holy Spirit shown heading for Mary's ear, to signify conception of the Word. In her voice-hearing, Kempe writes herself into the Annunciation with a speaking part that upstages the role of the angel Gabriel, who does not appear. Instead, Kempe hears herself being the first to break the news to Mary ('Lady, ye schal be the modyr of God', 6: 552–53). After demurring and disappearing, presumably for the Annunciation proper to take place elsewhere, Mary returns to Kempe to announce 'Dowtyr, now am I become the modyr of God' (6: 560). By hearing herself forestalling the Annunciation Kempe promotes herself through her voice-hearing to a unique role, but she does not hear the angel's words. The important analysis of hearing voices and sounds in Gregory's *Moralia in Job* (Bk 28, ch. 4)—as quoted in the *Epistola solitarii*—is careful to insist that God does not communicate in words:

the heart is taught his words without words and syllables [...]. The communication takes place without noise. It both opens the sense of hearing and yet does so without a sound [...]. To say that God's spirit speaks words to us means that, by a secret power, God intimates the things to be done and renders the human heart suddenly knowledgeable about mysteries without the noise or slowness of speech [...]. God's locution to us is seen inwardly rather than heard [...] he instils himself without the delay of speech.<sup>19</sup>

The special perception by means of such audition is so far beyond the hearing of speech that it may be likened to inward vision or illumination. Despite citing Gregory at length, Alfonso of Jaén still declares that

Bridget ‘heard the voice of someone speaking in her spirit’. The *Book* may not concern itself overtly with considering such questions, yet as always it positions itself adroitly when it has Kempe identify her hearing of God’s words with a form of intellection (‘I schal belevyn that every good thowt is the speche of God’, 59: 4913), as Christ later confirms to her: ‘every good thowt and every good desyr that thu hast in thi sowle is the speche of God, al yf it be so that thu her me not spekyn to the sumtyme as I do sumtyme to thi cler undirstondyng’ (84: 6901–4). Kempe acknowledges that divine voices are heard in silence, only ‘in gret qwyt of sowle thorw long excersyse’ (87: 7234–35) or as Christ reminds her ‘whan thu art in silens and sufferyst me to speke in thy sowle’ (35: 2922–23). Yet in practice Kempe evidently accepts that divinely wordless communications, in order to be reported, must be translated into words, as Julian of Norwich does in her *Revelations*.

‘And for the wordes, I have seid them rith as our Lord shewid hem to me’, declares Julian (ch. 70), distinguishing between her locutions, which she can record precisely, and visions that she can only ever partially convey. Even so, Julian’s practice is to rethink, through her own interpretative paraphrase, what the divine voices said to her: the originally heard words and the subsequent layers of interpretation are unselfconsciously part of one contemplative continuum. Kempe comparably insists on accuracy of record, presumably including the locutions that comprise so much of her text: ‘sche dede no thing wryten but that sche knew rygth wel for very trewth’ (138–39). Did Kempe also imitate St Bridget in checking over with her amanuensis that ‘not one word was added or subtracted but was exactly what she had heard’? As with Julian, decades intervene between the beginning of Kempe’s experience and her written text. Unlike Julian’s text, the *Book* does not reveal how much Kempe may have revised her understanding of the Christ she knows by hourly hearing his voice. There has been much brilliant modern commentary on Kempe’s quest for a disputed authority, as a self-styled holy woman interacting with her mercantile society. Now it is time to hear more about Kempe’s difficult interaction with the authoritarian voice of a tyrant Christ, who dominates her in a daily colloquy which becomes much more the core of her being than any outward worldly life. Here Kempe listens to a terrifyingly demanding and ineluctable God whom she hears, like Samuel, calling in the night.



## NOTES

1. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Longman, 2000; Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2004). Reference is by chapter and line number to this edition.
2. *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); on Julian's locutions, see xliv.
3. Kempe reports 'sche cowde no skylle of the dalyawns of the Godhede' (35: 2820–21) but also records how 'sumtyme the Fader of hevyn [...] sumtyme alle three Personys in Trinyte' conversed to her soul (17: 1251–61). This is evidently occasional.
4. St Jerome both appears and speaks when Kempe visits his tomb (41: 3261–75).
5. This is calculated by counting around 1275 of the 7422 lines of text (in Book I in my edition) as divine and saintly voices addressed to Kempe. This does not include the speeches by and between Christ, Mary, and others overheard by Kempe in her Passion meditations but not addressed to her. Kempe's attempts to include herself in these conversations are largely discouraged by the divine voices (79: 6343, 6355–57).
6. *The Revelations of St Birgitta of Sweden*, trans. by Dennis Searby, with notes by Bridget Morris, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006–15), 4.27.
7. Searby and Morris, 1.12.
8. *The Orchard of Syon*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS, OS 258 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 18.
9. For another view: 'These conversations can be interpreted as evidence that she suffered from auditory hallucinations as a symptom of an ongoing mental illness'; Diana Jefferies and Debbie Horsfall, 'Forged by Fire: Margery Kempe's Account of Postnatal Psychosis,' *Literature and Medicine*, 32 (2014), 348–64 (361).
10. Cf. 'Drede the nowt' (5: 516); 'Drede the not' (12: 826); 'Anoon owyr Lord seyde to hir mende: "Drede the nowt, dowtyr,"' (26: 2022); 'Drede the not, dowtyr, for I schal ordeyn for the ryth wel' (30: 2466); '[...] owyr Lord spak to this creatur in hir sowle and seyde, "Dowtyr, drede the not [...]"' (34: 2789–91); '[...] owr Lord answeyde to hir mend and seyde, "Dowtyr, be not aferd [...]"' (35: 2900–01); 'And therfor, dowtyr, drede the nevyr' (37: 2993–94); 'And therfor, drede the not' (38: 3038); 'Dowtyr, be not aferd, for ther schal no wedyr ne tempest noyin the' (39: 3156–57); 'Than owr Lord [...] seyde to hir mende, "Drede the not, dowtyr"' (42: 3292–93); 'Than owr Lord [...] seyde to hir, "Why art thou aferd?"' (42: 3340–41); 'And therfor, dowtyr, fere the nowt what any man can seyn onto the' (54: 4388–89); '[...] and evyr among owr Lord spak to hir mende, "Why dredist the?"' (II.5: 7847–49).

11. On 'discernment of spirits' (discrimination between good and delusory spiritual influences), see Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late Medieval Women Visionaries* (York: Boydell & Brewer for York Medieval Press, 1999).
12. *Incendium Amoris*, ed. by M. Deanesly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1915), ch. 15, 189–90.
13. 'For þei turne þeire bodily wittes inwardes to þeire body aȝens þe cours of kynde; & streynyn hem, as þei wolde see inwardes wiþ þeire bodily iȝen, & heren inwardes wiþ þeire eren, [...] & þan as fast þe deuil haþ power for to feyne sum fals liȝt or sounes'; *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises*, ed. by Phyllis Hodgson (Salzburg: Analecta Cartusiana, 1982), ch. 52.
14. 'Othere feelinge in the bodili wittes maad as it were goosteli, either in sownyng of the eere [...] or ony othere partie of the bodi [...] aren not verili contemplacion; ne thei aren but symple and secundarie though thei be good [...] in goosteli knowyng and loovyng of God'; *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. by Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 2000), 1.10.
15. 'And than, for febilnes of the brayn, him thynk that he heres wonderful sownes and sangs; and that is nathyng els bot a fantasy, caused o trublyng of the brayne [...] and al es bot a vanite and a fantasy of the heved, or els it es be wirkyng of the enemy that feynes swylk soun in his heryng [...]; *Of Angels' Song*, in *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 134.
16. Kempe cites Matthew 10: 19–20 to attribute her own discourse to the Holy Spirit's speaking in her (55: 4556–58).
17. Cf. 'Þe speche of God is þis: if þou feele a þought or a stiryng in þin herte of knowyng of þi silf & of þin owne synnes & þin owne wrecchidnesse, and to biholden noon opere mannis defaultes but þin owne [...] þis þouȝt & þis stiryng is a speking of God in þin herte & not of þi silf'; Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.14.19, ff. 149v–f.150r; for a modernisation, see *The Coasts of the Country*, ed. by Claire Kirchberger (London: Faber, 1953), 75–77.
18. Kempe hears Christ say 'I receyve every good wyl as for dede' (86: 7153–54). Cf. 14: 950–52; 30: 2450–54; 36: 2958–60; 66: 5421–22; 84: 6844–73.
19. Searby and Morris, 4.30–31.

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## Daggers of the Mind: Hallucinations, Mental Fixation and Trauma in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Early Modern Psychology

*Lesel Dawson*

Creeping silently in the dead of night to kill the king, Shakespeare's Macbeth suddenly encounters a dagger floating in the air before him:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.  
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,  
And such an instrument I was to use.<sup>1</sup>

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Taken aback by the apparent physicality of the dagger, Macbeth tries to grab it, only to discover its illusory nature; without material substance, it appears to be ‘a false creation’ produced by his ‘heat-oppressed brain’. As Macbeth moves from the hallucinated dagger to the real weapon in his hand, there is a marked shift in how he comprehends the prospect of regicide. He is forced to abandon his earlier hope that he might spend the crucial moment in a self-protective dissociative state where his body acts of its own accord, leaving his mind and soul untouched: ‘Let not light see my black and deep desires. / The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see’ (1.4.51–3). Given this, Macbeth’s encounter with his ‘fatal vision’ is striking for the way that it intertwines his conscious thoughts and submerged intent, so that his suppressed conscience takes a startlingly visual form.<sup>2</sup> Macbeth realises that the only way to become king is to unite the imaginary and material realms and transform his inner vision into something palpable. Instead of maintaining a separation between eye and hand, action and actor, here he tries to grip the imaginary dagger, thereby marshalling himself to deploy the tangible one. Lady Macbeth denies the moral and emotional complexity of Duncan’s murder (‘a little water clears us of this deed’), clinging to a materialist view that discredits Macbeth’s otherworldly encounters (2.2.68). But Macbeth’s hallucination, while immaterial, forces him to confront the terrible reality of his next step, in which he can neither jump the life to come nor absent himself, psychically or ethically, from the king’s murder.

While early modern natural philosophers and demonologists offer a variety of natural and occult causes for visual and aural disturbances, Macbeth’s obsessive thinking about the crown and his plan to achieve it suggests that he is suffering from mental fixation, a cognitive disturbance in which an extremely pleasing or terrifying image is forcefully imprinted on the brain.<sup>3</sup> This mental picture (or phantasm) obliterates all other sense perceptions, causing the sufferer to dwell obsessively on the internal mental image. Stuck in the mind, the phantasm also interferes with perception, causing delusions, hallucinations and other types of visual, aural or multimodal disturbances. We see the early stages of this in act 1 scene 3, in which Macbeth is observed by Banquo to be ‘rapt’ after hearing the witches’ prophecy: Macbeth’s obsessively contemplates the ‘horrid image’ he both fears and desires, until eventually this inner image is projected outward (1.3.57, 137). As Harold Bloom comments,

'it is imagination, rather than the Witches, that victimizes and destroys Macbeth'.<sup>4</sup>

One aim of this essay is to offer a new way of understanding the relationship between early modern visual disturbances and trauma in early modern literature by giving an account of mental fixation, an early modern psychological disorder related to melancholy. Mental fixation offers an explanation as to the cause of visual disturbances that differs from those found in accounts of other melancholic disorders, illuminating early modern ideas about emotion, cognition and the imagination. Moreover, in cases where mental fixation is caused by frightening or shocking experiences, the deeply embedded phantasm also triggers intrusive memories and repetitive behaviours, symptoms now associated with trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This form of mental fixation is dramatised in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the 1602 Additions to the play, in which Hieronimo's grief for his murdered son manifests itself in hallucinations and a compulsive re-enactment of his painful experiences. Thus, whereas Macbeth's hallucination of a dagger is triggered by the anticipation of a deed, the visual errors in *The Spanish Tragedy* result from Hieronimo's failure to process a traumatic event. Focusing on the play's representation of Hieronimo's grief, this essay aims to historicise trauma by suggesting how it can be understood in relation to early modern psychology and ideas about cognition.<sup>5</sup> As Heather Hirschfeld reads *Hamlet's* 'theological underpinnings alongside, rather than in opposition to, a psychoanalytic vocabulary',<sup>6</sup> I read early modern natural philosophy alongside trauma theory, offering an early modern framework for understanding trauma that captures historically specific ways of comprehending loss.<sup>7</sup>

A second aim of this essay is to argue that literary texts adapt and merge the discourses of mental affliction in a manner that reinvents the meaning and trajectory of early modern psychological disorders. In the case of mental fixation, while early modern natural philosophers tend to emphasise the detrimental (even if at times also the creative and pleasant) aspects of visual disturbances, playwrights depict characters conversing with their hallucinations in a manner that renders them self-reflexive tools for thought.<sup>8</sup> Macbeth's encounter with the dagger, for example, may be a symptom of mental distress, but it also prompts self-reflection and (rightly or wrongly) spurs him to action.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, while the Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* portray Hieronimo's hallucinations as a painful and destructive consequence of trauma, act 3 scene 13 of the original play

depicts Hieronimo in dialogue with his visions, dramatising how visual distortions could be both the product of a disturbed mind and a means of working through distress. Hieronimo's mental fixation thus also sheds light on the therapeutic aspect of revenge. Within the terms suggested by early modern faculty psychology, revenge's therapeutic benefit derives from its engagement with the powerful phantasms that hijack the imagination: Hieronimo's revenge not only restores his agency and satisfies his sense of justice, but also has a cognitive effect, allowing him to access and reconfigure traumatic remembered material. The enacting of revenge resembles other cures for mental fixation in that it works by manipulating the content of the phantasm through interactive performance. Kyd represents hallucinations as creative fictions—spectral art objects or waking dreams—that present the seer's mind to itself. As the examples of *Macbeth* and Hieronimo make clear, hallucinations in early modern plays are more than mere illusions; they operate as means of self-reflection and tools for thought.

### MENTAL FIXATION, VISUAL DISTURBANCES AND TRAUMA

Although early modern natural philosophers generally regard melancholy as a chief cause of visual distortions, the way in which it is seen as contributing to these experiences varies from text to text. Variations in aetiology also frequently occur within texts, as early modern writers tend to accumulate different aetiologies, presenting these side-by-side, rather than choosing between them.<sup>10</sup> As Drew Daniel argues, 'there can be no melancholy essence because there is not a singular kind of melancholy content'.<sup>11</sup> An abundance of melancholy in the body was held to cause feelings of fear and sadness, emotions that could in turn influence perception and lead to visual distortions; melancholy could emit vapours that interfered with vision and with cognition; and melancholy could contribute to the production of erroneous phantasms, or mental pictures, that distorted or displaced ordinary sense perceptions. Visual distortions could also be the result of witchcraft or other occult practices. Some writers hold that melancholic individuals are more susceptible to devilish influence and to the activities of witches, an explanation that clearly also has relevance for *Macbeth*.

Voice-hearing could also have supernatural, occult, or natural origins in the early modern period, conforming to Simon McCarthy-Jones' observation that 'most thinkers of this time seemed to co-exist within



both natural and supernatural frameworks'.<sup>12</sup> Voice-hearing could also be caused by mental fixation, in which thinking excessively about a person or divine being sparks an auditory verbal hallucination. The astrologer-physician Richard Napier conversed with angels about his patients, using 'angelic communication as a practical tool in both medical practice and divination'.<sup>13</sup> His manuscript case notes also record his patients' experiences with voice-hearing, reporting in 1603 that William Fringe 'had a voice yt told him there was silvr & golde', and in 1628 that Lord Emmanuel Scrope 'thought yt he had heard a voice & sayd to him t|g|oe [*sic* Napier's notes] to thy prayers & that done goe to bed'.<sup>14</sup> More troublingly, in 1601, Elizabeth Fox is described as having been 'taken wth a feare in a wood thinking shee hard a voice ever sinc out of her wits'.<sup>15</sup> Voice-hearing in early modern literature usually turns out to be a form of otherworldly communication, but playwrights preserve the ambiguities of their origins by structuring their occurrences so that their supernatural and psychological meaning co-exists.<sup>16</sup> In John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* for example, Delio takes Antonio to hear an echo 'So hollow and so dismal [...] That many have supposed it is a spirit / That answers'.<sup>17</sup> Unaware that he is standing before his wife's grave, Antonio hears his words return to him charged with new import, in an echo that operates both as the Duchess' ghostly voice and his own internal interlocutor.

Just as melancholy was seen alternatively as a debilitating illness with detrimental physical and psychological effects, and as an elite malady associated with the sufferer's sensitivity and intelligence, so too could melancholic visions be regarded as the symptom of a physiological, spiritual, or psychological sickness; a sign of artistic creativity; or a combination of all these.<sup>18</sup> 'All melancholike persons have their imagination troubled' observes André Du Laurens, so that 'they devise with themselves a thousand fantasically inventions and objects'.<sup>19</sup> In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton stresses the creative aspects of the melancholic's imagination:

In *Melancholy* men this faculty is most Powerfull and strong, and often hurts, producing many monstrous and prodigious things, especially if it be stirred up by some terrible object, presented to it from common sense, or memory. In Poets and Painters *Imagination* forcibly workes, as appears by their severall fictions, Antickes, Images: as *Ovids* house of sleepe, *Psyches* palace in *Apuleius*, &c. In men it is subject and governed by *Reason*, or at least should be.<sup>20</sup>

Moving seamlessly from delusional melancholics to poets and painters, Burton aligns the ‘monstrous and prodigious things’ made by the melancholic’s imagination with the products of art, citing dreamlike episodes from Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* and Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* that conjure a liminal realm between sleeping and waking, between what is seen and what is imagined. Indeed, Burton sees melancholics as equalling poets and painters in their extravagance, differing only in that they fail to recognise the fictional nature of their flights of fancy: ‘there is nothing so vaine, absurd, ridiculous, extravagant, impossible, incredible, so monstrous a Chymera, so prodigious and strange, such as Painters & Poets durst not attempt, which they will not really feare, faine, suspect, and imagine unto themselves’ (i.395). Like visionary poets, melancholics possess unfettered imaginations—‘they wake, as others dreame’ (i.393).

Many of the early modern explanations of visual disturbances, including that of mental fixation, rely on ancient ideas about cognition and the structure of the brain. Despite the advances made during the fifteenth and sixteenth century in anatomical drawings of the brain, most early modern writers of natural philosophy continued to draw on Aristotle’s concept of phantasms and Avicenna’s account of the mental faculties when describing what the mind does with the things it sees, as described by Corinne Saunders in this volume.<sup>21</sup> Within this model, the brain is divided into specific regions that each have a particular function in perception and cognition. The number of ventricles and the exact placement and function vary from theorist to theorist (and sometimes writers give more than one account), but the basic principle behind them is the same.<sup>22</sup> As Simon Kemp observes, the inner senses were psychological faculties, ‘performing functions such as remembering or imagining in the same way that the eye was responsible for seeing or the ear for hearing’.<sup>23</sup> Often the brain was thought to be divided into three cells, or ventricles (the medieval model described by Saunders).<sup>24</sup> The first ventricle receives the forms of sensory objects from the eyes and preserves them once they are no longer present; the second converts the forms into mental pictures, or *phantasms*, and judges whether objects should be pursued or avoided; and the third retains these mental images in memory. In this model, the imagination is the faculty held to provide the link between the external world and its internalised forms, translating sensory input into a visual mental language. Hence, although thinking is conceptualised as fundamentally visual, these memory-images are not exact replicas of sense perceptions but subjective renditions of external stimuli. Memories are

laid down with an accompanying emotional response and cause a material change in the body, imprinting the mind like a stamp in wax.<sup>25</sup> As Burton writes, ‘By the Apprehensive power we perceave the Species of Sensible things present, or absent, and retaine them as waxe doth the print of a Seale’ (i.150).

