Images, Icons, and Texts: Illustrated English Literary Works
from the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer
by

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photocopying or other means, without the permission of the author.
Illustrations accompanying medieval literary works have often been disparaged as “crude” or judged as inaccurate “translations” of the text. These determinations, based on modern expectations of what constitutes good “art,” indicate how we judge past value systems according to those of the present. In the Middle Ages, concepts about the function and the subject matter of art derive from the theology of the Incarnation and are realized in illustrated English vernacular productions even in the late medieval period. Because God became man, the reasoning went, images could be made of his human form. Images manifest the Incarnation and suggest divinity. Incarnational theology is, to a greater or lesser degree, the basis for the images in early and late medieval English poetic works.

Several significant illustrations examined in this thesis help to illuminate incarnational theology and suggest the goal of life’s pilgrimage for the medieval reader. This study clarifies for the first time a major critical misunderstanding about the relationship of the inscribed vernacular poem and the main sculpted panel of the Ruthwell Cross to show that the triumphant divinity and suffering humanity of Christ are featured in both. Fascination with the power of the Incarnate Word is also highlighted in the Cædmon Manuscript, which recreates Genesis from a late Anglo-Saxon historical perspective. A new interest in biblical authors led, in the thirteenth century, to the first author portrait of an English poet, that of the inspired Laȝamon, shown at work within the historiated initial at the beginning of the Brut. The first miniature in the early fourteenth-century Auchinleck Manuscript makes the distinction between a pagan idol and the image of the Incarnate Christ on a crucifix. Responding to the image controversies provoked by the iconophobia of the Lollards in the late fourteenth century, the Vernon Manuscript miniatures prove the efficacy of devotion to holy images while the Pearl Manuscript’s visual prefaces and epilogues, which do not portray divine figures directly, nevertheless create a metatextual narrative of the journey to the New Jerusalem. The decorative features of the Ellesmere Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales aestheticize the penitential way to the Jerusalem celestial for its aristocratic audience and present Chaucer as a literary icon for their
edification. Close attention to all parts of these works shows that the visual elements operate together with the words to incarnate the "text" for the medieval reader.

Examiners

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I dedicate this work with love and gratitude to my husband

Wayne Dennis Hilmo
Here you can look upon the face of the divine majesty drawn in a miraculous way....
And there are almost innumerable other drawings. If you look at them carelessly and
casually and not too closely, you may judge them to be mere daubs rather than careful
compositions. You will see nothing subtle where everything is subtle. But if you take the
trouble to look very closely, and penetrate with your eyes to the secrets of the artistry....

(on "A book Miraculously Written," from Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*)
I

Reading Medieval Images

Introduction

The creative energy generated by the composition of poetic works in the newly fashionable English vernacular both in the Anglo-Saxon and again in the late medieval period spread into the visual sphere when some of these texts were combined with extensive pictorial programs—from the Ruthwell Cross poem to the poetic narrative in the Caedmon Manuscript\(^1\) and, later, from the author portrait introducing Laȝamon’s *Brut*\(^2\) to the illustrations of the Auchinleck,\(^3\) Vernon,\(^4\) and *Pearl*\(^5\) Manuscripts, and finally the Ellesmere Manuscript\(^6\) of the *Canterbury Tales*. In this study I will explore the function of the images in relation to the poetic texts in these works. While no one doubts the importance of the literary texts, and few would now question consideration given to individual manuscript versions of a particular text, too little serious attention has been paid to the illustrative material. Even those recent critics who have shown an interest have, with rare exceptions, felt compelled to note the inaccuracy of many of the images, presupposing that their purpose is to reiterate the text by rendering faithful pictorial translations of it, and to pass judgments about their artistic “quality.”

In her astute summary of prevailing methodologies in art history, Suzanne Lewis quotes Foucault in observing that we value or devalue art according to how closely it

\(^1\)Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11.

\(^2\)London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A. ix.

\(^3\)Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1.


\(^5\)London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A. X, Article 3.

\(^6\)San Marino, Calif., Huntington Library, MS Ellesmere 26 C 9.
articulates the "political and cultural issues of our own time." She suggests that in order to understand the concerns of medieval designers it is more useful to turn to "questions of representations, narrative, and reception" than to continue the traditional "search for origins, filiations, and stylistic definitions." What images were expected to represent, how they functioned, for what purpose and for whom they were made are crucial matters which need to be examined.

Demonstrating the chasm between modern and medieval conceptions of the function of art and, incidentally, the cognitive nature and extent of the "reading" process, are the assumptions in the twelfth-century treatise De Diversis Artibus. In this medieval "how to" manual on the arts addressed to young craftsmen, Theophilus says that he intends his efforts for their advancement "to the increase of the honor and glory of His name." His own reward would be the prayers of his students whenever they make use of his work. While this is a typical medieval statement of aims, it cannot be dismissed entirely as a mere formula because it gives the cultural, or more specifically, religious context in which artists and writers worked and had their being. While advancing the immediate interests of both maker and audience, the ultimate goal was the salvation of all concerned. It provides a timeless metaphysical framework and referent for temporal efforts. Further, Theophilus mentions that his book is to be read repeatedly to commit it to memory (thereby fixing the information in the reader's mind)—and the attitude with which it is to

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8Lewis, Reading Images 1.

9Theophilus: De Diversis Artibus / Theophilus: The Various Arts, trans. C. R. Dodwell (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961) 4. Both the translations in my text and the Latin in my notes are from Dodwell, unless otherwise noted. See also Theophilus: On Divers Arts, The Foremost Medieval Treatise on Painting, Glassmaking and Metalwork, trans. and introd. by John G. Hawthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith (New York: Dover, 1979). Their Introduction to this earliest extant manual by a practicing artist endorses C. R. Dodwell's suggestion that Theophilus Presbyter was a Benedictine monk (xvi). They also support the verbal tradition that he was a metalworker named Roger of Helmarhausen (xvi-xvii).
be embraced—"with an ardent love."\(^{10}\) In appealing for this feat of memory on the part of his "ethical" young craftsman, to make a local application of John Dagenais' term for the medieval reader,\(^{11}\) Theophilus assumes that the student will extend into real life the moral imperative to use his talents and, unlike the merchant in the Gospel story (Matt. 25.18 and 24-31), to add to what he was given with interest.\(^{12}\) Theophilus refers all artistic activity to God who is its source.\(^{13}\) This accords with the medieval theory of authorship which

\(^{10}\)From Dodwell, *Theophilus: De Diversis Artibus 4: ardentis amore.* Dodwell translates this as "warm affection," but I have quoted Hawthorne and Smith, *Theophilus: On Divers Arts* 13, because it reflects the medieval approach more closely.

\(^{11}\)The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de Buen Amor (Princeton: UP, 1994). Rigo Mignani and Mario A. Di Cesare have translated the *Libro* in *The Book of Good Love* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1972). While Dagenais bases his thesis on this narrative compilation, the ethical framework within which he sees the medieval reader operating relates also to the spirit in which Theophilus hopes his readers will apply their knowledge, even if it does not pertain to the recipes per se. In a sense, however, no human activity in the Middle Ages was morally neutral. I have summarized some of the matter pertinent to my present discussion from his book. Where I refer to quotations or ideas specific to a certain page, I have enclosed the page numbers in brackets following the mention in my text. For the role of memory in connection with ethical reading see Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 156-88.

\(^{12}\)The version I have used throughout this study is *The Holy Bible*, the Douai and Rheims version (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1914). See Dodwell, *De Diversis Artibus* 2. Theophilus refers to the parable of the slothful man with the hidden talent in the prologues to the first and the third books, applying it literally and stressing thereby the importance of this justification and sanction of artistic activity as a spiritual enterprise. Concerning the idea that whatever the student can learn of the arts is bestowed by grace (in the Prologue to the third book), there is an insert in red in one of the manuscripts of this work, London, BL MS Harley 3915, thirteenth century: *Nota conformationem septem spirituum cum septem operum artibus*, as noted in Dodwell, *De Diversis Artibus* 62. In Hawthorne and Smith, *Theophilus: On Divers Arts* 78, this is translated as "Note the conformity between the Seven Spirits and the seven works of art." They observe that the insert is followed by a rubricated initial for each of the following seven paragraphs on the seven spirits (to which their modern translation has paid tribute with a special font and bolding). The Harley version demonstrates rather effectively the editing work of a medieval scribe.

\(^{13}\)From Dodwell, *De Diversis Artibus* 62: *Per spiritum sapientiae cognoscis a Deo cuncta creata procedere, et sine ipso nihil esse*, which he translates as "Through the spirit
refers all human efforts ultimately to the divine author (see my fourth chapter). By engaging in his artistic craft, the young reader, having acquired "participation" in the work of the divine artificer, can "attain a capacity for all arts and skills, as if by hereditary right." The fact that the theological perspective sanctioning artistic activity needs to be reaffirmed in a manual about methodology indicates the ever precarious position of the visual arts within the Hebraic-Christian tradition. The former restrictions about image-making tended to have a long afterlife even subsequent to hard-won justifications for the practice during the early centuries when the debates were politically current. It is also the sort of thing the modern reader tends to skim over somewhat uncomfortably in the search for the real substance of a work, but it is the transcendental framework within which medieval creative activity and audience response operated—and it is the added dimension which informs the pictorial programs of the illustrated vernacular manuscripts to be considered.

Although John Dagenais examines Juan Ruiz's *Book of Good Love* in relation to what he calls the individual "scriptum" or physical manuscript with its unique presentation, considering the act of reproducing a manuscript as an intimate act of reading (22), what he calls to our attention concerning the ethics of reading, which applies to texts as well as to images, accords remarkably well with the expectations Theophilus has of his students. Both Theophilus and Ruiz share common assumptions about their readers. As Dagenais points out, it is expected that medieval readers of discernment will become dynamically involved in the reading process (22), their trained memories helping them to make individual choices with respect to such activities as re-reading passages which seem relevant to them at any one time (one imagines Theophilus' students paying particular attention to memorizing sections pertinent to their own arts and reading at a level consonant with their understanding). Memory of the text is modified according to the subsequent experiences of the reader. Most important, the reading process is

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of wisdom, you know that all created things proceed from God, and without Him nothing is."

14From Dodwell, *De Diversis Artibus* 1.
transformative in that readers are to carry the process into real life and look at their own lives “anew” (7). This is still true in the fourteenth century in which even the uninformed lewed men who knew no Latyn could be led to good works through the fear instilled by The Prick of Conscience, a work introduced by a historiated initial in the Vernon Manuscript which I discuss in chapter 5 or, in the case of the nun Margaret Kirkeby for whom Richard Rolle translated the first fifty psalms, to the fyre of luf kindled by devoutly saying or singing the psalms. In the case of Ruiz’s fourteenth-century Spanish narrative poem, after considering the methods exemplified in his “how to” seduction manual, ethical readers could choose their own subsequent behavior by seeking the love of God or worldly love (the book presents mostly the latter). With a very medieval combination of piety and practicality Theophilus suggests to his ethical and industrious reader that, “through the spirit of godliness, you regulate with pious care the nature, the purpose, the time, measure and method of the work and the amount of the reward lest the vice of avarice or cupiditie steal in.”

While much of this spiritual dimension remained active in the sense that religious subjects continued to be depicted, many artistic works of the early Renaissance, especially in the north, reveal a much stronger interest in the glorification of the sensuous texture of an idealized and prosperous earthly existence. Such “empiricism in art” would have been viewed by many medieval readers as blocking faith, as Robert Deshman puts in his study

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15See the prologues to The Prick of Conscience lines 1, 11-12, and The English Psalter lines 1-5, both in The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520, eds. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, Ruth Evans (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999) 242-43 and 245 respectively. In the former, the most widely circulated Middle English poem, the reader or listener is led to hope for the joys of heaven only after considering the wretchedness of the human condition, the instability of the world, death, purgatory, doomsday, and the pains of hell. Quite different in tone, the latter, surviving in about 40 manuscripts indicating its wider secondary audience, begins with a long list of advantages to be gained from reading the psalms with love, including chasing away fiends, destroying the anguish of the soul, and creating a beauty of understanding.

16From Dodwell, De Diversis Artibus 63.
of corporeal and spiritual vision. Yet if we are to recover some sense of what it is that
the images in medieval manuscripts do, it may be necessary to be open to other
conceptions of what constitutes art. As I will show with respect to the visual programs
accompanying and shaping the reading of English vernacular poetic texts, both the earlier
condemnations of their quality and many of the later temperate reassessments following in
their wake appear to be a legacy of socially-constructed earlier nineteenth- and twentieth-
century standards of art criticism deriving ultimately from a post-Renaissance value
system. While I will discuss the function of the illustrations in relation to the poems they
interact with and shape, spanning the relevant periods of English vernacular activity from
the Anglo-Saxon to the late medieval periods, in the section below I will discuss only
modern criticisms of the illustrations of the Pearl and Ellesmere Manuscripts because they
are typical of modern evaluations, where they exist at all, of the others. As will be seen,
these criticisms focus on assumptions about artistic quality and the purpose of illustrative
pictures which reveal more about modern expectations than medieval ones. Historically
situated, they are not "wrong," but they allow little room for dealing with the theological
incarnational issues, for instance, which the artists struggled with in making
representations at all, especially for vernacular works which were accessible to a wider
audience.

"Modern" Readings of Illustrated Medieval Literary Works

The long-awaited release of the monumental two-volume survey of Later Gothic
Manuscripts: 1390-1490, an invaluable resource for all future academic study of
illustrated manuscripts of this period, demonstrates the propensities to which I have just
referred. Understandably, Kathleen Scott needed to limit her selection; accordingly she

17"Another Look at the Disappearing Christ: Corporeal and Spiritual Vision in

18Kathleen L. Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts: 1390-1490, 2 vols. (London:
Harvey Miller, 1996). The actual release date was May, 1997. Subsequent references in
my text to this work will by indicated by enclosing the volume number and page number,
respectively, in brackets.
chose for catalogue entries primarily manuscripts “of exceptional artistic quality,” a phrase that indicates the sort of commentary the reader can expect.

The *Pearl* Manuscript

Scott allows “a few” examples of manuscripts which are “of exceptional literary interest, even if the illustration was of moderate artistic quality” (1: 10). She includes a catalogue entry, for instance, for the *Pearl* Manuscript, Cotton Nero A. X, Article 3, “although it has pictorial work of average workmanship” (1: 10). This is at least a middle distance from Gollancz’s description of the illustrations as being of “crude workmanship.” She absolves the artist from charges of previous critics concerning his “proven lack of attention to the poems” on the “evidence that he received written or oral instructions” from somebody else, presumably a later owner of the manuscript (2: 67). No such evidence is offered since nothing certain is known about the circumstances of composition or which later owner this might be, making her argument somewhat circular and unsubstantiated. In Jennifer Lee’s estimation, the amateurish and unsophisticated (she also repeats the word “crude” more than once) illustrator responded to the entertainment value of the events and especially to the spiritual journey of each main character. This is modified by Sarah Horrall’s submission that “in a simplified form” the artist presented “the main elements of the stories” (the criticism about their lack of adaptation to the stories being “much exaggerated”). Scott advances the illustrator’s case by suggesting that he

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19 Scott, “Preface,” *Later Gothic Manuscripts* I. 7. The following two quotations are from the same page.


21 “The Illuminating Critic: The Illustrator of Cotton Nero A X.” *Studies in Iconography* 3 (1977): 19 and 44. (17-46) She does, however, conclude that his work “gives us the rare opportunity of seeing the first critical judgment of these poems, a medieval reader reacting to a medieval work” (44).

was a regionally based professional because of his knowledge of conventional techniques and use of pigments (2: 67). Against Sarah Horrall’s assertion that the figures are “clumsy,”23 and Jennifer Lee’s reference to the Pearl dreamer’s “awkward gestures,”24 Scott points to the “range of movement in gestures” (2: 67). She also notes that the artist was observant of “detail in nature,” although less happy is his inability “to deal with perspective.” Scott mentions among the “positive aspects” of the Pearl Manuscript that the tree branches “show depth through the application of yellow for the outer leaves and deep green for the inner surfaces” (Sarah Horrall had referred to the “meticulously drawn and carefully shaded leaves”25), while the “depth and setting of the bedroom scene” are “more than normally competent” (2: 67). She also regards the interior scenes as giving “an impression of depth through the placement of people behind tables or beds” (2: 67). Both layering and placement above or behind objects are common medieval ways of suggesting some depth and are quite different from the effects produced by methods employed in the Renaissance.26 While not as vitriolic as the earlier criticism iterated by R. S. and L. H. Loomis that the “infantile daubs” of this illustrator reached the “nadir of English illustrative art,”27 the more constructive approaches of these later critics have nevertheless been restrained by such wounding darts and ensnared into dealing each time with the issue of artistic quality.

Refreshingly, two very recent studies signal a new approach by taking the art seriously. They contribute a new understanding and appreciation of the picture cycle and explore the issue of visual literacy. Robert J. Blanch and Julian N. Wasserman have done a well-researched study featuring the artist’s use of the iconography of hands, relating this

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23Horrall, “Notes” 198.


