Memory and Identity in the Late Medieval Prison

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester
for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy
in the Faculty of Humanities

2013

Katherine Frances
School of Arts, Languages and Cultures
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on the Text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.0 Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1A Introducing the Late Medieval Prisoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.1B The Medieval Prison-Writer: A Confined Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2A Memory Theory in the Middle Ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2B The Ars Memorialis and The Kingis Quair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3A Authorising Religious Memory in the Late Medieval Prison</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter One

**Remembering the Saints: Rewriting Treachery in Thomas Usk’s Testament of Love and William Paris’s Life of St. Christina**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction: Ricardian Prisoners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Re-making and Politicising Memory Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Writing and Release: Usk’s Newgate Script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 The Theo-Politics of Margarite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Saintly Associations: Paris’s Hagiographic Critique of Richard’s Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chapter Two
### Biblical Memory and the Wycliffism in the Ecclesiastical Prison: The Letter of Richard Wyche and The Testimony of William Thorpe

2.0 Introduction: Wycliffite Prisoners 116
2.1 Formulating Memory and Heresy 121
2.2 Wyche’s First Letter to the Wycliffites 129
2.3 Wyche’s Revelation 143
2.4 Affective Memory: Thorpe’s Passion 151
2.5 Embodiment and Eucharistic Piety 165
2.6 Conclusion 175

## Chapter Three
### ‘Thes synnes wold make you shamyd and schent’ Remembering the Prisoner in John Audelay the Blind’s The Counsel of Conscience and George Ashby’s Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet, 1463

3.0 Introduction: Penitential Prisoners 177
3.1 The Blind Witness in Audelay’s Writing 188
3.2 Forgiveness and The Visible Healing of Blindness 195
3.3 *Imitatio Christi*: Audelay’s Sacrifice 205
3.4 Forgetful Friends and the Remembering Self 209
3.5 Ashby’s Purgatorial Prison 220
3.6 Conclusion 226

## Conclusion
4.0 Memory and Identity in the Late Medieval Prison 229

## Appendix
The Latin Letter of Richard Wyche 239
# Bibliography of Works Cited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sources</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Sources</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Sources</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of Words**  
81,829
### Abbreviations

**Appeal**


**Book**

*The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Lynn Staley (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996)

**Complaint**


**Consolation**


**Counsel**


**EETS**

The Early English Text Society

**EWS**

*English Wycliffite Sermon Cycle*

**Letter**

‘*The Letter of Richard Wyche: An Interrogation Narrative*’, ed. by Christopher Bradley, *PMLA*, 127.3.

**Life**


**MED**

Middle English Dictionary

http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/

**Quair**

James I of Scotland’s *The Kingis Quair*, in *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, ed. by Linne Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005)

**Pricke**

*The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae): A Northumbrian Poem*, ed. by R. Morris (Berlin: Asher for the Philological Society, 1863)
SEL  


**Testament**  


**Testimony**  


**Notes on the Text**

All references to the *Middle English Dictionary* were checked on 12 November 2013.

The first reference to all poems is given in the footnotes. Subsequent line references are embedded in the text.

Prose citations all appear in the footnotes. Where available, the page number is accompanied by the line reference.
Abstract

The thesis examines how religious memory permits the medieval prisoner to redeem himself textually from any potential shame associated with his imprisonment through the creation of a self-promotional, autobiographical discourse. By combining his interest in his spiritual affairs with his experiential memory of his recent past, the prisoner presents himself as a virtuous Christian, deserving of God’s reward. This work not only demonstrates how the prisoner utilises memory to justify the actions or beliefs engendering his downfall, but it also considers how this reified sense of self-perception prompts the incarcerated writer to think upon his salvation prospects. Thus I argue that memory is inextricably linked to the construction of an autobiographical narrative in which the prison-writer ponders his past, present and future identity.

Throughout the thesis, the multiple sub-genres that constitute prison-writing are illuminated as I demonstrate how each prisoner suggests his virtue by inscribing his self-reflective thought into a religious genre, including hagiography, biblical letters, Passion mediations and penitential prayer. In the Introduction, I draw attention to the need for scholars to recognise the existence of the medieval subject, who is often denied ontology in studies of the history of selfhood. I also discuss the need to develop the current understanding of pre-modern autobiographical inscription by examining the mnemonic practices and strategies that underpin this form of writing. Moving on from here, the thesis examines six late-fourteenth and fifteenth-century narratives to show the different ways in which acts of recollection legitimise identity in the medieval prison. Chapter One explores the creative and political function of memoria by showing how two Ricardian traitors, Thomas Usk and William Paris, compare their own experience of imprisonment to that of a virgin martyr as they set about reframing their reputations for treachery. As Richard himself used hagiographic commemoration to promote his kingship, this act permits Usk and Paris to respectively appeal to and critique the king, who is responsible for their imprisonment. Chapter Two examines two prose epistles that were written by the Wycliffite preachers, Richard Wyche and William Thorpe. By considering how both men frame their memory of persecution in a narrative structure which emulates the epistle format deployed by medieval popes, as well as the prison epistles that St Paul wrote to the early Church, I argue that Wyche and Thorpe use their letters to entreat the recently formed Lollard community to stand firm in her faith, even if she is threatened with death. Chapter Three also considers how the prison-writer seeks to inspire a community outside the prison. Here I argue that the orthodox writers, John Audelay and George Ashby, both imprint a memory of the prisoner in the minds of the reader so that this latter figure will remember to cleanse her own soul of sin by showing mercy to the imprisoned community. The prisoner is thus shown to be nothing less than a conduit to divine grace.

Throughout this thesis, religious memory, which is combined with experiential memory, is shown to be integral to the construction of the late medieval prison-writers past, present and future autobiographical identity.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning

Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and she has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trade marks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=487), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, The University Library’s regulations (see http://www.manchester.ac.uk/library/aboutus/regulations) and in The University’s policy on Presentation of Theses
Introduction
Memory and Identity in the Late Medieval Prison

0.0 Introduction

In 1413, the religious visionary, Margery Kempe, visited the Bishop of Lincoln, Philip Repington, to discuss ‘hyr medytacyons, and hy contemplacyons, and other secret thyngys’. Following their conversation, Repington counselled Margery to write an account of her personal experiences. However, she forestalled engaging in this task, explaining that ‘it was not Goddys wyl that they schuld be wretyn so soon’. Indeed, over twenty years elapsed before she eventually solicited the assistance of a priest-cum-scribe to help create her autobiography, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (c. 1436).

Although the specific reasons why Margery felt that God wished her to delay writing her experiential narrative remain unknown, it is intriguing that in the years following her conversation with Repington, the holy woman was arrested on no less than seven occasions, threatened with imprisonment and interrogated about her religious beliefs by a host of authorities, including the mayor of Leicester, the Bishop of York and various other canons and priests. Is it possible, then, that a memory of Margery’s conflict with bodies of power in fifteenth-century England was somehow divined to be included in her story? Or might it be that Margery’s experience of persecution

2 *The Book of Margery Kempe*, p. 46, ll. 771-73.
3 The question of whether a narrative dictated to a scribe should be classed as biography or autobiography has been debated by scholars since Hope Emily Allen discovered the manuscript of Margery’s work in 1934. The history of this debate is discussed in Marea Mitchell, *The Book of Margery Kempe: Scholarship, Community, and Criticism* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), pp. 56-64. I posit that as Margery recounted the details to the scribe personally, the work should be read as autobiographic.
strengthened her resolve to preserve an account of the faith that she vociferously
defended each time that she was questioned about her wayward conduct?

This thesis does not set out to answer these speculative questions, nor does it focus
its attention on Margery’s spiritual autobiography, which was not written from
prison. However, by considering the possibility that an individual’s personal conflict
with an authoritative power might precipitate a self-reflective impulse within the pre-
modern subject, it examines how the prison-writer draws on the faculty of memory
to document the ways in which his recent political actions or heterodox religious
beliefs engender his personal downfall in late medieval England.

The notion that a self-reflective impetus is heightened when a subject is threatened,
derimined or effaced by an institutional power, such as the Church, government, or
a colonial administration, underpins Stephen Greenblatt’s ground-breaking study,
*Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare.* While Greenblatt’s work
did much to invigorate scholarly interest in how identity was represented textually in
the field of early modern studies, in the early 1990s, two medievalists, David Aers
and Lee Patterson, critiqued his thesis. Aers’ and Patterson’s contention with
Greenblatt’s work lay in their shared belief that, by identifying the sixteenth century
as the time at which an ‘increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human
identity as a manipulable, artful process’ first developed in Western culture, the New
Historicist critic was guilty of erroneously casting the Middle Ages as a historical

---

epoch within which individual thinkers did not contemplate or represent their sense of selfhood textually.\(^7\)

Maintaining Greenblatt’s sense that an individual’s conflict with a body of power is a causal factor prompting the subject to create an account of the self, yet aligning myself with Aers and Patterson, who emphasise the need for literary historians to acknowledge the existence of the pre-modern subject, my study considers how the late medieval prison-writer utilises memory to recall and record the ways in which the controversy surrounding his past conduct contributes to his sense of self-understanding during his imprisonment.

The importance of memory-work in the construction of self-reflective literature has already been discussed in studies of modern and postmodern autobiography.\(^8\) Yet despite the fact that Mary Carruthers describes medieval culture as ‘fundamentally memorial’, underlining that conscious considerations of the past were central to the cultivation of both knowledge and spiritual identity in the pre-modern period, the field of literary studies presently lacks a full-length consideration of how late-fourteenth and fifteenth-century subjects draw on this faculty to create a textual


record of significant upheavals and difficulties in their personal, lived experience.\(^9\) This thesis responds to this lacuna in scholarship by examining the myriad ways in which memory permits the prison-writer to justify textually the behaviours or beliefs that have engendered his personal downfall, not only to himself, but also to his anticipated readers. While the forms of memory that the prison-writer draws on are various (including, for example, experiential memory, religious memory and political memory), in each narrative the past is willingly recollected as the incarcerated subject seeks to explain why, in the present, he is trapped within the confines of the prison. Yet within these prison-writings, mnemonic strategies are not simply used to enable the prisoner to legitimise his identity in the immediate moment of inscription. Rather, throughout this thesis, I propose that in the pervasively Christian culture of late medieval England, the prisoner’s reified sense of self-perception propels him to contemplate how his soul might be judged in the eschatological future. Given that each prison-writer focuses on the idea that he will receive liberation from his strife when he enters heaven, this forward-looking action offers the ultimate validation of personal identity as the incarcerated subject represents himself as a figure who has God’s ineluctable support, despite his social downfall. Memory thus shows itself to be intrinsically and inextricably linked to the medieval prisoner’s construction of an autobiographical discourse that not only encompasses his self-understanding in the temporal now, but that also permits him to envisage his position in the macrocosmic discourse of Judeo-Christian salvation history.

---

0.1A Introducing the Late Medieval Prisoner

Any study that sets out to examine the operative dynamics of memory in the medieval prisoner’s textual account of his personal experience must initially illuminate the prisoner’s existence. As Guy Geltner explains, in scholarship on the history of punishment in Western society, prisons are ‘mostly absent from modern imaginaries of the medieval urban panorama’. Instead, the pre-modern period is commonly, albeit disproportionately, conceptualised as a time when the streets were filled with pillories and gallows that were used to painfully inscribe punishment on the bodies of criminal subjects, through corporeal strategies such as branding, flogging, scourging, beheading and hanging.

The scholarly tendency to posit a crude binary between pre-modern and modern penal praxis can perhaps be attributed to the prominent influence that Michel Foucault’s study, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, has had on much thinking since its publication in 1975. Although the French theorist does not deny the existence of the medieval prison, he identifies the late-eighteenth and early-

---


nineteenth centuries as the time when ‘the entire economy of punishment was re-
distributed’ from the gallows to the gaol house in Europe and America.\textsuperscript{13} As Foucault points out, in these prisons, criminal subjects were reformed through the mandates of a ‘time-table’.\textsuperscript{14} That is, by forcing the inmates to carry out tasks that were pre-determined by the authorities, dissident individuals were transformed into docile bodies, submitting under surveillance to the governing forces of the gaol.

While Geltner notes that pre-modern prisons were not structured in this same highly organised fashion (a point to which I return later), he is one of a number of historians whose work underlines that the view that imprisonment was rarely used in medieval penal practice needs to be revised.\textsuperscript{15} As Jean Dunbabin explains, throughout the continental high Middle Ages, criminal subjects were regularly imprisoned in the dungeons of castles owned by high-ranking members of society.\textsuperscript{16} While these prisons were often situated in remote or rural areas, Geltner observes that by the mid-thirteenth century, in countries such as Italy, France and Germany, the topography of imprisonment shifted so that the incarcerated were held in prison buildings enmeshed in the physical fabric of the city.\textsuperscript{17} In this way, the prison – from the outside – was visible to the city’s citizens as they went about their day-to-day business.

\textsuperscript{14} Foucault, \textit{Discipline}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{16} Jean Dunbabin, \textit{Captivity and Imprisonment in Medieval Europe, 1000-1300} (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 177-78.
Moreover, and most pertinent to this study, the history of imprisonment in England is even richer than in these continental countries. The ninth-century law codes of Alfred the Great, for example, state that a man who betrayed his lord could be imprisoned for forty days.\(^{18}\) Similarly, the ninth-century law codes of Guthrum and the tenth-century law codes of Æthelstan show that imprisonment was used in cases of witchcraft, theft, fighting and to punish members of society who failed to fulfil their civic duty and attend the *gemot*.\(^{19}\) Indeed, in the twelfth century, at the Council of Assize (1160), Henry II decreed that if any county in his kingdom lacked a prison, one should be built immediately to ensure that this punitive strategy could be deployed across the realm.\(^{20}\)

By 1509, some 180 offences in English law were punishable by imprisonment.\(^{21}\) Furthermore, as the texts that form the basis of this study demonstrate, the offences for which an individual could be imprisoned came to include some of the most serious crimes against humanity, the Church and the king. The first chapter considers the writings of two men who were incarcerated owing to their calamitous


embroilment in plots of political deceit and treachery in Ricardian England. While Thomas Usk’s *The Testament of Love* (c. 1384) was written shortly after the London clerk was imprisoned in Newgate for rebelling against the recently elected mayor of the city, Nicholas Brembre, William Paris wrote his poem, *Life of St. Christina* (c. 1398), as he and his master, Sir Thomas Beauchamp, were imprisoned on the Isle of Man, following the nobleman’s admission that he was guilty of treason. Chapter Two moves away from a Ricardian context to consider two prose epistles, *The Letter of Richard Wyche* (c. 1403) and *The Testimony of William Thorpe* (c. 1407), that each purport to have been written shortly after the eponymous Wycliffite preachers were thrown into ecclesiastical prisons for disseminating heretical beliefs in Northumbria and Shrewsbury, respectively, during the first decade of Henry IV’s reign. Finally, Chapter Three examines George Ashby’s first-person lament, *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet, 1463*, which is believed to have been written after the clerk was imprisoned for refusing to relinquish his Lancastrian affinities during the early years of Yorkist rule, alongside the chantry priest John the Blind Audelay’s orthodox compendium of religious verse, *The Counsel of Conscience* (c. 1424). Within this thesis, Audelay appears as something of an anomalous figure since he was not cast into prison personally. However, in 1417, his master, Sir Richard Lestrange, was thrown into the Tower of London for killing an innocent man during a brawl that took place inside a London church on Easter Sunday. For this reason, Audelay is considered as a writer whose work explores his personal relationship to a late medieval prisoner. Moreover, and as I discuss at greater length in Chapter Three, Audelay’s blindness, which he alludes to throughout *Counsel*, also forms an intriguing relationship between the priest and imprisonment. In a fifteenth-century context, the affliction of blindness, which prevents the clergyman from
enjoying a full relationship with the social world that is visible to other men and women, was also understood to be a physical marker of disgrace and a sign of God’s punishment for sin. In this way, Audelay himself can be seen as experiencing punishment in and throughout his personal, lived experience. Even though he does not suffer the same form of incarceration, within the walls of a gaol house, that is experienced by Lestrange and the other writers whose works are considered in the thesis, he is, in a sense, removed from the same experience of society as other bodies that enjoy physical and spiritual health.

Even though imprisonment appears to have been deployed widely in late medieval England, the question of how the pre-modern prisoner represents his identity in textual culture has attracted very little scholarly attention. As I indicated in my discussion of Greenblatt’s work, this may be symptomatic of the fact that medievalists and early modernists are still engaged in an ongoing debate as to whether the Western self first emerged in the pre-modern or modern period. In the latter conception, the belief that the individual first became conscious of her own identity in the sixteenth century is often linked to the Reformation. As Protestantism precipitated the disenfranchisement of intermediary aspects of the Catholic faith (such as the power of the priest to administer the sacrament of penance, the power of the saints to intercede on behalf of the faithful and the power of relics or indulgences

---

to absolve a man’s soul from sin), Christians subscribing to this set of beliefs understood that the individual bore exclusive responsibility for the spiritual state of her soul. For this reason, self-scrutiny became increasingly important as looking inwards enabled the individual to express personal sorrow for her own transgressions and to meditate on how she should improve her behaviour in order to draw close to God.

Looking in a different direction, Elizabeth Eisenstein suggests that the burgeoning interest in autobiography in the sixteenth century can be attributed to the development of the printing press at this time. Since biographies of prophets, preachers and kings were extremely popular reading material in early modern England, Eisenstein proposes that print effectively enabled this corpus of writing to be supplemented with saleable stories of ordinary men and women pursuing more variegated and recognisable careers.

Although the idea that pre-modern peoples lacked a sense of individuated autonomy still finds expression in certain spheres, many medievalists – most famously Aers and Patterson – have countered it. In these studies, Augustine of Hippo’s

---


26 Jay Rubenstein confirms that much modern scholarship has ‘emphasised the ascendancy of group identities in medieval culture’ and ‘downplayed the significance, or even existence, of the self in the medieval imagination’. See Jay Rubenstein, ‘Biography and Autobiography in the Middle Ages’, in
Confessions (c. 394) is cited as evidence that the history of self-reflective discourse can be traced back to the fourth century. Confessions, however, should not be seen as an isolated example of pre-modern autobiography. A wide-range of high and late medieval narratives, including Abelard’s twelfth-century Historia Calamitatum, The Showings of Julian of Norwich (c. 1373), Thomas Hoccleve’s La Male Regle (c. 1406) and his Complaint and Dialogue (c. 1420), as well as Margery’s Book, are also cited as examples of self-reflective discourses that pre-date the sixteenth century. While print might have led to an increase in the production of autobiographical literatures, the existence of these medieval texts, all of which have manuscript witnesses, quickly falsifies any notion that this technology alone was responsible for the ‘birth’ of the genre.

In this context, it is also important to note that medieval religious culture should not be seen as stifling the growth of the self-reflective subject. To the contrary, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) is often cited as a landmark event in the development


of the medieval self. In Canon Twenty-One, Pope Innocent III decreed that all individuals, over the age of twelve, must ‘faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their own (parish) priest’, lest they be excommunicated from the Church.\(^{28}\)

Regular self-scrutiny was thus prescribed as a pre-requisite for salvation in a way that counters the idea that introspective analysis was not relevant to, or required within, late medieval Catholicism.\(^{29}\)

Throughout this study, then, I do not question whether selfhood existed in late medieval culture. Rather, aligning myself with Nancy Bradley Warren, who writes that most medievalists no longer doubt ‘the existence of the “individual” or “the subject” in the Middle Ages’, I examine how a range of mnemonic techniques and forms of memory permit selfhood to be explored, represented and preserved in and through the imprisoned subject’s construction of a textualised autobiographical identity.\(^{30}\)

To this end, it is important to point out that this study privileges the concept of subjectivity over that of individualism. This differentiation is one that not only acknowledges that the prison-writers are circumscribed by the prevailing religious, social and cultural structures of late medieval England, but it also


\(^{29}\) The *Omnis utriusque sexus* canon is identified as a causal factor in the production of a range of texts – penitential handbooks, prayers, romance narratives and lyrics – in which the subjective experience of an individual emerges as thematic concern. See Masha Raskolnikov, ‘Confessional Literature, Vernacular Psychology, and the History of the Self in Middle English’, *Literature Compass*, 2 (2005), 1-20.

recognises that the medieval self is distinct from the later idea of the autonomous and unified Romantic individual, who is imagined to transcend any such boundaries.

In the context of this Introduction, it is also important to explain that my decision to describe the texts that are considered in this thesis as ‘autobiographical’ reflects the difficulties associated with defining ‘autobiography’ as a literary genre. In 1982, Philip Lejeune offered a ‘judicious and widely quoted’ definition of autobiography as a ‘retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality’.

Yet for my study, this definition’s emphasis on prose is problematic as it precludes the notion that self-reflective discourse can be expressed in the poetic mode. Similarly, Georges Gusdorf’s influential definition of autobiography as ‘a document about a life’ within which the ‘author gives himself the job of narrating his own history; what he sets out to do is reassemble the scattered elements of his individual history and reassemble these into a comprehensive sketch’, is also inadequate. While Gusdorf is right to point to the constructed, mediated nature of autobiography, he appears to suggest that there will be a chronological, sequential order to the work that is not always evident in medieval prison literature. As I discuss later, the medieval prison-writer often interweaves carefully selected moments from his personal past into a broader narrative framework that is concerned with another individual’s autobiographic or biographic experience (such as a saint’s life, a Passion meditation or a biblical letter). Accordingly, the incarcerated subject does not simply produce or re-assemble a linear account of his life. Instead, the

---

prisoner expends much of his narrative energy discussing the life experience of another subject who serves as a foil that permits him to present a comparative consideration of his own identity and situation. The generic term ‘autobiographic(al)’ thus recognises that the prison-writings are concerned with matters of selfhood, but simultaneously acknowledges that alternate, albeit complementary, modes of expression coexist within these narratives. My study thus nuances current understandings of medieval autobiographical writing by placing special emphasis on the multiple genres that self-reflective inscription can take place within.

0.1B Medieval Prison-Writing: A Confined Subject

In 2004, Joanna Summers made an important innovation in the field of medieval studies. By bringing together the writings of Usk, Thorpe, Wyche and Ashby, as well as two foreign prisoners of war, King James I of Scotland and Duke Charles of Orléans, Summers presented the first in-depth study of how the medieval prisoner documented his experience of incarceration in her monograph, *Late Medieval Prison-Writing and the Politics of Autobiography*. Within this foundational work, Summers aligns herself with Kathryn Kerby-Fulton as she asserts that medieval authors typically interpolate auto-citations into their writing to either appeal for patronage or to placate an offended reader through the expression of apology. By discussing how the prison-writers embed these self-naming epithets alongside

---

33 While I discuss James’s *Quair* in the Introduction, this study does not include a consideration of Charles’s *Fortunes Stabilines* since the narrative does not offer any sustained engagement with Christian beliefs and ideologies. Indeed, within Summers’s study, Charles’s writing is treated as an anomaly as she posits that this French prison-writer does not share the same interest in the politics of self-promotion that is evident in the other prison-texts that she discusses. See Joanna Summers, *Late Medieval Prison-Writing and the Politics of Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 90-107.

myriad intertextual allusions to the writings of celebrated textual authorities, such as Anicius Boethius (c. 475-524), John Gower (c. 1330-1408) and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400), Summers argues that these persecuted authors aspire to liberate their identity from the shame associated with imprisonment by portraying themselves as moral and ethical writers, whose narrative compositions deserve the reader’s attention.

As Summers develops her compelling argument, she explains that the specific intertextual choices made by these prison-writers are anything but innocent. Boethius’s autobiographical text, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524), for instance, was written when the Roman scholar and senator was unjustly imprisoned for defending the name of an innocent consul, Albinus, during the sixth-century reign of King Theodric.  

*Consolation* enjoyed extensive circulation throughout medieval Europe, particularly in England, where Boethius was celebrated as a martyr and a saint. By invoking tropes from Boethius’s work, the prison-writer could thus suggest that he, too, was a virtuous subject whose present imprisonment was the result of injustice, rather than his personal malignancy. Similarly, Gower and Chaucer were widely celebrated as ethical and skilled *auctores*. The fifteenth-century Augustinian canon, John Walton, for instance, lauded Chaucer as ‘þat floure

---


of rethoryk/ In Englisshe tong and excellent poete’ and praised Gower for filling ‘hys book[es] of moralitee’. Similarly, in a *Speculum Principium* text, written for Henry VI’s son, Edward of Westminster, *Active Policy of a Prince* (c. 1463), Ashby identifies Chaucer and Gower as ‘Primier poetes of this nacion […] By whome we all may haue lernyng and lore’. Borrowing images from these two authors, thus permits the prison-writer to stylise his own work as inherently ethical and even beneficial to his reader’s edification. Intertextual strategies, then, do not override individualistic expression. Rather, they serve to underscore and authorise the prisoner’s self-promotional presentation of his personal identity.

Although Summers does not frame her argument in relation to memory studies, in her seminal study on medieval theories of the faculty, Carruthers also discusses the idea that intertextual allusions could be used for self-serving purposes in the construction of pre-modern, self-reflective discourse. Focusing on Abelard’s recollection of how his student and lover, Heloise, justified her decision to enter into convent life after the couple discovered that she had conceived a child out of wedlock, Carruthers notes that the troubled young woman explains this choice by recalling Lucan’s poem, *Pharsalia*. As the specific verses Heloise cites describe how Cornelia offers to sacrifice her life to placate the gods when she hears that her husband has suffered a shameful defeat in battle, the pregnant woman uses Lucan’s discourse to suggest that, she, like her predecessor, is also prepared to sacrifice her freedom in order to release her lover from his shameful conduct. Much like the Boethian, Gowerian and Chaucerian intertextual allusions that Summers identifies as

---

permeating the self-reflective writings of the late medieval prisoner, it is the ‘memory of a text in the public domain’ that permits Heloise explain ‘her own present dilemma’ in the medieval now.\(^{40}\) Albeit implicitly, Summers’s strong emphasis on intertextuality points to the importance of textual memory in the construction of pre-modern, self-reflective discourse.

Summers’s work has rightly received notable praise within the field of medieval studies. Indeed, Elizabeth Schirmer states that one of its strengths lies in its illumination of prison-writing as ‘a new genre of Middle English literature’.\(^{41}\) Within her study, however, Summers concedes one of its weaknesses as she admits that she does not consider how the different ‘formal and generic’ structures deployed by the prison-writers might enrich an understanding of what other self-representational strategies are exploited in these narratives.\(^{42}\) To this, I would add that Summers’s preoccupation with the prison-writer’s desire to secure patronage or support from his contemporaries often comes at the expense of considering how this figure represents himself as a divinely sanctioned author, who stands to gain the ultimate liberation from suffering when he reaches heaven.

Situated at the interstices of these two concerns, my thesis demonstrates that considering the formal techniques and religious tropes that the late medieval prisoner employs in his autobiographical discourse deepens an understanding of this figure’s identity. By examining how these fourteenth- and fifteenth-century prison-writers inscribe details about the actions that have precipitated their incarceration into an

---


\(^{42}\) Summers, *Prison-Writing*, p. 4.
eclectic range of popular religious genres that ponder the interrelationship between earthly experience and salvation (such as hagiography, biblical letters, Passion meditations and penitential prayers), I draw attention to the wide repertory of textual modes available for self-reflection and self-inscription in the late medieval prison. Although the different genres that the prisoners turn to have their own distinctions and idiosyncratic emphases, my work shows that these narrative frameworks share a united feature. That is, each prison-writer frames his experiential memory of persecution in a religious genre that describes, or relates to, the suffering of a celebrated figure in Judeo-Christian history. By bringing a memory of this pre-existing figure into the present, through an act of citation and inscription, and then comparing his own experience of imprisonment to the hardship faced by his righteous predecessor, the medieval prison-writer uses past exemplars of suffering to recast his present incarceration as an aspect of his vita that God will look on favourably when his soul comes to judgement. Before returning to contextualise this idea further, it is necessary to examine the operative dynamics of the faculty that each prison-writer both employs and creates as he composes his self-reflective discourse: memory.

0.2A Memory Theory in the Middle Ages

The past fifteen years have witnessed a burgeoning interest in how the remembrance of past events or former experiences affects identity formation, on an individual and collective basis, in both the humanities and in the social sciences.43 As Nancy Wood

43 In 2000, Andreas Huyssen remarked that ‘One of the most surprising cultural and political phenomena of recent years has been the emergence of memory as a key concern in Western Societies’. See Andreas Huyssen, ‘Present Pasts: Media, Politics and Amnesia’, Public Culture, 12.1 (2000), 21-38 (p. 21). This is exemplified in the publication of major essay collections which are devoted to discussions of memory such as Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity, ed. by Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999);
puts it, memory studies is now a field of ‘intense contestation amongst vying social
groups’, each of whom have identified memory as ‘an essential bulwark of […]
identity politics’.

An interest in the myriad ways in which memorial practice shaped pre-modern society has certainly permeated medieval studies. Indeed, scholars working in a range of disciplines, including archaeology, drama, art history, music and literary studies, have invested in, and contributed to, a broader knowledge of how the past was regularly and repeatedly invoked to convey religious instruction and to document legal or political affairs.

That memory emerges as a scholarly concern in so many different areas of medieval studies confirms that the ability to willingly recollect the past played an important role in many aspects pre-modern life. Confirming this idea, the entry for ‘memorie’ in the *Middle English Dictionary* shows that the term was associated with a range of concepts, including the faculty of memory, recollection and preoccupation,

---


reputation and fame, observance and commemoration as well as the written record.\footnote{MED, ‘memorie’, (n.) 1-6.}

As the prison-writers whose work I discuss in this thesis all engage with at least one of these kinds of memory, it appears that these definitions or understandings of the faculty were not perceived to be entirely distinct from one another, nor were they abstract or unknown to the populace. Rather, when a particular aspect of ‘memorie’ was either selected exclusively or fused together with complementary strains of ‘memorie’, the individual could look to the past in order to authorise his rhetoric of self-understanding in the living present.

The importance of memory in medieval culture is, I have noted, stated emphatically in the work of Carruthers, who explains that pre-modern peoples ‘reserved their awe’ for this particular faculty and praxis.\footnote{Carruthers, \textit{Book}, p. 1.} As both their geniuses and their saints were revered for their ‘prodigious memory’, the ability to recall the past was recognised to be integral to the cultivation of superlative knowledge and venerable spiritual health.\footnote{Carruthers, \textit{Book}, pp. 1-14.} Memory, however, was not only possessed by these eminent subjects. Rather, it was understood to be inherent in, and universal to, all individuals. Indeed, Carruthers remarks that in pre-modernity ‘a person without memory, if such a thing could be, would be […] in a basic sense, without humanity’.\footnote{Carruthers, \textit{Book}, p. 14.} The idea that memory and selfhood are inextricably bound together is certainly evident in Chaucer’s \textit{The Knight’s Tale}. When Chaucer wishes to inform his reader that Arcite has not died, despite the fact that he has fallen from his steed, he states that he was ‘yet in memorie and alyve’ in a manner that confirms the centrality of the faculty to human
Similarly, when Hoccleve vividly recalls how he was ostracised by many of his contemporaries, during his five-year mental breakdown, in his autobiographical poem, *Complaint*, he explains that his illness came to pass at a time of life when ‘the substaunce of my memorie/ Wente to pleie as for a certain space’. Absence of the faculty is thus linked to the onset of madness and despair. Without the ability to ground one’s identity in the authority of the past, an individual loses the ability to understand himself or be understood by others.

While Chaucer and Hoccleve present literary and autobiographical allusions to memory, throughout the Middle Ages the faculty was also discussed in a wide range of philosophical, religious and medical texts. These works were influenced and shaped by a rich history of writings on the mind, including the works of Aristotle, the commentaries of Avicenna and Averroës and Galen’s theories of physiology. Within each of these traditions, memory is consistently treated as ‘the final process in sensory perception’. Memory ‘begins with the simulation of the five senses’ and ‘becomes [the] material knowledge through the activities of a series of internal functions known to the Middle Ages as the inward sense(s)’. This is exemplified in Aristotelian thought, which posits that the ‘perceptions brought in by the five senses are first treated or worked on by the faculty of imagination, and it is the images so

---

51 *Thomas Hoccleve’s Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. by J. A. Burrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 3-33 (p. 5, ll. 50-51). The interrelationship between the loss of memory and madness is also alluded to in a number of late medieval court records. Here, a temporary absence of the faculty is identified as a reason why an individual should be excused from a certain crime. See Wendy J. Turner, ‘Emotional Displays and Lapses in Memory as Indicators of Mental Instability in Medieval English Investigations’, in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. by Wendy Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 81-96.
formed which became the material of the intellectual faculty’. 55 This same idea also finds expression in Augustine’s influential consideration of memory in Book Ten of his autobiographical work, *Confessions*, which states:

> Memory preserves in distinct particulars and general categories all the perceptions which have penetrated, each by its own route of entry. Thus the light and all colours and bodily shapes enter by the eyes; by the ears all kinds of sounds; all odours by the entrance of the nostrils; all tastes by the door of the mouth [...] Memory’s huge cavern, with its mysterious, secret and indescribable nooks and crannies, receives all these perceptions, to be recalled when needed and reconsidered. 56

Although Augustine expresses a belief that there is something mysterious and unknown about how memory works, his writing affirms that the faculty, stocked through the senses, is one that allows an individual to internalise her contact with the world so that this experience can be recalled and referred to at a later date.

However, while these definitions confirm that memory is stocked through sensory perception, they do not explain the task of recollection, which was recognised to take place in two different ways. The first, ‘memoria verborum or verbatim’, describes the process that occurred when one learnt something by rote and was able to repeat this information, at a later date, with precision. 57 This form of memory was recognised to have strong practical application, for it enabled men and women to learn, for example, their prayers, as well as the order of the liturgy, by heart. 58

58 A precedent for this form of memory can be found in Aristotle’s work. Here, the philosopher posits that an individual’s temperament is symptomatic of habitual disposition. If the same actions or experiences are repeated over a period of time, they will come to shape and influence the individual’s character. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1999) II, pp. 18-19.
However, although the importance of ‘memoria verborum’ should not be underestimated, Carruthers explains that, in pre-modern culture, the ‘true force of memory’ lay in a different form of remembrance. This second kind of memory, ‘memoria rerum or sentalier’, can best be described as ‘remembering the substance’ and, for the purposes of my study, it is in this praxis that I am most interested. 59

Memoria rerum, which I refer to as memoria throughout this thesis, was a process by which previous experiences and formerly encountered ideas could be brought into the living present in a different context to how they were initially received. In this way, a thinker could draw on the authority of the past to legitimise his actions as he responded to newly emerging situations and stimuli. The ‘goal of memoria’, then, was not to map the past directly on to the present, but to use the past to inform new decisions or new compositions in the temporal ‘now’. 60

Memoria thus had two very important functions. Firstly, as is expanded on in Chapter One, it was crucial to the process of creating narrative discourse. When a medieval author set about the task of composition, he essentially wove images and ideas that he had encountered in his former learning into a new narrative sequence. Whilst this newly produced discourse was informed by other texts or experiences, it was simultaneously unique and distinct to the authorial thinker. 61 Secondly, memoria

---

59 Carruthers, ‘Composition’, p. 16.
60 Carruthers, Book, p. 39.
61 As A. J. Minnis explains, the word ‘auctor’ was believed to emanate from the Latin verbs ‘agere ‘to act or perform’, augere ‘to grow’ and auieo ‘to tie, and to the Greek noun autinem ‘authority’’. In this way, the author performs an act of writing which brings together original sources to develop a new and authoritative narrative thereby suggesting that a degree of inventiveness, which was produced through the creative fusion of existing discourses, was central to authorship. See A. J. Minnis, Medieval Authorship: Scholastic and Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages, 2nd edn (Aldershot: Scholar, 1988), p. 10. Burt Kimmelman argues that it is this Latin conception of authorship that informed and inspired the identity of the vernacular writer in the later Middle Ages as he explains that English writers ‘did indeed desire to assert themselves as poets – that is, as auctores – yet their
played a vital role in decision-making. In order to determine his behaviour, the medieval thinker was encouraged to draw upon memory of his own past experiences, as well as the biographic experiences of other subjects whose vita he was familiar with, in order to repeat good ethics and steer clear of bad choices. This use of memory explains why medieval sermon-writers filled their homilies with exemplary tales.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, the idea that exemplars from the past could be recalled to help an individual shape his identity in the present moment also explains why de casibus literatures, such as Chaucer’s Monk’s Tale and John Lydgate’s Fall of Princes (c. 1423), became popular during the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the de casibus tradition, the reader is offered a series of biographic stories, extrapolated from biblical, mythological, philosophical and religious history, which detail how a protagonist fell from prosperity to disgrace as a result of her ill conduct.\textsuperscript{63} The medieval thinker could thus turn to these textual models to gain a sense of how not to behave.

In the pervasively Christian culture of late medieval England, the belief that memory of the past could enhance an individual’s capability to make righteous decisions in the living present meant that the faculty gained a strong association with salvation. If a man stocked his memory with scriptural and religious knowledge, to which he could have recourse in his day-to-day experience, he stood a better chance of making decisions that would please Christ and, ultimately, permit his entrance into the
Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{64} For this reason, training the memory, in order that it could work at its utmost efficiency, was considered to be of importance for all medieval peoples. Indeed, this is why Carruthers makes the bald assertion that, in medieval culture, the ‘choice to train one’s memory or not […] was not a choice dictated by convenience: it was a matter of ethics’.\textsuperscript{65}

Yet although Carruthers makes this important remark, her study on memory-training focuses almost exclusively on the ways in which the faculty was developed and exercised in monastic and academic communities. One late medieval text that places strong emphasis on the need for the populace to edify itself through personal familiarisation with the \textit{ars memoria} is King James I of Scotland’s autobiographical poem, \textit{The Kingis Quair} (c 1424). Moreover, and most pertinent to this study, the royal subject is widely believed to have written this poem as his captivity in Lancastrian England drew to a close.\textsuperscript{66} Within the verse, James, who was initially seized as a prisoner of war when he was just twelve years of age, implies that his familiarisation with the \textit{ars memoria}, which he gained during his time in prison, was the catalyst that enabled him to convert from a state of sin to one of spiritual enlightenment. At the close of the poem, the contented prisoner thus employs a Chaucerian envoy to send his experiential discourse out to a public readership so that


\textsuperscript{66} James’s authorship is indicated in the paratextual notes that encapsulate the poem in its sole manuscript witness, Bodleian Library MS. Arch Selden B.24. On folio 192r, an English scribe records, ‘Heire efter followis the quair maid by King James I of Scotland […] quhan his majestee wes in Ingland’ and, on the final folio (211r), a Latin hand confirms that the work is ‘Quod Jacobus primus scotorum rex Illustrissimus’. See King James I of Scotland’s \textit{The Kingis Quair}, in \textit{The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems}, ed. by Linne Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), pp. 31-79 (p. 31 and p. 79).
other subjects might learn that they, too, must familiarise themselves with the art of memory if they wish to ‘helit’ their own personal ‘defautis’ (Quair, l. 1365). Examining James’s Quair in the Introduction to this thesis thus serves three important purposes. Firstly, it allows a detailed illumination of the ideas and ideologies surrounding medieval memory-training to be presented. Secondly, it draws attention to the way in which the experience of imprisonment in the pre-modern period could be represented as conducive to an individual’s personal and spiritual development. Thirdly, it highlights an idea that I discuss at length in Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this thesis; that is, that the medieval prison-writer was quite aware that his personal record could be used to shape the identity of a community outside of the prison walls. It is for these reasons that I turn now to consider James’s Quair in further detail.

0.2B The Ars Memoria and The Kingis Quair

In James’s first-person poem, Quair, the speaker recalls how his own experience of captivity commenced after his boat came into trouble on stormy waters and he was seized by ‘inymyis’ who imprisoned him in ‘thair contree’ for the ‘space of yeris twise nyne’ (Quair, ll. 304-35). As these details match the biographic record of the Stewart ruler, who was detained in England for eighteen years after pirates intercepted his boat off Flamborough coast and ransomed him to Henry IV at Westminster, the rhyme-royal verse is generally acknowledged to contain the autobiographical reflections of the Scottish monarch. Although James does not refer to the specific political situation surrounding his imprisonment, in the opening section of the poem, the imprisoned speaker employs nature imagery to portray...
himself as an individual who is painfully aware of his sinful state. Given that fifteenth-century thinkers used the word ‘nest’ punningly to mean a breeding ground of sin as well as the dwelling place of a bird, this negative self-representation finds articulation as, through metaphor, the prisoner compares himself to a ‘bird that fed is on the nest/ And can noght flee of wit wayke and unstable’ (Quair, ll. 94-95).

Given that ‘wit’ was understood to denote prudence – a virtue which required the individual to use the past to make wise decisions in the present – James links his state to his feeble mental faculty. Yet as the poem unfolds, James recounts how his personal transformation came to pass as, during his time in prison, he has a dream in which he journeys to the courts of three allegorical goddesses – Venus, Minerva and Fortune – who teach him that if he wishes to live as an ethical and moral subject, he must govern himself through his memorial faculties.

Strikingly, James’s dream vision begins with an account of his somnolent ascent to Venus’s court ‘upward ay fro spere to spere/ Through air and water and the hote fyre’ (Quair, ll. 526-27). This particular presentation of James’s journey is important as medieval tracts on memory-training often promote cosmological maps as schema that can be deployed to develop the faculty. The reason why medieval thinkers

---

68 While there were occasional periods of rapprochement, throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries England’s relationship with Scotland was fraught with conflict, principally relating to border politics. It has been suggested that Henry IV was particularly keen to instigate war against his northern neighbour as James’s father, King Robert III, refused to acknowledge the Lancastrian ruler as a sovereign power following the deposition. See Alastair J. MacDonald, Border Bloodshed: Scotland and England at War, 1369-1403 (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000); A. J. Pollock, Late Medieval England, 1399-1509, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 2000), p. 34.

69 The MED, ‘nest’, (n.)1a and 2b.

70 According to Cicero, prudence entailed an individual to draw on memory of the past to make wise decisions in the present since this would eventually effect positive change in the future. See Cicero, De Inventione, trans. by H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 160. By indicating that his wit is weak, James confirms that he has little ability to exercise his memory at this point in his life. See the MED, ‘wit’, (n.)3.

71 Steven Kruger explains that dreams often take place at ‘pivotal points in the history of the self’ in medieval culture. See Steven Kruger, Dreaming in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 151.
believed that maps of the cosmos could be used for this purpose lay in the popular and long-standing belief that memory worked best when given a spatial context.\textsuperscript{72} From late Antiquity onwards, texts presenting the \textit{ars memoria} emphasise the need for subjects to imaginatively envisage highly ordered structures within which memory-images can be given fixed locations, or \textit{loci}.\textsuperscript{73} This was considered important as, if the memory was stocked in an organised manner, it would be easier for images to be recalled accurately at a later date. Thus, as is exemplified in treatises such as \textit{Six Days of Creation in Genesis} and Thomas Bradwardine’s \textit{De memoria artificale adquirenda} (c.1333), maps of the cosmos and the related Zodiac signs were used to promote memory-training precisely because memory-images could be attached to distinct stars, spheres or planets in a segregated fashion that would facilitate clear recall.\textsuperscript{74} Importantly, for James this cosmological imagery has a further significance. As Sophie Page explains, astrologers were often required to attend the birth of royal subjects so that they could read the arrangement of the stars to make divinations about the infant’s future character.\textsuperscript{75} When the intersection of


\textsuperscript{73} The need to place memory-images in highly organised schema can be traced back to the story of the first mnemonist, Simonides, which is recorded in Cicero’s \textit{On the Ideal Oratore} and Marcus Quintilianus’s \textit{De Institutione Oratoria Libri Duodecim}. Cicero explains that shortly after the scop, Simonides, had finished performing at a feast held by a nobleman from Thessaly, the roof of the banqueting hall suddenly collapsed, leaving the bodies of all of the guests obscured by the rubble. When Simonides returns to the scene, however, he finds that he is able to conjure, from memory, an image of the table where the guests sat. Thus, he is able to identify each of the corpses. The tale exemplifies the importance of storing memory-images in a highly ordered fashion as it is only because the scop can recall the \textit{loci} of each guest at the table that he can prevent the identity of the deceased guests from being consigned to oblivion. See Coleman, \textit{Ancient and Medieval Memories}, p. 13; Paul Rossi, \textit{Logic and the Art of Memory: The Quest for a Universal Language}, trans. by Stephen Clucas, 2nd edn (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 8-9.

\textsuperscript{74} Elizabeth Elliott notes that in the opening stanza of \textit{Kingis}, James describes the movement of the stars. From here, she expresses her belief that James was keen to establish an interest in memory-training from the outset of the verse. See Elizabeth Elliott, ‘The Open Sentence: Memory, Identity and Translation in the \textit{Kingis Quair}’, in ‘Joyous Sweit Imaginatioun’: \textit{Essays on Scottish Literature in Honour of R. D. S. Jack}, ed. by Sarah Carpenter and Sarah M. Duggan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 23-39 (p. 28).

\textsuperscript{75} Sophie Page points out that Henry V employed the astrologer John Holbrooke to attend the birth of his son, the future Henry VI, in 1421. As James shared a close relationship with this Lancastrian monarch, who took the Scotsman to France in the latter stages of his captivity, it seems probable he
these two ideologies – the utility of the cosmos in memory-training and in determining the character of a future ruler – is considered, James’s dream vision can be seen as an experience that is fundamentally concerned with the cultivation of his regal identity, which stands to be achieved through the development of his memorial faculties. This confirms that a medieval thinker could draw on specific tropes, resonant in relation to memory and to other discourses that reflect his own identity, to explore how his individual character must develop in accordance with the different situations he experiences personally.

The idea that spatial settings are integral to memory work is further exemplified in *Quair* when James recalls his arrival at Venus’s court; a place that he describes as a ‘chamber large, rowm, and fair’ (*Quair*, l. 538). The emphasis on the court’s architectural structure is apposite since, in the oldest surviving treatise on memory-training, the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 90BC), the faculty is compared to a ‘house, an intercolumnar space, a recess, an arch or the like’.76 *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, enjoyed extensive circulation in medieval Europe, where it came to influence the writings of many prominent mnemonic theorists. Albert Magnus (c. 1193-1206), for example, compares the memory to ‘the monastery church (*templum*), the portico (*intercolumnia*), *hospitalium*, and the cloister (*partum*)’.77 Likewise, Richard de Bury (1287-1345) describes the process of remembering as a journey in which the memory-image passes through the eyes to the


76 For a facing page translation of *Ad C. Herennium de ratione dicendi* (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*), see <http://www.utexas.edu/research/memoria/Ad_Herennium_Passages.html> [accessed on 30 October 2013].

‘vestibule of common sense and the atriums of the imagination’, before it enters ‘the bed-chamber of the intellect’ and eventually sets itself down in ‘the beds of memory, where it congenerates the eternal truth of the mind’. \(^{78}\) In Chapters Two and Three, I return to the idea that space and memory are interconnected as I explore how Wyche and Ashby evince their awareness that the prisons they dwell in heighten their ability to draw on scriptural and penitential memory to suggest their spiritual integrity. Yet for James, the sense that Venus’s chamber is a space wherein his character will be enhanced through memory-work is exemplified as he looks around the court to see an array of past lovers – some good and some bad – on whom he meditates as he considers how he can please the goddess. While James recognises that the ‘seyne, martris and confessour’ \((\text{Quair}, \text{l. 552})\) are emulable, he disregards those figures who have disappointed Venus through their ill-conduct. \(^{79}\) While the figures he sees embody and represent a diverse range of moralities, the profusion of deictic epithets, such as ‘Bysyde thame’ \((\text{Quair}, \text{l. 562})\), ‘next there’ \((\text{Quair}, \text{l. 562})\) and ‘in ane othir stage’ \((\text{Quair}, \text{l. 565})\), that appear as James recalls his time in this chamber highlights that the space is highly organised as men and women who are virtuous occupy different positions to those who are dubious. Given that variants from the verb ‘to see’ recur six times while James is in the chamber confirms, as noted earlier, that the sensory perception of sight was integral to the process of filling the mind with material to be recalled at a later date. \(^{80}\) Moreover, the very fact that James recalls the sight of ‘Ovide and Omer’ \((\text{Quair}, \text{l. 599})\) with pleasure confirms the idea that the memory should be stocked with authoritative and gnomic narratives from the past as these sources will aid a subject make wise decisions in the future. This idea is one


\(^{79}\) These negative exemplas include men and women who had ‘desyre surmounting thair degree’ or become consumed by ‘unkyndenes’ and ‘jelousye’ \((\text{Quair}, \text{ll. 608-11})\).

\(^{80}\) Variants of ‘sagh’ appear at l. 555, l. 562, l. 570, l. 604, l. 645 and l. 654.
that I develop throughout this thesis as I show how the prison-writers recall figures, tropes and images that are preserved in popular religious writings to explore their identity in a manner which emphasises their spiritual virtue.

For James, his time at Venus’s court comes to a close after he swears his loyalty to the goddess. Thus he journeys to Minerva’s court, where he is given a further lesson about the importance of filling his mind with sources that will enhance his moral character. This is exemplified as Minerva entreats her guest to:

\[
[...]
\[
\text{pray unto His hye purveyance}
\]
\[
\text{Thy lufe to gye and on Him traist and call}
\]
\[
\text{That cornerstone and ground is of the wall}
\]
\[
\text{That failis noght; and trust, without in drede}
\]
\[
\text{Unto they purpose sone He sall lede}
\]
\[
[...]
\]
\[
\text{Ground thy werk therefore on the stone}
\]
\[
\text{And thy desire sall forthward with thee gone.}
\]

\text{(Quair, ll. 906-17)}

By urging James to remember that God is the cornerstone on which he should found his identity, Minerva conflates the architectural mnemonic that pervades medieval texts on memory-training with scripture to imprint her important lesson that James must stock his mind with biblical truth in the dreamer’s mind. That this lesson, concerning the importance of scriptural memory, is articulated at a separate court to that of Venus draws attention to the centrality of the Bible in the late medieval subject’s cultivation of his spirituality.

After visiting Minerva’s court, James journeys on to visit Fortune. On his travels, he records seeing ‘mony another beste diverse and strange’ \text{(Quair, l. 1065)}, including a ‘pantere like unto the smaragdyne’ \text{(Quair, l. 1080)} and ‘the lufare unicorne’ \text{(Quair, l. 1084)}. Although the vivid description of the beasts spans three stanzas, this section
of verse is often overlooked by critics. Indeed, in one of the few studies that touches upon this part of the poem, Robert Crawford describes the lines as one of Quair’s ‘incidental beauties’ in a manner that suggests this section of James’s narrative is purely aesthetic. The listing of animals, however, finds an important parallel in the bestiary tradition. Rather than presenting natural history, medieval bestiary literature offered counsel towards character building as each of the listed beasts was either celebrated for a particular virtue or condemned for malignancy. John Garland (c. 1180-c. 1252) thus promoted the bestiary as conducive to memory-training as he recognised that an individual could affix different memory-images to different beasts and the various character traits that the animals evoke. Pertinently to my study, which shows how a range of religious genres are invoked to preserve ideas about the self, the use of the bestiary in a mnemonic context demonstrates that genres that are not immediately or explicitly associated with memory-training could be invoked and adapted by medieval thinkers as they set about training and exercising this faculty.