Mental fixation occurs when a real or imagined image gets imprinted on the brain with extreme force. This image lodges in the mind, causing the sufferer to dwell on it exclusively and repeatedly; this internal image can, in turn, be projected outward, causing faults in perception or manifesting itself as an external vision. Mental fixation is commonly discussed in relation to wishes or desires, accounting, for example, for one of the four origins of lovesickness.<sup>26</sup> According to this aetiology, the sight of the beloved is so pleasing that the lover ‘overestimates’ the object of desire, becoming enraptured by an idealised inner image which dominates the lover’s thoughts—as in the case of Arcite in Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*, discussed by Saunders. Ioan P. Coulianu describes this form of lovesickness as involving concentration and possession: ‘concentration, because the subject’s entire inner life is reduced to contemplation of one phantasm only; possession, because this phantasmic monopoly is involuntary and its collateral influence of the subject’s psychosomatic condition is highly deleterious’.<sup>27</sup> Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* describes a lover plagued with memories of his paramour: ‘that impression of her beauty is still fixed in his minde [...] as he that is bitten with a mad dogge, thinks all he sees dogges, dogges in his meat, dogges in his dish, dogges in his drinke, his mistris is in his eyes, eares, heart, in all his senses’ (iii.156). This phenomenon is dramatised in early modern plays when lovers imagine that they see their beloved before them, and in Shakespeare’s and Fletcher’s reworking of Chaucer’s *Knight’s Tale*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, where the Jailor’s Daughter’s lovestruck vision makes it easy for the doctor to convince her that the humble wooer who comes to bed her is in fact her desired lover.<sup>28</sup> Burton similarly describes ‘one, that through vehemency of his love passion, still thought hee saw his mistris present with him, she talked with him [...] still embracing him’ (iii.156). In cases where the phantasm is longed for, the most straightforward cure is for lovesick sufferers to fulfil their desires: in such cases, sex satisfies a mental as well as physical craving.

Just as a beloved object can be fixed in the lover’s mind, so too can the sight of something terrifying become indelibly engraved on the mind, impacting an individual’s vision, imagination, and body. Indeed,

it is striking that faculty psychology explains things that are excessively desired and things that are excessively feared as the same mental disturbance: both arise from a mental fixation and both involve involuntary obsessive thinking. Passions that are often seen as at opposite ends of the emotional spectrum (fear, love, wonder and grief) are thus shown to have the same cognitive root and trajectory, revealing the structural similarity of different affective states in early modern thought. Burton describes how ‘the apprehension of some terrible object’ can be ‘pernitious and violent, and so suddainely alter the whole temperature of the body, move the soule and spirits, strike such a deepe impression, that the parties can never bee recovered’ (i.333). In such instances, the memory-image acts as a barrier to perception so that, as Burton writes, ‘we looke upon a thing, and see it not; heare, and observe not; which otherwise would much affect us, had wee beene free’ (i.249).

Burton suggests that this affliction is commonly caused ‘*from some imminent danger, when a terrible object is at hand*’ (i.333). Drawing on classical and contemporary stories of plague, natural disasters, and warfare, he describes how a terrible memory can seem ever-present to the survivor, blocking her or his ability to perceive and inhabit the world. Burton also recounts incidents in which people are haunted by the memory of seeing something shocking or disgusting, in which those who cannot ‘drive the remembrance of it out of [the] minde’ become melancholy, mad, or suicidal (i.336). One story describes a woman who, after seeing a pig cut up and being told that ‘as that hogge, so was shee, full of filthy excrements’, became ‘so mightily distempered in minde and body’ that ‘shee could not forget it, or remove the object out of her sight’ (i.335). Burton also describes incidents where people are affected by seeing a dead body and afterwards ‘cannot endure the roome where a coarse hath bin’ (i.334). Another describes a young girl, who after seeing a corpse hanging from a gallows and thinking, when it swayed, that it was coming after her, ‘was so terribly affrighted, that for many dayes shee could not rest, eate, or sleepe, she could not be pacified, but melancholy, died’ (i.334).

Although descriptions of mental fixation often assume that one has seen something frightening or desirable, the most frequently repeated stories found in natural philosophy concern self-generated delusions that derive from the imagination alone. Many of these are familiar anecdotes that have been handed down from classical sources; they include stories of people who believe that they are made of glass, are dead, or that they are

monarchs. These stories give the impression of the violent imagination which has become disorderly, in which the sorrows, anxieties or excessive love, result in a single image or idea which is projected onto the material world, either via a delusion ('I am the king') or as a vision. Within these accounts, delusions mark both an intensification and narrowing of the subject's thoughts and personality—the sufferer has immense power to recreate the self and the material world imaginatively, but in a way that is obsessive, narrow, and fixed. There are numerous characters in literature who follow the pattern outlined above, including many comic delusional lovers who become seized by an image of themselves as romantic heroes or heroines. Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, in his sudden pride and new self-conception, recalls these figures; as Sir Toby remarks to Maria: 'why, thou hast put him in such a dream that / When the image leaves him he must run mad'.<sup>29</sup>

To cure mental fixation, natural philosophers recommend that the sufferer eat well, get enough sleep, and that doctors and friends comfort and distract the sufferer. William Vaughan in his *Directions for Health* suggests that one should 'imprint another conceit, whether it be wise or foolish, in the Patients braine, thereby to put out all former phantasies', driving out a destructive conceit with a harmless one.<sup>30</sup> In most cases, the person is utterly convinced of the reality of what they see, so it is futile to try to change their minds. Instead, doctors and friends must work within the subject's delusion, engaging with the sufferer, while simultaneously remedying his or her body and mind.<sup>31</sup> In one story, for example, a woman who believes herself possessed is only reassured when a priest makes a small cut in her arm and releases a bat he has hidden in a bag, satisfying her that the spirit had been driven out.<sup>32</sup> Another story describes how a doctor cures a woman who believes that she has swallowed a serpent by causing her to vomit into a basin where he had secretly placed snakes.<sup>33</sup> Another patient, who believed that his nose was enormous, was given a fictitious surgery that convinced him 'that his great nose was cut away'.<sup>34</sup> In each instance, the doctor, failing to convince the sick individual of his or her error, manipulates the patient's delusion in a beneficial manner. Significantly, the doctor works within the sufferers' aberrant beliefs, which demand a kind of satisfaction, even when negative: patients want to see the reality of their terrifying visions, even when these incite fear or cause pain. In many respects, then, these delusions are not so much *destroyed* as *fulfilled*: the moment of the 'cure' being the same moment the maladies are verified and made visible. Perceived in this way,

such examples have more in common with desired phantasms than first appears, as both types are dislodged by being, in some sense, realised and satisfied.

Early modern ideas about mental fixation, its durability and treatment, have analogues in twentieth-century trauma theory, specifically, how the painful memories that trigger PTSD are cognitively embedded. According to neuropsychologists, whereas memories are usually placed within a narrative which allows them to be constantly shuffled and modified, moments of extreme stress can cause them to be laid down differently, so that they remain separate and isolated.<sup>35</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, who studies the survivors of Hiroshima, suggests that traumatic memories are preserved in an abnormal state and set apart from ordinary consciousness so that they form an ‘indelible image’ or ‘death imprint’.<sup>36</sup> This isolation renders them particularly vivid, so that sufferers of PTSD seem to re-experience, rather than remember, distressing events through dreams, visions, and flashbacks. On this basis, Cathy Caruth argues that PTSD cannot be defined by the particular event or by its symptoms, but rather by ‘the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in a repeated possession of the one who experiences it’.<sup>37</sup> The forms of repetition inherent in trauma are not merely symptoms but ways of trying to assimilate and apprehend profoundly troubling experiences.

Lifton’s description of traumatic memories stamping the brain with an ‘indelible image’ recalls both early modern descriptions of powerful phantasms and the experiences articulated by a number of early modern characters who have witnessed violent scenes. Grief-stricken characters who experience hallucinations can appear oddly frozen in time, doomed to see endlessly and repeatedly the awful things they have witnessed. In Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, for example, Ferdinand’s madness and lycanthropy result not simply from causing his sister’s death, but also from seeing her murdered body; as he recoils from the reality of his crime (‘Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle: she died young’), the verb ‘dazzle’ (and its etymological link to ‘dazed’) conveys Ferdinand’s overwhelmed and transfixed state.<sup>38</sup> This sense of being frozen by a terrible image is also conveyed by references to the mythical Gorgon, whose powerful gaze was believed to turn the onlooker to stone. In act 4 of Marmion’s *The Antiquary* (1634–36), for example, when Lorenzo catches his wife propositioning the page-boy (actually the cross-dressed Angelia), he feels as if ‘this Gorgon, this damn’d vision / Have numm’d my faculties’.<sup>39</sup>

Characters also draw attention to the inexpressibility of what they have experienced. Shakespeare's Macduff, for example, not only finds it impossible to convey the reality of seeing Duncan's murdered body ('O horror! horror! horror! / Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee!'), but also suggests that such a vision is somehow damaging to sight itself (2.3.62–63); he insists that the assembled company will only comprehend the bloody spectacle if they view it themselves:

Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight  
With a new Gorgon. —Do not bid me speak:  
See, and then speak yourselves. (2.3.70–72)

Macduff's reference to the Gorgon captures his frozen astonishment and his sense that to behold such a catastrophe is to be similarly struck down. Whereas Lady Macbeth naively claims that 'The sleeping, and the dead, / Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil', the play itself dramatises how these pictures come to haunt the mind (2.2.52–54). For the Macbeths as well as for Macduff, the image of Duncan's murdered body will destroy clear sight by being forever emblazoned on the mind's eye. As with the mythical gaze of the Gorgon, being terror-stricken congeals the blood and petrifies the mind, transforming mind and body into something fixed, numbed, and stone-like.

### VISUAL ERRORS AND HALLUCINATIONS IN KYD'S *THE SPANISH TRAGEDY* AND THE 1602 ADDITIONS

Revengeurs, as critics suggest, are failed mourners, shackled to the sense of grief and injustice that follows traumatic events. While their emotional pain, repetitive behaviours, and mental derangement offer acute portrayals of the psychological consequences of profound loss, their visions and theatrical plots also suggest how trauma sufferers reconfigure internal pain through external objects and artistic activity. Revenge, moreover, has a therapeutic function, easing the revenger's guilt and sorrow. Examining *Titus Andronicus*, Deborah Willis argues that as well as restoring a familial sense of honour, revenge 'acts as a container for traumatic emotion, enabling characters to bypass or transmute major PTSD symptoms such as intrusive recollection or psychic numbing, while also helping them recover a sense of agency, cohesion, and meaningful action'.<sup>40</sup> I will extend this theory in the context of early modern ideas about mental

fixation, arguing that Hieronimo's vengeance enables him to not only 'contain' his 'fixed memory-images', but to interrogate and transform them.

Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the 1602 Additions offer different views as to how grief triggers perceptual errors and whether delusions solely express the sufferer's mental derangement or can have a therapeutic benefit. As Lukas Erne has rightly argued, in the original play 'Kyd skillfully constructs his protagonist's mental and emotional trajectory from initial self-control to utter frenzy'; Hieronimo's grief for his murdered son is thus carefully psychologised so that his insanity slowly takes hold.<sup>41</sup> This is also the case with Hieronimo's visual errors: while initially his sight remains undisturbed, he subsequently begins to see his dead son and misconstrue what is before him as his sorrow and frustration intensify. This process culminates in act 3 scene 13 in which he projects a series of identities onto an old man, externalising submerged aspects of his grief and engaging creatively with his thoughts and feelings.

The Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* change the origin and structure of Hieronimo's madness, offering a radically different interpretation of trauma and grief. For Erne, the 1602 Additions violate Kyd's careful design in which Hieronimo's madness emerges gradually: whatever their inherent literary qualities, they are a distraction which 'do nothing to improve Kyd's play'.<sup>42</sup> However, the changes made to Hieronimo's 'mental and emotional trajectory' add to the import of these scenes. Rather than depicting Hieronimo's madness as gradual and progressive (in which he moves in a linear fashion from 'initial self-control to utter frenzy'), the Additions represent Hieronimo's mental derangement as instantaneous (it occurs at the moment he sees his son's mutilated body) and non-progressive (his madness recurs in a cyclical manner), a structure that anticipates contemporary ideas regarding PTSD. The two writers also offer different views of visual distortions: while Kyd's original play depicts how visual errors can prompt self-reflection, the writer of the Additions appears to be more pessimistic. Hieronimo's faults in vision reveal his psychological entrapment, in which he is stuck perpetually reliving his son's murder.

Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* was first performed in 1587 and first published in 1592. Hugely popular on stage, it was revived and reprinted a number of times, with numerous references to it appearing in other works.<sup>43</sup> The 1602 edition was based on the original octavo, but also



introduced new material: five excerpts or scenes inserted into the original play.<sup>44</sup> Although extraneous to the plot, the 1602 Additions have long been held by critics to give the play an added depth and coherence; Charles Cannon, for example, argues that the ‘significance of Hieronimo’s madness is developed with much more sensitivity and perception in the Additions than the original play’.<sup>45</sup> Recently, a number of critics have offered evidence to support Shakespeare’s authorship through an analysis of trigrams (instances of three consecutive words),<sup>46</sup> function words,<sup>47</sup> ‘clusters of interrelated groups of images and phrases’,<sup>48</sup> and spelling.<sup>49</sup> The death of Shakespeare’s own son, Hamnet, in 1596 adds poignancy to his possible involvement.<sup>50</sup> If the authorship theory is correct, then the Additions offer an unusual example of the ways in which Shakespeare engaged with contemporary writers, lending support to Lukas Erne’s claim that ‘Shakespeare, perhaps more than anyone else, seems to have specifically profited from Kyd’s works’.<sup>51</sup>

As Robert Watson observes, although *The Spanish Tragedy*’s ‘leading motive is revenge [...] its primary psychological condition is mourning’,<sup>52</sup> After finding his son brutally murdered, Hieronimo repeatedly relives the moment in which he discovered Horatio’s body, returning physically and psychically to the spot where he was killed. Like the sufferer, who, ‘bitten with a mad dogge, thinkes all he sees dogges’, Hieronimo is fixated by the memory of his son, sometimes seeing his son before him and at other times projecting himself or his circumstances onto others. Even his own words trigger painful memories, such as when the word ‘discords’ reminds him that ‘with a cord Horatio was slain’.<sup>53</sup> Hieronimo’s revenge, achieved via the metadramatic play-within-the-play, *Suleiman and Perseda*, is the culmination of this process: Hieronimo takes revenge by, in some sense, re-enacting his son’s murder, setting the theatrical pattern for many revengers to come.

The play opens with the ghost of Don Andrea describing his descent to the classical underworld where the nature of his life and the manner of his death cause confusion: should he spend his afterlife with the lovers because of his identity as Bel-Imperia’s suitor or with the fighters given that he died in battle? Proserpine resolves this problem by granting Andrea revenge, offered as a kind of fusion of love and war. However, as Andrea was killed in battle rather than murdered, the revenge plot must advance by means of another death, reducing Andrea’s significance from central figure to onstage audience member. Hieronimo’s son Horatio is Andrea’s friend and comes to act as his surrogate: after defending him in

battle, Horatio observes his funeral rites and subsequently takes his place in the courting of Bel-Imperia. It is in this romantic context that Horatio becomes a target for both Balthazar, who wishes to marry Bel-Imperia himself, and Lorenzo, Bel-Imperia's brother, who supports Balthazar's suit and wants control over his sister. With the help of Bel-Imperia's servant Pedrigano, Lorenzo and Balthazar surprise the lovers as they sit in Horatio's family arbour. Taking Bel-Imperia offstage, Lorenzo stabs Horatio and hangs him from the arbour for his father to find. The rest of the play chronicles Hieronimo and Isabella's grief for their son and the process by which Hieronimo comes to take revenge.

The first visual error occurs in the First Addition, which expands act 2 scene 5 where Hieronimo discovers his son's corpse. In the original play, Hieronimo's shock at his son's death does not prevent him comprehending its reality and he moves rapidly from grief to a promise of revenge. Taking up Horatio's bloody handkerchief as the symbol of his cause, he declares to his wife Isabella: 'Seest thou this handkerchief besmeared with blood? / It shall not from me till I take revenge' (2.5.51–52). As John Kerrigan suggests, 'Hieronimo sets out to secure his revenge by equipping himself with objects charged with remembrance: the corpse, a surrogate ghost to whet his purpose should it ever blunt, and the gory napkin, a memento to be carried near his sorrowing heart'.<sup>54</sup> Memory here does not have the shattering force it comes to have later in the play, but is deliberately cultivated as an important aspect of Hieronimo's revenge. Hieronimo's formal, stylised speech (he describes Horatio, for example, as a 'Sweet lovely rose, ill-plucked before [his] time') captures his rationality and self-control and serves as a contrast to the breakdown in language he experiences as his frustration mounts and his composure snaps (2.5.46).

The First Addition occurs in the middle of this scene. Whereas Kyd's Hieronimo remains eloquent and self-possessed after discovering his son's body, the First Addition depicts Hieronimo's loss of sanity as instantaneous and devastating, changing the pattern of Hieronimo's madness to correspond to Burton's description of how 'the apprehension of some terrible object' can be 'pernicious and violent', striking 'such a deepe impression, that the parties can never bee recovered'. Unable to comprehend the unalterable fact of his son's non-existence, the bereaved father sees reality as a dream or delusion. He fixates on a memory to block out the present image of his son's dead body ('His majesty the other day did grace [Horatio] / With waiting on his cup') and insists that the corpse

is some sort of uncanny imposture or replica instead, musing ‘I wonder how this fellow got his clothes’, before ordering his servant to ‘[...] run to the Duke of Castile’s presently / And bid my son Horatio to come home. / I and his mother have had strange dreams tonight’ (Addition 1, 11–12, 15, 17–19).

The First Addition can be read as critiquing the representation of trauma in the original play, by suggesting that such an experience would overwhelm the subject and shatter the psyche, rather than prompting formal, rhetorical pledges of revenge. Whereas the Hieronimo of the original text knows that the cries he hears are ‘no dream’ and recognises his son’s body (‘Those garments that he wears I oft have seen’), the Hieronimo of the Additions feels he must be dreaming and cannot connect the familiar clothing with the mutilated corpse before him (2.5.5, 13). Indeed, he is angered by his wife’s insistence that this is Horatio, asking how she could ‘entertain a thought / That such a black deed of mischief should be done / On one so pure and spotless as our son?’ (Addition 1, 34–36). Nevertheless, when Isabella begs Hieronimo to ‘Cast a more serious eye upon thy grief’, he goes back over what has just happened trying to make sense of things (Addition 1, 38). The jerky rhythms of Hieronimo’s speech contrasts with the formal rhetoric of the original play:

It was a man, sure, that was hanged up here,  
A youth, as I remember, I cut him down.  
If it should prove my son now after all—  
Say you, say you. Light! Lend me a taper!  
Let me look again. O God!  
Confusion, mischief, torment, death and hell  
Drop all your stings at once in my cold bosom  
That now is stiff with horror. (Addition 1, 40–47)

Asking for a light to view the body, Hieronimo gazes once more on this son’s lifeless face and struggles to comprehend what has happened. His words convey the immobilising sensations of shock, which petrify the mind and make the body ‘stiff with horror’. By telescoping and repeating the moment that Hieronimo recognises his son, the Addition also conveys the fundamental latency of traumatic experience, in which terrible events cannot be comprehended at the time of their occurrence. As Caruth explains: ‘trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather the way that its very unassimilated

nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on'.<sup>55</sup> The First Addition reshapes Hieronimo's encounter with his dead son along these lines: he moves from recognition to denial and then back to a recognition again, making the structure of repetition integral to the experience itself.