26See my subsequent discussion on the Ellesmere MS.

to the poet’s conceptions. Paul F. Reicbardt, building on Jennifer Lee’s observation that the illustrator provided “the first critical judgment of these poems, a medieval mind reacting to a medieval work,” proceeds to look for a “coherence of content and design,” finding that some of the scenes do indeed “anticipate or recall other pictures in the sequence” (125), creating a “fifth text” (129). He suggests, among other things, the artist’s sensitivity to the numerological values in the poem, which he sees as key to the overall design and placement of the illustrations in the manuscript, the scene of Daniel at Belshazzar’s feast being central (133). Displacing the common assumption that the illustrations were made sometime after the text was copied, which he sees as based on the disparity between the perceived quality of the poem and pictures, he suggests that the artist might have begun work shortly after the scribe copied the text (137-38). This means, as I argue in my sixth chapter, that the Pearl artist’s restrained work might indicate a sensitivity to the issues raised in late fourteenth-century debates about image-making.

The Ellesmere Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales

If the Pearl miniatures have suffered neglect until the last few years due to negative assessments of their artistic quality, ironically the Ellesmere pilgrim portraits have suffered the same fate for a different reason. Richard K. Emmerson, quoting James Thorpe, refers to the Ellesmere’s reputation as “the most beautiful literary manuscript of its period, or perhaps of any period.” The overall magnificence of the decorative

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29 Lee, “The Illuminating Critic” 44.

30 Paul F. Reicbardt, “Several Illuminations, Coarsely Executed’: The Illustrations of the Pearl Manuscript,” Studies in Iconography 18 (1997): 120. Pages numbers of subsequent quotations are enclosed in brackets in my text.

31 San Marino, Calif., Huntington Library, MS Ellesmere 26 C9.

program of which these miniatures are part tends to create an unfocussed experience comparable to that of entering a Gothic cathedral. When these marginal illustrations have been considered more particularly, agreement about their function and quality has varied. The tendency to rank the two main artists according to quality has produced opposite assessments. Scott considers the first artist who made the majority of pictures (17 of them) the "least competent," while she sees the other as a "fine native representative of the International Style"; however, Emmerson mentions that the latter "is often considered inferior."

With respect to the rendering of the third dimension, Margaret Rickert points to the "rather rudimentary and conventional type of modeling" of the figures. Martin Stevens, on the other hand, enthusiastically concludes that the Ellesmere illustrators "brought to manuscript art a new, indeed revolutionary, style of naturalistic representation." Scott considers that the modeling, in the painterly style of each artist, was executed with "varying degrees of success." She reflects the usual assumption that

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33Later Gothic Manuscripts 2:141 and 142 respectively. Margaret Rickert had previously considered his figures as "well-proportioned" and "dashing," made with a "bold skill," see her chapter on "Illumination" in Descriptions of the Manuscripts, vol. 1 of The Text of the Canterbury Tales: Studied on the Basis of all Known Manuscripts, ed. John Manly and Margaret Rickert (Chicago: UP, 1940) 597. Rickert, on the basis of variable quality, thought that the majority of figures might have been made by two different artists, allowing for the possibility of four artists (596).

34"Text and Image" 151.

35Margaret Rickert, "Illumination" 603. Interestingly, in the same sentence, she mentions that the illustrations have a "narrative and illustrative purpose," but she does not pursue this.


37Later Gothic Manuscripts 2: 141. She appears to consider modeling as an indicator of artistic quality, superior to the technique of layering; see also 1: 48-49.
the portrait of Chaucer is the best (2: 142), observing that his gown is “a dark grey which gradually lightens” and that his face is “a pale grey through which a complexion tone barely shows” (2: 142). The first effect of gradation can be achieved by varying the saturation of the colored pigment on the brush, the latter by a process of layering typical of art from the Anglo-Saxon period through to the early fifteenth century. Ralph Hanna, in referring to the 1911 Manchester Facsimile of the Ellesmere MS, seems cognizant of this aspect of medieval painting technique when he observes of the facsimile that “the reproduction fails nearly totally to capture the multiplanar effects of the style of painting: neither the layering of gold leaf nor the highlighting which ‘builds up’ the painting, which makes it appear to ‘come off the page’, is captured.” In addition to giving the recipes for the preparation of pigments in his De diversis Artibus, Theophilus devotes the first thirteen chapters to the layering of pigments for portraying flesh tones and the outlining to be applied for facial features and hair. This results in an effect unlike the subtly blended look of oil painting but very like that of the Ellesmere portraits.

Rickert, Scott, and Emmerson allow that the artists collaborated but do not fully pursue the implications of this. Scott and Emmerson follow Doyle and Parkes who observed that, from the position of the pictures at the beginnings of the tales, “it seems as though they were designed as an adjunct to the apparatus and not merely added as

\[38\] Emmerson, “Text and Image” n 28, agrees. Lois Bragg, however, views this portrait negatively as demonstrating an incorrect use of the finger alphabet, in “Chaucer’s monogram and the ‘Hoccleve portrait’ tradition,” Word and Image 12.1 (1996); see my reference to her in the latter part of this discussion of critical appraisals of the Ellesmere.


\[40\] Rickert, “Illumination” 596; Scott, “An Hours and Psalter by Two Ellesmere Illuminators,” The Ellesmere Chaucer: Essays in Interpretation” 92; and Emmerson, “Text and Image” 151.
afterthought of decoration"⁴¹ (this last was the opinion of N. F. Blake⁴²). Emmerson, however, takes issue with the widely accepted view expressed, for example, by Doyle and Parkes that "As far as possible the attributes found in Chaucer's description of the pilgrims in the General Prologue are depicted in the illustrations."⁴³ It is the question of fidelity of the pictures to the General Prologue which "most scholars" assume they illustrate that Emmerson considers at some length, proving this is not their main function. He approaches this task by creating a "spectrum" of illustrations that at one end are "discursive" and at the other are "figural," the former relating to the text and the latter being independent of it.⁴⁴ Having categorized their quality and fidelity, Emmerson proceeds to a consideration of the artists' knowledge of the text which he denies, although he accepts the role of an editorializing supervisor who knew the text.⁴⁵ While Emmerson has conclusively laid to rest the assumption that the pilgrim portraits relate primarily to the General Prologue descriptions, he sees their chief purpose as facilitating the reading process "by making explicit and visible the manuscript's ordinatio: they classify the tales according to their speakers," thereby serving as "visual titles" introducing and representing the tale-tellers (144). He has not taken enough account of the possibility that the portraits might serve as an interface not only with respect to the General Prologue and the linking elements, but also with the subjects of the tales (as Martin Stevens does, to an extent, in


⁴³"The production of copies" 190. See Emmerson, "Text and Image" 143 ff.

⁴⁴Emmerson, "Text and Image" 146. In his definitions, the discursive illustrations include such elements as the details which relate to the General Prologue, the links, or the tales, or connect these parts, and the placement of figures which identify them from their proximity to their tales. The figural illustrations include invented or interpretive details, even those that contradict or replace Prologue descriptions.

⁴⁵Emmerson, "Text and Image" 153.
the case of the Knight), and with the audience as well. Emmerson assumes that the artists were part of a "collaborative venture," but he hypothesizes that they "probably did not work in the same shop," even though it is likely they worked "simultaneously" (151).

Involved in the issue of the extent of the collaboration of the artists in the Ellesmere are questions concerning the overall unity of design, the order of the artists' work, and the identity and level of their skill. Scott's observations, for example, concerning the decorative borders that any differences "in execution among the Ellesmere limners are superficial in nature," since "adherence to the decorative program" rather than "artistic diversity" is the "most compelling motivation behind its realization" (90), might have led Emmerson to consider unifying similarities rather than the order of execution and differences in quality among the artists (which, however, Scott is herself prone to in her catalogue entry for the Ellesmere Manuscript in Later Gothic Manuscripts released two years later). In a recent study Lois Bragg speculates that the first artist passed to another one the task of doing the Chaucer portrait, a person who may have continued on to do the next five portraits, or who was imitated by the next one. Bragg's main interest, however,

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46 The Ellesmere Miniatures" 124. He observes that the Knight's portrait, for example, "summons up the role of Theseus," with whom the Knight's Tale begins. I will show how the visual dynamics of the folio in question supports this approach.

47 Emmerson, "Text and Image" 152. In this he follows Doyle and Parkes, "The production of copies" (237) who deny the presence of centralized scriptoria in London; but C. Paul Christianson, "A Century of the Manuscript-Book Trade in Late Medieval London," Medievalia et Humanistica, ns 12 (1984): 143-165, indicates the opposite in what he considers as the growing professionalism of the book-trade in London. See further Emmerson, "Text and Image" n30. It would be extraordinary if the designing supervisor allowed individual artists to take home such large quires of the finest grade of vellum. Daniel Woodward points out that only seven pages in the entire manuscript do not contain gold leaf. "Appendix B," The Ellesmere Chaucer 347. If the artists worked simultaneously but separately, how is it that the selective use of gold paint (as opposed to the gold leaf used in the borders), added to only five of the mounted pilgrims, was applied to work by each of the three artists? Its use and the areas of its application indicate it was not added as an afterthought. This instance, among others (as shall become clear), favors more collaboration and sharing than has been previously considered.

48 Bragg, "Chaucer's monogram" 134. See also Scott’s assignments of artists in Later Gothic Manuscripts 2: 142.
is the finger alphabet which she sees in the Hoccleve version of the Chaucer portrait as embedding the monogram GC, a monogram which was misunderstood by the Ellesmere miniaturist who did not know its meaning and unskilfully made a "very bad picture indeed" in his "botched copy." Bragg's study demonstrates the perils of approaching a single visual element with a preconceived idea of how it should have been executed.

Viewing the portraits as part of the decorative program of the borders they frequently inhabit, or whose demivinet enclosure they approach from across the page, inevitably leads to a consideration of the intimacy of collaboration, even possible identity, of some portrait and border artists. If the entire design and layout of the Ellesmere manuscript is considered as the cooperative effort of a "production team" under the hands-on direction of one of their number, perhaps in consultation with those interested in promoting Chaucer for their own purposes, then the pictorial and scribal elements can be seen not only as part of the ordinatio, but the ordinatio itself can be seen to advance a particular reading for a particular audience. Viewed in this context, considerations of the artistic quality and "fidelity" of the individual portraits are of diminished importance; instead, the effectiveness and purpose of their presentation becomes paramount.

If the artists of the Ellesmere and the Pearl manuscripts are allowed, like shopkeepers familiar with their merchandise, to have known what they were doing—after all, illustrated manuscripts were expensive—then it becomes necessary to discover how these late medieval illustrators might reasonably have expected their images to function. This can be approached in two ways: by considering the illustrators as among the first professional "readers" of the texts which they converted for their contemporary audience, which is

49London, British Library, MS Harley 4866, fol. 88.

50Bragg, "Chaucer's monogram" 135.

51This felicitous phrase is from Hanna, "Introduction" 11.

52Emmerson, "Text and Image" 166n29, acknowledges that as Michael Camille suggests, "medieval patrons were probably less attuned to differences of style and determination of pictorial quality in their books than is the modern art historian looking for 'hands.'" See Camille, "Labouring for the Lord: The Ploughman and the Social Order in the Luttrell Psalter," *Art History* 10 (1987): 446.
what the body of this study will attempt in the sections on each manuscript, and by a consideration of certain features of the Christian legacy regarding images which these artists inherited which will be discussed shortly. Before this can be attempted it will be useful to consider further the nature of the displacement of values which took place subsequent to the making of these manuscripts, distorting our appraisal of their merit.

The Renaissance Shift

In an issue of *Gesta* devoted to reexamining medieval conceptions of Art, Henry Maguire points out that only recently has the notion of "Art" come to be seen by some critics as a social construct "incorporating ideas of individual achievement, social status, monetary value, quality, and detachment from common life that, at the best, are irrelevant to the pre-modern societies, and at the worst encode elitist and mercenary values." What has happened is a paradigm shift whose essence was the undermining of "the very nature of our historical understanding of 'reality."

This sense of departure from medieval perceptions was articulated clearly in the early sixteenth century by Giorgio Vasari. Although there were always greater or lesser strains of classical aesthetic theory from one school of thought or another adapted or modified by Christian thinkers like St. 

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54Nicholas Tuelle, Assistant Director and Chief Curator of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, concerning the work of Jackson Pollock in the mid 1950s. This definition was expressed in a written commentary accompanying an exhibition of concept art in February 1997. He correlated this with the theories of twentieth-century physicists.

55Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, selected and translated from Italian by George Bull (1965; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968). I have chosen Vasari for present purposes because he articulates Renaissance attitudes so clearly. Writing in the mid-sixteenth century, he is not the sole or even earliest to express the new vision of art: more than a century earlier Leon Battista Alberti, for instance, had already completed his treatise on perspective, defining painting as the representation of the pool's surface and things seen, see *On Painting*, trans. Cecil Grayson (1972; London: Penguin, 1991) 61 and 64. At about the same time Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, in his handbook on painting techniques, includes oil painting, and while admitting that the art student should copy the best of the old masters, adds that he should also copy from nature which is better than other models, see *The Craftsman's Handbook: The Italian "Il Libro Dell' Arte, "* trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (Toronto: General Publishing; New York: Dover, 1960) 14-15.
Augustine and of practical influence exerted by classical models, Vasari describes the Renaissance or “rebirth” of pre-Christian classical conceptions regarding the purpose and ideals of art as if these were something completely unprecedented. In the Preface to his *Lives of the Artists* he assumes that there is such a thing as the “attainment of perfection,” that it was achieved in classical times, but that “as emperor succeeded emperor, the arts continually declined.” By the time of Constantine, for instance, sculpture was “decadent” and “inferior,” contrasting to the “beautifully fashioned” parts of the “marble histories made at the time of Trajan” (32-33). This decline was accelerated by the “coming of the Goths and the other barbarian invaders who destroyed the fine arts of Italy, along with Italy itself” (33). The coup de grâce, however, was inflicted by “the new Christian religion” which, “not out of hatred for the arts but in order to humiliate and overthrow the pagan gods,” attempted to “destroy every least possible occasion of sin” by demolishing “all the marvelous statues, besides the other sculptures, the pictures, mosaics, and ornaments representing the false pagan gods” (37). Pope Gregory, now known for his famous dictum that pictures are the books of the illiterate, was recalled by Vasari for the despoliation following his edict against all remaining statues and works of art (38). Gregory was obviously aware both of the positive and negative potential regarding the popular reception of visual images.

As Vasari asserts, the result of all this decline and destruction was that, without proper

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58 See the discussion in Michael Camille on “Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literature and Illiteracy,” *Art History* 8.1 (March 1985): 26-49, with references in 44n1-2. Gregory says “The picture is for simple men what writing is for those who can read, because those who cannot read see and learn from the picture the model which they should follow. Thus pictures are above all for the instruction of the people,” as translated by Tatarkiewicz from *Epis. ad Serenum*, PL 77, col. 1128: *Nam quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat pictura cernentibus, quia in ipso ignorantes vident, quod sequi debeant, in ipsa legunt, qui litteras nesciunt; unde praecipue gentibus pro lectione pictura est.*
models or instructions, subsequent works were “grotesque,” “awkward,” “crude,” “lacking in grace,” “clumsy,” “insecure,” “stiff,” and “mediocre” (38-50). In particular, he decries pictures of “figures with only the rough outlines drawn in color” and with faces “staring as if possessed” (45-46). Such “imperfect productions” continued to be produced until “new generations started to purge their minds of the grossness of the past so successfully that in 1250 heaven took pity on the talented men who were being born” (45) in Italy and, in his “own day,” some Roman works which had been buried under the ruins were rediscovered (37).

Vasari begins his Lives with biographies of the artists he considers as initiating the progress back to perfection, namely Cimabue (c.1240-1302?) and his pupil Giotto (1266/67-1337). What is noteworthy in both biographies is the association of St. Francis, who is frequently mentioned, with the practice by these artists of painting “from nature” (50 ff.). Vasari contrasts this imitation of models from the natural world with the older (i.e., what we now refer to as “medieval”) custom of copying authoritative models and “blindly following what had been handed on year after year” (50-51).

While, for the medieval mind, “visible things are the images of invisible things,”59 for the Renaissance the primary referent is terrestrial reality. Criteria for artistic evaluation in the Renaissance are less concerned with a work’s conceptual, symbolic, and spiritual significance, or its effect on the beholder, than its fidelity to tangible, if idealized, worldly models. Vasari assumes that all former works since antiquity simply failed in achieving this realism. The absolutist “strict rules of art” (85) which today still tend to be used as a standard—although a new “fault line” has ruptured the connection with nature in non-objective art—testify to the extent of Renaissance values first initiated when Giotto “set painting once more on the right path” (81).