When James eventually reaches Fortune’s court, he glimpses the goddess’s infamous wheel; a symbol that reflects her power to move all individuals through the highs and lows of their earthly experience at her own discretion. Yet before James himself climbs on the wheel, Fortune wakes him from his dream by tugging at his

---

82 Carmen Brown, ‘Bestiary Lessons on Pride and Lust’, in The Mark of the Beast, ed. by Debra Hassig (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 53-70 (pp. 61-62). In the twelfth century, bestiary animals were often painted on the walls of monasteries and churches because they were recognised as bearing the capacity to facilitate moral development. See Joyce Salisbury, The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2011), p. 90.
‘ere’ (Quair l. 1203). As the ear – which allows sound to be internalised in the mind – was used to stock memory, the goddess’s action can be interpreted as an expression of her belief that James should take personal responsibility for his future by drawing on his memorial faculties to make prudent decisions that will effect positive change in his life. In this context, it is pertinent to recall that as soon as James wakes from the dream, he is visited by a ‘turtur quhite as calk’ (Quair, l. 1235). While the earlier avian imagery drew attention to James’s sinful disposition, here, the presence of the dove, which denotes the Holy Spirit, confirms that the lessons the prisoner has recently learnt – that is, the lessons that he should stock his mind with ethical materials so that he can make recourse to his memorial faculties in a manner that will permit good self-governance – gains God’s blessing.

Importantly, the dove’s significance does not end here. Minerva taught James that he must imprint biblical truth in his memory. In the Book of Genesis, it is this bird – the dove – that appears to show Noah that new-life exists after the Flood. 85 James’s situation, as a man who, in a state of sin, travelled over water before his spiritually transformative imprisonment commenced, can be seen to recall Noah’s vita. Like his biblical predecessor, James moved over water, from a state of debasement, to a new realisation of God’s grace, love and law. 86 As the Scotsman prepares to return home and ascend to throne, he can be seen as akin to his Old Testament forbear, who founded a new order within which God’s truth was preserved. Like the cosmological spheres, this resonance emphasises that memory can be exercised and presented in

85 Genesis 6-9.
86 The idea that James’s experience evokes memory of Noah is confirmed if this particular biblical figure’s place in the medieval ars memoria is recalled. In the twelfth-century, the influential theologian, Hugh de St Victor, presented Noak’s Ark as a memory-training scheme precisely because he recognised that its compartments were conducive to storing memory-images in a highly organised fashion. See Carruthers, Book, p. 53.
ways that speak to the individual’s situation. Yet as a well-trained memory permits
the thinker to establish himself as a moral authority, this faculty also enables him to
use his experiential record to aid and bring about development in others. Given that
James states, at the close of *Quair*, he wants others to learn from his personal
experience, the future Scottish monarch uses his experiential memory of
imprisonment to teach his people that they, too, must gain familiarity with the *ars
memoria* if they are to bring about positive change in their personal and spiritual
identities. Memory is confirmed to be integral to an individual’s personal
development. Accordingly, it is a faculty that all men and women must train and
exercise.

0.3A Authorising Religious Memory in the Late Medieval Prison

While *Quair* is useful for illuminating the late medieval *ars memoria* to both the
medieval and modern reader, the experience of imprisonment for James was notably
different from that of the other prison-writers I discuss in this thesis. In late medieval
culture, prisoners of war did not face a legal trial. Rather, it was recognised that
this prisoner’s release would come to pass if and when the governing authorities in
their homeland agreed to pay an appropriate ransom.\(^\text{87}\) Moreover, reflecting the
values of a feudal society, in late medieval England, the conditions that a prisoner
was held within were often determined by his social status.\(^\text{88}\) As a regal subject,
James spent very little time in the confines of a gaol-house. Instead, during his time
in England, James was moved between the estates of the aristocracy, where he was

\(^{87}\) Rémy Ambühl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle

\(^{88}\) Wealthier prisoners could, for example, alleviate the suffering they endured by using their wealth to
purchase food from outside or they could purchase a place in a room with more light that their poorer
122.
treated as a guest under house arrest, who had full access to the benefits of a courtly life, rather than as a prisoner *per se*. For most medieval prisoners, however, the experience of incarceration was much more difficult than this. As the incarcerated community was not protected by medieval law, prisoners were often left to languish in terrible, even intolerable, conditions. Indeed, historical evidence confirms that starvation, illness, violence and even premature death were not uncommon in the medieval gaol-house.

Importantly, the harsh conditions of the medieval prison did not come about by accident. This is exemplified when the history of Ludgate Prison is considered. In 1419, around thirty years after opening in 1388, Ludgate was temporarily closed down since its conditions were considered to be too lenient. This confirms that suffering was perceived to be a necessary part of the prisoner’s experience in a way that supports Trevor Dean’s suggestion that, in late medieval culture, imprisonment may very well have been ‘reminiscent of penitence’. In this conception, the

---


91 Marston, *Prison*, p. 12. It is pertinent to note that, in his scholarship on Margery’s *Book*, John Arnold notes that the holy woman feared violence when she was threatened with imprisonment. This affirms that the prison was recognised as a dangerous locale in fifteenth-century England. See John Arnold, ‘Margery’s Trials: Heresy, Lollardy and Dissent’, in *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by John Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 75-94 (pp. 83-84).

92 When the detained inmates were moved to Newgate, sixty-four men died in little over a fortnight. Although there is no record of what caused their death, it seems likely they were either struck by a serious illness or attacked by other prisoners or gaolers. This confirms how tough the prison conditions were. See Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 116.

93 Dean, *Crime*, p. 124. While Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobalkia suggest that the choice to name ‘the worst chamber’ in Newgate the ‘Paradise Room’ was ironic, it is possible that there was a degree of sincerity in this epithet. It permits the acknowledgement that the incarcerated subject, through his suffering, is in a place where his soul is being cleansed so that it can eventually enter heaven. See Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobalkia, ‘Introduction’, in *Medieval Practices of*
The hardship experienced inside the prison offers the soul a chance to be cleansed of its sin. The prison, then, can be identified as a place within which the incarcerated subject should ideally undergo a form of spiritual transformation that will enhance his chance of entering into the Kingdom of God at the end of his earthly life; an end which he may have (rightly) perceived to be proximate precisely because he was trapped in a dangerous, squalor-filled place.94

The notion that examining the spiritual significance of imprisonment in the pre-modern period might deepen the understanding of how and why this form of punishment developed and was understood in medieval culture has recently been suggested by Megan Cassidy-Welch. In her latest monograph, she explains that, although the work of scholars such as Geltner and Dunbabin has done much ‘to flesh out the social and political contexts in which the widespread use of imprisonment came about’ in the late Middle Ages, ‘there is still a need to recognise the significant and enduring impact of religious thinking on imprisonment during the same period’.95

This important work has already begun in several areas of medieval studies. Scholars examining how the architecture of the monastery was designed to aid the spiritual health of the community dwelling therein have, for example, noted that many

---

94 In late medieval culture, religious writers typically posited that God would judge the soul of each individual at the moment of death rather than at the Last Judgement. See Gwenfair Walter Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England: Lay Spirituality and Glimpses of the Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Brill: Leiden, 2007), pp. 116-17.

95 Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Imprisonment in the Medieval Religious Imagination, c. 1150-1400* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 4. The ensuing study begins to explore the religious implications and uses of imprisonment on the continent over the course of the ‘long-thirteenth century’. My work differs from that of Cassidy-Welch in that it considers the significance of religious memory and identity in the English prison in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
religious houses contained a private prison. This meant that any dissident monks or nuns could be sent into solitary confinement to cleanse their souls through prayer and suffering.

Another area where medievalists have begun to explore the interrelationship between imprisonment and the spiritual well-being of the ‘incarcerated’ subject is in the burgeoning body of scholarship on the anchoritic life. In this strain of ascetic piety, men and women shut themselves off from the world in order to dedicate their lives to prayer and penance.96 Scholars examining this tradition have noted that, in certain instances, medieval writers represented the anchorhold as a symbolic prison as the suffering that took place within its walls enabled the anchoritic subject to cleanse her soul of sin.97 This is exemplified in a thirteenth-century conduct handbook for anchoritic subjects, Ancrene Wisse. Here, the anonymous author informs his reader that it is ‘quite unreasonable to come into an anchor-hold, into God’s prison, readily and willingly into a place of discomfort, in order to look for ease there’.98 Instead, he reminds her that once she enters into confinement, she must commit herself to constant prayer, weeping and penance so that her heart can be lifted to the Lord. Much like the monastic prison, the anchorhold is recognised as a place that benefits the spiritual health of the ‘incarcerated’ subject.

---

Although *Ancrene Wisse* was written in the thirteenth century, the significance of the parallel between the anchorhold and a symbolic, spiritual prison should not be viewed as dated in relation to the later fourteenth and fifteenth century contexts that this thesis focuses on. As Anne Savage has lucidly explained, while anchoritic literatures may have been primarily directed towards the attentions of a select number of voluntary ‘incarcerated’ subjects, by the fifteenth century, the theologies articulated in these texts had infiltrated into, and permeated, mainstream, orthodox religious culture.\(^9^9\) It is therefore possible that prison-writers, who were familiar with religious literatures such as the Bible, hagiographies and penitential discourses, may also have been aware of this strain of piety. As well as using memory of saintly narratives, scripture and prayers that were promoted by the Church, the prison-writers may also have been investing in a memory of the anchorhold as they recast their own, immediate enclosure in the confines of a prison as an experience that stood to the benefit, not the detriment, of the soul, in both the earthly life and, most significantly, the afterlife.

Scholarship on anchoritic discourse not only highlights that this form of writing was received and understood in fourteenth and fifteenth century England, but it also draws attention to the important ways in which enclosure and the experience of a specific space was understood to aid and abet the spiritual growth of an ‘incarcerated’ subject.\(^1^0^0\) As critics have observed, the anchorhold, which is sealed off from the world, acts as both a womb-like structure, in which a subject can grow

---


\(^{100}\) This is exemplified in the essays contained in the edited collection *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages*, ed. by L. H. McAvoy and Marie Hughes-Edwards (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009) and Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms*, pp. 20-25.
and develop, and as a tomb-like structure, in which the subject, who is ‘dead to the world’, can focus attention exclusively upon Christian ideals and identity, without the distraction of external influence. In this way, the walls of the anchorhold and the space within its confines take on spiritual significance as it is through entrance into these parameters that the ‘incarcerated’ subject is enveloped in a region that is overtly conducive to spiritual health and salvation.

The idea that space and subjectivity are interconnected is not only discussed by scholars who are interested in anchoritic literatures. A number of twentieth-century theorists, including Foucault, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau have also explored, in some detail, how space informs the identity of its inhabitant and, in turn, how the inhabitant subject also affects and informs the cultural meaning of a particular space. As I indicated in my earlier discussion of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, the French theorist argues that space can be manipulated to bring about discipline and reform in the subject. This is exemplified through recourse to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon design for the prison. In Bentham’s ideal view of the prison, criminal subjects should be placed in a constricted and confined setting, within which they can always be viewed by an overseeing authoritative body.¹⁰¹ Although the panopticon prison was never physically realised, Foucault argues that the idea which underpins the design; that is, that space can be manipulated and regulated in order to manipulate and regulate the behaviour of a dissident subject so that he transforms in to a moral being, is central to the post-Enlightenment ideology of imprisonment.

¹⁰¹ Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 7-100.
While my thesis argues that medieval prisons are not structured in the same organised fashion as modern prisons, where microcosmic cells are utilised to contain and control the subject, this sense that space can affect and influence the behaviour of the incarcerated individual is maintained through my own work. In my thesis, rather than adhering strictly to Foucauldian thinking which, as I indicated earlier, does not encompass a consideration of the Middle Ages, I am strongly influenced by Michel de Certeau’s theorisation of space. For de Certeau, space should not simply be seen as having a monolithic meaning or resonance, nor should it be seen as defined or demarcated by a specific set of parameters. Rather, in de Certeau’s conception, space is always actuated by the movements that take place within it. Thus, while Foucault sees space as a principal factor that determines subjectivity, de Certeau sees the behaviour and activity of the subject as determining the cultural significance of the space that he is in. To this end, de Certeau’s conceptualisation of space complements the work of Henry Lefebvre. Like Foucault, Lefebvre precludes a specific analysis on the Middle Ages from this own work. However, pertinent to my thesis, Lefebvre does argue that space is always historically contingent; that is, he posits that space takes on a particular meaning at a particular time. This meaning, he contends, is determined by what happens within the space.

In my thesis, especially in Chapter Three, I argue that the prison serves as a memory-chamber for the medieval prison-writer, who uses the mnemonic potential of the space that he is trapped within to reflect on the religious past so that he can suggest his own holiness in the past, present and future. Just as the anchorhold is recognised


as a place of spiritual development, my thesis also argues that the medieval prison held a similar cultural connotation. It too, is a space within which the prisoner, through memory, could evince his own holiness as, through prayer and reflection on scripture and saints, he could present himself as a spiritual subject, intent on pleasing God in this life and the next. Foucault argues that space can be manipulated to bring about discipline and reform in the subject. This is exemplified through recourse to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon design for the prison. In this latter conception, subjects are placed in a confined setting within which they can always be viewed by an overseeing authoritative body. Although the panopticon prison was never physically realised, Foucault argues that the idea which underpins the design; that is, that space can be manipulated and regulated in order to manipulate and regulate a dissident subject to better behaviour is central to the post-Enlightenment ideology of imprisonment. While my thesis argues that medieval prisons are not structured in this same organised fashion, this sense that space can affect and influence the behaviour of the incarcerated subject is maintained through my own work, albeit in an alternate fashion. In my thesis, rather than adhering strictly to Foucauldian thinking which, as I indicated earlier, does not encompass a consideration of the Middle Ages, I am strongly influenced by Michel de Certeau’s theorisation of space. For de Certeau, space should not simply be seen as having a monolithic meaning or resonance, nor should it be seen as defined or demarcated by a specific set of parameters. Rather, in de Certeau’s conception, space is always actuated by the movements that take place within it. Thus, while Foucault sees space as a principal factor that determines subjectivity, de Certeau sees the behaviour and activity of the subject as determining the cultural significance of the space that he is in. To this end, de Certeau’s conceptualisation of space complements the work of Henry Lefebvre.
Like Foucault, Lefebvre precludes a specific analysis on the Middle Ages from this own work. However, pertinent to my thesis, Lefebvre does argue that space is always historically contingent; that is, he posits that space takes on a particular meaning at a particular time. This meaning, he contends, is determined by what happens within the space. In my thesis, especially in Chapter Three, I argue that the prison serves as a memory-chamber for the medieval prison-writer, who uses the mnemonic potential of the space that he is trapped within to reflect on the religious past so that he can suggest his own holiness in the past, present and future. Just as the anchorhold is recognised as a place of spiritual development, my thesis also argues that the medieval prison held a similar cultural connotation. It too, is a space within which the prisoner, through memory, could evince his own holiness as, through prayer and reflection on scripture and saints, he could present himself as a spiritual subject, intent on pleasing God in this life and the next.

Developing this work on the interrelationship between space and the cultivation of a medieval subject’s spiritual, personal identity further, this thesis examines how the figure of the late medieval prison-writer, who exists outside of the confines of either a monastery or an anchorhold, uses religious memory to reframe the condemnation that led to his imprisonment. By framing his experiential memory of his past conduct in a narrative framework that permits the prisoner to compare himself to religious figures who also suffer great persecution during their earthly lives, the prison-writer not only advocates his own holiness, but he also anticipates that he, too, will eventually share in the promise of salvation. In this way, the prisoner’s autobiographical inscription reveals itself to encompass an understanding of his
identity in three interrelated temporal modes: the past, the present and the anticipated eternal future.

As I indicated earlier, in bringing together these prison literatures, the thesis does not set out to establish a generic definition of what a medieval prison-text is or what it might contain. Instead, it highlights that the late medieval prison-writer drew mnemonically on a number of modes of religious expression to promote himself as spiritually sound authority. Thus, as I discuss further in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, which consider how the fifteenth-century prisoner extends lessons in biblical learning and penitential piety to his reader, the incarcerated subject exploits this moral vantage point to help free Christians improve their spiritual identities. The prisoner thus creates a memory of his own life experience that taps into the temporalities of Judeo-Christian salvation history to evince his personal consolation and to establish his moral authority, as the earthly condemnation he suffers is reconceptualised in an alternate, and ultimately more important, framework of judgement.

The taxonomies of genre in medieval literature have often been described as existing in a state of flux and change. As Alfred Hiatt explains, medieval authors did not only ‘move between and mix genres’, but they often had ‘flexible [...] understandings of what and how particular genres were constituted’.104 This same idea underpins Ethan Knapp’s study of an author whom Patterson describes as ‘the most strenuously autobiographical poet of early English literature’, Hoccleve.105 As Knapp notes, in his professional life Hoccleve was employed for the Privy Seal, where his principal

104 Alfred Hiatt, ‘Genre without System’, in Middle English, pp. 227-94 (p. 228).
task was to draft petitions to the king and to record the monarch’s responses to those seeking either mercy or money at his bequest.\footnote{Ethan Knapp, \textit{The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England} (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 33-38.} That the petitionary mode is central to Hoccleve’s autobiographical inscriptions suggests that he transposed a literary form he was familiar with in his working life on to his personal context as he set about recording his understanding of selfhood.\footnote{Knapp, \textit{The Bureaucratic Muse}, pp. 33-38.} My study draws upon and develops Hiatt and Knapp’s scholarship by demonstrating that the paradigm of borrowing a familiar religious genre to legitimise personal identity is also enacted by the late medieval prison-writer.

The prison-writers whose work I consider in this thesis all experienced imprisonment in England between the late-fourteenth century and the fifteenth century. In this way, their biographic records all stand to contradict the theory, implicit in Foucault’s \textit{Discipline and Punish} and proliferated by other scholars, that imprisonment is a modern phenomenon, utilised in criminal justice from the Enlightenment period. Yet the authors whose writings I explore are not simply selected by virtue of this temporal factor, they are all linked by a further common factor. Each prison-writer turns, through memorial actions, to the authority of the Christian tradition to explicate and represent their personal, lived experience in order to elevate himself beyond the earthly judgement he has received. The intersection between self-representation, memory and religious identity that permeates the self-reflective discourse of each prisoner – Usk, Paris, Wyche, Thorpe, Ashby and Audelay – is thus presented as textual evidence that the pre-modern subject was, indeed, predisposed to meditate upon himself and think about his personal reputation and representation in ways that are often occluded by scholars who posit that a
predilection to create autobiographical discourse is also a modern phenomenon. In this light, it is pertinent to note that this thesis does not consider the writings of two other famous late medieval prisoners: Duke Charles of Orleans and Thomas Malory. While d’Orleans was held as a prisoner of war in England between 1414 and 1445, after he was seized from Agincourt during the Hundred Years’ War, Malory was imprisoned in the Tower of London for a number of years during the 1460s for reasons that are largely unclear. The ellipsis of these two figures, however, is not accidental, nor is it based on the political circumstances surrounding their imprisonments, whether these be known or unknown. Charles’s and Malory’s works are excluded as, in their writings, –*Fortune Stabilnes* and *Le Morte d’Arthur* respectively – the central protagonists do not look, in detail, to the authority of the saints, penitential discourses or the Bible to come to terms with their identity.

Rather, Charles’s first-person speaker records the ways in which his thwarted amatory affairs with two unnamed women leave him to languish in excessive and seemingly endless misery. In Malory’s work, on the other hand, pertains to a popular medieval strain of romance: Arthurian literature. In *Le Morte d’Arthur*, the narrative action, which is largely compiled, translated and reworked from extant French and English sources, thus pivots around the pursuits of a fictional group of knights, living in the latter half of the fifth century. The text thus lacks the same autobiographical and religious impetus that I posit exists in, and underscores, the works of the other late medieval prison-writers discussed in the thesis.

In order to start thinking about how religious memory is used to authorise the prisoner’s creation of a multi-temporal and self-promotional autobiographical discourse, Chapter One demonstrates how two Ricardian prisoners conflate their
own experience of imprisonment with the experiences of two early Christian martyrs, St Margaret of Antioch and St Christina of Bolsena, to liberate themselves, textually, from the shame associated with treachery. By comparing their own experience of imprisonment with that of their holy predecessors, Usk and Paris not only suggest their own holiness, but they also anticipate that, at the end of their lives, they, too, will share eternal glory with the saintly community. As well as examining how Usk’s and Paris’s remembrance of the saints permits the prison-writer to evoke a Christian sense of eternity in order to effect personal consolation, my analysis of Testament and Life also draws further attention to the creative and political significance of memoria. As Usk and Paris configure their memories of these saints in ways which, respectively, permit them to appeal to and repudiate the man responsible for their incarceration – Richard II – it becomes clear that the particular way in which a prison-writer interweaves his own personal experience of suffering into a pre-existing textual model enables him to comment on his immediate, personal situation.

Chapter two maintains the argument that recollecting a text that occupies an important place in the cultural consciousness permits the prisoner to exculpate himself, textually, from the negative association of imprisonment. However, here I also consider an alternate, yet complementary, intersection between personal and public memory. By drawing attention to the ways in which the Wycliffite prisoners, Thorpe and Wyche, frame their memory of persecution in letter form, I show that the prisoner’s experiential memory of suffering, which he authorises through ubiquitous recall of scripture, is disseminated to a community of heretics outside the prison walls in the hope that its message will inspire other Lollards to retain their heterodox
creed, despite the persecution they face from the Church. In this way, the prison-writer not only validates his identity through biblical memory, but he also uses this scripturally-sanctioned vantage point to promote himself as a figure who is fit to offer counsel to others, despite his recent condemnation. Experiential memory, which is authorised through biblical memory, is thus recognised as having the potential to solidify the bonds in a designated community of believers, as well as to aid the representation of the remembering author.

Moving on from this, Chapter Three returns to an orthodox context as I consider the ways in which Ashby and Audelay each draw on the memory of a prisoner, whose vita they are familiar with through personal experience, to issue lessons to the populace on the importance of penitential piety. In my examination of Audelay’s Counsel, I place special emphasis on the clergyman’s recollection and adaptation of Archbishop Pecham’s instruction, articulated at the Council of Lambeth (1281), that Christians must remember the incarcerated and the sick, not only to aid the souls of the imprisoned and the ailing, but also to bring about spiritual healing in their personal context. For Audelay, who represents himself as blind, remembering Lestrange, in and through the prayers that he presents to his readers, permits him to exemplify this form of charity as his physical and textual corpus each enable him to share in his master’s former sin as he sets about redeeming Lestrange and himself from the shame associated with the former’s heinous crime. In Ashby’s Complaint, on the other hand, the poet responds to the fact that his friends forget to show him mercy during his imprisonment by committing himself to fervent penitential prayer. Throughout his verse, this prisoner thus has recourse to the doctrine of Purgatory as he teaches his reader that, if she is to reduce the sentence of suffering that stands to
burden her soul in the afterlife, she should emulate his spiritual activity and commit herself to penitential prayer. Memory of the prison and prisoner in both Audelay and Ashby’s works provides a stimulus for the author to entreat his reader to follow his example and remember the incarcerated community so that the souls of all Christians can move further along the path to salvation.

Throughout this study, then, I argue that memoria, and specifically the act of combining experiential memory with religious memory, is integral to the late medieval prisoner’s articulation of a discourse in which he liberates himself, textually, from his recent condemnation by exhibiting himself as a figure who will gain eternal reward in the heavenly kingdom. By considering the multiple genres that the prisoner’s self-reflective inscription is preserved within, this study not only develops the current understanding of medieval autobiographical discourse, by showing how religious genres intersect with self-reflective writings in a self-promotional fashion, but it also develops Carruthers’s seminal work on memory and scholarship on the history of imprisonment in the West, by arguing that the pre-modern prison, as well as the pre-modern monastery and the pre-modern university, should be recognised as a locale within which the memory could be trained, developed and exercised to permit the late medieval subject’s personal and spiritual development.
1.0 Introduction: Ricardian Prisoners

In July 1377, when he was just ten years of age, Richard II ascended to the throne of England. For the first time in the country’s history, the vigil of the king’s coronation was marked with a public celebration, during which Richard processed through the streets of London for his subjects to behold. When young boy reached Westminster, he came before a specially constructed castle that was designed to emulate the New Jerusalem. Here, actors dressed as celestial angels gave him a crown to symbolise the belief that the new monarch was vested with God’s authority.1 The notion that the king was a theocratic figure, who imparted divine law on earth, was upheld throughout medieval Europe.2 Thus, as is exemplified in the fourteenth-century English law code, Britton, at the age of twelve, all boys were expected to swear an oath of life-long loyalty to the monarch and his descendants:

Hear this you this, N, bailiff. That I, P, from this day forward will be faithful and loyal [feal et leal] to our lord E. king of England and his heirs, and will bear unto them faith and loyalty [foy et leauté] of life and limb, of body and chattels, and of earthly honour, and

1 Roy Strong, Coronation: A History of Kingship and the British Monarchy (London: Harper Collins, 2005), pp. 135-36. It is possible that Richard’s coronation was celebrated in this way to allay any potential concerns about the young boy’s readiness to take to the throne. The cultural anxiety surrounding minority rulers in the Middle Ages is discussed in Mark Ormrod, ‘Coming to Kingship: Boy Kings and the Passage of Power in Fourteenth Century England’, in Rites of Passage: Cultures of Transition in the Fourteenth Century, ed. by Nicola F. McDonald and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press in association with the Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 31-49 (pp. 46-49).

2 In his twelfth-century book of ethical and philosophical politics, Policraticus, John of Salisbury explains that ‘according to general definition, the prince is the public power and a certain image on earth of the divine majesty […]. Whatever the prince can do, therefore, is from God so that power does not depart from God, but it is used as a substitute for His hand, making all things learning His justice and mercy’. See John of Salisbury: Policraticus, trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), IV, p. 28. The interrelationship between divine and regal power in medieval culture is also discussed in Walter Ullmann, The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 66-67 and Ernst H. Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 45-48.
will neither know or hear of their hurt or damage, but I will oppose it to the best of my power; so help me God and the Saints.³

While the rhetoric of Britton is necessarily formulaic, even ritualistic, the pledge not only stresses the importance of obeying and safeguarding the king, but it also underlines that the saints were recognised as figures who could aid late medieval subjects to cultivate and sustain an honourable and Christian civic identity.

The intersection between acts of hagiographic commemoration and the development of personal and political identity is central to this chapter. Here, I examine two texts written by men imprisoned on charges of treachery in late fourteenth-century England, Thomas Usk’s Testament of Love (c. 1384) and William Paris’s Life of St. Christina of Bolsena (c. 1397). Within my consideration of Usk’s and Paris’s writings, I demonstrate that, in an ostensibly paradoxical twist, each shamed author draws on the memory of an early Christian martyr to exculpate himself, textually, from the heinous crime of betraying King Richard.

The historian Nigel Saul has identified Richard’s reign as one that encompassed ‘all the elements of a tragedy’.⁴ In the late 1380s, the king was accused of forming close relations with a host of malignant courtiers, who sought to augment their personal wealth at the expense of the realm. At the Merciless Parliament (1388), the Lords Appellant thus pronounced Richard an unfit monarch and set about limiting his power.⁵ While the Appellants were initially successful in this endeavour, Richard did not accept their coup. Instead, in the early 1390s, he set about countering their efforts

³ The original text, which is preserved in French, is believed to have been written at the request of King Edward I. See Britton, trans. by F. M. Nicol, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1865), I, p. 185.
⁵ Saul, Richard II, pp. 176-91.
until he successfully resumed full regal authority. However, as the final decade of Richard’s reign unfolded, his inability to forget the way in which he had been marginalised led him to exert his monarchical authority in an increasingly tyrannous fashion. Accordingly, at the close of summer 1399, the Plantagenet king was arrested by a former Appellant, Henry Bolingbroke, and cast into the Tower of London, where he finally admitted that he had failed to rule his people honourably.

On 30 September 1399, Richard’s prison confession was read aloud at Westminster and, the very same day, Bolingbroke deposed his Plantagenet enemy, taking the crown to become England’s first Lancastrian king.

Albeit in different contexts, Usk’s and Paris’s biographic records attest that Richard struggled to rule his subjects effectively over the course of his reign. In late medieval culture, the mayor of London’s principal role was ‘to keep the city “surely” and “safely” for the Crown’. The mayor thus existed as one of the king’s most loyal servants. Although little is known about Usk’s early life, in spring 1383 he took up a position as clerk to the mayor of the city, John of Northampton, and, over the ensuing months, he played an active role campaigning for his master’s re-election.

---

8 Christopher Fletcher, Richard II: Manhood, Youth and Politics, 1377-99 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-5. It is widely acknowledged that Richard’s prison-confession, De Merita Notoria, was adapted by the House of Lancaster, who supplemented the document with additional failings in order to create the impression that the Plantagenet king was even more tyrannous than he himself admitted. In the fifteenth century, this adapted text was reproduced and circulated in England as part of the House of Lancaster’s attempt to justify the deposition. See Jenni Nuttall, The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship: Language, Literature and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-10.
10 The mayor’s importance was made evident to the populace through the elaborate ceremonies and rituals that accompanied his installation. See Barbara Hanawalt, ‘Of Good and Ill Repute’: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 21-24.
However, when the city went to vote in October, Northampton lost the mayoral election to his opponent, and Richard’s preferred candidate, Nicholas Brembre. In response, Northampton’s men incited civic disturbances throughout London. Although this display of opposition lasted a number of months, it came to an abrupt end in July 1384, as a number of Northampton’s supporters, including Usk, were arrested and cast into Newgate as traitors of the realm.

Paris, on the other hand, was imprisoned towards the end of Richard’s reign. In July 1397, his master, the twelfth Earl of Warwick, Sir Thomas Beauchamp (1338-1401), was thrown into the Tower of London after Richard accused him, as well as two other Appellants, Richard Arundel and Thomas of Woodstock, of plotting treason.

In his account of Beauchamp’s trial, the chronicler Adam Usk vividly describes how the disgraced nobleman admitted that he was guilty of ‘everything that was alleged’. As a result, Beauchamp was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment on the Isle of Man. While many of Beauchamp’s former friends abandoned him, in the closing lines of Life, Paris explains that he entered the ‘prison of ston’ with his

---

16 The Chronicle of Adam Usk, p. 35. When Arundel appeared before court, he refused to express any remorse. Accordingly, he was executed on Tower Hill on the day that his trial took place. Woodstock, on the other hand, was found dead, presumably murdered at Richard’s command, before his trial commenced. See Saul, Richard II, p. 374.
master and, from here, Warwick’s loyal servant wrote his verse account of St Christina of Bolsena’s *vita*.¹⁷

The popularity of hagiographic discourse in medieval culture is difficult to overstate. Throughout the Middle Ages, the saints were revered for the exceptional piety and faith that they displayed during their earthly lives. As a reward for their steadfast commitment to Christ, at the moment of death, these holy subjects ascended directly to heaven to reside in close proximity to God for eternity.¹⁸ In both textual and visual culture, the Church promoted the saints as role models for Christians to meditate on as they cultivated their own spiritual identities.¹⁹ Moreover, as well as being remembered as exemplary figures, these holy subjects were also praised as intercessors and miracle-workers, who could bring about divine intervention in the lives of their faithful devotees.²⁰ The relationship between the Church and the saints thus pivoted around reciprocal acts of remembrance. If a Christian commemorated a

---
¹⁷ William Paris, *Life of St. Christina*, in *Middle English Legends of Women Saints*, ed. by Sherry Reames (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institution Publications, 2003), pp. 227-42 (p. 242, l. 518). Pertinently, in the verse, Paris laments the way in which Beauchamp’s friends and former retainers neglect him through the use of an *ubi sunt* motif: ‘Where are his knyghtes that with hym yede/ Whan he was in prosperité?/ Where are the squiers now at nede,/ That sumtyme thoughte thei wold not flee?/ Of yomen had he grete plenté/ That he was wonte to cloth and feede;/ Nowe is ther non of the mené/ That ons dare se ther lorde, for drede’ (*Life*, ll. 241-42). These lines highlight that treachery was considered so heinous that any individual who knew a traitor was likely to abandon this despicable figure in order to safeguard his own reputation.

¹⁸ Given that most Christians did not die wholly contrite, their souls were required to undergo a period of posthumous purgation before they could enter heaven. While the understanding of penance in the afterlife is discussed further in Chapter Three, here it is important to note that the saints, as well as the newly baptised, were exempt from purgatorial suffering. See Laura Vivanco, *Death in Fifteenth Century Castile: Ideologies of the Elite* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004), p. 114.

¹⁹ Karen A. Winstead explains that ‘medieval hagiographers […] intended to promote imitation of the saint’s admirable qualities which […] included absolute faith, patience and fortitude’. See Karen A. Winstead, ‘Fear in Late-Medieval English Martyr Legends’, in *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. by Johan Leemans (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), pp. 201-220 (p. 201). When the saints were depicted in medieval visual culture, they were often represented holding an attribute that reminded the onlooker of a pious act that they had performed in their earthly life. In this way, the connection between earthly action and salvation was constantly reiterated to Christians. See Veronica Sekules, *Medieval Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 109.

saint in prayer, that selfsame figure would remember to bestow grace on her devotee, particularly during times of hardship and strife.

In two recent studies that explore the interrelationship between saints and prisoners in medieval culture, Guy Geltner and Megan Cassidy-Welch explain that certain members of the apotheosised community were recognised to play an important role in the social and spiritual rehabilitation of imprisoned subjects. From the sixth century onwards, St Germanus and St Leonard of Noblat were revered as ‘jail-breaking saints’, who held the power to emancipate prisoners from gaol, even if the incarcerated subjects were guilty of committing a serious crime.21 Speaking of St Leonard, the anonymous author of *The South English Legendary* (c. 1280-1290) remarks:

Prisones loured seint Leonard. wel wide icliped was
Oure Louerd schowede for him fair miracle
[…]
For whan prisouns cride on him. Meni wiþ dreorie chere
Here bendes gon to berste atuo. & hi delyured were
& menie come to þonki him.22

By repeating ‘meni’ – a word that not only means ‘the multitude’, but also contains the morpheme ‘men’ (which, again, denotes the plural) – twice within three lines of verse, the hagiographer emphasises Leonard’s reputation for lightening the sorrows of a host of prisoners, whose shackles are broken when they call on the saint’s name. The remembrance of jail-breaking saints thus offered the incarcerated community a

---


hope of freedom that was typically absent from contemporary jurisdiction and law codes.

Developing the work of Geltner and Cassidy-Welch, this chapter extends scholarly interest in the interrelationship between acts of hagiographic commemoration and the identity of the late medieval prisoner by examining how Usk and Paris invoke the memory of two different saints – St Margaret of Antioch and St Christina of Bolsena – as the former reflect on the ways in which their recent political affiliations have brought about their imprisonment in Ricardian England. Although neither Christina nor Margaret are known as ‘jail-breaking’ saints, their vitae highlight that they themselves were imprisoned and eventually martyred for their Christian faith during the fourth-century Diocletian persecutions. Throughout this chapter, then, I argue that both Ricardian prisoners exploit the verisimilitude between their own experience of incarceration and that of the saints as they represent themselves as true Christian subjects, whose past actions will ultimately be rewarded by God in the eschatological future.

1.1 Re-Making and Politicising Memory Images

Although jail-breaking saints were celebrated by certain hagiographers, Geltner’s scholarship indicates that their cults often developed at a slow pace, in limited and localised settings. The apparent marginalisation of these figures may therefore suggest a cultural reluctance to promote the remembrance of saints who were recognised to override the authority of the ruling secular elite. By contrast, the

24 In SEL account of Leonard’s life, the hagiographer draws attention to the way in which the saint breaks the ‘bendes’ of his devotees. As this word puns to mean shackles as well as a legal or moral
vitae of the early Christian martyr saints, including Margaret and Christina, enjoyed perennial popularity throughout medieval Europe, particularly in England. As well as appearing in SEL, biographic accounts of both holy women are also preserved in other hagiographical anthologies, such as Jacob de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend* (c. 1260) and Osbern Bokenham’s *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* (c. 1447), as well as in various discrete poems and popular martyrologies.25

As they set about commemorating Margaret’s and Christina’s lives, Usk and Paris were recollecting narratives that held a prominent position in the cultural consciousness. Yet as I indicated in the Introduction, medieval thinkers did not know memory exclusively for its retentive capacity. Memory was also recognised as a creative faculty, integral to ‘the task of composition’.26 Reproducing the saint’s life did not simply require the author to repeat an existing tale verbatim. Rather, commemorating Margaret’s and Christina’s lives was an endeavour that offered the prison-writer the opportunity to flex and mould his source text(s) according to his personal intention and context.

This creative and political aspect of memory – remembrance – is central to the argument of this chapter, which examines how memory images were actively remade to suit the immediate needs of the individual prison-writer. In doing so, this obligation, the holy man’s power to override the jurisdictional sentence granted by the secular court is recalled and recorded. See *St Leonard*, in SEL, I, p. 479, l. 78; the MED, ‘bende’, (n. (1)), 1a and 1f.


chapter also draws on and develops Patrick Geary’s work on the praxis of historiography in medieval culture. As Geary examines the ways in which medieval authors presented the past, he posits that pre-modern writers were ‘quite aware’ that the specific way that they arranged memory-images of a foregone event held the potential to affect how that particular historical moment was communicated to, and therefore remembered by, future readers.27 This ‘selectivity of memory’ thus enabled medieval writers to participate in a ‘transformative process’ wherein the presentation of the past was nuanced according to the author’s particular ideological commitments.28 In Geary’s work, textual memory is thus shown to be anything but innocent. Rather, the historian argues that textual memory is always politicised ‘for something’ and, from here, he remarks that the ‘political (in a broad sense) purpose’ of a medieval writer’s account of the past ‘cannot be ignored’ by modern scholars.29

Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate that this sense that textual memory can be manipulated according to the author’s intention is true of Uusk’s and Paris’s writings. I argue that the commemorative accounts of Christina’s and Margaret’s lives, composed by the Ricardian prisoners, are consciously reconfigured to enable the treasonous subjects to portray their own identities and recent political actions in a more positive light than contemporary legal and judicial discourses would permit.

28 Geary, Phantoms, pp. 7-12. The notion that a particular saint could be invoked for political purposes has been discussed by Robert Swanson, who explains that during the fifteenth-century reign of Henry V, the cults of native Anglo-Saxon saints were promoted ‘to encourage English patriotism’ whilst England was at war with France. See Robert Swanson, Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215- c. 1515 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 145-46. The invocation of native Anglo-Saxon saints to consolidate national identity during the Hundred Years War is also discussed in Katherine Lewis, ‘History, Historiography and Re-Writing the Past’, in A Companion to Middle English Hagiography, pp. 122-40 (pp. 128-29). My work differs from these extant studies as it moves away from a consideration of national politics and, instead, focuses attention on how the saints are invoked and commemorated for self-promotional purpose in the construction of an autobiographical narrative.
29 Geary, Phantoms, p. 12.
By conflating their own experiences of imprisonment with those of the saints, both Ricardian prison-writers use their self-constructed narratives to highlight how their conduct is, in fact, akin to that of God’s holiest subjects. In *Life*, which conforms to the generic expectations of hagiography by offering an account of Christina’s experience from childhood to death, Paris outlines how the maiden’s wicked father, Urban, as well as two other malignant pagan opponents, Dyons and Julyan, imprison the holy child, subjecting her to a host of brutal tortures as they try to force her to worship their pagan gods. Christina responds by denouncing her father’s authority and continually praising God, despite the torments that Urban and his friends inflict upon her innocent body. When she eventually succumbs to death, her soul is thus taken directly to heaven as a reward for her steadfast commitment to Christ. As Paris’s translation of these events draws to its conclusion, the imprisoned writer expresses his awareness that his own biographic experience is similar to that of Christina in a prayer that he interpolates into her *vita*:

Seint Cristyn, helpe thorough thi prayere
That we may fare the better for thee,
That hath ben longe in prison here,
The Ile of Man, that stronge cuntré.
Sir Thomas Brawchaump, an erle was he;
In Warwikshire was his power
[...]
In prison site ther lorde alone.
Of his men he hath no moo,
But William Parys, be Seint John,
That with his will woll noght him fro.

(*Life*, ll. 497-520)

30 While it may appear unusual that Paris and Usk commemorate female saints, both women were revered for their prized virginity. In medieval culture, virginity was often perceived to exist as a ‘third gender’ that transcended the traditional masculine/feminine dichotomy. See Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2001), p. 2. In this way, Usk’s and Paris’s decision to call on the memory of a female martyr, as they reflect on how imprisonment affects their sense of personal identity, should not be seen as emasculating.
Within these lines, the dual meaning of the word ‘thi’, which can be read as either the demonstrative pronoun ‘this’ or the personal pronoun ‘thy’, permits prison-poet to suggest that his own act of praying is congruent with the devotional activity of the saint. Moreover, through the repetition of the word ‘that’ (in lines 498 and 499), Paris also conflates the saint with the ‘we’ in the preceding line to ensure that all three figures – saint, servant and master – are depicted as sharing the experience of imprisonment. The idea that Beauchamp’s and Paris’s experience matches that of the holy maiden is given further support through the slippery meaning of the deictic ‘here’ at the end of the line 499. While this word may describe the immediate confines that Paris and Beauchamp are trapped in, it also evokes a memory of Christina’s imprisonment here on earth. In this powerful narrative moment, ten centuries of history are swiftly collapsed, and the cultural, temporal and geographical differences between Christina’s society and that which Beauchamp and Paris inhabit are rendered irrelevant, as, instead, attention is focused on their common status as suffering prisoners.

By contrast, in Testament, Usk does not depict, or even explicitly refer to, the specific events that took place during Margaret’s life. Instead, in the opening book of his allegorical prose treatise, he discusses the ‘political intrigues surrounding his imprisonment’, before he turns his attention to matters of statecraft in the final two books.31 In Book One, which I focus attention on precisely because it explores how Usk understands and represents his identity in confinement, the London scrivener records a dialogue that he has with Lady Love, who descends into the ‘contrarious

prison’ to console him during his sad hour.\textsuperscript{32} This relationship between Love and the incarcerated speaker has led numerous critics to read Usk’s work as a Boethian apologia.\textsuperscript{33} Joanna Summers, for example, writes that ‘Testament emulates the structure of Consolation and borrows heavily from its contents’.\textsuperscript{34} However, there is one striking difference between the two texts. In Testament, Usk’s conversation with Love prompts him to look back on his first encounter with ‘precious Margarit’: a mysterious entity, which is later identified as bringing about the prisoner’s personal healing.\textsuperscript{35}

As Usk does not elaborate on what, or who, ‘Margarit’ represents, scholars have debated the nature of the enigmatic salve. At present, however, there is no consensus on Margarit’s identity, nor do scholars agree on how important her role is within Testament. In some studies, Margarit is read in an amatory context. Anne Middleton, for example, argues that Usk includes an allusion of his relationship to her in the work as part of his ‘somewhat clumsy effort’ to portray himself as ‘a vernacular philosopher of love’ in a text which, she posits, is predominantly concerned with his ‘destiny as a public man’.\textsuperscript{36} Similarly, though more positively, J. A. Mitchell suggests that, much like Dante’s Beatrice and Petrarch’s Laura, Margarit may exist

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{32} Thomas Usk, The Testament of Love, ed. by R. Allen Shoaf (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), pp. 47-305 (p. 57, l. 28). Unless otherwise indicated, all references to Testament are taken from Book One.
\textsuperscript{34} Joanna Summers, Late Medieval Prison-Writing and the Politics of Autobiography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 27.
\textsuperscript{35} Usk, Testament, p. 57, l. 14.
\end{flushleft}
as a figure of subliminated desire, whom Usk seeks to impress through his writing.\textsuperscript{37} Lucy Lewis, on the other hand, moves away from an amatory interest to a commercial context. She suggests that Margarit symbolises Margaret Berkeley, the wife of the London patron, Thomas Berkeley, whom Usk might have hoped would sponsor his work, despite his recent downfall.\textsuperscript{38} In my examination of Testament, I offer an alternative line of thought. By exploring the symbolic economy of the ‘margarit’ pearl-stone in pre-modern religious culture, and focusing special attention on the associations between the white gem and the maiden, St Margaret, I suggest that Usk invokes the memory of this particular saint to promote himself as a subject who, like his holy predecessor, is fully committed to maintaining God’s law on earth.\textsuperscript{39}

For each Ricardian prison-writer, religious memory – specifically hagiographic commemoration – provides a means by which he can set about liberating himself, textually, from the shame associated with treachery. By coaxing out the associations between the saint’s vita and his own, the incarcerated author not only justifies his recent course of political action, but he also looks forward to receiving reward for his conduct, which he implies he will gain when he is united with God in heaven, just like his holy predecessor.

\textsuperscript{37} Mitchell, \textit{Ethics}, pp. 55-56.
\textsuperscript{38} Lucy Lewis, ‘The Identity of Margaret in Thomas Usk’s Testament of Love’, \textit{Medium Aevum}, 68.1 (1999), 63-72 (p. 64).
\textsuperscript{39} A connection between the pearl stome, the cult of St Margaret and Usk’s Testament has been noted in S. K. Heninger, ‘The Margarite-Pearl Allegory in Thomas Usk’s Testament of Love’, \textit{Speculum}, 32.1 (1957), 92-98 and in the introductory notes of a recent edition of the work, Gary Shawver, ‘Introduction’, in \textit{Thomas Usk’s Testament of Love: A Critical Edition}, ed. by Gary Shawver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 1-42 (esp. pp. 3-7). My work extends these studies by presenting a detailed analysis of how Usk draws on his memory of Margaret’s biographic record, alongside other religious memories, to represent his personal identity as he attempts to liberate himself from the shame associated with his imprisonment and draw attention to his newfound loyalty to Richard.
In her work on the preservation and presentation of the lives of the virgin martyrs in late medieval textual culture, Karen Winstead observes that these biographical accounts generally contain a number of ‘standard ingredients’. The tales begin by outlining how a young girl’s conversion to Christianity sets her at odds with the pagan authorities in her society. From here, the hagiographers go on to explain how the maiden is persecuted for her faith with multiple tortures, including beatings, imprisonment and the threat of sexual violence. However, despite suffering these ordeals, the young maiden does not relinquish her beliefs. Instead, she continues to praise Christ, preserving her prized virginity for him, until the cataclysmic moment of her martyrdom. Confirming her supreme holiness, her death is often marked by a miracle that prompts the mass-conversion of other pagan members in her society to Christianity. Moreover, the saint herself is personally rewarded for her exceptional conduct as she ascends directly to heaven to dwell in eternal glory with the Lord.

Within the tales of the virgin martyrs, the saint’s virtue is consciously and consistently juxtaposed with the deplorable and damnable conduct of her pagan opponents. Usk’s and Paris’s authorial decisions to locate their self-reflective writings within this particular type of hagiographical framework thus taps into a Christian understanding of morality and temporality in order to evince a personal sense of consolation. By forging a connection between themselves and these saints, both writers are not only able to represent themselves as faithful and ethical subjects, but they are also able to meditate on their own soteriological future, anticipating, in particular, the prospect of eternal reward in God’s heavenly kingdom. Yet as well as looking forward to the afterlife, both Usk and Paris configure their remembrance of

41 See Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs*, p. 6.
the early Christian martyrs in ways which enable them to comment on their immediate political situation, particularly their relationship to the man responsible for their imprisonment, Richard. By drawing attention to the ways in which the king himself used hagiographical images and tropes to cultivate and promote his regal image, this chapter demonstrates that both prisoners situate their self-redeeming narratives in dialogue with the king’s representation of himself as an embodiment of divine authority. It also shows, in a manner that confirms the creative potential of memoria, that Usk and Paris do so to opposite ends. By portraying himself as deeply invested in Margaret’s cult, Usk represents himself as a virtuous Christian, who participates in similar religious practices to those maintained by the king. This rhetorical gesture enables the disgraced scrivener to portray himself as an honourable subject, who is committed to serving Richard and who is therefore deserving of the king’s mercy. In Life, on the other hand, Paris maps the suffering Christina endures on to his and Beauchamp’s situation. In doing so, he uses his memory of Christina’s experience to articulate a forceful invective against Richard as he suggests that this man, who is responsible for his master’s imprisonment, is akin to the pagan authorities who persecute the saint. This act of hagiographical commemoration enables Paris to critique Richard as he implies that the king lacks the spiritual and moral integrity required to rule his realm. The chapter thus demonstrates that for both Ricardian prisoners, the commemoration of the saints is not simply a spiritual or devotional act. Rather, hagiographic memory permits each incarcerated author to reframe his reputation for treachery through the creation of a self-reflective discourse which is, concomitantly, self-promotional and politically motivated.
1.2 Writing and Release: Usk’s Newgate Script

Usk’s Testament exists as an unusual example of a medieval narrative that survives without a single manuscript witness. Indeed, the earliest surviving copy of the Middle English work is preserved in the printed anthology, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and Others (1532), which was edited by William Thynne some 150 years after Usk’s death in March 1388. However, within Thynne’s collection, Testament is falsely attributed to Chaucer; thus, throughout the early modern period, biographers of the ‘father of English poetry’ commonly, but erroneously, indicated that he suffered a difficult period of incarceration during the early 1380s. In the nineteenth century, this ascription was rectified when Walter Skeat re-ordered the final chapters of Testament’s third book to reveal that, with the exception of the prologue, the complete prose text is structured by an acrostic which reads: MARGARETE OF VIRTW HAVE MERCI ON THIN USK. Accordingly, the work was re-assigned to the London scrivener who was imprisoned in Newgate owing to his calamitous involvement in the factional politics surrounding the mayoral elections of 1383.

While Usk’s authorship of Testament is now accepted, the description of the work as a prison-text seems something of a misnomer. As Paul Strohm observes, it appears most likely that Usk wrote his first-person work in the years following his release from Newgate, at a time when his tarnished reputation impeded his re-assimilation into London civic life. Yet this is not to say that Usk did not write from prison. In

---

43 The acrostic is formed by the first letter of each chapter in the three prose books. See W. W. Skeat, ‘Thomas Usk and Ralph Higden’, Notes & Queries, 10 (1904), 245. In his recent edition of Usk’s work, Shawyer explains that acrostics were often used in prayers, particularly to the saints and to the Virgin Mary. This observation is important as it supports my argument that Usk calls upon religious memory to reframe his reputation for treachery in the opening book of Testament. See Shawyer, ‘Introduction’, pp. 3-7.
his chronicle account of Usk’s arrest and trial, Thomas Walsingham explains that the clerk was ‘lodged in prison and kept there for some time with the intention that he should disclose Northampton’s secrets’. While the coercive potential of the medieval prison is discussed further in Chapter Two, the unique preservation of *The Appeal of Thomas Usk against John Northampton* (c. 1384), in MS Public Records Office, Miscellanea of the Exchequer 5/26, highlights that during his detention in Newgate, Usk made a confession in which he outlined how his erstwhile master, Northampton, had tried to skew the election results to secure his own victory.

In *Appeal*, Usk excoriates Northampton, as well as his former colleagues, namely ‘John More, Richard Norbury & William Essex’, in a number of ways. The scrivener not only reveals that, on the day of the election, these men tried to block the doors to the Guildhall so ‘that ther sholde non haue kome jn but onl[y that] wolde haue chose John Northamton to be mair’, but he also states that, ‘on the morwe after’ the results were released, these same men returned to the Guildhall to ‘ordeigne how thilk eleccion of Sir Nichol Brembre myght be letted’. Moreover, in a rhetorical turn that indicates Usk’s shrewd nature, the scrivener does not simply incriminate his former acquaintances, but he also uses his prison-script to exonerate himself from the same charge of treachery. By stating that his former associates hatched many of their clandestine plans in his ‘absence’ and declaring that they were ‘atte some tymes […] mo[r]e pryuier that I’, Usk implies that he was not directly involved in calculating Northampton’s corrupt plans. Usk’s prison-confession thus

---

45 *The St. Albans Chronicle*, p. 91.
served two purposes. On one hand, it gave Brembre the evidence that he needed to condemn Northampton to death and on the other, it aided the London scrivener to secure his own freedom. As Walsingham narrates it, when Usk’s case was heard in court in August, he admitted, once more, that through his involvement in Northampton’s party, he had become a ‘traitor to the city of London and to the whole realm of England’. Richard thus rewarded Usk’s honesty by granting mercy to his prisoner, whom he freed from confinement on 24 September 1384.