Kyd represents how Hieronimo's grief leads to perceptual errors in act 3 scene 13, in which a group of men entreat Hieronimo to 'plead their cases to the King' (3.13.48). Observing the elderly Bazulto's distress as he seeks justice for his murdered son 'With mournful eyes and hands to heaven upreared', Hieronimo is struck with guilt for his own inaction (3.13.68). He vows to go to hell to capture 'A troop of Furies', asking Bazulto to join him and 'be [his] Orpheus'; working himself up into a mad rage, he plots to 'rend and tear' Horatio's murderers while physically shredding the petitions that have been brought to him, shouting to the stunned citizens 'catch me if you can' (3.13.111, 116, 121, 129). Hieronimo's encounter with Bazulto, and the eruption of guilt and rage this trigger, elicit the visual delusions that follow. When Hieronimo returns after tearing up the petitions, the stage is empty apart for Bazulto and, for Hieronimo, the images that dominate his imagination. '[S]taring him in the face', Hieronimo first sees Bazulto as his son Horatio, who he believes has returned to him from the grave:

And art thou come, Horatio, from the depth  
 To ask for justice in this upper earth,  
 To tell thy father thou art unrevenged,  
 To wring more tears from Isabella's eyes,  
 Whose lights are dimmed with overlong laments?  
 Go back, my son, complain to Aeacus,  
 For here's no justice. Gentle boy, begone,  
 For justice is exiled from the earth.  
 Hieronimo will bear thee company.  
 Thy mother cries on righteous Rhadamanth  
 For just revenge against the murderers. (3.13.130–40)

Hieronimo's visual error enables him to converse imaginatively with his dead son, so that he is able to give voice not only to the frustration he imagines Horatio to feel at his father's inaction, but also to his reasons for this failure. Whereas the First Addition dramatises the destructive aspect of delusions, here Hieronimo's visions could be seen to have a therapeutic aspect, allowing him to externalise and engage with his thoughts

and feelings. Pausing to 'look on' the vision, Hieronimo's concern that 'death's black shade' has aged and 'blasted' his 'sweet boy' expresses both his great longing to see his son and his fear that the grave may have transfigured and destroyed him (3.13.142–46). It is as if Hieronimo's vision has become layered: his hallucination blends with reality, so that he sees the old man and his son simultaneously.

Hieronimo's interpretation of what he sees transforms as Bazulto responds to him. When Bazulto tells him, 'I am not your young son', Hieronimo reinterprets Bazulto as a Fury 'Sent from the empty kingdom of black night [...] To plague Hieronimo, that is remiss / And seeks not vengeance for Horatio's death', a change that illuminates his feelings of shame at his failure to revenge and suggests that he too is deserving of punishment (3.13.149, 151–55). Finally, when Bazulto protests that 'I am a grieved man, and not a ghost, / That came for justice for my murdered son', Hieronimo sees the man as a version of himself:

Ay, now I know thee, now thou namest thy son.  
 Thou art the lively image of my grief.  
 Within thy face, my sorrows I may see.  
 Thy eyes are gummed with tears, thy cheeks are wan,  
 Thy forehead troubled, and thy muttering lips  
 Murmur sad words abruptly broken off  
 By force of windy sighs thy spirit breathes.  
 And all this sorrow riseth for thy son;  
 And selfsame sorrow feel I for my son.  
 Come in, old man, thou shalt to Isabel.  
 Lean on my arm; I thee, thou me shalt stay. (3.13.156–57, 158–70)

As in the case of Macbeth, Hieronimo's delusions here function as a form of self-dialogue, allowing him to express and work through aspects of his grief and guilt. Looking at Bazulto's ravaged face and hearing his 'windy sighs' and broken speech, Hieronimo is able to see his own suffering, describing Bazulto in artistic terms as 'The lively portrait of my dying self' (3.13.84). As the speech progresses, Hieronimo is able to move beyond his private anguish to a sympathetic offer of mutual support: he no longer perceives the man as merely 'the lively image of [his] grief', but as a fellow sufferer in need of sympathy: 'Come in, old man [...] Lean on my arm'. If trauma dissociates and alienates subjectivity, then representation allows for a partial reintegration of self through identification with another. This moving episode thus gives us in miniature a process

by which Hieronimo moves from grief, to revenge, to the possibility of some sort of consolation through sympathy, offering an example of the way that visual distortions can act as a means through which characters come to know and process their motivations and emotions.

### TRAUMA, MEMORY AND REVENGE

The Fourth Addition, written to replace act 3 scene 13, picks up the way in which Hieronimo finds comfort in seeing an external image of his suffering, but puts these questions into explicitly aesthetic terms. While the First Addition can be read as critiquing the representation of trauma in the original play, the Fourth Addition has a more complex, dialogic relationship to Kyd's text, drawing from it and recasting some of its key elements. Here the writer of the Additions reworks and expands Kyd's act 3 scene 13, reframing Kyd's exploration of the relationship between grief and representation in a manner that makes questions about artistic representation and the sufferer's own repetitive reliving of the past explicit. Although Hieronimo's eventual turn from painting to revenge is seen by Peter Sacks as a mark of his refusal of remediated forms of consolation, theatrical representation offers a different means of reshaping traumatic remembered material, one which is less brutally mimetic than has often been claimed.<sup>56</sup>

The scene begins at midnight with the servants discussing Hieronimo's faltering sanity. Pedro describes how Hieronimo continues to experience hallucinations:

Sometimes as he doth at his table sit,  
He speaks as if Horatio stood by him,  
Then, starting in a rage, falls on the earth,  
Cries out, "Horatio, where is my Horatio?" (Addition 4, 10–13)

Unlike in act 3 scene 13, here Hieronimo's hallucinations highlight his psychological stuckness: seeing his son before him as if alive again, Hieronimo re-experiences the loss of his son again and again. It is into this setting that the painter Bardo comes to see Hieronimo, seeking justice for his murdered son. Instead of sympathising with the painter, however, Hieronimo asks for a painting which calls for an impossible similitude, one which will recreate in visual terms his exact experience of finding his

son dead. Thus, when the painter admits he can only ‘Seemingly’ ‘paint a doleful cry’, Hieronimo counters, ‘Nay, it should cry’, telling the painter:

[...] bring me thorough alley and alley, still with a distracted countenance going along, and let my hair heave up my night-cap [...]. And then at last, sir, starting, behold a man hanging, and tottering, and tottering as you know the wind will wave a man, and I with a trice to cut him down. And looking upon him by the advantage of my torch, find it to be my son Horatio. There you may [paint] a passion, there you may show a passion. (Addition 4, 124–6, 141–52)

Hieronimo’s instructions to the painter take us into his painful flashback of the night Horatio was murdered. His repeated use of present participles (‘starting’, ‘hanging’, ‘tottering’, ‘looking’) reinforces the sense that these momentary details have become his continuous, simultaneous present, suggesting the literal, experiential quality attributed to mental fixation and to traumatic memories. Moreover, Hieronimo’s description of looking at his son’s body ‘by the advantage of [his] torch’ suggests that the memory being returned to here is specifically that depicted in the First Addition, reinforcing the sense that Hieronimo’s compulsive, repetitive behaviour is founded on his inability to comprehend and assimilate what has happened.

Like others afflicted with mental fixation, Hieronimo wishes to see his visions externalised, despite the pain that this causes, suggesting that at times the revenger’s masochism is more compulsive than studied. Thus, while Francis Bacon famously claims that the revenger ‘keepe[s] his owne Wounds greene, which otherwise would heale and doe well’, the nature of Hieronimo’s grief suggests that some psychic injuries do not heal of their own accord: they are less like a clean cut than a wound in which a shard of glass is still lodged.<sup>57</sup> While Hieronimo’s request for an impossible painting draws attention to theatre’s superior representational mode, the literal quality of the painting Hieronimo requests also suggests the emotional stuckness of the revenger—who is, as critics have pointed out, a kind of failed mourner. If successful mourning is characterised by the ability to reconfigure the lost beloved in symbolic terms, then the revenger seems incapable of such acts of restorative translation. Instead, Hieronimo simply returns to and relives the moment of loss through flashbacks, dreams, and most significantly art, haunted by memories from

which there seems to be no escape. As he tells the painter: ‘there is no end; the end is death and madness’ (Addition 4, 159–60).

It is in this context that we can appreciate the therapeutic aspect of revenge. From the standpoint of early modern ideas about mental fixation, revenge helps in two important ways. First, it makes the mental fixation visible. As Hieronimo’s encounter with the painter Bazardo demonstrates, even those beset by negative mental fixations want to see their painful images externally represented. Second, revenge allows the sufferer to act on the traumatic memories in a manner that changes their context and meaning, transforming as well as representing the original memory. Revenge fuses painful remembered material with the desired image of vengeance in a manner which jolts the memory out of its isolation, allowing it to be integrated into a wider narrative in which its force is mitigated and its meaning recast.

The most explicit example of this process is found in Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*, and the translation of Gloriana’s skull from an object of mourning to an agent of revenge. For Vindice, Gloriana’s skull acts like an externalised phantasm, calling to mind his dead fiancée and the moment of her murder. Vindice, who has kept his fiancée’s skull as a gory memento after she was killed, decides to incorporate it into his revenge. Dressing it up in a mask and gown in order to poison her murderer, the Duke, Vindice transforms his sense of the skull (and his own memories) so that a devastating mental image (Gloriana’s death) is overlaid with a desired phantasm (the image of the Duke being murdered). In this sense, Vindice’s revenge on the Duke provides a new context in which to picture the skull, modifying Vaughan’s suggestion for a cure; for here Vindice is not ‘imprint[ing] a new conceit [...] to put out all former phantasies’, but rather fusing one phantasm with another.

In artistic terms, Hieronimo’s transformation from mourner to revenger occurs when his desire to replicate his memory in mimetic painting mutates into a desire to translate the horror into a new form. Hieronimo achieves his revenge by reconfiguring Horatio’s death in a staged play where the supposedly fictional deaths of his enemies turn out to be real. For Sacks, this signals Hieronimo’s relinquishment of artistic and legal forms of remediation, which he argues are, towards the end of the sixteenth century, increasingly ‘suspected of being no more than figural impositions on an essentially intractable reality’. As Sacks writes, Hieronimo refuses ‘to accept what might be considered the mediated forms of consolation’, instead literalising ‘the actions of what is supposed



to be a play within the play, to kill *in fact* the victims whose ‘kill’ he might only have represented in theatre’.<sup>58</sup> Anderson agrees, arguing that ‘Hieronimo’s play refuses symbolic exchange and collapses any separation between sign and signified’.<sup>59</sup>

However, Hieronimo’s revenge works as ‘a perverse therapy’ precisely because in a different respect it is not literal: Hieronimo’s revenge play offers a means of taking hold of and reconfiguring a troubling phantasm, transforming rather than simply replicating the story of Horatio’s death. The shift in Hieronimo’s relationship to his memories, as evident in his move from the imagined painting and play-within-the-play, corresponds in many ways to the distinction Dominick LaCapra draws between ‘acting out’ traumatic memories and ‘working through’ them.<sup>60</sup> Whereas Hieronimo’s flashbacks in the Fourth Addition can be seen as a form of acting out, in which he relives the moment of his son’s death, his play *Suleiman and Perseda* can be seen as form of working through, in which he reconfigures the meaning of his son’s death and establishes ‘a relation to the past which involves recognizing its difference from the present’.<sup>61</sup> As writer, director, lead actor, and commentator in its re-performance, he seizes ultimate control over the moment that sent his life into turmoil. By murdering Lorenzo and Bathazar within a play he has conceived, Hieronimo is able (with the help of Bel-Imperia) to replay his son’s murder in the context of his revenge. He places Horatio’s dead body at the centre of the final spectacle, transforming not only himself, but his fallen son too, into a kind of ‘author and actor in this tragedy’ (4.4.146). While Allison P. Hobgood argues that the object of mourning is effaced by an egoistic performance of grief ‘driven by [Hieronimo’s] terrifying need for self-commemoration’, Horatio’s death is reconfigured rather than erased.<sup>62</sup> Once more the story of Horatio’s death is told, but this time in a new narrative context. So keen for retribution, Hieronimo derives pleasure not just from the death of the men who murdered his son, but also from the pained reactions of their bereaved fathers, men who are entirely innocent of Horatio’s death. When Castile asks, ‘Why hast thou butchered both my children thus?’ Hieronimo responds like a gratified audience member (‘Oh, good words!’), pointing out ‘As dear to me was my Horatio / As yours, or yours, or yours, my lord, to you’ (4.4.165–67).

Hieronimo’s move from a sympathetic mourner to a sadistic murderer enacts the ethical cost and cognitive danger of vengeance. For while acts of revenge can be seen to reconstitute painful memory-images, they also

have the potential to create their own desires, so that the satisfaction of violent bloodshed is desired again and again. Hieronimo is 'pleased with their deaths, and eased with their revenge', acquiring a newfound emotional resilience but also, perhaps, a taste for blood (4.4.186). Nevertheless, Hieronimo's revenge is successful in the way that it reshapes and to some extent dislodges his mental fixation, changing the way that Hieronimo remembers and regards his son's murder. As he informs those gathered that the play they have just seen is in fact grimly real, we can see how Hieronimo perceives his triumph over Lorenzo and Balthazar to be Horatio's also. Conflating Horatio's earlier success in taking Balthazar in battle with his act of vengeance, Hieronimo describes Horatio finally as a victor rather than victim: 'One that did force [Balthazar, his murderer] to yield' (Addition 5, 41). Hieronimo's ability to modify the meaning of Horatio's death and his memory of it is also hinted at in his own declarations of emotional toughness. Unlike the Viceroy who in the Fifth Addition attempts to turn away from the gory spectacle before him ('Be deaf, my senses, I can hear no more'), Hieronimo boasts: 'Methinks since I grew inward with revenge, / I cannot look with scorn enough on death' (Addition 5, 43, 27-28). Although Hieronimo's words ostensibly proclaim his suicidal intentions, they can also be read as encompassing his memories of Horatio, suggesting that his son's corpse (like Gloriana's skull) has taken on a new function and imaginative import. Horatio, as well as being Hieronimo's 'hope, heart, treasure, joy and bliss', is now his 'show' and 'spectacle' (4.4.93, 88). Thus, although revenge is generally regarded as the most brutally mimetic of crimes, we can see (at least in psychic terms) something creative in its reshaping of static memory-images.

## CONCLUSION

The portrayal of Hieronimo's grief reifies and extends early modern ideas about mental fixation, thinking through the ways in which art and representation can, alternatively, reinforce or reconfigure fixed memory-images. By juxtaposing the imagined painting and the staged play, the Additions distinguish between involuntary, recurring memories and a creative reinterpretation of these, highlighting not only the role psychic distress plays in creativity but also art's ability to reconfigure the imagination. In this respect, revenge offers a form of consolation related to traditional elegy, which, like theatrical performance, allows for a

“working through” of what might otherwise resist psychic assimilation?<sup>63</sup> However, where elegy offers solace by creating a new art object to stand in place of the lost beloved, revenge works in a different manner, transforming the distressing material of memory and making it visible.<sup>64</sup> Where the successful elegist will find consolation in a symbol of the lost beloved, the creation of which helps to foster a sense of the possibility of life’s renewal, the revenger will instead reconfigure the materials of mourning into the props of revenge. While such a move lacks the compensatory power of the elegist, it does nevertheless allow the revenger to take hold of his or her memories in a more active and controlled manner and to achieve a new imaginary relationship with the dead. It is thus not only that revenge allows individuals to achieve justice for the people who have been murdered and betrayed, but also that the very process of treating the dead as props complicates and modifies their meaning.

The difference between Hieronimo’s compulsive re-enactments of his experiences and a more therapeutic working through of his emotions is dramatised in the distinct ways that the original play and later Additions represent visual errors. While the Additions depict hallucinations as expressions of psychic entrapment, the original play offers a more positive view of delusions in which they can function like semi-autonomous fictions that encourage self-dialogue. Hieronimo’s engagement with his hallucinations also captures the odd sense of unreality that moments of profound stress can have, when life takes on the form and feel of a nightmare. Trauma is represented as granting an access to the self as other, so that just at the moment one becomes a tragic actor one feels instead like the witness to one’s own life. Indeed, characters beset by terrible circumstances frequently become highly self-conscious in this way, speaking of themselves in the third person or seeing their life in explicitly theatrical or narrative terms. While some early modern characters (such as Middleton’s *Vindice*) embrace their role, others (such as Hamlet) question the ethics and meaning of the script they have been handed. And others again become curiously aware of their life’s genre and aesthetic dimensions. Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*, for example, is conscious of the tragic figure she cuts, asking Cariola, her lady’s maid ‘Who do I look like now?’<sup>65</sup> Although critics typically read these moments as an aspect of the playwright’s playful meta-theatricality, such language also bespeaks a self-alienated subjectivity. In a related fashion, early modern literary characters stand back from their hallucinations, reflecting on them and interacting

with them like uncanny art objects. As well as being sights that can trick and tempt, visions can also provide a form of consolation, a stimulus to self-reflection, a provocation for action, or a means of apprehending loss. For characters such as Kyd's Hieronimo and Shakespeare's Macbeth, visions operate like waking dreams or works of fiction: they are creative fantasies that reveal the seer's mind to itself, offering an encounter with psychological realities that overlay and, at times, transcend the material world.

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## NOTES

1. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 2.1.33–43. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited by act, scene, and line numbers.
2. Hallucinations are an example of what Andrew Sofer has termed the dark matter of theatre: invisible phenomena that are '*materially unrepresented onstage but un-ignorable*'; 'exerting irresistible force over our imaginations in the playhouse, it pulls the visible elements of theatrical representation into a pattern'. See *Dark Matter: Invisibility in Drama, Theater, and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 4.
3. I use the phrase 'mental fixation' to refer to a subspecies of the type melancholy that arises from *laesa imagination* (an injured imagination), in which an emotionally charged image that is seen or imagined takes hold of the imagination.
4. Harold Bloom, 'Introduction', in *Bloom's Major Literary Characters: Macbeth*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), 1. Bloom describes Macbeth as 'the perpetually rapt protagonist, who is condemned always to be in a kind of trance or phantasmagoria that governs him' (3). See also, in the same volume Christopher Pye, '*Macbeth* and the Politics of Rapture', 131–58.
5. Trauma theory is a growing area of interest in early modern studies. For example, Thomas P. Anderson in *Performing Early Modern Trauma from Shakespeare to Milton* examines how writers from Kyd to Milton simultaneously erase and memorize various forms of social trauma, from Protestant martyrdom to the execution of Charles I (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006). Other studies consider trauma theory in

relation to, amongst other subjects, early modern warfare, plague writing, original sin, pain, and mourning practices. See Patricia A. Cahill, *Unto the Breach: Martial Formation, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ernest B. Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Heather Hirschfeld, 'Hamlet's "First Corse": Repetition, Trauma, and the Displacement of Redemptive Typology', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 424–48; James Robert Allard and Mathew R. Martin, eds., *Staging Pain, 1580–1800: Violence and Trauma in British Theater* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); and Katharine Goodland, *Female Mourning in Medieval and Renaissance English Drama: From the Raising of Lazarus to King Lear* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006). Lisa Starks-Estes reviews recent work in this area in *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays: Transforming Ovid* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 32–35.