Instead of the linear “heavy lines and contours” of older works, the new art emphasizes plasticity in terms of the use of light and shadow (85) and draperies which are “softer and more realistic and flowing” (50) with “folds falling so convincingly” (71). Stiffness in figural work is replaced with animated figures whose posed attitudes and

59Pseudo-Dionysius, Epistola X, PG 3, col. 144 as quoted in Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Medieval Aesthetics 34.
gestures express emotion. Giotto "evolved a delicate style from one which had been rough
and harsh" (88). In the actual perfection of the "new style," eyes eventually became more
"vivacious" and hands showed "their natural muscles and articulations." Advances in the
blending of colors led to improved flesh-tints, draughtsmen "gave new dimensions to
perspective" (89), and landscapes were introduced and became more realistic as the
"golden age" approached (93). Instead of size being determined by the importance of the
subject or the space available within initials in manuscripts, for instance, the "disproportion
characteristic of the ineptitude" (85) of earlier work is eliminated in later Renaissance
work with its adjustments to a more realistic scale in the use of larger panels. Vasari
emphasizes the rediscovery of "the proportions and measurements of the antique" and the
more "careful organization and purpose" in overall composition and design (90). His chief
criterion for perfection is the exact reproduction of "the truth of nature" (90) which is,
artistically speaking, antithetical to the divine truth to which medieval art aspired and to
the more complex presentation of multiple, often simultaneous levels of reality, along with
the distortions of "nature" this involved. More unified in time and place and keyed to an
ideal "nature," Renaissance art, like that of antiquity, served largely to give pleasure.
Instead of the medieval tendency to idolize the art object whose purpose was rather to
serve as a bridge to the transcendent, the Renaissance inclination was to venerate the
artist. As Camille so perceptively remarks, "If the 'stars' of art history have tended to be
Renaissance artists, this is because the discourse of art history was itself created by that
giver of 'godlike' status and arch idolator, Vasari."^61

The artists of the Pearl and Ellesmere Manuscripts, made just as the "new style" was
about to take hold throughout Europe, have perhaps suffered more acutely from the exact
sort of disparagement Vasari leveled against medieval art a century later precisely because
such forbears of the Renaissance as Giotto had already lived and passed on—as if these
English illustrators really ought to have known better. In various ways, these manuscripts

^60Vasari The Lives of the Artists 88. Vasari admits that Giotto himself had not yet
achieved this.

do anticipate the Renaissance: the landscapes of the *Pearl* settings contextualize the chief actors, and the beauty of Ellesmere’s decorative program testifies to the aesthetic impulses behind the organizational design of the whole. Nevertheless, while their purpose has much to do with responses to the issues of their own time and place, as will become evident, they replicate elements which are more medieval in character. Resurrecting, as they did, the vernacular as the language of important literature, these manuscripts manifest various stylistic admixtures of nationalistic conservatism with a glancing interest in continental preferences for what Scott describes as the softer outlining and plastic modeling that characterize the International Style of c.1400-1410 (I. 49) in their presentation. Jonathan Alexander sees the “heraldic style” of artists like the mid-fifteenth-century William Abel as congruent with English artists’ opposition to and rejection by that time of the representation of the third dimension seen in contemporary Netherlandish and Italian painting, an attitude which may already have been current in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. In the case of medieval painting, accepted painting techniques also contribute to the conventional medieval look. Of course, the flattened and linear characteristics of much English medieval painting are not entirely the result simply of the medium or of nationalistically conservative tendencies, but have to do with ideological considerations relating to the legitimacy of rendering visual likenesses *per se*, as I will shortly indicate.

The reception of the illustrations, for instance, in the *Pearl* and Ellesmere Manuscripts by critics of our own time is based on values of artistic excellence deriving from the Renaissance as formulated by Vasari and his contemporaries. He used the term “modern” to indicate the art of Leonardo da Vinci “who originated the third style or period, which we like to call the modern age” (252). It is not surprising then that the litany of epithets he used against medieval works seems to be almost identical with those used by nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentators regarding these and the other vernacular

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62William Abell ‘lymnour’ and 15th Century English Illumination,” *Kunsthistorische Forschungen: Otto Pächt zu seinem 70. Geburtstag* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1972) 168 and 170. (166-172) He refers particularly to stained glass and embroidery. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts* 1. 49, says his “idea may be valid if it takes into account the embryonic forms of the style as early as c. 1400.”
works I discuss. It is hardly necessary to reiterate the same sort of evaluations and
disparagements for these earlier works because the observations by modern critics are all
tediously similar.

In the Eastern Church, however, the medieval value system continued. As early as
the beginning of the fifteenth century, Simeon, the Archbishop of Thessalonica went much
further in reacting against the new style than did the English, for he considered as
subversive the innovations of the Latins. For him, the icon, by means of colors which serve
as “a kind of alphabet,” is “an image and symbol of the prototype”; instead, the Latins try
to clothe their image with the “hair and garment of a man.” At the Chapter-synod in
Moscow in 1551, the new western modes which did not follow the traditional types were
condemned as “inartistic” and imaginative (not a compliment), fit only for the simple and
the ignorant. At the end of the following century, in his will the Patriarch Joachim
implored the “Tsarist Majesties to decree that the holy pictures of the God Incarnate Jesus
Christ, of the holy Mother of God and of all the saints be painted in the old Greek manner,
in which are painted all our old miracle-working icons, and that they are not to be painted
according to the vexing, recently invented indecent conceptions of Latin and German
pictures, which are due to the sensuality of those heretics, and which are contrary to the
tradition of our church.” This is a good antidote for western critics who would see
medieval productions merely as childish, naive, and crude attempts, successful only to a
greater or lesser degree, in achieving what the modern mentality perceives as the
naturalism or realism attained by the more artistically mature artists since the Renaissance.
They are, literally, worlds apart.

To be sure, the work of painters was frequently praised for being lifelike and true

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63 Contra haereses, ch. 23 (PG 155, col. 112) quoted in Cyril Mango, The Art of
the Byzantine Empire 312-1453: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-
Hall, 1972) 253-254.

64 Heinz Skrobuch, Icons, trans. M. v. Herzfeld and R. Gaze (Edinburgh and

65 Heinz Skrobuch, Icons 9.
to nature. But since neither the early Christians nor the medieval writers dealt with Renaissance vocabulary concerning perspective, scale, and depth, it may be that, in part, they did not "see" what they did not expect or value as constituents of reality. They tended to focus on the spiritually relevant attitudes of the human form, calling attention also to such features as the common outline of the prototype and picture, not their dissimilar matter. Camille observes that the "lifelike" qualities attributed by medieval observers to images do not mean that they looked like the real thing, but that they seemed to come to life, as indicated in stories of talking statues. Some of the Vernon Manuscript illustrations show the Virgin Mary, who looks like her statue, actually coming to life and helping her devotees (see my fifth chapter). It is an interesting aspect of human perception that, as observed by Mango, when a holy personage such as, for example, "St. John chose to appear in a vision to a saintly man, he looked exactly like his image, and was, in fact, recognized by virtue of this resemblance." An interesting modern study and discussion of experiments in visual perception in connection with the thin line between internal and external reality indicates that people tend to see what they expect to see.

**Early Christian Theories of Image-Making and Strategies of Representation**

A brief examination of the concepts and aims of early Christian art will elucidate some of the features of the medieval "look" which Vasari rejected and will provide a historical and theological context for the early Anglo-Saxon works which I discuss in my next two chapters. These deal with the very incarnational issues raised by the defenders of

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66See the discussion by Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* xiv-xv. He attributes this to the conventions inherited from the literature on art from the ancient world.


68Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* xv.

images when images were forbidden altogether in the Near East during the periods of iconoclasm from 726–780 and 815–843. Image-making in Britain was a hot issue again in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries when many of the arguments from both sides were resurrected. The Incarnation remained, as I will demonstrate, the core justification for images even until the fourteenth century: Gregory’s dictum about their educational value for the illiterate, a safe argument frequently resorted to over the centuries, notwithstanding. Although in the late medieval period there was no longer the temptation to worship pagan idols, especially in the form of classical statues, as there was during the process of the conversion during the very early medieval period, there seemed always to be a tendency to respond to the Christian artifact as an object of worship or to value it for its rich, sensuous properties. As during the eighth to ninth centuries when the acute sensitivities to image-making occurred in the vicinity of the expanding Islamic empire, western contact with its anti-iconic attitudes during the crusades put Christian thinkers on the defensive afresh and led some artists consciously to present visual statements with respect to holy images.

Unfortunately Gregory’s statement that images are justified as a means of instruction for the illiterate, familiar to most medievalists, has contributed to a general disparagement of medieval illustrations which, consequently, have come to be viewed as lacking in profundity. This is especially true with regard to literary critics of illustrated vernacular manuscripts who naturally rely on the import of such words rather than on the meaning of the pictures, especially when the latter are executed in a non-naturalistic and seemingly naive style and when they do not seem to deal “literally” with the text. Further, many are still under the impression that the text was always considered more important than the image in medieval works (briefly a Carolingian position formulated to deal with the issues raised in the East) and that medieval people themselves viewed illustration only as a didactic tool for the illiterate or for decorative purposes. All these factors have prejudiced serious study of the illustrations in English vernacular manuscripts. While it is true that Gregory’s statements persisted and had an important impact on all aspects of

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70Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* 149, in giving the first date as 726 (or 730), notes that the exact date of the first edict is in doubt.
medieval Christianity, there were other evaluations and statements of purpose even then. It is this other tradition that I wish to pursue by way of balance and to show, both on theoretical and practical levels, that art could and did serve more sophisticated purposes, especially in manuscript illustrations—which were not made primarily for the poor and illiterate who could not afford them in any case. The arguments put forth by defenders of images during the first major period of iconoclasm provide a deeply considered rationale justifying them in terms of their authority and function within a Christian context, and also an unsurpassed exploration of how they work singly and in narrative situations to produce their effects on an audience.

Even before iconoclasm became official, early Christian art reflects various strategies to accommodate in particular the second of the Ten Commandments:

\[
\text{Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing,}
\]
\[
\text{nor the likeness of any things, that are in heaven above, or that are in the earth}
\]
\[
\text{beneath, or that abide in the waters under the earth [...] (Deut. 5.8)}
\]

Although the new Christian religion appears at first to have rejected representational art under the influence of its Judaic roots, image-making gradually began to establish itself.

A number of early accounts indicate the importance sometimes attributed to visual representations, showing that the text itself was not always viewed exclusively as the primary or sole authority of Christian truth.\(^1\) In his sixth-century history, Theodorus Lector includes a story about a portrait of the “Mother of God painted by the apostle Luke” which was sent by Eudocia, the wife of Theodosius II to Pulcheria, the daughter of the Emperor Arcadius.\(^2\) This story that one of the writers of the gospels was also an artist

\(^1\)I am grateful to Peter Gunnhouse for his letter of April 24, 1994 giving me the references to the sources to “Pictorial Narrative as Gospel Truth,” a lecture he gave at the University of Victoria.

\(^2\)PG 86, col. 165A, as excerpted by Nicephorus Calistus Xanthopoulos in the early fourteenth century (reinforcing at that time an interest in the cult of Mary); see Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* 40 and 263. Only fragments of an ecclesiastical history by Theodorus Lector remain, as indicated by Mango 264.
had helped to sanction the painting of images of the Virgin, a popular subject in medieval art. The story also testifies that powerful women were early collectors of holy images, specifically of female figures such as the Virgin with whom they could identify. In the West, Bede mentions that Benedict Biscop brought such an image back from Rome to adorn the seventh-century English church of St. Peter’s. Moreover, accounts and paintings of Luke painting the Virgin were popular in the late medieval period, when Luke was “venerated as patron saint of the Painters’ Guild.” At the end of the fourteenth century Robert Rypon, sub-prior of Durham and prior at Finchale, included in his defense of images against the heretical Lollards a story he says John of Damascus told, that Luke painted both Christ and his mother. This vouches for the persistence of the tradition that

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73 Images of the Virgin also served as visual models for the depiction of women generally, as I show, for instance, in my discussion of the portrayal of the Wife of Bath in the Ellesmere Manuscript.

74 The Lives of the Abbots of Wearmouth by the Venerable Bede, introd. and trans. P. Wilcock (1818; Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham, 1973) 13-14. See Vita Sanctorum Abbatum Monasterii in Wiramutha et Girvum, PL 95, col. 718: imaginem, videlicet, beatae Dei generatrice semperque virginis Marie. Wilcock notes that this expression for Mary was “adopted to denote and profess the divinity of Christ”; it also alludes to the Incarnation.

75 Luke’s connection with the Blessed Virgin was reinforced by such popular accounts as that in John Myrc’s Festival as summarized by G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961) (124): “The Blessed Virgin confided the secrets of the Annunciation and the years of Christ’s youth at Nazareth, in person, to St Luke, ‘for enchoson that he was clene maydon’ like herself, and was wont to visit her in the early period of her Son’s ministry on earth.” This special knowledge uniquely qualified Luke to paint scenes from the Virgin’s life. According to Virginia Wylie Egbert in The Medieval Artist at Work (Princeton: UP, 1967) 72, see also her Plate XXVI, the earliest western representation of Luke is the miniature of “St. Luke as Panel Painter” in the Gospel book (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS 1182, fol. 91v) written and illuminated by John of Troppau, a Bohemian artist, in 1368. For the identification artists must have felt with Luke as early as the Anglo-Saxon period, see my discussion of the iconography of the prostrate position of Dunstan and its continental analogues.

Luke was an artist, while at the same time authorizing artistic activity.

Narrative visual scenes and identifying script are seen to complement each other in the account of the Life of St. Pancratius where it is claimed that pictures of Christ’s life with inscriptions naming each image were ordered by St. Peter himself from the painter Joseph in order “people may believe all the more and be reminded of what I have preached to them.”

Since many of the people converted to the new religion would have been illiterate, pictures in churches must indeed have seemed to the biographer of Pancratius, or rather to the makers of the pre-iconoclastic versions of the Life, as a powerful means of reinforcing the converts’ faith and of reminding them of what they had heard preached. This was the apparent purpose of Peter’s provision of two volumes of picture stories containing the scenes from the Old and New Testaments to his brother and to another preacher setting out to spread the Gospel. These, as St. Peter tells them, were to serve as models for wall-paintings in churches so that the crowds, “being reminded of the Lord’s incarnation, should be inspired and so assume a more ardent faith.” It is interesting too that it is the inspirational value of pictures that is considered as the factor confirming and increasing commitment, not just the intellectual reminder. Not only is faith increased, but pictures can also inspire emulation, as indicated by the comparison of rhetoric and painting by St. Basil in the fourth century with reference to brave deeds which speech writers...

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77Vita S. Pancratii, quoted in Cyril Mango, "From Justinian to Iconoclasm (565-726)," The Art of the Byzantine Empire 137.

78The author of the legendary Life “who calls himself Evagrius” claimed to have been a disciple of Pancratius; see the Vita S. Pancratii, quoted in Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire 138. Mango used the Lavra codex which was made just before the period of iconoclasm and which already defends the use of images in terms of their history and use.

79In his instructions, St. Peter points to the pictures in the book detailing the important highlights of Christ’s life which are to be copied in the churches: “First, put the Annunciation, then the Nativity, then how he was baptized by the Forerunner, the Disciples, the Healings, the Betrayal, the Crucifixion, the Burial, the Resurrection out of Hades, and the Ascension”; Vita S. Pancratii 138. As Mango remarks, this elaborates a scheme that appears to have become standard even before iconoclasm (123).

80Vita S. Pancratii, quoted in Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire 138.
embellish with words and painters depict, both leading to acts of bravery. As Henry Maguire observes, Basil's suggestion concerning inspiration was to be elaborated by the defenders of images, as in the instance of the Partriarch Germanos I (deposed in 730 during the first outbreak of iconoclasm) who quoted St. Basil's homily and commented that pictures, like words, can inspire the imitation of the deeds of saints. The Patriarch Nikephoros (deposed in 815 at the beginning of the second wave of iconoclasm) distinguishes between the symbols preferred by the iconoclasts and the meaningful development of a narrative subject with respect to their effect upon an audience. Also drawing upon Basil's earlier comparison of rhetoric and painting, he argues that the cross is a symbol which "hints at the manner in which He who suffered bore the Passion," whereas the narrative images of artists, in embellishing and expanding a subject, "delineate it in greater detail, but also they demonstrate with greater breadth and clarity the miracles and prodigies that Christ performed."

A subject who is pictured as visually present allows for an intense emotional engagement by the viewer who can develop and sustain an intimate relationship through contemplation and prayer. The quality of the contemplation depends largely on the capacity and experience of the viewer. In addition to serving as a reminder of what was

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81 Henry Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton: UP, 1981) 9. St. Basil was speaking of the forty martyred soldiers of Sebaste in *Homilia XIX*, *In sanctos quadragesima martyres*, par. 2, PG 98, cols. 508C-509A, as given in Maguire 114 n5. Basil interconnects the two arts by similitude, saying that he will "show to all, as if in a picture, the prowess of these men"; as trans. by Maguire 9.

82 Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* 9-10, and 114 n6 for the reference to *Epistola IV*, PG 98, col. 172C-D.


84 *Antirrheticus* III, PG 100, cols. 1241B-C and 429C-D; referred to and translated in Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* 11 and 114, n13 and n14.

85 An example of this is St. John Chrysostom who, when he read the gospels, had before him a picture of St. Paul that "would seem to come to life and speak to him," as recounted by John of Damascus in *De Imaginibus*, PG 94, col. 1231; noted by Michael Camille, "Seeing and Reading" 28 and n15.
preached and to increasing the ardor of the believer, images were shown to serve a more complex hermeneutic function. One instance is that of the fourth-century St. Spyridon who overthrew a pagan idol by means of his prayers, a story which was subsequently doubted and then confirmed in the middle of the seventh century when a painted image of the event was examined and Spyridon’s miracle “was made understandable,” an important aspect of visual representation.