While it was certainly not uncommon for medieval prisoners to be offered the opportunity to make an oral confession of their guilt to a coroner before they faced trial, Appeal, which presents itself as being written in the scrivener’s ‘owne [honde]’, is particularly unusual in that it exists as the earliest known example of a prisoner’s textual appeal in English history. When Usk left prison, he appears to have been equipped with the awareness that a written autobiographical account of his recent history could be used to serve his personal agenda. However, although Appeal clearly helped Usk to secure his freedom, his reputation for duplicity was less easy to shun. By rallying against the new mayor, Usk had betrayed the realm. Furthermore, in order to liberate himself from the grave punishment associated with this offence, he had also turned his back on his former master, Northampton, in a way that confirmed his capacity for deceit. The fact that Usk’s name disappeared from

49 Northampton’s sentence was later reduced to perpetual imprisonment after Queen Anne interceded for mercy on his behalf: See Strohm, ‘Politics’, p. 87.
50 The St. Albans Chronicle, pp. 91-93.
52 Usk, Appeal, p. 423, l. 3.
54 Walsingham makes a point of noting that, in court, Northampton lashed out verbally against his former employee, accusing him of being nothing but ‘a lying rascal and a gallows-bird’. This confirms that the former mayor was greatly angered by Usk’s duplicity. See The St. Albans Chronicle, p. 93.
historical record between 1384 and 1387 thus strongly suggests that, following his release from prison, he was ostracised by his contemporaries, who recognised that they could not trust his word. Strohm’s suggestion that Usk used this time to write Testament therefore seems entirely plausible.

The idea that Usk recognised that a specially constructed textual discourse could aid the representation of his identity underpins several influential studies of Testament. This scholarship posits that the scrivener’s desire to reframe his reputation for deceit, by promoting himself in a positive light, influenced the intertextual sources that he chose to include in his narrative. Summers, for example, proposes that Usk sought to overcome the ‘negative reputation constraining his career’ by imbuing his text with Boethian imagery as this act of ‘politicised intertextuality’ enabled the scrivener to imprint ‘affinities’ between himself and his noble predecessor in the mind of the reader.55 Likewise, Marion Turner describes Testament as a narrative that is motivated by ‘Usk’s desire to win friends and influence people’.56 She thus argues that Usk includes multiple intertextual allusions to Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde in his narrative so that he can present himself as a skilled writer, who is, in fact, comparable to the celebrated court poet.57 Furthermore, Turner also explains that Usk uses other memory-images to promote his identity. Immediately before the scrivener recounts how he turned away from his former associates, who were ‘yvel […] and of tyrannye purposed’, he alludes to ‘certayne sayntes in holy churche’ and ‘Romayne Zedeoreys’ (Antiochus the Great) as examples of subjects who, much like

55 Summers, Prison-Writing, p. 27.
57 Within her argument, Turner goes so far as to suggest that since Usk downplays any erotic overtones and elides any representations of sexual sin that are found in Troilus and Criseyde, it is possible that he sought to present himself as an author who was, in fact, morally superior to Chaucer. See Turner, ‘Thomas Usk and Troilus’, p. 26.
himself, switched allegiances from one faction to another during their lives.\(^{58}\) According to Turner, the reference to Zedeoreys is the most comprehensible as this man also turned his back ‘ayenst his kynde nacion’ when he realised that his homeland was steeped in corruption.\(^{59}\) By remembering this figure, Usk thus demonstrates that certain acts of ‘political betrayal’ are committed with ‘well-intentioned integrity’.\(^{60}\) However, in a somewhat laconic remark, Turner dismisses Usk’s allusion to the saints, who underwent a ‘convercion f rom badde into good’ during their earthly lives, as an ‘odd comment’.\(^{61}\) As such, she does not explore this allusion any further. Arguing that Usk uses his narrative to appeal to Richard’s sympathies, as he seeks to re-write his reputation for treachery, I propose that the reference to the saints, as exemplary converts, warrants consideration precisely because it exemplifies how Usk exploits religious memory – particularly hagiographic memory – to redeem himself from his troublesome past. By showing how certain saintly figures also undergo conversion, Usk indicates that his change in political allegiance is one that grants him a new sense of spiritual understanding, within which he recognises that in order to please God, he must repent for his former error and commit himself to obey and serve Richard loyalty in his future life.

1.3 The Theo-Politics of Margarite

As previously noted, Book One of Testament opens in a manner that appears to recall Boethius’s Consolation; much like his Roman predecessor, the imprisoned Usk laments that he is overwhelmed by ‘unhappy heyvnesse’ in a ‘derke prisone’.\(^{62}\) However, when Love descends into his cell, to offer comfort to the wretch, it quickly

\(^{58}\) Usk, Testament, pp. 94-95, ll. 538-56; Turner, ‘Thomas Usk and Troilus’, p. 35.
\(^{60}\) Turner, ‘Thomas Usk and Troilus’, p. 35.
\(^{62}\) Usk, Testament, pp. 55-56, ll. 2-11.
becomes apparent that the consolation she will bestow diverges from that of Boethius’s Lady Philosophy. While Philosophy’s speech is virtually devoid of biblical allusions, Love’s speech is imbued with New Testament imagery. For instance, when Usk asks the radiant muse to explain why she has entered into the ‘foule fylthe’ of the prison, she responds with recourse to the parable of the Good Shepherd, found in the Gospel of John. Thus, she explains that just as a good shepherd would venture into the ‘wyldernes’ to find his lost sheep, even laying down his life to rescue his flock from ‘the swalowyng wolfe’, she would also risk her life to aid her needy people, who suffer ‘in disease and sorowe’. In recalling the scriptural parable early in Love’s speech, Usk introduces the radiant muse as a Christ-like figure, whose pastoral advice stands to benefit his spiritual health.

While Usk records that he is ‘gladed’ by Love’s speech, as their dialogue unfolds, she discerns that his ‘soule is not al out of the amased cloud’. For this reason, she asks Usk to reveal his ‘hevy charge’ in order that she can help lighten his burden. In another marked variation on Boethius’s text, the imprisoned speaker responds by admitting that he himself knows how he can find the ‘moste comforte’ from his strife as he informs Love that his solace lies ‘in herte of that Margaryte’. While I discuss the multi-layered facets of Margaryte’s identity later, what is crucial here is that Usk portrays himself as a man who possesses the knowledge that he requires to bring

---

64 Usk, Testament, p. 58, l. 49; John 10.1-21.
66 From the twelfth century, ‘Love’ was used as a name for God thereby confirming the sense that the goddess is a Christ-like figure. See the MED, ‘love’ (n. (1)), 3a-b.
67 Usk, Testament, p. 72-73, ll. 242-47.
68 Usk, Testament, p. 73, ll. 248. Pertinently, in late medieval culture, the word ‘charge’ punned to mean a punishment as well as something encumbering the soul. This lexical choice thus permits Usk to draw attention to the ways in which the imprisonment that resulted from his treacherous act affected his spiritual disposition. See the MED, ‘charge’ (n.), 1b and 2.
69 Usk, Testament, p. 73, l. 253.
about his recovery. He thus subtly suggests that he is, in fact, wiser than Boethius as the latter required Philosophy to teach him that, if he wished to overcome his suffering, he would need to gain a better understanding of his identity by taking a tour of the libraries of his mind. Yet this is not to say that Usk’s personal recognition that his comfort lies in the heart of ‘Margaryte’ is one that diminishes or negates the importance of memory-work in the process of his self-recovery. While the word ‘herte’ may suggest that his cure lies deep in the centre of Margaryte’s being, in medieval culture this particular organ had a long-standing association with the memory. Traced back to the Latin tradition, the word *cor* was used as a synonym not only for ‘thought, memory, mind, soul and spirit’, but also for ‘the seat of intelligence, volition, character, and the emotions’. As Eric Jager explains, this vast ‘semantic range’ was inherited by medieval thinkers, who incorporated the morpheme *cor* into the word ‘record’ (*recordari*) in a manner that forged a link between the heart and ‘memory as well as writings and books’. Fittingly, Usk’s identification of the heart of Margaryte as the salve he requires to alleviate his sorrow marks the inauguration of an important act of memory as, ‘revolvyng of yeres in tyme’, the prisoner recalls and records a sea-journey that he undertook earlier in his life.

---

70 This sense that Usk has control of his mental faculties is confirmed later in Book One. As Usk explains his decision to change political faction, he elides any reference to the fact that he may have been coerced to switch allegiances by Brembre or the coroner in Newgate. Instead, he states that he based his decision on the ‘counsayle of myne inwytte’. See Usk, *Testament*, p. 95, l. 555.


73 Jager, *Heart*, p. xv. The *MED* confirms that, from the twelfth century, ‘herte’ could refer to memory when references to learning ‘bi herte’ (by rote, or by heart) began circulating. See the *MED*, ‘herte’ (n.), 4 a-d.

As Usk recounts his sea-journey, he explains that he set out on this voyage because he needed to move away from ‘great beestes’ that haunted the wood he found himself in. Thus, although the stormy sea over which he travelled was ‘peryllous’, the journey had a positive outcome as, eventually, he arrived on an island where he was safe from these animals. In his influential consideration of Usk’s sea-journey, Strohm argues that the passage can be read as a political allegory that maps the clerk’s movement from the company of Northampton’s primitive, bestial faction towards a new realm ‘of seeming refuge’ that is governed by Brembre and Richard. Yet while this suggestion is persuasive, Strohm does not consider the multivalent meanings, particularly the theological resonances, inscribed and encapsulated in the figurative image. His reading thus appears to fall into the trap of interpreting the allegory in a way that simply involves putting ‘one thing in the place of another’. That is, it substitutes elements of the natural world with the various political figures whom Usk moved between during his fateful embroilment in the factional politics surrounding the mayoral elections. This hermeneutic is one that Jeremy Tambling cautions against as he remarks that allegorical literatures typically operate by encoding a series of meanings that are ‘causally connected’ into a single image. In order to fully understand and appreciate allegory, then, it is necessary to unpack and explore the multiple meanings that are connected to the figurative text.

75 Usk, Testament, p. 74, l. 269.
76 Usk, Testament, p. 75, l. 285.
77 Strohm, ‘Politics’, pp. 101-02. Isabel Davis states that Strohm’s landmark work on Testament has ‘set the tone’ for much research on Usk’s writing. Summers’s and Turner’s considerations of the text, to which I have already referred, exemplify this as they share Strohm’s interest in considering how the London scrivener uses rhetorical strategies to justify the political errors that he has made in his recent political past. My own work further develops this scholarship by considering how Usk employs religious imagery to appeal to Richard’s sympathies. See Isabel Davis, Writing Masculinity in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 42.
79 Tambling, Allegory, p. 5.
Throughout the Middle Ages, allegories were commonly used to convey lessons in Christian ethics to the reader.\textsuperscript{80} The justification for using this form of ostensibly slippery language in a spiritual context is clearly articulated in the writings of Augustine, who draws on the authority of the Bible to highlight that scripture contains many instances of ‘\textit{allegoria, aenigma, parabola},’ where ‘not one but two or more meanings are elicited’ from God’s Word.\textsuperscript{81} Far from seeing these figurative moments as detracting from the integrity of the Bible or blurring its truth, in \textit{On Christian Doctrine} (c. 397), Augustine praises God for ‘generously and abundantly’ disseminating his divine message in a form of writing that can be conceptualised in myriad ways.\textsuperscript{82} As Augustine explains ‘even if what he who wrote the passage intended remains hidden’, there is ‘no danger’ in the reader supplying his own interpretation, providing that ‘the meanings’ which she ascribes to the teaching are ‘congruous with the truth taught in others passages of scripture’.\textsuperscript{83} Allegory in scripture thus permits an individual to gain a personal understanding of God’s love and law.

Augustine’s work thus confirms that causal associations can be used to engender a deeper spiritual understanding of scripture. Moreover, when this understanding of the allegorical mode is considered in light of the early Church father’s famous


\textsuperscript{83} Augustine, \textit{On Christian Doctrine}, p. 101. This same idea is also articulated in Augustine’s \textit{City of God}. Here, the early Church father writes that ‘there is something to be gained from the obscurity of the inspired discourses of Scripture. The differing interpretations produce many truths and bring them to the light of knowledge; and the meaning of an obscure passage many be established either by the plain evidence of facts, or by the passages of less difficulty’. Moreover, Augustine also notes that ‘Sometimes the variety of suggestions leads to the meaning of the discovery of the writer, sometimes this meaning remains obscure, but the discussion of the difficulties is the occasion for the discussion of some other truths’. See Augustine, \textit{City of God}, trans. by John O’Meara (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 325-26.
discussion of memory in *Confessions*, which I cited in the Introduction to the thesis, it becomes apparent that the act of interpreting scriptural and other religious allegories depends upon memory. That is, reading allegory requires the thinker to bring strands of knowledge and wisdom that she stores in the repository of her mind to the figurative discourse so that she can elicit its multiple meanings in a personalised context.84 For Augustine, in an ideal scenario, ‘self’ and ‘scripture’ are not distinct. Rather, selfhood must be shaped with reference to scripture, just as scripture must be read and understood by a ‘self’. The two processes – understanding God’s word and developing as an individual – thus flow into one another; although, owing to its superlative authority, scriptural truth is the final or fundamental reference point.

The spiritually transformative potential of allegorical literatures, which is realised most fully through feats of memory, is also referred to in the twelfth-century work of the influential theologian, Hugh de St Victor. In *The Didascalicon* (c. 1120), Hugh compares the process of interpreting scriptural figures to the extrapolation of honey from multiple cells of a honeycomb.85 In doing so, Hugh invokes a metaphor that was commonly associated with the process of drawing out memory-images from the mind to highlight that, if the reader is to be spiritually nourished by the allegory, she must bring aspects of knowledge held in this faculty to the text.86 Hugh’s work thus

86 Noting that the Latin word for the compartments in which bees stored their honey was *cellae* (cell), Mary Carruthers reminds us that there is a long-standing ‘texture of metaphors that likens the placement of memory-images in a trained memory […] to the honey-making of bees’. This metaphor can be found in Longinus (c.first century CE), Quintilian (c.35 – c.100) and, possibly, Virgil (70 BCE – 19 BCE). Seneca (c. 4 BCE – 65CE) also uses the metaphor of the bee to denote a reader or an author. See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 42 and p. 237.
confirms Augustine’s sense that reading allegory is not just about making the text mean what the individual thinks she already knows, but it is also about bringing the self into alignment with the ideal meanings of the text; that is, shaping one’s self in accordance with its religious truth.

Given that medieval thinkers recognised allegory to be intrinsically linked to a subject’s spiritual development, the multiple layers of biblical and theological meaning encapsulated in Usk’s sea-journey allegory should not be ignored by critics of Testament. Essentially, it is only through examining these spiritual resonances, which Usk deftly inscribes into his discourse, that we can fully appreciate how the scrivener draws attention to his religious identity in order to communicate his civic reformation to his reader. This idea that Usk strives to represent himself as an individual who has undergone spiritual transformation and thereby left his dark past behind is confirmed by the imagery he uses to set the scene for his sea-journey. As he looks back on the difficult sea-crossing, he outlines how it commenced during the harvest season, while his contemporaries, the ‘good londe tyllers’, were working in the fields ‘with great travayle to bringe forthe more corne’.87 By using this particular seasonal setting, Usk reminds the reader of God’s generous provision, only to underline that, at this time in his life, he did not nourish himself with God’s sustenance. Instead, he depicts himself as straying from his fellow kinsmen as he traversed down ‘smale paths’ to arrive at a place where he is surrounded by ‘great beestes’ and ‘heerdes gone to the wylde’.88 As the mayoral elections were held in autumn, this temporal reference permits Usk to imply that his affiliation with Northampton’s party occurred at a time of life when, regretfully, he moved away

88 Usk, Testament, p. 74, ll. 267-70.
from true Christian society. Instead, he located himself in a place where, surrounded by primitive animals, he failed to reap the benefits of God’s grace. By portraying himself in this negative manner, Usk sets the scene for his forthcoming conversion to truth and light.

It is at this point, then, that Usk recalls setting out in his boat, over stormy waters, to escape the troublesome and fearful beasts with which he had come into contact. Given that medieval writers often used metaphorical images of sea-journeys to describe acts of political governance, Strohm is right to observe that Usk’s voyage is one that enables the scrivener to reflect on his changing political identity. However, throughout the pre-modern period, journeys, specifically pilgrimages, formed an important part of Christian religious practice. On pilgrimage, God’s devotees travelled to holy places, where they could draw closer to Christ or the saints, in order to seek out forgiveness and spiritual healing from sin. As Usk, through his harvest imagery, has already pointed to his sinful neglect of God’s grace, his trip across the sea also holds the potential to be interpreted as a form of a penitential pilgrimage. In this context, the inclement ‘wynd and water’, that rise up to make his sea-crossing uncomfortable and fearful, can be seen to constitute the form of punitive pain that was perceived to remove sin from the soul. Thus, as he

---

89 The metaphor of the sea was often used in this political context as waterways both divided, yet simultaneously allowed movement between, different countries and territories. In this way, sea-imagery could be used to allude to either political harmony or political division between foreign lands. See Sebastian I. Sobecki, *The Sea in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2008), pp. 140-43.


91 Sinners are known to have undertaken penitential pilgrimages to eschew the stain of sin from their souls from as early as the sixth century. In certain instances, pilgrims would carry a heavy load or wear a hair-shirt to augment the pain that they endured on the road to forgiveness. See Jonathan Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* (1975, London: Faber & Faber, 2003), pp. 136-59.
moves towards the island of refuge, his soul is effectively cleansed of the sin that he committed by joining Northampton’s party. Just as the waves of the water overlap with one another, so it seems that Usk’s expression of political identity intersects with religious experience. Thus, while Strohm concludes his analysis of the allegory by explaining that Usk’s discovery, on the island, of a ‘muskel in a blewe shel’ that ‘enclosed a Margaryte perle’ marks the end of the clerk’s strife, I suggest that it is precisely at this point that an in depth analysis of the religious meanings of the pearl and its significance to Usk’s spiritual and political development must begin.92

Importantly, in the first moment that Usk sees the pearl, he explains how his mind ‘bethought on the man that sought the precious Margarytes, and whan he had founden one to his lykyng he solde al his good to bye that jewel’.93 As Usk recalls the parable of the pearl of great price, found in the Gospel of Matthew, he suggests his virtue by comparing himself to his biblical predecessor, who sold all of his possessions to purchase a single pearl-stone precisely because he understood the precious gem represented the Kingdom of God and therefore transcended the value of all earthly wealth.94 Through this comparative memory, Usk thus portrays himself as mindful of the Lord’s love. Now that he has ‘founden the jewel’ he, too, recognises that he no longer needs to ‘seche further’ for happiness or security as he is in possession of a form of Christian truth, which satiates all of his requirements.95

The stark contrast between the blue exterior of the shell and its gleaming white content thus epitomises and exemplifies Usk’s remarkable and biblically sanctioned

---

92 Usk, Testament, p. 76, ll. 293-94.
94 Matthew 13.45-46.
95 Usk, Testament, p. 77, l. 300.
spiritual transformation as he moves from a point of darkness to one of Christian enlightenment. Moreover, the function of the pearl as biblical aide-mémoire takes on further significance when related back to the beasts that Usk previously walked amongst. While Strohm suggests that the primitive animals represent Northampton and his acquaintances, he does not ponder their particular species. Yet as Usk explains it, these animals are ‘swynnes and hoggges’. This detail is important as in another biblical parable, which is also found in Matthew’s gospel, Christians are warned not to throw pearls before swine as these beasts will not only trample the stones underfoot, but they will also turn to rend the very men who share the precious gem. If the beasts represent Northampton’s party, Usk confirms his new belief that his former acquaintances, who show a profane disregard for God’s truth, are a threat to social order. As a contrast, Usk’s own recognition of the pearl’s great value, which echoes and emulates the knowledge held by his exemplary biblical predecessor, not only evinces his holy disposition, but it also confirms his new commitment to uphold Christian civic order in his social and political life.

By encapsulating the sea-journey in allusions to these two parables, Usk draws on the authority of scripture to legitimise his decision to turn his back against Northampton’s faction and embrace that of Brembre and Richard. Yet the deft scrivener does not simply look to biblical authority to justify his political past.

---

96 It was not uncommon for medieval pilgrims, who travelled to religious shrines that were overseas or near coastal areas, to bring home a mussel or scallop shell as a commemorative token of their spiritual journey. Usk’s shell may very well have reminded a contemporary reader of this practice thereby re-affirming the sense that the journey was of spiritual significance in her mind. See M. S. Lovell, *The Edible Mollusks of Great Britain and Ireland, with Recipes for Cooking Them* (London: Reeve & Co., 1867), pp. 106-07. Pilgrims often wore hats that were decorated with mussel shells precisely because the dark shell, which encased the bright gem, was recognised to symbolise the Holy Sepulchre from which Christ raised from the dead. See *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Symbols*, ed. by Udo Becker (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), p. 207.


98 Matthew 7.6.
Rather, as he records his time on the island, he draws on a range of textual traditions to show that he is fully committed to the king. Usk’s eagerness to evince his respect for Richard is, for example, emphasised when Testament is positioned alongside the medieval lapidary tradition. Here writers often looked back to the authorities of Isidore of Seville and Plato to outline how mussel shells, which contained pearls, were harvested from coastal regions.\(^9\) In Testament, Usk follows suit. Yet as he does so, he specifies that these shells can be found ‘on the see sydes in the more Britayne’.\(^10\) In this way, the scrivener confirms his new belief that Richard’s realm is bounded and bedecked with God’s grace in a way that would assuredly compliment the ruling monarch.

However, although the medieval lapidary tradition is clear in its discussion of the topographical location of pearls, when it comes to the task of explaining the jewel’s genesis, the authors affix an ineffable mystery to the stone. The ‘cokelis’ or ‘moscyls’ shells that the precious gems are found inside are said to be ‘genderd from þe dewe of heauen’.\(^10\) Accordingly, ‘in certen tymes of þe zer’, a margarite miraculously appears within them.\(^10\) The pearl’s ontology is thus presented as distinctly holy and unique. The unusual and special nature of the pearl has been discussed by Sarah Stanbury, who notes that, in late medieval culture, this gem embodied a ‘hyper-economy’ of meanings.\(^10\) Moreover, Stanbury also points out that the precious gem was quite peculiar as it could either express ‘equivalence’ with just one of its numerous connotations or ‘multiplicity’ with many of its resonances in

\(^10\) Usk, Testament, III, p. 231, l. 33.
\(^10\) _Mediaeval Lapidaries_, p. 107.
\(^10\) _Mediaeval Lapidaries_, p. 107.
a single moment.\textsuperscript{104} That is, when the pearl appeared in textual and visual media, it could evoke the memory of one particular thing, such as the Kingdom of God, or it could evoke a whole host of alternating, yet complementary, memories and meanings. By turning to examine these varying significances of the pearl, it is thus possible to further consider \textit{how} and \textit{why} Usk’s memory of his encounter with the precious gem permits him to consciously and consistently present himself as a true Christian subject, whose spiritual identity expresses his commitment to serving both God and his divine agent on earth, Richard.

As I indicated earlier, in late medieval culture, the pearl was often associated with the cult of St Margaret of Antioch. The association between the stone and the saint was engendered precisely because the former’s physical qualities were seen to symbolise the latter’s chaste and humble disposition. This is explained in John Lydgate’s fifteenth-century verse account of the holy woman’s life, \textit{The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete}:

\begin{quote}
For of nature perlys echone ben white,
Right vertuous of knyde, rounde, and smalle -
Whiche propurtees resemblen hir at alle.

She was first white by virginyté,
In al hir lyvyng prevyde vertuous
And smal she was by humylité
Right strong in God, this maide glorious;
And for she was thurgh deth victorious,
Thurgh her triumphe she gate the palme in hevene,
With lauer crowned about the sterres seveue.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{104} Stanbury, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{105} John Lydgate, \textit{The Lyfe of Seynte Margarete}, in \textit{Middle English Legends}, pp. 147-62 (p. 148, ll. 33-42). In his account of Margaret’s life, de Voragine also states that ‘Saint Margaret was shining white by her virginity, small by humility, and powerful in the performance of miracles’. See \textit{Saint Margaret}, in de Voragine, \textit{Golden Legend}, I, p. 368.
The gem’s small, white, hard exterior is thus representative of the humble maiden’s pure virginity, her courage and her spiritual strength to resist evil. This understanding of the pearl therefore adds a further layer of meaning to Usk’s allegory. If the gem is a symbol for Margaret, the mussel shell that Usk discovers on the island can be read as a form of reliquary. As Julia Reinhard Lupton explains, in medieval culture, ‘the reliquary and the relic, the container and the contained’ were believed to be at one with another so that ‘the opposition between outside and inside’ existed as ‘the indeterminate product of a single surface folded on itself’. This holy unity also embraced and enshrouded the temporal significance of the relic and reliquary. Encasing and embodying St Margaret, the mussel shell and its content are ‘treasure on earth and in heaven’. Confirming the truth recalled and authorised through Usk’s memory of the biblical parables, his discovery of the mussel-shell reliquary moves him towards devotion to the saints; a spiritual act that, in turn, stands to augment his chances of entering into the Kingdom of God. In this way, hagiographical memory emphasises the scrivener’s belief that he is now distant from his previous primitive and bestial state. Instead, he possesses the treasure of an enlightened spirituality, which will ultimately lead to heavenly redemption.

Since allegory requires a thinker to draw on causal associations to achieve true and full understanding, Usk’s account of his transformative encounter with the gem, that symbolises St Margaret, can best be understood when the links between his own experience and that of the holy maiden are given further consideration. While Turner

---

suggests that the conversion of the saints is irrelevant to, or even incongruous with, Usk’s decision to change political parties, I counter her.\textsuperscript{109} Instead, I suggest that by yoking his experience to that of the holy saint, the scrivener transposes the conversion topos from the maiden’s \textit{vita} on to his own decision to switch allegiances in a manner that permits him to reframe and elevate the significance of his recent course of action. Just as Margaret, in her youth, turns her back on the pagan society that she is born into, including its malignant political ruler, Olibrius, in order to embrace Christianity, so Usk also turns his back on the corrupt Northampton to embrace Brembre’s faction, which is supported by the theocratic Richard. Moreover, while this memory is one that permits Usk to emphasise the virtue associated with Richard’s faction, it simultaneously allows him to show his own fallen nature. Unlike the saintly Margaret, who is not once tempted by Olibrius’s advances of marriage, in his sinful state, the scrivener was lured into a relationship with Northampton. Thus, although Usk, through his conversion, may have come to emulate Margaret, there is an acknowledgement that his humanity differentiates him from the holy maiden. Oscillating between these perspectives enables Usk to praise both the saint and the king at the very same time that he draws attention to his own inferior status and his sin-ridden past.

Strikingly, the invocation of the conversion topos is not the only way in which Usk establishes congruence between himself and Margaret. As well as being represented by the pearl, in visual culture, Margaret was often portrayed as bursting out of either the loins or the mouth of a dragon.\textsuperscript{110} This depiction recalls an episode in her \textit{vita} in

\textsuperscript{109} Turner, ‘Testament and \textit{Troilus}’, p. 35.
which the holy maiden is said to have been swallowed by a dragon that appears in her prison cell. When she is initially swallowed by the beast, she prays to God. Rewarding her faithfulness, the Lord thus grants the innocent maiden a miraculous release from the dragon’s innards. Indeed, the very fact that Margaret burst forth from the beast unharmed led medieval Christians to revere her as the patron saint of childbirth. In addition to offering consolation to parturient women, this aspect of Margaret’s experience, read alongside Testament, also speaks to Usk’s situation. Like the saint, whose prayer is answered with divine protection, Usk also used his script (Appeal) to elicit mercy from a higher power, Richard, as he sets about freeing himself from the dangerous prison that he was trapped following the mayoral elections. Usk’s remembrance of Margaret thus enables him to characterise his decision to betray Northampton and align himself with Brembre as a form of rebirth. Moreover, since it was Richard who authorised Usk’s release from the prison, the transposition of Margaret’s miraculous release from the dragon on to the scrivener’s situation also allows this latter figure to draw a further comparison between the king and God, who ensured the maiden escaped from the frightful place that she was temporarily trapped within.

This idea that Usk plays with the association between Margaret, the dragon and childbirth to express how his experience of imprisonment affects his identity takes on further significance if the temporal setting of Usk’s arrest is considered. As Walsingham records, Usk was thrown into Newgate around ‘St. Margaret’s day [24th July]’. Usk’s prison conversion, which marks the beginning of his new life as a

112 The St. Albans Chronicle, p. 91.
Christian committed to Richard’s servitude, thus coincides with the celebration and commemoration of the life of the saint most prominently associated with childbirth. Once more, Usk’s memory of Margaret’s *vita* and cult is one that permits him to show congruence, but also difference, to the saint as in order to suggest his rebirth, the prison-writer must also acknowledge his sinful past. The fact that Usk manages to draw on Margaret’s *vita* in a way that permits him to show that he is similar to the saint, whilst maintaining that he does not share her ability to resist evil and live in complete purity, confirms his authorial skill. In performing this rhetorical feat, Usk circumvents any potential criticism for arrogance that could be incurred by his suggestion that he is at one with the holy maiden. Instead, he remains conscious of his former failings in the very narrative moment that he gestures to the Christian aspects of his character, exemplified through his devotion to the saint.

The notion that Usk plays with the difference and likeness between his own situation and that of Margaret to articulate a nuanced portrait of himself, that acknowledges his sin, yet is simultaneously redemptive, gains further credence if the maiden’s youthful state is considered. By implying that there is a similarity between the innocent, young saint’s experience and his own, Usk quite subtly suggests that, before his imprisonment, he was as powerless as the maiden (even if that maiden happens not to be powerless through God’s grace). In this way, his own transgression – that is, his decision to work for the devilish Northampton – appears less damnable as it was committed at a time of life when, it is implied, he was less mature than the corrupt figure who led him astray. Hagiographic memory of the youthful saint thus provides the scrivener with a partial exoneration from his
criminal past since it enables him to posit that he committed his injurious action at a
time of life when his moral character was not fully developed.

Yet to suggest that the pearl that Usk discovers represents just two things – the
Kingdom of God and St Margaret – still underestimates not only the gem’s multiple
symbolisms, but also Usk’s skill in weaving as many of these different associations
as possible into the rich fabric of his self-promotional narrative. As Carole Hill
explains, Margaret was not the only saint associated with the pearl. Pre-eminent
above all saints stood the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose purity was also represented
by the white jewel.\footnote{Carole Hill, \textit{Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich} (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), pp. 66-67.} This shared iconography created an affiliation between the two
women in the medieval imagination; thus, in visual culture Margaret and Mary were
often figured alongside one another, wearing robes that were adorned with pearls.\footnote{Hill, \textit{Women}, pp. 66-67.}

In Mary’s case, her special association with this gem was also noted by devotees
who chose to commemorate her as \textit{Stella Maris} or ‘Star of the Sea’ precisely because
the properties of the stone – particularly its gleaming, white exterior – meant that it
could be viewed as a beacon to guide troubled subjects over stormy waters and
through darkness.\footnote{In the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux praised Mary as \textit{‘Ave Maris stella,/ Dei mater alma,/ atque simper virgo,/ felix caela porta’ or ‘Hail, star of the sea, kind hearted mother of God, and ever
virgin, happy gate of heaven’} and, over the following centuries, the association became commonplace in Marian piety. See Brian Reynolds, \textit{Gateway to Heaven: Marian Doctrine and Devotion} (New York, NY: New City Press, 2012), pp. 193-94.} This understanding of the interrelationship between Mary and
the precious pearl permits Usk to imply that Christ’s mother guided the journey he
undertook from his former darkness to the truth found in Brembre’s faction. Once
more, the pearl’s multiple meanings corroborate and confirm the spiritual legitimacy
of Usk’s decision to change political factions.
In medieval culture, Mary and Margaret, who are both connected to the pearl, were also understood to share a further common quality: they were both revered as holy intercessors.\textsuperscript{116} With this in mind, it is pertinent to note that, shortly after Usk discovers the mussel-shell reliquary, he outlines how he adopted a prayerful stance, ‘knelyng with a lowe herte’, before the gem.\textsuperscript{117} As he prays, he expresses his belief that the pearl has two additional virtues: it ‘wold adorne and make fayre al a realme’ and ‘delyver’ him ‘therof out of this prison’.\textsuperscript{118} Usk therefore evinces his awareness that the saints not only bless the land, by bringing about justice, but that they also hold the power to deliver subjects from prison. These particular virtues, however, are not exclusive to the saints. Rather, as Usk’s own case exemplifies, in late medieval England, the king was not only responsible for maintaining justice in his realm, but he also held the power to release imprisoned subjects from their gaol-sentences at his personal discretion.\textsuperscript{119} The pearl can thus be seen not simply to evoke memory of Margaret and Mary, but also to bring memory of Richard into the scrivener’s text.

The sense that the pearl invokes memory of Richard, as well as Margaret and Mary, is especially pertinent when the gem’s association with royalty is considered. As is emphasised in the opening line of the anonymous fourteenth-century poem, \textit{Pearl} – ‘Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye’ – in late medieval culture, this gem was associated

\textsuperscript{116} Donna Spivey Ellington, \textit{From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe} (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 102-41. Margaret and Mary’s reputation for intercession is also noted in Katherine Lewis, \textit{Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England} (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 196.

\textsuperscript{117} Usk, \textit{Testament}, p. 78, ll. 316-17.

\textsuperscript{118} Usk, \textit{Testament}, p. 79, ll. 335-37.

with regal identity. The association between the pearl and regality is also confirmed in the iconography of Richard’s personal altarpiece, the Wilton Diptych. The Diptych, which art historians believe Richard commissioned personally, is crafted from two panels of Baltic oak, that are hinged together to open and close like a book. Inside, an image of Richard’s presentation to the Virgin and Christ is preserved. In the left frame, Richard is figured kneeling at the feet of three saints, each identifiable by their attributes: John the Baptist holds a lamb, and the Anglo-Saxon saints Edward the Confessor and Edmund hold a ring and an arrow respectively. On the right-hand side, Mary holds the Christ-child and they are both flanked by a company of angels. The Diptych thus powerfully highlights how Richard used hagiographical memory to express his sense that he is a divinely sanctioned authority. By recalling the memory of two Anglo-Saxon kings, Richard’s identity is associated with his glorious predecessors in a manner that imparts an aura of sanctity to the fourteenth-century monarch. Indeed, the Diptych can even be seen as expressing the possibility that, like his hallowed companions, Richard, too, will be sanctified at the end of his life. The sense that Richard is akin to the saintly kings of the past is also expressed in the shared iconography of their crowns, all of which are bedecked with pearls. Moreover, Richard’s preference for this particular gem is also

120 *Pearl*, ed. by Sarah Stanbury (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), pp. 31-68 (p. 31, l. 1). The association between the gem and regal identity was also evident in material culture as pearls were commonly used to adorn the crowns of monarchs in both Scotland and England. In 1324, 1333 and 1605, pearls were transferred from Scotland to England to be placed in the English crown. See Brian Barker, *The Symbols of Sovereignty* (Newton Abbot: Westbridge Books, 1979), p. 220. Elizabeth Harper also notes that crown brought to England by Anne of Bohemia was also bedecked with pearls. See Elizabeth Harper, ‘Pearl in the Context of Fourteenth Century Gift Economies’, in *The Chaucer Review*, 44.4 (2010), 421-39 (p. 422).

121 Charles T. Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III: Sex, Saints and Government in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 75. While it is believed that the Diptych was not commissioned until c. 1395, I believe it is relevant to consider its iconography in relation to Usk’s *Testament* as it attests to the way in which the king used hagiographical memory to express his personal understanding of kingship.
confirmed on his badge of office – the white hart – that is displayed upon his chest. Here, the horns of the hart are also ‘crowned’ with pearls.\textsuperscript{122}

Usk’s prayer to the precious pearl can thus be seen as directed to Richard, as well as Margaret and Mary. Usk therefore represents and reveres Richard as a quasi-divine authority. The pearl, then, provides Usk with a means of expressing his true commitment to the king, whom he lauds as a role model, a saint-like figure and an embodiment of God’s love and law. Given that Usk shows himself to be a man who reveres the same precious gem that Richard appreciates and suggests that this gem informs his identity in a manner that is similar to the way that Richard understood the stone to signify his regal status, the scrivener’s commitment to Margaret permits him to represent himself as a subject whose obedience to, and respect for, the king manifests in and through his attempt to emulate this man. If Usk’s hagiographic memory of the saints is configured to allow him to present himself as a man who shares the same interests as the king, the idea that his sea-journey is a form of pilgrimage also takes on a heightened significance. While some devotees travelled to far-off places, such as Jerusalem, to seek out God, Eamon Duffy explains that most medieval pilgrims sought out more local ‘sacred sites’ to ‘pay devotion to a saint’ and ‘secure help or healing in an emergency’.\textsuperscript{123} During the 1380s, Richard is known, for instance, to have undertaken several pilgrimages to Walsingham, where Margaret and Mary were depicted alongside one another on the altarpiece of the


Lady Chapel. By representing his movement from Northampton’s faction to that of Brembre as a form of pilgrimage that leads to a place where both Mary and Margaret coexist, Usk presents his process of self-discovery and self-transformation as akin to a spiritual practice that Richard also actively participated in.

Furthermore, by highlighting the similarity between himself and Richard, who both go on religious pilgrimage to seek out the saints and who both admire the precious pearl, Usk also opens up the possibility of reconsidering the politics surrounding the mayoral elections that both men shared an interest in. As Caroline Barron explains, medieval kings rarely showed any sustained concern for the candidates presenting themselves to be elected as mayor of London. From the earliest stages of his reign, however, Richard broke with this precedent: he not only showed a personal interest in the mayoral candidates, but he also cast his own vote in the election. Yet during the early years of his reign, Richard’s support for Brembre was anything but consistent. In fact, when the city went to vote in 1381, Richard expressed his support for none other than Northampton. In this context, it is possible that, in Testament, the pearl stone also serves a further mnemonic purpose. By drawing attention to the fact that he and Richard have similar tastes to one another, the scrivener invokes memory of the monarch’s political affiliations to remind this figure that he, too, had previously ‘converted’ from Northampton’s faction to that of Brembre. Usk thus

124 Carole Hill, ‘St. Anne and her Walsingham Daughter’, in Walsingham in Literature and Culture from the Middle Ages to Modernity, ed. by Dominic Janes and Garry Waller (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 99-112 (p. 105).
126 It is possible that Richard took a strong interest in the mayoral elections as a result of witnessing the Peasants’ Revolt in June 1381. As Wat Tyler’s rebels wreaked havoc throughout the city, Richard would assuredly have become powerfully aware of the need to protect London from future uprisings. See Dan Jones, Summer of Blood: The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 (London: The HarperPress, 2010), pp. 149-54.
uses the association between himself and the monarch to confirm his belief that whilst a man might initially err, by choosing to support a corrupt political faction, it is not inconceivable that he should change his political allegiance to a moral cause. To this end, memory of Richard’s past, as well as memories of scripture, St Margaret and Christ’s mother, Mary, are fused together in the precious pearl in a manner that permits the imprisoned-speaker to portray himself as a subject who is now committed himself to maintaining civic truth in his present and future life.

Usk’s investment in religious memory permits the shamed writer to use his spiritual knowledge and understanding to authorise an allegorical discourse in which he not only expresses regret for his sinful past, but in which he also sets about showing how his recent history – specifically, his change in political affiliations – stands him in good stead to embark on his journey towards a union with God in the eternal future. The discovery of the pearl – which represents the Kingdom of God, St Margaret, St Mary and Richard – represents disgraced scrivener’s newfound commitment to Christian order and obedience. Usk’s text therefore draws attention to the ways in which acts of religious memory enable a condemned, imprisoned subject to rewrite his tarnished reputation. In and through Testament, Usk portrays himself as a true Christian figure, who, in the future, will serve Richard truly and who, therefore, will enter the heavenly kingdom at the end of his life.

1.4 Saintly Associations: Paris’s Hagiographic Critique of Richard’s Rule

Usk’s biographical record confirms how important it was to belong to the right political faction – that is, the faction supported by the king – in Ricardian England. However, as I pointed out earlier, at the Merciless Parliament, the Lords Appellant
actively rose up against the monarch, expressing their belief that he was unfit to rule the realm and limiting his monarchical power.\textsuperscript{128} Although Richard quickly resumed his monarchical authority, the marginalisation that he suffered deeply affected his governance and, in the final decade of his reign, he ruled his kingdom in an increasingly autocratic, even tyrannous, fashion.\textsuperscript{129} In the following section of this chapter, I examine a hagiographical poem, \textit{Life}, which was written after the Revenge Parliament (1397) at which the former Appellant, Beauchamp, admitted to committing treason against Richard.\textsuperscript{130} Throughout my examination of Paris’s \textit{Life}, which Beauchamp’s servant wrote when he entered prison with his master, I draw attention to the ways in which the hagiographer emphasises the similarity between Beauchamp’s situation and that of St Christina in order to present Warwick as a righteous Christian who, like his saintly predecessor, is unjustly persecuted by a deplorable, unchristian authority. In contrast to Testament, within which Usk invokes Margaret’s memory to show his respect for Richard, Paris uses hagiographical memory to critique the ruling monarch, who is portrayed as a man who is, in fact, entirely ill-suited to Christian kingship.

The historian Anthony Goodman explains that as Richard regained his power in the early 1390s, he limited the political capabilities of the Lords Appellant in attempt to prevent any recurrence of rebellion in his realm.\textsuperscript{131} At this time, Beauchamp is known to have spent most of his time outside of London, occupying himself with the

\textsuperscript{128} Saul, Richard II, pp. 176-91.
\textsuperscript{129} Saul, Richard II, pp. 195-204.
\textsuperscript{130} Saul, Richard II, p. 374.
renovation of his castle and estate in Warwickshire. However, of all of the Appellants, he appears to have maintained the best relationship with Richard. In July 1397, he thus accepted an invitation to dine with the king in London. Far from being a convivial occasion, this meal marked the beginning of the earl’s downfall as Richard suddenly turned against his guest, charging him with treason and ordering his immediate imprisonment in the Tower of London. When Beauchamp faced trial, he pleaded guilty to the heinous offence. However, as the shamed nobleman expressed remorse for his ill-conduct, Richard spared his life. As an alternative punishment, the earl was stripped of his dignities and possessions and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment on the Isle of Man, where he spent his time in the company of his sole loyal servant, Paris.

In her consideration of Paris’s prison-poem, Life, Mary-Ann Stouck suggests that Beauchamp’s servant may have chosen to commemorate Christina because she, like his master, was imprisoned on more than one occasion during her persecution. Initially, Christina’s earthly father, Urban, keeps his daughter locked in ‘a tour of lyme and ston’ (Life, l. 35) as he attempts to force her to worship his pagan idols. However, when Christina rebels by smashing the statues and throwing them out of the window, her father punishes her by binding her ‘in cheynes’ and throwing her ‘in depe prisoun’ (Life, l. 170). Although she is soon taken out of this place, to face a public court, she is later imprisoned again by her father’s pagan accomplices, Dyons and Julyan. Similarly to the saint, during his ordeal, Beauchamp was moved from the

132 Goodman explains that Beauchamp may have been happy to step back from national politics as he was of advancing age. See Goodman, Loyal Conspiracy, pp. 135-36.
133 There is evidence that Richard had planned to visit Beauchamp in Warwick in 1395. While this never came to pass, it suggests that the two men held an amicable relationship and were in contact with one another at this time. See Goodman, Loyal Conspiracy, pp. 135-36.
135 The Chronicle of Adam Usk, p. 35.
Tower of London to a prison in Cornwall and, after this, he was banished to another prison on the Isle of Man. Moreover, Stouck also notes that just as Christina was persecuted by three pagan opponents, during his trial, Beauchamp was also interrogated by this same number of prosecutors: Richard, Sir John Bussy and William Scrope. Yet while Stouck cautions that these ‘connections’ between Beauchamp and Christina’s situation ‘cannot be pushed too far’, I would suggest that the ways in which Paris consciously and consistently conflates his own experience with his memory of the holy maiden have not been ‘pushed’ far enough. In *Life*, Paris subtly differentiates his narrative from earlier accounts of the maiden’s experience by alluding to a number of other saints. By situating a consideration of these additional holy figures in relation to a discussion of the ways in which Richard used hagiographic imagery to legitimise his kingship in the 1390s, I argue that Beauchamp’s servant personalises his memory of the maiden’s experience to imply that the king has lost the approval of the very saints that this monarch revered. In this way, Paris critiques Richard in a manner that permits him to redeem his master from the shame associated with this man’s ‘treacherous’ doubts about Richard’s capabilities as he implies that the apotheosised community is also disappointed in the king.

136 Mary-Ann Stouck, ‘Saints and Rebels: Hagiography and Opposition to the King in Late Fourteenth-Century England’, *Medievilia et Humanistica*, 24 (1997), 75-94 (p.84). It is pertinent to note that just as Paris states that Christina was imprisoned in a ‘tour of lyme and ston’ (*Life*, l. 35), so he also describes the place where he and Beauchamp are confined as a ‘prison of ston’ (*Life*, l. 518). The repetition of the word ‘ston’ thus confirms the similarity between the experience of the saint and that of the Ricardian prisoners as they are all portrayed as experiencing incarceration in structures that are made from the same raw material.

137 Stouck, ‘Saints’, p. 85.


139 James Simpson suggests that it is most likely that Paris based his translation of Christina’s life on de Voragine’s account of the saint’s experience. See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 407. While I have followed Simpson, by focusing predominantly on the differences between Paris’s work and that of de Voragine, I have also consulted other sources from her cult, including SEL hagiographer’s work and that of Lydgate. Bibliographical references for these sources are detailed in n. 22 of this chapter.
Paris opens *Life* by outlining how, in her youth, the beautiful maiden, Christina, forsook the pagan beliefs of her mother and father and converted to Christianity:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Seynte Cristyn was a maide bryghte,} \\
\text{[..]} \\
\text{As martyr shuld and virgin clene.} \\
\text{In Itayle she was borne, Y wene,} \\
\text{And come of kynne were grete of myghte,} \\
\text{But she forsoke them all bedene} \\
\text{And holle hir herte to Criste she highte.}
\end{align*}
\]

(*Life*, ll. 1-8)

From the outset of the narrative, Paris not only emphasises Christina’s noble status (a fact that further connects Beauchamp and the holy woman), but, through the use of alliteration in the final line of the stanza, he also emphasises how the maiden’s conversion to Christianity set her apart from her pagan family. Instead of expressing congruence with her kin, she devotes her whole heart to Christ.

Yet far from presenting Christina as an isolated figure, in a stanza that is unique to Paris’s translation of the maiden’s life, he explains how her conversion sets her in the company of a number of other saints, who also share her love for Christ:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thus som have grace or thei borne be,} \\
\text{As had the Baptiste, goode Seint John;} \\
\text{And some in tendre age, pardé,} \\
\text{As Cristyn had, that faire woman;} \\
\text{And some in elde when youghte is gon,} \\
\text{As in Poules lyfe we may see;} \\
\text{And some when thei shall die anon,} \\
\text{As Barabas, that honge so hye.}
\end{align*}
\]

(*Life*, ll. 57-64)

Within these lines, Paris stresses the omnipresence of God’s grace, showing that it can be accessed by all individuals, regardless of sex or age. Although the final line of this stanza appears confused, as it mistakes the identity of the good thief (who was crucified alongside Christ) with Barabbas (the criminal whom Pontius Pilate released from prison at Passiontide), the anaphoric interplay of ‘and’ and ‘as’ that recurs
throughout these lines permits Paris to align Christina with two of Christ’s most treasured companions, St John the Baptist and St Paul. In this way, Christina’s special sanctity is underlined as she is placed in the company of the man who prophesised Christ’s ministry and the man who played a seminal role in the foundation of the early Church. Moreover, within the medieval hagiographic tradition, both John and Paul were commemorated as men who paid the ultimate price for their faith as they were imprisoned and martyred for their Christian creed when Herod and the Romans persecuted the early Church.140 By comparing Christina to these men, Paris anticipates her eventual martyrdom in a way that enables him to emphasise that, throughout Judeo-Christian history, Christ’s most loyal and most honourable servants have endured imprisonment at the hands of evil assailants.

While Paul and Barabbas are not given further consideration in *Life*, Paris refers to the memory of the Baptist on two further occasions. The first of these allusions occurs as he suggests that ‘Seinte John’ (*Life*, l. 232) sorrowfully witnessed the torture that Christina endured as the pagans tortured the holy maiden, scraping her white flesh from her bones with ‘hokyd nayles, sharpe and kene’ (*Life*, l. 227). Moreover, at the close of the narrative, he also describes how he himself had the support of ‘seint John’ (*Life*, l. 515) as he sat in prison with Beauchamp, composing his hagiographic poem. These allusions to the Baptist, albeit brief, deserve attention, not simply because they further show how Paris articulates his description of his and

140 See Saint Paul, in *Golden Legend*, I, pp. 350-64 (esp. pp. 363-64) and the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, in *Golden Legend*, II, pp. 132-40. Miri Rubin explains that Baptist’s martyrdom was commonly celebrated in the late medieval Church. Indeed, small alabaster carvings that bore the image of the Baptist’s severed head on a plate after Herod’s banquet were ‘one of the most popular religious artifacts, cheap and mass produced in the thousands’ in late medieval England. See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 315.
Beauchamp’s persecution in terms that are also used to describe Christina’s ordeal, but, more importantly, because the Baptist was known to be one of Richard’s favourite saints.

Richard’s special interest in the Baptist’s cult might have emanated from the fact that important dates in his life coincided with feast days associated with this saint. Richard was born on 6 January, when the Church celebrated the baptism of Christ. Moreover, he ascended to the throne on 22 June, which was the eve of the vigil of the feast of St John. Richard’s sustained devotion to the Baptist is affirmed on an inventory of his treasures. This shows that some thirty items stored in the royal chapel were decorated with images of this saint. Additionally, as noted above, the special relationship between Richard and the Baptist is also confirmed on the king’s personal altarpiece, the Wilton Diptych. Here the Baptist is the only figure who makes a tangible connection with Richard, laying his hands on the shoulder of the royal subject, in a manner that suggests a special sense of intimacy exists between them. Given that the Baptist famously foretold Christ’s ministry, the gesture can also be seen as one that was designed to express the belief that Richard’s preferred saint supported his kingship.

Richard’s dedication to St John also appears to have been noted by other contemporaries, who remembered this saint when they needed to win favour from the king. In 1392, the citizens of London found themselves needing to seek forgiveness from Richard after they shamefully refused to lend him the money that

---

141 Richard also presented a chasuble decorated with sacred images, including the figure of the Baptist, to Westminster Abbey. See J. Wickham Legg, ‘On an Inventory of the Vestry of Westminster Abbey’, Archaeologia 52.1 (1890), 195-286 (p. 280).

142 John 1.26-27.
he required to fund England’s efforts in the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). In his Latin poem, *Concordia Facta Inter Regem et Cives Londonie*, the Carmelite friar Richard Maidstone recalls this unsettling historical moment as he outlines how the city’s people arranged an elaborate pageant to apologise for their misconduct. As Maidstone describes the king’s arrival at Temple Gate, he explains that a group of citizens performed the biblical scene of John’s experience in the wilderness before Richard:

> Amidst them all the holy John the Baptist stood,  
> And pointed with his finger: "Look, the Lamb of God!"  
> The king observed him closely, since, remembering  
> The saint that was portrayed, his manner grew more mild:  
> For, since he honored him devotedly, to him  
> He offered prayers before all other holy saints.  
> On seeing him, if any anger still remained,  
> It vanished utterly, expiring on the spot.

These lines demonstrate how the citizens of London praised Richard by conferring the same title that was given to Christ on him. Moreover, and most pertinently to my argument, the description of Richard gaining inner peace after he casts his eyes on the Baptist also affirms the king’s special connection to this saint, who is seen to bring about mercy in the monarch.