6. Hirschfeld, 'Hamlet's "First Corse"', 425.
7. While mental fixation provides a distinctly early modern discourse for understanding the psychic consequences of distressing experiences, its parallels with PTSD are striking, giving credence to trauma theory as a valid methodology in early modern studies. I thus support Cahill's claim that while 'no literal lexicon of trauma exists in the early modern period, one can discern in the period's war plays what contemporary theories have described as the repetitive structure characteristic of trauma', including the 'intrusive scenes, compulsive repetition, and disorienting temporalities that define traumatic experience in the modern social realm' (*Unto the Breach*, 6, 8). See also Zackariah C. Long, "'Uncollected Man": Trauma and the Early Modern Mind-Body in *The Maid's Tragedy*', in Allard and Martin, eds., *Staging Pain*, 31–46.
8. Discussing Macbeth's interaction with the vision of the dagger, Roychoudhury observes, 'this is a man in dialogue with a projection of himself'. See 'Melancholy, Ecstasy, Phantasma: The Pathologies of *Macbeth*', *Modern Philology* 111, no. 2 (November 2013): 227. Roychoudhury's article also discusses Macbeth's imagination in relation to early modern discourses of melancholy, exploring how the play 'reflects but also interrogates the early modern discourse of the pathological imagination' (205).
9. Kiernan Ryan makes a related point about how the witches function in the play, observing that they 'give palpable form and cryptic expression to [Macbeth's] self-destructive individualism'. See "'The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible": Shakespeare and the Politics of Perception', *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 33 (2015): 3.
10. Stuart Clark's excellent *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) provides a

- detailed account of the wide range of early modern explanations for visual distortions.
11. Drew Daniel, *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 32. In a related manner, Angus Gowland argues that ‘although Burton was committed to the Galenic theory of melancholy, the emphasis placed upon the extreme diversity and particularity of the condition, in all its forms, stretched the orthodox concept of melancholy as far it could go’. See ‘Burton’s *Anatomy* and the Intellectual Traditions of Melancholy’, 25 *Images de la folie au tournant du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance* (2012), accessed December 1, 2017, <https://journals.openedition.org/babel/2078#ftn73>. See also Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
  12. Simon McCarthy-Jones, *Hearing Voices: The Histories, Causes and Meanings of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 39.
  13. Ofer Hadass, *Medicine, Religion, and Magic in Early Stuart England: Richard Napier’s Medical Practice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), 91. See also Lauren Kassell, *Medicine and Magic in Elizabethan London: Simon Forman, Astrologer, Alchemist and Physician* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), and Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, *Angels in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
  14. Lauren Kassell, Michael Hawkins, Robert Ralley, John Young, Joanne Edge, Janet Yvonne Martin-Portugues, and Natalie Kaoukji, eds., *The Casebooks of Simon Forman and Richard Napier, 1596–1634: A Digital Edition*, ‘CASE15119’, ‘CASE65218’, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/cases/CASE15119>, <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/cases/CASE65218>.
  15. Kassell et al., *Casebooks*, ‘CASE19541’, accessed July 19, 2019, <https://casebooks.lib.cam.ac.uk/cases/CASE19541>.
  16. See, for example, Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr Faustus* and William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.
  17. John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. by John Russell Brown (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 5.3.6–9.
  18. Whether one suffers from a debasing or ennobling form of melancholy depends on many things, such as the type of melancholy being experienced, the place in which it lodges in the body, the severity of the affliction, and the mental, physical, and moral condition of the sufferer.
  19. André Du Laurens, *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight: of Melancholike Diseases; of Rheumes, and of Old Age*, trans. by Richard Surphlet (London, 1599) 87.

20. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds. Nicolas K. Kiessling, Thomas C. Faulkner, and Rhonda L. Blair, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989–94), i.152. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited by volume and page numbers.
21. As described by Corinne Saunders in ch. 5, 91–116.
22. For an overview of the range of ways that the imagination could be anatomically configured and the ways this impacts early modern notions of fancy and the imagination, see Suparna Roychoudhury, ‘Anatomies of Imagination in Shakespeare’s Sonnets’, *Studies in English Literature* 54, no. 1 (2014): 105–24.
23. Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 53.
24. See, for example, Burton, *Melancholy*, i.152.
25. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18–19.
26. For mental fixation and lovesickness, see Donald Beecher, ‘The Lover’s Body: The Somatogenesis of Love in Renaissance Medical Treatises’, *Renaissance and Reformation* ns 12, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 1–11; Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 21–25.
27. Ioan P. Coulianu, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. by Margaret Cook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 31.
28. Dawson, *Lovesickness*, 24; John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. by Lois Potter, Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 5.2.40–112.
29. William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. by Keir Elam, Arden Shakespeare Third Series (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 2.5.187–8.
30. Vaughan, *Directions for Health*, 230–31.
31. For a discussion of how performance and trickery are used to cure patients’ delusions, see Winfried Schleiner, *Medical Ethics in the Renaissance* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1995), 20–29; Dawson, *Lovesickness*, 177–90.
32. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Penguin, 1971, 1991), 249–50.
33. Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother. Written upon Occasion which hath Beene of Late Taken Thereby, to Suspect Possession of an Evill Spririt, or Some Such Like Supernaturall Power* (London, 1603), 25.
34. André Du Laurens, *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight: Of Melancholike Diseases; of Rheumes, and of Old Age*, trans. by Richard Surplus (London, 1599), 89.

35. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 34–35.
36. Robert Jay Lifton, ‘The Concept of the Survivor’, in *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust*, ed. by J. E. Dimsdale (New York: Hemisphere, 1980), 113–26. Quoted by Herman (*Trauma and Recovery*, 38).
37. Cathy Caruth, ‘Introduction’, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.
38. Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*, 4.2.262.
39. Shackerley Marmion, *The Antiquary* (London, 1641), accessed October 16, 2017, <http://literature.proquest.com>.
40. Deborah Willis, ‘“The Gnawing Vulture”: Revenge, Trauma Theory, and *Titus Andronicus*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 32. See also Tanya Pollard, ‘A Kind of Wild Medicine: Revenge as Remedy in Early Modern England’, *Revista canaria de estudios inglese* 50, no. 1 (2005): 58, 69; Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma*.
41. Lukas Erne, *Beyond ‘The Spanish Tragedy’: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 126.
42. *Ibid.*, 126.
43. See Emma Smith, ‘Hieronimo’s Afterlives’, in Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie*, ed. by Emma Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), 148–49.
44. Although the title page claims that this updated version ‘hath of late been of diverse time acted’, this seems unlikely given the fact that the new material is simply inserted into the original text with no attempt to fix consequent problems of duplication, which are particularly evident in the Fourth Addition (known as the painter scene). As Levin Schücking points out, the Fourth Addition duplicates the situation of 3.13–14, in which a father visits Hieronimo seeking justice for his murdered son, a similarity drawn out further by the fact that the two men are named Bazulto and Bazardo. See ‘*The Spanish Tragedy* Additions: Acting and Reading Versions’, *TLS* (June 12, 1937), 442.
45. Charles K. Cannon, ‘The Relation of the Additions of *The Spanish Tragedy* to the Original Play’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1962): 234.
46. Using plagiarism software, Brian Vickers and Marcus Dahl argue that the results prove Shakespeare’s authorship. Brian Vickers, ‘Identifying Shakespeare’s Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* (1602): A New(er) Approach’, *Shakespeare* 8, no. 1 (2012): 29. In his blog entry on August 31, 2013, Holger Syme challenges Vickers’ conjectures about the possible performance history of *The Spanish Tragedy*, but accepts the case for



- Shakespeare's authorship. See: 'Shakespeare and *The Spanish Tragedy*: A Challenge for Theatre History', *Dispositio: Mostly Theatre, Then and Now, There and Here*, August 31, 2017, <http://www.dispositio.net/archives/1667>.
47. Hugh D. Craig, 'Authorial Styles and the Frequencies of Very Common Words: Jonson, Shakespeare, and the Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*', *Style* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 199–220; Hugh D. Craig, 'The 1602 Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*', in *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*, ed. by Hugh Craig and Arthur F. Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 162–80.
  48. Warren Stevenson, 'Shakespeare's Hand in *The Spanish Tragedy* 1602', *Studies in English Literature* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1968): 314; Stevenson's claims are more extensively explored in his monograph, *Shakespeare's Additions to Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy: A Fresh Look at the Evidence Regarding the 1602 Additions* (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edward Mellen, 2008).
  49. Douglas Bruster, 'Shakespearean Spellings and Handwriting in the Additional Passages Printed in the 1602 *Spanish Tragedy*', *Notes and Queries* 60, no. 3 (September 2013): 420–24.
  50. Stevenson suggests that although 'Shakespeare seldom, so far as we know, directly alluded to himself in his plays [...] the anonymity afforded by the circumstances under which the Additions were written provides a possible answer to this objection' ('Shakespeare's Hand', 320).
  51. Erne, *Beyond 'The Spanish Tragedy'*, 5.
  52. Robert N. Watson, *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 65.
  53. Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. by Clara Calvo and Jesús Tronch, Arden edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 3.13.170–73. All subsequent references to this edition will be cited by act, scene and line numbers.
  54. John Kerrigan, 'Hieronimo, Hamlet and Remembrance', *Essays in Criticism*, 31, no. 2 (April 1981): 107. For a reading of how the bloody handkerchief functions as 'an ambiguous prop whose meaning shifts according to the needs of the scene' and recalls liturgical practices, see Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 61–88.
  55. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 425.
  56. Peter Sacks, 'Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare', *ELH* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 583. See also Marjorie Garber's discussion of the uncanny nature of tragedy and its relation to trauma and repetition: *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 14.

57. Francis Bacon, 'Of Revenge', in *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, ed. by Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 17.
58. Sacks, 'Where Words Prevail Not', 583.
59. Anderson, *Performing Early Modern Trauma*, 153.
60. Developing Freud's theories of melancholia and mourning, LaCapra suggests that while 'acting out' and 'working through' are related processes, they involve a different experience of, and relationship to, the past: 'In acting out, the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription, and it hauntingly returns as the repressed. Mourning involves a different inflection of performativity: a relation to the past which involves recognizing its difference from the present—simultaneously remembering and taking leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgement and a reinvestment in life'. See *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 65–67, 70.
61. While recent attention has focused on the ways in which early modern theatre impacts the playgoer through the sensations aroused, in the context of mental fixation, theatre's affective force arises from the visual content of theatrical display, which can speak directly to the mind's phantasms. For the audience's affective involvement, see, for example, Allison P. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Katharine A. Craik and Tanya Pollard, eds., *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
62. Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing*, 78.
63. Cahill, *Unto the Breach*, 139.
64. My argument here draws on Sacks' analysis of the relationship between elegy and revenge but offers a different view of revenge as a psychological process and form of representation. See 'Where Words Prevail Not', 576–601.
65. Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*, 4.3.30.

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## ‘Fearful Echoes Thunder in Mine Ears’: Hearing Voices in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*

*Laurie Maguire and Aleksandra Thostrup*

Christopher Marlowe is often cited as the paradigmatic playwright of the early modern aspiring mind, and Dr Faustus the creation who most epitomises that mind’s disillusionment. Faustus is a university graduate who has worked his way through the medieval quadrivium only to experience intellectual *ennui*. He deems law fit only for ‘a mercenary drudge / Who aims at nothing but external trash’ (1.1.34–35); medicine is unfulfilling because it cannot ‘make man to live eternally’ (1.1.24); logic has already been mastered: ‘Is to dispute well logic’s chiefest end? / [...] / Then read no more, thou hast attained the [B-text: that] end’ (1.1.8, 10).<sup>1</sup> Frustrated by what he perceives as academic and practical limits (although his medical ambition to give men eternal life counts as hubris rather than frustration and his rejection of logic is only because he misunderstands its ethical purpose), Faustus dismisses the academic aims of his university

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syllabus and the achievements of political power in favour of a 'greater subject', necromancy: 'Emperors and kings / Are but obeyed in their several provinces, / [...] / But his dominion that exceeds in this [magic] / Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man' (1.1.59–62).

Faustus wants 'the whole extent', 'all that is possible'. These are the *OED* definitions of 'all', an adjective recurrent in Faustus's vocabulary:

*All* things that move between the quiet poles  
 Shall be at my command (1.1.58–9)  
 Resolve me of *all* ambiguities (1.1.82)  
 [S]earch *all* corners of the new found world (1.1.86)  
 [T]ell the secrets of *all* foreign kings (1.1.89)  
 I'll have them wall *all* Germany with brass (1.1.90)  
 [R]eign sole king of *all* our provinces (1.1.96)

Given Faustus' resistance to limits, damnation, as defined by Mephistopheles, would seem to have metaphysical attractions: 'Hell hath no limits' (2.1.124). By the end of the play, however, in an unsurprising theophobic *volte face*, Faustus will be begging for the re-imposition of limits:

Oh God, / [...] / Impose some end to my incessant pain.  
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,  
 A hundred thousand, and at last be saved.  
 O, no end is limited to damnèd souls.  
 (5.2.98, 101–04 A-text; lines 169–72 in B-text, with minor variants)

God does not respond to this plea, and the epilogue laments the protagonist's wasted potential: 'Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight' (Epilogue, 1).

The text of *Doctor Faustus* exists in two versions, neither of which was published in Marlowe's lifetime: the A-text (1604) and B-text (1616). Marlowe scholars used to think that Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus* late in his career, shortly before his death in 1593. This was because the play's primary source, the German *Faustbook*, was not published in an English translation (by 'P.F.')

until 1592 (STC 10711).<sup>2</sup> The title page advertises this translation as 'newly imprinted', a phrase which may declare the newness of the English translation, or gesture, tantalisingly, to an earlier edition of this translation. Without evidence of a prior edition, anyone who wanted to argue for an earlier date for Marlowe's play had to posit



that a manuscript of the translation circulated pre-publication. (This is not an impossibility.) However, in recent years two references to a pre-1592 English *Faustbook* have been discovered and Marlowe scholars now tend to place *Doctor Faustus*'s composition in 1589.<sup>3</sup> The short A-text probably comes closer to the version that Marlowe and a collaborator wrote in 1589, for which we have records of performance throughout the 1590s.<sup>4</sup> The expanded B-text reflects the additions for which two playwrights, William Bird and Samuel Rowley, were paid by the theatre manager Philip Henslowe in 1602.<sup>5</sup> The B-text is 600 lines longer than A; it is roughly parallel to A in acts 1 and 5 but diverges in the middle, expanding the action at the Imperial Court and the comic revenge sequence between Faustus and Benvolio.<sup>6</sup>

In both texts Faustus hears voices but he hears them differently. Scholarship on the B-text has tended to concentrate on the comic expansions as discrete scenic units or on the theological implications of the structural and lexical variants (the Old Man in 5.1<sup>7</sup> and the crucial modal verb variant between A and B in 2.3: 'if Faustus *can* repent' (A-text 2.3.79) versus 'if Faustus *will* repent'; B-text 2.3.80); we want to look at the variant voice-hearing as part of a *pattern* of revisions that the B-text makes and argue that the revisions cut down Faustus' interiority, reduce his agency and transfer that agency to external forces by augmenting the role of the devils. The devils have more to do and more to say in B-text *Faustus*, and much that was internal in A (such as the voice-hearing) becomes externalised in B. The argument usually invoked to explain such variants is that the B-text represents a more Calvinist world, one in which Faustus' capacity for choice is limited (and this is indeed true). We suggest, however, that this is a side-effect of the revisions rather than their purpose; or rather, that early modern theology and early modern mental health are not discrete categories.<sup>8</sup> To its first audiences, the A-text *Faustus* introduced a radical and disturbing new idea of what the early modern mind could do; the revisers' project in the B-text was to return Marlowe's play to a mental space and a dramaturgy that was more familiar, one that directed audience response and moral interpretation, and clarified blame: what we might call a medieval aesthetic.<sup>9</sup>

Our invoking a generalised 'medieval' participates in the reductive binary that characterises histories of medieval and Elizabethan drama, with Marlowe pressed into service as a convenient shorthand for the bridge between the two theatrical and ontological *milieux*. Critics move from morality plays to Shakespeare in one step via Marlowe, viewing (for

instance) *Doctor Faustus* as an inverted saint's life or *The Jew of Malta* as a morality play that omits the virtues.<sup>10</sup> These are astute observations and not to be downplayed, but the continued performance of medieval drama in the 1570s (to take one example) blurs the boundaries between medieval and early modern. The theatrical traffic is continuous rather than the medieval being a relic or an isolated import within an Elizabethan play, and as Raphael Falco points out, '[t]he continuity is often highly mediated, or compromised, by changing fashions and contemporary polemics'.<sup>11</sup> That which returns to cross the Marlovian (and Elizabethan) stage does so in stranger forms: rather than being testament to Faustus' deft psychomancy (and unlike the Helen of the German *Faust-book*), Marlowe's Helen is a mute figure who feeds Faustus' fancy and, as becomes a succubus, 'sucks forth [his] soul' (5.1.94). She is the face that launched a thousand ships only in semblance; an un-whole and unholy echo that, while gesturing to a cosmos neatly partitioned into heaven, hell and firmament, disrupts the *mappa mundi* on which the medieval drama rests.

In the earlier *Mankind* the eponymous figure enters and in the allegorical, explanatory mode of medieval drama states the crux of play:

My name ys Mankynde. I have my composycyon  
Of a body and of a soull, of condycyon contrarye.  
Betwyx them tweyn ys a grett dyvisyon<sup>12</sup>

This is a dramaturgy that relies upon clear divisions and contrarities. *Mankind* tells its audience what they see and hear and what they should think about it all. Equally literally perspicacious is William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest* (1569), whose central figure Moros ('fate' in Greek) is reminded by the helpfully named Discipline that 'Unto [Piety] you must be obedient in all things / Concerning the statutes and laws of the country' (ll. 443–44). Unlike Polonius, Discipline is not ridiculed for being dour, sententious and somewhat tone-deaf. Lines spoken on stage are not meant to echo with 'ifs and buts' in the heads of those who hear them, and Wager's stress on obedience is punningly serious. As Steven Connor reminds us, 'the very word "obedience" derives from the Latin *audire*'.<sup>13</sup> Faustus is disobedient not because he does not listen but because he listens to, and believes, other voices.

The source of these voices is unclear; if they issue from on high, they come from a god who is neither heard nor seen by the playhouse audience

who thus have to take Faustus' word for what he hears. 'If a god or a tyrant wants to ensure unquestioning obedience, he had better make sure that he never discloses himself to the sight of his people, but manifests himself and his commands through the ear', says Connor. 'Do we not call such a person a dictator? *Ex auditu fides*, as St Paul puts it in *Romans* 10:17—from hearing comes belief'.<sup>14</sup> What does Faustus hear and what does he believe? These are the questions that prompt our investigation.

Everyman, Mankind and Moros are types and serve a didactic function; Faustus seemingly occupies the same role in a drama that, ostensibly, adheres to the plot of morality play. But Faustus the character and *Faustus* the play are not very good at staying within permitted parameters. Though he be but Faustus and a man, Faustus' affliction is not Mankind's 'condycyon contrarye'. He is a humanist mind in a morality structure, and the 'contrariety' is embedded at the level of genre and form: Marlowe's moral play is the '*disputatio in utramque partem*' version, invoking a recognised pattern but making it ask questions it had hitherto been used to foreclose. He draws on a theatrical heritage of dumbshows, pageantry, didacticism and character-as-abstraction, but all serve to destabilise meaning rather than reinforce it. What is remarkable about Marlowe's play is the element of uncertainty about where one thing ends and another begins. Marlowe's adaptation of the psychomachia gives us not a soul caught in a tug-of-war between the two, but a riven mind arguing about the nature of its self and its world with itself. The play stages a disquiet that was throbbing through the Elizabethan thought-world beyond the theatre, an uneasy awareness of how seeming and being could be all too difficult to tell apart. Is this the face or merely simulacrum? Is this a thing or a metaphor? Does this word 'mean' or does it merely gesture elsewhere? In a play full of doubles, from Helen of Troy as simulacrum through the clowns' copycat magic and the two angels (Good and Bad) to a text written by two collaborators, becoming two texts through revision, the struggle to identify Faustus' internal and external voices and adjudicate between them is part of a thematic continuum.<sup>15</sup> As de Mornay writes, 'There is in man a dubble Speech; the one in the mynd, which they call the inward Speech, which wee conceyue afore we utter it; and the other the sounding image thereof, which is uttered by our mouth and is termed the Speech of the Voyce'.<sup>16</sup>

Part of the project of this essay is to explore how the two texts of *Doctor Faustus* complicate the ways we view the movement from medieval to Elizabethan: not just in terms of drama but in terms of the early

modern mind. Thus, what begins as a textual argument about revision has both a dramaturgical and a psychological aim. In what follows we group the differences between the texts of *Faustus* into two categories: those A-text lines that give Faustus more interiority and agency and hence those interconnected changes in the B-text that give the devils more power; and those B-text additions that offer the audience clear direction about how to read or interpret the episode they have just seen. It is the first group of changes, interiority, that has most to say to the theme of this book: as we shall see, the differences between A- and B-text *Faustus* offer a pattern of revisions that are connected in terms of voice-hearing. The second group of revisions contributes to a tendency in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama to teach audiences how to interpret the play they have just seen.