Similar attitudes concerning the value of pictorial narratives were current in seventh- and eighth-century England as indicated by Bede who records with awe and admiration that the “ecclesiastical treasure” brought back from Rome on his sixth and last trip by Benedict Biscop consisted of sacred writings and holy pictures. Interestingly, he speaks of them in terms which might have come from a Byzantine writer, for he says that “the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ” is “described in one series of paintings,” as if the paintings are an actual narrative text. Concerning Benedict’s exhibition of the pictorial acquisitions from his previous trip which he has displayed on the walls of St. Peter’s church, Bede summarizes their didactic, emotional, and spiritual reception by a mixed audience, leading to a reevaluation of their lives:

By this united and magnificent exhibition of so many religious subjects, the whole interior of the sacred edifice presents to the eye one continued scene of pious instruction, accommodated to the capacities of all who enter, even of the humble and unlettered multitude. For in whatever direction they turn their sight, it is instantly struck with the resemblance either of the amiable countenance of Jesus, or of some of his chosen friends. Here the heart of the spectator learns to melt with gratitude at the gracious mystery of human redemption; there his soul is summoned to take a strict survey of his mode of life, having before his eyes in the awful spectacle of the last day, the rigorous scrutiny of divine justice.

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86 Theodorus, ep. Paphi, Vita S. Spyridonis, ch. 20, quoted in Mango, “From Justinian to Iconoclasm: (565-726),” The Art of the Byzantine Empire 136-137. This saint’s life was composed in 655 AD, as indicated by Mango 265.


89 The Lives of the Abbots 14. Vita Sanctorum Abbatum Monasterii in Wiramutha et Girvum, PL 95, col. 718: quibus septentrionalem aequa parietem ornaret, quatemus
It is difficult for us now to imagine the powerful impact of these figural representations on the early Northumbrians, but the fact that the king, Egfrid, was so “charmed” by them that he gave an additional grant of “forty hides of ground” for the establishment of a monastery at Jarrow, having previously given seventy hides for the establishment of the first monastery at Wearmouth after Benedict’s fourth trip, gives some indication.

In an account similar to that of St. Spyridon, Bede indicates the authority of pictures in resolving an interpretive crux. He cites a picture to substantiate his argument that Paul received thirty-nine lashes rather than forty. In the picture to which Bede refers, the torturer has a lash with four ends, but he holds one back, so it follows that since Paul was flogged thirteen times, he received thirty-nine lashes. Dorothy Whitelock, in her lecture on “Bede: His Teachers and His Friends,” found this passage interesting because it shows that Bede regarded illuminators as authoritative for the interpretation of Scriptures. Bede’s use of a picture in the preceding example indicates that he did not consider it an inferior substitute for the written word, but on a par with it. That he saw pictures as a symbolic system capable of signifying spiritual truth is indicated by his discussion in “Question 3,” about the use of colour in book and wall paintings:

However as it is not right in a wall-painting to depict black Ethiopians in white nor white-bodied and white-haired Saxons in black, so in the Retribution every one

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intrantes ecclesiam omnes etiam litterarum ignari, quaquaerversum intenderent, vel semper amabilem Christi sanctorumque ejus, quamvis in imagine, contemplarentur aspectum; vel dominicae incarnationis gratiam vigilantiore mente recolerent; vel extremini discrimen examinis, quasi eorum oculis habentes, districtus seipsi examinare meminissent.

90 The Lives of the Abbots 15 and 9.

91 In Question 2 from the Book of Questions (PL 23, col. 456), a superior text of which, according to Dorothy Whitelock (see my subsequent note), is published in the article by Paul Lehman, “Wert und Echtheit einer Beda abgesprochenen Schrift,” Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Philisophisch—philologische und historische Klasse, 4 (15 Februar 1919): 1-21. Question 2 concerns the labours and sufferings of St. Paul. Bede may have been referring to an illustrated account of the Life and Sufferings of the Apostle Paul, which Bishop “Cudum” brought from Rome to Britain, according to Lehman, 6-7 and 16-20.

should receive his due, and his face be shown in the Judgment according to what will happen to him. And it should not relate altogether to what each looks like but to what each stands for.\(^{93}\)

It can be seen that Bede regarded visual details as a signifying system for both literal truth ("what each looks like") and symbolic truth ("what each stands for" or "figures").

That images can also be a negative vehicle for emotional response is manifested by the violence done to images by the iconoclasts. Testifying to the successful proliferation and effective (as well as affective) potency of Christian images after Constantine's recognition of Christianity in the early fourth century was the zealous and sometimes violent reaction against their use which culminated in the period of iconoclasm in the eighth and ninth centuries when they were banned altogether in the Eastern Church. The equally emotionally charged counterattack rallied those who identified their interests and those of the Church with the production of images, producing a literature which, in justifying art, articulated the theories behind its use. The debates concerning the efficacy and truth of visual representations enable us to gain some insight concerning the various ways they were thought to function.

John of Damascus (675-749), who was to have a profound effect on medieval thinkers in various ways,\(^{94}\) articulates in his Defense of Holy Images what is perhaps the major justification superseding the Old Testament restriction, namely, the doctrine of the Incarnation: "we are not mistaken if we make the image of the God incarnate, who was seen on earth in the flesh, associated with men, and in His unspeakable goodness assumed

\(^{93}\)The Latin is given in Lehman, "Wert und Echtheit" 6: Sicut autem in pictura parietum neque obscurum Aethiopem candido neque candidi corporis sive capilli Saxonem atro decet colore depingi, ita in retributione meritorum iuxta sum quisque opus recipiet, et qualis erit actu, talis etiam parebit vultu in iudicio; neque omnino ad rem quid quisque figurarit, sed quid egerit pertinebit. I wish to thank David McCulloch for his assistance in translating this passage.

\(^{94}\)For example, his Font of Knowledge had a major impact on Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas, while his work on hymnology and reputedly, on the liturgical cycle, were influential; see Moshe Barasch, Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea (New York: New York UP, 1992) 190-91.
the nature, feeling, form and color of our flesh.\textsuperscript{95} He refers to the dual nature of Christ: "It is not divine beauty which is given form or shape, but the human form which is rendered by the painter's brush."\textsuperscript{96} Nevertheless, the two natures are not entirely separate in that one interfuses the other, as it were: "The flesh assumed by Him is made divine and endures after its assumption. Fleshly nature was not lost when it became part of the Godhead...just as the Word made flesh remained the Word."\textsuperscript{97} For John of Damascus, images are not just for the illiterate (the didactic function advanced by Gregory the Great); they also form a bridge between worlds: "all images reveal and make perceptual those things which are hidden."\textsuperscript{98} Depicting the natural world of the senses was without value since that can always be seen anyway.\textsuperscript{99} This sort of thinking supported and underwrote the tendency of contemporary art toward dematerialization and the reaching, instead, toward non-material truth.\textsuperscript{100} The teaser is: how can the material represent the non-material? For the answer, John of Damascus developed the Platonic and Neo-Platonic theories of his predecessors concerning the hierarchical structures of creation (metaphorically connected by a chain or ladder), the principle of resemblance (likeness or parallelism) between prototype and copy, and the flow of emanations (projections,


\textsuperscript{98}Apologies III, 17; p. 74 as quoted by Moshe Barash, \textit{Icon} 205.

\textsuperscript{99}See the discussion in Moshe Barash, \textit{Icon} 219-220.

\textsuperscript{100}Such art was impelled by impulses opposite to those which motivated Vasari and Renaissance artists until the camera was invented, propelling artists once more to manifest abstract concepts and to intimate spiritual or psychological conditions.
reflections, shadows) from one to the other.\footnote{In \textit{Icon}, Moshe Barasch traces these concepts in his preceding sections on “Reflections in Classical Antiquity” and “The Icon in Early Christian Thought”; but see especially the chapters on Eusebius and Dionysius Areopagita in Barasch, \textit{Icon} 141-157 and 158-182 respectively.}

These concepts can perhaps best be understood by considering the origin of the concept of the image or \textit{eidolon}, a synonym for \textit{psyche}, which originally applied to the visible but immaterial soul after it has left the body upon death but which could appear to the living, especially in dreams.\footnote{Moshe Barasch, \textit{Icon} 26-27.} This application was then transferred from the other world to this one. Barasch explains that the atomists’ theory of visual perception “assumed that the \textit{eidola} of the same shape of the body are given off and enter the pores of the viewer.”\footnote{Moshe Barasch, \textit{Icon} 27. Similar theories of visual perception also occupied medieval thinkers. See, for example, the discussion in Suzanne Lewis, \textit{Reading Images} 6-10.} The theory of “spiritual affinity or parallelism”\footnote{Moshe Barasch, \textit{Icon} 211.} helps to explain the relationship between the original and the copy. Plotinus had developed “the theory of sympathy” by which “like attracts like” and “thus similarity becomes the foundation of attraction.”\footnote{Moshe Barasch referring to Plotinus, \textit{The Enneads} V, translated in A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA, and London: Loeb Classical Library, 1984) 255-257.} The Pseudo-Dionysius, John’s predecessor, did not require the greatest degree of likeness to the original, but rather preferred the most crass: “Indeed, the sheer crassness of the signs is a goad” to rise higher and see beyond,\footnote{The Celestial Hierarchy 2, 3: col. 14A-C; p. 150 of \textit{Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works}, trans. Colm Luibheid (London, 1987) as quoted in Moshe Barasch, \textit{Icon} 176. That visual representation of the divine should deliberately be crass would have been aesthetic anathema to Vasari!} a theory taken up in the twelfth century by Hugh of St. Victor. Umberto Eco summarizes the Victorine aesthetic in this regard: “when the soul is confronted with ugliness it is unable to achieve contentment, and is freed also from the kind of illusion created by beauty. Thus it is led naturally to
desire the true and immutable beauty." An image, in being similar to its prototype in certain ways, participates in the nature of the prototype which, in turn, imbues the latter with power. John of Damascus considered the value of symbols or images (his successor in defending images, Theodore of Studion, refers specifically to the latter) to lie in their effect on the audience, advancing their knowledge or the condition of their souls.

Referring to the circumstances following the iconoclastic Council of 754, a text of the Life of St. Stephen written in 806 records that "on the part of the impious, [one saw] sacred things trodden upon, [liturgical] vessels turned to other use, churches scraped down and smeared with ashes because they contained holy images. And wherever there were venerable images of Christ or the Mother of God or the saints, these were consigned to the flames or were gouged out or smeared over," revealing the violence of feeling by the opposing faction and its specific targets. One difficulty that iconoclasts had—apart from major concerns about the incompatibility of representing divinity by means of inanimate matter, indeed about the assumptions of the divine vis-à-vis the human nature of Christ which underpinned so many of the controversies of these centuries—was the necessary inventiveness, hence the apparent falseness, of artists concocting images of unseen prototypes. The "illicit craft of the painter" was attacked at the Iconoclastic

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108 *Apologies III*, 17, p. 74, as quoted in Moshe Barasch, *Icon* 203.

109 *Vita S. Stephani inu.* , col. 1112-13 as translated in Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* 152. Mention of the vessels is noteworthy in view of the *Pearl* Manuscript miniature for Cleanness depicting the desecration of the sacred vessels at Belshazzar's feast.

110 See the list of heretics on this issue consisting of Arius and a number of Monophysites (who taught that Christ had only one nature) mentioned in the Definition of the Iconoclastic Council of 754 as quoted by Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* 165.

111 Even before images were officially prohibited the idea of art as a lie was posed as a problem by, for example, Epiphanius, a bishop of Salamis (d. 403), not to be confused with the deacon of the same name in the eighth century. He ridicules the practice of representing the apostles with cropped hair while the Savior is shown with long hair by
Council of 754 which attributed the “sordid love of gain” as their motive in following
Lucifer, inventor of idolatry.\textsuperscript{112} This same Council affirmed that the “only true image of
Christ is the bread and wine of the Eucharist as He Himself indicated,”\textsuperscript{113} a subject which
was to re-emerge as an issue in connection not only with the related subject of images but
with the doctrine of the Transubstantiation in late medieval England. Iconoclasts did not
uniformly oppose all images, only religious images. As Grabar points out, they continued
the use of imperial images as political propaganda\textsuperscript{114} and they did not destroy church
decorations including plant, animal or bird motifs, as well as landscapes, even using all
these as a replacement for the holy figures that had been destroyed. Islamic influences also
had an ambivalent effect on the debates concerning images.\textsuperscript{115} The iconoclasts initiated, as
Tatarkiewicz observes, an art form that was realistic and secular instead of mystical,\textsuperscript{116} a
process that, in its effects, recurred during the Renaissance.

Like John of Damascus, Theodore of Studion (759-826), a champion of icons
during the second phase of iconoclasm, gave priority to the sense of sight. He supports

asking why the Pharisees and scribes needed to pay “a fee of thirty silver pieces to Judas
that he might kiss Him and show them that He was the one they sought, when they might
themselves or through others have known by the token of His hair Him whom they were
seeking to find, and this without paying a fee?” Better, he says, to dispose of curtains
bearing images by burying the poor in them and by whitewashing the images on walls. See
his Testament, ed. G. Ostrogorsky, Studien zur Geschichte des byzant. Bilderstreites
(Breslau, 1929) 67, Fr. 6, 7, as quoted in Cyril Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire
41-42.

\textsuperscript{112}The Definition, quoted in Cyril Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire 165.

\textsuperscript{113}The Definition, quoted in Cyril Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire 168.

\textsuperscript{114}André Grabar, Byzantium: Byzantine Art in the Middle Ages (London:
Methuen, 1966) 90.

\textsuperscript{115}Grabar, Byzantium 89, for instance, suggests that the iconoclastic decree in 726
against icons drew the Byzantine state “closer to their subjects in Asia Minor who were in
the forefront of the battle and hostile to religious images. It also drew them closer to the
Muslims and might have impaired the resistance of the Christians in Asia Minor to Muslim
attacks.”

\textsuperscript{116}Tatarkiewicz, Medieval Aesthetics 42-43.
this by referring to the story of Isaiah (who first sees the Lord sitting on the throne of glory and only then hears the seraphim praising him [Isaiah 6:1]) and to the disciples who first saw Christ and later wrote the gospels. As for images of Christ, it is precisely because of the paradoxical mixture of such features as “the uncircumscribable with the circumscribed” that the invisible can be seen. The outline is shared by the prototype and the icon, the difference consisting mainly in their material nature. Not only is there a dialectical tension between the two, as John of Damascus indicated; “it is not admissible to call something a prototype if it does not have its image transferred into some material.”

The holiness and power of the icon rests on an identity, based on likeness in form between the original and the copy: “Thus if one says that divinity is in the icon, he would not be wrong [...] divinity is not present in them by a union of natures, for they are not deified flesh, but by a relative participation.” Hence, even the “shadow” of the cross can “burn up demons.”

In the record of the Seventh Ecumenical Council—held at Nicea in 787 during the brief interlude when the iconoclastic forces were in temporary abeyance under the iconophile Empress Irene (780-798)—there is a passage in which Epiphanius the deacon charges that the opponents of icons had lumped both icons of demons and of the Lord and

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117 Moshe Barasch, Icon 278.
119 Moshe Barasch, Icon 282.
120 On the Holy Icons 112, as quoted in and discussed by Moshe Barasch, Icon 269.
121 Moshe Barasch, Icon 273. Further, at the end of the third Refutation (quoted in Barasch 275), Theodore states: “It is not the essence [ousia] of the image which we venerate, but the form [character] of the prototype which is stamped upon it [...] Neither is it the material which is venerated [...] But if the image is venerated, it has one veneration with the prototype, just as they have the same likeness.”
122 On the Holy Icons, as quoted in Moshe Barasch, Icon 270.
his saints in the same category of “idols.” The faithful, he says, “look not at what is seen but at what is signified,” stressing that the physical work is not important in relation to its accurate reproduction of a physical model but in relation to the spiritual truth to which it points. Yet by “making an icon of Christ in his human form,” says Epiphanius, one “confesses that God the Word became man truly, not in conjecture.” The image, then, confirms the Incarnation. Further, Epiphanius, as a defender of images, goes on to declare the equality of visual and textual gospel narratives and their shared purpose, both of which lead their audiences to remember Christ’s life on earth and, with heightened awareness, to praise their Redeemer: “For when they hear the gospel with the ears, they exclaim ‘glory to Thee, O Lord’: and when they see it with the eyes, they send forth exactly the same doxology, for we are reminded of his life among men. That which the narrative declares in writing is the same as that which the icon does [in colors].” The ultimate purpose of Christian art is to lead a transported audience to acts of praising their Redeemer.

An important, if somewhat overestimated, literary response to the Council of Nicea is expressed in the Libri Carolini, or Caroline Books, composed under the auspices of Charlemagne, but probably reflecting the thinking of a small circle around Theodulf of

123 For a discussion of the concept, with respect to the views of John of Damascus, that the main difference between images of pagan “demons” and of God is the prototype see Moshe Barasch, Icon 212.