---


144 Richard Maidstone, *Concordia: Reconciliation of Richard II with London*, trans. by A. G. Rigg (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), pp. 69-70, ll. 371-76. An earlier example of a poet drawing on imagery associated with the Baptist to praise Richard can be found in John Gower’s Latin verse *Vox Clamantis*, in which Gower critiques the Peasants’ Revolt (1381). By using the title *Vox Clamantis*, the poet recalls John crying out in the wilderness and, as he does so, he promotes Richard as a Christ like figure who came to save the people from their sin. See *Vox Clamantis: necnon Chronica Tripartita* ed. by H.O. Coxe (London: Roxburghe Club Publications, 1850).

145 The decision to address Richard in this way may very well reflect the fact that, as his reign unfolded, the king encouraged his subjects to address him using ‘new, and grander, forms of address’, including terms such as ‘your majesty’, which were designed to highlight his sovereignty. By describing Richard in Christ-like terms, Richard’s subjects could appeal to the king’s mercy as, in essence, they suggested that he, like Jesus, was a forgiving power. See Nigel Saul, ‘The Kingship of Richard II’, in *Richard II: The Art of Kingship*, pp. 37-57 (p. 46).
While the Diptych artist and Maidstone each portray the relationship between the Baptist and Richard in a positive fashion, in *Life* something quite different takes place. In Paris’s narrative, the Baptist is portrayed as expressing his sympathy for Christina, who is persecuted by pagans. Moreover, he also supports the work of the imprisoned hagiographer, who is sitting alongside Beauchamp – a man who is persecuted by Richard. The remembrance of John in Paris’s text permits the prison-writer to express his belief that Richard’s recent conduct, which emulates that of the pagans, has resulted in the loss of the Baptist’s approval. This implication is affirmed in Paris’s description of a life-changing moment in Christina’s *vita*: her baptism. In a memorable and dramatic account, the prison-poet outlines how this event takes place in the black of night, when Urban tries to kill her by throwing her into the sea with a stone hung around her neck. At the precise moment Christina enters the water, the darkness of the external world and the darkness of her father’s actions are pierced by light as angels descend, from on high, to rescue her:

> Whan daie was gon and comme was nyght,  
> Aboute hir neke thei honge a ston-  
> It was right hevy and nothinge lighte;  
> Thai caste hir in the see anon.  
> When thei that dulfull dede had don,  
> Ther com aungels for hevyn so bright.  
> And held hir up the water anon.  
> Thorough Goddes grace and His grete myght.  

(*Life*, ll. 257-64)

In medieval culture, drowning was understood to be one of the worst forms of death that an individual could experience. As Michael Evans explains, ‘the enveloping nature of the waters, and the loss of the bodies beyond recovery for Christian burial, invoked horror and seemed to echo the fear of damnation’. However, at the very
moment that her earthly father places Christina in this position, Christ, too, descends from heaven, delivering her from this fearful fate and welcoming her into his kingdom through the sacrament of baptism:

Than Criste come downe Hymself, iwyse
And baptys Cristyn in the see [...]  
“In My Fadir and als in Me
Jhesus Christe, Son of blisse,
And in the Holy Goste, us Three
I baptise thee in watire this”

\(\text{(Life ll. 265-28)}\)

Urban’s attempt to end Christina’s life proves futile. Instead, the Trinity offer the precious child a chance to begin a new life in the family of God. Moreover, the specific way in which God saves Christina expresses and emphasises her holiness. In the gospel accounts of Christ’s baptism, God descends from the heavens to announce his approval of his son.\(^{147}\) God’s appearance thus legitimises the authority of Christ’s future ministry. As Christina receives the sacrament, she, too, is given this same divine recognition thereby confirming her supreme holiness. The scene of Christina’s baptism, however, not only echoes and emulates that of Christ, but it also permits a further parallel to be drawn between the life experience of the holy maiden and that of Paris and Beauchamp. As Paris’s recollection of the sacrament draws to a close, he declares that Christ baptised Christina ‘in the stronde!’ \(\text{(Life, l. 280)}\). In this way, he draws attention to the fact that God blessed the saint as she resided on a

---

\(^{147}\) Matthew 3.13-17, Mark 1.9-11 and Luke 3.21-27. The confirmation of Christina’s special sanctity is reiterated as Christ takes on the role of ‘gofidar’ in her life \(\text{(Life l. 277)}\). In medieval culture, godparents not only took on a responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the infant, but they were also granted the privilege of naming the child. The very fact that the maiden is called ‘Christina’, which contains the morpheme ‘Christ’, thus provides a further powerful reminder of her holiness. See Michael Bennett, ‘Spiritual Kingship and the Baptismal Name in Traditional European Society’, in \textit{Studies on the Personal Name in Late Medieval England and Wales}, ed. by Dave Postles and Joel Thomas Rosenthal (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), pp. 115-46 (p. 137).
stretch of land abutting water. As there is a topographical similitude between the place where the holy maiden is persecuted and the island setting where Paris and his master face similar suffering, the idea that the prison-writer uses his memory of Christina’s experience to suggest the holiness of the Ricardian prisoners finds yet further support.

Moreover, the idea that Paris’s and Beauchamp’s experience is akin to that of the saint is again articulated as the imprisoned hagiographer elaborates on the tortures Christina underwent at the hands of her father’s accomplices, Dyons and Julyan, following her baptism. As Paris explains, Dyons not only places Christina in great pot full of boiling oil and iron, but he also orders four men to ‘roke hir to and froo/To make hir Payne mor violente’ (*Life*, ll. 313-14). However, despite the fact that she is subjected to this most horrible experience, Paris recalls that Christina lies ‘als innocente’ in a ‘credyll rocked, that felyd no wo’ (*Life*, ll. 317-18). This imagery thus provides a stark reminder of the difference between her Christian father, God, who offers his young child comfort and protection in her hour of need and her earthly father, Urban, who allows his accomplices to try their best to harm his daughter. The idea that Urban entirely negates his patriarchal responsibility to protect his daughter takes on special significance when considered alongside medieval political theory. Here, the king is often referred to as the father of his people precisely because he was expected to protect his subjects. If Richard, who

---

148 The MED, ‘stronde’, (n.1)),1a.
149 Christina’s earthly father is called ‘Urban’ in earlier redactions of her life. According to the MED, in late medieval culture the word ‘urbanite’ was associated with court behaviour, courtesy and urbanity. In this way, it is possible to contend that the name of the pagan figure might also have evoked a memory of Richard, in his role as a civic governor, in the mind of *Life’s* reader. See the MED, ‘urban’ (n.).
is responsible for Beauchamp’s and Paris’s imprisonment, is paralleled with Urban, who imprisons and instructs the torture of the saint, he can be seen as an evil man who fails to fulfil his kingly, patriarchal and pastoral responsibility to his innocent people.

The idea that tortures that Christina endures draw special attention to Richard’s failings as king is also confirmed in the description of the way in which Julyan ‘treats’ her. As Paris explains, this pagan opponent places the holy maiden in an ‘oven als hote as fier so brighte’ (Life, l. 392). However, even though this punishment is intended to burn her flesh, the saint feels the heat no more than if she were ‘in a bathe’ (Life, l. 392). Her torturer’s attempt to destroy her body is turned into a cleansing experience that enhances her purity. This image of the oven, which recalls the pot that Dyons ‘boiled’ Christina inside, also takes on significance if the circumstances surrounding Beauchamp’s arrest are recalled. Ovens and pots were, of course, used in kitchens to prepare food for a meal. The way that the two pagans torture the saint thus recalls Richard and Beauchamp’s relationship in a troubling manner. As I noted earlier, in July 1397 the king invited Warwick to a feast: a convivial occasion at which companions gathered to eat together and to solidify social bonds with one another. Yet on this occasion, Richard did not intend to strengthen his social bond with his guest. Instead, he turned his back on Beauchamp, calling for his arrest and imprisonment. Richard’s deceptive conduct can thus be seen as similar to that of the pagans in Paris’s narrative. Like Dyons and Julyan, Richard, too, inverts a domestic setting to bring about persecution in the life of one

---

of Christ’s true subjects. This association thus further emphasises the prison-poet’s belief that Richard is entirely ill suited to his kingly role.

This indictment of Richard is also attested in the vocabulary that both the prison-poet and Christina use to describe Urban. In the opening section of *Life*, Paris introduces Urban as a ‘wykked tyrande’ (*Life*, l. 18). Later in the poem, when Christina addresses her father, she also calls him a ‘teraunt’ (*Life*, l. 239). As the *MED* shows, the word ‘tiraunt’ was used not only to describe a wicked ruler, but also to describe satanic figures.¹⁵² In this way, Paris and the saint both articulate their belief that Urban, like Richard, is anything but an agent of Christian authority. Moreover, if these lexical epithets are read alongside medieval political theory, the idea that Paris crafts his memory of the saint’s life to emphasise his master’s virtue is powerfully confirmed. As is exemplified in John of Salisbury’s twelfth-century handbook of political ethics, *Policraticus*, if a king was considered to be a tyrant, his people were morally obliged to remove him from the throne so that true Christian justice could be restored. In Salisbury’s words, ‘it is just for public tyrants to be killed and the people to be liberated for obedience to God’.¹⁵³ The potential parallels between Urban and Richard that recur throughout *Life* thus enable Paris to exonerate Beauchamp from his ‘treasonous’ past. Through his act of hagiographic commemoration, which he splices with his understanding of Ricardian politics, the nobleman’s loyal servant suggests that his master was acting righteously when he, and the other Appellants, worked to marginalise Richard.

¹⁵² *The MED*, ‘tiraunt’, (n.) 1-2a.
As *Life* draws to a close, Paris explains that despite the best efforts that the pagans – Urban, Julyan and Dyons – all make to harm Christina, they eventually find that they must employ yet another man, Marces, to help kill the girl. After setting sixty serpents on the maiden, this man also expresses his anger and surprise that the young girl does not die. Marces, however, eventually succeeds in killing the maiden by smiting her head three times and, at this point, we are told that Christina gains a divine release from her earthly hardship as her ‘soule wente up to heven so brighte/ Where she shall feele of peynes no moo’ (*Life*, ll. 486-87).

Far from being bleak, the scene of Christina’s death confirms that she receives the ultimate liberation from suffering through beatification: her glory and sanctity are confirmed. Although Paris does not elaborate on Christina’s life in heaven, it is pertinent to recall that, following her baptism, Christ entrusted his holy godchild to the care of ‘Seint Mighell’ (*Life*, l. 281). As Richard Freeman Johnson explains, while St Michael the Archangel is ‘only mentioned five times’ in the Bible, in medieval culture these scriptural references ‘came to define his principal role for Christians’. The Archangel was thus recognised as a saint who would ‘battle Satan [...] be the advocate of God’s chosen people’ and ‘rescue the souls of the faithful from the devil and lead the souls of the faithful to heaven’. In *Life*, the Archangel fulfils each of these roles as he helps Christina to escape the clutches of her diabolic father and to enter into the Kingdom of God. Moreover, although medieval subjects

154 Noting that, at this point, Christina’s breasts begin to lactate, Simpson suggests that this image of Christina’s fertility might indicate Paris was looking forward to the future with optimism; that is, the prison-poet believed that despite the persecution he and Beauchamp faced, in the future, this suffering would be replaced in and through the installation of a new and prosperous political order. While Simpson does not discuss *Life* as a critique of Richard’s kingship, this allusion affirms the political potential of the prisoner’s translation of the saint’s life. Simpson, *Reform*, p. 407.


believed that all saints resided in heaven, the influential writings of the fifth-century theologian Pseudo-Dionysius, which enjoyed widespread popularity throughout the Middle Ages, generated a popular belief that the celestial kingdom was arranged in a hierarchical fashion, so that the holiest subjects enjoyed closest proximity to God.\footnote{Jan Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 101-07.}

As Pseudo-Dionysius explains:

> the holy ranks of heavenly beings are obviously superior in what they have received of God’s largess. Their thinking processes imitate the Divine. They look on the divine lightness with a transcendent eye. They model their intellects on him. Hence it is natural for them to enter into a more generous communion with the Deity, because they are forever marching towards the heights, because as permitted they are drawn into a concentration of an unfailing love for God.\footnote{The Celestial Hierarchy, in Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works, ed. by Colm Lubeid (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), pp. 156-57.}

In the most popular form of prayer book in late medieval culture, Books of Hours, the saints whom Christians could address their prayers to were thus ranked in order of perceived holiness.\footnote{Eamon Duffy, Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers, 1240-1570 (London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 1-5.} Consistently, the Trinity, the Virgin, St John the Baptist and the Archangel were listed above the male and female martyrs.\footnote{The Baptist and the Archangel were granted this privileged position as they were recognised as intercessor and judge, respectively, at the Last Judgement. See, Roger Wieck, ‘The Book of Hours’, in The Liturgy of the Medieval Church, ed. by Thomas Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), pp. 473-513 (p. 506).} In Life, then, Paris portrays Christina as having the support of three of the holiest figures in the heavenly community: the Trinity, the Baptist and the Archangel. Since Paris, in the prayer that I discussed above, identifies and calls on Christina as an intercessor, he effectively implies that this saint, who is herself supported by the holiest members of the apotheosised community, will work on his behalf to pass his plea for help to God.\footnote{The Byward Wall in the Tower of London, where Beauchamp was held prior to his trial, features an elaborate late-fourteenth century wall painting that displays a crucifixion scene. Here, Christ is represented on the cross as his mother and St John the Evangelist grieve at his feet. These three}
Furthermore, given that Paris has repeatedly impressed the similarities between himself and his master in the mind of his reader, he also suggests that Richard’s prisoners, too, have the eternal and special protection of the highest members of the apotheosised community. In this way, Paris suggests that although he and Beauchamp suffer persecution in the present moment, they have divine protection and so, ultimately, their salvation prospects are secure.

The idea that hagiographic memory permits a consideration of the afterlife future is also important in relation to the ‘fate’ of the pagans in Paris’s narrative. While the prison-writer does not explicitly discuss what will happen to Urban and his malevolent accomplices once they die, the pagan beliefs of these men, combined with their heinous conduct, suggests that they will be damned. If, as I argue, Paris configures his memory of Christina so as to suggest a parallel between Richard and Urban, as well as between himself, Beauchamp and the maiden, then the terrifying prospect of damnation marks a further repudiation of the king’s regal status. Medieval political theory not only conceptualised the king as the father of his people, but it also stressed that the monarch was a priest, who was responsible for his people’s salvation. The act of hagiographic commemoration thus offers Paris the

figures are, in turn, flanked by both the Baptist and the Archangel. Although little is known about the circumstances surrounding the production of the painting, the saintly figures are represented in a way that is strikingly similar to the display of the saints on the Wilton Diptych, which was most likely painted at a similar time. It is possible, then, that the wall-painting was designed to please the king, who may very well have shared a special reverence for the Archangel, as well as the Baptist. This idea affirms the sense that Paris was consciously trying to align himself and Beauchamp with religious figures preferred by Richard to emphasise his belief that the king, through his tyrannous conduct, had lost the support of the apotheosized community he repeatedly sought to revere and impress. I am grateful for Jane Spooner, the curator of the Byward Wall at Tower of London for discussing the imagery on the wall-painting with me. An earlier articulation of this idea is also found in Katherine Frances, ‘A Voice in the Wilderness: Saints, Prisoners and Exiles in William of Paris’s Life of St. Christina’, *Hortulus*, 6, (2010), pp. 1-12.

opportunity to draw attention to Richard’s ultimate failing as king as he anticipates that, like Urban, this man will spend his eternity in hell.

1.5 Conclusion

Although Beauchamp was originally sentenced to perpetual imprisonment on the Isle of Man, almost immediately after ascending to the throne, Henry IV quickly set about liberating his fellow Appellant from prison and restoring his possessions and dignities.\textsuperscript{163} Approximately two years later, Beauchamp died, an old man, back on his Warwickshire estate.\textsuperscript{164} Although little is known of Paris’s fate, it seems most likely that he, too, would have been released from the prison and perhaps even rewarded by Warwick for his display of steadfast loyalty.

In the years following the production of Testament, Usk also enjoyed liberation from his suffering. In a move that would appear to suggest the scrivener was successful in his endeavour to win political favour from Richard, in 1387 he was made the under-Sheriff of Middlesex.\textsuperscript{165} However, this accomplishment, like his employment under Northampton, ended disastrously. When the Merciless Parliament convened in 1388, Usk was identified as a malignant individual, who was guilty of deceiving and duping Richard into misrule.\textsuperscript{166} As a result, Usk, alongside a number of other traitors, was eventually sentenced to death by execution.\textsuperscript{167}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[163] Goodman, \textit{Loyal Conspiracy}, p. 139.
\item[164] Goodman explains that when Beauchamp died, he rewarded Bolingbroke for his loyalty by leaving him an image of the virgin as well as two silver cruets, each shaped as angels, in his will. See Goodman, \textit{Loyal Conspiracy}, p. 139.
\item[167] Oliver, \textit{Parliament}, pp. 170-03.
\end{footnotes}
Winstead is certainly right to regard the lives of the early virgin martyr saints as stock narratives that follow similar trajectories to one another. However, Usk’s and Paris’s prison narratives draw attention to both the supreme creativity and political potential of medieval memoria as, in Testament and Life, the biographical records of Margaret and Christina are not only presented in very different ways, but they are also exploited to opposite ends. In Usk’s case, his allegorical memory of Margaret, which is evoked and articulated through his reverence for the precious pearl stone, allows him to show that despite his dark past, he is capable of converting to become a true Christian subject. By doing so, he confirms his intention to serve Richard in the rest of his life in a manner that simultaneously anticipates that, when he dies, God will judge him as a good civilian and therefore permit his entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Paris, however, presents his relationship to Richard in an entirely different manner. By configuring his account of Christina’s life in a way that permits him to parallel himself and his master to the persecuted maiden, Beauchamp’s servant uses hagiographic memory to imply that the man responsible for their imprisonment – Richard – is portrayed as akin to the heinous pagan authorities, who unjustly torment Christ’s precious child, Christina. In this way, he suggests that while he and his master will eventually be rewarded for their earthly actions, Richard will not enjoy any such glory.

Memory thus reveals itself to be a faculty that enables the medieval prison-writer to reframe his reputation for deceit and malignancy as he represents himself as a righteous figure, who has God’s favour. In this way, religious memory plays a vital role in the medieval prisoner’s creation of a self-promotional autobiographical voice that is concerned with justifying the past, emphasising virtue in the present and
anticipating eternal reward in the future. These ideas are further developed in Chapter Two, which moves away from a Ricardian context and, instead, turns to consider the ways in which two Wycliffite prison-writers each draw on their memorial faculties to defend and share their faith when they are arrested and imprisoned for expressing a heterodox, Lollard creed during the opening decade of Henry IV’s reign.
Chapter Two

2.0 Introduction: Wycliffite Prisoners

In March 1401, just sixteen months after ascending to the English throne, Henry IV issued De Heretico Comburendo – a statute designed to cleanse England of its indigenous heresy, Wycliffism, by legalising the burning of intransigent and relapsed heretics for the first time in the country’s history. While the statute is best known for sanctioning the death penalty in heresy cases, an examination of its rhetoric highlights that this measure was recognised as a last resort. De Heretico stipulates that if any individual is suspected of maintaining ‘erroneous opinions’, he should be imprisoned by his bishop and offered an opportunity to recant his evil creed. If he abjured, he could be released from the ecclesiastical confines. However, if he refused to relinquish his heterodox beliefs, he would be handed to the secular arm and burnt at the stake. Ultimately, the way in which the Lollard prisoner recalled his faith stood to determine whether he should live out his life until its natural end, or die as a shamed excommunicate, with no hope of salvation.

This chapter considers two texts – The Letter of Richard Wyche (c. 1403) and The Testimony of William Thorpe (c. 1407) – that take the form of prose epistles purportedly written shortly after the eponymous Lollard preachers were imprisoned.

---

2 A full translation of De Heretico Comburendo, which is found in the Statutes of the Realm, can be found at <http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/heretico.html> [accessed 30 October 2013]. In this chapter, all references to De Heretico are taken from this source. Early in the sixteenth century, Bishop Geoffrey Blyth of Coventry identified the ‘payne of imprisonment’ as a useful way of eliciting confessions from Lollard subjects thereby highlighting that the prison was recognised as a coercive locale, within which heretics could be bought back to faith, for over a century after the statute was released. See Shannon McSheffrey, Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 13.
and examined about their religious beliefs during the first decade of the fifteenth century. While there are no external records documenting Wyche’s arrest, in *Letter* he explains that he was imprisoned for several months under the authority of the Bishop of Durham, Walter Skirlaw, as he was accused of ‘corrupting the people of Northumbria’ with heterodox teachings.\(^3\) In *Testimony*, on the other hand, Thorpe outlines how he was imprisoned ‘in þe prisoun of Schrouesbori’ after he allegedly promoted five Lollard beliefs in a sermon delivered at St Chad’s College in April 1407.\(^4\) As Thorpe details, he was later moved to ‘þe Erchebischopis prisoun of Cauntirbirie’, at Saltwood Castle, where, in August, he was interrogated about his faith by the most fervent persecutor of the Lollard sect, Archbishop Arundel.

In the following examination of *Letter* and *Testimony*, I discuss the ways that Wyche and Thorpe use memory of scripture not only to defend their beliefs whilst in prison, but also to entreat other members of the Lollard community to stand firm in their faith, despite the persecution they might face. Thus, while I maintain Chapter One’s argument – that the prisoner could draw on his memory of an authoritative source text to legitimise his identity – in this chapter, I also consider an alternative, yet

---

\(^3\)*The Letter of Richard Wyche: An Interrogation Narrative*, *PMLA*, 127.3, 626-42 (p. 634). The Latin letter is produced in full in *The Trial of Richard Wyche*, *English Historical Review*, 5.4 (1890), 530-44. While I cite from the modern English translation throughout this chapter, the Latin text can be found in the Appendix to the thesis. Maureen Jurkowski explains that Wyche was one of four men who Skirlaw arrested for disseminating Lollard beliefs in 1402. See Maureen Jurkowski, ‘Lollard Networks’, in *Wycliffite Controversies*, ed. by Mishtooni Bose and J. Patrick Hornbeck II (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 261-78 (p. 264). Richard Rex explains that there are only three records that refer to Wyche’s troubles in 1402. These are his own letter, the list of the charges that were pressed against him in court and a copy of the abjuration statement that he later made between October 1404 and November 1406. See Richard Rex, ‘Which is Wyche: Lollardy and Sanctity in Lancastrian England’, in *Martyrs and Martyrdom in England*, c. 1400-1700, ed. by Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer Press, 2007), pp. 86-106 (p. 89).

\(^4\) These beliefs were ‘þat þe sacrament of þe autir aftir þe consecracioun was material breed; and þat ymagis schulden in noo wyse be worschippid; and þat men schulden not go in pilgrimage; and þat preestis haue now no titil to tiþis; and þat it is not leeful to swere in ony maner’. See *The Testimony of William Thorpe*, in *Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1993), pp. 24-93 (p. 43, ll. 627-31). Thorpe was probably able to deliver his sermon at this college as there was no resident dean to prevent or restrict his preaching. See Jurkowski, ‘Lollard Networks’, p. 267.
complementary, intersection between personal and public memory. That is, by focusing attention on the ways in which both Wyche and Thorpe frame their recollection of the examination that they faced in the form of an epistle, I suggest that the experiential memory of the Wycliffite prisoner, which is authorised by his remembrance of the Bible, is configured to shape the collective memory of the Wycliffite community outside of the prison. I thus argue that Wyche’s and Thorpe’s letters both draw on and expand the resources of cultural memory as, despite their personal suffering, both prison-writers continue to share their beliefs with other members of the heretical community from inside the very confines that were intended to stifle the existence of Wycliffism.

The Lollard heresy, which was pre-eminently concerned with how the Bible was read, understood and valued, reflected the thought of the fourteenth-century Oxford theologian, John Wyclif (c. 1331-1384).5 As Wyclif believed that scripture alone contained the truth concerning the nature of God and the matter of salvation, he inveighed against the clergy for divorcing themselves from the Bible’s sacrosanct authority and for perverting the holy text with false glosses – two interrelated offences which, he suggested, had led to the creation of the Devil’s Church on earth.6 In the early 1370s, Wyclif took a lead role in the commissioning of the first

---

5 Andrew E. Larsen, ‘John Wyclif, c. 1331-1384’, in *A Companion to John Wyclif: Late Medieval Theologian*, ed. by Ian C. Levy (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 1-65. I focus on the early phase of Lollardy here (Thorpe and Wyche were both imprisoned within twenty-five years of Wyclif’s death) and do not discuss the later development of Lollardy in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which as recent scholarship suggests, increasingly diverged from Wyclif’s creed. Additionally, as Wyche and Thorpe were writing when Wyclif’s beliefs were prominent in Lollard culture, throughout the discussion of *Testimony* and *Letter*, I use the words ‘lollardy’ and ‘wycliffism’ synonymously. For a discussion of Lollardy and its divergence from Wyclif’s theology in the later period see Shannon McSheffrey, ‘Heresy, Orthodoxy and Vernacular English Religion, 1480-1525’, *Past and Present*, 186.1 (2005), 47-80.

6 Wyclif’s fullest chastisement of the clergy’s abuse of the Bible survives in John Wyclif, *De Veritate Scripturae*, trans. by Rudolph Buddensieg (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing 2010). The idea that the clergy had created the Devil’s Church is evident in much Wycliffite polemic. In the *English*
full-scale translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into vernacular English.\textsuperscript{7} As is explained in the prologue to the translation, this task was undertaken so that the laity could gain ‘kunnyng of hooli scripture’ without clerical mediation.\textsuperscript{8} Alongside this project, Wyclif also produced a voluminous body of texts disavowing the spiritual validity of religious beliefs and practices that were grounded in papal, rather than biblical, authority. This included the rejection of the worship of religious iconography, the practice of pilgrimage, the doctrine of Purgatory, devotion to non-biblical saints and, most polemically, the doctrine of transubstantiation, that lay at the heart of late medieval Catholicism.\textsuperscript{9}

Unsurprisingly, Wyclif’s work angered the Church. After the Council of Blackfriars (1382) found fourteen aspects of his teachings to be heretical and a further ten to be erroneous, Wyclif was forced to retire to his home parish of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire.\textsuperscript{10} Yet despite this early attempt to eradicate Wyclif’s theology from England, the Lollard heresy continued to spread; indeed, by 1400 some twenty towns had been reached by Wycliffite preachers.\textsuperscript{11} Accordingly, orthodox writers frequently drew on the rhetoric of pollution to characterise the sect’s influence. This

\textit{Wycliffite Sermon Cycle}, for example, the preacher propounds: ‘for Antichrist; for he haap turned hise clerkes to covetise and worldli love, and so blindid þe peple and derkid þe lawr of Crist, þat hise servantis ben þikke, and few ben on Christis side […] þe firste is þe pope and cardinals, bi fals lawe at þei lan made; þese counde is emeperours bishops, whiche dispisen Christian lawe; þe þridde is þes Pharisees, possessioners and beggeris. Alle þes þree, Goddis enemyes traveilen in ypocrisie, and in worldly covetise, and idilnesse in Goddis lawe’. See \textit{English Wycliffite Sermon Cycle}, in \textit{Select English Works of John Wyclif}, ed. by Thomas Arnold, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869), I, pp. 208-09.

is exemplified in the etymology of the word ‘lollard’, which, deriving from the Latin word for a tare, ‘lolium’, recalls the New Testament parable of the weeds and the wheat seed. Furthermore, Wyclif’s powerful influence on late medieval religious culture is also attested by the large number of surviving manuscripts that preserve the first English Bible. While only a handful of these codices contain the complete complement of biblical books, the Wycliffite translation of the Vulgate text is preserved in some 241 manuscripts making it the most popular surviving work in the corpus of Middle English literature. Its prominence thus confirms its paramount position in Wycliffite culture, where it was regarded as the most valuable text for men and women to hold in mind as they cultivated their spiritual identities. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, it is precisely for this reason that Wyche’s and Thorpe’s recall of scripture provides the means through which each prison-writer can validate his own identity and urge other Lollard subjects to retain their biblically-grounded beliefs, even if, in light of _De Heretico_, this defence of faith might cost the intransigent Lollard his life.

---

12 In the parable, the weeds are uprooted from the ground so that the true seed – the wheat - can flourish. See Matthew 13.24-29. It is possible that the word ‘lollard’ also invokes the Dutch verb ‘lollere’ meaning ‘to mumble’ thus referring to the sect’s predilection to utter words of faith outside of the Church’s jurisdiction. See Rex, _The Lollards_, p. xii. This metaphor is invoked by the fifteenth-century chronicler, Adam Usk, who laments that the Church was troubled ‘on account of the seeds sewn by a certain Master John Wyclif, whose noxious doctrine contaminated the faith, as if by tares’. See _The Chronicle of Adam Usk, 1337-1421_, trans. by Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford: Oxford Medieval Texts, 1997), p. 7. Similarly, in _Testimony_, Arundel accuses Thorpe of ‘sowyng aboute fals doctryne’ thereby confirming that this scripturally informed metaphor was repeatedly used to critique the sect. See Thorpe, _Testimony_, p. 29, ll. 182-83.

13 David Daniell, _The Bible in English: Its History and Influence_ (London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 66-67. While this chapter focuses on the conflict between the Wycliffites and the Church, it should be noted that, in the fifteenth century, the Middle English Bible was possessed by a number of aristocratic families, including members of Arundel’s family, even though these people did not identify themselves as Lollards. This suggests that an eagerness to understand the Bible in the mother tongue also existed in orthodox spheres. See Jeremy Catto, ‘Shaping the Mixed Life: Thomas Arundel’s Reformation’, in _Image, Text and Church, 1380-1600: Essays for Margaret Aston_, ed. by Linda Clark, Maureen Jurkowski and Colin Richmond (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2009), pp. 94-108 (p. 99).
2.1 Formulating Memory and Heresy

While *De Heretico* set out to remove Wycliffism from the realm, a consideration of its rhetoric and the disciplinary practices that were put in place to ensure that recanting heretics did not relapse suggests that creating a controlled memory of the heresy was thought to be integral to the task of its extirpation. This is perhaps most obvious in the statute’s mandate that intransigent heretics ought to be publicly burnt to death in a ‘high place’ so that the spectacle of punishment would ‘strike fear’ into the minds of onlookers.\(^\text{14}\) At the very moment the heretic relinquished his last earthly breath, his body was exploited, mnemonically, to remind the populace that heterodox subjects would not be tolerated in the realm.

Yet even if a subject did abjure, the Church still relied on a certain politics of memory to confirm its defence of orthodoxy. When a suspected heretic was imprisoned, any books she owned, that contained teachings ‘contrary to the Catholic faith’, were seized and destroyed.\(^\text{15}\) As books exist as important repositories of cultural memory, that carry previously formulated ideas and ideologies into the living present, sequestering and purging these resources enabled the Church to impose an act of *organised forgetting* on the Lollard community, which was deprived of the material required to cultivate and sustain its identity.\(^\text{16}\)

However, despite this initial act of deprivation, if a prisoner did abjure, he did not leave the ecclesiastical confines with empty hands. Before being released from

\(^{14}\) *De Heretico.*

\(^{15}\) *De Heretico.*

prison, the recanting subject was expected to sign a first-person copy of his abjuration in which he rejected his past error and swore to obey the laws of the Church. This personalised document was then duplicated so that both the heretic and the Church could retain a record of his former transgression. If the heretic were to stray from orthodoxy once more, this textual memory could thus be drawn on, by the Church, to justify the decision to burn the dissenter as having relapsed.

Moreover, to ensure that other Christians were made aware of the abjurer’s former sin and were therefore alert to the possibility that he might transgress in a similar fashion once more, before being released from the ecclesiastical confines, the prisoner was commonly issued with a faggot badge to wear on his outer clothing. His past transgression was thus visibly memorialised for all to see in a manner that confirms that while the Church may have forgiven abjurers, their sin was by no means forgotten.

For all the Church sought to control the public and private memory of Wycliffism, Wyche’s Letter and Thorpe’s Testimony attest to failings in this endeavour. While the episcopal registers of the period are replete with details of the imprisonment and examination of Lollard subjects, Wyche’s and Thorpe’s narratives provide an insight into the machinations of a late medieval heresy trial memorialized from the perspective of the accused dissident. In each case, the prisoner’s first-person voice is positioned in diametric opposition to the Church’s intent as, rather than disenfranchising and repudiating their heretical pasts, both Wycliffite preachers

18 Steiner, Documentary Culture, p. 230.
20 Hudson, Premature Reformation, p. 121.
create a textual record of their persecution, throughout which they use memory of scripture to justify their beliefs and to urge other Lollards to resist the spiritual corruption associated with, and engendered by, orthodox culture.

The public focus of *Letter* and *Testimony* manifests itself most obviously in Wyche’s and Thorpe’s decision to frame their memory of persecution in an epistle – a genre of writing that is typically directed to a reader from whom the author is somehow separated. While modern studies of the epistolary genre stress its private nature, emphasising that an author can use the form of a letter to disclose intimate details to a single recipient, with whom he chooses to share his personal thoughts, medieval letters were not received in the same way. Rather, as Katherine Kong explains, in the Middle Ages letters were recognised to be ‘quasi-public documents’ that were commonly read aloud to, and shared amongst, a community who lived in close proximity to the immediate recipient. This did not mean that the author of a medieval epistle could not include personal details in his letter, but it meant that if he did impart such information, he was most likely aware that it might very well be shared in a public context.

Recent scholarship on the epistolary form in medieval England has concentrated on the letters that were circulated within a particular kind of community: the family. Here, the letter collections of five gentry families – the Armburgh, Cely, Paston, Plumpton and Stonor papers – have been discussed as scholars have examined how these documents attest to a number of cultural issues, such as the increase in lay literacy amongst the late medieval gentry, the interrelationship between the written

---

word and household and/or mercantile administration in pre-modern England and the role that women played maintaining the domestic sphere.\textsuperscript{22}

However, in medieval culture, the letter form was not used exclusively to discuss matters relating to family life. From the fourth to the sixteenth centuries, letters written by medieval popes were commonly disseminated throughout Western Christendom.\textsuperscript{23} As these \textit{epistola decretalis} or \textit{littera decretalis} touched on matters such as ‘church order and discipline’, they played an important role in the consolidation of the Church’s identity.\textsuperscript{24} Indeed, the pope’s letters, which were essentially ‘substitutes for oral preaching and teaching’, often came to form the basis of canon law.\textsuperscript{25} For this reason, papal epistles typically contained a clear instruction that they must be disseminated widely. Thus, although the letters were initially addressed to a leader of an ecclesiastical province, these documents were typically


\textsuperscript{23} There is evidence that a highly developed scriptorium was in place in the papal chancery from as early as the seventh century. See Malcolm Richardson, ‘The \textit{Ars dictaminis}, the Formulary and Medieval Epistolary Practice’, in \textit{Letter Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies}, ed. by Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (South Carolina, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 52-66 (p. 54).


shared with his bishops who, in turn, were charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the message therein was made known within their dioceses.²⁶

Furthermore, in addition to explaining ethics and establishing canon law, medieval papal letters were also used to address the threat that any godless or heretical peoples posed to the Church. Innocent III is widely acknowledged to have been more prolific in his production of letters than any previous pope as, during the thirteenth-century crusades, he turned to the epistolary form to solicit support for his campaign to purge foreign realms of heretical and disbelieving subjects.²⁷ Moreover, and pertinently to this chapter, in May 1377, Pope Gregory XI sent a series of bulls to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London in which he criticised both men for failing to prevent Wyclif from promoting his heterodox creed at Oxford.²⁸ In medieval religious culture, the epistolary form was thus drawn on to define the parameters of the Church and to confirm Christian law to all willing believers.

In *Letter* and *Testimony*, however, Wyche and Thorpe invert this association between the epistolary form and the preservation of orthodox religious culture as they create letters that are designed to solicit cohesion amongst a developing sect of heterodox dissenters. In Wyche’s case, this appears to take place at a local level as he not only addresses his letter to his ‘Reverend lord and brother’, but he also issues spiritual counsel to a number of named individuals, whom it seems he knew prior to

---

²⁷ The enormous number of letters pertaining to this matter has caused some scholars to believe that a number of these documents may have been produced by the papal curia, rather than exclusively by Innocent himself. See Walker Reid Cosgrave, ‘*Crucisignatus*: A Refinement or Merely One More Term amongst Many’, in *Crusades: Medieval Worlds in Conflict*, ed. by Thomas F. Madden, James L. Naus and Vincent J. Ryan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 95-110 (pp. 97-100).
his imprisonment. Before bestowing this advice, however, Wyche explains that, during his time in confinement, he was taken out of his cell on nine separate occasions to be examined about his faith. As he recalls the investigation, the responses that Wyche reports he gave to Skirlaw are typically terse. While Christina von Nolcken suggests that the prisoner crafted the narrative in a ‘rushed’ manner, it is possible that Wyche, who makes frequent references to the fear that he experienced during his trial, kept his responses brief in order to avoid aggravating the Church officials further.

In the more spirited Testimony, Thorpe outlines how he set about creating a textual memory of his ordeal after a number of his ‘special frendis’ visit him in prison and ask him to record his ‘aposynge and [...] answeringe’ before Arundel. In what appears to be a self-aggrandising gesture, the prisoner does not address his letter solely to these individuals. Instead, he expresses his hope that it will be read in ‘sondri placis and cuntrees’ in a manner that permits him to promote his discourse as one which holds the potential to bring about ‘þe edificacioun of al holi chirche’. After explaining how he willingly shared his creed with Arundel, Thorpe recalls how the Archbishop proceeded to question him about the five precepts he allegedly included in the fateful sermon he preached at St Chad’s. Although Thorpe denies that he preached on the particular subjects that he is accused of promoting in his teaching, he proceeds to fearlessly defend each aspect of Wycliffite belief in a

29 Wyche, Letter, p. 629 and pp. 640-42. These people include Robert Earl, the lords Balknolle and Winkfield, Laudens Grene and John Maya and his wife. Rex suggests that Wyche might have been writing his letter to John Oldcastle. This theory is based on the knowledge that the two men were in contact with each other between 1410 and 1414, and the knowledge that Wyche originally came from Herefordshire, which is also where the Oldcastle estate lay. See Rex, ‘Which is Wyche’, pp. 89-90.
31 Thorpe, Testimony, pp. 24-25, ll. 26-27.
32 Thorpe, Testimony, p. 25, ll. 42-100.
sequence of highly crafted and detailed responses. In this way, he exploits the didactic potential of his epistle to boldly expound his Lollard creed, even though this stands to cost him his life.

In both Testimony and Letter, the epistolary mode, which medieval popes commonly used to consolidate the Church’s identity, is usurped by the Wycliffite prisoners, who rely on this form of writing to transmit a defence of Lollardy beyond the prison walls. Yet to suggest that Wyche and Thorpe drew on the epistolary mode solely to rebuff the authority of the pope would be to overlook another important use of the letter in Christian culture. As Rita Copeland suggests, the heretics may have opted to locate their memory of persecution in the form of a letter to establish a point of congruity between themselves and St Paul of Tarsus, who wrote many of the New Testament epistles from prison, before he was martyred for his faith in Rome.33

Copeland’s persuasive suggestion also finds support in the recent work of Shannon Gayk, who calls on literary scholars to reassess how the form and rhetorical style of Lollard writings are evaluated. As Gayk explains, the Wycliffite belief that all of God’s truths were memorialised in scripture led to the sect’s repudiation of orthodox sermons steeped in extra-biblical material.34 The anonymous author of the Lollard treatise, Lanterne of Li3t, for instance, criticises preachers who fill their religious

---

33 Rita Copeland, Pedagogy, Intellectuals and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and the Idea of Learning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 143. The Lollards certainly had high regard for St Paul whose letters stand alongside the gospels and the psalms as the most commonly reproduced biblical books in the Wycliffite corpus. Moreover, in EWS, which consists of 294 vernacular homilies, composed by a range of Lollard preachers, only fifty sermons touch on material that is not found in the gospels and, of these, forty focus on Paul’s letters. See Janel Mueller, The Native Tongue and the Word: Developments in English Prose Style, 1380-1580 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 51. For a discussion of the authorship of the sermon-cycle see Kantik Ghosh, The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 112.

instruction ‘wiþ poysis and dremyngis’. Similarly, in the *English Wycliffite Sermon*, one preacher condemns clerical figures who ‘prechen dremes, fablis and gabbyngis’, while another states that ‘prestis don harm’ by filling their homilies with ‘worldly songis and talis of iapis’. From a Lollard perspective, these ‘needless rhetorical embellishments’ were dangerous as they diverted attention away from biblical truth. Yet while the Lollard’s disdain of the clergy’s creative handling of scripture is often interpreted as a sign that Wycliffite authors preferred to convey their theology in a plain, even dull, style, Gayk posits that such an assessment is reductive. Instead, she argues that the dissenters also employed imaginative literary devices and rhetorical flourishes to expound matters of faith in ‘a wide range’ of Lollard discourses ‘including satirical poetry, polemical treatises, and sermon literature’. Gayk thus views imaginative strategies as central to the promotion of the heterodox creed. Within this chapter, I follow Gayk by exploring how Wyche and Thorpe both exploit the creative potential of *memoria* in their prison-epistles as they combine their experiential memory of suffering with memory of scripture to construct personalised discourses that are designed not only to authorise the self, but which also aim to promote the Lollard creed to other heretics.

Throughout this chapter, then, memory is shown to be integral to the prison-writer’s ambition to sustain a scripturally-authorised community which, through his text, he remains a part of. In *Letter*, this is achieved as Wyche combines memory of Paul’s lessons on sexual ethics with his memory of Daniel’s and John of Patmos’s trials of

---

faith. While the former permits him to cast the Church as a perverse power, the latter empowers him to present himself as a prophetic speaker of truth. Thus, the prisoner reveals himself to be a man capable of teaching the Wycliffite community how they can form a pure faith community who will be spared damnation. In Testimony, Thorpe imbues his letter with memories of Christ’s Passion in order to conflate the suffering of the Lollard sect with that of the son of God. As he does so, he uses his textual memory of persecution to teach his reader how, by emulating Christ in life and death, she can preserve her faith in extra-textual ways. Thus, Thorpe responds to the Church’s decision to destroy Wycliffite books by teaching the community outside of the prison that they can still embody true Christian identity, even if it is difficult to access religious texts and teaching aids. In both prison-letters, the incarcerated author’s memory of his personal experience, authorised by scriptural memory, comes to emulate the biblical text itself. Disseminated in the present, but also available to future members of the Wycliffite community, Wyche’s and Thorpe’s words can be held in the minds of other heterodox thinkers as these free Lollard dissenters build a true Church on earth.

2.2 Wyche’s First Letter to the Wycliffites

Wyche’s Letter opens with the author recounting how he travelled to Chester-le-Street, where he entered Skirlaw’s ecclesiastical prison. Yet despite taking time to explain how he made arrangements for his horse to be cared for during his trial, the heretic omits any detailed discussion of the circumstances precipitating his initial arrest. This elision, though potentially frustrating for modern readers, enables

Wyche to establish an immediate parallel between himself and his biblical predecessor, Paul, who also avoids disclosing details of his arrest in his letters.

While *Letter* presents itself as a continuous piece of prose, its content can be divided into two parts. Wyche begins by outlining how his interrogation before Skirlaw unfolded, before offering spiritual advice to his former acquaintances. As Wyche reflects on his trial, he recalls that the first issue that Skirlaw questioned him on was ‘the friars’ voluntary mendicancy’ – a practice critiqued by the Lollards, who believed that the friars were exploiting the poor to fund their own indulgent lifestyles.\(^\text{40}\) While Skirlaw defends voluntary mendicancy, explaining that ‘the catholic church has approved it without qualification’, Wyche responds by stating: ‘Paul says, “All things are permissible for me, but not all are beneficial”’.\(^\text{41}\) By grounding his objection in scripture, Wyche shows himself to be a man whose memory of the Bible is so thorough that the words contained in holy text constitute the language that comes to him most naturally. Almost immediately, scripture is shown to determine the prisoner’s ethics and expression.

Pertinently, the specific citation that Wyche makes in this early encounter with Skirlaw is from Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians.\(^\text{42}\) Although scholarship on Wyche’s writing has not previously considered the idea that I Corinthians is an important intertext in the prisoner’s letter, the notion that Wyche remembers this particular epistle, as he writes his own, is apposite when the cultural context of


\(^{42}\) I Corinthians 6.12 states ‘Alle thingis ben leeeufel to me, but not alle thingis ben spedeufel’. This line is also repeated at I Corinthians 10.23 which states ‘Alle thingis ben leeeueful to me, but not alle thingis edifen’. Throughout this chapter, all Bible citations are taken from *The Wycliffite Bible: John Wyclif’s Translations of the Holy Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate* (Winchester, CA: Lamp Post Publications, 2008).
Paul’s discourse is considered. As is explained in a prologue to I Corinthians, preserved in the Wycliffite Bible, Paul brought the ‘very faith and wisdom of the gospel’ to Corinth as he knew that new Church developing here was struggling to establish itself properly precisely because the people of this particular region were ‘perverted in many manners’. By making recourse to this biblical text within his own letter, Wyche establishes himself as a mouthpiece of Christian truth, whose narrative will aid the spiritual development of a minority Lollard community that is also developing its faith against the backdrop of a ‘perverted’ culture.

Importantly, as Paul instructs the newly emerging Christian community in Corinth about how they should develop their faith in a Christ-pleasing manner, he pays special attention to the need to regulate the physical body in three ways. At first, he inveighs against incest and lechery. After this, he advocates virginity as a hallowed state for both men and women. Finally, he proposes that if people cannot live chastely, they should only consummate sexual relationships within the marital bond. In a recent examination of ‘Lollard attitudes towards marriage and sexuality’, Patrick Hornbeck II writes that scholarship on these matters ‘is scarce indeed’. Elizabeth Schirmer and Mishtooni Bose thus stand out as two scholars who have begun to explore this largely un-mined field. In discrete studies, they have

---

43 The Wycliffite New Testament 1388: An Edition in Modern Spelling with an Introduction, The Original Prologues and The Epistle to the Laodicians, ed. by W. R. Cooper (London: The British Library, 2002), pp. 269-70. It should also be noted that whilst modern scholarship on the Bible suggests that Paul’s letters to the Corinthians were not written during the apostle’s imprisonment, the mid-fifteenth century preacher Reginald Peacock states that ‘it is trewe that Poul wrote his bothe Epistlis to Corintheis eir he was bounden by prisonyng in Rome’ thereby showing that these letters were recognised as prison-epistles in late medieval England. See Reginald Peacock, The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy, ed. by Churchill Babington (London: Longman, 1860), p. 57.
44 I Corinthians 5.1-10.
45 I Corinthians 7.25-28
46 I Corinthians 7.35-38.
each considered how Wycliffite preachers metaphorically deploy the rhetoric of sexual sin – adultery, prostitution, bastardry and lechery – to critique the clergy’s violation of the Word. As Schirmer highlights, this form of imagery can be found in the EWS. Here, the preacher states that the clergy ‘don gostily lechery by goddis worde, when þei prechen more her owne fyndynges’ than scriptural truth. The figurative language of perversion thus permits the Wycliffite sermonist to ‘distinguish between […] legitimate and illegitimate bodies of knowledge’. Given that the Church is the target of this criticism, the metaphorical sexual rhetoric repudiates the orthodox power.

However, in Wyche’s prison letter something quite different takes place. Here, Wyche uses his biblical memory of I Corinthians to imply that the Church is allowing people – both clerical and lay – to embody deplorable and damnable sexual sins, literally and physically. This is exemplified in Wyche’s third encounter with Skirlaw. At this point in the investigation, the prisoner’s discussion with his ecclesiastical captor moves away from the central topics that divided heterodox and orthodox thinkers, such as the practice of voluntary mendicancy, the doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrament of confession, to address the issue of unnatural sexuality, which, Wyche posits, is rife within the Church.

While Wyche’s third encounter with Skirlaw has attracted scant scholarly attention, the episode is striking for two reasons. It marks the first occasion on which Wyche

---

faces Skirlaw after an Augustinian master of theology visits his cell to offer him the ‘tempting advice’ that, if he chose to obey the bishop, this ecclesiastical would most certainly spare him his life. At this point, then, the prisoner most definitely knows that his refusal to submit to his captor would result in his imminent death. Furthermore, while Skirlaw has previously taken control of the topic of investigation, by asking his prisoner to explicate his views on specific aspects of his faith (such as whether he believes that friars should be allowed to beg, whether he believes that the consecrated Eucharist transsubstantiates into the body and blood of Christ, or whether he believes that priests should preach without a licence), in this encounter, the bishop offers Wyche the opportunity to explain why he will not swear an oath of loyalty to the Church. The prisoner is thus given carte blanche to state his principal objection to the orthodox power; thus, the reader gains a unique insight into the heretic’s personal opposition to the Church.

As Wyche answers Skirlaw’s question, as to why his prisoner will not ‘swear the oath before him’, the heretic states that it is ‘because there was a law saying that a man who had been joined to his mother in matrimony could not be released from her – according to the laws, he had to treat her as his wife’. Wyche’s comment here is unusual. According to the prisoner’s recollection of the examination, he and Skirlaw had not previously discussed marriage theology; thus, this sudden reference to a case of incest appears to come ex nihilo. Moreover, and more disturbingly, Wyche’s objection is dissonant with late medieval marriage theology. As Canon Fifty of the

Fourth Lateran Council (1215) states, the Church strictly prohibited marital unions within four degrees of ‘consanguinity and affinity’.\(^54\) Indeed, as the Church was so troubled by the harmful nature of incest, it legislated that her ecclesiastical courts could dissolve any marriage that was formed with a close blood relative.\(^55\) Unsurprisingly, both Skirlaw and a Franciscan friar, who is present at this point of the inquiry, refute Wyche’s objection by ‘insisting that there was no such law on the books’.\(^56\) Despite this response, the determined prisoner repeats his belief ‘that the law on the books was that they could not be divorced in such a case’.\(^57\)

While Wyche’s refutation is grounded in a rationale that appears incongruous with the commonplace understanding of medieval marriage theology, this does not mean it should be overlooked. Indeed, if it is considered in relation to Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, with which the prisoner has previously shown familiarity, Wyche’s seemingly abrupt decision to identify ‘the case of the son contracted in marriage to his mother’ as the principal reason why he will not swear an oath of loyalty to the Church can be seen as recalling the theology of the biblical writer.\(^58\) In the opening four chapters of I Corinthians, Paul focuses his attention on the problem of division in the Christian community, before suddenly shifting his attention to the matter of

---


\(^{55}\) Other grounds for marriage dissolution in the late medieval Church include impotence, adultery, spiritual adultery (that is, if one member of the couple adopted heretical beliefs) and attempted manslaughter. See Monique Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, ‘Incestuous Marriages: Formal Rules and Social Practice in the Southern Burgundian Netherlands’, in *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Isabel Davis, Miriam Müller and Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 75-95 (p. 78).