## I: INTERIORITY

When Faustus meets his ‘dearest friends’, Valdes and Cornelius, in the B-text he tells them that he has been thinking about their previous conversations and that he has finally decided to practise black magic:

Know that your words have won me at the last  
To practise magic and concealed arts.

(1.1.103–04, both A- and B-texts, spelling modernized; line numbers from A-text, ed. Bevington and Rasmussen)

The earlier A-text continues the explanation, with a qualification:

Know that your words have won me at the last,  
To practise Magicke and concealed arts:  
*Yet not your words onely, but mine owne fantasie,*  
*That will receiue no obiect for my head,*  
*But ruminates on Necromantique skill.*

(A-text, sig. A4r, our italics)

A-text Faustus is drawn by his own imagination; imagination is something the B-text does not permit him.

The most noteworthy passage in this regard is the sequence in act 2 when the Good and Bad Angels make their second visitation. They have come to persuade/dissuade Faustus theologically:

*Good Angel:* Faustus, repent, yet God will pity thee.  
*Evil Angel:* Thou art a spirit, God cannot pity thee  
*Faustus:* Who buzzeth in mine ears I am a spirit?  
 (2.2.12–14, both A- and B-texts)

Faustus responds in both texts to the voices that he hears:

Be I a devil, yet God may pity me.  
 Ay, God will pity me if I repent.  
 (2.2.15–16, both A- and B-texts)

And the Evil Angel counters, still in both texts:

Ay, but Faustus never shall repent  
 (2.2.17, both A- and B-texts)

Faustus believes the Evil Angel's negative prediction and reflects as follows (we quote from the A-text with the B-text variant in parenthesis):

My hearts so hardened [B: is hardened] I cannot repent  
 Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,  
 (2.3.18–19)

This is where the texts start to diverge. 'Scarce' in the B-text is an absolute. The line ends not with a comma as in A but with a full stop:

Scarce can I name saluation, faith, or heauen.  
 (B-text, sig. C2r)

In the A-text the adverb 'scarce' is not absolute or conclusive. Instead it leads to the second half of a grammatical equation: scarce can I...*but*. And what that 'but' leads to is further voices:

Scarce can I name saluation, faith, or heauen,  
*But feareful echoes thunders in mine eares*  
*Faustus, thou art damn'd,*  
 (A-text, sig. C3r, our italics)

Once again, A-text Faustus hears more in his head than his B-text equivalent does. The B-text revision functions as a virtual denial of any inward

recesses of character. The voices A-text Faustus hears come from within, echoes of thoughts he himself has articulated.

Perhaps that is what renders these ‘echoes’ so thoroughly ‘fearful’: Faustus finds the proof of his exceptionality in his mind. Conceits, whether considered as rhetorical devices or ‘mentall objectes’,<sup>17</sup> are the parts of his book-bound, word-dense world of which he feels in command. In the beginning of the play, there is only Faustus’ word and voice. It is the ‘heretical conscience’ and its soliloquy on stage.<sup>18</sup> What he thinks he confidently utters, and what he utters can be heard as ‘speech acts demonstrating the rhetorical possibility of defying God’.<sup>19</sup> To dispute well satisfies him only if new worlds of being are conjured forth by the utterance. As Engle and Rasmussen observe, the opening soliloquy implies that ‘Faustus finally turns to magic as an affirmation of human mental strength, a strength that allows mental life to be a god unto itself’: ‘his dominion that exceeds in this / Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man. / A sound magician is a mighty god’ (A-text, I.i.62–64).<sup>20</sup>

A ‘sound’ magician: the adjective is deliberately mocking, delicately blasphemous and effectively emphasised by the rhetorical structure of the line. The word, like the Faustian tale, is Germanic in origin and invokes a sense of freedom from both spiritual and bodily infirmity or decay. It is often found in scriptural contexts such as William Tyndale’s exegesis on the gospels: ‘it is the moost felicite that can be to haue a sounde mynde in a sounde body’.<sup>21</sup> But it might also imply acoustic sound. The play, like Prospero’s isle, is full of noises<sup>22</sup>: speaking voices, thundering echoes, buzzing noises and striking clocks—and conjuring, an implicitly vocalic and performative act, with an etymology that functions somewhat like a silent stage direction (*conjūrāre*, to swear together). Early modern music theory was a lingering echo of the medieval quadrivium, drawing on scholastic dogma, mysticism and numerology, and the kind of intellectual endeavour Faustus would consider initially intriguing but eventually inadequate.<sup>23</sup> If we conceive of music as a kind of aural alchemy, we see its analogue in the way language and hence magic work in the play. There is a strange, even transformative, power in what is apprehended by the ear. Summoning a devil is the conjuror’s counterpart to the voice-produced self, as Mephistopheles makes clear: ‘when we hear one rack the name of God [...] We fly in hope to get his glorious soul’ (A-text, I.3.51–53). It is a speaking-into-presence gone awry.

Things spoken and heard are intrinsically self-dramatising in the play, and Faustus has an idiosyncratic tendency to flicker between ‘I’ and

speaking to and of himself in the third person. This echo of medieval plays shows the bifurcation of a mind as Faustus becomes an audience to himself, listening to himself speaking forth his self; this way of giving voice 'is the process which simultaneously produces articulate sound, and produces myself, as a self-producing being'.<sup>24</sup> Like Tamburlaine before him, Faustus discards the character dealt by fate and seeks to make 'my selfe' anew by language as if anxious to avoid ossifying into an immutable morality-Everyman, sans 'mine own fantasy', no matter how damning; both Faustus and Tamburlaine deploy words to conquer worlds, recycling the Humanist notion of persuasive speech to move—literally and figuratively—the listening mind. The contemporary anatomist John Banister noted how the human ear is 'continually open, and prest to receive the sound of every speach, or other noyse'.<sup>25</sup> The ear tunnel is the physical counterpart to the mythical passage that joins corporeal and spirit realms; oratorical flair moves through it like an unsighted ferryman and establishes strange contiguities between the inside and the outside. The Aristotle Faustus haughtily dismissed in his opening soliloquy makes an astute, and for the play apposite, point: the difference between sound and voice, he noted, is a difference between unsouled and ensouled entities: 'Voice is a kind of sound characteristic of what has soul in it; nothing that is without soul utters voice' and 'what produces the impact must have soul in it and must be accompanied by an act of imagination, for voice is a sound with a meaning'.<sup>26</sup>

So what is it Faustus hears? Is it an echo of himself? Is it 'speach, or other noyse'?<sup>27</sup> And where does it come from? Marlowe was alert to spurious acoustics as we see in his translation of Ovid's *Elegies*: 'No such voyce-feigning bird was on the ground' (1603, STC 18931, C4r). Hearing voices exposes the notion of an 'inner space' as fragile and tenuous. Once unbidden words penetrate his head there is no place of safety for Faustus: 'whither should I fly?' (2.1.77).

In early modern England, the ear was referred to as the 'hole of hearing' through which sounds and matter could enter.<sup>28</sup> The body and the mind were not impregnable and Faustus was not alone in being concerned with what was 'buzzing' in his ears. In *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), Philip Stubbes fulminates against the corrupting effect of stageplays, with the player 'buzz[ing] his venomous suggestions into their eares'.<sup>29</sup> The listener has no agency, but is as passive and impressionable as B-text

Faustus. As such, the revised version of the play becomes a late sixteenth-century morality play, an allegory of the damning effect of harking to words that seek to delight the mind.

And so to return to the two different grammatical uses of ‘scarce’ in A- and B-texts with their two different meanings. The absolute of the B-text means ‘I can’t do this’ or ‘I am barely able to do this’. The relative of the A-text means ‘whenever I try to do this, here is what happens’. So A-text Faustus *names* salvation, faith and heaven. And when he does, what happens is that he hears voices—or he has internalised voices—that fill him with fear.

If this scene ends with voice-hearing, it also begins with it: Faustus hears voices at the start in both A- and B-texts:

O something soundeth in mine ear [B: ears]

Abjure this magic, turn to God again.

(A-text 1.5, B-text 2.1, lines the same in both A- and B-texts, spelling modernised)

Only in the A-text, however, does Faustus *answer* the voice, assenting to its positive suggestion:

I [= Aye], and Faustus will turne to God againe.

(A-text, sig. B4r)

The negative voice then takes over again in both texts:

To God? he loves thee not? (A-text, sig. B4r)

Why he loves thee not

(B-text, sig. B3v)

Because of its extra line, the A-text gives us *dialogue*:

O something soundeth in mine ear

Abjure this magic, turn to God again.

I [= Aye], and Faustus will turne to God againe.

To God? he loves thee not?

(1.5, A-text, sig. B4r)<sup>30</sup>

Faustus is in dialogue with his inner voices throughout the A-text; the A-text consequently dramatises a powerful schism inside a mind.



In act 5 in both A and B we hear the voice of Hell:

Hell calls for right [B: claims his right], and with a roaring voice  
Says: 'Faustus come, thine hour is almost [B omits 'almost'] come'.  
(5.1, A- and B-texts, spelling modernised)

Only the A-text prefaces this with the line:

Damnd art thou Faustus, damnd, dispaire and die.  
(A-text, sig, E4r)

Whose voice is this? Is this the voice of God? Is this Faustus' voice? Or Faustus' internalisation of the voice of the Bad Angel? Is this the voice of hell that is summarised in the next line? Or is it a voice distinct from the voice of hell, which would be in keeping with the dialogic voices in the A-text—in which case there is not much mercy on the table?

We might compare this with a different kind of dialogue. The devils are more vocal and interactive in the B-texts. In act 2, Lucifer arrives. Here is how he talks to Faustus in the A-text:

*Lu:* Christ cannot saue thy soule, for he is iust,  
Theres none but I haue intrest in the same.  
*Fau:* O who art thou that lookst so terrible?  
*Lu:* I am *Lucifer*, and this is my companion Prince in hel.  
*Fau:* O Faustus, they are come to fetch away thy soule.  
*Lu:* We come to tell thee thou dost iniure vs.  
Thou talkst of Christ, contrary to thy promise.  
Thou should'st not thinke of God, thinke of the devil.  
And of his dame too.  
(2.6, A-text, sig. C3v)

The same statements are made to Faustus in both A- and B-texts (with two small variants included below in brackets: a relative pronoun and a verb). The difference is that in the B-text Lucifer shares this speech with Beelzebub and the devils perform a pincer movement on Faustus:

Lucif. Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just,  
There's none but I have interest in the same.  
Faust. O what [A: what] art thou that look'st so terribly.  
Lucif. I am Lucifer, and this is my companion prince in hell.

Faust. O Faustus they are come to fetch thy soul.  
 Belz. We are come to tell thee thou dost injure us.  
 Lucif. Thou call'st on [A: talks of] Christ contrary to thy promise.  
 Bels. Thou should'st not think on God.  
 Lucif. Think on the devil.  
 Belz. And his dam too.

(2.2, B-text sig. C3r)

The A-text devils are more passive, here and throughout: they have less to do and less to say than their equivalents in the B-text.

This dialogue in the A-text is followed by an extraordinary vow from Faustus:

pardon me in this,  
 And Faustus vowes neuer to look to heauen  
 Neuer to name God, or to pray to him  
 To burne his Scriptures, slay his Ministers,  
 And make my spirites pull his churches downe.  
 (A-text, sig. C4r)

B-text Faustus promises only never to look to heaven:

And *Faustus* vowes neuer to looke to heauen.  
 (B-text, sig. C3r)

A-text Faustus' list of potential transgressions is extreme: three promised inactions followed by three promised actions ('neuer to look to heauen / Neuer to name God, or to pray to him / To burne his Scriptures, slay his Ministers, / And make my spirites pull his churches downe').<sup>31</sup> From these examples, and others like them, it is clear that A-text Faustus has more 'attitude' and more imagination than his B-text equivalent. What the B-text does with its hero is point out how to read him and his transgressions; the B-text underlines what he is doing wrong.

## II: INTERPRETATION/GUIDANCE

The most obvious example of the B-text's moral direction is at the end. Faustus' final hour has come and gone; midnight strikes in both texts, and both texts contain a stage direction for effects to accompany the entrance

of the devils (thunder and lightning in the A-text; thunder alone in the B-text).<sup>32</sup> The devils presumably carry Faustus to Hell ('*Exeunt with him*' in the A-text; 'Exeunt' in the B-text).<sup>33</sup> This terrifying sequence is followed in the A-text by the Epilogue. The B-text interposes an 18-line scene before its epilogue, in which the scholars enter and, in a slightly stagey, almost hammy dialogue, say:

1. Such fearefull shrikes, and cries, were neuer heard,  
Pray heauen the Doctor haue escapt the danger.
2. O help vs heauen, see, here are *Faustus* limbs,  
All torne asunder by the hand of death.
3. The deuils whom *Faustus* seru'd haue torne him thus.  
(5.3, B-text H3r-H3v)

The scholars of the A-text, sympathetic to Faustus' human predicament, are revised in the B-text to become explicators of a didactic theatre, with their resoundingly summary concluding line: 'The devils whom Faustus served haue torn him thus'.

If interpretation ends this sequence in the B-text, it also begins it, with the entrance of the three devils, Lucifer, Beelzebub and Mephistopheles (5.2): they have twenty lines of dialogue that is not in the A-text before Faustus and the scholars enter in both texts. The devils explain that they are waiting for Faustus who is their subject; tonight is the night they will claim his soul and bring him everlasting damnation. Their dialogue as they wait in anticipation is a piece of theatrical scene-setting—they locate the time of the action, the place ('here in this room'), and the purpose ('here we'll stay / To mark him how he doth demean himself'). How he 'doth demean himself' is deemed predictable ('how should he, but in desperate lunacy?') and their discussion of Faustus' behaviour occupies nine lines in which they imagine his attempts to overreach them—'but all in vain'. As Bevington and Rasmussen explain, 'the presence of these devils from the start of the final scene lends a determinism to the tragedy not found in the A-text version' (B-text 5.2.0.1–2 S.D., note, 277).

But we do not need chunks of dialogue or inserted scenes to see the B-text's focus on interpretation and the way it likes to underline its moral. In act 1, the A- and B-texts vary in an observation by the Second Scholar. He is in dialogue with the First Scholar and both fear that Faustus' friendship with Valdes and Cornelius means he has been drawn to black magic. The Second Scholar says in the B-text:

Were he a stranger, not allyed to me,  
*The danger of his soule* would make me mourne:  
 (1.2, B-text, sig. B1r, our italics)

The phrase spells out, as morality plays do, precisely what is at stake. This is a spiritual narrative. The A-text's alternative is altogether less specific:

Were he a stranger, and not alied to me,  
*Yet should I grieue for him*  
 (1.2, A-text, sig. B1r, our italics)

The A-text implies that this is a personal narrative; the grief is for Faustus as a person.

Even Mephistopheles is given didactic lines in the B-text. In act 2, Faustus in his study says (in both texts):

When I behold the heavens, then I repent,  
 And curse thee wicked Mephistopheles  
 Because thou hast deprived me of those joys.  
 (2.2, A- and B-texts, spelling modernised)

A-text Mephistopheles simply corrects Faustus' view of heaven:

why Faustus,  
 Thinkst thou heauen is such a glorious thing?  
 (2.2, A-text, sig. C2v)

B-text Mephistopheles does the same, but not before he has accused Faustus of depriving *himself* of the joys of heaven:

'Twas thine owne seeking *Faustus*, thanke thy selfe.  
 But think'st thou heauen is such a glorious thing?  
 (2.2, B-text, sig. C2r)

This is a morality-play-kind of insertion and it chimes with the conservative nature of the Chorus in the B-text, which is keen to repeat moral conclusions and likes to make things straightforwardly unidirectional in meaning.

Mephistopheles is right, of course: Faustus did seek more than heaven permitted. Faustus' blame of Mephistopheles fits a pattern in both texts

in which Faustus has a tendency to blame everyone except himself. We see this as late as his final soliloquy when he blames his parents for having given birth to him:

Curst be the parents that engendered me  
(5.2, A- and B-texts, spelling modernised)

A moment of self-awareness follows:

No, Faustus, curse thy self,

before Faustus returns the blame to the devil:

curse Lucifer,  
That hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven.

Faustus blames Lucifer here for the same deprivation as he has earlier blamed Mephistopheles:

When I behold the heavens, then I repent,  
And curse thee wicked Mephistopheles,  
Because thou hast deprived me of those joys.  
(2.2, A- and B-texts, spelling modernised)

The possibility that Faustus' accusation is true is raised in the B-text as part of a series of revisions which reduce Faustus' autonomy. In act 5, Faustus accuses Mephistopheles again of tempting him and robbing him of eternal happiness. Mephistopheles confirms Faustus' accusation:

I doe confesse it Faustus, and reioyce;  
'Twas I, that when thou wer't i'the way to heauen,  
Damn'd vp thy passage, when thou took'st the booke,  
To view the Scriptures, then I turn'd the leaues  
And led thine eye.

(5.2, B-text sig. H1v)

Presumably what is being referred to is the opening soliloquy when Faustus constructs arguments based on incomplete reading of Bible passages. Two things are of interest here. The first is the implication of

the word ‘damn’d’. If Mephistopheles has dammed up the Bible passages, physically blocked them, he has consequently damned Faustus, spiritually. The second is the fact that even the act of reading is being done for Faustus. He has almost no independence in the B-text: no independent thoughts, no independent activity, no control. What emerges from this pattern of variants is a careful and deliberate revision that tones down the aspiring, conflicted, complex mind of the Marlovian A-text.<sup>34</sup>

Philip Sidney objected to ‘mungrell tragy-comedie’ that did not heed the Aristotelean unities of dramaturgy.<sup>35</sup> *Doctor Faustus* is, in many ways, a mongrel play. It opens within a bounded space whose coordinates are known—the study—but from there it moves into its distorted version of a morality play, returning to a study where time now runs too fast and the last vestiges of unity shatter. The trope of the humanist scholar-bee, diligently gathering improving nectar from the choicest flowers of learning, is thus another echo from the cultural past that returns unsettlingly distorted.<sup>36</sup> When Erasmus gathered and distilled classical epistemology into a theory of *copia* and *imitatio*, he sought a practice that ‘transfers what it finds into the mind itself [...] so that transfused into the veins it appears to be the birth of one’s intellect, not something begged and borrowed from elsewhere’.<sup>37</sup> It is a bold proposition, and one that posits ‘mankind’ at a considerable distance from *Mankind*. Mind and body are not distinct; both are mutable and may remake themselves by learning. But throughout, Faustus gropes for an interpretative framework by which to know the strange motley of playworlds that seem to buzz around him and seep through his speech. His final soliloquy is a cluster of fragments: Ovidian love-poetry but with its sense inverted; medieval drama but without a god coming from the heavens. What pervades all is a horror at counting down the clock and knowing what will come. As Thomas Heywood reflected in his *Apology for Actors*, ‘Comedies begin in trouble, and end in peace; Tragedies begin in calmes, and end in tempests’. The thunder in *Doctor Faustus*, like the clock, duly strikes at midnight.