124 Daniel J. Sahas, Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-Century Iconoclasm: An Annotated Translation (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1986) 69, col. 232B. Sahas notes that the “prominence given to this deacon by the council makes him the probable author of the text of the Refutations” which followed the reading of the Definition of the iconoclastic council of 754 (41, fn. 194). In his Introduction, Sahas comments that the prerequisites of an iconographer are personal spirituality and commitment, as well as a “profound knowledge of the Church’s life and tradition” (15). He notes that in the few Byzantine manuals for iconographers that exist, discussion of “the meaning of the different icons and symbols” constitute an important part (italics mine; 15, fn. 52).

125 Daniel J. Sahas, Icon and Logos 160, col. 344E.
Orléans.\textsuperscript{126} As Caecilia Davis-Weyer further points out concerning the political dimension, the scathing reply by the Carolingian court, the Western Church “had barely a voice in the deliberations of the council.”\textsuperscript{127} Further, the author of the Caroline Books appears to have been unaware that he was responding to a “garbled Latin translation of a Greek original,” as pointed out by Stephen Gero.\textsuperscript{128} Attacking idolatry and the view that images have supernatural powers, the Caroline Books state that images are acceptable as a means of depicting events, refreshing memory, and formulating thoughts. Images of Christ, the Virgin and the saints are discouraged as tending towards idolatry, with the result that they were essentially absent in monumental sculpture in Carolingian France. The Caroline Books and the iconoclasts shared an expressed regard for the Cross.\textsuperscript{129} In the Caroline Books the military symbolism of the Cross is stressed as a sign of the Savior's cosmic triumph.\textsuperscript{130} Gero observes that this emphasis is quite different from late medieval fixations on the sufferings of the crucified Christ\textsuperscript{131} although, as I will show in the next chapter, the Anglo-Saxon Ruthwell Cross features alternately both aspects. Carolingian cross mysticism is represented by the meditations of Rabanus Maurus. The text inscribed within

\textsuperscript{126}He was a Visigoth from Spain. In Arab dominated areas, there was opposition to image-making. Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this paragraph is drawn from the discussion by Hans Holländer, \textit{Early Medieval Art} (New York: Universe Books, 1974) 73-74 and C. R. Dodwell, \textit{Painting in Europe: 800 to 1200} (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) 15-24.


\textsuperscript{129}Gero, “The Libri Carolini” 16-17. He summarizes: “The Cross retained for them its full ritual value. The Iconoclasts exorcised demons and sickness by the sign of the Cross. They consecrated meals with the sign of the Cross. In churches they replaced images by plain crucifixes. The Cross was for them a token of the triumphant power of the faith, arresting the torrent of error. The emperors raised high the Cross as a sign of victory.”

\textsuperscript{130}Gero, “The Libri Carolini” 17.

\textsuperscript{131}Gero, “The Libri Carolini” 17.
his self-portrait in one of these *carmina figurata* corresponds exactly to part of the inscription used by Dunstan in his tenth-century self-portrait, where he appeals not to the Cross of his apparent source, but to a monumental outline of Christ as a figure of Wisdom, which, as I will demonstrate in my third chapter, manifests the sophisticated thinking of this Anglo-Saxon Benedictine reformer on the matter of images. In the Caroline Books primacy is given to text over image, with a special emphasis on the inscription which alone could, according to Theodulf, distinguish an image of the Virgin from that of Venus.\(^{132}\)

As Dodwell observes with respect to the restrictions against painting, public "wall-painting is always meant," not "the private and privileged art of the manuscript."\(^{133}\) He says that, in the latter, there is a full range of classical subjects so disparaged in the Caroline Books, manuscripts actually being their chief means of transmission for posterity. Of particular prominence in Carolingian manuscript art are Old Testament subjects, manifesting the interest of the Franks who saw themselves as replacements for the Old Testament Israelites in terms of God's special attention. Subsequently, Charlemagne in particular was seen as a second King David.\(^{134}\) Charlemagne's interest in aligning himself with the spiritual authority of the Christian religion was reinforced when he was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope on Christmas Day 800,\(^{135}\) an alliance which was to contribute to the conditions that led to the future crusading activities of the European states which, as I will indicate in my discussion of the early fourteenth-century Auchinleck Manuscript in chapter 5, led to a reconsideration and reaffirmation of the Christian use of images as distinguished from the perceived idolatrous use by the Saracens. In his desire to identify imperial interests with the spiritual sanction conferred by Rome, where the Pope had condemned the Caroline Books, Charlemagne appears to have withdrawn from the

\(^{132}\)This passage is translated in Tatarkiewicz, *Medieval Aesthetics* 100.

\(^{133}\)Dodwell, *Painting in Europe* 16 and 21.

\(^{134}\)Dodwell, *Painting in Europe* 21-22.

\(^{135}\)The secular power gave political (and military) support to the pope and received in turn spiritual sanction; for a discussion see Donald Bullough, *The Age of Charlemagne* (London: Elek Books, 1965) 167-183.
position they expressed.

The Caroline Books were officially disputed in 825 under Louis the Pious at a synod in Paris, resulting in an expansion of allowable themes, including renditions of God in Majesty.\(^{136}\) They were to be seen allegorically, not as holy pictures\(^{137}\)—in theory. In practice, as Ellert Dahl shows with respect to the late ninth-century statue of St. Foy of Conques, "the veneration of the 'cult image' in the West has much more in common with the worship of icons in the East than with the doctrine of the *Libri Carolini*,"\(^{138}\) a subject which, in general, has been inadequately discussed. Dahl has recourse to the experience of Bernard of Angers who visited Conques, starting out with the orthodox view of the Caroline Books that only the Cross and relics are to be venerated, but ending by exclaiming before the image, "O, St. Foy [...] come to my rescue at the Day of Judgement."\(^{139}\) Although the statue contains the head of the martyred child, accounting in part for its efficacy, its outward countenance is that of a Roman emperor, representing the saint in glory.\(^{140}\)

In his study of the extent to which the ideology of the Caroline Books influenced Carolingian art, Gero concludes that they had little direct effect on contemporary artistic activity. In his view, the exception might be an apse mosaic at Germigny-des-Prés which may have been commissioned by Theodulf according to its dedicatory inscription.\(^{141}\) It

\(\text{\textsuperscript{136}}\)Holländer, *Early Medieval Art* 74.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{137}}\)Holländer, *Early Medieval Art* 74.


\(\text{\textsuperscript{139}}\)Dahl, "Heavenly images: The statue of St. Foy of Conques" 181.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{140}}\)Dahl, "Heavenly images: The statue of St. Foy of Conques" 181. As will become apparent, there is some similarity here to the Pearl dreamer who, mourning of his lost child, sees a grown-up vision of her in the Heavenly Jerusalem in the fourteenth-century poem to be discussed later in this study.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{141}}\)Gero, "The Libri Carolini" 22 and 20.
represents the deity by showing his right hand coming out of a cloud, with two small and two large cherubim on either side, all pointing to the ark of the Covenant, an interesting configuration in view of the frontispiece to the late Anglo-Saxon Cædmon Manuscript frontispiece which assertively depicts the image of the deity himself between the cherubim, as I will show in chapter 3. Not mentioned by Gero but likely also produced under the auspices of Theodulf is the sole miniature, apart from decorative canon tables, in the Fleury Gospels which shows a hand of God representing his Word inside the top part of an arch above the four evangelist symbols, with eyes in their wings, depicted within a twin arcade below. Such a hand of God was again used to signify God's Word in the iconophobic Pearl Manuscript which I discuss in chapter 7.

One of the main points of interest regarding the Caroline Books concerns not just the political or religious context, but its disclosure of the opposing modes of perception implicit in textual and artistic representation. Obviously not written by artists, they draw on arguments formulated by Augustine who rejected his former aesthetic seduction by the arts when he turned away from the necessarily false illusions of art which variously represent the bodily countenance, not of import to the atheist, and which are "compelled by a kind of necessity to conform as much as they are able to the artist's will." The author of the Caroline Books affirms that, while art can serve as a reminder of past events, rational matters can best be expressed by words. What is opposed is an intellectual

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143 Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 348, fol. 8v. See the discussion and reproduction in Florence Mütterich and Joachim E. Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting* (New York: George Braziller, 1976) 53 and plate 11. The eyes evidently refer to the “apocalyptic significance of the symbols” and refer to Rev. 4.6 and 4.8.

144 Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II, 10 (18) anthologized in Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art 300-1150: Sources and Documents* 41; see also 42 to 44. See the Latin version in *Oeuvres Complètes de Saint Augustin, Evêque d' Hippone*, tran. Péronne et al., vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie de Louis Vives, 1873) 601.

145 Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art: 300-1150: Sources and Documents* 103. The John referred to is John the presbyter who spoke for the iconodule position at the Council of Nicea in 787.
understanding of spiritual truth, conveyed by extended rational discourse, and a direct visual apprehension of spiritual truth, immediate and emotionally powerful when it occurs, resulting in an outflowing of love for that which is visually represented. It is perhaps not surprising that the association of text and image, even in later medieval art, was always a bit uneasy, the power of the latter always threatening to usurp institutional authority even while promoting its interests. Like mystics, artists could be utilized by the Church, but with extreme caution and only with restrictions. Because of their power to engage the viewer directly, images were used in the sort of devotional practices encouraged later by Franciscan piety. Once prolifically produced, images led also to the excesses of their very success: idolatry and greed of ownership at the expense of charity. Even when this did not result in iconophobic reactions, such as occurred during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries in England, it led some artists to define in subtle ways their position with respect to holy images. During periods when writers sought to delimit the range of what, if anything, they considered acceptable in art, artists themselves continued to break down the restrictions in practice or to devise ingenious ways of representing their subjects indirectly and audiences continued to respond, as evidenced by the art that has survived despite these interludes. It would be a mistake for scholars to extrapolate medieval attitudes from writings alone or even primarily, a tendency that has until recently been supported by a post-medieval rejection of the quality of medieval art as naive in its execution, leading to the assumption that it was also naive in conception.

Medieval Images and English Words: The Theological and Historical Dimensions

The story of medieval illustrated vernacular poetic works is one of continuities and discontinuities. One of the continuities, perhaps surprising to a modern reader, is that in both the Anglo-Saxon and late medieval periods, the illustrations of English vernacular

146 This was due to the influence of Wyclif, the Lollards, and other reformists at the time, as I shall elaborate in chapters 5 and 6.

147 This is the case, for instance, in the frontispiece to the Caedmon Manuscript, the Dunstan self-portrait before the image of the deity and that of Matthew Paris before the Virgin and Child, all works to be discussed shortly.
works dealt in one way or another with the core issues raised by the Byzantine iconoclastic debates. The theology of the Incarnation was at the heart of image-making, pertinent not only to the portrayal of the deity but also to the portrayal of people because man was perceived as made in the image of God. God’s divine nature created a problem for art because of the biblical restrictions about making graven images, but the theological basis for portraying God was that as the Word, he not only manifested himself in the creation, the subject of the late Anglo-Saxon Cædmon Manuscript, but took on human flesh during the Incarnation. The uncircumscribable could, as it were, become artistically circumscribed, but in a more dematerialized form by way of allusion to the divine. The image, according to this view, could serve as a bridge to the divine which it intimates and which is the real object of “seeing.” The English vernacular poem inscribed in runes on the Ruthwell Cross forms part of a sophisticated word-image complex and features alternately the humanity and divinity of Christ, the subject also of the main panels. This large monument with its interrelated images and words, English and Latin, serves as a meditation site for people of varying levels of literacy from the newly converted to the multi-lingual.

All this attention to image-making, which was challenged to a greater or lesser degree according to the times, also made the makers of images self-conscious about what they were doing as shown, for instance, in their own self-portraits, often kneeling before an image of the Creator, as in the case of the tenth-century Dunstan and of the thirteenth-century Matthew Paris. Related to this is the subject of authors, since they too imitate a divine prerogative. Portraits of authors engaged in the act of writing visually manifest Augustine’s comparison (based on Psalm 44.2) of the tongue of God to the scrivener’s pen. By means of words and images, the Invisible is made known by writers and artists. More than ever before or since in the history of the West, words and images are indissolubly connected in medieval cultural artifacts. Not only images but the vernacular itself was closely associated with the Incarnation, the divine Word being corporeally incarnated, as it were, in the language of the common people just as it was in the flesh of Christ whose human form could be represented by a visual image.

The discontinuities in the production of illustrated vernacular manuscripts were
due in large part to the disruptions caused by military invasions and the degree of cultural differences the invaders imposed. Vernacular writings first emerged from the impetus given by the establishment of a Latin monastic written culture in combination with the native oral traditions of Germanic poetry in Northumbria. The Viking invasions led to a serious loss of knowledge, not only of Greek which had been considered a touchstone of international sophistication by writers like Bede, but also of Latin. When King Alfred tried to recover some of this, he promoted vernacular literacy for his court, vernacular translations of Latin works to help instil wisdom in his administrators, and competence in Latin for the religious. The Alfred Jewel symbolizes his emphasis on the Wisdom of the Word, both divine and human, accessible in English, linking spiritual and national power structures. During the late Anglo-Saxon period, the illustrations of vernacular scriptural narratives imply that there was no real perceived limitation about the capacity of the vernacular to convey spiritual truth. The Caedmon Manuscript miniatures give evidence of the plan of the creative Word while displaying the Christological significance of the Old Testament. Image-making in the Anglo-Saxon period is more specifically informed by incarnational theology than in the later medieval period when it becomes more broadly based. The potential for future development of major works involving words and images is evidenced by Ælfric’s Hexateuch and the Bayeux Tapestry, but the latter signals the cause of its disruption. The Norman Conquest derailed the first significant emergence of a vernacular culture in Europe.

Anglo-Norman replaced English as the language of court and Latin continued to thrive as the language of religion and of scholarship. When the English vernacular began to come to the fore again, largely due to nationalist aspirations, it was no longer the language of the court. The first extant evidence of figural art in connection with an English vernacular work appears at the beginning of a verse history, the Brut, in the form of a portrait of its human author Layamon, projecting into the nationalist sphere thirteenth-century interests not only in God as the author of creation but in the human authors of the Bible.

It was not until the fourteenth century that the English vernacular began to re-emerge as a serious literary medium again, now following other European vernaculars.
The Auchinleck Manuscript, a library of pious works and translations of courtly romances all in one vernacular collection, has illustrations prefacing many of its poems, adding to the impression of luxury and so enhancing the status of its owner, probably a wealthy magnate, such a patron reflecting the entry of a new element influencing book production. Since at this time the vernacular did not grow out of a sophisticated Latin cultural base, as had Anglo-Saxon literary works, but from the language of the common people, there was a perception that the vernacular was not up to conveying sophisticated spiritual truths, a situation exhibited in the Auchinleck selections. It is interesting that the first miniature deals with the issue of images, the difference between a pagan idol and a sculpted image of Christ on the cross, a kind of artistic manifesto preceding the other illustrations of vernacular works in this manuscript. Meditation on the sufferings of the corporeal Christ was encouraged for vernacular readers for whom contemplation of the divine was a stretch only the Latin literate were more likely to attain, a view emphasizing the cultural gap between this attitude to the vernacular and that exhibited by Anglo-Saxon artifacts like the Ruthwell Cross which demonstrates no such diminished expectations. In the Auchinleck Manuscript, too, the veneration of icons, itself related to hero-worship, opens up to include that of English national heroes.

Later in the century, the Vernon Manuscript, the largest extant English vernacular manuscript book, includes miniatures relating to the Incarnation of Christ and the efficacy of devotion to the image of the Virgin. While this encyclopedic collection of pious works contains mostly works that are not difficult to read, it does contain a section of writings for those more advanced, including a work on contemplation by Walter Hilton. The lavishness of its scale, the inclusion of holy images and works by such writers as Hilton, who was a defender of images, suggest that the Vernon might have been made as an orthodox reaction to the views of the Lollard heretics, a group who promoted the vernacular but opposed images as tending to idolatry. The Lollards were most vitriolic in their condemnation of richly adorned images associated with the world of wealth and privilege.

The next two vernacular works to be discussed, the Pearl Manuscript and the Ellesmere Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales, show that the capacities of the vernacular
were no longer conceived to be limited with respect to their intellectual and stylistic range. Yet they contain no pictures of holy figures at all! Although they are very different in other respects, this avoidance of holy images can perhaps be explained in relation to the image controversies of the times, whether as evidence of sympathy to the concerns raised or of caution, since images were being defaced and destroyed, although not on the scale of the Byzantine iconoclasts earlier.

The very plainness of the *Pearl* Manuscript miniatures hints further at such a sensitivity to Lollard concerns, or it may be simply that these miniatures, serving as prefaces and epilogues, were made for an ascetically inclined audience for whom the provision of a visual apparatus encouraged a proper spiritual reading of the poems. In the case of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, for instance, a more religious vision may have been imposed by the miniatures than the poem by itself might seem, to some critics, to invite. The *Pearl* Manuscript miniatures, in effect, control and channel contemporary anxieties on sensitive matters in a deceptively simple way. While the *Pearl* Manuscript did not require a massive financial outlay, expense is not likely to have been a major consideration affecting the style of the miniatures since it does not take much to add some decorative adornment. Modern charges of artistic naivety, lack of skill on the part of the artist, or ignorance of the text can be challenged by an examination of what sort of reading, if any, the miniatures provide.