\(^{56}\) Wyche, *Letter*, p. 632. Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek notes that there are virtually no ‘incest-related cases’ recorded in the ecclesiastical court records of late medieval England. While she posits that this may indicate that the laws forbidding incest were so thoroughly ‘interiorized’ in English culture that couples knew not to transgress in this way, it might also suggest that Wyche was correct to assert that the Church had relaxed its enforcement of the law surrounding this sin. See Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, ‘Incestuous Marriages’, p. 77.


sexual sin in Chapter Five. Like his elision of the details surrounding his arrest, Wyche’s decision to make an abrupt recourse to incest laws emulates the epistolary style deployed by his biblical predecessor. The idea that Wyche is consciously remembering and emulating Paul in his own writing is further confirmed if Wyche’s case of ‘the son espoused to his mother’ is considered alongside the specific case that the apostle recalls as he expresses his disdain for incest. In his epistle, Paul inveighs against ‘summan’ who has entered into a sexual relationship with ‘the wijf of his fadir’ – a woman who must be either his mother or his stepmother.59 Given that Paul indicates that this form of union is so vile that it is deplored even ‘amongst hethene men’, Wyche’s memory of scripture enables him to suggest that the Church is tolerating a form of sexual behaviour that even these immoral, godless people perceive to be wrong.60

Significantly, as Paul turns his attention to the case of the incestuous son and mother, he not only expresses his disdain towards the two individuals who commit this sin, but he also critiques those members of society who ignore its existence by posing the question: ‘Witen ye not, that a litil sourdow apeyrith al the gobet? Clene ye out the

59 I Corinthians 5.1.
60 I Corinthians 5.1. This idea also takes on significance if the metaphorical understanding of marriage in medieval culture is considered. In both Wycliffite and orthodox culture, theologians used the imagery of marriage to describe Christ’s relationship to his people; that is, Christ was understood as the bridegroom, who was married to his faithful people. Wyche’s sense that the Church allows her people to live in incestuous relationships thus evokes a broader, figurative criticism of the way in which the orthodox power permits the ‘faithful’ to exist in a defiled relationship with God. The idea that marriage can be interpreted figuratively, as well as literally, is discussed in a Middle English tract, often attributed to Wyclif, which states: ‘Oure Lord God Almyghty spekith in His lawe of tweie matrimoneys or wedlokis. The first is gostly matrimonye, bitwixe Crist and Holy Chirche, that is, Cristene soulis ordeyned to blisse. The secunde matrimoyne is bodily or gostly, bi just consent, after Goddis lawe’. See John Wyclif (?), Of Weddid Men and Wifis and of Here Children Also, in The Trials and Joys of Marriage, ed. by Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), pp. 191-202 (p. 191, ll. 1-4). The development and reception of this image in orthodox culture is discussed in Dyan Elliott, The Bride of Christ goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500 (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 1-62.
old sourdow, that ye be new sprengyng togidere, as ye ben therf. In his exposition of this passage, Origen (c. 185-284) explains that if a sheep had a contagious skin disease, the shepherd should ‘expel him from the flock […] to prevent its spreading amongst other sheep’. Wyche’s memory of I Corinthians thus enables him to justify his decision not to vow an oath of allegiance to the orthodox institution. Essentially, he is exemplifying Paul’s instruction that a true Christian should dissociate himself from men who tolerate the foul sin of incest in order to ensure that he is not contaminated by the spiritual depravity of others. Wyche’s memory of Paul’s letter, within which incest is identified as a sin that will harm the community at large, thus enables the prisoner to reverse the Church’s commonplace charge that Wycliffism is a source of pollution. Instead, in Letter, scriptural memory permits Wyche to portray the orthodox power as the contaminative agent that stands to destroy the salvation prospects of the English people.

In this context, it is important to observe that as Paul’s letter unfolds, he proceeds to instruct the community that, as well as steering clear of men who commit or tolerate incest, true Christians should not associate themselves with men who are befouled by a range of other sins, including lechery, greed or false worship of idols:

I wroth to you in a pistle, that ye be not medlid with letchours, not with letchours of this world, ne coueitous men, ne raueynours, ne with men seruynge to mawmetis, ellis ye schulden haue go out of this world. But now Y wroth to you, that ye be not meynd. But if he that is named a brother amongst you, and is a letchour, or coueitouse, or seruynge to ydols, or cursere, or ful of drunkenesse, or raueynour, to take no mete with siche.

---

61 I Corinthians 5.6-7.
63 I Corinthians 5.9-13. It is perhaps pertinent to note that earlier in Letter, Wyche indicates that the clergy left him to ponder his faith in solitude while they went to eat their evening meal together. This
Strikingly, in the biblical passage within which Paul repudiates these offences, he states that this is not the first time that he has written to the Corinthians to advise them not to associate with such sinners. Indeed, it would seem that he is writing his present letter as the community he addresses have cast aside, or forgotten, the first set of instructions that they were given. For this reason, Paul repeats his instruction that his readers must now dissociate themselves from any members of society who are guilty of lechery, greed and worshipping idols. This scriptural memory takes on a heightened significance when it is positioned alongside Wyche’s commitment to Wycliffite ideology. The sins that Paul critiques – lechery, greed and false worship of idols – were offences the Wycliffites repeatedly accused the clergy of perpetrating. This is exemplified in the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible. Here, in a moment of nostalgia, the author contrasts a former time, when the clergy at Oxford were pure-minded, with the present state of corruption at the University. Although, in former times, the ‘cyvylians and canonistris weren devout and so bisy on her lernyng that they token ful litil reste of bed’, the author states that the clergy are now ‘ful of pride and nyce array, envye, and coveitise, with leccherie, glotonie, and ydilnesse’.\textsuperscript{64} Elsewhere the author of the prologue also complains that ‘prelatis excited strongly men to idolatrie’.\textsuperscript{65} If Wyche is tapping into the memory of I Corinthians, then the prisoner’s objection to incest not only enables him to critique a host of other sins that the Church is guilty of committing, but it also permits him to remind his reader that the same truthful lessons that he imparts have already been

\textsuperscript{64} Prologue, XIII, p. 72, ll. 2506-09.
\textsuperscript{65} Prologue, X, p. 51, l. 1756.
articulated by Paul. Wyche’s belief that Wycliffite ideologies are entirely congruent with biblical truth thus engenders the concomitant acknowledgement that the Church, like Corinth, exists as a community within which God’s instructions and laws have been cast aside, forgotten or, worse still, consciously ignored. By conflating his identity with Paul’s, Wyche is able to emphasise and authorise the truth of his words at the same time that he implies that the Church is failing to remember the authority and truth invested in scripture; an offence which has led to a multitude of biblically condemned sins flourishing in orthodox culture.

Although the ecclesiastical officials deny that their laws permit incest, in his presentation of his examination, Wyche portrays the orthodox power as failing to provide any evidence that counters his line of argumentation. Indeed, he indicates that, instead of drawing on either the Bible or the law books to show where incest is condemned, the clergy simply change the topic of investigation. This narrative tactic appears to suggest that Wyche is keen to portray the Church as unable to defend itself against his truthful indictment. If this is the case, Wyche confirms his belief that the clergy are incapable of recalling and living according to either biblical teaching or the instructions that exist in their own law books.

Whilst his investigators proceed by changing their line of inquiry, as the prisoner recalls what takes place in this next part of the examination, he continues to show that his own memory of scripture is superior to that of the clergy. Here, he explains that the chancellor, who was present during this part of the investigation, read out ‘a law forbidding priests to be married’, before asking the prisoner whether he agreed
with this decree. Wyche’s response is considered, it is clear that the prisoner’s memory of, and commitment to, Pauline theology does not waver. As Wyche replies to the chancellor’s question, his initial exclamation – “Would that priests strive to keep that law!” – illustrates his belief that the clergy are guilty of breaking the vow of celibacy, taken at ordination. Wyche thus shows his congruence with Wyclif, who, in De Simonia, argues that the law of continence, which is annexed to the priesthood, induces sodomy in the Church. Similarly, Wyche’s remark also coheres with the sentiments of the author of the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, who accuses the clergy of committing the ‘orible synne’ of ‘sodomye’; a vice which he identifies as the ‘moost sclaudrid […] agenus kynde!’ Wyche’s quick quip thus enables him to tap into this broader memory of Wycliffite texts that all point to the clergy’s unnatural sexuality in order to confirm his view that the ordained authorities within the Church embody perversion.

Furthermore, as the examination unfolds, Wyche continues to promote himself as a man who has a sound memory of biblical truth as he combines his invective against the carnal sins of the Church with his criticism of the clergy’s tendency to violate

69 Prologue, XIII, p. 72, ll. 2519-20. This same sentiment was also expressed in The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards; a polemical bill that outlined the sects principal objections to the Church which was pinned to the doors of St Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Hall in 1395. Here, the author states that ‘be lawe of continence annexyd to presthod […] inducloth sodomie in al holy chirche’. See The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards, in Selections from English Wycliffite Writings, pp. 24-29. It is worth noting that cases of sodomy amongst the clergy were brought rarely before the ecclesiastical courts however it is possible that this low statistic may reflect the fact that the clergy were keen to conceal a sin which they frequently committed themselves. See Shannon McSheffrey, Marriage, Sex and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 148.
scripture through their selective remembrance of the Bible. As soon as Wyche expresses his wish that the clergy would maintain the vow of celibacy, taken at ordination, the chancellor claims that the heretic’s desire for the clergy to live chastely is, in fact, ‘contrary to one of Paul’s writings’. Here, the ecclesiastical figure points out that ‘Paul said that each should take a wife’. In doing so, the chancellor seemingly endeavours to trap his prisoner into admitting that the laws of the Church are, in fact, holier than those of the biblical author as the ecclesiastical authority emphasises that the orthodox power, who insists on clerical celibacy, exercises greater discipline than Paul. While the chancellor momentarily appears to be a man familiar with scripture, in that he shows he, too, can recall verses from the Bible in his speech, Wyche exposes the fact that his examiner’s remembrance of Paul’s teaching is problematic. As the prisoner responds, he confirms that Paul did advise Christian men to marry ‘but he added on account of fornication’. By showing his own memory of scripture to be fuller, and more accurate, than that of the chancellor, Wyche proves that the ecclesiastical authorities are guilty of cutting and abbreviating the spiritual word to suit their own purpose. Wyche’s ‘complete’ memory of Paul’s teachings thus permits him to demonstrate that the clergy embody and practice not only sexual, but also spiritual, perversion.

Wyche’s desire to articulate a powerful indictment of the clergy’s behaviour also takes on further significance if Paul’s concern about what happens to men who commit sexual sin outside of marriage is recalled. In I Corinthians, Paul reminds his

---

73 Wyche, *Letter*, p. 632. The verse that is being recalled here is I Corinthians 7.2: ‘But for fornyacioun eche man haue his owne wijf, and ech woman haue hir owne hosebonde’.
readers that it is ‘betere to be weddid, than to be brent’. As is explained in Augustine’s gloss of this verse, the image of the burning sexual sinner has a dual connotation. On one hand, it can refer to the fact that the individual is so aflame with passion that lust destroys his body, but on the other it can be seen as looking forward to the final Judgement, when those sinners who have violated either their marriage vow or who have lost their virginity outside of marriage will burn for their sin. Importantly, this is not the first time that Paul refers to burning in his letter. In Chapter Three, before he offers his various discussions of sexual ethics, the biblical writer states that, at the end of time, all men’s souls will be tested by flames. While Paul explains that those who have invested their energies in worldly concerns ‘schal suffre harm’, he notes that those who have followed God’s laws loyally will ‘be saaf, so netheles as bi fier’. Given that Wyche’s discussion of marital theology is also preceded by a reference to burning, as he explained how he was visited, in his cell, by a man who told him that he should submit to Skirlaw if he wished to avoid being burnt at the stake, the prisoner again emulates the structural style of the biblical letter to suggest that his form of faith – that is, a faith which is consistently sanctioned by scriptural memory – will ultimately mean that he can avoid the dreaded fate of damnation. Wyche’s remembrance of I Corinthians thus permits him to remind the Wycliffites to whom he writes that even if Lollards are burnt here on earth, any member of his sect, who lives his life according to biblical truth, will avoid this fate in eternity.

74 I Corinthians 7.9.
75 Augustine, On the Good Marriage: De bono coniugali; De sancta virginitate, in I Corinthians Interpreted, pp. 115-116 (p. 115).
76 I Corinthians 3.15.
In this light, it is notable that when Wyche recalls how he was led before Skirlaw to be excommunicated, he describes how Skirlaw sat near a fire next to ‘a monk named Rome’.\(^77\) Just as the fire can be seen as foreshadowing the burning that Wyche stands to face, the reference to Rome yokes Wyche and Paul in a manner that further permits the heretic to model his identity on that of his biblical predecessor, who was martyred in this particular city. Yet in a potent twist, when Wyche is taken back before Skirlaw the following day, there is no reference to Rome. Instead, the prisoner indicates that the bishop is accompanied by ‘a preacher called Paris’.\(^78\) This arrangement of ecclesiastical figures is hard to ignore. When placed together, the names of these two figures – Rome and Paris – recall the two countries – Italy and France – that the papacy was split between during its thirty-six year schism (1378-1414).\(^79\) The schism was certainly not unfamiliar to Wycliffite thinkers. In the sermon *Omnia planctio*, for example, the preacher imagines Christ sorrowfully anticipating a time when some ‘believers’ would misguidedly call out “Lo, here is perfeccioun at Rome!” while others would say “Lo, here is perfeccioun or ground of christen lyuyng at Auinon!”\(^80\) In this way, the preacher posits that the split in the papacy reflects the fact that men and women who subscribe to orthodoxy do not know where to locate Christian truth. As Wyche recollects how he stood before the threatening flames, he thus reminds his reader that the Church condemning him to

\(^77\) This is the third occasion that the Church threaten to excommunicate the prisoner. See Wyche, *Letter*, p. 638.


\(^79\) Daniell, *Bible*, p. 71.

\(^80\) *The Works of a Lollard Preacher: The Sermon "Omnis plantacio", The Tract "Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere" and the Tract "De oblacione iugis sacrificii"*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2001), p. 9, ll. 160-62. This is not an isolated example of such discourse. Ben Lowe explains that many Lollards used the papal schism to evidence their belief that the Church was corrupt, and that the pope was a sinner, not a God-ordained authority. See Ben Lowe, ‘Teaching in the “Scole of Christ”: Law, Learning, and Love in Early Lollard Pacifism’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 90.3 (2004), 405-38 (p. 407).
death is presently so corrupt that it cannot even find coherence within its own domain.

2.3 Wyche’s Revelation

As well as recalling his investigation before Skirlaw, in Letter Wyche frequently bemoans the conditions of his captivity. He laments, for instance, that during his lengthy imprisonment, he is ‘without visitor and without counsel’.

As I discuss further in Chapter Three, the medieval Church taught that Christians must visit the imprisoned so as to fulfil Christ’s instruction, found in the gospel of Matthew, that God’s faithful should serve him by tending to the needy. By drawing attention to the fact that he is denied this privilege, Wyche shows the Church to be culpable of reneging on its own tenets in ways that are antithetical to Christ’s intention.

Yet even though the conditions of Wyche’s confinement cause him concern, it is pertinent to note that, in medieval culture, the very form of loneliness that Wyche describes experiencing was recognised to be particularly conducive to memory-work. In his treatise on memory-training, Albert Magnus, for example, counsels that to develop memory effectively, people should withdraw from ‘public light’ as the faculty functions best in solitude. Given that medieval thinkers also posited that ‘mental unease’, ‘anxiety’ and ‘restlessness’ were all conducive to the task of narrative composition, the ‘great sorrow and affliction of spirit’ that Wyche

---

81 Wyche, Letter, p. 130.
82 Matthew 25.31-46. This instruction, which was promoted by Archbishop Pecham at the Council of Lambeth (1281), was conveyed to the populace through the promotion of the doctrine of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. See Helen Leith Spencer, English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 145. Thorpe recalls receiving visitors in Testimony in a manner which affirms that heretics were granted access to this form of spiritual mercy. See Thorpe, Testimony, pp. 24-25, ll. 19-23.
experiences in his solitary cell means that he is in an ideal locale – physically and mentally – to both develop his spiritual self through feats of memory and to create an authoritative narrative that commemorates this experience.\footnote{In monastic culture, illness, restlessness and anxiety were frequently experienced by monks as they contemplated their faith. See Mary Carruthers, \textit{The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400-1200} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 174.}

The idea that the prison cell provides the ideal locale for Wyche to use his memory to create an authoritative textual record of his experience is confirmed as the prisoner turns to compare himself to past exemplars of men who have suffered for their faith. Unsurprisingly, the suffering figures to whom he compares himself are biblical men. As the prisoner describes the fear that he experienced in his cell, he recalls how he ‘called to the Father of lights – he who comforted Daniel and snatched him from the lion’s den – to comfort me and release me from my tribulations’.\footnote{Wyche, \textit{Letter}, p. 635.} In the Old Testament Book of Daniel, King Darius instigates ‘a decree and commandment’ that, for thirty days, no man should praise or worship anybody else but him, lest ‘he be sent in to the lake of lions’.\footnote{Daniel, 5.8-6.27.} Daniel’s experience in this dangerous place can thus be linked to Wyche’s imprisonment since the biblical figure, like the Lollard, suffered as a result of his decision to worship God, rather than obey the instruction of a corrupt temporal power. Given that, in both textual and visual culture, medieval thinkers represented Daniel’s release from the lions’ den as foreshadowing Christ’s resurrection, Wyche’s biblical memory provides consolation that all subjects who suffer righteous persecution, by remaining true to God even though this causes them personal strife, will share in the promise of salvation.\footnote{The link between the Daniel’s release from the lions’ den and the resurrection is recorded in both orthodox sermons and art work. The association came to pass as Daniel remained faithful to God despite the fact he faced death in a manner that anticipates Christ’s own commitment to the truth which he retained even as he died on the cross. Bracy Hill, ‘Apocalyptic Lollards? The Conservative
In prison, however, Wyche is not only susceptible to emotional vexation. As he reflects on his time in the confines, he explains that he also suffered physically:

Our good God, by his grace, has visited me with a serious confliction in my bowels, which sometimes has made and still makes voiding my bowels extremely painful. Because of this, I have sometimes gone nine days without real purgation – I have had haemorrhoids twice, and I am ashamed to say how profusely they made me bleed.88

While Copeland suggests that Wyche’s revelation that he is suffering from constipation confirms that the prisoner was writing to a community whom he felt he could trust with even his most personal details, I suggest that the prisoner’s reference to this particular form of sickness also epitomises the multiple, yet complementary, ways in which Wyche figures himself as a man who embodies, and is empowered by, biblical memory.89 Medieval theories of reading stress that if an individual wishes to remember a text, he must participate in a task of rumination, breaking down and digesting the material so that his mind can be nourished by its contents.90 In Augustine’s words, which became something of a ‘monastic commonplace’, the memory was essentially ‘venter animi’ – that is, memory was the stomach of the mind.91 Wyche’s constipated state can thus be read as a marker of his holiness. Through detailing this illness, he presents himself as a man who has digested and

---

89 Copeland also notes that Paul alludes to sickness in his second letter to the Corinthians; thus, the illness may also be read as a further way in which Wyche compares himself to this biblical figure. See Copeland, Pedagogy, p. 162.
internalised the Bible so thoroughly that he cannot release or purge its content from his inner being, even though this causes him great discomfort.\(^{92}\)

The idea that Wyche’s ailment signifies nothing less than his superlative memory of scripture takes on heightened significance if his suffering is compared to that of the author of the New Testament Book of Revelation, John of Patmos.\(^{93}\) When he wrote Revelation, John suffered exile on Patmos for his Christian faith. This fact links him to Wyche, who is also suffering because he refuses to relinquish his commitment to biblical truth.\(^{94}\) Moreover, and most pertinent to the case of Wyche’s constricted bowels, in Chapter Ten of Revelation, John records how he heard a voice from heaven imploring him to take a book from the hand of an angel whom he sees standing above the sea.\(^{95}\) As he approaches this holy figure, he explains that the angel entreats him to ‘deoure’ the book, informing him that ‘it schal make thi wombe to be bittir, but in thi mouth it schal be swete as hony’.\(^{96}\) As John recalls this experience, he explains that after he followed the angel’s advice and ‘deouourid’ the

\(^{92}\) Wyche’s sense that the affliction is a gift from God also takes on significance if the timing of the illness – which affects him for up to nine days – is considered. While Christopher Bradley notes that Wyche’s proclivity to fill his account of his persecution with temporal signifiers is ‘recognizable as that of a lonely prisoner with little else to mark but time’, I suggest that these markers might be more allusive. Earlier in the Letter, Wyche explained that Skirlaw first denounced him ‘as an excommunicate’ of the Church ‘after the ninth hour [3.00pm]’. Given that Christ’s death is memorialised as taking place at the ninth hour, in the gospel of Mark, Wyche’s recollection of both the spiritual and physical difficulties he endures for his faith are powerfully conflated with Jesus’s persecution. Thus, just as Christ shed his blood on the cross, so Wyche, who embodies Christian law and teaching, also bleeds in pain, as a result of his haemorrhoids, as he refuses to relinquish his faith, despite impending death. Bradley’s discussion of the temporal references in Wyche’s discourse is found in Christopher Bradley, ‘Trials of Conscience and the Story of Conscience’, Exemplaria, 24 (2012), 28-45 (p. 29). For Wyche’s first excommunication see Wyche, Letter, p. 32.

\(^{93}\) Fittingly, John’s writing is often believed to fulfil the prophecy that Daniel was asked to keep private in the Old Testament; thus, Wyche’s letter can be seen to resemble the structure of the biblical text.

\(^{94}\) John’s identity as an individual persecuted for his faith is noted in Opus Ardum; a Latin Wycliffite tract on apocalyptic theology., dated to the mid-1390s, in which the author presents himself as writing from prison. See Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, ‘Authority, Constraint, and the Writing of the Medieval Self’, in The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English, ed. by Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 403-33 (p. 424).

\(^{95}\) Revelation 10.8-9.

\(^{96}\) Revelation 10.9-10.
scroll, his ‘wombe’ did, indeed, become ‘bittere’. Moreover, he also explains that, at this moment, the angel said to him ‘It bihoueth thee eft soone to prophesie to hethe\nmen, and to puplis, and langagis, and to many kingis’. The fact that Wyche and John share the trouble of an afflicted stomach, which is symptomatic of the fact they have consumed God’s truth, confirms the prisoner’s holiness as he is shown to be at one with Christ’s dear companion. Moreover, Wyche’s affliction also highlights his authority as a prophetic figure as, like John, his digestive illness symbolises the fact that he is empowered to teach other Christians about how they should live if they, too, are to share in the promise of salvation.

When Wyche turns his attention to the task of advising those outside the prison how to lead their lives, the prisoner’s interest in, and remembrance of, Paul’s teaching on sexual conduct re-emerges. This confirms that the prisoner is eager to use his memory of scripture to ensure that the Lollard community, to whom he writes, will follow in his footsteps and live out their lives according to God’s law. As he endeavours to communicate God’s truth to those outside the prison, he asks the recipient of the letter to visit two individuals, John Maya and his wife, so that this man can ‘greet their daughter’ on Wyche’s behalf. Moreover, Wyche also extends another instruction to the recipient of his letter: he asks this man to counsel Maya’s daughter that she should ‘maintain her virginity for her spouse, Christ’. From as early as the fourth century, Paul’s instructions on the spiritual benefits of maintaining one’s chastity for Christ were repeatedly drawn on by patristic authors to create ‘a theology of virginity that portrayed the asexual life as the summit of

---

97 It is pertinent to note that the translator of the Wycliffite script adds ‘heathens’ to the list of people John should share his vision with (this detail is not found in the Vulgate). This appears to evince the Lollard belief that they were living at a time when very few people knew God truly.

Christian perfection’.\(^{99}\) However, despite initially advocating virginity as a state that is pleasing to Christ, Wyche goes on to (re)iterate the advice, which he previously imparted to the chancellor, that if Maya’s daughter cannot manage to maintain her purity, she should:

> Pray to God day and night in his infinite providence, if it pleases him, to wed her bodily and provide her with a spouse […] Therefore, let her say with Sarah, “Lord you know that I have taken a husband not from lust but only because of the love of posterity, that he may see the sons of his sons in peace over Israel forever and ever. Amen.”\(^{100}\)

By entreat ing Maya’s daughter to model her prayers on those of Sarah, whose vita records that she conceived a son with Abraham in old age, Wyche again uses biblical memory to reaffirm his belief that God will reward his faithful servants.\(^{101}\) Yet although this lesson is congruous with the teachings that Wyche has previously articulated in *Letter*, the prayer that the prisoner recommends Maya’s daughter should say is somewhat problematic. In the Book of Genesis, Sarah is not portrayed as speaking any such words. By indicating that this prayer, which he includes in his letter, was originally spoken by Sarah, Wyche momentarily departs from the act of citing from the Bible and, instead, he takes on the role of writing scriptural history himself. While the prisoner has previously relied on accurate biblical memory to authorise his identity, as the letter draws to a close, he appears to suggest that the words he imparts are of equal importance to those that are preserved in the Bible. He thus presents his own letter as one that his reader should study closely precisely because it is a holy script that will help the Lollard community to cultivate a truthful identity.


\(^{101}\) Genesis 21.2-4.
Wyche’s request that Maya’s daughter should join her prayer with the imagined prayer of Sarah is also significant if its content is considered in more detail. By instructing a member of his own community to request, with Abraham’s wife, that she will be blessed with children, who, in turn, will follow the Lord’s law, Wyche proves that the words he writes hold the potential to enable a future generation to grow and develop in God-pleasing ways. Although, earlier in the investigation, Wyche did not explicitly discuss what might happen in cases when the Church permitted incest to flourish amongst her people, it should be noted that in medieval culture, infants who were conceived in incestuous relationships were believed to be mired in sin.102 As Wyche, in this later stage of his letter, implies that Maya’s daughter’s children will be akin to Sarah’s child, Isaac, who went on to father the line of Israel, he draws further attention to the Wycliffite community’s spiritual superiority. This is confirmed if the representation of Sarah in the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible is considered. Here the author draws on Paul’s memory of Sarah, which is preserved in the Book of Galatians, as he records how:

\[
\text{Poul [...] preueþ þat Sara, þe fre wiþf and principal of Abraham, wiþ Isaac hir sone signifieþ bi allegorie þe newe testament and þe sones of biheest, and Agar þe handmaide, wiþ her sone Ismael, signifieþ bi allegorie þe elde testament and fleischli men þat shulen not be resseyued into þeeritage of God wiþ þe sones of biheest þat hold enpetreuþe and fredom of Cristis gospel wiþ endeles charite.}^{103}
\]

In allegorical terms, Sarah’s line symbolises an order of people who interpret and follow God’s commandment correctly and, as a result, are rewarded with eternal life.

By contrast, the earlier ‘fleischli’ line, born unto Abraham’s concubine, Hagar, will

---

102 In many texts that critique incest, the children born inside these unions are said to be physically deformed. Given that illness and deformity were believed to be the direct result of sin, the fact that the bodies of these infants suffer affliction can be seen as confirming the fact they were conceived in illegitimate circumstances. See Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest in the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 52.

103 *Prologue*, p. 63, XII, ll. 2184-90.
not be granted entrance into the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{104} In this way, the Church, which Wyche has already presented as populated by sexual sinners, is shown to be damnable. Scriptural memory thus permits Wyche to instruct the Wycliffite community that they must continue to fashion their identity in relation to biblical truth, not in relation to the perverse laws of the Church, if they wish to share in the promise of salvation.

Throughout \textit{Letter}, Wyche’s ability to combine his memory of persecution with sustained recall of scripture permits him to use his experience of imprisonment to not only critique the authority responsible for his unjust persecution, but also to encourage his brethren to cultivate their identities in a biblically grounded manner. What is striking about Wyche’s work is that, despite the fact it is generally acknowledged that the prisoner wrote his original narrative in English, it survives only in a single manuscript, Prague University Library MS III. G. II, where it is preserved in a Latin hand.\textsuperscript{105} While the manuscript provenance may initially appear unusual, given that Wyche’s work is essentially a personal letter directed to a local Northumbrian community in late medieval England, fifteenth-century Bohemia was home to the Hussite heresy – a strain of dissent indebted to Wyclif’s thinking.\textsuperscript{106} Although the precise way in which the letter first found its way overseas remains a

\textsuperscript{104} The understanding of Hagar as a concubine who represents the old order is discussed in Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell, ‘Unto the Thousandth Generation’, in \textit{Hagar, Sarah and their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives}, ed. by Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), pp. 1-32 (pp. 7-9).

\textsuperscript{105} Joanna Summers, \textit{Late Medieval Prison-Writing and the Politics of Autobiography} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 111. If the work was translated to reach the Hussites, the use of Latin would have made Wyche’s discourse accessible to a foreign reader. See A. J. Minnis, \textit{Translations of Authority in Middle English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 106.

\textsuperscript{106} The progenitor of the Hussite heresy, John Hus, was sentenced to death at the Council of Constance (1414) when it was also legislated that Wyclif’s body should be exhumed and burnt. See Petr Z. Mladenovic, \textit{John Hus at the Council of Constance}, trans. by Matthew Spinka (Columbia, DC: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 31-36.
matter of speculation, what is clear is that much like Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians, Wyche’s text, which was originally directed to a minority group, came to cross geographical borders, achieving international significance.\(^\text{107}\) With this in mind, I turn attention now to Thorpe’s *Testimony* which, as I noted earlier, was specifically written to aid the development of the universal Church.

### 2.4 Affective Memory: Thorpe’s Passion

In *Testimony*, Thorpe, like Wyche, claims to present an honest account of his examination by the ecclesiastical authorities. However, while Wyche’s letter matches our understanding of how late medieval heresy trials were orchestrated, in that it lasted over a number of months and took place in front of a number of ecclesiastical officials, the same cannot be said of Thorpe’s trial account. According to *Testimony*, Arundel examined his prisoner on a single day in August, during which time the Archbishop received very little assistance or guidance from members of his court. This discrepancy has not gone unnoticed by critics of the work, who have expressed concern about the truth-value of Thorpe’s narrative. Emily Steiner, for instance, posits that Thorpe’s narrative may very well be an entirely fabricated account of a trial that never took place.\(^\text{108}\) While Christopher Bradley does not go so far as to assert that Thorpe’s whole experience is imagined, he notes that the prisoner consistently offers Arundel ‘well-crafted model answers’ to his questions that are devoid of ‘any particularities of impulse, views or doubts’.\(^\text{109}\) This observation suggests that Bradley believes a degree of artifice underpins Thorpe’s recollection of

---

\(^{107}\) Michael Van Dussen *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 74-75. Rex observes that the letter might have been taken back to Bohemia by two Hussite priests who are known to have travelled to England in 1410. See Rex, ‘Which is Wyche’, p. 90.

\(^{108}\) Steiner, *Documentary Culture*, p. 71.

the encounter. Similarly, Schirmer states that *Testimony* can best be seen as a ‘highly crafted, if not largely fictional, account of whatever may have transpired between Thorpe and Arundel’ in a manner that indicates her scepticism about the work’s historical accuracy.\footnote{Elizabeth Schirmer, ‘William Thorpe’s Narrative Theology’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 31 (2009), 267-99 (p. 271). It should be noted that there is documentary evidence for Thorpe’s arrest. This documentation, however, does not offer any insight into the prisoner’s trial. See Maureen Jurkowski, ‘The Arrest of William Thorpe in Shrewsbury and the Anti-Lollard Statute of 1406’, *Historical Review*, 75 (2002), 273-95.}

In the following discussion, however, I am not concerned with ascertaining whether or not the trial took place in the manner that Thorpe suggests as any attempt to do so would be entirely speculative. Instead, building on the idea that Christians can internalise scriptural memory to powerful effect, as is exemplified by the way that Wyche’s digestive illness authorises him to counsel the community outside the prison, I posit that Thorpe uses his written memory of persecution to teach the Wycliffite community about the extra-textual ways in which they can embody memory of scripture to promote their faith, even when the Church is intent on destroying Lollard books.\footnote{The possibility that Thorpe might have built on an idea found in Wyche’s text is given more weight by the possibility that the two men knew each other personally. As *Letter* draws to its conclusion, Wyche’s insatiable appetite for God’s truth is further evinced as he entreats his reader to assist him acquire ‘three books containing the four gospels all on one’. In order to execute this plan, he asks his reverend brother to visit ‘a priest living by the church of Saint Andrew […] called Henry of Topcliff […] who is married to the sister of lord William Corpp’ so this preacher might smuggle the Scripture into prison for him. See Wyche, *Letter*, p. 642. Given that medieval scribes frequently confused the letter ‘C’ with ‘T’, *Letter* may attest that he and Thorpe knew one another personally. It is thus also possible that Thorpe was familiar with Wyche’s prison letter. See Summers, *Prison-Writing*, pp. 112-13.} I argue that Thorpe achieves this by paralleling his own suffering with his memory of Christ’s Passion, not only to emphasise the righteousness of the Lollard creed, but also to engage with, critique and ultimately transcend the orthodox understanding of the interrelationship between divine embodiment and sacramental symbolism that lay at the heart of late medieval Eucharistic piety. In this way, Thorpe, like Wyche, utilises scriptural memory to
define himself and his fellow Lollard believers as members of a true Christian community whose faith is constituted by biblical truth alone and not by the doctrines or practices that have been ‘created’ by the medieval papacy.

Thorpe’s interest in how scriptural memory can be preserved and embodied in extra-textual ways is undoubtedly timely. As I indicated earlier, _De Heretico_ mandated that if any individual was found to possess books containing a heterodox creed, these materials should be burnt within forty days of the suspected heretic’s arrest. Yet this was not the only attempt made to deprive the Lollards of the textual materials utilised to sustain their identity. In 1407, Arundel drafted his _Constitutions_. This set of regulations, which was first presented at a synod in Oxford, prohibited the translation of the Bible from Latin into English, mandated that the writings of Wyclif and his contemporaries must be destroyed and insisted that vernacular religious writings must only be circulated in England if they were approved by either Oxford or Cambridge University. Additionally, in _Constitutions_, Arundel forbade priests from preaching unless they were licensed to do so by the Church thereby restricting the way in which these teachers could use scriptural memory to promote their creed orally.¹¹² As Thorpe was arrested in this year, it is not inconceivable that he was familiar with the Archbishop’s plans to further tighten the measures in place to eradicate Wycliffism from the realm.¹¹³


¹¹³ The date at which Thorpe wrote his account is unknown. In his consideration of this matter, David Aers posits that it is most likely that _Testimony_ was written almost immediately after Thorpe’s examination. See David Aers, _Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England_ (Notre Dame, IL: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), p. 83. Summers, however, makes the important observation that, as the prisoner introduces his captor, he uses the past tense in speaking of the man who was ‘thanne primate of al Yngelond’. For this reason, she suggests the work may have been written after Arundel’s death in 1412. See Summers, _Prison-Writing_, p. 111. Given that the
Although Nicholas Watson famously described Arundel’s text as ‘one of the most draconian pieces of censorship in English history’, recent scholarship has challenged this view.\textsuperscript{114} As Kirsty Campbell explains, the fact that there are, to this day, so many surviving Wycliffite Bibles and that fact that we still have access to an extensive corpus of Wycliffite sermons, treatise and vernacular theologies illustrates that the Archbishop’s control measures were not widely heeded.\textsuperscript{115} Yet despite the seeming failure of Arundel’s plan, Constitutions undeniably attests to the Archbishop’s belief that removing all textual repositories of heretical knowledge from the collective consciousness was integral to the task of extirpating Lollardy from fifteenth-century England.

Thorpe’s creation of a vernacular textual record of his examination, that sets out to encourage other Wycliffites to retain their heterodox beliefs, despite the persecution that they might face, thus flies in the face of his persecutor’s ambition. Moreover, the sense that Thorpe deliberately aimed to counter Arundel’s authority is confirmed through the temporal signifier that the former uses to date his trial, which he recalls took place ‘on þe Sondai next aftir þe feste […] þat we clepen Lammasse’.\textsuperscript{116} In the opening section of Constitutions, Arundel praises St Peter as the head of the Church, before drawing on the commonplace metaphor of Lollards as weeds to describe the Wycliffite’s pollution of England.\textsuperscript{117} Yet, in the religious calendar, the feast of

\textit{Constitutions} were eventually published in 1409, the view that Thorpe might very well have been familiar with Arundel’s programme to reassert orthodoxy in England is supported.

\textsuperscript{114} Nicholas Watson, ‘Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409’, Speculum, 70.4 (1995), 822-64 (p. 826).
\textsuperscript{115} Kirsty Campbell, \textit{The Call to Read: Reginald Peacock’s Books and Textual Communities} (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), p. 8.
\textsuperscript{116} Thorpe, \textit{Testimony}, p. 29, ll. 167-68.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Concilia Magnae}, p. 314.
Lammas marked both the day when Christians remembered Peter’s release from prison and the day when the beginning of harvest was celebrated. By dating his examination in relation to this temporal signifier, Thorpe conflates his own experience of imprisonment with that of his biblical predecessor, not only to remind his reader that God holds the power to liberate his faithful from prison, but also to suggest that he, as well as other men and women who are prepared to face persecution for their scripturally sanctioned beliefs, dwell at the helm of a true faith community, that will flourish before it is eventually reaped by the ultimate harvester, God.

As Testimony unfolds, Thorpe shows himself to share Arundel’s concern about the ways in which textual memory can endanger the souls of a community. However, as he does so, he critiques the written scripts that the Church uses to define its boundaries and preserve her laws. Thorpe recalls, for example, how Arundel explained that he was alerted to his prisoner’s preaching when ‘þe bailies and þe comouns’ of Shrewsbury wrote to him ‘and witnessen vndir her seelis’ that he had ‘prechidest þus openly þese foreside errours and heresies þere amongst hem’. In the late Middle Ages, the sealed document was one with legal effect. Yet as Thorpe insists that the charges contained within this document are false, the prisoner immediately draws attention to the fact that his prosecution is invalid precisely

---

119 Thorpe, Testimony, p. 43, ll. 640-44.
because it is based on corrupt evidence.\textsuperscript{121} Moreover, the very fact that the erroneous beliefs that Thorpe allegedly preached are transcribed on to ‘a litil rolle’, from which Arundel reads aloud, suggests that even the manipulated evidence that the Church uses against the prisoner is insubstantial.\textsuperscript{122} The implication that the Church defines its parameters according to false witness and corrupt record is further emphasised when Thorpe describes the book of faith that he is asked to swear an oath of allegiance to the Church on as one that is ‘compilid togidere of diuerse creaturis’.\textsuperscript{123} Since the adjective ‘diuerse’ puns to mean ‘to be in disagreement’ or ‘perverse, hostile and vicious’, Thorpe implies that the men who have written the laws of the Church cannot agree with either one another or with the truth of God.\textsuperscript{124}

When Arundel asks Thorpe to kiss the book, the clever prisoner circumvents the request to align himself with this corrupt textual ‘authority’ by offering to share his beliefs with his investigator.\textsuperscript{125} In doing so, Thorpe creates an opportunity to expound his faith, even as he faces persecution for his religious convictions. As Thorpe lays bare his creed, he uses an oral mode of delivery to impart a detailed and biblically grounded account of Christ’s life to the Archbishop. By extending this lengthy exposition of faith without the use of any \textit{aide-mémoire}, in the form of a Bible or another religious text, Thorpe not only differentiates himself from his

\textsuperscript{121} In late medieval culture, a heresy trial could only take place if the suspect’s \textit{publica fama} was established. While many modern scholars have misinterpreted this law, positing that the suspect’s ‘general bad reputation’ needed to be documented, what it actually means is that ‘a certain suspect is widely held to be guilty of the \textit{specific crime} that is being prosecuted’. The way in which Thorpe recalls his persecution, then, is one that enables him to imply that a host of people in the Church have falsely conspired against him to bring about an examination that is unjust and unsubstantiated. See Henry Ansgar Kelly, ‘Inquisition, Public Fame and Confession: General Rules and English Practice’, in \textit{The Culture of Inquisition in Medieval England}, ed. by Mary Catherine Flannery and Katie L. Walter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 8-29 (p. 9).

\textsuperscript{122} Thorpe, \textit{Testimony}, p. 42, l. 622.

\textsuperscript{123} Thorpe, \textit{Testimony}, p. 34, l. 337.

\textsuperscript{124} The \textit{MED}, ‘diuerse’ (adj.), 1a and 5a.

\textsuperscript{125} Thorpe, \textit{Testimony}, p. 30, ll. 190-96.
persecutor, who relies on textual aids to prosecute his prisoner, but he also establishes himself as a figure whose knowledge of scriptural history and God’s law is so thoroughly embedded in his memory that he can draw on it and share it with others at any given moment.

In her examination of Thorpe’s narrative theology, Schirmer argues that the prisoner consciously and consistently establishes himself as a role model for others to emulate. Accordingly, she describes his narrative style as ‘experiential and exemplary’.126 This is certainly evident in the prisoner’s representation of himself as a man who has memorised biblical lore so thoroughly that he can recall it accurately and with ease. However, as Schirmer lays out this largely persuasive argument, she makes a misjudgement which I propose to engage with here: that is, she argues that Thorpe’s narrative lacks the affective impulse that is commonly found within late medieval orthodox literatures.127 This bifurcation of Church and Lollard discourse is one that, aligning myself with Gayk’s scholarship (see above), I show needs to be revised.128

The growth of affective piety in medieval culture can be traced back to the twelfth century. At this time, the Church began to entreat devotees to identify with Christ by emphasising his humanity.129 This is epitomised in the changing representation of Passion iconography. While earlier artists portrayed Christ as a stoic soldier, who bore his pain on the cross bravely, in the tradition of affective piety the son of man

---

126 Schirmer, ‘Narrative Theology’, p. 270.
was represented as suffering the agonies of a bloody and painful death. Preserved in a range of textual and visual media, these graphic images were intended to solicit ‘heightened degrees of emotionalism’ from the faithful, who were moved to compassion, love and devotion as they witnessed the son of God endure this awful ordeal to free mankind from sin. This rationale is explained in the Carthusian friar Nicholas Love’s Middle English text, *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (c. 1407-09), which states:

> For to him þat wolde serche þe passion of oure lorde with alle his herte & alle his inward affeccione þere shuld come many deuout felynges & stirynges þat he neuer supposede before. Of þe whech he shuld fele a newe compassion & a newe loue, & haue newe gostly confortes, þor þe whech he shold perceyue him self turnede as it were in to a newe astate of soule, in þe whech astate þoo foreside gostly felynges, shold seme to him as an erneste & partie of þe blisse & ioy to come.

Here, affective piety is identified as creating a new spiritual understanding and impulse in the devotee, whose heart is turned to steadfast devotion to Christ and his promise of eternal life. The very fact that Arundel gave his ‘official backing’ to Love’s work in 1410, shortly after *Constitutions* were published, confirms that this form of devotion retained its popularity in orthodox culture throughout the fifteenth century. Indeed, Schirmer notes that affective piety took on a special significance at this particular historical moment as this form of religious discourse and discipline provided the laity with a way of accessing God through emotion and intense feeling.

---

rather than through an intellective, yet dangerously unmediated, recourse to scripture.134

While Schirmer states that Thorpe’s narrative style is neither ‘affective or devotional’, when the prisoner gives his creed, he lavishes attention on one particular moment in Judeo-Christian history: Christ’s death.135 In a graphic description of the crucifixion, which spans over twenty lines of prose, Thorpe draws attention to the myriad tortures that the Jews inflict on Jesus in the hours before his death, recalling, for instance, how they ‘bynden him and leden him forþ as a þeef, and to scorne him and to buffeten him, and to al tobawme him wiþ her spittinge[s] […] to crowne him wiþ moost scharp þornes and to beten him wiþ a reed’.136 By repeating the third-person pronoun ‘him’ on seven occasions, Thorpe draws attention to the different brutal ways in which Christ was mocked, scorned and beaten before his death. Moreover, the intensifier – the superlative epithet ‘moost scharp’ – that Thorpe employs to describe the crown of thorns that the Jews use to pierce Christ’s head is not the only hyperbolic expression within the Passion account. The prisoner also employs two more superlative phrases to describe Christ’s death as ‘þe moost peyneful passioun’ and he states that the son of man was killed by men who lay their hands ‘moost violently vpon him’.137 The Wycliffite prison-writer thus draws strong attention to the terrible suffering that Christ endured for his people. Corresponding to Gayk’s assertion that Wycliffite writers often utilised similar narrative strategies to

134 Schirmer, ‘Narrative Theology’, p. 270. Blamires posits that, before the inception of Lollardy, affective literatures and images were often directed to the attention of women precisely because the Church believed that the female sex was not capable of accessing God through intellectual study; thus, it was considered more suitable that they use emotion to identify with Christ’s suffering. See Blamires, ‘Beneath’, p. 152.
136 Thorpe’s discussion of Christ’s death and resurrection appears at Thorpe, Testimony, pp. 31-32, ll. 244-73.
137 Thorpe, Testimony, p. 31, ll. 243-47.
their orthodox contemporaries, Thorpe’s vividly detailed memory of Christ’s death is not, in fact, very different from recollections of the Passion that are made by and for his orthodox contemporaries.\textsuperscript{138}

Acknowledging Thorpe’s text as affective, however, not only confirms that orthodox and Wycliffite writers often used similar narrative techniques to one another, but when the prisoner’s creed is read alongside scholarship that considers the interrelationship between memory and feeling in medieval culture, it also confirms that Thorpe was keen to imprint an image of Christ’s suffering in the mind of his reader. As Mary Carruthers explains:

\begin{quote}
successful memory schemes all acknowledge the importance of tagging material emotionally as well as schematically, making each memory as much possible to a personal occasion by imprinting an emotional association like fear or desire.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

By employing affective language, Thorpe sets about ensuring that his reader will not forget Christ’s death. This rhetorical strategy is important since Thorpe regularly and repeatedly draws on his memory of the Passion as he instructs his reader about the different ways that she can embody true Christian faith, even if she is being persecuted for her beliefs.

Strikingly, the first instance that Christ’s memory is used in this way occurs almost immediately after Thorpe has given his creed. As Arundel is unable to fault the heretic’s biblically grounded statement of faith, Thorpe recalls that his examiner pursued an alternative tactic, requesting that his prisoner should prove his loyalty to the Church by not only swearing to ‘forsake alle þe opynynouns whiche þe sect of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[138] Schirmer, ‘Narrative Theology’, p. 286.
\end{footnotes}
Lollers holdiþ’, but also by agreeing to ‘pupblishinge her names’ of other Lollards so as to ‘make hem known to þe bischop of þe diocese þat þese ben inne’. Implicit in the verb ‘publishen’ is a sense that Thorpe will create a new textual record, within which he will effectively betray his brethren by providing the Church with the evidence that she requires to arrest and investigate these men and women. Thorpe, of course, refuses to add to the corpus of sinful texts owned by the Church by compromising his faith community in this way. Thorpe’s refusal thus sparks the anger of Arundel, who threatens to ‘schauen’ his recalcitrant prisoner to ‘Smeþfelde’ – the site used to burn intransigent and relapsed heretics. In referring to the name of the site, Smithfield, rather than explicitly threatening his prisoner with death, Arundel distances himself from the responsibility of taking another man’s life: a task performed by the secular arm precisely because ordained figures were strictly prohibited from drawing blood from any man, woman or child. Yet, perhaps unsurprisingly, the reference to Smithfield immediately evokes Thorpe’s memory of the first Wycliffite priest to be killed under *De Heretico* – ‘Wiliam Sautri’ – who the prisoner recalls was ‘wrongfulli brent’ at that place.

Although Sautre’s death is now fresh in the prisoner’s mind, as Thorpe records his memory of his fellow Wycliffite’s execution, he articulates his remembrance of this public event in quite a peculiar fashion. In his chronicle account of Sautre’s death,

141 This tactic was not unusual. At the Norwich Heresy trials, the abjurer Thomas Moon proved his full rejection of heterodoxy by drawing on his memory of the conventicle to which he used to belong to name fifteen other heretics whom the Church could also prosecute. See *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, ed. by Norman P. Tanner (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 178-79. By citing ‘publishen’ here, I acknowledge that the spelling given in Thorpe’s text is an unusual variant on this Middle English verb which appears in the MED as ‘publishen’.
142 Thorpe, *Testimony*, p. 36, l. 409
144 Thorpe, *Testimony*, p. 36, l. 417.
Adam Usk describes how the heretic was ‘fettered upright to a post’ and ‘surrounded by blazing wood’ until ‘he was reduced to ashes’.\(^{145}\) Usk thus makes it clear that the heretic was burnt to death. Similarly, when Thomas Hoccleve memorialises the death of the first lay Lollard subject to be killed under *De Hereticis*, John Badby, he too deploys incendiary imagery. In *Regiment of Princes* (c. 1410), he explains that, before ‘any stikke kyndlid were or light’, Henry IV’s son mercifully attempted to save the heretic by offering him a final chance to share in the Eucharist and abjure.\(^{146}\) However, as Thorpe reflects on Sautre’s death and ponders the fact that he might suffer the same fate as his predecessor, he does not refer to any flames. Instead, he describes the Archbishop as a man who ‘þirstide 3it aftir þe schedynge out of more innocent blood’.\(^{147}\) This turn of phrase not only underlines that the Archbishop was acting in a manner that contravened the requirement for the clergy not to engage in acts of bloodshed, but, if Thorpe’s creed is recalled, it also provides a means by which the prisoner yokes the persecution of his people to that of Christ. As the prisoner describes Christ’s bloody Passion, the verb ‘scheden’ appears three times to emphasise how the son of man suffered terribly to secure salvation for his faithful followers. Thorpe not only states that God ‘ordeyned þat he [Christ] wolde *schede* out þis blood and þis watir for mannes saluacioun’, but he also remembers how ‘Crist *schedde* out wilfully for mannes loue þe blood þat was in his veynes’ and, later, states that ‘þe blood and þe water þat was in his herte Crist wolde *shedde* out for mannes loue’.\(^{148}\) By deploying affective strategies to imprint and affix the memory


\(^{147}\) Thorpe, *Testimony*, p. 25, l. 55. My emphasis.

\(^{148}\) Thorpe, *Testimony*, p. 32, ll. 261-65. My emphasis. Importantly, this verb is also used to describe Christ’s death on the first occasion that Thorpe refers to this pivotal moment in Judeo-Christian history in *Testimony*. Here the prisoner explains that Christ ‘bicam man and *schedde* oute his hert blood’. See Thorpe, *Testimony*, p. 25, l. 55.
of Christ’s death in his reader’s mind, Thorpe creates a mnemonic image that he can
draw on repeatedly in order to teach his people that the persecution they suffer is
akin to the tortured death of Christ. In this way, the Wycliffites are figured as at
one with Christ – they, too, are living embodiments of Christian law whose death
will bring about salvation. Despite the fact that Arundel hoped that the memory of
Smithfield would prompt his prisoner to abjure, it is clear that he cannot control his
prisoner’s mind in the way that he desires. Rather, Thorpe’s memory of Sautre’s
death, which, in turn, reminds him of Christ’s Passion, does nothing but strengthen
the prisoner’s resolve to embody Christian truth to the point of death.

Thorpe’s authorial decision to conflate his suffering with that of Christ takes on
further significance when his bodily reaction and response to Arundel’s threat is
considered. As Thorpe meditates on Sautre’s death, which is portrayed as similar to
that of Christ, the prisoner explains that he ‘stood stille and spak not’. Given that
Thorpe has previously portrayed himself engaging in continuous dialogue with his
captor, this moment of silence provides a strong and dramatic rupture in his
recollection of this investigation. In her work on the manifestation of affective
responses to emotional stimuli, Corinne Saunders explains that the body holds the
potential both to ‘reflect’ and ‘illuminate’ the feelings of an individual. Saunders
is not alone in identifying the body as the site where affective responses manifest
themselves. Many medievalists, including Sarah Beckwith, Louise Bishop and

149 This is confirmed by Jan Assman’s scholarship on oral testimony. She states that the technique of
150 Thorpe, Testimony, p. 36, l. 410. My emphasis.
Caroline Walker Bynum, have drawn attention to the ways in which emotive images or memories of Christ’s death moved devotees to tears, ecstasies and rapturous devotion. Yet within these studies of affectivity, silence is often denied its own ontology. This elision may be symptomatic of the fact that many modern ‘definitions of silence privilege its negative qualities’ in a way that means silence gains an association with ‘non-existence’ and therefore becomes ‘tied to negativity’. But in medieval Christian tradition, silence did not hold these same pejorative connotations. In *On Christian Culture*, for example, Augustine illustrates that silence is, in fact, the only true way in which God can be understood. As the early Church father explains, God’s greatness is so overwhelming and mysterious, the Lord cannot even be described as ‘ineffable’ as the utterance of this word is an attempt to contain his might and power within language – a task that is impossible. Silence thus permits a true understanding of God that is not thwarted by the inadequacy of human speech. The association of silence with holiness is also evident in the gospellers accounts of Christ’s trial, persecution and crucifixion. In these texts, Jesus is presented as reticent during his trial. This is not lost on Thorpe. In his biblically-grounded creed, he invokes another superlative to emphasise that Christ suffered ‘moost mekeli and pacientli […] wi þouten grucchynge’. As Thorpe meditates on the ways in which he and his fellow Wycliffites, like Christ, must suffer for their faith, his

---


stillness and silence emphasise his oneness with the son of God. In the opening part of the investigation, then, Thorpe not only makes it clear that he will not affiliate himself with the corrupt textual records of the Church, but he also shows that the medium of text is not necessarily essential for communion with Christ. Instead, Thorpe uses his experiential memory of persecution to exemplify his belief that if biblical lore is memorialised effectively, the Lollard subject either use speech, to declare his faith orally, or he can adopt a silent position, so that he emulates Christ emotionally, mentally, and potentially even physically, as, like the son of man, he, too, prepares to die for God’s truth.