### STAGING AUDIENCE RESPONSE

It is easy to forget that the professional drama of the 1580s and 1590s was a new literary phenomenon and that audiences might need guidance in how to interpret it. As late as the 1620s, Ben Jonson put two captious playgoers on stage, the resonantly named Damnplay and Probee in *The Magnetic Lady*. In the Induction and the *entr’actes* these critics ask one

of the players how to go about interpreting a play. (The player begins with a striking summary: 'A good play is like a skein of silk which if you take by the right end, you may wind off at pleasure on the bottom or card of your discourse...but if you light on the wrong end, you will pull all into a knot'.)<sup>38</sup> Jonson was particularly concerned with his work being misinterpreted but he is not alone in publicising his authorial anxiety: prefatory material to published works of prose and poetry demonstrates a recurrent concern about the reader's critical ability/inability.

George Gascoigne describes how readers 'doubtfully construed' the first edition of *The Adventures of Master F.J.* as 'scandalous'.<sup>39</sup> He inveighs against 'certain readers who (having no skill at all) will yet be very busy in reading all that may be read and think it sufficient if (Parrot-like) they can rehearse things without book when within book they understand neither the meaning of the author nor the sense of the figurative speeches'.<sup>40</sup> Thomas Nashe taxes readers with the opposite habit: over-interpretation. In *Pierce Penniless*, he laments this 'moralising age' in which 'everyone shows himself a politician by misinterpreting'<sup>41</sup>; Nashe complains that he cannot write 'how are you?' without someone thinking he is referring to 'one How, a knave'.<sup>42</sup> Michael Drayton complains about the negative responses to the first edition of his long poem, *Poly-Olbion*: in contrast to his friends' encouraging reactions, those of the public were characterised by 'barbarous ignorance..., below all balladry'.<sup>43</sup> John Taylor the water poet addresses those of his readers who 'know how to read and not mar the sense with hacking or misconstruction'.<sup>44</sup> George Chapman is worried that the reader's intention trumps that of the author: in *Andromeda Liberata* he writes that 'an author can mean what he lists' but 'his writing notwithstanding must be construed *in mentem legentis*—...to the intendment of the reader'.<sup>45</sup> The development of sidenotes and footnotes in part responds to these anxieties, directing the reader to rhetorical beauties or moral interpretations.<sup>46</sup>

In early modern drama, prologues and epilogues take over some of these guiding and explanatory functions, inducting the audience into the world of fiction and helping them negotiate that world intellectually as well as emotionally. So too do theatrical references within the fabric of the drama. Early modern drama is full of metatextual references to poetic form or structural conventions. The clowns comment on verse form in *Doctor Faustus* (1.4.15); Jacques notes the shift to blank verse in *As You Like It* (4.1.30–31); characters in Lodge's *Wounds of Civil War* twice comment on the play's use of rhyme (G3v, K2r); Jonson defends the

punishments at the end of *Volpone*, anticipating the audience's judgement of the ending as too severe; *The Honest Lawyer* (1616) is one of a multitude of plays to draw audience attention to the structure of scenes and acts; Middleton's *Roaring Girl* (1611) comments on single versus double plots; the anonymous manuscript play *John a Kent and John a Cumber* comments on generic conventions. These comments direct audience attention and interpretation. Above all, drama directs the audience's interpretive response by putting surrogate audiences on stage. The chorus in Greek tragedy reacts to the events of each act and cues the audience's moral response. Allegorical figures in medieval drama perform the same function in a distributed manner. Christopher Sly in the frame play in the anonymous *Taming of a Shrew* (1594) is a parody of the literal playgoer: having watched a play about shrew-taming, Sly feels confidently equipped to return home and tame his shrewish wife, assuming that a play's plot is the same as its message (an assumption that the last fifty years of criticism on Shakespeare's cognate drama, *The Taming of the Shrew*, has done much to question).

Stephen Miller has studied the plot differences between *Taming of a Shrew* and Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* (first published in the Folio of 1623, although on stage in the early 1590s or late 1580s). Miller analysed the differences in the anonymous play's subplot—the wooing of Bianca—and showed that it was an adaptation of Shakespeare: Shakespeare's plot had been revised to bring it into line with the class-based comedy of Robert Greene that was currently popular on stage. Shakespeare's plot of a merchant, a rebellious daughter and a permitted marriage of equal affections was, he concludes, rejected as too innovative and so his subplot was returned to a more generically conventional scenario in which class is the obstacle (the rebellious daughter is in love with a prince). Thus, we have one example in which a text was rewritten to make it more conservative—in this case generically conservative.

This essay has argued that *Doctor Faustus* was also revised to make it more conservative—intellectually conservative. The A-text's drama of a one-way conversation commits a cardinal sin of early modern stagecraft by being more inclined to question than give definite answers, to interrogate political and religious dogma than enact and enforce it. It should come as no surprise that Marlowe would be deemed interrogative, unconventional, radical, morally daring, even though his protagonist in the A-text ends by being damned. Accusations of 'atheism' swirled around Marlowe and his literary activities at a time when this charge did not preclude



a belief in some supernatural presence but indicated a wilful refusal to affirm the official account; it meant a dangerous inclination 'to wonder at unlawful things' and to think otherwise than 'heavenly power permits' (Epilogue, 8).

In the medieval *Everyman*, allegorical characters serve the function of a pedagogical narrative: they are *exempla*, not in pursuit of ambivalence or equivocation. Marlowe uses duplicitous words, invoking opposite meanings and interpretations and repercussions. In morality drama, rhetorical instruction is figured forth and lent figurative form on a stage. There is nothing ambivalent about the role of the *deus* that emerges *ex machina* to save the day at the end, nothing equivocal in *Everyman's* ponderings on his world, nothing ambiguous about what really happens come the final tableau. The morality play was a complement to the official worldview. In many ways, so is the expurgated and expanded B-text. Attending, as we have done, to the less conspicuous alterations from early to later printed text, the subtle trimming of a word here, the cutting of a phrase there, a pattern emerges: the establishing of an intelligible play-world and with it a correspondence between what occurs and what it means, and the attrition of an inward self capable of thought, doubt, hope and regret.

As so often in Marlowe (*Tamburlaine* is a prime example), it is the daring of the protagonist's vision that is held up for admiration, with the failure of the vision's achievement being taken almost for granted. Anticlimax is a built-in Marlovian dramatic effect, keeping focus on the aspiring mind. The revisers of *Doctor Faustus* take systematic steps to alter the dramatic balance: they underline the failure so that it cannot be accepted as an incidental by-product of a scholar's audacious vision but instead becomes the play's (heavily stressed) moral point. Revision and adaptation thus function as an early form of what we now recognise as literary criticism. Voice-hearing takes many forms: in the revised B-text we hear the voices of Elizabethan critics and audiences, the adaptation offering us the closest we can come to an eyewitness (or ear-witness) response to Marlowe's play.

## NOTES

1. We quote here and throughout from Bevington and Rasmussen's modernised edition of the A-text: *Doctor Faustus, A- and B-texts*, Revels edn, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). Where substantive variants exist (and

- exploring the variants is the point of this essay), we quote from both the 1604 and 1616 texts (see paragraph 2), accessed on the digital database EEBO (Early English Books Online) but we modernise spelling.
2. John Jones has persuasively identified the owner of these initials as Paul Fairfax. See John Jones, ed., *The English Faust Book: A Critical Edition Based on the Text of 1592* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
  3. Both discoveries are reported by R. J. Fehrenbach in *The Library*: Fehrenbach, 'A Pre-1592 English Faust Book and the Date of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*', *The Library* 2, no. 4 (2001): 327–35; Fehrenbach, 'Another Pre-1592 Copy of the English *Faustbook*', *The Library* 20, no.3 (2019): 395–6. Dating the play *ca.* 1589 makes it a combative inaugural work rather than the critical apogee of Marlowe's canon.
  4. On the status of the A-text as 'closer to' the original version, see Andy Kesson 'Shakespeare, Attribution and Attrition: at Tribute Zone', before-shakespeare.com blog post, 12 April 2017: 'We call the two versions of *Dr Faustus* the A text and B text, but we know that they both represent later versions of an earlier play: they are at best the B text and C text of the original work'. For records of revivals in the 1590s see *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. by R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 25–28, 30–31, 34, 36, 47, 54–55, 60.
  5. *Henslowe's Diary*, 206.
  6. For a good analysis of the theatrical effects of the variant material see chapter 4 of Eric Rasmussen, *A Textual Companion to Doctor Faustus* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). The 1604 A-text was reprinted in 1609 and 1611; the 1616 B-text was reprinted in 1619, 1620, 1624, 1628, 1631, 1663. Although recent performance tradition tends to favour the A-text as funnier and more sharply focused, a production at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse (2018/2019, directed by Paulette Randall) brought out the B-text's striking contrasts of tone, its display of the actor's body and the comic logic of its extended revenge sequence.
  7. 'The Old Man's speech to Faustus is extensively rewritten in the B-text as an exhortation to restrain the corrosive effects of bad habits, in place of the emphasis on contrite tears and faith in divine mercy obtained through Christ's sacrifice in the A-text' (Bevington and Rasmussen eds. B-text 5.1.35–51 note, 274).
  8. The relation between spiritual health and mental health is well established in medieval scholarship. See, for instance, Marion Turner, 'Thomas Usk and John Arderne', *Chaucer Review* 47 (2012): 95–105; Turner, 'Illness Narratives in the Later Middle Ages: Arderne, Chaucer, and Hoccleve', *JEMS (Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies)* 46, no. 1 (2016): 61–87.

9. These revisions may or may not have occurred at the same time as Bird and Rowley's commissioned additions in 1602 and the reviser(s) responsible for this voice-hearing strand may or may not be Bird and Rowley.
10. Susan Snyder, 'Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" as an Inverted Saint's Life', *Studies in Philology* 63, no. 4 (1966): 565–77.
11. Raphael Falco, 'Medieval and Reformation Roots', in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. by Arthur F. Kinney (Abingdon: Blackwell, 2002), 254.
12. *Everyman and Mankind*, ed. by John Coldeway (London: Methuen, 1993), ll. 194–96.
13. Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.
14. *Ibid.*
15. This conundrum is replicated on the textual level with scholarship seeking to demarcate the lines by Marlowe and those written by his collaborators; we are thus drawn into the web in which Faustus, too, is entangled as we wonder whose words these are, and what power they incubate.
16. Philippe De Mornay, *A Work Concerning the Trueness of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding (1587, STC 18149), D6r.
17. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie* (1589, STC 20519), Ff4r.
18. Katherine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 87.
19. Lars Engle and Eric Rasmussen, *Studying Shakespeare's Contemporaries* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 48.
20. *Ibid.*, 49.
21. William Tyndale's scriptural exegesis, *Expositions of 1 John* (1531), 97 (much reprinted throughout the sixteenth century).
22. Prospero is a magician who shares his name with Faustus ('Prospero' means 'faustus'—fortunate, lucky); like Marlowe's Faustus he renounces magic at the end of his play, but for more positive reasons.
23. See for example Stillman Drake, 'Renaissance Music and Experimental Science', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31, no. 4 (1970): 483–500.
24. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 12.
25. John Banister, *The Historie of Man* (1578, STC 1359), Fflv.
26. Aristotle, *De Anima*, Bks II and III, trans. by D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 32, 33.
27. Banister, *Historie of Man*, Fflv.
28. See Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrocosmographia* (1615, STC 6062), *passim*; Ambroise Paré, *Works* (1634, STC 19189), R5v; Alexander Read, *A Manual of Anatomy* (1638, STC 20,784), 415. See also Allison K. Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

29. Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583, STC 23376), C4r. The bombastic passages and ‘high, astounding terms’ of Marlowe’s plays constitute a seductive poetics tempting the player to act in the manner Nashe described onomatopoeically as ‘ruff raffé roaring, with thwicke, thwacke, thurlerie bouncing’, Thomas Nashe, *Works*, Vol. 3, ed. by R. B. McKerrow (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1911), 320.
30. Marlowe’s dramaturgy is famed for its mighty line: for monologues, not for the to-and-fro of dialogue. The exception is *Edward II* (1593) which, as Roma Gill notes (*Edward II*, ed. by Gill [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, reprint 1978]), seems consciously to be choreographing human voices: ‘realistic dialogue, snapping, peevish or threatening, takes the place of splendid rhetoric’ (15). Whether one views this as a technical development or a falling off is a question that divides critics, but it is worth pointing out the way that the early *Doctor Faustus* instinctively foreshadows this later accomplishment (*Edward II* is generally agreed to be Marlowe’s last play). It is also worth pointing out that *Edward II* is the only one of Marlowe’s plays that seems to have a straightforward textual transmission: *Dido* is complexly collaborative (Thomas Nashe is credited on the 1594 title page although many critics are unable to find stylistic evidence of his contribution); *Doctor Faustus* is collaborative and revised, both versions printed many years after Marlowe’s death; *1 Tamburlaine* has been edited by its publisher, Richard Jones, who removed comic material (a claim that is now considered credible rather than disingenuous; see, for example, Laurie Maguire, ‘Marlovian Texts and Authorship’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Patrick Cheney [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 41–54; Kirk Melnikoff, ‘Jones’s Pen and Marlowe’s Socks: Richard Jones, Print Culture, and the Beginnings of English Dramatic Literature’, *Studies in Philology* 102, no. 2 [2005]: 184–209, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4174816>); and *Jew of Malta* is complicated by its late publication (1633) and uncertainty over the extent of Thomas Heywood’s involvement (did he add more material than just new prologues?).
31. The differences between the two texts here may in part be due to the *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players*. Passed in 1606, two years after the publication of the A-text, the *Act* prohibited ‘jestingly or profanely’ invoking ‘the holy Name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, which are not to be spoken but with Fear and Reverence’ and demanded the expurgation of such profanities as ‘by God’, ‘s’blood’ and ‘in faith’.
32. For an excellent analysis of the staging of thunder and lightning in the Elizabethan theatre (and the observation that thunder is almost

- always accompanied by lightning) see Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).
33. There was a vogue in comedies between 1589–1592 for the devil to carry a character offstage to hell on the devil's back: see Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589) and its sequel *John of Bordeaux* (unpublished MS, ca. 1590, Alnwick Castle), Anon, *A Knack to Know a Knave* (Q 1594). These plays are closely connected to *Doctor Faustus* dramaturgically and in date of composition, but it is not clear which is/are precursor plays and which is/are imitations. However, *Doctor Faustus* is unlikely to risk a comic effect here and the combination of Henslowe's stage property 'Hell mought [mouth]' (*Henslowe's Diary*, 319) and the Rose Theatre's trap door would be theatrically horrifying at the end of this *de casibus* tragedy.
  34. The B-text reviser is not alone in this. For the ways in which sixteenth- and seventeenth-century critical responses try to fix Marlowe's 'debatable' characters, see Laurie Maguire and Aleksandra Thostrup, 'Marlowe and Character', in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. by Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 39–48.
  35. Sir Philip Sidney, *Apology for Poetry* (1595, STC 22534), K2r.
  36. In his *Epistolae Morales* Seneca implores the reader and the poet to emulate the bee and 'separare' (sift) knowledge and gather, keep and use the best: what became Humanism's principle of transformative, or active, acts of imitation.
  37. Erasmus, *Il Ciceroniano*, ed. by Angiolo Gambarà (Brescia, 1965), 290, quoted in G. W. Pigman III, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (1980): 1–32 (8–9).
  38. Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*, Revels edn, ed. by Peter Happé (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
  39. George Gascoigne, *Pleasantest Works* (1587), STC 11639, sig. 2r.
  40. *Ibid.*, sig. 2r.
  41. Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless* (1592), STC 18372, C2v.
  42. *Ibid.*, C3r.
  43. Michael Drayton, *Polyolbion* (1622), STC 7228, sig. A2r.
  44. John Taylor, *Works* (1630), sig. Bbb5r.
  45. George Chapman, *Andromeda Liberata* (1614), sig. \*\*.
  46. For a detailed survey of marginal notes in early modern works, see William W. E. Slights, *Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

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# ‘Under the Operation of a Higher and Exalted Mind’: Medicine, Mysticism and Social Reform in Restoration England

*Peter Elmer*

## INTRODUCTION

Following the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, various individuals and groups committed to radical and millenarian visions of social, intellectual, religious and political regeneration continued to meet in England to promote change. This essay focuses on one such group that first coalesced around the mystic John Pordage, and then, following his death in 1681, was reconfigured as the Philadelphian Society under the leadership of the charismatic mystic Jane Leade (1624–1704). The group has previously attracted scholars intrigued by the radical implications of the circle’s thinking with regard to issues of religion and gender.<sup>1</sup> Little, however, has been said of the pronounced medical interests of the group and how such ideas may have helped to shape their wider vision of reform in Restoration

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society. Thus, this essay explores the significance of the group's attachment to 'psychic experimentation' and its base in contemporary strains of medical thinking, focussing in particular upon the career of one of their number, William Boreman (d. 1707). On many levels, Boreman's religious and scientific ideas—radical Whig, tolerationist and medical reformer—mark him out as a 'progressive' or 'modern'; however, alongside such ideas, he was also a committed witch hunter who converted his home in Kent into a refuge for the bewitched and a laboratory for psychic battles with the Devil. Much of the evidence for Boreman's career is based on extensive new research that helps to shed light on how it was possible for contemporaries to adhere to a range of positions which, from a modern vantage point, appear inherently contradictory. This is most evident in the way in which Boreman and like-minded colleagues were able to promote new ideas in medical thinking while at the same time anchoring such beliefs in a worldview in which the reality of inner voices and spiritual inspiration held a central place. The Philadelphians and like-minded groups are shown to have contributed to the process of intellectual regeneration or 'enlightenment' in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, which, as historians are increasingly aware, did not follow a single path.

### MEDICAL BACKGROUND

Traditionally, the period from about 1660 onwards is usually depicted as witnessing an important shift away from religious understandings of sickness, medicine and the body towards a more secular and materialistic conception of bodily function. The advances of the Scientific Revolution, which incorporated important developments in the field of medicine and physiology, alongside the emergence of early Enlightenment rationalism, are still widely seen as the dominant ideological forces in England in the second half of the seventeenth century. The place of 'spirit', broadly defined, in this world was becoming severely circumscribed. In medical terms, these developments are conventionally believed to have led to a number of important consequences. Here, I wish to focus on two aspects of this process of 'medicalisation', as some have termed it, and to offer a corrective to some aspects of the traditional historiography as it relates to the role of 'spirit' in medical thinking and practice. In the first place, and perhaps most important given the theme of 'hearing voices', this essay explores changing attitudes in medical circles to those who claimed to

hear voices or communicate with spirits in the period from about 1650–1720. Whereas in earlier times, such claims did not arouse undue alarm, after 1650, and the rise of radical dissent, epitomised by the success of the early Quakers, such groups were increasingly subjected to a process that might accurately be termed the pathologising of dissent. In short, after 1660 and the Restoration of the established Church, all nonconformists were now liable to be labelled as ‘fanatics’ and ‘enthusiasts’ and consequently diagnosed as suffering from a form of mental illness. Those, like the Quakers, who claimed to hear voices or receive divine inspiration were thus increasingly marginalised and derided, their symptoms reduced to those of a treatable medical condition.<sup>2</sup>

And second, while it was not unusual before and during the civil wars for social commentators to employ the language of madness in castigating religious radicals, this process gathered pace after 1660, in part because of new strains of medical thinking. Particularly significant here was the work of the Anglican physician and neurologist Thomas Willis (1621–1675), whose pioneering research into the brain was widely co-opted by fellow Anglicans after the Restoration in order to explain, in medical terms, the irrationality of spirit-based or intuitive religion. Groups such as the Quakers, and later the French Prophets, were thus robbed of legitimacy and increasingly marginalised in a religious culture that was moving inexorably towards rational deism.<sup>3</sup>

## NEW APPROACHES

While it is undeniably the case that such a process is identifiable in Restoration England, it is also apparent that this represents a gross over-simplification of a complex issue. English medicine after 1660, like society in general, was subject to a range of conflicting tensions and conflicts—political, religious, cultural and scientific—the outcomes of which were never clear-cut or easily discerned. Body and spirit remained contentious and contested, as demonstrated, for example, by the continuing and often heated debate over the reality of witches and witchcraft. In the field of medicine, the situation after 1660 was particularly messy and open to a whole range of new ideas and beliefs. The mechanistic assumptions of the work of physicians like Willis did not rule unchallenged in this period. Critically, the 1660s, building on developments in the previous two decades, witnessed a major revival of interest in

iatrochemistry, or medical chemistry, focused largely on the inspirational figure of the Flemish chemist Jan Baptist van Helmont (1580–1644).