In the case of the Ellesmere Manuscript, a conservative work which avoids suggestions of violence and explicit sexuality, the decision to portray the authors rather than the tales emphasizes its subtext, the posthumous visual canonization of its author, making of him a literary icon. While the whole of the Ellesmere "text," including the images, might seem more aristocratic in its presentation than the literary work by itself might seem to warrant, it counters the heavily annotated, linguistically oriented texts with which modern scholars have long been familiar and provides a richer sense of how Chaucer's legacy was perceived within the cultural context of the period right after his death. Both the *Pearl* and the Ellesmere Manuscripts take the reader on a spiritual pilgrimage to the celestial court by visual means, as I will show.
Introduction

While Britain was at the opposite end of the Christian world from the source of the iconoclastic debates, it was not as cut off as might be expected. Characteristically, Christian ideas manifested in books and art works passed beyond national boundaries, unifying worshipers anxious to own them as an important part of their devotional lives. The speed of transmission may not have been quite as instantaneous as that of the sign of the cross made by Adamnán of Iona to effect a miracle for an abbot at a great distance, but the conveyance of sacred objects had all the greater an impact for their rarity. It was this same Adamnán who wrote a book, from which Bede quotes, about the Holy Places as recounted to him by Arculf, a bishop from Gaul who had visited not only Jerusalem but


4 It is Arculf who, Carl Nordenfalk surmises, might have been the one who brought with him a copy of Tatian’s *Diatessarion*, since his visit coincides with the production of the Book of Durrow which first adopted the carpet page and full-length evangelist portraits. Nordenfalk points to the striking coincidence that at the beginning of a
also Damascus, Constantinople, and Alexandria. It is perhaps not so strange that Adamnán, a Celtic priest and abbot of monks, should find a community of interest with the converted Anglo-Saxons in Northumbria, both showing a fascination with the religious culture of the Mediterranean and the Byzantine world. Kurt Weitzmann observes that there was a greater Byzantine influence on insular art around the turn of the seventh century up to the mid eighth century than on the continent.⁵

Although there are no extant texts proving that the theories of images formulated by someone like John of Damascus were read by the early monks in Ireland or England, there is no absolute reason to exclude the possibility either. On the eve of iconoclasm in the East, not only does Bede indicate that he could read Greek—in the list of works appended to his History, he includes the information that he corrected The Life and Sufferings of Saint Anastasius which had been badly translated from that language—but he repeatedly emphasizes the high level of learning in both Greek and Latin in native monastic circles.⁶ He traces this to the arrival of Theodore from Tarsus in Cilicia, a scholar proficient in Greek and Latin,⁷ who was sent by Pope Vitalian to be consecrated as

sixteenth-century Persian copy of this gospel harmony by Tatian, there is a carpet page in which the cross has been left bare but which corresponds in specific details to that at the beginning of the Book of Durrow. The latter is Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 57, fol. 1v, c. 680. See the discussion in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting 19-20.

⁵See his Art in the Medieval West and its Contacts with Byzantium 4-5. He mentions this in particular in connection with the Irish style. He says that for a deeper infiltration there had to be "a predisposition towards Byzantine art forms" at this time. The Celtic form of monasticism itself had close affinities with that of the Byzantine world, especially of Coptic Egypt, the probable source also of interlace as a design feature whose potential was exploited in insular art. See also the discussion in Jackson J. Campbell, "Some Aspects of Meaning in Anglo-Saxon Art and Literature," AM 15 (1974): 14.

⁶Bede, History of the English Church and People 5.24, 332 and 324. He does not mention that the Irish monks had maintained a knowledge of Greek.

⁷Bede, History of the English Church and People 4.1, 198-200 for the information on Theodore and the circumstances of his arrival. Michael Lapidge, in pointing out that this Greek monk "was one of the most learned men in the Mediterranean world," as indicated by the following information gained from recent work on his biblical commentaries: he studied in Syria, fled from the Arab invasions in the 630s, went to the university at Constantinople, and then to Rome where he joined the community of Cilician
Archbishop of all the English. To ensure that Theodore, who had to change his tonsure to the Western circular form, did not introduce into the English Church any untoward Greek customs, however, the Pope ordered Abbot Hadrian, a native of Africa and himself a scholar in Greek and Latin, to support Theodore. This indicates Bede's awareness of the allure of Byzantine ideas and the need to accept only those suitable to the practices of the English church in order to avoid heresy. A lively intellectual community was instigated by Theodore and Hadrian, attracting numerous students some of whom were still alive in Bede's day, as knowledgeable in Latin and Greek as in their own language.8

In such an atmosphere, it would indeed have been surprising if contemporary theoretical discussions of the Incarnation as a justification for the making of images had not taken place. After all, Benedict Biscop, who had conducted Theodore to Canterbury, also went out of his way on his journeys to such places as Rome and elsewhere to acquire by purchase or donations, an "immense library of books on every branch of learning."9 Not only did his zeal extend to acquiring a store of sacred books, pictures, and relics, but he was also interested in all the arts that could beautify the church to the extent that he brought along Abbot John, the chief cantor of St. Peter's in Rome, to teach the monks how to sing the psalms and to conduct the Roman liturgy, information which the latter wrote down for them.10 From France he brought masons to build a stone church and glaziers to teach the making not only of stained glass windows, but also of lamps and church vessels.11 Not long after, "workmen, scholars, and clergy" fled from "the

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8 Bede, History of the English Church and People 4.2, 201.


11 Bede, The Lives of the Abbots 10. From Vita Sanctorum Abbatum Monasterii in Wiramutha et Givrvm, PL 95, col. 717. In the footnote to the translations of this in The
iconoclasm and intolerance consequent upon the Moslem conquests," with the result that Levantine influence was "strongly felt at Ravenna and at Rome, and from thence was passed on to Northumbria," as Lawrence Stone suggests. It is evident from all this that the imported arts and skills, not to mention artists and scholars, served to establish a flourishing religious life in Britain, a legacy in which Bede took pride and of which he was himself a product. The success of the enterprise, as demonstrated by the extant works of art, indicates that the artists were willing to incorporate and reignite elements from a variety of cultures, whether Celtic, Germanic, or Mediterranean.

Yet even before John of Damascus was to define the twofold nature of visible images as written words or as material objects (including paintings), words and pictures themselves were becoming highly interactive in early insular art. From its rudimentary Irish beginnings, this process was to explode almost overnight into the well-known works of Hiberno-Saxon manuscript art. It is not these I intend to feature here; rather, I want to show that even in its earliest stages, there was an urge to exploit and develop the potential of the spaces around texts or pictures to direct the way they are read and thought about. With respect to artistic rendition, the objective is not to picture the naturalistic form, but to give only enough detail to stimulate the mind to penetrate the meaning behind surface

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*Age of Bede*, trans. J. F. Webb and ed. D. H. Farmer (1965; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 189, it is pointed out that recent archaeological excavations have found an extensive stained glass workshop at Jarrow dating from the time of Bede.


13"Differences between works of Byzantine and Western art of this period must be treated rather as local variants, a situation which had existed throughout the late Roman Empire when one could justifiably speak of a *Römische Reichskunst,*" as pointed out by Kurt Weitzmann, *Art in the Medieval West and its Contacts with Byzantium* 1.

14*Apologies III*, 23, as mentioned in Barasch, *Icon* 230.

15Insular art shares this with Early Christian and Byzantine art which was derived from it. See the discussions in Campbell, "Some Aspects of Meaning" 12-14; David Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Painting and Developments in the West* 6; and André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968) 8.
perceptions. Even the act of writing itself turns into a creative spiritual exercise as ideas become manifest on vellum or on stone. In the case of the former, the flourished introduction to a text becomes a pictorial commentary in the early seventh-century Cathach of St. Columba\(^6\) and in the case of the latter, texts serve as borders for the pictorial content on sculpted panels of the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross.\(^7\) The borders on two of the side panels of the Ruthwell Cross give the earliest extant vernacular poem of any length.\(^8\) In order to facilitate a better understanding of the process by which image and text became so intimately and symbiotically connected, I will limit the scope of this discussion to showing how the theme concerning the triumphant divinity and the fleshly humanity of the Incarnate Christ grew from its earliest introduction to its maturation. The Cathach initial and this main panel of the Ruthwell Cross form part of a developing

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\(^6\)Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, s.n., fol. 48.

\(^7\)Douglas MacLean, “The Date of the Ruthwell Cross,” The Ruthwell Cross: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 8 December 1989, ed. Brendan Cassidy (Princeton: UP, Index of Christian Art and Dept. of Art and Archaeology, 1992) 70. He considers the earlier suggested date of c. 684 untenable and suggests instead early in the second quarter of the eighth century.

\(^8\)Caedmon’s Hymn was initially recorded in a Latin rendering by Bede, A History of the English Church and People 4.24, 246. The earliest vernacular versions of this are recorded in the margins of tenth-century Latin texts of Bede’s history. For an itemization of these see Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ed, The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems (New York: Columbia UP, 1942) xcvi. Most Anglo-Saxon poems are recorded in manuscripts of c. 1000 AD, but early examples do survive from tenth-century manuscripts, probably as a result of King Alfred’s interest in vernacular poetry. Closely contemporary with the Ruthwell Cross is the ivory Franks Casket which also contains vernacular verses, less extensive than those of the Ruthwell Cross, inscribed as runes on its borders, as well as some Latin in Roman characters. There are also runic letters on St. Cuthbert’s coffin of 698 AD, as for example, on the lid which gives the names of Matthew, Mark, and John for their evangelist symbols, while that of Luke is inscribed in Roman characters. See E. Kitzinger, introduction, The Coffin of Saint Cuthbert (Oxford: UP for the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral, 1959) 3-4. Both the lettering and the outline drawings on this coffin are similar in appearance to the Romans. See Kitzinger puts it (6).
tradition with respect to the visual iconography connected with Psalm 90.13. It is within the militant thematic context of this biblical text that the Ruthwell Cross poem needs to be understood. Notwithstanding the misreading of a patristic commentary by an influential scholar, the heroic Anglo-Saxon verses on this cross are consonant with the Latin text and the image on its main panels. The verses, the Latin inscriptions, and the images together contribute to an enlarged, holistic sort of understanding incorporating imaginative, intellectual, and emotional responses evoked by evidence of Christ's dual nature. Within individual works then, and in relation to other works that form part of a continuous thematic development, it is possible to "read" more fully any one of its manifestations.

Inextricably linked with the pictorial and verbal context of the vernacular poem, in the discussion immediately following and throughout the rest of this study at large, is the relevance of artistic issues concerning the making of graven images. Christianity being an Incarnational religion, these are issues that artists had to struggle with and to redefine for themselves in their works again and again as the centuries progressed. It is easy to forget that even though the church in the West became divided from that in the East, in artistic practice, the ideas and controversies informing image production, which iconoclasm forced Byzantine theologians to articulate, remained operative (if not always at fever pitch) throughout the Christian world until the Renaissance shifted western perceptions.

Merely excavating a medieval artifact and judging it in relation to classical or modern works without successfully recovering something of its meaning within its original context leads to an impoverished appreciation of its power. Mutually informative texts and images, in particular, allowed access to the promise of salvation that Christianity held for its community of believers, not just for those literate in Latin, but also for larger numbers.

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19 The ceremonial calcatio, the graphic illustration of the victor trampling the defeated enemy is familiar in the art of the Near East and the Mediterranean from earliest times. For a discussion of its application to Christian art, see Jeanne Vilette, La Résurrection du Christ: Dans l'Art Chrétien Du IIe Au VIIe Siècle (Paris: H. Laurens, 1957) 89-105.

able to read the vernacular as well as for the visually literate. The majority of believers who only heard the Christian narrative would have focused more intensely on visible monuments and so would have "read" with concentration and awe all the visible signs and pictures that prompted their recollection of the events of salvation history, served as a conduit to the divine, and provided models for their own lives. This is not merely a hierarchical process devolving down from the Latin literate to the least sophisticated because the act of vernacularization and visualization returned added dimensions of thinking and feeling to those involved in formulating ideas and artifacts.

The Shape of an Idea in Insular Manuscripts: Script into Image, Image as Christological Commentary

Probably the first extant insular manuscript to include a visual image in connection with script, in imitation of Mediterranean decoration,\(^2\) is a simple decorated cross in the Codex Ussherianus Primus made around 600 in Ireland (fig. 1).\(^3\) This enlarged monogram cross is inserted between the explicit of Luke and the incipit of Mark, with the Greek letters indicating the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1.8; cf. Isaiah 44.6) appearing below the cross beam.\(^4\) The cross has been enhanced by the widening of its terminals, with that at the top right ending in a small curl, making of it an "Xp" monogram. The impulse to adorn the symbol further is shown by the red dots, deriving from Syrian art,\(^5\) which define the cross shape both internally and externally, to be repeated in the triple border in


\(^{22}\) Dublin, Trinity College, MS 55, fol. 149v. For further discussion of this manuscript see Carl Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting* 11-14.

\(^{23}\) Nordenfalk mentions that this is a copy of the pre-Jerome version of the Gospels, using the old Latin order; *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting* 11-13. Carl Nordenfalk, *Die Späantiken Zierbuchstaben*, 2 vols. (Stockholm, C. G. Röder, 1970) 1: 63-64, traces this sort of monogram to the period before AD 500. See his vol. 2, composed of plates, for early examples of this sort of monogram, especially plates 7 and 8 for stone reliefs, plates 10 and 11 for early Christian oil lamps, and plate 14 for manuscript examples.

\(^{24}\) Campbell, "Some Aspects of Meaning" 15.
alternation with curved brown calligraphic lines. Its enlargement, decoration, and framing separate it from the main body of the preceding and following gospel texts, while serving also as a point of transition and as a mnemonic device. Referring to the gospels, but also pointing beyond them to an eschatological framework as suggested by the suspended letters referring to Revelation 1.8, this concentrated visual diagram encourages the reader to pause in contemplation. The deity is inferred by the cross and these letters, both in human and in divine terms. The blank space of the vellum between all the visual elements, including the calligraphically ornamented frame, gives the impression that the ground of their being is spiritual rather than physical. The cross partakes of the character of script in its schematization, almost like a hieroglyph, supporting Jackson J. Campbell’s observation on the affinities of early Irish and Byzantine art in this regard. The cross was to become the “symbol most favoured by the Byzantine iconoclasts.” Historically, the efficacy of this sign was already demonstrated in the account of Constantine’s conversion as given by Eusebius who says that the Emperor’s teachers told him that the sign of the cross signifies victory over death. Following his two visions of this wondrous sign, it was by means of such an image that Constantine vanquished his rival, as described by Eusebius. The interpretation of this incident with its revelatory context is somewhat akin to the way the biblical text itself came to be viewed in Britain “as something revealed visually to the understanding,” with the result that “the appearance of the text became a


26 Campbell, “Some Aspects of Meaning” 13. Throughout his article, Campbell traces probable routes of importation by which Byzantine art influenced Hiberno-Saxon art (5-45).


matter of concern.\footnote{Alexander, The Decorated Letter 7. He contrasts this to the notion in the “Ancient world” in which “literature was spoken or heard since texts were read aloud.”}

The next advances in insular manuscript illumination are, however, distinguished from contemporary experiments with initials in Mediterranean manuscripts.\footnote{Alexander, The Decorated Letter 9 and Nordenfalk, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting 13. See Nordenfalk, Die Spätantiken Zierbuchstaben 2, color plates VI and VII for earlier manuscript examples of a fish forming the left side of the letter “A.”} In native manuscripts the form of these enlarged letters was often to swell into the curves and spirals of Celtic La Tène art\footnote{Nordenfalk, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting 13.} and to shape-shift further into zoological terminals, thereby changing direction and identity.\footnote{Alexander, The Decorated Letter 10.} The eye is also drawn into the text by the \textit{diminuendo} effect in which the letters adjacent to the large introductory initial gradually decrease in size, making them a continuation of the transformative process begun by the enlarged initial. What happens is that a phonogram, i.e. a visual symbol representing a speech sound, is converted into a pictogram and then back again as the reader’s eye brings it into relation with the text which is charged with new energy in the process.

There is, I suggest, a further and very important development to be added, one that was facilitated by these metamorphosing aspects—that in the transfer back from the pictorial to the verbal, the adjoining text becomes additionally charged with supra-textual meaning so that the reader is encouraged to understand its Christological significance. The zoological motifs in these early English initials have not previously been accorded any such meaning by either Nordenfalk, who refers only to the “open-mouthed animal head which terminates some of the initials,”\footnote{Nordenfalk, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting 35.} or by Alexander, who says merely that the letter, in the example I am about to discuss, “turns into a fish.”\footnote{Alexander, The Decorated Letter 9.} It may be that, at first, the calligraphic curved terminals suggested a zoological shape, especially with the addition of
an eye and an ear, but this in turn offered scope for further play, notably when a connection could be found with the adjacent passage of text. The increasing limitation of representations to animal and plant motifs as a result of the iconoclastic concerns beginning to emerge in the East may have given an added impetus to their employment and development even in insular art, leading to the necessity of having these motifs carry more than an ordinary weight of symbolic meaning.