2.5 Embodiment and Eucharistic Piety

As Arundel realises that he will not bring about his prisoner’s abjuration by threatening this man with death, he turns to ask Thorpe about the five Wycliffite beliefs that he allegedly promoted in his sermon at St Chad’s. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first charge relates to the heretic’s understanding of Eucharistic theology, which was ‘a key litmus test’ used to identify Lollard subjects in late medieval heresy trials.\(^\text{157}\)

The doctrine of transubstantiation stressed that when an ordained priest consecrated the Eucharistic gifts, the bread and wine were transformed, in substance, into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.\(^\text{158}\) Although the laity typically only received the Eucharist orally on Easter Sunday, the Church taught people that they could share in


the holy meal each time that they fixed their eyes on the elevated host in the Mass.\footnote{David Aers, ‘Walter Brut’s Theology of the Sacrament of the Altar’, in \textit{Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England}, ed. by Fiona Somerset, Jill Havens and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 115-26 (p. 117). In addition to sharing in the Eucharistic feast, by mouth, at Easter, the laity were traditionally also offered a chance to consume the holy feast on the deathbed. See Christopher Daniell, \textit{Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066-1550} (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 31.}

In this way, the Eucharist became an ‘affective site’ that provided the faithful with an opportunity to identify with Christ’s life, death and resurrection.\footnote{Miri Rubin, \textit{Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 93; Lahey, ‘Eucharistic Theology’, p. 453.} As partaking in the Eucharist celebration allowed Christ’s people to draw near to him, during the liturgy certain rituals were carried out to heighten the congregant’s emotional experience of, and devotion to, the holy feast. When the consecration bell rang to signal that a substantive ‘change in elements had taken place’, the priest turned to face the congregation, raising the host on high, so that they could adore the body of Christ cradled between his hands.\footnote{Aers, \textit{Sanctifying Signs}, p. 72.} Moreover, the sound of the consecration bell was often accompanied by the burning of candles and incense, both of which were incorporated into the Mass to stir the faithful to deeper devotion.\footnote{Rubin, \textit{Corpus Christi}, p. 93.}

The Eucharist, however, not only offered late medieval Christians spiritual sustenance, but the sacrament also defined the parameters of the Church. While those who partook in the celebration were recognised as members of Christ’s body, those who did not avow belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation were perceived as outsiders.\footnote{Beckwith, \textit{Christ’s Body}, p. 32.} These non-believers thus stood to be damned at the end of time. This is made clear in the opening canon of the Fourth Lateran Council, which states:

\begin{quote}
There is one Universal Church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation. In which there is the same priest and sacrifice, Jesus Christ, whose body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar\end{quote}
under the forms of bread and wine; the bread being changed \textit{(transsubstantiatio)} by divine power into the body, and the wine into the blood, so that to realize the mystery of unity we may receive of Him what He has received of us.\footnote{Medieval Source Book: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp> [accessed on 2 October 2013].}

The Lollards certainly did not fully reject the importance of commemorating Christ’s Last Supper. Indeed, in his creed, Thorpe employs yet another superlative to describe the Eucharist as the ‘moost worshipful and holiest sacrament’ in a manner that evinces his respect for this religious meal.\footnote{Thorpe, \textit{Testimony}, p. 31, l. 241.} However, following Wyclif, Thorpe and the Lollard-sect believed that when the Eucharist was celebrated, Christ was present only in the ‘form’ of bread and wine. By maintaining a symbolic understanding of the Eucharist and rejecting the notion that a substantive, elemental change took place when the priest consecrated eucharistic gifts, the Lollards effectively turned their backs on an aspect of Catholic practice and teaching that the Church upheld as central to Christian faith.\footnote{Wyclif’s theology on the Eucharist is given its fullest treatment in John Wyclif, \textit{De Eucharistia Tractus Maior}, ed. by J. Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1982), esp. pp. 98-99.}

When Arundel asks Thorpe to explain whether he had, indeed, shared his belief that ‘\textit{þe sacrament of þe auter was material breed after þe consecracioun}’ in his sermon at St Chad’s, the prisoner replies by stating:

\begin{quote}
I telle 3ou truli, I touchide no þing þere of þe sacrament of þe auter […] As I stood in þe pulpitte, bisinge me to teche þe heestis of God, oon kynllide a sacringe belle, and her for myche peple turned awei fersli and wiþ greet noyse runnen frowards me. And I, seynge þis, seide to hem þus “Goode men, 3ou were better to stoonden here stille and to here Goddis word! For certis, þe vertu and þe meede of þe most holi sacrament of þe auter stondiþ myche moore in þe bileue þer of þat 3eowen to haue in 3oure soulis þan it doiþ in þe outward siȝt therof. And þerfore 3ou were
\end{quote}
better to stoned stille quyetefulli and to heeren Goddis
worde, siþþer of men comen to very bileue”\(^\text{167}\).

Given that memory was understood to be stocked through sensory perception, Thorpe’s declaration that he ‘touchide’ not the Eucharist permits him to imply that his own mind is not with the theologies that surround this sacrament. The suggestion that he might have preached on the matter thus appears null and void. This idea is also affirmed if the dual meaning of ‘touchide’ is considered. By stating that he did not take the sacrament in his hands, the prisoner not only differentiates himself from the clergy, who hold the host between their hands as they elevate it in the Mass, but he also provides a further reminder of the fact he is accused of false charges, as the verb ‘touchide’ refers back to the fact that he did not touch on – that is, make reference to – the subject of the Eucharist in the way that he stands accused of.\(^\text{168}\)

More potent, however, is that, as Thorpe’s speech unfolds, he suggests that the celebration of the Eucharist is harming the spiritual health of ‘believers’ who invest their devotional energies in the celebration of this sacrament. In contradistinction to the silence that Thorpe has previously suggested permitted communion with Christ, the sound of the consecration bell knelling in the distance is identified as a disruptive agent since it causes a number of men, who were previously listening to Thorpe’s truth-filled sermon, to turn away and run in a contrary direction – ‘frowardis’ – from the preacher.\(^\text{169}\) As the word ‘frowardis’ also translates to mean ‘unruly’, ‘war-like’, ‘bellicose’ and ‘perverse’, the physical movement of the men and women can be seen as indicative of their spiritual state.\(^\text{170}\) By running away from the preacher, they prove themselves to be contrary, even oppositional, to the form of biblical truth that

\(^{167}\) Thorpe, *Testimony*, p. 52, ll. 934-45.
\(^{168}\) MED, ‘touchen’, (v.), 7a.
\(^{169}\) MED, ‘froward’, (adv.), 1a.
\(^{170}\) MED, ‘froward’, (adj.), 1c-e.
Thorpe promotes. The idea that the sound of the consecration bell is an impediment to spiritual growth is further confirmed as the prisoner describes the people who run away from him as ‘fersli’. Given that this word translates to mean ‘fiercely’, ‘cruelly’ and ‘savagely’, the malignancy of the absconders is emphasised.\textsuperscript{171} Similarly, Thorpe’s recollection of the great ‘noyse’ that the errant subjects made, as they fled away, also confirms their negative character. The \textit{MED} shows us that, in medieval culture, ‘noyse’ not only meant sound, but the word also denoted troublesome and quarrelsome conduct.\textsuperscript{172} Thorpe thus suggests that chaos and division are at the heart of eucharistic piety, promoted and practised by the Church. This idea, that the men who privilege the sight of the host over the sound of truth that Thorpe imparts in his sermon, takes on further significance as the prisoner presents the congregation’s visual participation in the Eucharist celebration as a spiritually empty, even idolatrous, act. Through their eyes, the gathered ‘faithful’, internalise an image which is meaningless precisely because the Bible does not authorise the idea of transubstantiation.

As a spiritually beneficial alternative to attending Mass, Thorpe goes on to express his belief that Christians who remain quiet and listen to the words of the Wycliffite preacher will grow in faith. As Carruthers explains, according to medieval memory theory, the faculty was considered to work most efficaciously in quiet or silent conditions.\textsuperscript{173} Thorpe thus posits that quietness not only permits identification with Christ’s Passion, but it also enables spiritual development precisely because it is conducive to the remembrance of a preacher’s lessons. Moreover, as this is not the first time that Thorpe explains his belief that listening to the words of a Lollard

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{MED}, ‘fersli’ (adv.), 2a-e.
\textsuperscript{172} \textit{MED}, ‘noise’ (n.), 1a and 2a.
preacher can bring about true faith, the narrative moment emphasises, through repetition, the interrelationship between the aural reception of truth and the spiritual transformation of the Wycliffite subject. This idea takes on significance when the rhetoric Thorpe used in his earlier articulation of why listening to a preacher is important is considered. When Thorpe previously justified his decision to preach his Lollard sermon, even though he did not possess a licence from the Church, he explained that his action was necessary, important and right because ‘[h]e peple to whom we prechen […] schulen be oure lettris þat is oure witnesse-berers’. What Thorpe implies here is that when the people to whom he preaches take his lessons into their memories, by listening to the sermon, they become testaments and testimonies to Christ’s truth. In effect, internalising the biblical teaching, through the sensory act of hearing, allows an alternative – yet ultimately more meaningful – form of transubstantiation to take place. The Christian listener, who hears and remembers scriptural lessons, becomes, like scripture itself, a witness to God’s power. Indeed, this faithful listener is transformed so that comes to emulate Christ’s identity as the Word incarnate. This idea becomes even more pertinent when the polysemy of Thorpe’s language is considered. While the word ‘lettris’ evokes a sense of the letters on a page, the MED confirms that the same word also punned to mean something that could be set alight in flames. If hearing truth permits the Wycliffite subject an opportunity to emulate Christ in life, as she incarnates the Word, so it also empowers her to emulate him in death; that is, it permits her to become a virtuous martyr, who will willingly die to defend her faith. Similarly, in late medieval culture, the word ‘witnesse’, that denotes someone who proclaims the truth, also punned to

---

174 Thorpe, Testimony, p. 47, ll. 774-75.
175 John 1.1-5.
176 MED, ‘lettere’ (n. (2)). This word derives from the verb ‘leiten’ which also means ‘to burn’. See, MED, ‘leiten’, (v. (1)), 1a.
mean a martyr. By employing these particular words to describe the Wycliffite subject who hears and heeds Lollard teaching, Thorpe again affirms his belief that when a Christian remembers and recalls the Bible and/or the scripturally grounded teachings of the heterodox preacher, she will come to emulate Christ and, as a result of this spiritual transformation, she will be willing to sacrifice her earthly life for divine truth. As Thorpe presents himself as a speaker of the very form of truth that will engender this spiritual transformation in others, he effectively takes the place of the elevated Eucharistic host. Speaking truth and modelling his own identity closely on that of Christ, he becomes the agent that enables meaningful devotion, spiritual change and divine nourishment in his audience. Once more, it is the prisoner’s memory of the son of God that legitimises his identity as a preacher of supreme truth, who can educate his reader about the best ways in which she should develop her faith by stocking her mind with scripture and biblically grounded teaching.

Thorpe’s strategy of critiquing the noise of the disruptive and disturbed Church is reiterated later in the examination as Arundel asks his prisoner whether he believes pilgrimage is a spiritually enriching experience. The practice of pilgrimage, according to Glenn Ehrstine, can be seen as an outgrowth of ‘late medieval affective piety’. By travelling to sites or shrines associated with either Jesus’s life (or the lives of the saints), devotees could ‘experience Christ’s body’ (as well as the bodies of the saints) ‘as vividly as possible’. Yet when Thorpe responds to Arundel’s question, he explains that ‘whanne dyuerse men and wymmen’ go on pilgrimages, they ‘synge rowtinge songis’, so that each town they travel through hears ‘þe soun of

177 MED, ‘witness’ (n.), 2a and 7a.
her pipinge’ and ‘be gingelynge of her Cauntirbirie bellis’.\textsuperscript{180} As Thorpe’s allusion to the ‘Cauntirbirie bellis’ appears to reference the small, metal souvenirs that medieval pilgrims who visited this city often purchased, he takes this narrative opportunity to suggest that most pilgrims are more invested in material culture than spiritual growth.\textsuperscript{181} Moreover, the fact that these pilgrims have, at some point, visited this English city, suggests that they are predisposed to pay reverence to a local English saint, rather than to experience Christ’s homeland. Thus, Thorpe draws attention to the ways in which orthodox subjects invest their devotional energy in paying homage to figures whose lives are not scripturally authorised.

The negative view of pilgrimage also finds further expression in the adjectival epithet that Thorpe uses to describe the pilgrims: ‘dyuerse’. As I explained earlier, this word, which could denote perversion, hostility and viciousness, was also used to describe the men who wrote the law books that the Church preserves faith within. Thorpe thus suggests that men and women who obey the clergy will come to emulate their spiritual corruption, not Christ’s holiness, which is incarnated by, and embodied within, men and women who allow their memories to be filled with Wycliffite truth. This sense that men and women who undertake pilgrimage are traversing the path to damnation is confirmed by the prisoner’s scathing description of their voices forming a ‘rowtinge songe’. Given that the adjective ‘rowtinge’ was often used to describe the gathering of a herd of animals, it confirms the prisoner’s sense that men and women who participate in pilgrimage, like those who run off to venerate the host which is elevated by the priest, are essentially primitive. The sin of the pilgrims is also confirmed by the allusion to the fact that they play the

\textsuperscript{180} Thorpe, \textit{Testimony}, p. 64, ll. 1320-29.
\textsuperscript{181} Minnis, \textit{Translations}, p. 234, n. 113.
‘bagpippis’ as they travel. In late medieval culture, this instrument was commonly associated with gluttony and lechery.\textsuperscript{182} In this way, it is also worth paying attention to Thorpe’s employment of the onomatopoeic word ‘gingelinge’ to describe the sound of the Canterbury bells that the pilgrims carry. As Gayk explains, ‘gingelinge’ is an especially ‘rare term’ within the corpus of Middle English literature.\textsuperscript{183} Yet one place it does appear is in the first sermon of the \textit{EWS}, where the preacher uses the adjective to draw attention to the difference between the humble Christ and the proud men who support his persecution. As he describes Christ’s arrival in Jerusalem, the week before his death, he states:

\begin{quote}
He cam mekeli and wilfulli toward Jerusalem, where he wist wel he schulde suffer deþ [...]. And here auȝten proude men of þis world [...] and þey so ride so proudeli in gai gult sadeles wiþ gingelinge brideles.\textsuperscript{184}
\end{quote}

If Thorpe’s description of the pilgrims is intended to evoke memory of this sermon in his reader’s mind then the temporalities of Judeo-Christian history are again transposed on to the prisoner’s present-day understanding of Church culture in a manner that permits him to depict the orthodox power as encouraging people to act in the same way as the faithless men who supported Christ’s death. By depicting the orthodox institution as one that is populated by individuals who love material culture and resemble the men who did not prevent or object to Christ’s death, the prisoner confirms his belief that devotees who subscribe to the Church and participate in religious practices that are supported by the papacy, but not the Bible, such as pilgrimage, are void of spiritual integrity. Proving his earlier point that listening and remembering Wycliffite sermons allows spiritual growth, the memory of the \textit{EWS}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{184} Gayk, \textit{Image}, p. 27.
\end{flushright}
that is evoked through Thorpe’s onomatopoeic description of the pilgrims’ bells, which, in turn, recalls the knelling consecration bell, further reminds the reader that she must form her identity in contradistinction to the Church. Essentially, it is only through privileging Wycliffite belief over orthodox praxis that she will emulate and be saved by Christ.

Although it is impossible to ascertain whether Thorpe’s memory of either scripture or the sermon cycle was gained by reading the written word or through hearing it read aloud, throughout Testimony he repeatedly demonstrates that if Christian truth is embedded in memory, it can be consciously and consistently recalled to defend and develop one’s faith, even in the midst of persecution. The idea that a text taken into memory can be drawn on and ‘re-published’ at a later date, in oral as well as written contexts, is confirmed by the reproduction and reception history of Thorpe’s own Testimony. As I noted earlier, in medieval culture, letters were often read out loud in order that they could be shared by a community of readers or listeners. In this way, the contents of the epistle were made known to a wide audience. Strikingly, of all the prison-texts considered in this thesis, Testimony is the only one that is preserved in multiple manuscript copies; the work exists in one Middle English witness and it is also preserved in two Latin copies. This appears to suggest that the memory of persecution, inscribed in the discourse, was internalised in the minds of its recipients who, in turn, set about transcribing Thorpe’s record precisely because they believed that it could be used to inspire faith and solidarity in the

185 Kong, Lettering, pp. 55-56.
186 Two Wycliffite Texts, pp. xxvi-xxxi. Additionally, Thorpe’s text is included in John Foxe’s Acts of Martyrs and Monuments thereby showing that, through until the sixteenth-century, the prisoner’s experience of persecution for his faith was recognised to inspire and encourage the spiritual development of the Church. See John N. King, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 47-48.
Lollard community. Wycliffite memory, in Thorpe’s text, is shown to be a force that cannot be easily destroyed or eradicated. Rather, so long as memory is stocked with biblical truth, this faculty and praxis will provide the heretic with the knowledge, faith and strength she requires to emulate Christ by living and dying truthfully for his/His convictions.

2.6 Conclusion

Despite the fact that both Wyche and Thorpe faced the threat of death, their biographical records indicate that they managed to escape the flames. At the end of his examination, Skirlaw sent Wyche to prison in Westminster where, at some point between October 1404 and November 1406, he eventually recanted his Lollard creed.187 In 1440, however, he was re-arrested for promoting Lollard beliefs in a sermon and was burnt on Tower Hill on 17 June.188 Thorpe’s record is more elusive than this, but he, too, is believed to have continued preaching after he eventually left Arundel’s prison.

Yet even though Wyche and Thorpe each escaped the flames, their letters demonstrate the ways in which scriptural memory—which the prisoners both show that they can recall with fluidity and ease—authorises the heretic to present himself as an embodiment of Christian truth. Emulating the words that are found in the

187 Wyche’s career, following his initial imprisonment, has been discussed by Rex who explains that Wyche was arrested and imprisoned following the Oldecastle Risings in 1414. At this time, he managed to gain release from prison. Similarly, in 1419, he was rearrested and imprisoned in the Fleet. However, after confessing his chequered past to Archbishop Henry Chichele, he was released once more. One of the greatest ironies and oddities of his biographical record, however, is found in the chronicle accounts of his death which highlight that, after he was burnt, Wyche was praised as a saint-like figure by the Wycliffite community who kissed the ground near where he was burnt, treated his ash as if it were a holy relic and who went, on pilgrimage, to visit the site of his death. In this regard, Wyche appears, much like Paul, Daniel and John, to have gained a quasi-hagiographical status, despite his sect’s apparent antipathy to such practices. See Rex, ‘Which is Wyche’, pp. 89-92.
188 Rex, ‘Which is Wyche’, p. 86.
Bible, the words in Wyche’s and Thorpe’s letters are presented as holding the potential to aid the Lollard community to grow in strength, despite the opposition that it faces. As they write to the community of dissenters outside the prison walls, the Bible provides the means through which both heretics can invoke the temporalities of Roman and Jewish history to cast the present-day Church as a corrupt power that is ignorant of God’s love and law. By entreating the Lollard community to form their identities in contradistinction to the Church, Wyche and Thorpe use their prison-scripts not simply to preserve a record of their own persecution, but also, like true biblical writers, to set about ensuring the salvation of the people whom they lived amongst prior to their persecution. Memory, in this context, reveals itself not only to be important to the cultivation of personal identity, but also to the shaping of a community, indeed, a new ‘church’, in England, in the early-fifteenth century.
3.0 Introduction: Penitential Prisoners

In the previous chapters, I have considered how hagiographic memory enabled the Ricardian traitor to exculpate himself textually from the charge of deceit and I have examined how the Wycliffite prisoner utilised biblical memory to entreat his sect to retain their heterodox creed in the face of persecution. This final chapter, however, explores a different aspect of the interrelationship between acts of remembrance and the identity of the late medieval prisoner: that is, it considers how and why free Christian men and women were encouraged to remember the incarcerated community in their daily spiritual devotions.

Throughout this chapter, special attention is given to two fifteenth-century works, John Audelay the Blind’s orthodox collection of religious verse, *The Counsel of Conscience* (c. 1424) and George Ashby’s first-person lament, *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet, 1463*. In each textual exploration, the author draws on his memory of a prisoner, whose vita he is familiar with through personal experience, to show that whilst the incarcerated subject initially exists as an embodiment of sin, this shamed figure can be redeemed from his debased state, if the Church remembers to bestow Christ-like mercy on him. By considering the prisoner’s potential to undergo spiritual transformation alongside the popular belief that remembering the imprisoned, through charity and prayer, could improve the spiritual health of Christians who displayed such mercy, I argue that Audelay’s and Ashby’s writings
exemplify the ways in which the late medieval prisoner came to occupy a prominent position in popular religious culture, where he could be seen as nothing less than a conduit to God’s healing grace and, in turn, salvation.

The importance of penitential piety in late medieval culture cannot be overstated. As the Church taught people that they could only enter the Kingdom of God once their souls were cleansed of iniquity, she expended great energy encouraging Christians to repent for their transgressions throughout their earthly lives. If a faithful Christian did so, her soul would always be ready to be judged by God.¹ In her teachings on the forgiveness of sin, penance was consistently presented as a two-fold process. While the guilt of a sin (*culpa*) could be removed when the individual confessed to wrongdoing, an appropriate amount of satisfaction or punishment (*poena*) needed to be carried out before the stain of the transgression was fully expiated.² Although a priest would often administer a specific penance to cleanse a particular sin from the soul of his confessant, in his influential fifteenth-century sermon cycle, the *Festial*, John Mirk explains that Christian men and women should regularly commit themselves to ‘devot prayng, almes-3euyng, and masse syngyng’ as these ‘þre þynges helped soules most out of penance’.³ According to Mirk, prayer, the

¹ Late medieval theology stressed that souls were judged at the moment of death, rather than at the Last Judgement. As no-one could predict when death might strike, the Church stressed that her people must always be ready to undergo judgement, which could come at any given moment. See Gwenfair Walter Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England: Lay Spirituality and Glimpses of the Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Brill: Leiden, 2007), pp. 116-17.
performance of charitable deeds and mass-singing could enhance a sinner’s soteriological prospects.

Although the Church stressed the on-going need for Christians to carry out these penitential acts regularly, its concomitant promotion of the doctrine of Purgatory, which gained special prominence from the late-twelfth century onwards, offered the populace the hope that, if a faithful Christian died harbouring unrepented sin in her soul, this transgression could still be purged posthumously. 4 As Purgatory was distinct from heaven and hell, the doctrine transformed ‘the geography of the afterlife’ from its traditional dualistic conception into a tripartite arrangement. 5 This is not to say, however, that Purgatory held the same eternal significance as the other two afterlife realms. Rather, the Church taught people that the period of time that a soul spent in Purgatory was temporally bounded: once the soul was eventually

---

4 While Jacques Le Goff dates the birth of Purgatory to the late-twelfth century, noting that this is the first time that the Latin word ‘purgatorium’ appears in religious discourse, Aron Gurevich, Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Takami Matsuda have all shown that the writings of the Church fathers, including Augustine and Gregory the Great, as well as influential ecclesiastical figures in the Anglo-Saxon church, such as Bede, all evince an awareness that the soul could be cleansed posthumously before it entered into heaven. See Jacques le Goff, The Birth of Purgatory, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: Scholar Press, 1984), pp. 130-32; Aron Gurevich, Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception, trans. by J. M. Bak and P. M. Hollingsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 116-49; Takami Matsuda, Death and Purgatory in Middle English Didactic Poetry (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1997), pp. 5-10 and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, Doomsday, Death and Paradise in Anglo-Saxon Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 184-89. One of the reasons why it is difficult to date the inception of the doctrine of Purgatory is that there is no explicit reference to it in the Bible. When Christians do look to scripture for evidence, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is often drawn on. As I discussed in the previous chapter, here Paul explains that at the end of life, all souls will be tested through flames. See I Corinthians 3.13-15. Within this chapter, however, I do not focus on debating the date of the doctrine. Rather, I work with the acceptance that, by the fifteenth century, Church teachings surrounding Purgatory were well established and accepted in orthodox culture and therefore familiar to Christians. The Lollards rejected any belief in Purgatory precisely because the prospect of this form of penance had no grounding in the Bible. See Anne Hudson, The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 309-10. A further consideration of the difference between penitential beliefs in orthodox and Wycliffite discourse can be found in R. N. Swanson, Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 300-15.

5 Matsuda, Death, p. 1.
cleansed of its sin, it would be released into the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{6} While the prospect of this ‘release’ undoubtedly re-assured Christians that they could still enter heaven even if they died in a state of transgression, the doctrine of Purgatory did not completely allay anxieties about the fate of sinners in the afterlife. In order to privilege the importance of earthly penance, the Church taught that the pain involved in the posthumous cleansing of the soul was far greater than any distress the individual might experience in this life.\textsuperscript{7} This is exemplified in the enormously popular late-fourteenth century orthodox poem, \textit{The Pricke of Conscience}.\textsuperscript{8} Here, the anonymous author not only declares that there is little difference between the purgatorial agonies and ‘\textit{þe payn of helle}', but he also stresses that the pain involved in posthumous penance is ‘\textit{mare bitter þan alle þe tourmentes/ Þat alle þe martyrs in erthe tholed}’.\textsuperscript{9}

Although the suffering experienced in Purgatory was depicted vividly in order to remind Christians of the importance of carrying out penance on earth, the Church did offer one important consolation. The Church taught people that if living Christians, kept the souls in Purgatory firm in memory, commemorating these spirits through penitential devotions such as mass-singing, prayers and alms-giving, they could help alleviate the pain endured by the formerly departed.\textsuperscript{10} The doctrine of Purgatory thus

\textsuperscript{6} Matsuda, \textit{Death}, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{The Pricke of Conscience}, which is preserved in more than 115 late fourteenth and fifteenth-century manuscripts, is the second most surviving work in the Middle English corpus. See Moira Fitzgibbons, ‘\textit{Enabled and Disabled “Myndes” in The Prick of Conscience}' in \textit{Medieval Poetics and Social Practice: Responding to the Work of Penn R. Szittya}, ed. by Seeta Chaganti (Fordham, NY: Fordham University Press, 2012), pp. 72-94 (p. 72).
\textsuperscript{9} \textit{The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus Conscientiae): A Northumbrian Poem}, ed. by R. Morris (Berlin: Asher for the Philological Society, 1863), IV, pp. 74-75, ll. 2723-57.
had enormous implications for memorial practices in late medieval culture. In the first instance, the prospect of the afterlife agonies served as a stimulus to prompt Christians to reflect on and repent for their personal sins personally and continually. Moreover, the fear associated with this place also stood to remind the living faithful that they should remember the souls of the departed, in their spiritual devotions, so that their former acquaintances would be spared some of the excessive pain involved in purgatorial penance. In something of a paradoxical fashion, the deceased were given a new lease of life in the minds of the faithful, who were expected to regularly remember the departed in their spiritual lives. Penitential memory, then, was not only personal and individual, but it was also public, communal and shared.

The interplay between public and personal modes of penance in the earthly life and the afterlife emerges as a central thematic concern in the writings of Audelay and Ashby. In *Counsel* and *Complaint*, both authors draw on memories of their personal relationship with a prisoner to teach their readers how the merciful act of remembering the incarcerated community can help cleanse sin from the soul of the prisoner who is the recipient of this kindness and from the soul of the individual who performs this deed. In this way, the shamed sinner, who dwells at the heart of both *Counsel* and *Complaint*, is essentially presented as a mnemonic stimulus for the populace to meditate on in order to save themselves, as well as their acquaintances, from bitter suffering in the afterlife.

Unlike the authors whose works I have considered alongside one another in Chapter One and Chapter Two, Ashby and Audelay were not imprisoned for committing
similar offences. As I indicated in the Introduction, within the context of this thesis, Audelay’s work is something of an anomaly as there is no historical evidence to suggest that he was personally imprisoned.\textsuperscript{11} Although little is known about the Shropshire clergyman’s background, he was employed as a household chaplain by the Lestrange family of Knockin, who owned an extensive estate in Shropshire, in the early years of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{12} In 1417, Audelay, as well as a number of other members of the household, accompanied Sir Richard Lestrange and his wife, Lady Lestrange, on a trip to London. The visit to the city, however, soon turned sour. For reasons that remain unknown, after evening vespers on Easter Sunday, Lestrange struck up a physical fight with an opponent, Sir John Trussell, inside St Dunstan’s Church, Billingsgate.\textsuperscript{13} Trussell and his son, who tried to help his father, were maimed in the fight. Yet more disturbingly, an innocent parishioner, Thomas Petwardyn, who attempted to separate the brawling men, lost his life at Lestrange’s hands.\textsuperscript{14} By sunset, the disgraced nobleman was thus thrown into the Tower of London and, over the following week, a further fourteen men from his retinue were brought before the city’s sheriffs and cast into Newgate prison.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} In late medieval culture, the clergy were exempt from imprisonment at the hands of secular authorities. Instead, they were punished for any transgression by the bishop. See John G. Bellamy, \textit{Criminal Law and Society in Late Medieval and Tudor England} (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984), pp. 115-16.


\textsuperscript{13} Documentary evidence of the crime indicates that Lestrange and Trussell had exchanged heated words following morning mass. However, at that time, the Shropshire nobleman left St Dunstan’s without any recourse to physical fighting. When Lestrange returned to the Church in the evening, he spied Trussell at prayer and, at this point, he initiated a brawl with the parishioner. Although Lestrange’s biographical record is considerably less well-documented than that of other fifteenth-century aristocratic figures, he is known to have been involved in aiding Henry V to rout Lollards out of his home diocese of Shropshire. It has been suggested that Trussell and his wife were sympathetic to the plight of Lollards; thus, it is possible that Lestrange’s anger emanated out of his belief that this man also have shared, or supported the dissemination of, heretical beliefs. See Bennett, ‘John Audelay: Life Records’, pp. 33-34.

\textsuperscript{14} Bennett, ‘John Audelay: Life Records’, pp. 33-34.

\textsuperscript{15} Bennett, ‘John Audelay: Life Records’, pp. 33-34. It is possible that Lestrange’s high status led to his being imprisoned in the Tower as this was the London gaol that was most commonly used to detain high status noblemen during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. See Kenneth J. Mears, \textit{The
The enormity of Lestrange’s crime, which the historian Michael Bennett describes as ‘the most notorious act of sacrilege’ in early fifteenth-century culture, should not be underestimated.\(^{16}\) In killing Petwardyn, Lestrange shattered the Old Testament Commandment that no man should take the life of another.\(^{17}\) Moreover, by spilling blood on the consecrated ground of St Dunstan’s, he also polluted a sacred place on the holiest day in the Church’s calendar. Given that biblical tradition and canon law each asserted that ‘bloodshed in churches or cemeteries polluted their sacredness and suspended their efficacy as media to the divine’, no sacramental celebrations could take place inside St Dunstan’s until the Bishop of London had cleansed and re-consecrated the building.\(^{18}\) As a result of his crime, Lestrange was instructed to carry out a very serious and public act of penance. On May Day, when the city of London was bustling with revellers, the disgraced nobleman was taken out of the Tower so that he, as well as a number of members of his household, including Audelay, could walk solemnly, in bare feet, from St Paul’s Cathedral to St Dunstan’s, to attend the ceremony at which the church was reconsecrated.\(^{19}\) Bennett thus suggests that Audelay’s imminent retirement to Haughmond Abbey, from whence he wrote *Counsel*, may very well have formed part of a separate punishment issued to the priest by his bishop, who was undoubtedly appalled by the ordained figure’s

---


\(^{17}\) Exodus 20.14.


\(^{19}\) Thierry, *Polluting*, pp. 52-53. In June, the disgraced nobleman was also taken before a secular court where he was also ordered to pay financial compensation to Trussell and his son. See Bennett, ‘John Audelay: Life Records’, p. 36.
involvement in these shameful events. Thus, while Audelay was not imprisoned himself, he appears to be writing as someone whose life experience and biographical record were profoundly affected by his personal relationship with a prisoner.

On the other hand, in his first-person lament, Complaint, Ashby recalls how he was thrown into ‘a pryson/ whos name the Flete hight’ for ‘a hole yere and more’ during the early 1460s. Although Ashby reveals these personal details, as the verse unfolds, he elides any further discussion of why, precisely, this imprisonment came to pass. Given that the poem is the sole surviving historical document that alludes to Ashby’s time in the Fleet, any attempt to discern what offence he committed remains speculative. Within the verse, however, Ashby does offer an important insight into his life before his imprisonment as he recalls how he once served Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, King Henry VI and his wife, Queen Margaret of Anjou, as a signet clerk at the royal court. For this reason, Robert Meyer-Lee makes the persuasive suggestion that the bureaucratic figure might have been thrown into prison for refusing to relinquish his Lancastrian loyalties after the House of York ascended to the English throne in 1460.

---

20 Bennett, ‘John Audley: Some New Evidence’, p. 348. Haughmond Abbey was an Augustinian House in Shropshire. As many monastic houses contained their own prison-spaces, which were used to punish dissident members of the clergy, it is not inconceivable that the monastery would have been recognised as an appropriate place to send Audelay following his associative involvement in Lestrange’s crime. For a discussion of monastic imprisonment in medieval culture see Megan Cassidy-Welch, ‘Incarceration and Liberation: Prisons in the Cistercian Monastery’, Viator, 32 (2001), 23-42 and Megan Cassidy-Welch, Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Cistercian Monasteries (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 123-30.


22 Ashby’s loyalty to the House of Lancaster is affirmed by the fact that Queen Margaret rewarded him for his service by granting him the stewardship of Warwickshire in 1458. See Ralph A. Griffths, The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority in 1422-1461 (London: Benn, 1981), p. 258.

23 Robert Meyer-Lee, Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 140-41. The Wars of the Roses arose as the House of York argued that their consanguine line could be traced back to Edward III; thus, they rejected the sovereignty of the House
While *Counsel* and *Complaint* were composed in different circumstances and each work takes a different narrative form, they share one common feature: in their writings, Ashby and Audelay both draw attention to their advanced age and their close proximity to death. In Ashby’s case, this is evinced immediately, in the opening line of his poem, as he recalls that his incarceration took place ‘at the ende of somere, when winter bygan’ (*Complaint*, l. 1). By doing so, the clerk exploits the popular medieval practice of paralleling the stages in a man’s life to the seasonal changes of the natural world to suggest that he himself was moving from a time of life associated with vitality towards one that is associated with decline. Moreover, later in the poem, Ashby also recollects that he had previously served at the Lancastrian court for ‘full fourty yere’ (*Complaint*, l. 46) in a manner that confirms the sense that he is writing in old age.

In *Counsel*, Audelay describes his decrepit body in order to emphasise his belief that he is approaching death. As I discuss later, throughout *Counsel*, the poet-priest repeatedly signs his name as ‘Blynde Audlay’. In doing so, he presents himself as


25 Although there is some variation in the presentation of the autographs, these signatures appear in *Remedy of Nine Virtues*, where Audelay signs himself as ‘Blynde Awdelay’, in *Visiting the Sick and Consoling the Needy* where Audelay signs himself as ‘Blynd Audley’, in *On The World’s Folly* where Audelay signs himself as ‘Blynd Audlay’, in *Audelay’s Prayer Explicit to Pope John’s Passion* where Audelay signs himself as ‘Blynd Awdlay’ and twice in *Audelay’s Epilogue* where Audelay signs himself as ‘Jon the Blynd Audlay’ and ‘Jon the Blynd Awdelay’. Throughout this chapter, all references to *Counsel* are taken from John the Blind Audelay: Poems and Carols (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302), ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), pp. 25-146. Throughout this chapter, the individual poems are referred to by the full titles that Fein uses in this edition.
suffering from an affliction that often affected the aged.\textsuperscript{26} However, Audelay’s sense that he is nearing death gains its most powerful articulation in the \textit{Epilogue to John Audelay’s Counsel} as he recollects that he penned his religious poems as ‘I conclud al my makyng’ (\textit{Epilogue to John Audelay’s Counsel}, l. 1). Here, the linguistic play on ‘makyng’, which puns to mean both a body of work and the physical form of the human body, confirms the clergyman’s belief that his book is the final thing that he will produce.\textsuperscript{27} This is further affirmed in the conclusion of \textit{Epilogue to John Audelay’s Counsel} as Audelay explains that he wrote his ‘boke’ as he ‘lay seke in my langure/ In an abbay here be west’ (\textit{Epilogue to John Audelay’s Counsel}, ll. 482-83).

As elderly and ailing writers, Ashby and Audelay were writing at a time of life that was closely associated with death. Despite the fact that medieval thinkers understood that reaching old age was an ‘inevitable and inescapable’ fact of life (lest fatal illness or some other personal tragedy should strike a man in his youth), this did not lead to a monolithic understanding or representation of the aged state.\textsuperscript{28} As Shulamith Shahar explains, in medieval culture there were ‘two stereotypes of the old person – positive and negative’.\textsuperscript{29} While the elderly man, who had the benefit of years of personal life experience, could be seen as possessing the wisdom required to counsel younger subjects on matters of ethics, morality and spiritual affairs, the deterioration of the physical body and the loss of mental faculties, such as memory, that often


\textsuperscript{27} MED, ‘maken’, (v. (1)), 5a and 12C c-d.

\textsuperscript{28} Rosenthal, \textit{Old Age}, p. 177.

occurred in elderly individuals led to a perturbing association between advanced age and spiritual depravity.\textsuperscript{30}

Although these two cultural perceptions of the elderly, which Shahar describes as ‘equivocal’, may appear antithetical to one another, in \textit{Counsel} and \textit{Complaint}, Audelay and Ashby identify with and vacillate between both the positive and negative understanding of old age as they use their personal, experiential memories of sin to meditate on the ways in which Christians must help each other prepare for death, through the performance and promotion of penitential pieties.\textsuperscript{31} In Audelay’s case, he draws on his remembrance of Lestrange’s heinous crime to advocate the importance of praying for those in prison so that their souls might be cleansed from sin. As he does so, the clergyman teaches the populace how the exhibition of this form of mercy will also aid the Christian who performs the kind deed. While Audelay’s work is concerned with the importance of remembering those in prison, in \textit{Complaint} Ashby creates a discursive space in which he can respond to the dilemma of being forgotten by his friends during his own incarceration. As the verse unfolds, the imprisoned clerk draws on images and motifs commonly found in both penitential and purgatorial literatures to show how he must compensate for the negligent treatment he ‘receives’ from his friends by taking on exclusive responsibility for cleansing his soul from its sins. In this way, he memorialises the prison as a locale that the free community should remember in their devotions, if they wish to follow in his footsteps and purge their own souls of sin before they journey into the afterlife. In both textual explorations, the prisoner, who initially embodies and epitomises spiritual sin, is not simply liberated from his shame, but he

\textsuperscript{31} Shahar, ‘The Old Body’, p. 160.
is also promoted as an *aide-mémoire*, capable of aiding the Christian community to achieve salvation through penitential piety.

3.1 The Blind Witness in Audelay’s Writing

*Counsel* survives as an acephalous collection of religious poems, including Passion meditations, penitential prayers and a vivid account of St Paul’s tour of hell. The work is preserved in a single manuscript – MS Bodleian Douce 302 – where it precedes the remnant corpus of Audelay’s writings: a series of salutations to five female saints, twenty-one carols and a selection of devotional prose and poetry. As the carols were clearly designed to be sung out loud, Julia Boffey suggests that the manuscript was most likely produced for public consumption. This idea is also expressed in Susanna Fein’s scholarship as she suggests that the rubrications, under-linings and glossing that characterise the manuscript seem to have been designed for a reader living outside the close-knit monastic community in which Audelay wrote. At the same time, MS Douce 302 also exists as one of the most personalised manuscripts in the extant corpus of pre-modern English literature. Although Kathryn Kerby-Fulton notes that late-fourteenth and fifteenth-century authors began to express ownership of their writing, by inscribing their names into their texts in a way that earlier medieval writers were less predisposed to do, Audelay does this more pervasively than any of his contemporaries. Indeed, his signature occurs some

---

35 Kathryn Kerby-Fulton explains that the impetus to self-name, in late medieval textual culture, might have emanated from the fact that writing became increasingly professionalised at this time. Inscribing one’s name in a text might have provided a means through which a writer could secure either payment or patronage for his work, or indicated ownership in a way that reduced the possibility of potential plagiarism. See Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, ‘Authority, Constraint, and the Writing of the Medieval Self’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. by Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 403-33 (p. 413).
eighteen times across his works, with six of these autographs appearing in *Counsel*.\(^{36}\)

While Fein explains that Audelay’s pervasive interest in self-naming suggests that the priest played an important role in arranging the manuscript’s layout, as well as composing the texts therein, she remarks that ‘the broader purpose and plan’ behind *Counsel* remains ‘elusive’.\(^{37}\)

One reason why scholars might find it difficult to identify a unifying structure or ambition within Audelay’s eclectic collection of religious poems may relate to the fact that six folios are missing from the opening of the work; thus, if any justification of the piece was articulated in its opening lines, the damaged state of the manuscript would render this information irretrievable.\(^{38}\) However, in the Latin colophon, which appears at the close of *Counsel*, Audelay offers some insight into the circumstances surrounding the composition of the work. Here, the priest explains that he completed his work at Haughmond Abbey in 1426. This date is important as, two years previously, in 1424, Lestrange commissioned his former household chaplain to serve him once more, but this time in the capacity of chantry priest.\(^{39}\)

Chantry priests were members of the clergy who devoted their lives to sing masses and pray for the salvation of Christian souls, particularly the soul of their sponsor.

---


\(^{38}\) Fein, ‘English Devotions’, p. 327.

and his immediate family.\textsuperscript{40} For this reason, in late medieval England, it became increasingly common for members of the aristocracy to commission a private chantry priest as, by doing so, the wealthy could effectively make a material investment in the prospect of a glorious eschatological future.\textsuperscript{41} At the time that Audelay was writing \textit{Counsel}, his clerical role would have seen him bear a special interest in remembering the souls of the Christian community, and, particularly, the Lestrange family. The suggestion that Audelay held Lestrange in mind as he wrote his impeccably orthodox collection of poems has been touched on in Bennett’s influential scholarship on this text. Here, the historian proposes that once the clergyman retired to Haughmond Abbey, he may very well have struggled to forget the ‘traumatic experience’ of witnessing his master’s crime inside St Dunstan’s.\textsuperscript{42} As Bennett notes, since several of the pastoral poems in the collection emphasise the need for Christians to keep the Sabbath holy and to behave well in church, Audelay might very well have designed his narrative to steer his reader away from the same reckless offences that Lestrange perpetrated on this fateful day.\textsuperscript{43}

Bennett’s suggestion is certainly persuasive. Indeed, if the idea that Audelay’s impetus to write \textit{Counsel} emanated from his concern about how Lestrange’s past crime would affect this man’s salvation prospects is taken further, it can go some

\textsuperscript{41} Christopher Harper-Bill, \textit{The Pre-Reformation Church, c. 1400-1530}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edn (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 68-69.
\textsuperscript{43} Bennett, ‘John Audley: Some New Evidence’, p. 352. It is also pertinent to note that in the poem, \textit{The Remedy of Nine Virtues}, Audelay improvises God’s voice as he instructs his reader that the Lord feels more ‘cumford’ when his faithful people show love to their neighbour and live together in peace than when they walk ‘barefote in the strete’ in acts of love for him. That this image recalls the penitential walk of shame that Lestrange and his household, including Audelay, took, reifies the idea that the clergyman was conscious of his master’s sin as he wrote and confirms that the clergyman was keen to use his memory of the past to counsel his reader spiritually. See \textit{The Remedy of Nine Virtues}, in \textit{Counsel}, pp. 64-66 (p. 64, ll. 1-6).
way to illuminating *Counsel*’s ‘elusive’ plan. That is, when Lestrange’s crime is recalled, it becomes clear that this ‘episodic’ memory of the events that took place in St Dunstan’s provides a stimulus through which the clergyman uses his personal remembrance of the past to educate his reader about the ways in which treating the needy with mercy can aid the soteriological future of the whole Church, including criminal transgressors who are imprisoned for their malfeasance. While Avishai Margalit posits that ‘episodic memories’ stem from the memory of a particular event, that the individual has experienced personally, rather than the ideological lessons that they have learnt through an accretive process, *Counsel* manifests something quite different. 44 Here the ‘episodic memory’ of the past permits Audelay to draw attention to the Church’s teaching on the nature of Christian mercy. In this way, Audelay’s personal memory of the past takes on public significance as it enables the articulation of penitential lessons concerning the interrelationship between sin and salvation for the populace at large.

Yet initially, if the presentation of *Counsel* is considered, the idea that a memory of Lestrange’s past underpins Audelay’s writing might appear problematic. As Margalit explains, ‘survival of the name’ in a discourse typically indicates that ‘the survival of the essence’ of that particular person or thing is preserved. 45 However, despite his tendency to draw attention to his own identity, Audelay makes no explicit reference to his master, Lestrange, within this work. 46 Instead, it is always he himself – ‘Jon the Blynd Awldlay’ – who is identified as requiring spiritual succour. Moreover, by repeatedly making allusions to his ill health in his signatures, Audelay ensures that

---

46 Lestrange’s name is, however, preserved in the meditative poem at the close of the manuscript, where Audelay identifies himself as the ‘furst prest to the Lord Strange’. See *Audelay’s Conclusion*, in *John the Blind Audelay*, pp. 224-25 (p. 225, l. 49).
the personal memory he preserves of himself is one that consistently reminds the 
reader of the difficult affliction that he suffers: his blindness. The priest’s loss of 
vision, which he presents as a central and constituent part of his identity, is thus 
emphasised throughout the work. For this reason, the medieval understanding of this 
particular condition warrants consideration.

In his work on the representation of illness in late medieval monastic communities, 
Nicholas Orme writes that very few texts document the existence of sickness in 
ordained bodies. Although Orme does not elaborate on why the topic of sickness is 
elided from monastic memory, it seems most likely that the omission reflects the 
popular medieval belief that the aetiology of physical illness was, in fact, spiritual 
sin. This idea was certainly articulated at the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). In its 
canons, it is decreed that as ‘bodily infirmity is sometimes caused by sin’, if a 
physician is ‘called to the bedside of the sick’, he should first ‘call for the physician 
of souls’ to attend. By hearing the ill-man’s confession, the priest could help restore 
his ‘spiritual health’ so that ‘the application of bodily medicine may be of greater 
benefit, for the cause being removed the effect will pass away’. Confession and 
spiritual healing were thus recognised as integral to an individual’s recovery from 
physical disease.

47 Nicholas Orme, ‘Sufferings of the Clergy: Illness and Old Age in Exeter Diocese, 1300-1540’, in 
Life, Death and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives, ed. by Margaret Pelling and Richard Michael 
48 Medieval Source Book: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215: 
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp> [accessed on 9 September 2013].
As Jeremy Citrome explains, metaphors of wounding and surgery commonly appeared in penitential 
literature as the priest’s absolution was viewed as contributing to the ‘cure’ of sin. See Jeremy 
1-20.
The belief that illness and sin were inextricably bound to one another certainly affected the medieval understanding of blindness. The eyes were, of course, organs that permitted an individual to internalise and memorialise the external world. The ability to look on a religious image, found in either visual or textual media, thereby allowed the on-looking individual to stock her memory with spiritual sources that would enrich her character in a manner that stood to enhance her chances of drawing near to God.\textsuperscript{49} The power of sight, achieved through a healthy eye, was thus one that was associated with spiritual growth. For this reason, it was believed that if an individual did not have her sight, ‘absence’ would essentially be imprinted on her memory.\textsuperscript{50} The loss of sight could thus be seen as a signifier of the fact that an individual was not capable of stocking her mind with the forms of material that would augment her spiritual health and enhance her personal development.\textsuperscript{51} The darkness associated with the condition was therefore considered to be a manifestation of spiritual disease.

While this association with blindness and sin was accepted in medieval culture, in \textit{Counsel}, in an ostensibly paradoxical rhetorical manoeuvre, Audelay articulates his personal awareness that a loss of vision signifies spiritual corruption through his


\textsuperscript{51} In late medieval visual culture, Jews and Saracens, for instance, were often portrayed as blind as the condition signified their unbelief. See Debra Higgs Strickland, \textit{Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 89-102. Rachel Koopmans notes that, in order to circulate in medieval society, the blind would have had to use ‘groping hands’ to sense their ways through the streets or buildings. In this way, the physical form of the blind man would have been notable amongst, and potentially disturbing to, the populace. See Rachel Koopmans, \textit{Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England} (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 37.
remembrance of scripture. In this way, the priest exonerates himself from some of the shame associated with the condition as he shows his reader that he is a man whose mind is stocked with biblical knowledge. Furthermore, if the specific scriptural episode that Audelay invokes in his writing – the Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah – is analysed closely, it appears that the priest uses biblical memory to suggest that his mark of sin – his blindness – is, in fact, symptomatic of Lestrange’s past crime. In this Old Testament narrative, God blinds the people of Sodom in a wrathful manner as they have ignored and broken his laws.\(^52\) The loss of sight thus constitutes a punishment for transgression. When Audelay alludes to the Genesis story in *Counsel*, the transgressions that he indicates God blinds sinners for perpetrating recall his master’s wrongdoing. In *Our Lord’s Epistle on Sunday*, for instance, God is depicted issuing the instruction that he will ‘blynd […] with schame and schond’ all ‘false Cristyn men’ who ‘con not of God his holeday/ Kepe clene out of the dedlé syn’ as he did ‘Sodom and Comor’ (*Our Lord’s Epistle on Sunday*, ll. 14-32). Given that Lestrange was guilty of killing Petwardyn inside St Dunstan’s on Easter Day – the holiest of all ‘hole’ days – Audelay forges a connection between his own affliction and his master’s crime. The clergyman thus implies that he is being punished for the nobleman’s transgression. Moreover, Audelay’s belief that his illness results directly from Lestrange’s crime also finds expression in *True Living*. Here, blindness is again posited as a punishment for sin as Audelay outlines how:

The syn of sodom, into heven  
Hit crys ever on God Almyght!  
And monslaght, with a rewful steven  
Hit askys vengans day and nyght!  
[...]  
These synnys a mon thai done blynde,  
Fore thai be don agayns kynde,

\(^{52}\) Genesis 19.10-11.
And bene the werkys of the Fynde
Of damnacion.

(True Living, ll. 28-38)

Here, Audelay vividly personifies the sin of manslaughter, which Lestrange committed when he took Petwardyn’s life, to portray this heinous vice crying God’s vengeance day and night. By likening this sin to the sin of the Sodomites, which also pleads for vengeance, the clergyman further affirms his belief that his affliction is an outcome of his master’s malfeasance. The blindness that he is afflicted with is again confirmed to be a mark of God’s wrath. The chantry priest, whose clerical position was one which required him to remember Lestrange’s soul regularly, thus uses both his physical and his textual corpus to address the shame associated with his master’s crime as he presents himself as sharing in the punishment that God righteously administered in anger at Lestrange’s wrongdoing.