I use the word ‘inspirational’ here quite deliberately, as inspiration—that is, the idea that medical knowledge was infused by God, and not derived from books or education—lay at the heart of Helmontian medical thinking. Helmont’s ideas were to prove particularly attractive to English physicians and natural philosophers. As I have argued elsewhere, they proved especially congenial to many of the radical religious groups like the Quakers and Baptists that proliferated in post-civil-war England.<sup>4</sup> This is hardly surprising given the theological prominence ascribed by such sects to the role of immediate divine inspiration in religious faith and organisation. The process of *ecstasis* thus facilitated intellectual as well as spiritual enlightenment. Religious experience, according to van Helmont (a nominal Catholic), consisted of an inward process of self-illumination which enabled an initiate to gain not only access to a perfect understanding of the Creator, but also to a complete comprehension of the objects of the creation. Knowledge of the world thus flowed, in the words of the English Helmontian Noah Biggs, ‘from an inward teaching of the minds heightening and enlightening by an invisible and yet sensible glorious emanation of light, truth, God, Intellect, and Intelligible objects’.<sup>5</sup> For van Helmont and many of his followers, ‘soul’ and ‘intellect’ were interchangeable principles which, in the regenerate individual, enabled the recipient of the divine spirit to understand natural as well as divine mysteries by recourse to an inner ‘optic’ sense or voice. Ecstatic communion or a trance-like state, which many radical sects of the period promoted, thus provided the keys to natural as well as spiritual wisdom.

That adherents of the Quakers and assorted other religious radicals and mystical thinkers should be attracted to Helmontianism is hardly surprising. More unexpected, perhaps, is the discovery of the extent to which Helmontian medical ideas permeated more orthodox religious circles in the same period. This is most evident in the support provided to a group of Helmontian physicians in 1665 who, in seeking to overthrow the authority of the Galenic College of Physicians in London, were able to call on the support of leading figures within the Restoration Church, including archbishop Gilbert Sheldon and Humphrey Henchman, bishop of London. The case of the ‘Society of Chymical Physicians’, both in terms of its medical membership and lay support, provides important evidence to undermine any simple correlation between specific religious

affiliations and scientific and medical innovation. The picture is far too murky to make such clear-cut distinctions. The Restoration, medically speaking, was an open book in which medical truths were asserted and contested but never firmly established, and allegiances formed across the religious and political divide.<sup>6</sup>

### THE MEDICAL ROOTS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION: JOHN PORDAGE, JANE LEADE, AND THE EARLY PHILADELPHIANS

One of the best examples of the complex nature of the ideological divisions generated by the English civil wars can be found in the Philadelphian movement that emerged around the visionary prophetess Jane Leade in the second half of the seventeenth century. Leade was a mystical thinker of some originality who recorded her many visions from 1670 until her death in 1704. Her initiation into such ideas came through her acquaintance with one of the most celebrated radical thinkers of the English civil war, John Pordage (1607–1681). Pordage was a clergyman and physician who had long been attracted to a range of unorthodox religious beliefs. This also led him to keep company with various idiosyncratic and unstable figures who shared his commitment to a radical new vision of English religion and society in the wake of the civil wars. He soon became a marked man. Eventually, following two failed attempts to curb Pordage's activities, in 1654 the religious authorities initiated legal proceedings against him. Later that year, he was dismissed from his post as rector of the parish of Bradfield in Berkshire following an inquest into various activities in which he and a wide circle of adepts and followers had allegedly indulged at Bradfield rectory, including accusations of communing with spirits and demons.<sup>7</sup>

Intriguingly, Pordage's recent biographer Manfred Brod has described Pordage's community at Bradfield as 'a research institute for the supernatural' akin to a 'psychic laboratory', where the boundaries between the world of humans and spirits, or this world and the next, were subjected to intensive investigation.<sup>8</sup> Throughout, however, it is unclear whether the visions that Pordage claimed to have witnessed and experienced at Bradfield were 'real', involving the physical presence of demons and angels, or spiritual in nature, representing internalised manifestations of a psychic battle between good and evil. As Joad Raymond has acutely remarked, the two are clearly and deliberately confused in Pordage's mind: 'Though the spirits are seen with the inward eye, they are also seen, projected on to

surfaces, with the outward eye'.<sup>9</sup> However, the revelatory nature of these visions and voices seen and heard by Pordage and his disciples at Bradfield is undeniable. While they were not scientific in the modern sense of the word, they were clearly understood by Pordage to provide valuable insights into the existence of a spiritual realm and man's relationship to this otherwise invisible world. And though Pordage does not appear to have claimed that such encounters led him to new ways of thinking about the natural world, others who followed in his footsteps were less reticent about making such claims.

Pordage's peculiar brand of mystical and millenarian thinking clearly owed much to earlier writers, most notably the Silesian mystic Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), most of whose works were published in England between 1645 and 1662.<sup>10</sup> Boehme is now recognised as a major influence on radical thinking in mid-seventeenth-century England. From the perspective of this essay, Boehme's attachment to alchemical language and symbolism made him particularly attractive to a range of radical and reform-minded thinkers, many of whom adopted Boehme's ideas in order to promote intellectual and scientific change. Among the many goals of this movement was the cause of medical reform and the overthrow of the ancient system of medicine based on the humoral principles of the second-century physician Galen of Pergamon. In its place, advocates of the therapeutic methods of Paracelsus and van Helmont argued for a new medical order based on the virtues of laboratory-manufactured medicines. Such ideas were promoted by many within the circle of the Prussian émigré, Samuel Hartlib (d. 1662), as were the writings of Boehme, which together seemed to proffer new hope for spiritual and physical change in an age of millennial expectation.<sup>11</sup>

The Behmenist approach to knowledge shared much in common with van Helmont and the 'chymists'. Boehme, for example, derided book learning in favour of experientially acquired wisdom. Through opening one's mind and heart to the divine wisdom, or *Sophia*, through a process of mystical communion with God, the recipient of God's spirit was also guaranteed access to greater understanding of the natural world. In the words of Boehme's translator John Ellistone, spiritual *ecstasis* 'must needs advance all Arts and Sciences and conduces to the attainment of the Universall Tincture, and signature, whereby the different secret qualities, and vertues, that are hid in all visible and corporeall things, as Metals, Minerals, Plants, and Hearbes [...] may be drawne forth and applied to their right natural use for the curing, and healing of corrupt and decayed

nature'.<sup>12</sup> Such thinking was widespread in interregnum England, where the call for medical reform on chemical lines was inextricably linked to radical, theosophical speculation as to the origins of medical and spiritual wisdom. It was God alone, not book learning, that made a true doctor. The Paracelsian physician John French thus instructed his readers that he published not to 'multiply books' but rather to advance human knowledge of the creation. Not averse to book learning per se, he nonetheless remained convinced that 'there are too many books already; and the multitude of them is the greatest cause of our ignorance'.<sup>13</sup> Better instead to open one's mind and heart to an infusion of divine wisdom. Spiritual renewal as imagined by Boehme provided an escape from human folly and ignorance and proffered the hope of intellectual regeneration. Its impact on individuals, not surprisingly, was often all-consuming. A particularly vivid example of the process can be seen in the journal of the young George Fox, founder of the Quakers, who in the late 1640s, and almost certainly under the influence of reading Boehme, proclaimed the virtues of spiritual rebirth. Now, he wrote, 'the Creation gave another smell unto me than before [...]. The Creation was opened to me and it was showed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue'. Such was the overwhelming power of these insights that Fox 'was at a stand in my mind whether I should practice physic for the good of mankind, seeing the natures and virtues of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord'.<sup>14</sup>

It is not known when John Pordage first encountered Behmenism. In 1634, Hartlib reported that he was broaching 'new-fangled opinions' in which he rejected traditional religious ordinances in favour of waiting for an 'over-powring light'.<sup>15</sup> The date may be significant as Pordage himself later claimed in 1640 that he had been practising medicine illicitly in London for six years. Thereafter, he was frequently in trouble with the College of Physicians. In 1637, one disgruntled patient claimed that he was prescribing harmful powders and a year later he was said to have assisted the celebrated empiric William Trigge (d. 1665) in performing an autopsy. Despite securing a Leiden medical degree in 1639 (incorporated at his *alma mater* Cambridge the following year), he continued to attract the disapproval of the College.<sup>16</sup> Respite only came with the outbreak of civil war in 1642 in which he served as physician to Colonel Venn's regiment at Windsor Castle. Here, according to his own account, he daily risked his life 'visiting the common souldiers that had the plague-sores on them'.<sup>17</sup> While there is no direct evidence to suggest that Pordage was

practising chemical medicine, such fearlessness was often displayed by the iatrochemists as a token of their faith in the worth of such cures. In 1644, he removed to Reading, where he officiated as minister in the parish of St Lawrence, and two years later became rector of nearby Bradfield, where he remained until his ejection in 1654. Once again, he took up the practice of medicine, firstly at Bradfield and then in London, where he continued to practice until his death in 1681.

Medicine thus permeated every aspect of Pordage's life, as well as extending to close family and friends. One son, John, became a physician and was active in London during the plague of 1665, in which year he was appointed to administer physic to the royal household as well as Colonel Russell's regiment of foot guards.<sup>18</sup> In later years, he sold Pordage's spirit of scurvy grass from his house in Holborn as well as other outlets in London.<sup>19</sup> Pordage's eldest son Samuel, who shared his father's attachment to mystical Behmenism (he was the author of the epic poem, *Mundorum Explicatio*, 1661, which some have described as 'a sort of familist or Behmenist *Pilgrim's Progress*'), was responsible for translating into English many of the works of the pioneering neurologist Thomas Willis (and in the process, became the first Englishman to coin the term 'psychology').<sup>20</sup> Medical men were also to feature prominently among the networks of friends and colleagues attached to Pordage and later Jane Leade. Of particular interest is the figure of John or Jan Coughen, born in Holland of English parents. According to Richard Roach (1662–1730), rector of Hackney in Middlesex, who helped to found the Philadelphian Society in 1697, Coughen, a Quaker apostate, played an equally important role in the early years of the Society. On leaving the Quakers, Coughen opted to pursue a medical career. In 1664–1665, he returned to Holland, where, according to his former Quaker colleagues, he now enrolled in 'the filthy fountains of the universitie to drink yet deeper of the foul streams thereof, that thereby hee may become a doctor'.<sup>21</sup> Soon after, he was back in England, where he was licensed to practise medicine as an extra-licentiate of the London College of Physicians in 1672. At the same time, he began to argue forcefully for 'a new Model of Doctrine and Discipline' in religious matters, one in which religious differences were minimised in lieu of a new faith based on strict moral and eirenic principles. In short, his ideas coalesced with those of the early Philadelphians with whom he would appear to have collaborated in the 1680s and 1690s.<sup>22</sup>



Other colleagues and associates of Pordage and Leade who either practised medicine or demonstrated a special interest in the subject included Oliver Hill,<sup>23</sup> Edmund Brice,<sup>24</sup> and Dr James Keith.<sup>25</sup> Leade's son-in-law Francis Lee (1662–1719), moreover, was a physician. After studying briefly at Leiden and Padua in 1692, he would appear to have graduated as MD overseas. Following two years of practice in Venice, he returned to England where he married Leade's widowed daughter Barbara Walton and helped to found the new Philadelphian Society. All this time, he practised medicine, finally securing the licence of the College of Physicians in 1708.<sup>26</sup> Here, however, I focus on the medical careers of two lesser known figures in the Pordage-Leade circle, whose commitment to Behmenist mysticism and moral reform provides further evidence for the significance of medicine in helping to shape the Philadelphian movement.

### EDWARD HOOKER AND WILLIAM BOREMAN

Following John Pordage's death in 1681, his papers fell into the hands of a former friend and associate Edward Hooker, who set about editing them for the press. Vital financial assistance came from William Boreman, a fellow admirer, and in 1683 the bulk of Pordage's works were published under the title *Theologia Mystica, or the Mystic Divinitie of the Aeternal Invisibles*.<sup>27</sup> Both men were practising physicians. Hooker (d. 1707), who studied at Cambridge in the 1640s, would appear thereafter to have combined school teaching with medical practice. In his will, made in 1704, he described himself as 'licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians', though no evidence survives to confirm the award of such status.<sup>28</sup> If he was attached informally to the College, it may have been through his friendship with a leading fellow, Dr Charles Goddall (d. 1712), physician to the Charterhouse, who was bequeathed the works of the influential German iatrochemist Daniel Sennert (1572–1637) as well as Hooker's own manuscript collection of medical thoughts entitled *Adversaria Medica Alphabetica*. The bulk of Hooker's medical library, however, was reserved for his special friend, the non-juring clergyman-turned-physician, Thomas Wagstaffe (1645–1712). There is also a hint of the kind of medicine practised by Hooker in the donation of a silver box containing 'essences comfortable for the braine of students', complete with silver syringe and chain, which he gave to the chaplain of the school.<sup>29</sup>

Hooker's probable attraction to the new chemical philosophy was undoubtedly shared by his collaborator on the Pordage project, William

Boreman (d. 1707).<sup>30</sup> In 1665, Boreman was a signatory to the petition organised by the group calling themselves the ‘Society of Chymical Physicians’ which set out, with the approval of various high-profile figures at the court of Charles II, to overthrow the monopolistic powers exerted by the Galenic College of Physicians over medicine in the capital. At the same time, he was also active as a provider of testimonials for other chemical physicians seeking ecclesiastical licences to practise medicine throughout England. Intriguingly, on two occasions he signed alongside fellow iatrochemist Edward Bolnest (1627–1703), a passionate advocate of chemical medicines who published numerous Helmontian texts in the 1660s and 1670s.<sup>31</sup> While little is known of Bolnest’s religious affiliations, he may well have shared Boreman’s mystical proclivities. As a young man, Bolnest was apprenticed to Hamond Ward, merchant taylor of London and brother of the Philadelphian Jane Leade, in 1645.<sup>32</sup>

Taken together, Pordage’s acolytes Hooker and Boreman present a tantalising glimpse into the world of late seventeenth-century medico-mystical thinking in England, as well as in Boreman’s case providing a vital corrective to the idea that support for Pordage and Leade necessarily implied withdrawal from the world and disengagement from social, religious and political issues. Boreman, in particular, is interesting in this respect as he would appear to have engaged directly in political agitation on behalf of the Whigs, while at the same time waging a one-man war against immorality in his role as a self-confessed expert in the detection of witches and witchcraft. Indeed, in many respects, he might justly be labelled the ‘last witchfinder’ in English history.

Traces of his witch hunting can be found in a variety of sources. In 1679, a pamphlet described how he was responsible for exorcising a young maid at Orpington in Kent. Two years later, he appeared as the main witness in a witchcraft trial at the Kent assizes (alongside his Behmenist colleague Edward Hooker and the Helmontian physician and former Quaker Albertus Otto Faber). He again appeared as an expert witness in a later witch trial in Kent in 1690, though by now his reputation had grown so much that his services were in demand throughout the home counties and London. The nonconformist physician Henry Sampson claimed that he grew rich through his practice, while he later achieved posthumous fame in the pages of Daniel Defoe’s *A System of Magick*, published in 1727, wherein Defoe provides an invaluable insight into the moral purpose, and mystical origins, of Boreman’s mission to rid the earth of the evil influence of witches and demons. From a modern

perspective, it is difficult to equate such an obsession with the wider goal of social and moral regeneration, but as we shall see, belief in witchcraft and its legal prohibition was not incommensurate with such aims.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the most revealing evidence for Boreman's practice and belief can be found in a series of lengthy depositions made before the Court of Arches in 1684. There, Boreman was accused of committing adultery with one of his patients, whom he was treating as the victim of diabolical possession at his house in Wilmington in Kent. Various witnesses testified to the fact that Boreman used no 'outward meanes' to cure his patients, instead resorting to fasting and prayer and insisting that 'her Cure must bee wrought by laying the hand of a Believer upon the parte aggrieved'. He also insisted, according to some witnesses, on breathing on the food and medicines that his patients ingested. The recourse to fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands was redolent of the approach to healing adopted by many early Baptists, though in Boreman's case, he almost certainly drew upon chemical medicines too.<sup>34</sup> There is little doubt that Boreman saw himself as the custodian of special powers, divinely granted, which he was morally obliged to use in an ongoing conflict between the forces of good and evil. The source of those powers, like those claimed by Pordage, was, however, open to dispute. If Defoe is to be believed (and it seems highly likely that he did personally seek out Boreman to interrogate him on such matters), Boreman was convinced that he was a true visionary possessed of the ability to see and comprehend the natural world in a manner denied to other mere mortals. When asked by the sceptical Defoe (or his interlocutor) how he gained such insights through 'conversing with spirits', Boreman replied that the two men were basically operating on different levels. In typical mystical language, Boreman explained that he was subject to 'the Operation of a higher and exalted Mind, the Eyes of the Soul, which is a Spirit [and] can operate upon immaterial Objects, and see what to common Sight is call'd invisible'.<sup>35</sup>

The accusations that were brought against Boreman in the Court of Arches were almost certainly politically motivated, reflecting his deep commitment to the cause of radical political change. He was, in fact, an active Whig who was facing prosecution at this time for uttering a series of treasonable statements aimed at James, duke of York, the Catholic heir to the throne. Significantly, these were couched in the language of radical mysticism in which James was denounced as 'a great wizard [who] rides about att night in fiery chariots to torment soules, and [...] is preparing for a field of blood [with] his witchcraft [that] will lay the

nation in blood and Popish slavery'. Boreman ended this diatribe with a warning to the duke of Monmouth to prepare an interest in each county in order to counter the evil designs of the duke of York, a warning that may have been acted upon by those within the duke's entourage. In November 1686, a few months after the duke's death at Sedgmoor and the failure of his attempt to seize the crown, government spies in Amsterdam reported that the duke's sisters were claiming to possess a magical sword which contained a 'Potent Talismanick Spell'. The report concludes by suggesting that they had purchased the weapon from one Dr Boreman in London to whom they had been attracted in the first instance through a shared interest in the 'magical Sciences' and the 'Philosophicall Stone'.<sup>36</sup>

It is evident from these and other sources that Boreman saw himself as a man of action, impelled to engage with the religious and political controversies of his day. He was not, as Pordage and his acolytes are so often depicted as being, an apolitical quietist who withdrew from the world to practise a private faith in the altered circumstances of the Restoration. This much was also true of the Philadelphian movement in general, which first began to meet properly in London in the 1690s (by which time, Boreman had probably drifted away from the group). Its aims were ecumenical and non-sectarian, its members keen to avoid confrontation and controversy. Consequently, Leade and her followers attempted to avoid the sectarian debates of the period by remaining in communion with the Church of England. They steadfastly refused to condemn the ritualistic practices of the Church or debate the rights and wrongs of different types of church government. Instead, the Philadelphians envisaged their movement as 'a Religious Society for the Reformation of Manners [and] Advancement of an Heroical Christian Piety', wishing 'universal love towards all', and thus providing support for similar, mainstream schemes of social and moral regeneration which constituted such a feature of religious life at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup>

The group which first coalesced around John Pordage, and then morphed into the Philadelphians, was open to men and women of a wide range of religious and political backgrounds. Boreman himself, as we have seen, was deeply engaged on the side of the Whigs in the attempt to exclude Charles II's brother, James, from the throne in the early 1680s. However, the majority of Philadelphians and their associates, including Boreman's former colleague and Pordage's literary executor, Edward

Hooker, would appear to have been drawn towards upholding the political status quo while at the same time fraternising with a wide range of religious groups and radical sects. This much is evident from Hooker's lengthy will, made in 1704, in which he provided financial support to a meeting of Seventh Day Baptists in London at the same time as leaving a sizable bequest to his best friend Dr Thomas Wagstaffe, a High Church Anglican widely suspected of harbouring Catholic sympathies. In the same document, Hooker asserted that the Church of England was 'the best constituted church in the world'.<sup>38</sup>

### RELIGION, MEDICINE AND NATURAL PHILOSOPHY IN AN AGE OF SPIRITUAL CRISIS

In many respects, it is possible to characterise the period after the English civil wars as ushering in an age of spiritual crisis, in which the boundaries between the material and spiritual world were openly contested and re-imagined. This crisis affected all areas of life but was particularly manifest in two separate yet related fields. In the first instance, it fundamentally shaped the heated debate surrounding the nature of the post-Restoration Church, including its beliefs and practices as well as broader issues relating to the nature of religious faith. After 1660, the restored Anglican Church briefly attempted to reimpose, through a combination of coercion and persuasion, order and unity in church matters, an outcome that was ultimately thwarted by the Glorious Revolution of 1688/1689 and the legal recognition of a limited toleration of religious dissent. At the same time, religious debate rapidly acquired a political dimension as the emergence of new political parties, the Whigs and Tories, reinforced religious divisions in the country. Not surprisingly, the decline of the authority of the Anglican Church was perceived by many as providing the perfect breeding ground for an epidemic of unbelief and immorality as radical deists and others challenged a range of orthodox religious beliefs, including belief in an active providential God, his adversary the Devil and the existence of demons, witches and other spirits.