All of these features are demonstrated in an initial in the Psalter or Cathach of Saint Columba\textsuperscript{36} (fig. 2) made close to the time of the Codex Ussherianus Primus. In the Cathach initial both the letter and its transformation into a zoological terminal exist on the same two-dimensional plane in which all the elements “grow or contract, intertwine or merge as the artist requires.”\textsuperscript{37} The reader is led into the script first by the size and decoration of the large “q” with its lively zoological terminal and then, by the diminuendo effect, into the extended text of Psalm 90. It is the addition of the cross that suddenly allows the configuration to carry meaning in relation to this particular psalm. The cross alone is suggestive, immediately connecting the Old Testament psalm with the New Testament narrative, but it is the placement of the cross above the neck of the dragonesque creature that is important. The “q” introduces Psalm 90 and anticipates verse 13:

\begin{quote}
Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: 
and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon.\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

Eusebius relates these words to Christ’s victory “over the leaders of spirits after his death.”\textsuperscript{39} An early sixth-century Byzantine mosaic in the Chapel of the Archbishop at

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\textsuperscript{36}Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, s.n., fol. 48.
\textsuperscript{37}Alexander, The Decorated Letter 9.
\textsuperscript{39}Commentaria in Psalmos, PG 23, col. 1166: \textit{ipsum post mortem de principibus spiritibus victoriam reportasse narrat}.
\end{flushright}
Ravenna showing Christ Treading on the Beasts (fig. 3) indicates how the theme developed in the Mediterranean. The exemplary function of this representation of victory is indicated by the open book with the text from John 14.6: *EGO SVM VIA (ET) VERITAS ET VITA* + ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life.’ Both the emblem and the words function in a double sense as “the visible sign of an idea” addressed to the viewer. In the Cathach initial, the schematization is greater than in the Byzantine mosaic, the cross by itself indicating that this psalm is to be taken as reference to Christ and the dragonesque creature below to the figurative meaning of the beasts of verse 13.

Whether one beast, two beasts, or four are pictorially represented in this context they were all considered as different manifestations of the devil and his minions, as explained by Cassiodorus in his commentary for Psalm 90.13, recorded in the Durham Cassiodorus in the first third of the eighth century:

> The divine strength is portrayed here: it gave orders to a host of savage things; for all the following names can be suitably applied to the devil—he is an “asp” when he strikes furtively, a “basilisk” when he disseminates his poison in the open, a “lion” when he persecutes the innocent, a “dragon” when he swallows the negligent in his unholy greed. But when the glorious Lord came, they all lay...

40 See my previous note on the *calcato*. According to Eusebuis, Constantine and his sons were depicted above a *durchbahrten Drachen, der in den Abgrund stürzt* ‘a pierced dragon who plunges into the abyss,’ as mentioned by Gertrud Schiller, *Ikonography der Christlichen Kunst*, Band 3 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1968) 32. The theme showing Christ’s divinity on the Ravenna mosaic is of interest since it represents the orthodox position when, during the period of Theodoric’s reign, Arianism was strongly influential. See “The Archeepiscopal Chapel,” Municipality of Ravenna, Tourist Information, 29 March 2001 <http://www.akros.it/comuneravenna/arcive1uk.htm>.

41 I have supplied the omitted *et* in brackets and the / to indicate the separation of the words.


43 Durham, Cathedral Library, B.II.30, fol. 172v. Janet Backhouse, *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900*, ed. Leslie Webster and Janet Backhouse (London: British Museum, 1991) 127, observes that the exemplar might have been brought to England ‘from Cassiodorus’s own monastery of Vivarium, the source of a number of the books acquired from that community.”
prostrate at his feet.\(^{44}\)

This explains the reason for the composite image of the beast on folio 172v (fig. 4), the last of the two surviving miniatures in this manuscript marking the tripartite divisions of the psalms (the one probably introducing Psalm 1 is now lost; the second preceding Psalm 51 on folio 81v shows David as Musician). In this miniature preceding Psalm 101, the creature trampled upon is composed of a leonine head at either end of a prostrate serpent’s body.\(^{45}\) The figure above the composite beast is David, according to the name

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\(^{44}\) See *Expositio in Psalterium*, PL 70, col. 654: *Hic jam divina virtus exprimitur, quae tantis rebus saevientibus imperavit. Nam omnia ista nomina diabolo congruenter aptantur: “aspis” est, dum occulte percuttit; “basiliscus,” cum palam venena disseminat; “leo,” dum persequitur innocentes; “draco,” cum negligentes impia voracitate deghuit.* (I have added quotation marks where the PL uses italics.) I am grateful to David McCulloch for assistance with the translations of Cassiodorus (in my main text) and Bede (below). See also Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms*, trans. P. G. Walsh, Ancient Christian Writers 51, vol. 1 of 3 (New York: Paulist Press, 1990). Bede somewhat similarly interprets the beasts of Psalm 90.13 as referring to different aspects of the devil: “For by ‘basilisk,’ the King of snakes, understand the chief of the demons himself, and for ‘asp’ the servants of that chief […] The lion signifies the same thing as dragon, i.e., the devil; when he attacks us openly he is a lion, but when he uses guile, he is a dragon.” From *In Psalmorum Librum Exegesis*, PL 93, col. 976: *Per “basiliscum,” qui rex serpentium est, intellige ipsum caput daemoniorum, per “aspidem” vero subditos illi capiti […] Idem est leo, qui et draco, id est, ipse diabolus, qui quando in nos aperte saevit, est leo; quoniam vero insidiatur, est draco.* Both Cassiodorus and Bede are in the same tradition as Augustine who says that “the devil hath each of these forces and powers”; *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 8 of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Scribners, 1917) 451-52. From *Expositio in Psalmos, Oeuvres 13: 689: Leo aperte saevit, draco occulte insidiatur: utramque vim et potestatem habet diabolus.*

\(^{45}\) Three eighth-century stones with Celtic or Pictish affinities depict similar duplicated heads: the pagan Dunfallandy Stone shows two such heads meeting at the top, while their serpentine bodies with fish tails border the other three sides, the Ingergowrie Stone with two confronted and crossing heads below three clerics (?), and the Meigle No. 5 Stone, with two confronted heads terminating a serpentine border enclosing knotted interlace and forming the base of a cross. See Stewart Cruden, *The Early Christian and Pictish Monuments of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1964). By the early tenth century, Christ has evidently been substituted for his prototype, but the Celtic composite beast survives in the form of two identical, confronted heads emerging from the border panels at the bottom in the Æthelstan Psalter, London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba A. XVIII, fol. 10v.
inscribed in the small shield held by the black-outlined figure holding a spear, identifying him in his role as warrior. In eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon psalter miniatures such as the Tiberius C. VI Psalter\(^4\) (fig. 5), the figure above the lion and the dragon is the triumphant Christ, but since David was considered as a prototype by Cassiodorus,\(^5\) it is he who is represented in the Durham manuscript of Cassiodorus. In the latter his hieratic frontal stance and his staring "Byzantine eyes"\(^6\) suggest his antetype, Christ. This is made clear in the next line of the commentary, just quoted, in which Cassiodorus discusses the nature of the Lord: "Only he was strong enough to subdue such savages, who was coeternal and cosubstantial to the Father and fit to be the divine heir."\(^7\) In the Durham Cassiodorus at least, the figure identified as David may indicate a reticence about illustrating the deity directly if the latest iconoclastic rumblings from the East were fresh in the minds of the manuscript's designer and artist.

### The Ruthwell Cross: Images, Latin Inscriptions, and Anglo-Saxon Poem

Made within the same time frame and location as the Durham Cassiodorus but representing Christ directly is the famous Ruthwell Cross (figs. 6-8), testifying to the creative legacy established by the imported stone carvers. Such standing stone crosses, unassociated with architecture, were popular until the Norman Conquest and were unknown on the continent.\(^8\) It is noteworthy that the largest panel on the Ruthwell Cross

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\(^4\)London, British Library, MS Tiberius C. VI, fol. 114v. Like that in the Durham Cassiodorus miniature, this precedes Psalm 101.

\(^5\)In his commentary on the Psalter, Cassiodorus says _David hic intelligendus est Dominus Christus_, PL 70, col. 35, as quoted by Jackson J. Campbell, "Some Aspects of Meaning" 25. Campbell also mentions that Bede likewise assumes such an identification in _Expositio in Samuelem Prophetam_, PL 91, col. 613.

\(^6\)To use Jackson J. Campbell's term in "Some Aspects of Meaning" 9, in which he describes the eyes of St. John in the mid eighth century Irish St. Gall Gospels, St. Gall, Stiftsbibliotek, MS 51, p. 208.

\(^7\)Cassiodorus, _Expositio in Psalterium_, PL 70, col. 564.

\(^8\)Lawrence Stone, _Sculpture in Britain_ 9-10.
depicts Christ Treading on the Beasts (fig. 6) because it displays more fully the
iconography only hinted at in the Cathach initial. Christ’s feet tread on the heads of two
very similar beasts (now much weathered), recalling the composite version in the Durham
Cassiodorus. A Latin inscription in Roman letters forms a border around three sides of
this relief panel and informs it:

(Top)    IhS XPS
(Left) BESTIAE.ET.DRACONES.CO NOVERVNT.IN.DE.
(Right bottom half) SERTO.SALVA[T]OREM.MVNDI.
(Right top half) IVDEX.AE QVITAS.

Given the hyphenation of DESSERTO, which begins at the bottom of the left side and
continues half-way down the right side, making the word order somewhat difficult to
follow, this could be translated as follows, with the variations on the identity of Christ
arranged as if in an Anglo-Saxon poem:

Jesus Christ the beasts and dragons recognized in the desert
the Savior of the World the Judge of Righteousness.

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51 In his attempt to establish the pacific, non-heroic nature of this panel, Éamonn Ó
Carragáin, “Christ over the Beasts and the Agnus Dei: Two Multivalent Panels on the
Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses,” *The Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul E.
Szamach, Studies in Medieval Culture 20 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1986) 383,
thought it “highly interesting” that the beasts cannot be identified as asps, basilisks, lions,
dragons or, in a reference to Farrell’s comments re. Saxl’s speculation, swine. The point is
not that they are merely “two animals” from the natural world, but that they are mythical,
metaphoric representations of the demonic, whether singly, in pairs, or two pairs. As such,
they are consistent with the portrayal of composite beasts as in the Durham Cassiodorus
and of rather similar headed beasts on later Anglo-Saxon representations of the theme. It
should also be remembered that not only the lion but also the wyvern, the Anglo-Saxon
style of dragon, tends to have a leonine head. See for instance the dragon into whose
mouth St. Michael thrusts his spear in the Tiberius Psalter, London, British Library, MS
Tiberius C. VI, fol. 16, his leonine head very like the lion David fights on fol. 8. Both are
reproduced in Francis Wormald, “An English Eleventh-Century Psalter with Pictures,
British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius C. VI,” *Collected Writings*, I. Studies in Medieval
Art from the Sixth to the Twelfth Centuries (London: Harvey Miller and Oxford: UP,
1984), illus. 143 and 127 respectively.

52 I have used the transcription by Bruce Dickins and Alan S. C. Ross, eds., *The
Dream of the Rood* (1934; London: Methuen, 1963) 3, but I have arranged it according to
the way it is placed in the borders.
This makes it clear that the beasts recognized who Jesus Christ really was, as indicated also by Cassiodorus in his commentary; that is, they recognized the power of his divinity. The placement of this scene in “the desert” situates it as the first in the series mentioned by Eusebius who reads the triumphal imagery of Psalm 90.13 as a prophecy foretelling “first the Temptation, then what he went through in the Passion, and then the attack he made against the hostile powers after he left the body.”\textsuperscript{53} Evidently in relation to the word COGNOVERVNT, Fritz Saxl in 1943 held that the beasts “adored” Christ; this is based on Saxl’s odd rendition collapsing two parts of the commentary by Eusebius on Psalm 90:

But “I believe” says Eusebius, “that all these evil forces were disturbed when the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon Him and a voice from heaven was heard saying: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Therefore they adored Him, saying: “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee...we know who thou art, the Holy One of God.”\textsuperscript{54} (italics mine)

Saxl, however, misreads the seldom used adortae sunt in Eusebius, which means “attacked,” likely having assumed it read adoratæ sunt (underlining mine), meaning “adored.”\textsuperscript{55}

The introduction to Psalm 90 in Eusebius concerns the need to overcome those who were considered to be gods by the heathens and so, before he began his public life, Christ was led into the desert to be tempted by the devil, the beasts of the desert referring to the forces of evil. Then, in the passage abbreviated by Saxl, Eusebius says:

In my opinion these invisible hostile powers which were under heaven closed ranks in opposition to him, frightened by the voice which came down to him when the

\textsuperscript{53}Commentaria in Psalmod, PG 23, col. 1166: Alio item sensu prophetia videtur mihi vaticinari omnem humanae Salvatoris nostri vitae modum dico autem primam tentationem; illam item, quam in passione sustinuit; ac etiam eam, quam post solutionem corporis fecit contra adversarias potestates irruptionem.

\textsuperscript{54}Saxl, “The Ruthwell Cross” 2. Saxl does not give a second set of quotation marks to end the quotation from Eusebius, within which the quotations from Mark 1. 24 and Luke 4.34 occur.

\textsuperscript{55}I am deeply indebted to David McCulloch for the translation. See Eusebius PG 23, col. 1155 for the Latin and 1156 for the Greek. The Latin verb can also mean “addressed,” but the Greek original makes it clear the context is hostile. The Greek reads ἐπιθέσαν, “attacked.”
Holy Spirit descended to him in the form of a dove and a voice was heard from above saying, “this is my chosen son, with whom I am well pleased.” So when they heard this voice and saw that this man had been called, and demonstrated to be, the son of God, they could not disbelieve it, but neither could they believe that this man, with human flesh, was God’s chosen one. Faced with this incredible sight, and perceiving a new nature for man, they expected their own power to be destroyed by his surpassing virtue, so they attacked him. He, with great presence of mind, offered himself to any temptation, which he undertook for the sake of man’s salvation. For as I have said he was about to announce “freedom for slaves and sight to the blind,” in accordance with the prophecy, and it would be so, in order to liberate men’s minds from the things which had always held them in slavery, and to free them from idolatry. It was, therefore, necessary to wage war first of all against those who maintained tyranny throughout the ages. Because he fought them with resistance to every temptation, Luke says, “when the devil had exhausted every temptation, he left him.” Then he began his work of healing and caring, and the demons were frightened by him. They confessed they knew who he was, and exclaimed “Leave us alone, what have you to do with us, you are God’s chosen one.” They had learnt who he was from the voice which had come down to him, and they recognized his power from his behavior during the period of temptation.56 (italics mine)

56Commentaria in Psalmo, PG 23, cols. 1155-58: Aestimo autem has invisibles et adversarias potestates, quae sub universo coelo erant, adversus cum confertim congregatasuisse, quod perturbarentur ex allata ipsi voce, quando in columbæ specie Spiritus sanctus descendit in illum, et audita vox est desuper dicens: “Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi complacui.” Hac igitur audita voce, conspicatae item a Spiritu sancto per columbam communstratumuisse hominem Filium Dei appellatum, neque voci non credere, neque, hominem carne indutum cernentes, hunc dilectum esse Dei persueam habere poterant. Quare stupendum quidpiam, et novam hominis naturam cernentes, suam operandi vim praestantiori virtute delendam esse expectabant. Idcirco illum adoratae sunt, qui sese alacri animo omnibus tentationibus obtulit, quas pro salute hominum susceperat. Nam cum, ut dixi, praedicaturus esset “captive dismissionem, et caecis visus restitucionem,” secundum prophetiam de ipso prolatam; atque futurum esset, ut animas hominum ab ipsis, qui ipsas olim in captivitatem abegerant, abducaret, liberaretque ab idolorum errore; necessario bellum primo gerebat in eos qui diuturno tempore tyrannidem obtinebat. Et quia ipsos per tentationum omnium tolerantiam oppugnabit, ideo Lucus ait: “Et cum consummasset omnem tentationem diabolus, discessit ab eo.” Deinde vero ad hominum curationem et medelam accedebat: quare fremebant in eum daemones, confiterbanturque se nosse quis esset, clamantes et dicentes: “Sine, quid nobis et tibi, Fili Dei? Novimus te quis sis, sanctus Dei.” Ab illata enim illi voce didicerant quisnam esset; imo etiam ex ipsis quae tentationis tempore gesserat, ejus virtutem noverant. (I have used quotation marks where the PG uses italics.) I am grateful to David McCulloch for assistance with the translation above.
This necessity of defeating the demonic forces who had previously kept mankind enslaved in error and idolatry led to Christ waging “war” against their power by resisting every temptation so that he could free mankind and “give sight to the blind” (Luke 4.19 and Isaiah 61.1). The reference to the latter explains the relevance on the Ruthwell Cross of the panel of Christ Healing the Blind Man, one of the subjects for which Schapiro could find no connection to the Crucifixion, but which shows the designer’s intent that the panels should work together. The healing of the “blind” is the corollary to the defeat of the hostile powers shown figuratively as beasts. Later in the same commentary on this psalm, Eusebius says that Christ annihilated all the powers of his enemies and foes and cast them under his feet. Throughout his commentary on verse 13, Eusebius makes clear that the result of the devil’s daring to test Christ’s divinity is the latter’s victory over the rulers of the world and the spiritual things of evil and finally, his “victory after death over the leading spirits.” The point of the passage in Eusebius concerns the dual nature of Christ who, although he was man, had another nature capable of overcoming all evil and idolatrous means by which the devil had ruled mankind since the Fall and even of overcoming death itself. The variant appellations for Christ in the border panel of the Ruthwell Cross confirm the divinity of Christ who is also “Savior” and “Judge,” the latter

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58 The phrase is pedibus ejus subjiciebat. See PG 23, col. 1159. This is on verses 10-12.