3.2 Forgiveness and the Visible Healing of Blindness

The idea that Audelay’s blindness permits him to remember and share in Lestrange’s disgrace takes on special significance as the priest’s representation of his affliction shifts and changes across Counsel. Although Edward Wheatley has recently argued that the anthology of religious verse is ‘devoid of any sense of an evolution in Audelay’s understanding of his blindness over time’, this reading fails to take into consideration the pervasive interest in the healing nature of Christian mercy that is also promoted in the clergyman’s writing.53 While the wrathful God of the Old Testament punished sinners by blinding them, in the New Testament, Jesus restores sight to the blind as he preaches his gospel of mercy to all sinners.54 Moreover, in hagiographical literature, this same merciful act of healing the blind is repeated by

54 Mark 8.22-5; John 9.1-12.
many of the saints, who help repentant sinners by restoring their lost sight.\footnote{Luciana Meinking Guimarães, ‘Saints Encounters with Secular Rulers in Welsh Saints’ Lives in the Vespasian Legendary: Miracles between Belief and Religious Politics’, in \textit{Spiritual Temporalities in Late-Medieval Europe}, ed. by Michael Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 57-76 (p. 65). Carole Rawcliffe explains that many shrine-keepers in late medieval culture record that blind pilgrims travelled to these places for healing. She notes temporary blindness, which was caused due to poor nutrition, parasitical infections or due to the fact that many people lived in smoky and dusty living conditions, was not uncommon among the medieval populace. As this temporary loss of sight could be ‘healed’ by better diet or a change in environment, late medieval people were aware that blindness was not always a permanent affliction. See Carole Rawcliffe, ‘Curing Bodies and Healing Souls: Pilgrimage and the Sick in Medieval East Anglia’, in \textit{Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan}, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 108-40 (pp. 132-33).} This is something Audelay was certainly aware of. In his salutation to the patron saint of Haughmond Abbey, St Winifred, he commends the holy woman for healing ‘blind’ and ‘crokid’ supplicants.\footnote{\textit{Saint Winifred Carol}, in \textit{John the Blind Audelay}, pp. 164-169 (p. 167, l. 110).} Blindness – though a marker of sin – was also recognised as a condition that could be healed through mercy, faith and miraculous grace.

In \textit{Counsel}, Audelay’s belief that acts of mercy could aid the sick and needy emerge prominently through the clergyman’s repeated and emphatic promotion of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. This doctrine was first promoted at the Council of Lambeth (1281) by the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Pecham (c. 1230-1290).\footnote{Decima Douie, \textit{Archbishop Pecham} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), pp. 95-142.} In the ninth canon of his highly influential Pastoral Reform, \textit{Ignorantia Sacerdotum}, Pecham looked to scripture to explain the behaviours that Christian men and women should adopt to augment their chances of salvation.\footnote{Andrew Reeves writes that the Council of Lambeth was as important for English pastoral care as Fourth Lateran Council. See Andrew Reeves, ‘Teaching the Creed and Articles of Faith in England, 1215-1281’, in \textit{A Companion to Pastoral Care in the Late Middle Ages (1200-1500)}, ed. by Ronald J. Stansbury (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 41-72 (p. 41).} In the New Testament, Christ taught his people that to serve God, Christians should tend to his most vulnerable subjects. As he did so, Christ offered the specific instruction that this could be achieved by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless,
clothing the naked, visiting the sick and visiting the imprisoned. By drawing directly on Christ’s lesson and combining it with the instruction that God’s faithful should bury the dead with dignity, which is found in the apocryphal Book of Tobit, Pecham propounded that these seven merciful deeds lay at the heart of an active Christian life. Indeed, as Pecham believed that the demonstration of these merciful works not only stood to bring about spiritual transformation in the life of the recipient, but that it also benefitted the soul of the individual performing the kind deed, he implored the clergy to promote the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy in at least four sermons each year, so that the laity would not forget their responsibility to the needy.

In the years following the Lambeth Council, Pecham’s belief that the performance of these seven works of mercy was necessary for salvation was repeated by many influential clerics. In The Lay Folks’ Catechism (c. 1373), for example, Archbishop Thoresby explains that the laity must ‘know the seven dedys of Mercy’ and ‘fulfyll hem in al’ since, ‘at the day of Dom’, God would judge his people according to ‘how he haue done hem to our euyn-Christen’. Similarly, in the Festial, Mirk also preaches that to avoid the ‘peyne of helle’, Christians must perform ‘alle the werkus

---

59 Matthew 25. 31-46
61 Alongside the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, Pecham also promulgated that the clergy should advocate the Fourteen Articles of the Faith; the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Principal Virtues, the Seven Sacraments of Grace and the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. See Helen Leith Spencer, Preaching in the Late Middle Ages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 205.
of mercy’. Moreover, to complement the articulation and examination of this teaching in sermons, the works of mercy were commonly displayed in the visual artwork that adorned medieval parish churches. Here, images of men and women performing each of the corporal deeds were depicted on the northern wall of the building, in close proximity to the pulpit, so that the congregation could meditate on the visual aide-mémoire as they heard the priest propound his sermon teaching.

In Counsel, Audelay also reveals himself to be an advocate of Pechamite thinking. In Marcolf and Solomon, for example, he reminds the clergy that they should ‘prechyn the pepul in the pylpit opynlè/ The seven werkys of mercé mekelé to fulfyl’ so that the laity could ‘ressayve here reward, remissyon redelé/ At the dredful Dai of Dome’ (Marcolf and Solomon, ll. 771-75). Yet while Meyer-Lee argues that Audelay always expresses his pastoral instruction through ‘pre-scripted utterances composed according to pre-established forms’, on the two occasions that the poet-priest

---

63 John Mirk’s Festial, ed. by Susan Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2009), I, p. 6. In his Constitutions, Arundel stipulated that the clergy should confine the content of their sermons to Pecham’s teachings thereby affirming that the teachings of the Lambeth Counsel continued to shape and influence Christian culture throughout the fifteenth century. See Douie, Archbishop Arundel, p. 139. While it is impossible to say – with any certainty – how often Christians visited the prison, Marjorie McIntosh also explains that, if an individual could not visit the prison in person, it was considered acceptable to make a financial donation to the prison. See Marjorie McIntosh, Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 15-16. It is perhaps pertinent to note that, in the fifteenth century, it became increasingly common for wealthy members of society to leave money to prisoners in their wills. This is exemplified in the case of the fifteenth-century London mayor, Richard Whittington, who not only left money for the prisoners in the Fleet, Ludgate and Marshalsea prisons, but who also left a substantial bequest so that Newgate prison could be rebuilt precisely because he was concerned by the high death rates in this gaolhouse. See Jean Imray, The Charity of Richard Whittington: A History of the Trust Administered by the Mercers, 1424-1966 (London: Athlone Press, 1968), pp. 1-5.


65 Later in Bodleian Douce 302, Audelay also includes a carol which focuses attention on the importance of the Seven Works of Mercy. This carol also follows straight on from a carol cautioning Christians against carrying out the Seven Deadly Sins, again showing how these two teachings were often positioned alongside one another to juxtapose the forms of behaviour that would result in salvation with those that would lead to damnation. See Carol 3. Seven Works of Mercy in John the Blind Audelay, pp. 177-78.
describes the actions that constitute the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, he provides two subtle, but significant, modifications to Pecham’s well-known doctrine.66 In *True Living*, Audelay instructs the reader:

The hungré, gif mete; the thorsté, gif dryng.  
Clethe the nakyd, as I thee say.  
*Vyste the seke in preson lying.*  
And beré the ded, as I thee pray.  
And herbere the pore that goth be the way,  
*And teche the unwyse of thi cumnyng.*  

(*True Living*, ll. 161-7867).

Likewise, in *God’s Address to Sinful Men*, as Audelay channels the Lord’s voice, he implores the Christian reader:

Then brekis your bred to my pore men,  
And gif ham drynk that thorsté bene,  
And clethe nakid, that nedé is,  
And harbare the pore, that woful ye syn  
[…]

*And vysette the seke that in preson be,*  
And beré the dede, I you pray,  
*And counsel the unwyse, pur charyté,*  
And here my Word when that ye may,  
And do therafter, both nyght and day,  
Fore this wil bring you to my blis;  
To heven hit is the hyewaye.  

(*God’s Address to Sinful Men*, ll. 164-7568)

While the sick and the imprisoned were traditionally represented as two distinct groups of vulnerable people, each in need of mercy, Audelay conflates them together. Yet as if to retain the septenary mnemonic that his contemporaries consistently employed, Audelay compensates for this first adaptation by adding one

---

67 My emphasis.
68 My emphasis.
more charitable act to his list: he advocates the importance of giving counsel to the unwise.\(^6^9\)

Audelay’s suggestion that the sick can be found in prison may very well be a sober reflection on the common condition of most medieval gaols as illness and disease were typically rife in these places.\(^7^0\) However, if this conflation of the two groups of needy people – the sick and the imprisoned – is read in relation to the clergymen’s earlier assertion that his own affliction is a punishment for the criminal act that precipitated Lestrange’s imprisonment, it becomes clear that his unusual presentation of the teaching permits him to draw further attention to his sense that he shares in the punitive suffering that stems from his master’s wrongdoing.\(^7^1\) Both the blind man and the prisoner – Audelay and Lestrange – coexist as sinful subjects who are in need of Christian mercy. The clergymen’s regular exhortations, articulated through his autographs, that his reader (and God) should show mercy to him – John the Blind Audelay – also apply to Lestrange, who was imprisoned in the Tower after killing Petwardyn in St Dunstan’s on Easter day. Even if Lestrange’s name is silenced in *Counsel* (in a rhetorical gesture that might suggest that Audelay was eager not to add

\(^6^9\) Thomas Lentes explains that late medieval authors ‘adopted such combinations of various septenaries in order to devise a methodical meditation that aimed at training the virtues’. See Thomas Lentes, ‘Counting Piety in the Late Middle Ages’ in *Organising Late Medieval Society: Perspective on Intellectual and Practical Modes of Ordering Society*, trans. by Bernard Jussen and Pamela Selwyn (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 55-91 (pp. 76-77). The act of giving counsel to the needy was traditionally understood to constitute one of the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. As the Spiritual Works of Mercy were specifically aimed at healing and helping the soul, many medieval preachers privileged the importance of these actions over the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. See Mary Beth L. Davis, “Spekyn for Goddys Cawse”: Margery Kempe and the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy’, in *The Man of Many Devices, who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honor of János M. Bak*, ed. by Balázs Nagy, János M. Bak, Marcell Sebők (New York, NY: Central European University Press, 1999), pp. 255-65 (pp. 252-53)

\(^7^0\) Edward Marston, *Prison: Five Hundred Years of Life Behind Bars* (Surrey: National Archives, 2009), p. 12. Interestingly, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that some late medieval prisoners became blind during their confinement owing to the deprivation of natural light. See Metzler, *Disability in the Middle Ages*, p. 32.

\(^7^1\) In this way, it is pertinent that Audelay’s unusual representation of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy in True Living appears in the same poem which he also referred to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, as discussed above.
to the disgrace suffered by the nobleman further by creating a textual record that explicitly detailed his sin), the chantry priest uses allusions to the experiential past, to the biblical past and to Pecham’s teachings to continuously remember his master in the work.

Audelay’s preoccupation with soliciting mercy for Lestrange’s soul is also exemplified in the second alteration that he makes to Pecham’s teaching. After imploring Christians to counsel the unwise in *True Living*, Audelay performs this gesture as he takes time to teach his reader that, if she wishes to serve ‘God and mon’ (*True Living*, l. 209) mercifully, she should hold ‘his Passyon in thi mynd;/ That dyed on cros’ (*True Living*, ll. 210-11). The clergyman thus identifies the remembrance of Christ’s death as a meditative stimulus that will strengthen a faithful Christian to perform the sorts of charitable acts that will bring about her salvation, as well as the salvation of any sinner whom she treats with compassion. Furthermore, in *Counsel*, Audelay’s does not articulate this lesson, that memory of the Passion can inspire Christians to serve God and man faithfully, in a vacuum. Within the collection of verse, Audelay provides his reader with four poems that take Christ’s death as their principal theme: *Seven Bleedings of Christ, Seven Words of Christ on the Cross, Seven Hours of the Cross* and *Pope John’s Passion of Our Lord*. By providing these Passion meditations for his reader, Audelay furthers the performance of his charitable act as he not only counsels the unwise about how they can improve their spiritual health, but he also provides the stimulus required to aid and abet this practice.
In Chapter Two, I explained that when late medieval religious writers commemorated the Passion, they frequently paid great attention to the immense agony Christ endured. In *Counsel*, Audelay proves to be no exception. In accordance with the gospel recantations of Christ’s death, the poet-priest lavishes his attention on the multitude of tortures that Christ was subjected to in the hours leading up to his death. In *Pope John’s Passion of Our Lord*, for example, Audelay describes how the son of God is ‘acusid of false witness [...] scorgid with creuelnes [...] crownd with thorns [...] spit in the face [...] bofet and blyndful [...] With moné shamful skorns’ (*Pope John’s Prayer on the Passion*, ll. 13-18). In *Seven Bleedings of Christ* and *Seven Words on the Cross*, Audelay also notes how the Jews mocked Christ by offering him ‘aysel and gal’ (*Seven Bleedings of Christ*, l. 84) to intensify his suffering. In this way, Audelay critiques the Jews by casting them as men who invert the works of mercy, giving Christ a bitter drink when he is most in need of refreshment and revitalisation.72

Yet within the Passion poems, Audelay also alludes to the actions of one particular man, the blind centurion Longinus, in order to emphasise the almighty and transformative power of true Christian mercy. According to the Gospel of St John, the centurion speared Christ in his side in an attempt to discern whether the son of man truly was dead.73 As Sarah McNamer explains, in late medieval culture

---

72 By contrast, in both *Seven Bleedings of Christ* and *Seven Hours of the Cross*, Audelay commends the conduct of Joseph of Arimathea, who took Christ’s body down from the cross for its anointing and burial. The very fact that Joseph was regarded as a saint in the fifteenth-century shows that performing these deeds permitted the populace a way to emulate the apotheosised community. See *Seven Bleedings of Christ*, in *John the Blind Audelay*, pp. 67-70 (p. 69, ll.103-09) and *Seven Hours of the Cross*, in *John the Blind Audelay*, pp. 109-12 (p. 111, ll. 60-63). A discussion of the cult of Joseph of Arimathea in medieval England can be found in Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: The History of a Legend* (Allen Lane: Penguin, 2004), pp. 130-34.

73 John 19.34.
Longinus’s act was understood to be ‘a gesture of gratuitous cruelty’. However, in his gospel text, John also records that after this man speared Christ’s side, he affirmed his faith in God and was suddenly healed from his blindness. This miracle is also memorialised in Audelay’s writings as he records that after Longinus pierced Christ with the spear, he ‘had his syght, this synful mon,/ Fore on Crystis Passion he had peté’ (Pope John’s Passion of our Lord, ll. 71-72). Just as sickness was perceived to be symptomatic of sin, Christ was often commemorated as a doctor or healer – as Christus Medicus – in the writings of the early Church fathers. In On Christian Doctrine, Augustine, for example, explains that just as doctors heal the sick by applying ‘contraries, such as cold to hot, moist to dry and so on’, so Christ heals mankind’s great sin of pride by applying ‘humility as a cure’. Christ’s act of taking on human form, descending to earth and dying for mankind is thus confirmed as the ultimate salve for humanity’s sin. This is certainly true for Longinus, whose lost sight is restored when he realises the true significance of Christ’s sacrifice.

Although the lesson that Christ’s mercy, combined with true faith, can heal even the cruelest of sinners is relevant to all mankind, in Counsel it takes on a special significance for the poet and his master. In visual representations of Christ’s Passion, Longinus was commonly figured pointing to his eye with one hand and holding a

---

75 John 19.34.
77 Hagioagraphical tradition confirms that Longinus undergoes a radical transformation as the erstwhile Roman centurion is celebrated as a saint who dedicated the rest of his life to Christ’s loyal service. Moreover, texts commemorating Longinus’s life affirm that this saint went on to heal the blindness of his devotees who, recognising and repenting for their sin, sought out his mercy. By including a reference to this figure in his writing, Audelay anticipates that he (and Lestrange) will be forgiven for the sin committed inside St Dunstan’s. See Saint Longinus, in Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend: Lives of the Saints, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), I, p. 184.
long, sharp spear in the other.\textsuperscript{78} While Audelay’s blindness creates an obvious similitude between the fifteenth-century sinner and his biblical predecessor, the weapon that Longinus carries appears to recall the instrument that Lestrange used to commit his heinous crime. The Records of the King’s Bench indicate that, on Easter Sunday 1417, shortly after Lestrange and his wife arrived at St Dunstan’s Church for evening vespers, she caught sight of her husband’s enemy at prayer. As she glimpsed Lestrange’s foe, she cried out “Steke him! Sle him!”\textsuperscript{79} If, as seems to be indicated in the secular record of events, Lestrange was carrying a sharp weapon such as a sword or a dagger when he entered St Dunstan’s, then this man, who committed his crime at Passiontide, is also comparable to Longinus, who pierced Christ’s side on Good Friday. Audelay thus conflates himself and Lestrange so that, once again, they appear to coexist; that is, they are both understood to be represented by a single biblical figure. The very fact that Longinus, who pierced an innocent victim with a spear, is healed of his blindness thus provides a powerful hope that Audelay and his master can also be transformed from a state of debasement to one of grace if they, like the centurion, are the recipients of mercy. Moreover, Audelay’s experiential and episodic memory of the St Dunstan’s travesty has positive implications not only for Lestrange’s soul, but also for the souls of all of his readers. As the ‘blind’ priest exemplifies, through his personal remembrance of his relationship with a man who had been imprisoned for criminal action, if Christians follow suit and exhibit mercy to the needy, the Church, as a whole, will move towards salvation.

\textsuperscript{79} Bennett, ‘John Audelay: Life Records’, p. 34.
3.3 *Imitatio Christi*: Audelay’s Sacrificial Gesture

While Audelay’s remembrance of Longinus permits him to draw attention to his status as a sinner, who can be healed through mercy, the Passion poems simultaneously offer the chantry priest a chance to promote his personal virtue. Much as his two alterations to Pecham’s teaching allow Audelay to represent himself as both a sinner in need of mercy and as a virtuous Christian author, whose memory is stocked with pastoral and biblical lessons that he uses to share counsel with others, the clergyman’s Passion meditations also allow an alternative understanding of his identity to emerge. As Audelay recalls Christ’s death, he does so in a manner that enables him to establish a number of similarities between himself and the son of God. As I have noted, medieval religious writers often portrayed Christ as a healer or physician. In his influential writings, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) draws further attention to Christ’s dissimilarity to the figure of a sick sinner as he explains that the son of God’s perfection meant that his physical form could never be afflicted or corrupted by illnesses such as leprosy, blindness and fever.  

Yet as Audelay remembers Christ’s death, his description of the Lord’s body appears to undermine Aquinas’s claim. As Jesus is strung up on the cross, Audelay recalls how his ‘vayns and sineus, hit brast, and bone,/ That evere joynte men myght ese’ (*Pope John’s Passion of Our Lord*, ll. 45-46) and, as he does so, he concludes that the son of God ‘was most lyke a leperus mon’ (*Pope John's Passion of Our Lord*, l. 47). Like blindness, leprosy was a condition that medieval thinkers commonly linked to a man’s sinful disposition. By comparing Christ to a leper, Audelay suggests that

---

81 In one fifteenth-century sermon, leprosy is, for example, specifically linked to pride as it causes a man’s skin to swell up in a way that matches the over-inflated sense of self that comes with this vice. See Holly Johnson, ‘A Fifteenth Century Sermon Enacts the Seven Deadly Sins’, in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. by Richard G. Newhauser and
Christ’s body is disfigured by the weight of humanity’s sin. Audelay’s representation of Christ thus permits him to compare himself to the son of God as, through his blindness, he, too, endures bodily affliction as a result of another man’s crime. This idea is confirmed as the poet-priest explains that when the Jews placed the ‘crown of thornes’ (Seven Hours on the Cross, l. 30) on Christ’s head, they caused blood to ‘ran in his ye’ (Seven Hours on the Cross, l. 30). The image, which has no scriptural grounding, permits Audelay to confirm the similarity between Christ and himself. Both men are figured as suffering an ocular affliction as they perform a merciful act that will bring about salvation for the sinner.

In this context, it is important to note that while the loss of sight was often thought to be a symptom of sin, this association was not exclusive. There are, in fact, several instances in scriptural history where blindness, particularly in the elderly, is associated with holiness. In his Confessions, for example, Augustine notes that the patriarch Isaac’s eyes were ‘dimmed by old age’. Moreover, he also observes that ‘because of his great age’, Jacob also ‘lost his eyesight’. Blindness is thus presented as a condition that is experienced by some of God’s holiest subjects as they approach the end of their earthly lives. That blindness symbolises spiritual intensity is also affirmed in the New Testament. When Paul first converts to

---

Susan J. Ridyard (York: The Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 107-31 (p. 112). It is perhaps also pertinent to note that, like blindness, leprosy is also an illness which Christ miraculously cures in gospel tradition. See Matthew 8.1-14, Mark 1.40-45 and Luke 5.12-16. In this way, the affliction is recognised as one that can be cured through forgiveness and miraculous grace. A detailed discussion of the medieval understanding of the association between sin and leprosy can be found in Carole Rawcliffe, Leprosy in Medieval England (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 44-54.


83 Augustine, Confessions, p. 209.
Christianity, on the road to Damascus, he temporarily loses his sight.\textsuperscript{84} The disciple’s intimate encounter with God is thus marked by a brief experience of blindness. Furthermore, this idea that blindness could, in fact, indicate that an individual was in a state of spiritual grace was familiar to later medieval thinkers. While the eye was recognised as an organ that could be used to stock memory with spiritually enriching images, it was also understood to be an orifice that could permit bad or sinful media to enter into the mind. For this reason, when monks entered the monastery, they were often encouraged to follow the gospel commandment, preserved in Matthew’s writings, ‘pluck out thy eye’, so that they could prevent themselves from viewing any sinful material.\textsuperscript{85} In the ordained community, blindness could thus be seen as a state that an individual voluntarily entered into in order to improve his relationship with God.

The idea that Audelay is keen to draw attention to the similarity between himself and Christ is confirmed by the clergyman’s description of the instrument central to each man’s salvific act. In \textit{Seven Bleedings of Christ}, Audelay recollects how Jesus mounted the instrument that the Jews used to kill him using a ‘lovelé Ladder’ (\textit{Seven Bleedings of Christ}, l. 97). As McNamer notes, the image of Christ climbing a ladder to mount the crucifix was commonly deployed in both textual and visual representations of the Passion as, in each instance it appeared, the instrument served to ‘promote an ideology of voluntary sacrifice’.\textsuperscript{86} The ladder thus reminded Christians of Christ’s merciful decision to give up his own life for their sin.

\textsuperscript{84} Acts 9.3-9. This association between blindness and conversion to Christianity is also commemorated in the hagiographical accounts of Paul’s life. See \textit{The Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle}, in de Voragine, \textit{The Golden Legend}, I, pp. 119-21.


\textsuperscript{86} McNamer, \textit{Affective Meditation}, pp. 100-01.
Strikingly, in *Counsel* Audelay does not only allude to a ladder in his Passion poem, but in the *Epilogue to John Audelay’s Counsel*, he also writes:

*The Counsell of Consciences* this boke I calle,  
Or, *The Ladder of Heven*, I say, forewy:  
There is no mon may clym up a walle  
Without a ladder, sekyrly;  
No more may we to heven on hye  
Without true counsell of consians.  
[...]
 Clyme up this ladder – then may ye se  
What joys in heven that ther be,  
And what payns in hel and turmentré  
Then chese yersellve weder to go.

(Epilogue to John Audelay’s Counsel, ll. 417-29)

While modern editors and critics typically refer to the work according to the first designated title, *Counsel*, Audelay also offers an alternative one: *The Ladder of Heven*. Audelay was by no means the only religious writer to use the image of a ladder in a devotional context. In fact, ladders were regularly employed by religious writers, who used the rungs of this instrument to draw attention to the stages of meditative ascent that a man needed to make to progress from a debased state of sin towards the celestial kingdom. By repeating the imperative ‘Clymbe up this ladder [...] Clymbe up this ladder’, Audelay urges his reader to use his sequence of poems as a meditative stimulus that they can contemplate as they raise their hearts upwards to God. Just as Christ’s earthly life culminated with him climbing a ladder to secure

---

87 This alternative title is also affirmed in the colophon where he states: ‘Liber vocatur Concilium consciencie, sic nominatur, aut Scala celi et vita salutis eterni’ or ‘The book is called *The Counsel of Conscience*, thus is it named, or *The Ladder of Heaven and the Life of Eternal Salvation*’, p. 146.

88 Popular examples of this form of writing include the late-fourteenth century treatise *Ladder of Foure Ronges by which Men Mowe Wele Clyme to Heven* and Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection*. See George R. Keiser, ‘‘Noght how lang man lifs; bot how wele’: The Laity and the Ladder of Perfection’, in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Michael Sargent (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 145-60. In the context of this thesis, it is pertinent to note that the ladder was also understood to be a mnemonic structure, as its rungs created an orderly structure to which memory-images (which might, for example, take the form of religious images or prayers) could be affixed to as the individual set about their devotions. See Carruthers, *Book*, p. 449, n. 51.
mankind’s salvation, so Audelay’s life follows the same trajectory as, in and through the anthology of religious verse that he writes, as he lies upon his death bed, he creates a textual ladder which others can use to reach heaven. While Fein suggests that *Counsel*’s ‘purpose and plan’ remains something of a mystery, it appears that Audelay created his ‘boke’ in order to educate Christians about the ways in which the souls of sinners can be transformed by receiving mercy and by giving this same form of grace to others. By configuring this penitential lesson in a way that also subtly encompasses his memory of the calamitous events of 1417, Audelay is able to create a corpus of devotional works in which he fulfils his chantry duty to the Church and, particularly, to his commissioner, Lestrange, as he shows himself to be concerned with the salvation prospects of all Christian men and women, but particularly with the soul of his master. Within his work, the elderly and ailing Audelay thus moves between the standpoint of sinner and saviour to share the spiritual burden of this calamitous event and to use his present position, as chantry priest, to help cleanse the stain of this transgression from his own soul and that of his master, so that they might both fare well in the afterlife. The prisoner, who is transformed precisely because he is the recipient of mercy, thus exists to remind other Christians of their responsibility to aid the imprisoned community so the souls of all of God’s sinners can ascend upwards towards salvation.

3.4 Forgetful Friends and a Remembering Self

Just as Audelay purportedly wrote *Counsel* as he lay between life and death, in the early 1460s, the elderly Ashby wrote an account of his imprisonment in the Fleet. In his scholarship on Ashby’s self-reflective lament, Meyer-Lee describes the Lancastrian clerk as ‘one of the most neglected poets’ of the fifteenth century – a
description which seems both apt and eerily ironic given that Ashby’s concern about
the ways in which his friends forgot him, when he entered the prison, emerges as a
structuring principle of Complaint. As the poem develops, the prisoner thus
responds to the difficult problem of being forgotten by creating a discursive space in
which he recalls and records a series of popular penitential and purgatorial images to
confirm himself as an individual who is fully committed to cleansing his own soul of
sin, despite the fact his friends do not assist him in this process in the way that the
Church teaches they should do.

Like Audelay’s Counsel, Complaint is preserved in a single manuscript, Trinity
College, Cambridge MS R.3.19, which Linne Mooney suggests was probably
foliated in the 1480s, some twenty years after Ashby’s imprisonment commenced.
Although it is not known how long Ashby remained in the Fleet, throughout the
verse the imprisoned speaker places strong emphasis on the need to bear one’s
suffering patiently; thus, the work is often viewed as modelling itself on the
Boethian tradition. However, unlike the other popular medieval Boethian prison-
texts that I have discussed in this thesis, namely King James’s The Kingis Quair and
Thomas Usk’s The Testament of Love, Ashby does not commune with a female muse
to gain understanding of his personal suffering. Moreover, as the poem’s most
recent editors, Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, note, the work concludes with a stanza that

92 Meyer-Lee, Poets, p. 147.
is categorically un-Boethian in that it focuses not on living through adversity. Instead, it sees imprisonment as a form of death:

Pryson propurly ys a sepulture
Of lyvyng men with strong lokkes thereon,
Fortyfyed without any rupture,
Of synners a gret castigacion,
Of feythfull frendes a probacion,
Of fre liberté a sharp abstinence,
Lackyng volunté for theyre dew penaunce.

*(Complaint, ll. 344-50)*

In a somewhat disparaging reading of the stanza, Mooney and Arn not only dismiss these lines as ‘tacked-on’, but they also state that they ‘depart from the message of the poem’ as a whole.\(^{93}\) For these reasons, they give Ashby’s closing remark no further attention. Countering this approach, I argue that the metaphorical link Ashby makes between the prison and a tomb is highly relevant to the narrative’s broader interest in the ways in which the experience of imprisonment can help a sinner to prepare his soul well for the afterlife. In order to present a reading of the work that corresponds with the narrative’s natural progression, these lines will be analysed in further detail at the close of argument. Before this, I return to the opening of Ashby’s lament.

As previously noted, Ashby’s self-reflective account opens with an image of death as he recalls how he was imprisoned as summer gave way to winter. By doing this, Ashby not only draws on the figurative association between the life cycle and the seasons to indicate his age, but the imprisoned poet also suggests that his incarceration marked a period of loss and deprivation. Thus, just as the poet recalls how the trees in the outside world lose their flowers, so he also notes that his ‘enemyes’ took away his worldly goods, leaving him without his ‘hors, money, and

---

This material loss, however, does not constitute the prisoner’s sole or main concern. Instead, he explains that:

Oon thyng amongst other greveth me sore,
That myn old acquentaunce disdeyned me
To vyste – though I have doon to theym more
Kyndnes – forgetyng me, and let me be,
Ne yevyng me comfort, ne wold me se,
Ne the werkes of mercy remembryng,
Ne me kyndnes to theym before shewyng.

(Complaint, ll. 36-42)

As I have argued elsewhere in this thesis, in orthodox culture, the remembrance of teachings was considered to be vital to the cultivation of a Christian ethic and identity. When a man stocked his memory with Church doctrine and law, he effectively equipped himself with the knowledge required to live his life in a way that would please God. In this stanza, Ashby draws attention to the sinful nature of his former friends as he explains that, once he was cast into prison, they forgot Pecham’s well-heeded instruction that they ought to show mercy to the imprisoned in order to save their own souls, as well as the soul of the incarcerated wretch, from damnation.94 Yet these lines not only enable Ashby to critique his former acquaintances, but they also provide the prisoner the opportunity to differentiate himself from the sinners outside the prison. By employing the word ‘kyndnes’ – which puns to mean both ‘kindness’ and ‘kin’ twice within a single stanza – he stresses that, before his incarceration, he remembered to show compassion to his

---

94 This idea is also confirmed in Ruth Evans’s work as she draws attention to the ways in which forgetfulness can be seen as part of man’s post-lapsarian condition. See Ruth Evans, ‘Our Cyborg Past: Medieval Artificial Memory as Mindupware Grade’, in Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies, 1 (2010), 64-71 (p. 66). Harald Weinrich also explains that the association between forgetfulness and sin is articulated in Augustine’s Confessions. Here, the Church father identifies his pagan years as time when he forgot to recognise God’s love and law. On the other hand, he praises God for never forgetting to remember him. In this context, remembering is associated with divinity and the failure of memory is linked to spiritual weakness. See Harald Weinrich, Lethe and the Art of Forgetting, trans. by Steven Rendall (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 22-23.
friends when they were in need. In this way, he opens his verse by implying that, despite his present position, trapped in the confines of the prison, he is, in fact, spiritually superior to many free men.

However, while Ashby is clearly aggrieved by the way in which his friends forget to show him mercy, in the following stanza he invokes the superlative to explain that their neglect does not constitute his deepest sorrow. Instead, he identifies his ‘grettest peyne’ as his ‘det’ (Complaint, ll. 43-44). While I noted earlier that Ashby elides a discussion of why he was thrown into prison, if this reference to his economic affairs is read literally, the clerk may very well have been indicating that he was thrown into prison because he had accrued a significant amount of debt, that he could not repay. Indeed, interpreting the line in this way might also explain why Ashby’s estate and his personal possessions were appropriated to his enemies. Yet to read Ashby’s reference to his debt as literal is to overlook the rich figurative association of the economics of sin that abounds in medieval religious discourse. As Jesus tells his New Testament parables, he recollects the story of a poor slave who owes his king ten thousand talents. When the debtor cannot repay the money, the king first orders that the slave and his family should be sold. However, in a magnificent act of mercy, the king later changes his mind, cancelling the debt, so that the slave and his family can walk free. This story epitomises the medieval understanding of the economics of sin within which God was understood as the merciful ruler who would forgive those who begged for his mercy, even though they were not worthy of his

95 MED, ‘kinde’, (n.) 10 b-c and (adj.) 5a.
generosity. Penitential literatures thus frequently made recourse to monetary imagery as, by allusively recalling this scriptural parable, religious thinkers could teach the populace that the Lord possessed both the power and the mercy to release his debtors from their transgressions. Given that Ashby, in a richly alliterative plea, describes how he ‘clepe, calle and cry to God’ to help him out of ‘det or I dy’ (Complaint, ll.48-49), we see that his main worry is, in fact, his need to purge his soul before he departs from this world into the next.

In the opening section of Complaint, Ashby essentially adopts a similar narrative voice to Audelay; that is, he oscillates between allusions to his moral character and references to his debased spiritual state in a way that permits him to use his personal memory of past sin to educate his reader about the importance of penitential piety. However, while Audelay’s admission that he is a sinner prompts him to reflect on the Passion, Ashby promotes a different form of memory. After admitting to the debt of sin which he has accrued, he enters an introspective mode, looking back on his life since boyhood:

I gan remembre and revolve in mynde  
My bryngying up from chyldhod hedyrto  
In the hyghest court that I coude fynd  
With the kyng, quene, and theyre uncle also,  
The duk of Gloucetre, God hem rest do!  

(Complaint, ll. 57-61)

As I noted earlier, Meyer-Lee suggests that these lines may explain why Ashby was imprisoned as they confirm his longstanding loyalty to the House of Lancaster at a

historical moment when the House of York held the throne. In her consideration of the narrative, Joanna Summers also sees the lines as having a political significance when she indicates that Ashby might have included this information in his narrative in the hope that fellow Lancastrian supporters might set about petitioning for his release. However, I would suggest that these lines evince Ashby’s eagerness to establish himself as a religious authority whose lessons on the interrelationship between memory, sin and salvation should be heeded by others. While the elderly were often believed to be people, whose sins, which had accumulated over the duration of their life time, manifested in the loss of their mental faculties, including memory, Ashby shows himself to be a figure capable of looking back over his personal past as he recalls and records forty years of service at the Lancastrian court. His ability to do so thus confirms his moral character as he can still exercise his memorial faculties, despite his advanced years. Ashby’s keenness to represent himself as a spiritual authority is confirmed as, using an intensifying superlative, he portrays himself as an individual who actively set out to find the *highest* court in the land from his boyhood. Given that medieval peoples understood the king to be an agent of Christ’s authority on earth, Ashby presents himself as an exemplary figure who consistently sought to fulfil his civic and Christian responsibility to serve this man truly in a way that simultaneously confirms his loyalty to God. Moreover, while many medieval writers identified youth as a period of life when an individual was predisposed to sin, Ashby counters any such negative understanding of his past

---

102 Metzler, *Disability*, p. 103.
103 This idea, that Ashby’s reference to his employment for the House of Lancaster provides a means through which he can emphasise his Christian identity, also finds support in the work of Isabel Davis, who argues that bureaucratic figures, particularly those employed at the Privy Seal, effectively performed a similar job to the monks who worked in monastic scriptoria; that is, they worked within a community where they took on the important task of writing texts that were intended to bring about civic development. See Isabel Davis, *Writing Masculinity in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 145-47.
by portraying himself as a figure who was fully committed to God’s service as a child, as well as in his adult life. Ashby’s remembrance of his time with the House of Lancaster not only serves a political purpose, but this memory also permits him to emphasise his Christian character.

At this point, Ashby uses his moral vantage point, albeit tinctured by his self-conscious awareness of sin, to establish himself as an exemplary figure, who others can emulate. This occurs as he entreats his reader to partake in a similar task to the act of introspective reflection that he has just performed. Through recourse to the imperative mode, he instructs his reader to look back on her personal past and meditate on any wrongdoings which she has committed:

Remembre thyself, thy lyf, thy demert  
Yef thow to pryson or trouble be broght,  
Haply by gret wrong, and nat of desert,  
Suffrying injury and right peynfull smert  
[…]

Nat for that sylf thyng but of just sentence.  

(Complaint, ll. 120-26)

By proposing that his reader’s sin might have caused her imprisonment or some other form of personal trouble, Ashby emphasises his congruence with the free community by suggesting that all Christians are capable of performing the sort of error that could result in incarceration. Yet at the same time, by acknowledging that some imprisonments can be unjust in secular terms, he also suggests that his own present predicament may not, in fact, arise from criminal conduct or malignancy.

---

104 In this way, Ashby’s verse is different from James’s The Kingis Quair. In this poem, as I discussed in the Introduction, the first-person narrator presents himself as a sinful subject during the early years of his imprisonment. See James, Quair, in The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems, pp. 31-79 (p. 34, ll. 93-113). Similarly, Ashby’s writing also differs to the autobiographical writings of his contemporary, Thomas Hoccleve, who, in La Male Regle not only states that ‘As for the more paart youthe is rebel’, but also laments that he spent much time, in his own youth, dallying with women in London’s taverns, rather than serving God. See La Male Regle, in Hoccleve’s Works: The Minor Poems, ed. by Fredrick Furnivall (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner for EETS, 1892), pp. 25-39 (p. 27, l. 65).
Nevertheless, although Ashby recognises that imprisonment can come about either as a result of secular injustice or as a result of sin, within these lines he expresses his belief that the experience of entering prison can be meaningful since the individual can reflect upon (other) transgressions that she has committed.

Ashby’s sense that the experience of imprisonment might benefit the soul is confirmed if the interrelationship between architecture and memory, which I discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, is considered. Inherited from classical thought, medieval thinkers maintained the belief that architectural settings were crucial to mnemotechnics as rooms, chambers and buildings all constituted spaces in which memory-images could be affixed and stored in an ordered fashion, conducive to clear recall. As Mary Carruthers explains, ‘churches, monastery buildings of every sort, castles, towers or strongholds, amphitheatres […] cloisters or enclosed gardens’ could all serve this purpose. While Carruthers does not explore the possibility that prisons might also function as mnemonic structures, within which memory-images could be stored and memory-work could take place, for Ashby the prison takes on this precise significance. It is a place that he invites his readers to think upon and even imaginatively enter in order that they, too, can follow his example and look back on their own past transgressions in order to ameliorate themselves before God.

As I indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, in his work on the cultural meaning of space, the influential theorist Henri Lefebvre argues that spaces do not have an innate significance. Rather, he posits that space is historically contingent; it takes on

---

multiple and changing meanings at different historical moments. Lefebvre, then, understands space to be ‘directly lived through its associated images and symbols’. This same idea also underpins Michel de Certeau’s understanding of space. As he differentiates between place and space, de Certeau argues that while a place is always determined by a specific set of coordinates, that demarcate its parameters, the more elusive and changeable category of space is actuated by the ‘intersections of mobile elements’ that takes place within its boundaries at any given time. Unlike place, space is not a fixed topography, but an area that is shaped by the changing activities and myriad agencies that occupy it at a particular moment. As Ashby elaborates on how prisoners should use the ‘lytyll space’ (Complaint, l. 140) that they occupy, he promotes ‘lamentyng and prayer mekeleche’ (Complaint, l. 137) as worthwhile activities. If the intersection of these ideologies – space as suitable for memory-work and space as a domain within which religious devotion can take place – is considered, then it becomes clear that Ashby understands the prison to be a locale that is ideally suited for sorrowful self-reflection and penitential prayer. This idea takes on a heightened significance as the imprisoned writer progresses to explore the sort of transformation that this prayer might bring about. Here, he writes:

    And as precious gold ys thorough puryd  
    By foull metal, led, and claryfyed,  
    Ryght so ys the sowle by trowbyll curyd  
    And my humble prose high gloryfyed,  
    As in the scrypture ys specyfyed.  
    So for soules helth hyt ys a gret grace  
    To have here trouble rather then solace.  

(Complaint, ll. 141-47)

107 Lefebvre, Production, p. 39.
By comparing the cleansing of the soul to the alchemical process of procuring gold from debased metals, Ashby suggests that prayer can transform even the most debased substance into a precious entity. However, gold was not only recognised to be of great material value on earth, but it was also understood to be found in heaven. As the *Pricke* author explains, heaven is a ‘ceté made of gold’ (*Pricke*, l. 9005). The prisoner’s prayer is thus one that looks forward to his entrance into the Kingdom of God as he expresses his belief that, if he remembers and repents for his sin, his soul can be transformed from a debased state to one of glorification. Moreover, within his verse, Ashby further confirms his spiritual worth by pointing to the fact that his own understanding of the type of spiritual transformation that penitential prayer can bring about is authorised in scripture. In their recent edition of *Complaint*, Mooney and Arn identify Zacharias 13:9 and Jeremiah 6:30 as places at which this image of cleansing can be found. Pertinently, in each of these instances, fire – the medium which late medieval writers argued purged the soul of its sin in Purgatory – is identified as the catalytic agent that tests the soul. It seems, then, that Ashby understands the memorial prison chamber that he is trapped within as a kind of Purgatory. That is, his prison is a place wherein he suffers precisely because his soul is being prepared for a glorious union with God.

---

110 For studies that draw attention to the prevalence of fire imagery in visual and textual depictions of Purgatory see Esther Cohen, *The Modulated Scream: Pain in Medieval Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 14; Matsuda, *Death*, pp. 7-17. The association between Purgatory and the cleansing of metal through flames is also present in the discussion of Purgatory in *Pricke* which states that ‘in þat fire be pyned/ Unto þat bene als clene als gold fyned./And when they er fyned and made bright/ þai sal be broght befor Goddes sight/ Til hey Paradis, þat blisful place/ What ey es rest, joy and solace’. See *Pricke*, ll. 3200-05.
3.5 Ashby’s Purgatorial Prison

In my earlier discussion of the doctrine of Purgatory (see above), I drew attention to the ways in which this third and interstitial afterlife realm provided a locale wherein the souls of the faithful could undergo a final period of cleansing before they were released to heaven. As the Church promoted this belief, it placed strong emphasis on the belief that the intensity and duration of an individual’s posthumous suffering was calibrated in accordance with the amount of unrepented sin harboured in the soul at the moment of death. For this reason, Paul Binski writes that a person’s stay in Purgatory could, in many respects, be seen as ‘a kind of prison-sentence’.111

This association between prison and Purgatory was prevalent in the late medieval imagination. In the late-fourteenth century poem Piers Plowman, for example, William Langland writes that an errant bondsman, who has attempted to abscond from his lord, will eventually be ‘putten […] after in prison in purgatorie to brenne’. Moreover, as the narrative unfolds, Langland powerfully authorises this metaphorical association by including it within Christ’s speech. As Jesus explains how he will treat the sinful when they die, he states that sinners ‘shul be clensed clerliche and [clene] washen of hir synnes/ In my prisone Purgatori, til parce it hote’.112 Similarly, in John Lydgate’s mid-fifteenth century hagiographical poem, Saint Austin at Compton, a cadaver, who returns from the grave, lingers in the churchyard in order to inform a group of Oxford parishioners that he is unable to rest peacefully in his tomb as he has been burning in a ‘dirk prisoun of desolacioun/

---

Mong firy flawmys’ for ‘hundred yeer’. Likewise, in his *ars moriendi* poem, *How to Lerne to Dye*, Thomas Hoccleve also describes Purgatory as a ‘hoot prison’. In *Complaint*, Ashby thus draws on a metaphor that is familiar to his contemporaries, only to reverse its relevance. Rather than seeing Purgatory as a form of prison, Ashby envisages the prison from where he writes, and where he entreats others to imagine themselves, as a form of Purgatory.

Although my earlier discussion of Purgatory concentrated on the idea that this cleansing-stead existed in the topography of the afterlife, the possibility that Purgatory could also exist on earth is not an idea unique to Ashby’s writing. The late medieval mystical tradition evidences the awareness that, if a faithful Christian experienced extreme pain on earth, their soul could undergo purgation before death. This idea is found in the writings of both the late-fourteenth century mystic, Richard Rolle and the fifteenth-century religious visionary, Margery Kempe. As Rolle struggles to manage the pain of physical illness, he cries out: ‘Jesus, graunte me here wilfully to suffer disessis and tribulaciouns for þi sake […] and graunte me, lord Jhesu, purgatorie for my synnes er I deie’.

Rolle thus identifies his physical suffering as spiritually beneficial. Similarly, in her autobiographical writings, Margery recalls how Christ appeared to her and said, ‘I have asayd the in povert é, and I have chastised the […] for the schuldist non other purgatory had but in this

---

Given that medieval thinkers traditionally understood the saints and newly baptised infants to be exempt from Purgatory, as the souls of these Christians were pure of sin at the moment of death, Margery’s recollection of Christ’s words appear to suggest that he has identified her as a saint-like figure; that is, by granting her suffering on earth, he provides his holy servant with an opportunity to purge her soul of its iniquity in order that she might ascend directly into his kingdom in the same way that celebrated members of the apotheosised community did. For Ashby, the experience of imprisonment is certainly one that involves intense suffering. He loses his wealth, his freedom, his friends forget to show him the mercy he deserves and, most pertinent, he finds himself wrestling with his knowledge that he must beseech God’s forgiveness to remove his debt of sin before he dies. However, the experience is not all bleak. Imprisonment also offers Ashby an occasion to reflect on his past and repent for his wrongdoing in order that his soul might be transformed into gold. Given that the privilege of circumnavigating Purgatory and journeying straight to heaven was recognised as a mark of holiness, by implying that his personal ‘purgatory’ takes place on earth, during his imprisonment, Ashby projects an image of himself as a devout Christian, whose suffering in the afterlife will be reduced, or even eradicated, owing to his earthly predicament. His prison cell is thus a space where the remembrance of past sin and the ensuing

---


118 Vivanco, Death, p. 114.
performance of penitential prayers permit him to move from the shame associated
with his earthly existence towards sanctuary and salvation.

While Ashby laments the way in which he has been forgotten by his friends, who fail
to demonstrate the works of mercy, it is important to note that the prisoner never
perceives himself to be completely alone during his confinement. In the opening part
of the narrative, he indicates that he is ‘abydyng without help singler/ Sauf of God
and Hys blessyd modyr there’ (Complaint, ll. 13-14). The reference to Mary here is
important. In many purgatorial literatures, the mother of God was represented as
aiding the souls in Purgatory to move onwards to heaven precisely because her
supreme purity – which she maintained in the Immaculate Conception and her
virginity – meant that she was the ultimate mediatrice for these sinners.119 The fact
that Ashby believes that the mother of God is in his prison cell with him can be seen
as affirming his belief that his prison-prayers will be communicated through this
holy woman to God.120 Moreover, the idea that Ashby is keen to solicit the support
of saints who can aid his release from his purgatorial prison is confirmed at the close
of the narrative as, in his hour of need, the prisoner also calls out to St Job, whose
life was celebrated in the medieval Office of the Dead and who was also recognised
to be the patron saint of Purgatory at this time.121

119 Barbara Haggh, ‘The Meeting of Sacred Ritual and Secular Piety: Endowments for Music’, in
Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music, ed. by Tess Knighton and David Fallows (Berkeley,
120 I regard this reference as different from the Boethian model of a prisoner communicating with a
female muse as Ashby does not detail the content of the conversation in the verse. Instead, he simply
alludes to Mary’s presence.
121 Lawrence Besserman, The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
The association between the prison and Purgatory thus explains why Ashby is eager to urge his reader to emulate his ‘exemplary’ conduct, admitting to past sin and attempting to repent for this while on earth. Just as the Church’s promotion of the doctrine of Purgatory was designed to inspire Christians to meditate on their own death and, in turn, to ensure that they committed themselves to as much penitential piety as was possible on earth in order to alleviate their afterlife stress, so Ashby uses his experience of imprisonment to remind his reader that since all sinners will face the common fate of judgement before God, they, too, should commit themselves to penitential piety on earth so as to reduce the pain they will endure when they journey into the afterlife.

Furthermore, this sense that Ashby presents and promotes his experiential recollection of imprisonment as an aide-mémoire that Christians should reflect on as they cultivate their own spiritual identities is strongly confirmed in the final stanza of the poem which, as I suggested earlier, coheres with, rather than departs from, the meaning of the verse as a whole. Here Ashby baldly states that the prison is a tomb in a way that confirms the associative link between this place and death, as well as the afterlife. As the word ‘lyvying’ denotes life and living, Ashby evinces his belief that certain subjects who enter the ‘tomb’ of the prison are still alive; that is, they can undergo an experience that is usually associated with death while they are still on earth. Moreover, as this word also means ‘to endure’, Ashby confirms his sense that the prison is a place where sinners must willingly undergo deep suffering precisely because this pain purges the soul in a positive fashion.122 The fact that he also indicates that the prison-tomb is a place within which the bonds between men are

---

122 MED, ‘liven’, (v. (1)) 1a and 8.
tested also has significance for both the earthly sinner and the sinners in Purgatory. It provides the reader with a final reminder that, in order to please God, she must remember to aid both the incarcerated members of her immediate society, who literally dwell in prison, and the spirits, who dwell in God’s figurative prison of Purgatory. Throughout his verse, and culminating in this final stanza, Ashby depicts the prison as a place where individual incarcerated subjects can cleanse themselves of sin and a place that free men should remember, in their spiritual devotions, if they are to aid their own souls, as well as the souls of all others sinners in this life and the next, move towards salvation.

Ashby’s sense that the prison is a memory site that all Christians should recall in their prayers and penitential devotions is further confirmed if the sepulchre, to which he compares the gaol house, is considered in relation to its contemporary socio-historical context. As Kathleen Cohen notes, during the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, medieval gravestones did not simply speak of the person buried in that place. Rather, they often bore a mnemonic epithet which was designed ‘to remind the beholder of death and to urge him to behave morally’.123 Ashby uses the prison in a similar way. It is a site that stands, both in his verse, and on the skyline of the metropolis, to remind Christians to reflect on their own impending deaths and the need to prepare for their journey into the afterlife by committing themselves to acts of penitential piety. It is thus possible that the reason why Ashby elides the specific reason for his imprisonment from the verse relates to the fact that he is keen to present the prison not simply as a home for those men and women whose reputation has been either rightly or wrongly tarnished by an accusation of criminality, but also

as a universal place, which is fit for all sinners to associate themselves with through charity and prayer. Moreover, it is also pertinent to note that, in late medieval England, the tombs of the dead were found in churches or in the consecrated grounds that surrounded these holy buildings.\(^\text{124}\) Ashby’s sense that the prison can be recognised as a holy place is affirmed as, essentially, he suggests that he is, in fact, interred in a place that is sacred and set aside for God’s devotion. In this way, the prison, which exists as a memory chamber wherein the incarcerated subject can recall and repent for his sin, is confirmed to have a positive connotation. Ultimately, entering prison enhances a man’s salvation prospects.