The impact of this 'crisis of spirit' was not, however, restricted to the narrow confines of matters ecclesiastical. It also engendered a fierce debate among natural philosophers, who were increasingly forced to confront issues surrounding the precise role, if any, of spirit in the material world. Christian natural philosophers of this age were acutely aware of the

materialistic dangers posed by the reception of the new mechanical philosophy of Descartes and his followers and frequently became entangled in controversies, both private and public, concerned with such issues.<sup>39</sup> As a result, scientific investigation of the reality of spirit, broadly defined, including the existence of witches, demons, ghosts and other supernatural beings, is now seen by some to constitute a form of ‘cutting-edge’ science or ‘boundary work’ that promised to expand early modern understanding of God and His creation.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, our own understanding of the Scientific Revolution has rapidly evolved in recent decades. This is most notable, perhaps, in the way in which historians of science have increasingly sought to appreciate the importance of the so-called occult sciences (alchemy, astrology and natural magic) in the development of new ways of thinking about nature. One aspect of this process, highlighted here, concerns the way in which those who claimed to be inspired by hearing voices, experiencing visions and communing with spirits also played their part in advancing understanding of the natural world. Adherence to mystical ideas about God, man and nature is thus no longer seen as inimical to developments in science in this period, with medicine and the rise of iatrochemistry providing a crucial case in point.

There was more than one medical tradition vying for supremacy in Restoration England. Not all physicians, by any means, subscribed to the atheistic and materialistic assumptions of men like Hobbes and Spinoza. Indeed, the iatrochemical school of Paracelsus and van Helmont continued to attract a wide range of admirers in medical and other circles into the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and their ideas are clearly manifest in the writings of mystical thinkers like John Pordage (as, for example, in his use of medical jargon such as the *tria prima* of salt, sulphur and mercury, and ‘the inmost framing spirit’ of the *archeus*). After Pordage’s death, interest in medical chemistry continued to help shape the thinking of many of his followers, including Boreman and Hooker, as well as playing a formative role in the evolution of new mystical groups such as the French Prophets who emerged in the wake of the demise of the Philadelphians. The road to scientific enlightenment and medical progress was neither straight nor simple. Mysticism and attachment to the ideas of thinkers like Boehme and van Helmont continued to exert a strong pull for those engaged in scientific enquiry well into the eighteenth century. The French Prophets, for example, included among their number two fellows of the Royal Society (Sir Richard Bulkeley and Nicholas Fatio, a close friend of Isaac Newton), as well as experimental chemists such

as Thomas Emes, Francis Moulton and Timothy Byfield, the author of numerous Helmontian tracts.<sup>41</sup>

Hearing inner voices, rather than reading books or conducting Baconian experiments, was not necessarily an impediment to what we might think of today as progressive ways of thinking about the natural world. Nor was the kind of experimental activity associated with the early Royal Society incommensurate with the experiential approach adopted by Pordage in his 'psychic laboratory' at Bradfield, or Boreman in his study at Wilmington. Robert Boyle, often heralded in his own day and feted since as the poster boy for the 'new science', was himself tempted to commune with angels. A firm believer in the reality of a supernatural realm, he lamented human ignorance of the spirit world and how it impinged on everyday activity, concluding that 'we know very little of the nature, communities, laws, Politicks and government of spirits'.<sup>42</sup> Despite his lifelong passion for alchemy, Boyle ultimately steered clear of seeking direct communication with the spirit world. Others in the burgeoning scientific community, however, were less cautious or fearful. A case in point was the late seventeenth-century physician, Gustavus Parker (d. 1722), who, like Boreman, considered himself something of an expert in the diagnosis and cure of the bewitched. Parker, who spent much of his time teaching others the art of magic, claimed to have experienced visions and angelical revelations. Listening to the inner voices of disembodied spirits did not preclude him, however, from helping to expand the borders of scientific knowledge. Parker was in fact in the forefront of meteorological research. Utilising data obtained from a portable barometer of his own invention, he was able to publish new insights into weather that owed much to the empirical methodology of leading natural philosophers such as Boyle and Robert Hooke. Parker, it would appear, was heir to a long tradition of mystical strains of thought which, far from inhibiting intellectual innovation and encouraging obscurantism, actively promoted the search for new truths about the natural world.<sup>43</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

It remains difficult, if not impossible, to fully understand how men like Pordage and Boreman managed to intuit wisdom, both divine and natural, through the revelatory processes of *ecstasis* associated with mystical thinking. At Bradfield, Pordage, like the Elizabethan magus John Dee (1527–1609) before him, demonstrated an eclectic approach to the

subject.<sup>44</sup> There he describes encountering a range of practices, including hearing voices, seeing visions and discussions with angels, which constituted a form of early modern sensory overload. According to his orthodox opponents, who were many, not only had he ‘seen the world of Divells, evill spirits innumerable, their order and government’, but ‘he hath heard, felt, tasted, and smelt hell [...] by a magicall tincturation, as he phrases it’.<sup>45</sup> In order to receive such truths, the true believer, like the alchemical adept, was expected to undertake severe preparatory steps such as prolonged fasting, a feat common too among many religious radicals and early modern sectarians. In a heightened state of physical and spiritual awareness, men such as Pordage and Boreman rejected conventional approaches to divine and natural wisdom, preferring instead to trust to their own instincts. Experiential learning, closely akin to Baconian experimentation in fields such as chemistry, thus found a congenial home among many early modern men and women attracted to mystical strains of religious thinking.

In seeking to understand better the wider religious and political context in which ideas about spirits, visions and related phenomena flourished in early modern Europe, we need to tread cautiously, and avoid the tendency to categorise early modern ‘mystics’ according to overly simplistic labels. Those who claimed to hear voices or find inspiration in visions were not restricted to a lunatic fringe or monopolised by radical extremists. Such behaviour was never restricted to marginal groups on the fringes of religious orthodoxy, but frequently pervaded the thinking, albeit in private, of those who chose to conform. This would appear to have been particularly true of those individuals who through their work as physicians to the body, and as devotees of the iatrochemical beliefs of Paracelsus and Van Helmont, encountered new ways of acquiring knowledge that minimised the role of traditional, book-based university education and promoted in its stead experiential modes of learning. Listening to the voice within oneself, rather than trusting to the words of others, thus laid the basis for a new approach to medicine which foregrounded the individual skill of the doctor as a creator of specific remedies. There is little doubt that the ‘democratic’ and anti-intellectual flavour of such thinking appealed in particular to the radical sectarian groups that flourished after the civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century. But as the case of the Philadelphians suggests, the correlation between medical reform and denominational purity was never straightforward. To understand better how mystical strains of thinking both interacted with



and shaped religious, medical and scientific thinking in the early modern world, we need to pay closer attention to those who claimed to hear voices and experience visions at this time. Rather than dismiss such people as cranks, it is time to reintegrate them and their ideas into mainstream thinking if we are to fully appreciate their contribution to the creation of a new, enlightened society in eighteenth-century Europe.<sup>46</sup>

## NOTES

1. For religion, see for example Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1948). For gender, see Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Susan Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 177–207; Elizabeth Bouldin, *Women Prophets and Radical Protestantism in the British Atlantic World, 1640–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 89–118.
2. Michael Heyd, “Be Sober and Reasonable”; *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1996), 44–108, 196–210; Lionel Laborie, *Enlightening Enthusiasm: Prophecy and Religious Experience in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), ch. 6.
3. For the pathologisation or medicalisation of religious ‘enthusiasm’ in late seventeenth-century England, see Peter Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 251–63.
4. Peter Elmer, ‘Medicine, Religion and the Puritan Revolution’, in *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Roger French and Andrew Wear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10–45.
5. Noah Biggs, *Mataeotechnia Medicinæ Praxew: The Vanity of the Craft of Physick* (London: Giles Calvert, 1651), 213–14.
6. I discuss more fully the religious and political background to the formation of the Society of Chymical Physicians in 1665 in my *Medicine and the Politics of Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). For an overview of the various explanations for the emergence of the group, see Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 357 and *passim*.
7. For a detailed life of Pordage, see *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), Pordage, John, article by Ariel Hessayon.

8. Manfred Brod, "Dissent and Dissenters in Early Modern Berkshire" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2013), 186.
9. Joad Raymond, 'Radicalism and Mysticism in the Late Seventeenth Century: John Pordage's Angels', in *Conversations with Angels: Essays Towards a History of Spiritual Communication*, ed. by Joad Raymond (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 317–339.
10. For the most recent and detailed account of the reception of Boehme's works in England, see Ariel Hessayon, 'Jacob Boehme's Writings During the English Revolution and Afterwards: Their Publication, Dissemination, and Influence', in *An Introduction to Jacob Boehme: Four Centuries of Thought and Reception*, ed. by Ariel Hessayon and Susan Apetrei (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 77–97.
11. For the movement for medical reform in interregnum England, see especially Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform, 1626–1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975).
12. Jacob Boehme, *The Epistle of Jacob Behmen aliter Teutonicus Philosophus ... Translated out of the German Tongue* [by J. E., i.e., John Ellistone] (London: Matthew Simmons, 1649), a2v–a3r.
13. John French, *A New Light of Alchymie* (London: Richard Cotes, 1650), A4r–v.
14. *Journal of George Fox*, 2 Vols (London: Friends Tract Association, 1891), vol. 2, 28–29. For a fuller account of the Behmenist and sectarian roots of the medical reform movement in commonwealth England, see my 'Medicine, Religion and the Puritan Revolution', *passim*.
15. Sheffield University Library, Hartlib Papers, 29/2/40B.
16. Royal College of Physicians Library, London, Annals, vol. 3, 170b, 188b, 189b, 209a, 209b, 209b–210a; Robert William Innes Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1932), 185; John Venn and John Archibald Venn, eds., *Alumni Cantabrigienses ... Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922–1927), vol. 3, 381.
17. National Archives, Kew, SP 18/97/30 II [CSPD, 1655, 160].
18. Lambeth Palace Library, VX 1A/10/243. Pordage Jnr's service in the plague was noted in the testimonials for a licence to practice medicine issued to him by the archbishop of Canterbury in 1687. There, his chief sponsor was named as Edward Warner, a chemical physician and one of the signatories in favour of the creation of the Society of Chemical Physicians in 1665. It is highly probable therefore that Warner (then physician to Colonel Russell's regiment of guards) and Pordage shared a common interest in 'chymistry'.
19. *Loyal Protestant and True Domestick Intelligence*, no. 245 [15 March 1682/1683].

20. Brod, 'Dissent and Dissenters in Early Modern Berkshire', 204–5; *ODNB*, Pordage, Samuel, article by Nigel Smith.
21. William I. Hull, *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Swarthmore, PA: Swarthmore College, 1941), 24–25. The catalyst for such a change of career would appear to have been his meeting with the ejected English minister Edward Richardson, who was then minister at Haarlem. Richardson too combined medical practice with his pastoral duties, proceeding to MD at Leiden in 1664. According to Francis Mercury van Helmont, the son of the great physician Jan Baptist, Richardson developed a specialism for curing the mad which 'he claimed to have learnt out of my Father's Writings', Francis Mercury van Helmont, *The Spirit of Diseases* (London: Sarah Howkins, 1694), 43.
22. William Munk, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London, 1518–1700*, 3 Vols, 2nd edn (London: Royal College of Physicians, 1878), vol. 1, 366; Ariel Hessayon, 'Lead's Life and Times (Part Two): The Woman in the Wilderness', in *Jane Lead and Her Transnational Legacy*, ed. by Ariel Hessayon (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 51; Ariel Hessayon, 'Lead's Life and Times (Part Three): The Philadelphian Society', in *ibid.*, 77.
23. Hill, a theologian by background and a close friend of John Pordage, was an original and somewhat eccentric thinker with a deep interest in medicine and chemistry. A fellow of the Royal Society (1677, sponsored by Robert Boyle), in 1700 he posed as 'a friend of Truth and Physick' in denying the validity of the circulation of the blood; *ODNB*, Hill, Oliver, article by Anita McConnell.
24. For Brice, a collector, translator and publisher of alchemical/chymical texts, 'lover of the Hermetick Science', and early convert to Pordage's Family at Bradfield, see *ODNB*, Brice, Edmund, article by Ariel Hessayon.
25. James Keith (d. 1726) graduated as MD from Aberdeen in 1704. On moving to London, he was made a licentiate of the College of Physicians in 1706; Munk, *Roll*, vol. 2, 18. A manuscript in the Bodleian Library ('A Preliminary Treatise which may serve for an introduction to the following work of John Pordage') suggests that he intended to produce a new edition of the works of Pordage, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Rawlinson A 404. His will makes reference to 'a valuable collection of spiritual books' which may have been related to this or related projects, National Archives, PROB 11/612, 45r–v [30 May 1726; proved 11 November 1726].
26. *ODNB*, Lee, Francis, article by Brian J. Gibbons.
27. With Jane Leade, Hooker also signed the epistle to the former's Revelation of Revelations (London, Andrew Sowle) in 1683.

28. Hooker is routinely described as ‘doctor’ and ‘doctor of physick’ in other sources. For a brief life of Hooker, see Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting and Politics*, 273n–274.
29. National Archives, PROB 11/498, 218v–221r [12 June 1704; proved 6 December 1707]. Dr Goodall’s interest in medical chemistry is evident from his appointment as physician and ‘chemist in ordinary’ to Charles II in 1671, as well as his correspondence on the subject with the natural philosopher, Robert Boyle: see National Archives, LC3/26, 58v; *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, ed. by Michael Hunter, Antonio Clericuzio, and Lawrence M. Principe, 6 Vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), vol. 4, 118–24.
30. In *Theologia Mystica*, Boreman is thinly disguised as W. B., a physician residing at Wilmington, near Dartford, Kent.
31. Thomas O’Dowde, *The Poor Man’s Physician* (London, 1665), unpaginated appendix; Devon RO, PR 518, *sub* Allington [sic][testimonial on behalf of William Bruton Jnr of Alwington, Devon, also signed by Robert Turner and Robert Bathurst, fellow signatories of the chemists’ petition in 1665]; Lambeth Palace Library, VX 1A/10/212/1–4 [testimonial on behalf of George Penhellick of Kidderminster, Worcestershire]. On the latter occasion, Burman signed as ‘royal physician’. There is no evidence that Boreman was employed by the crown, though it is tempting to speculate that he, like John Pordage Jnr (above), may have served the royal household in an ‘unofficial’ capacity during the plague of 1665.
32. Records of London’s Livery Companies Online, admissions and freemen, accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.londonroll.org>.
33. For fuller discussion of Boreman’s obsession with witchcraft and diabolical magic, see Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics in Early Modern England*, 198–200, 272–74.
34. Lambeth Palace Library, Court of Arches (Attree v. Burman), D324b; B10/217.
35. Daniel Defoe, *A System of Magick* (1727), ed. by Peter Elmer (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), 216.
36. Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting and Politics*, 199.
37. Jane Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 93. There is a large literature on the moral reform movements of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; see especially Craig Rose, ‘Providence, Protestant Union and Godly Reformation in the 1690s’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 3 (1993): 151–69; Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Karen Sonnelitter, ‘The Reformation of Manners Societies, the Monarchy, and the English State, 1696–1714’, *The Historian* 72 (2010): 517–42.

38. Hooker's principal debt to the intellectual influence of mysticism is evident in his first bequest, namely the collected works of Jacob Boehme. For good measure, he named the eldest daughter of Dr John Reynolds, archdeacon of Norwich and brother of the bishop, as his executor, National Archives, PROB 11/498, 218v–221r [12 June 1704; proved 6 December 1707].
39. For the controversy over the air pump, and the wider issues raised therein, see Simon Shapin and Steven Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); cf. the public debate that ensued with regard to the supposedly 'miraculous' curative powers of the Irish healer, Valentine Greatrakes, which raised similar issues; see Peter Elmer, *The Miraculous Conformist: Valentine Greatrakes, the Body Politic, and the Politics of Healing in Restoration Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
40. See especially Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chs 16 and 17; John Henry, 'The Fragmentation of Renaissance Occultism and the Decline of Magic', *History of Science* 46 (2008), 6 and *passim*.
41. For brief discussion of the French Prophets in the context of 'occult' and mystical strains of thought, see Paul K. Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 205. For fuller discussion, see Lionel Laborie, *Enlightening Enthusiasm: Prophecy and Religious Experience in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), ch. 6.
42. Michael Hunter, 'Alchemy, Magic and Moralism in the Thought of Robert Boyle', in *Robert Boyle 1627–1691: Scrupulosity and Science*, ed. by Hunter (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 93–117, especially 102–6.
43. Jan Golinski, 'Barometers of Change: Meteorological Instruments as Machines of Enlightenment', in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, ed. by William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Schaffer, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), 83–84; Elmer, *Witchcraft, Witch-Hunting, and Politics*, 198, 200. In a similar vein, the Somerset fossil collector and mineralogist John Beaumont (*ca.* 1640–1731), FRS, claimed to have conversed with fairies affirming that 'what he had seen, heard, touched and smelt must be real', James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World: The Life and Curiosity of Hans Sloane* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), 278–79.
44. For Dee, see Deborah Harkness, "'Shows in the Showstone": A Theater of Alchemy and Apocalypse in the Angel Conversations of John Dee', *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 (1996), 707–37; Stephen Clucas, "'False Illuding Spirits & Counterfeiting Devills'", in *Conversations with Angels*, ed. by Raymond, 150–74.

45. Christopher Fowler, *Daemonium Meridianum. Satan at Noon* (London: Francis Eglesfield, 1655), 98.
46. For a starting point, see Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

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