3.6 Conclusion

While the precise date at which Audelay died remains unknown, Bennett asserts that it is not unreasonable to think that the ailing clergyman passed away soon after he had completed writing *Counsel*.\(^\text{125}\) Ashby’s fate, like that of Audelay, is also difficult to trace with certainty. However, after his eventual release from the Fleet (at a date that remains unknown), he lived until 1475 when he appears to have died of natural causes.\(^\text{126}\)

Whatever happened to the authors, in *Counsel* and *Complaint*, the vantage point of old age permits each writer to establish himself as an exemplary figure, who draws on his experiential memory of imprisonment (even if, as in Audelay’s case, this is an associational relationship formed and forged through his longstanding commitment


to Lestrange) to educate Christians about the ways in which they should prepare their souls to be judged by God through the remembrance of the incarcerated community. In this way, both Audelay’s and Ashby’s personal memory of sin is put to public purpose as, in essence, it is their familiarity with wrongdoing and transgression that allows them to teach others lessons in both penitential and purgatorial piety. For Audelay, this is most evident in his promotion of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy. As he vivifies this teaching, by emphasising his own blindness in a manner that enables him to identify with the needy, particularly the imprisoned, he establishes himself as an exemplary figure who others should emulate. In doing so, he urges his reader to perform charitable acts both to bring about spiritual transformation in the lives of wretched sinners, such as those men and women incarcerated in gaol, as well as in her own soul. Ashby, on the other hand, makes the suggestion that the prison-space, in which he is trapped, provides an ideal locale for him to pray for the forgiveness of sin. In prison, his soul can thus transform from its debased state to one in which it is fit for glorification, even beatification, in the heavenly kingdom. By imbuing his verse with images and figures found in popular literatures on Purgatory, the imprisoned clerk effectively promotes the prison building as a mnemonic structure that others should imaginatively envisage themselves within, if they, too, wish to cleanse their souls of iniquity in a manner which will hasten their entrance into the heavenly kingdom.

In both texts, the prisoner, who embodies sin, is not only liberated from his shame, but he is also upheld as an aide-mémoire that Christians must call on regularly, if they wish not only to please God, but also to reside with him for eternity.
Remembering the imprisoned is thus shown to be an act of superlative importance precisely because it stands to move the Christian community towards heaven.
Conclusion
Memory and Identity in the Late Medieval Prison

In his philosophy, the influential classical thinker Plato articulates a concern that the written word stands to the detriment of memory.\(^1\) In this conception, written discourse is understood to pose a threat to human memory since, if ideas can be preserved in textual form, it is possible that men and women might perceive their personal memorial faculties to be redundant. Medieval thinkers, however, did not inherit or subscribe to this belief.\(^2\) Beginning with Aristotle, one of the most dominant metaphors for memory in Western culture has been that of the wax tablet.\(^3\) In this image, the mind is essentially envisaged and understood as a surface upon which ideas can be inscribed precisely so that they might be recalled, by the remembering individual, at a later date. Moreover, and most pertinently to my thesis, the image of the tablet draws attention to the malleable nature of memory. That is, the wax tablet symbolises the fact that the faculty can be re-inscribed with different ideas, in different contexts, at different historical moments. Sharing the belief that writing provided a positive way to conceptualise memory, medieval authorities perceived the act of narrative composition to provide a means by and through which ideas and ideologies from the past, and the present, could be preserved for future recollection. Indeed, as Mary Carruthers explains, ‘the metaphor of memory as a

---


\(^2\) Although Platonic thought influenced much medieval thinking, this was often transmitted through the study of Neo-platonic works, rather than through a sustained commitment to the writings of the philosopher himself. See John Marenbon, *Medieval Philosophy: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 13.

written surface’ was so well accepted that, in pre-modernity, books and written texts were understood as ‘memorial cues and aids’.

For the medieval prison-writer, the creation of a textual record that combines personal memory of the actions or beliefs precipitating his imprisonment with personal memory of the suffering that he incurs during his time in confinement, constitutes a way in which he can preserve a trace of himself, even when his freedom is constrained and his life is under threat. The act of writing is not only about a defence or legitimisation of the self, but it is also about self-preservation. Through his narrative composition, the prison-writer effectively inscribes a record of his lived experience into the cultural consciousness so that he will not be forgotten by others.

Carruthers’s influential work has undoubtedly provided scholars with an invaluable commentary on the ways in which the faculty of memory was understood and exercised in monastic and academic communities. Developing her insights, my thesis demonstrates that memoria also played an important role in the construction of self-reflective discourses that were produced outside of the university and the monastery. Moreover, by focusing on how memory is drawn upon during an individual’s confinement in prison, my argument also complements and extends Jean Dunbabin’s and Guy Geltner’s on the medieval gaolhouse since it not only acknowledges that imprisonment was utilised in a wide range of contexts in late-fourteenth and fifteenth century England, but it also considers how the experience of incarceration affected the pre-modern subject’s understanding of his personal and spiritual identity.

---

The idea that imprisonment affects the conceptualisation of identity in medieval culture is one that must not be downplayed. In the Introduction of this thesis, I pointed to the fact that the dominant body of scholarship on the history of selfhood in Western autobiographical literatures still associates an interest in personal identity as a distinctly modern phenomenon. While the tendency of literary scholars to overlook the articulation and formation of selfhood in pre-modern cultures means that the present understanding of what constitutes medieval autobiographical discourse is underdeveloped, my thesis demonstrates that, as in the later periods, memory underpins this form of narrative. Acknowledging this not only confirms that medieval autobiographical identity exists, but also highlights that there is a congruity between this form of literature in the pre-modern and modern periods.

However, although the congruence between modern and medieval autobiographical inscription reminds us that selfhood, that is understood and articulated through personal memory, should not be seen as absent from pre-modernity, my study also evidences Anne Whitehead’s observation that memory is often ‘historically conditioned’. As Whitehead points out, memory is ‘not simply handed down in a timeless form from generation to generation’. Rather, it ‘bears the impression or stamp of its own time’. Thus, as I have shown throughout each of the preceding chapters, in the pervasively Christian culture of late medieval England, religious memory was inextricably linked to the expression of experiential memory as the former provided the prison-writer with a familiar authority that he could use to reflect upon and document the difficult changes in his life experience. In Chapters One and Two, I demonstrated that the prisoner’s proclivity to look back at celebrated

---

6 Whitehead, *Memory*, p. 4.
figures in Judeo-Christian history, who had also endured imprisonment in their lifetimes, permitted the incarcerated writer to register that the location he was trapped in was one that had also been inhabited by some of God’s holiest subjects. In doing so, the prisoner could thus advocate his own virtue. As is exemplified in Thomas Usk’s and William Paris’s narratives, this standpoint could be used to justify the political actions that had resulted in his incarceration or, as is manifest in Richard Wyche’s and William Thorpe’s letters, the prison-writer could use the authority imparted from the past to establish himself as a figure empowered to counsel others, outside the prison, on matters of religious faith. While George Ashby’s and John the Blind Audelay’s writings are each aware of celebrated figures from Church history (including, for example, Christ, Longinus, Job and Mary), the religious memory work performed and encouraged in *The Counsel of Conscience* and *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet, 1463* is quite different. Here, the prison-writers use their personal memory of sin to entreat others to remember the incarcerated community precisely because this charitable act, which constitutes an important strain of penitential piety, stands to move the Church, at large, towards spiritual purity. Imprinting the memory of a prisoner in the memorial faculties of the reader thus provides the means through which both fifteenth-century writers can solicit support for not only their personal salvation, but also that of the whole Christian community.

In the context of this thesis, the recognition that religious memory permits the authorisation of individual identity is crucial as, through this knowledge, it has been possible to consider the variety of forms and genres that constitute medieval prison-writing. The idea that pre-modern autobiographical expression can be inscribed into a multitude of religious genres and narrative forms that are not traditionally
associated with detailed introspective analyses of the self – including hagiography, biblical letters and meditations on Christ’s passion or didactic literatures pertaining to the doctrine of Purgatory – takes on a heightened significance if Astrid Erll’s influential scholarship on what genre means, and what services genre enacts and performs, is considered. As Erll describes how individuals choose to document the ‘uncommon, difficult or dangerous circumstances’ that they experience personally, she stresses that writers frequently draw upon ‘especially traditional and strongly conventionalised genres [...] in order to provide meaningful patterns of representations for experiences that would be otherwise hard to interpret’. By borrowing traditional religious forms of writing to frame their memory of persecution, the prison-writers all look to the long-standing authority of the saints, the Bible and the Church’s teaching on charity and purgatory, to legitimise and authorise their experience of imprisonment. Although these narrative modes are various, they allow these prisoners to present their identities in a way that detracts from any shame associated with incarceration. Moreover, as the religious genres chosen by the prisoners encompass and embrace a temporality that reaches out to include the eternal future, the prison-writers find themselves in a position where they can use their memory of the past, which has precipitated their immediate persecution, to anticipate eventual eschatological glory. This latter point, which has barely been noted in the small body of scholarship that examines medieval prison-writing, should not be overlooked. The act of using memory to reflect upon the self and, in turn, to consider the fate of the soul in the eternal future, offers the prison-writer a chance to effect personal consolation and to establish himself as a spiritual authority, as, ultimately, he anticipates that God will bestow favour on him in

heaven. As he enters the autobiographical mode, the medieval prisoner reveals himself to be concerned with much more than just the relationship between the past and his self-conceptualisation of personal identity in the present moment of inscription. Rather, he also evinces his strong concern with the eschatological future as he meditates upon what will happen to his soul once he relinquishes his last breath and faces judgement before God.

In my consideration of Thomas Usk’s *The Testament of Love* and William Paris’s *Life of St. Christina*, I demonstrated how, in quite different ways, both men, who were associated with treachery in late-fourteenth century England, looked to the hagiographical records of the early virgin martyrs to exculpate themselves, textually, from the charge of betraying the man responsible for their imprisonment, King Richard II. In Usk’s case, his transposition of the conversion topos from Margaret’s *vita* enabled him to represent his own decision to change political allegiance from Northampton’s faction to that of Brembre as one that moved him from darkness to enlightenment. As Brembre was supported by Richard, Usk drew attention to his loyalty to the king, whom he had previously betrayed through his civic disorder, in a manner that enabled him to confirm his new identity as a virtuous subject, deserving of mercy and forgiveness. Confirming the creative potential of *memoria*, Paris’s recollection of St. Christina’s life has, by contrast, a very different political meaning. By portraying himself and his master as akin to a saint who was imprisoned by pagan opponents, Paris implies that Richard is, in fact, responsible for the unjust imprisonment of virtuous Christians. Paris thus suggests that, like the saint whom he and his master resemble, Richard’s prisoners will be rewarded for their faith and their virtuous conduct when they ascend to heaven. Although Usk’s and Paris’s acts
of hagiographic commemoration permit them to respectively appeal to and repudiate the English king, both fourteenth-century narratives affirm that religious memory could be used to reframe one’s identity in a more positive light than contemporary legal and judicial record would allow.

Chapter Two’s analysis of *The Letter of Richard Wyche* and *The Testimony of William Thorpe* confirmed this idea that memory could be used to validate the actions precipitating the prisoner’s downfall as extensive recall of scripture, on the part of both Wycliffite preachers, permits the incarcerated writer to demonstrate his loyalty to biblical truth; a commitment that does not falter despite the persecution that he suffers at the hands of the Church. Yet in these prison-narratives, something else also takes place. By drawing on the Bible, a text of universal importance within the Christian – and especially Wycliffite – tradition and framing his experiential memory of suffering in a letter – a genre which, in medieval culture, had public significance – Wyche and Thorpe both use their memory of persecution, which is authorised by scriptural memory, to entreat other Lollard subjects to stand firm in their faith. As well as having personal resonance, memory is also shown to be of public significance as it is laid out to encourage solidarity amongst a heterodox sect of believers.

Chapter Three also examined the interrelationship between personal and public experience as I considered the ways in which two fifteenth-century orthodox writers, Ashby and Audelay, used their personal memory of the relationship they held with either a prisoner or the prison to articulate a series of lessons about the importance of performing acts of penitential piety during the earthly life. For Audelay, the
adaptation of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy enabled him to use both his
textual corpus and his physical corpus, which he emphasised was blind, to counsel
his reader about the ways in which they must identify with and remember the
incarcerated community through charitable acts, which would ultimately bring about
spiritual transformation in all sinners. While Audelay impressed the importance of
*remembering* the imprisoned to his reader, Ashby, in his prison-poem, drew attention
to the ways in which his friends *forgot* to carry out this duty. In this scenario, he
portrays himself as taking on exclusive responsibility for his soul, as well as the
souls of his readers. By creating a self-reflective poem that is saturated with images
and figures from purgatorial literatures, he suggests that the prison is an ideal
location within which to solicit forgiveness for one’s sins through penitential
suffering and prayerful lamentation. In this way, he presents the prison as a space all
Christians should remember if they too are to move from a state of disgrace to one of
spiritual cleanliness.

Albeit in different ways, in each chapter religious memory consistently provides a
framework for the exercise of experiential memory to take place within, as the
incarcerated writer looks to either the authority of pre-existing persecuted figures in
Church history or to the Church’s longstanding teachings surrounding scripture and
penance to validate his own identity during his imprisonment. By creating a new
narrative that uses religious memory to authorise his past behaviours and his ensuing
experience of incarceration, the prisoner inscribes himself into Judeo-Christian
history in a manner that suggests his positive spiritual state.
In the scope of this thesis, I have focused on the intersection between memory and identity in autobiographical narratives. References to the experience of imprisonment and records of persecution, however, exist in other genres of medieval writing, as diverse as the official records of secular and ecclesiastical courts and popular romance literature. Future research could thus turn to these medieval documents in order to deepen the understanding of the ways in which memory permits the prisoner’s identity to be considered in the biographic testimonies and legal records presented at court and/or to discern how the figure of the prisoner is introduced and discussed in a fictional narrative framework.⁸ Pursuing such research has the potential to prompt a comparative consideration of whether the prisoner’s existence and identity is preserved differently in these alternate modes of discourse. This, in turn, might consolidate the scholarly understanding of what rhetorical attributes or narrative strategies and techniques are unique and specific to autobiographical texts in medieval culture.

This thesis has therefore paved the way for future research that has the potential to enhance scholarly understanding of both the medieval prisoner’s identity and of the

---

⁸ The use of memory in Church court testimonies is the topic of Bronach Kane’s current research which will eventually be published in a monograph with the working title: Popular Memory and Gender in Late Medieval England: Men, Women and Testimony in the Church Courts of Canterbury and York. I am grateful for Dr. Kane for confirming, in email, that she, too, feels there is scope to carry out comparative work into whether autobiographic and biographic memory differs in medieval accounts of persecution. Romance literatures have, of course, long been recognised as an area within which personal identity is negotiated. While researching for this thesis, I was struck by the ways in which religious ideas and ideologies surrounding imprisonment are evident in these fictional texts. In the Sultan of Babylon, for instance, the daughter of the Saracen ruler who cruelly imprisons Charlemagne’s men breaks into the prison to provide food and sustenance for the incarcerated heroes. Given that she later converts to Christianity, it would be interesting to probe further whether this act, which fulfills two of the tenets of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, can perhaps be seen as anticipating her change in religious allegiance or if it is somehow intended to suggest that she inherently possesses the virtues required to belong to the Christian faith. Another intriguing text is that of Bevis of Hamptoun wherein the hero finds himself battling a dragon in prison. If this trope is borrowed from, or resonant with, St Margaret of Antioch’s vita then it would seem that, like Usk and Paris, the writer of this romance recognised hagiographical memory could be used to promote the identity of his protagonist in a positive fashion.
components and purposes of medieval autobiographical discourse. Moreover, what this study, as it stands, confirms is that David Aers and Lee Patterson were very much right to critique Stephen Greenblatt’s influential argument that selfhood first emerges as a cultural and textual concern in the sixteenth-century. My central argument that religious memory permits the prisoner to contemplate and record textually an account of the interrelationship between his past actions and is present identity which, in turn, allows him to anticipate his eternal future, proves that medieval subjects were also actively engaged in exploring and representing their sense of selfhood textually, particularly at times when this sense of self was under threat owing to the subject’s contentious relationship to a body of power in pre-modern England. While literary critics have often written the medieval self-contemplative subject out of studies considering the history of the self in Western society and historians of punishment have neglected to consider the use of imprisonment in medieval jurisdiction, my thesis confirms that the medieval prisoner must be acknowledged to exist as an individual who is both highly conscious of how his identity is affected by the punishment he undergoes and who is keen to preserve a record of this. As memory allows the prisoner to understand his past and present identity in a manner that grants him the self-reification he requires to anticipate eternal reward in the eschatological future, this faculty and praxis must be seen as integral to the medieval prisoner’s construction of a multi-temporal and self-promotional autobiographical discourse.

Appendix

The Letter of Richard Wyche
From F.D. Matthew, ‘The Trial of Richard Wyche’, English Historical Review, 5.4 (1890), 530-44

Reverende domine et frater.


iudice, oportet me recipere secundum intentum indicia et non secundum meum. At ille : Pro certo solas, quod dominus meus recipeter a te iuramentum istud, quia sum missus a Domino meo ad te ad tractandum tecum super isto iuramento. Et si volueris sio facere, dominus meus absolvere te ab alio iuramento et sic facies bonum finem. Melius est tibi sio facere quam taliter inoarcerari. Velle, dixi, liberar libenter, si Deo placeret. Sed de uno, inquit, si oportet te cavere, ut qndonouneque iuramentum tibi demonstraverit, non petas questdones super illo, quia subditus non peteret tales questdones a suo superiori, quia olla non petit a figulo, Cur me ad istum usum fingis vel ad istum. Et dominus meus est quodammodo capitosus scilicet testds.1* Et si volueris consentire ad istum finem, volo, si volueris, transire ad dominum meum et tractare ad finem. Dixi, volo34 libenter si dominus meus voluerit facere sicut vos deditis et recipere a me istud iuramentum limitatum in corde meo, hoc eat, quod teneor obedit legi Dei, in quantum ad me pertinet. Eciam dixit: Ne dubites. Tune dixit cancellarius : Per Deum, tu iuras sicut nos volumus antequam recesseris. Non respondi ei verbum. Et miles surrexit. Et cum stetisset in hostio domus, dixit: Eicharde, in fide, vis tu tenere paotum de istis que dixisti ?

Eciam, si dominus meus voluerit tenere pactum de quibus voa dixistis. Eciam, soias illud pro certo et recesait. Bt istud fuit in die Sabbato post Nonam. Et in crastino ductus sum ante episcopum circa horam primam. Et dederunt mihi iuramentum scriptum plene iniquitate ut legerem per me ipsum. Et legi illud ter. Et ista eat quodammodo sentencia Ego Richardus Vicz Virgoniensis ** dioesia iuro quod quilibet oatholicus teuetur firmiter et precise legibus et constitucionibus in Decretis, Decretalibus, Sexto et Clementinis contentds et, quantum ad me attinet, volo obedire eisdem et si contingat me in posterum aliquid contra eadem predioare me in heresim lapsum confiteor, eciam, si quos contra eos libros habeo, circa diem Pasce ad episcopum deatinare. Et cum legisqem istud iuramentum, cogitavi super pacto et quod pepigi me non petere questiones super iuramento ab eis donate, transivi ad militem stantem iuxta ignem ante formulam et dixi ei: Istud non est iuramentum pacti. Istud iuramentum nunquam iurabo. Non, dixit, iures tu iuramentum tibi in corde tuo limitatum ? Bene, dixi; volo. Et episcopus sedebat super formula et genu flectebam. Et dixi episcopo :Donune, iuramentum pacti mihi modo limitatum in corde a magistrd meohio ** milite ad iurandum volo iurare si volueritis. At ille : lures tune. Pone manum super librum. Et posui, et ipsi legerunt illud iuramentum; et cum legissent, osculatos sum librum; speravi episcopum non recepturum a me nisi iuramentum pactd, sicut et pactum voluit, si veritas staret Et tune dederunt michi ad legendum unum iuramentum de fide sua eukaristie et alid ex confessione ut iuarem. Et iuramentum eukaristie incipit hoc modo : Catholice est tenendum quod inferius hio scribitur. Quia videutes quod nolui r iurare illud miserunt postea illud miobi in carcerem de declararidum. Et dixi eis quod noluiw iurare illud iuramentum eucharistie. Et ille vetus magister frater Minor dixit: Tu teneris ex virtute iuramenti tui istud iurare; timui valde dolum in iflto iuramento. Et tune dixi: Non teneor iurare illud, nee volo. Tuno epiacopuB allegavit michi Berengarium et precepit ut legerent minhi revocationem eius. Et legerunt michi iurare non ease contra evangeliuim quod quilibet tenetur credere. Siout et Christus dicit et sio ego credo. Quomodo oredis prius, dixit. Et dixi eis coedem modo sicut superius. Et rogavi episcopum ut quidquid desideraret me oedere ut articulum fidei ut istud demonstraret michi in lege Dei. Et magister: Non vis tu credere, nisi demonstraremus tibi iurare in lege Dei. Tune dixi: Non euro quiscunque michi demonstraverit, et credam, quia omnino oportet me, ex quo fides ex auditu, auditus autem per verbum Christi, audire illud a Christo et ab

Et missus in carcerem fui per tres dies in magna tribulacione et affliczione spiritus super illo iuramento intoxicato, nesciens quodammodo quid facerem, si episeopus non teneret veritatem pacti in illo iuramento. Et Deua pater quoddammodo dereliquit me, ut postea revocaret me. Et pater mendacii inmiscuit falsas calidas temptaciones ut me ad falaitatem.31 In magnis angustiis clamavi ad patrem luminum ut confortaret me et deliberaret a meia tribulacionibus, qui confortavit eeripuit Danielem de 'lacu leonum. Et dixi: Pater, ista causa tua et tu scis, licet non sum dignua vivere super terram tuam pro multitudine iniquitatum meam, quod sequitur in ista cauaa; desideravi voluntatem tuam implere, et si in isto deliqui, aut detestabilia delicta a iuventutis mee aunt in causa et ignorancia. Ideo exaudi me pater et delicta iuventutis mee et tu secundom miflericordiam tuam memento mei semper et eripe me de manu pecatoris contra legem agentis et ioiqui. Sed anima mea a voluntate tueatur M que tue voluntari contrariatur. Et dulcis pater videns afflic tionem memor fuit testimonii, ubi dicit: Clamavit ad me etc.," et si in finem permanerit, glorificabo eum. Et ex sua gracia reduxit ad memoriam pactom et modum pacti com milite sicut preacribitur ** et quomodo numquam oogitavi nee in mentem ascendit, et nunquam habui voluntatem ad iurandum illud iuramentum, sed iuramentum limitatum a milite. Et exultavi in Domino. Et dilatatum est cor meum in Deo Jeau meo qui eripuit animam meam inmaculatam ab isto iuramento iniquissimo, anima eorum sicut dolenter timeo turpissime maculata, quia, ut ait prophetis : Quoniaiam absconderunt miiohi in interita laqueum sui, supervacue exprobraverunt aninnun meam. Veniat illi laqueus quem ignorat, et capcio quam abscondit apprehendat eum ; et in laqueum oadat in id ipsum. Tamen autem anima mea exaltabitur [sic] in Domino et delectabitur super
salutari suo. M Ideo benedictus Deua et pater domini nostri Jesu Christi pater miseriordiarum et Deus tocius consolacionis, qui consolatur nos in omni ferribulacione nostra, quia Respicie filii nacionum hominum, dicit Sapiens, et scitote, quia nullus speravit in Domino et si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; glorioso enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est. Nuno cantemus Domino ; gloriose enim magnificatus equum M et ascensorem eius proicit in mare. Fortitudo mea et laus mea dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante procespum. Et audivi a legistda quod si quis accusatus in iudicio habeat diem limitatam nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante quod accusatus non tenetur oomparere sine novo processu, et quoddammodo contentatus quod dies ille pertransit et proxima domina dominus et factus est michi in salutem orucis. Turn karissime contdgit quod dies assummacionis ad comparendum coram episcofo pertransit nullo in iudicio sedente nee contdnuante, quia nullus speravit in Domino e t si confusus est, permansit in mandatis eius et derelictus est.
sum declarator, nee acio declarare, dixi; tamen si volueritia mi>ii prestare biblam, 
fdem meam volo acribere libenter. Et recepit acripturnem et recesait. Poatea in die 
Lune vel Martis ante featum Cinerum ductus sum ante con spec turn albi canonici 
cum illo magistro fratre suprascripto et magister habuit verba et pluriadixit, 
innuendo41 quod ex quo non esaem olericua approbatua debeber conauli et erudiri 
secundum clericos approbatos. Pro certo, dixi," paratus sum erudiri a quocunque 
secundum legem Dei, quia ut AugustLnus dicit: Si alicud noxium eat i bi dampnatur, 
si utile est, i bi inventur, et habundancius i bi quam unquam alibi. Et albus canonicus 
valde modestua ut apparuit michi dixit: Dominc Bicacre scribitur in lege canonum et 
ititulatur Salomoni qui dicit: Fili mi: Ne ininneris prudencie tue. Et idem : Fili mi, 
ne sis sapiens apud te ipsum. Pro oerto ut spero quia 4 l si alicud dixero ex proprio 
capite, tune contra conaulium Salomonis ago. Nichil dicam vel dixi ex proprio capite 
vlen aensu. Et magister dixit: Tota ecclesia credit quod eakaristia post consecracionem 
non eat pania sed est i bi verum corpus Domini. Ostendatiff minVn^ dixi, illam 
negatdvam in lege Domini et paratus sum credere. 0, dixit, bio est pincerna episcopi 
et tu non via credere quod sot pincerna episcopi ni fi videria in manibus eiua clavea 
pincerne. Vos estis magister, dixi; allegaretis legem Dei pro vobia non frivola. Non 
eat, dixi, credere de subatancia fidei quod sot pincerna episcopi, tibi crederem. Pro 
certo, dixit magister, eat bonum argumentum: Sacramentum eat corpus Domini, ergo 
non eat panis. Et multe sunt raciones ad probandum quod non ait pania, quia 
dominus apparens in rubo Moysi dixit ei: Prince earn a te et proieeit et versa est in 
eolubrum. Sic, dixit, ille panis versus eat in corpus Domini. Intelligendo, dixi, quod 
ille panis versus eat in corpus Domini; sed nee scriptura nee doctores dicunt quod 
substancia virge fait annichilata vel destructa sed conversa in eolubrum. Eoce, dixit 
merger, quomodo dicit, quod virga non est versa in eolubrum. Non taliter dico, 
dixi. Et dixi albo canonicco, Eogo, domine, teatdfeticis, si i ta di^erim. Non dixiftis 
ita, dixit. Dixique: Domine, dicam vobis qualiter senioio in fide eukaristie. Et dixi 
semper eodem modo sicut prius. Et scio, dixi, qoad totus popalas laycalia ita credidit. 
Et credidi a iuventute mea quod ista hostda oonsecrata alba et rotunda est verum 
corpus Christi in forma panis et usque ad mortem si Deus voluerit vol> creder. Et 
eio credidit magnus Augustinua qui dicit: Quod videtur panis est, quod autem fides 
postulat instruenda panis corpus Christi est. Et cancellarius dixit: Greditds quod 
hostia consecrata inter manus sacerdotifi sicut iam utitur ecclesia sit verum corpus 
Christi. Credo, dixi, quod istud sacramentum est tam bonum sicut sacramentum 
quod Christus tenuit in manibus et dedit discipulis suis. Et ille dixit: Bogo vos 
Bicharde ut oonsenciatis episcopo. Turn dies appropinquat in quo episcopus sedebit 
in iudicio. Et dicit quod habet legem suficientem ad iudicandum vos pro heretdoo. 
Bene, dixi, In nomine Domini. Deus scit quod nichil aliud dixi preter legem Dei vel 
quod potest expresse fundari in scriptura sacra. Et si voluerit me pro isto iudicare 
heretdoum libenter sustinebo. Transeamus, inquit magister ; incorrigibilis, ut quid 
stabimus cum eo ? Et recesserunt ad prandium, ego autem ad oarcerem. Et post 
quindenam iterum sine assumcione ductus sum ante episcopum sedentem in 
cathedral iuxta ignem ; et ante ignem super formula sedebat miles cum quo tractavi, 
et duo magistri nuns Paris predicato et alias prior Augustinas Novioastrt et 
archidiaconus Donelnie et monachus qui vocatur Borne et familia episcope ad 
dorsum eorum, ego autem inter eos et ignem. Et cancellarius stana ante episcopum 
dixit: Magister, dominus meus querit a te, si adhuc voledris scribere intencionem 
tuam et respondere ad quamh'bet vel ad qaemlibet punctum istius scripture. Et dixi 
episcopo, Domine, si volueritia miuhi agere communem legem, non habetis contra 
me alicuem processum. Et narravi eis causam sicut prescripturnur.45 Et tuno
demonstraverunt michi illud iniquum iuramentum, asserentes quod tenerem illam scripturam per virtutem illius iuramenti. Pro certo, dixi, nunquam intendebam nee unquam cogitavi illud iuramentum sed iuramentum pactd limitatum in corde meo ab isto reverendo mihi; quod fuit istud quod teneor obedere legi Dei in quantum ad me pertinet, et istud paratus sum tenere. Et finaliter dixi in eodem tempore huic venerabih’ militi cum quo tractavi quod nunquam iurarem iuramentum; et vos dixistis mihi in eodem tempore: Non dixistis: lures tu iuramentum in corde tuo limitatum. Istud miles negavit. Dii ei, Deus scit quod ita fuit. Et dixi episcopo Domine: Eodem tempore dixi vobis quod iuramentum pactd in corde meo limitatum a milite, hoc volo si volueritis iurare; et vos dixistis: lures tuno. Tune et ego credidi. Deus scit quod non recuperetis a me nisi iuramentum pactd in corde meo limitatum, sicut et pactum voluit. Et similiter dixi.’ Miles hoc dixit mihi, Si vellem iurare illud iuramentum in corde meo limitatum, ut non peterem questiones, vos solveretis me ab alio iuramento; si dixit, dixit miles. In quo disorepat istud iuramento a tuo? dixit. In toto, dixi; et pactum non tenetur in aliquo. Et dixi: Magnum peccatum est homini in dolo tractare cum fratre suo. Et miles sun -exit: Dicis tu, dixi, quod ego tractavi tecum in dolo? Non sio dico, dixi, quia nesoio cor vestrum, neque novi quare dicerem' sio de vobis, sed ego generaliter quod est magnum peccatum ouicunque in dolo tractare cum fratre HUO. Tuno episopus dixit: -Bicarde, tu non potes demonstrare quin tu iurasti istud iuramentum quia hie ait duo notarii et plures alii qui volunt iurare quod non coactus sed libere iurasti istud iuramentum. Pro certo dixi, si scirent modum pacti et timerent Deum, non testificarent contra me. Ideo invoco Deum cum omnibus sanctis suia ut ipsi testdficent michi in die judicii, quod nunquam cogitavi nee fuit intencio mea nee unquam ascendit iurare illud iuramentum. Et Bome dixit michi: Bicarde ne invenias falsum pro pudore ecce omnes 48 testificantur contra te. Et dixi: Si dicerem quod iurasaem falsisnimns essem, quia Deua cum omnibus sanctis scit quod nunquam cogitavi illud. Et plura alia habuimus, et finaliter de sacramento altaris tenui me semper in eodem sensn aiout prescribitur. Tandem dixit michi episcopus: Bicarde, tu fore es in relapsu, ideo caveas. Dixi : Domine, vos potestia mecum facere quidquid volueritis. Et monestavit me primo, secundo et tercio, ut scriberem intentionem meam ad illam scripturam ; et non respondi ei verbum. Et denuciavit me excommunicatum et iam assumavit me nt crastino comparerem eodem tempore et loco. Et in crastino apparui coram eo sedente in cathedra et Parys frater cum arohidiacono sedebat super formulam, alii tres recesserunt et populus domus ad dorum eorum ; et ego steti iuxta ignem. Et cancellarius stetit coram episopus. Et cancellarius dixit: Bicarde, dominus meus petit a te, utrum adhuc voluerie scribere intentionem tnam. Et si volueris, dominus meus erit graciasua. Et ego dixi episco: Domine, si placet, per legem incipiatis contra me novum processum. Et ille Paris dixit: Bicarde, miror quod nullus adderet ad legem Dei, quia tune tota ecclesia errat, quia ecclesia addidit ad verba consecracionis sanguinis ’ misterium fidei,' quia nee Christua nee Paulus qui solummodo docuerunt ilia verba iatraa aacramenti non docuerunt ilia verba. Et legebat in biblia Matthei, Luce et Marci cum Paulo. Ecce, inquit, Bicarde; hio non inveniuntur ilia verba. Pro certo, dixi; Paulus habet ilia verba in pluribus locis. Non eat ita, dixit. Scio bene quod ic, dixi. Tamen oportet nos concipere quod lex Dei non atat prinicipaliter in caracteribua, scilicet in pergamen et incausto, quia tune esset lex Dei falsissima, quia multe biblie sunt libri falsissimi. Et finaliter tuno lex Dei faceret finem cum isto mundo; quod est contra verbum Christi qui elicet, Celum et terra tranabunt, verba autem mea non transibunt. Et scio quod aoeiaencia Chriati non maioratur nee minuitur per verba ilia, ideo non est addicio. Et rogavi fratrem, ut legerem Paulum in eodem loco parum
poat, quomodo ipse tractat de sacramento dicens illud ease panem. Non, dixit episcopus; est nimis longum legere Paulum nunc, quod istud sacramentum non est aliud nisi corpus Domini. Et magnus Augustinus, dixi, dicit: Quod videtur panis est. Et archidiaconus dixit: Eat panis spiritalia. Quomodo posoit ease spiritualiter, dixi, quam corpus Domini. Et recepi atramen in manu mea et dixi: Si posaible esset quod ChriatuB personaliter hie ataret et diceret: Hoo est corpus meum, numquid non crederem hoc esse corpus suum? Et episcopus dixit: Pro certo pertinentier defendit erforem suum. Tuno dixit cancellarius: Legatis senteneiam. Do tibi vocem meam, quia impeditus sum per infirmitatem. Et cancellarius dixit: Bicarde, tu dixisti michi quod nesciebas declarare intentionem tnam. NOB tamen scimus quod sic, quia nos habemus de declaeratione tua. Et sic dedit sententiaem excommunicando me maiori excommunicatione et fore hereticum et continuare in carcere, usque providerunt tempus ad degradandum me, et omnia bona mea tam mobilia quam immobilia oonfiscari. Et sic non obstante protestacione mea hereticarunt me; et ut michi apparret, absque processu, et pro illo nescio facere, nee teneor facere. Et fundat ae super iuramento quod nunquam cogitavi iurare et tamen, ut michi apparret, si in voluntate mea iurassem illud iuramentum cum per legem non teneor ad illud obligari, quia in principio illius iuramenti scributur: Ego Eicardua Wicz, Virgioniaenis diocesis $., et ego non sum talis, quia non sum illius dioceais, ergo etc. QuiB unquam audivit tale indicium mirabile? Et in fine iudicii appellavi papam, et dixerunt: Tarde venisti. In nomine Domini, dixi. Et frater Parys dixit: Per Deum; Deus [sic] fecit maiores caritatem, iudicando te hereticum, quam si mille pauperes ad prandium cibasset. Et quid, dixi, pro quo essem hereticus? Nichil alius dixi preter legem Dei nostri. Pro certo si possibile esset Christum personaliter coram vobis stare, iudicaretis ipsum hereticum, sicut et me. Et dixi populo: Eogo testificetis quod hec est fides mea quam sexies coram eis dixi: Credo quod venerabile sacramentum est verum corpus Christd et verus sanguis in forma panis. Et sic misit me in carcerem. In quo continuo etc. habena cibum et potum competenter, gracias agens Deo. Et bonus Deus noster ex sua gracia visitavit me per magnam strictitudinem in ventre, per quam Habebo et habui magnam penam aliqiuo purgare ventrem meum, quia aliqiuo per novem dies non habui quantitatem unius purgacionia et emeraudes teneurunt me bis et sanguinarunt quodammodo fortiter, et sic quod pudor est dicere. Tamen oportet me ita facere vel non vivere et purgacio mea est dura sicut purgacio eius. Ista sunt secretae mea. Ideo si placet vobis secrete cufttodite ea; non plura scribo vos et mittatis Bhytebi ut secrete legatur magistro meo de BalknoUe et Bynkfeld, cum videritis tempus, et salutetis me Johanna Maya cum uxore sia ista salutatione, ut quietam et tranquillam agant in omni pietate et castitate. Hoc enim bonum est et acceptum coram Deo salvare nostro, qui det eis graciam per verbum eius fieri filii eiusdem, attendentes sicut filii karissimi verbis eius ubi dicit: Et si patrem familias Bhytebi vocaverint, quanto magis domesticaea elua. Et alibi: Si mundus vos odit,scitote quia priorem me vobis odio habuit. Si de mundo fuissetia, mundus quod suum erat digeret. Bed quia de mundo non estis, sed ego elegi vos de mundo, propter aea odit vos mundus. Mementote ergo sermoni mei quern ego dixi vobis : Non est igitur servus maior domino suo ; me persecuti sunt et vos perseverunt. Ista verba fidelissima sunt. Ideo si voluerint esse de familia. Dei, exponant se pro Deo Salvatore suo ad humiliater paciendum exprobracia et detecciones et huiusmodi scandalata, et respiciant Christum patrem familia'm ante oculos mentis penas quodammodo infinitas pro peccatis nostris patientem. Et ista non nocebunt sed- inducent animam exultantem et Dei benediccionem, ut ille magister testatur: Beati eritis cum vos oderint homines et exprobrafverint] et eiecerint nomen vestrum
tamquam Trmlnm propter filium hominis. Gaudete et exultate quoniam merces vestra copiosa eat in oelo. Bogo salutetis me filie eiusdem, et ut servet virginitatem sponso suo Christo, non mundo, quia si glorvretur propter virginitatem laudari a mundo servat eam mundo, non Christo BUO sponso pulcherrimo. Si glorietur laudari a sponso Christo pulcherrimo propter puritatem virginitatis, virgo est Ohristi, servans se Christo sponso suo et non mundo. Et sic via illius via angelica, et ut spondus dicit: Angeli eius semper vident faciemi mei, qui in celis est, quia puritas mentis servata a corrupcione inimici est angelus, per quem videt Patram et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, unum' Deum, residentem in anima quasi regem in solio suo. Ideo decrepeter die ao nocte Deum infinite providencie, ut si sibi placet eam corporaliter despensare ei sponsum providere, quia ex quo ipse est infinite formositas quis potest resistere ei? Ne debet sibi in sponsum quenunque voluerit, et cum sit infinite sapiencie, quis meliorem scit sibi eligere sponsum, et ex quo est infiniti amoris et ex amore semper disponit optimum sue creature, ideo dicat anime sue, videlicet dicit cum Psalmo: Spera in Domino et fac bonitatem et inhabita terrain,80 et pasceris in diviciis eius, Delectare in Domino, et dabib tibi petitionem cordis tui. Eevela Domino viam tuam et spera in ipso, et ipse faciet ut non incidat in carnalia desideria que militant adversus animam." Quia super eos, ut dicit angelos, qui ita conunia susoipiunt, ut Deum a se et sua mente excludant et sue libidini ita vacent, sicut equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus, habet demonium potestatem. 81 Ideo dicat cum Sara: Domine, tu sos quia non luxurie causa accipio sponsum sed solum propter posteritatisM dileccionem ut videat filios filiorum suorum pacem super M Israhel in secula seculorum. Amen. Et consulutetis me fratri meo Boberto Herl qui in causa Dei et quodammodo pro me suscipit [fol. 98b] obprobria, quia dictum fuit mihi circa Quadragesimam, quod cancellarius episcopi ad Novumcastrum venit ad explorandum Lollardos, et invenit unum ibi quodammodo magistrum Lollardorum, cui nomen Robertus, et ad istum venisset ad me visitandum et mecum sederet ad me confortandum. Sed ut spero Deus pro se melius disponit. Disponat igitur se ad imitandum dulcissimam vitam Iean Christi. Et dicit cum Apostolo : Gracia Dei sum id quod sum et gracia eius in me vacua non fuit; ne perdat graciam quam pater celestas ex suo magnu amore condonavit; quia cum pater noster dedit filium suum onigenitum*4 ad maximas penas et obprobria propter amorem quern habuit ad ipsum et ad nos miseros, quomodo posset esse quod pater noster, dando quemquam ad penas et obprobria et huiusmodi in isto mondo miserrimo, ubi vita ista comparata vitae celestis pocius diceretur mors quam vita, quin ex thesauro suo magne dileccionis diliget ista diligentibus. Bespiciat igitur quomodo terrigene desiderant partem M de testimonio mortuorum, ita celigene de testimonio Domini dominorum. Sed fons omnifl thesauri non legavit in testamento suo dilectis scolaribus prosperitatem mundanam vel secularia desideria, sed penas, afflictiones, flagallaciones, eiecoiones a populo, similiter mortem ponderosam, quia ipsum deit in testamento ano, Tradent enim vos in conciliis etc. per 3candala et maliloquift, et ante regea et presides ducemini propter me in testimonium illis. Et alibi: Absque synagogia faciant voa per excommunicaciones ; sed venit hora ut omnis qui interificet vos arbitetur obsequium se prestare Deo, et hec faciant vobis, quia non noverant patrem neque me. Ideo dicat, Quam dulcia faucibus meis eloqnia tua ; super mel ori meo,57 quia ad ista sequitur vita eterna. Non ipse Christua testatuir dicens, Vos estis qui permansiatis mecum in temptacionibus meis: et aequeit, Dispono voa, aicet dispouuit mihi pater meua regnum, ut edatis et bibatis auper mensam mean in regno meo. Et alibi, Beati, qui persecucionem paciuntur propter iusticiam, quoniam ipsorum est regnum celorum. Beati eritis cum maledixerint vobis hominea et
persecuti vos fuerint et dixerint omne malum adversum voa mencientes, propter me. Gaudete et exultate quoniam merces vestra copiosa eat in celis. Ideo in finem sequamur Christum ducem milicie acolarium suorum attendentes doctrine magistri dicentis : Qui vult poat me venire abneget etc. Qui amat animam snam, perdet earn. Et qui perdiderit animam propter me, inveniet earn in eterna vita manentem cum Christo rege regmn per infinita secula seculorum Amen.

Et salutetia me Laudens et Greme cum uxore aua et dicatia Grene ne oblique agat, quia duo aunt que oedit Dens, divitem et mendacem et pauperem superbum, quia non habitabit in medio domua dei qui facit superbiam. Et aalutatis me matri vestre cum filia eiusdem, uxore vestra, omnibua salutacionibus premuais in vitam eternam et perpetuam benedictionem. Et salutetia me omnibus dilectia Dei in osculo pacia, et oretis pro me ut Deus ex sua magna miaericordia dirigat vias mea ad pereaeverandum in finem, quia qui perseveraverit usque in finem, hie salvus erit. Similiter rogo voa ut velitis reapicere in parva et atra nauca; M et ibidem invenietis tres quaternos continentia quatuor evangelia in uno, et ecribitur in textu Matthei, Marci, Luce et Johanna cum rubeo incausto et in auperiori margine : Prima pars, secunda pars, tercia pars et cutem M cum rubeo incauato. Et similiter duas proprietates tractantes de iuaticia iore continentes circa duodecim vel tredecim vel quatuordecim capitula. Et primum capitulum incipit in tercio vel in quarto folio M et tractat de iusticia et iure, et in primo foho quaterni et secundo eat recapitulacio capitulorum. Et prestetis michi illos quinque quaternos ob amorem Dei viventda et si caritas orget voa et habueritis equum, potestis portare illos quaternos ad unum presbyterum commorantem quodammodo iaxta ecclesiam aclude [sic] sancti Andree, qui ut credo vocatur Henricus de Topcliff, quia ipse habet fratrem in Topcliff qui desponaut sorori domini Wilhelmi Corp. Et iate presbyter si potuerit faciet ut habeam, et sic quidquid volueritis ad me Si voa non potestis sibi venire, conducatis aerum Grene, ut ipse sapienter veniat ad sacerdotem predictum ; et si presbyter predictus mittat vobis aliquid, ex suo capita mittet, ffoL 99b] non ex meo. Et sic similiter mittatia aibi quidquid voluerit et non michi et similiter prestetis mihi quadraginta denarios et recipiatiff a fraeres. Et si non potestis invenire illos quatemos, invenietis in alia cista quinque libros Moysi vel Salomonis scriptos in papiro de manu vestra propria ut mihi appareat; pratesismini intuitus caritatis. Rogo formetis argamenta 61 et mittatis ad sacerdotem predictam sapienter. Rogo VOB custodiatis ista snb consilio et ne reveletis nisi eis, qui ob amorem mei volant- sub consilio custodire propter oastodes meos, licet ipsi sint iuvenes, quia nesciunt de isto usque videritia quid faciant mecum. Aliquic dicunt quod facient diem sollempnem.

Amen et cetera.
Bibliography of Work Cited

Primary Sources


Bateson, Mary, ed., George Ashby’s Poems (London: Kegan Paul for EETS, 1899)


Cicero, De Inventione, trans. by H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949)


Keynes, Simon, and Michael Lapidge, trans., *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London: Penguin, 1983)


Matthew, F. D., trans., ‘The Trial of Richard Wyche’, *English Historical Review*, 5.4 (1890)


Reames, Sherry, ed., *Middle English Legends of Women Saints* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institution Publications, 2003)


Stanbury, Sarah, ed., *Pearl* (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000)

Swinburn, Lillian, ed., *The Lanterne of Li3t* (London: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1917)


Wilkins, David., trans., *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, 4 vols (London, R. Gosling, 1737)


Secondary Sources


Aertsen, Jan, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012)


Ambühl, Rémy, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)


Bassett, Margery, ‘Newgate Prison in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 18.2 (1943), 233-46


Bellamy, John G., *Criminal Law and Society in Late Medieval and Tudor England* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984)

Ben-Amos, Dan, and Liliane Weissberg, (eds), *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999)


___ ‘Spiritual Kingship and the Baptismal Name in Traditional European Society’, in *Studies on the Personal Name in Late Medieval England and Wales*, ed. by Dave Postles and Joel Thomas Rosenthal (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), pp. 115-46
Besserman, Lawrence, *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979)


---


Campbell, Kirsty, *The Call to Read: Reginald Peacock’s Books and Textual Communities* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010)


Carruthers, Mary, ‘The Poet as Master Builder and Locational Memory in the Middle Ages’, *New Literary History*, 24 (1993), 881-904


The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

‘How to Make a Composition: Memory Craft in Late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages’, in *Memory: History, Theories and Debates*, ed. by Susanna Radstone and Bill Schwarz (Fordham, NY: Fordham University Press, 2010), pp. 15-29


Monastic Spaces and Their Meanings: Thirteenth Century English Cistercian Monasteries (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001)

Imprisonment in the Medieval Religious Imagination, c. 1150-1400 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)


Davis, Isabel, *Writing Masculinity in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)


Dean, Trevor, *Crime in Medieval Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 2001)


Dunbabin, Jean, *Captivity and Imprisonment in Medieval Europe, 1000-1300* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002)


____ *Remembering Boethius: Writing Identity in Late Medieval French and English Literatures* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012)


Fletcher, Christopher, Richard II: Manhood, Youth and Politics, 1377-99 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)


_____ ‘The Best Place in the World’: Imaging Urban Prisons in Medieval Italy’, in Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400-1500: Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space, ed. by Caroline Goodson, Anne E. Lester and Carol Symes (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 263-78


Herbert McAvoy, Liz, Medieval Anchoritisms: Gender, Space and the Solitary Life (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2011)


Hill, Carole, Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010)
‘St. Anne and her Walsingham Daughter’, in Walsingham in Literature and Culture from the Middle Ages to Modernity, ed. by Dominic Janes and Garry Waller (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 99-112

Hiscock, Andrew, Reading Memory in Early Modern Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)


Home, Gordon, Mediaeval London (London: Ernest Ben Limited, 1927)


Jasper, Detlev, and Horst Fuhrmann, Papal Letters in the Early Middle Ages (Washington, WA: Catholic University of America Press, 2001)


Johnson, Richard Freeman, Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005)


Karnes, Michelle, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011)


Kruger, Steven, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)


Lewis, Lucy, ‘The Identity of Margaret in Thomas Usk’s *Testament of Love*’, *Medium Aevum*, 68.1 (1999), 63-72


____ *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013)


Little, Katherine C., *Confession and Resistance: Defining the Self in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006)


____ ‘Teaching in the “Scole of Christ”: Law, Learning, and Love in Early Lollard Pacifism’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 90.3 (2004), 405-38


Marston, Edward, *Prison: Five Hundred Years of Life Behind Bars* (Surrey: The National Archives, 2009)


Matsuda, Takami, *Death and Purgatory in Middle English Didactic Poetry* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1997)


McHardy, A. K., ‘*De Heretico Comburendo, 1401*’, in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997), pp. 112-26

McIntosh, Marjorie, *Poor Relief in England, 1350-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)


_____ ‘Heresy, Orthodoxy and Vernacular English Religion, 1480-1525’, *Past and Present*, 186.1 (2005), 47-80


_____ *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)


_____ *Translations of Authority in Middle English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)


_____ *Ethics and Eventfulness in Middle English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)


Neal, Derek G., *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008)


Phelpstead, Carl, ‘‘Th’ende is every tales strengthe’: Contextualising Chaucerian Perspectives on Death and Judgement’, in *Chaucer and Religion*, ed. by Helen Phillips (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010), pp. 97-110


Raskolnikov, Masha, ‘Confessional Literature, Vernacular Psychology, and the History of the Self in Middle English’, *Literature Compass*, 2 (2005), 1-20


Reeves, Andrew, ‘Teaching the Creed and Articles of Faith in England, 1215-1281’, in *A Companion to Pastoral Care in the Late Middle Ages (1200-1500)*, ed. by Ronald J. Stansbury (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 41-72


Richardson, Malcolm, ‘The Ars dictaminis, the Formulary and Medieval Epistolary Practice’, in *Letter Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies*, ed. by Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell (South Carolina, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), pp. 52-66


Rubin, Miri, Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)


Salih, Sarah, Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2001)


Saul, Nigel, Richard II (Yale, CT: Yale University Press, 1997)


Scattergood, V. J., Reading the Past: Essays in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996)


“‘Trewe Men’: Pastoral Masculinity in Lollard Polemic’, in *Masculinities and Femininities in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by Frederick Keifer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 117-30


Skeat, W. W., ‘Thomas Usk and Ralph Higden’, *Notes & Queries*, 10 (1904), 245


Spivey Ellington, Donna, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001)


Tancke, Ulrike, ‘Bethinke The Selfe’ in Early Modern England: Writing Women’s Identities (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010)


Thierry, Daniel, Polluting the Sacred: Violence, Faith and the ‘Civilising’ of Parishioners (Boston: Brill, 2009)

Thompson, John J., ‘Bagpipes and Patterns of Conformity in Late Medieval England’, in Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings, ed. by Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 221-30


Tilmans, Karin, Frank van Vree and J.M. Winter, (eds), Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe, ed. by (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010)


Turner, Marion, ““Certaynly His Noble Sayenges Can I Not Amende”: Thomas Usk and Troilus and Criseyde’, Chaucer Review, 37.1 (2002), 26-39


Ullmann, Walter, The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966)

Van der Slice, Austin, ‘Elizabethan Houses of Correction’, Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 45 (1936-37), 45-67


Watson, Nicholas, ‘Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409’, *Speculum*, 70.4 (1995), 822-64


Wickham Legg, J., ‘On an Inventory of the Vestry of Westminster Abbey’, *Archaeologia* 52.1 (1890), 195-286


Williams, Howard, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)


**Internet Sources**

*De Hereticorum Comburendo* (1401)
http://www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/heretico.html

Internet Medieval Sourcebook : Fordham University
http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook.asp

*Middle English Dictionary*
http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/

*Rhetorica Ad Herennium*
http://www.utexas.edu/research/memoria/Ad_Herennium_Passages.html