60 Augustine says that “If Christ is life, the devil is death...because through him is death,” which he defines as “the separation of the soul from the body, or a separation of the soul from God” which is the “real death.” See his commentary on Psalm 48.14 in Expositions on the Book of Psalms, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 8, 174. From Expositio in Psalmos, Oeuvres 12: 445. This triumph over death is visually represented in the Tiberius C. VI Psalter, fol. 6v, showing Christ as Vita standing on top of Mors. See Wormald, “An English Eleventh-Century Psalter,” illus. 125.
placing the Temptation in the desert within an eschatological framework.\textsuperscript{51}

In reading "adored," Saxl is led to describing the paws of the animals as crossed in a "gesture of adoration" rather than as just overlapping or, if the sculptor intended them to be crossed, exhibiting the universal gesture of surrender.\textsuperscript{62} If the paws of the beasts in the Ruthwell Cross were intended to form a cross, then it is an acknowledgment of the sign by which they were defeated. In the miniature of the Harrowing of Hell in the late Anglo-Saxon Tiberius Psalter, London, British Library, Tiberius C. VI, fol. 14, the manacled wrists of the defeated devil point down, and his manacled heels turn up—in both instances forming a cross as if to emphasize the means of his defeat. Because of the spatial constraints of the long, narrow panel on the Ruthwell Cross, it was not possible to show the writhing bodies of the four beasts as in the Northumbrian ivory of this theme made later in the same century, the Genoels-Elderen Diptych.\textsuperscript{63} On the vertical top of an early eleventh-century pastoral staff (fig. 9),\textsuperscript{64} Christ stands on the head of one beast and on the neck of another, the twisting bodies of both writhing along each side of the curved handle. If their horizontal bodies were eliminated, the heads of the beasts directly below Christ, slightly worn,\textsuperscript{65} would look rather like the beasts on the Ruthwell panel and could likewise be interpreted as friendly without the tortured response of their extremities. Saxl also

\textsuperscript{51}Cf. Paul in I Cor. 15.24-26.

\textsuperscript{62}Michael Camille, \textit{The Medieval Art of Love} (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998) 41, refers to the lover's surrender to his lady as indicated by his wrists which are crossed in a gesture of submission on an early fourteenth-century German casket now in New York, Cloisters Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art; see Camille's fig. 16.


\textsuperscript{64}It was found at Alcester and is now in the British Museum.

\textsuperscript{65}Their features may have been rubbed smooth by the owner's hands, as could also be the case with respect to Christ's face.
describes Christ as standing "over" the heads of the two beasts on the Ruthwell Cross, but it is apparent that he is standing on their heads just as in the Genoels-Elderen Diptych and on the pastoral staff.

Subsequent to Saxl’s work on the Ruthwell Cross, there has been a “flourishing industry” of deciphering the individual reliefs, with the majority of opinion on the panel under discussion following Saxl’s analysis without checking his translation of Eusebius. Meyer Schapiro developed the desert theme and related it to the visions of messianic harmony. Insofar as subsequent scholars have mentioned that the beasts on the Ruthwell Cross recognized the divinity of Christ in the desert, their interpretations are in accord with Eusebius, Cassiodorus, and Bede, as well as with the traditional visual iconography of the subject. Pacifc, messianic interpretations based on the misreading of adorae sunt or the application of biblical passages not directly relevant, however, have been misleading if ingenious.

The dominant panel on the other side of the Ruthwell Cross depicts a woman at the feet of Christ (fig. 7), a subject which has been thematically paired with the panel just

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65 Saxl, “The Ruthwell Cross” 1. Interestingly enough, he had not yet come to his reading of Eusebius in British Art and the Mediterranean 17, published the same year but obviously in press longer, since there he describes Christ standing “on” the beasts.

66 Where there was enough horizontal space on the Ruthwell Cross, the full bodies of beasts appear, as on the cross-beam showing a whale with a huge open mouth on one side and a winged dragon (very like a Viking ship) on the other—not impossibly having reference to the beasts displayed in the vertical panel. These two sides of the cross-beam have not been recovered but there is an engraving by W. Penny from a drawing by Henry Duncan of the four sides, 1833; see plate 39 in Brendan Cassidy, ed., The Ruthwell Cross.


68 The Religious Meaning of the Ruthwell Cross” 232-45. The context, however, of such passages as “The beast of the field shall glorify me, the dragons and the ostriches: because I have given waters in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, to my chosen” (Isaiah 43.20) is quite different from Psalm 90.13.

69 See, for example, the studies included in and referred to The Ruthwell Cross edited by Brendan Cassidy. Many provide useful insights into other features of the Ruthwell Cross.
discussed, both the beasts and Mary Magdalene being erroneously viewed as worshiping
Christ.\textsuperscript{71} The Latin border inscription, as restored by David Howlett from early drawings
of it in collation with Luke 7.37-38, reads, in translation: “she brought an alabaster box of
ointment and standing behind beside His feet she began to wash His feet with her tears,
and she wiped them with the hairs of her head.”\textsuperscript{72} There is no dispute here about what the
woman, usually described as Mary Magdalene, is doing or with the translation (despite the
awkwardness of “behind beside”). Commenting on this passage from Luke 7.37-38 in his
homily on John 11.55-12.11, Bede identifies this woman with the one who poured
ointment on Christ’s head from her alabaster box (Matt. 26.7, Mark 14.3) and explains:
“By our Lord’s head, which Mary anointed, is represented the sublimity of his divinity,
and by his feet the humility of his incarnation.”\textsuperscript{73} The Ruthwell Cross proclaims the dual
nature of Christ, the panel showing the anointing of his feet pertaining especially to his
human nature. Its place on a cross is appropriate also in that, according to Bede, it was
granted to Mary to perform this service before his burial (Mark 14.8).\textsuperscript{74} Lawrence Stone
deplores the “clumsiness and crudity of the arms and hands” of Mary Magdalene, along
with the “truly barbaric exaggeration of gesture,”\textsuperscript{75} but it is precisely this disproportion
that emphasizes how feelingly she wraps her long hair around him, almost like a shroud,
with her own loving hands. Her large hand expresses more than an ordinary,
representational hand could have; it suggests the poignancy and significance of her

\textsuperscript{71}David Howlett, “Inscriptions and Design of the Ruthwell Cross” \textit{The Ruthwell
Cross} 81.

\textsuperscript{72}Howlett, “Inscriptions and Design of the Ruthwell Cross” 73. He reconstructs it
(following along the borders) as + \textit{ATTVLIT ALABA} / \textit{STRVM} : \textit{VNGVENTI} : \& \textit{STANS
RETRO SECVS PEDES / EIVS LACRIMIS} : \textit{COEPIT RIGARE} : \textit{PEDES EIVS} : \&
\textit{CAPILLIS / CAPITIS SVIERGEBAT}. I have used / to indicate Howlett’s line breaks.

\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels}, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and
David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991) 2:37. From \textit{Homiliae Genuinae},
PL XCIV, col. 127.

\textsuperscript{74}\textit{Homilies on the Gospels} 2. 39.

\textsuperscript{75}\textit{Sculpture in Britain} 12.
In the corresponding panel of Christ Treading on the Beasts on the other side, it is particularly the power of his divinity that is acknowledged by the defeated demons.

These two largest panels taken together feature both aspects of Christ, the human side, as demonstrated by the faithful woman tenderly wiping his feet with her hair, and the divine, as represented by his triumph over the demonic minions of the devil who lost their age-old tyranny over mankind when he resisted their temptations. The view that both beasts and Mary Magdalene worshipped Christ, which has been generally held since Saxl’s article, is artistically redundant, psychologically inappropriate, and theologically suspect. “The attitude of the beasts as adoring,” observed Farrell in 1986, “is established only when the inscription is called upon.” This might be qualified by saying that it is established only when the passage from Eusebius is called upon, since the inscription itself does not state the beasts adored Christ, and even the passage from Eusebius does not say so, as is now evident. It is the power of Christ’s divinity that is emphasized by the defeated beasts and his humanity by the tearful Mary Magdalene. In the first panel Christ also models the heroic struggle against evil and serves as a conversion image for “blind” unbelievers, while in the second, Mary Magdalene signifies “the holy service of other souls faithful to God,” including, no doubt, the viewer.

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76 Cf. Francis Wormald, “The Survival of Anglo-Saxon Illumination after the Norman Conquest,” Collected Writings 164 and 166 on the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon art. He observes that the liveliness of the figure of St. Matthew in the tenth-century Gospels at York Minster, Chapter Lib., MS Add. 1, fol. 22v, was in part due to his enormous hands (155 and illust. 111).

77 The notion of creatures adoring the one trampling on their heads is rather masochistic.

78 If the beasts metaphorically representing the devil could have adored Christ, then they would have been saved. The issue has been complicated by being associated with messianic ideas, with the subject of the animals given into the keeping of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1. 28 (cf. Psalm 8.8), and with incidents in which animals representing the natural world acknowledged their Creator.


Following Saxl’s article, critical analysis of the Anglo-Saxon poem inscribed in runes on the two narrow sides of the cross also became problematic. Meyer Schapiro admitted that “when we turn from these lines to the sculpted images beside them, we find little that pertains directly to the poem.” Was there a slight defiance in Elliott van Kirk Dobbie’s assertion in 1942, the year before Saxl’s interpretation of the panels was in print but was likely in circulation among interested scholars, that the “figure-sculptures and the Latin inscriptions are of slight importance to an editor of the Anglo-Saxon text, except in determining the date of the cross, and may be disregarded here”?

His difficulties with the pictorial content and the Latin inscription, on the one hand, and the vernacular poem on the other, suggest that such perceptions of inconsistency resulted from Saxl’s misreading of Eusebius, with the result that the consequent messianic notions about docile beasts, as advanced by Schapiro, were not thought to be compatible with the martial imagery of the poem. Éamonn Ó Carragáin subsequently attempted a re-reading of both to effect a harmonious resolution. Once the misinterpretation of the sculpted panel of the beasts is removed, however, so is the perceived problem of inconsistency between image and text, eliminating the need for ingenious resolutions. Inscribed in Roman letters, the theme of the triumph of Christ, whose divinity is thereby acknowledged by the subdued beasts figuratively representing the devil, is entirely congruous with the inscribed runes of the Anglo-Saxon poem celebrating the heroic achievement of Christ and of the personified cross itself. These lines, as observed by Elliot van Kirk Dobbie, evidently derive from the same original as *The Dream of the Rood*, recorded in the late tenth-century Vercelli

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82 Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* cxix. On the issue of the quality of the Ruthwell Cross, however, he quotes A. S. Cook, *The Dream of the Rood. An Old English Poem Attributed to Cynewulf* (Oxford, 1905) xi, who describes it as “no doubt the finest stone cross in existence.” Yet he points out that Cook’s arguments about the twelfth-century date from “the history of art” have been disproved (cxx-cxxi).

and correspond to lines 39-64 of that version. The two outstanding features of the surviving verses on the stone cross (fig. 8) which are pertinent to the present discussion are the emphasis on the wounded Christ who suffers humiliation, which suggests his humanity, and his cosmic triumph, which refers to his divinity.

Like a 'courageous' warrior preparing for battle, Christ gets ready for the crucifixion by divesting himself of his clothes because he *walde* 'would' climb the gallows—the very opposite of the pacific victim! This accords also with the "almost obliterated" crucifixion panel at the base of the Mary Magdalene side of the Ruthwell Cross in which, as Howlett describes it, "Christ rather stands than hangs on the Cross....There is no inscription on this panel now, and probably never was." That the crucifixion in the Ruthwell Cross poem is envisioned in the context of a battle is confirmed by the cross itself which, like a loyal retainer, felt challenged to support its lord and dared not *buga* 'bow' or bend to the earth under his weight, rather it *ahof* 'lifted' him. The two of them, both Christ and the cross, were *bismaradu* 'insulted,' and the cross was *bistemid* 'steamed' with the blood that poured from Christ's side when he was wounded *mip streulum* 'with arrows.' This is suggestive of the terminology of the motif of the last stand of noble warriors who go down fighting as described, for instance, in the later Anglo-Saxon poem, *The Battle of Maldon*.

The paradox that in *this* last-stand, victory proceeds from apparent defeat, is

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84 Vercelli, Cathedral Library, Cod. CXVII, fols. 104v-106r. The Vercelli Book version is primarily in West Saxon dialect, while the poem on the Ruthwell Cross is in an early Northumbrian dialect.

85 Ó Carragáin, "The Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem and its Iconographic and Liturgical Contexts" 1-71, also observed the emphasis on the dual nature of Christ on the Ruthwell Cross, but he saw it within the context of Christ's kenosis (Phil. 2.7).

86 I have used the Ruthwell Cross transcriptions by Ó Carragáin, "The Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem and its Iconographic and Liturgical Contexts" 15-26, but I have not included his square brackets partly for the sake of clarity and partly because this is a complex issue since some of the runes which are not now legible were reconstructed from early drawings. See Ó Carragáin, n28.

87 Howlett, "Inscriptions and Design" 72. See the photograph by Robert T. Farrell in *The Ruthwell Cross*, No. 19.
resolved because the Lord has divine power. The appositions for his divine nature make this clear: he is god ælmihtig, riicna kyninge ‘the great king’ and heafunæs hlafard ‘heaven’s lord.’ His human nature is indicated by the bleeding, corporeal body of the guman ‘man.’ Afterwards, those who laid down the limwærigæ ‘limb-weary’ (dead) body, gistoddun him æt his licaes heafandum ‘stood at the head of his corpse’ and—in a moment of revelation in which his dual nature is revealed simultaneously—bihealdun [...] heafunæs dryctin ‘beheld [...] the Lord of Heaven.’ Whether in beholding they also recognized what they were seeing is left to the determination of the Anglo-Saxon readers of the runes who would themselves certainly have recognized the revelatory content, his divine triumph being so clearly visible on the adjoining front side. The readers of the Vercelli Dream of the Rood poem, further alerted by the shifting visions of the cross in which the dreamer sees variously an uprooted tree and a bleeding gallows tree, would have been prepared for the transformation from the beginning by the dreamer’s first sight of the wondrous, jeweled sigebeam ‘victory-beam’ (l. 13).  

The anomaly of its being a stone cross that speaks is visually resolved by having the runes border vine-scrolls—in an interesting reversal of elements concerning what is central and of substance—which refers at once to the living wood of the cross and to the metaphoric values accorded to the vine/vineyard images in the Bible. Vine scrolls inhabited by birds and animals, motifs deriving from the Mediterranean area or possibly the Near East where these were not forbidden by iconoclastic or Islamic strictures, are also shown on the panels, for example, of the Bewcastle cross, as well as on the cross shafts at Aberlady, Haddingtonshire and at Saint Andrew Auckland, Co. Durham. 

88Dickins and Ross, The Dream of the Rood 22.  
89Douglas MacLean, “The Date of the Ruthwell Cross,” The Ruthwell Cross 51, mentions that Kitzinger compared the Ruthwell vine scrolls to those in carvings in Ravenna and to Coptic wooden and ivory panels, but proposed a generic relationship with contemporary mosaics in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque at Damascus.  
90See plate 50 in Brendan Cassidy, The Ruthwell Cross.  
91See plates 6a and 6c in Stone, Sculpture in Britain.
symbolic function these motifs within the panels on cross-shafts were accorded likely relates to the biblical imagery of Christ as “the true vine” in whom the faithful abide (John 15. 1-7). At the top of one of the vine scroll panels on the Ruthwell Cross is a cluster of grapes, and on both panels, birds and animals peck at floral, leaf, and grape cluster terminals. In his Ascension Homily, Bede identifies the cluster of grapes carried on a pole for the people waiting in the desert (Numbers 13.24) with “our Lord exalted on the cross, he who said, ‘I am the true vine,’” and connects this with the wine Christ poured for his disciples, saying “‘This chalice is the New Covenant in my blood, which will be poured for you.’” The latter associations are more fully exploited, for example, in connection with the chalice of the Mass in the mid ninth-century Drogo Sacramentary historiated initials in which Carolingian acanthus scrolls replace insular vine scrolls but perform a similar function. There, on the page opening the Canon of the Mass, they entwine the trellis-like structure of the cross shaping the large T(e igitur) and the enclosed Old Testament scenes mentioned in the Canon as prefiguring Christ’s sacrifice, with that of Melchisedek celebrating the Eucharist on an altar which has a large gold chalice. They also entwine both the trellis structure of the D(eus) page opening the Easter Mass and provide a vineyard-like setting for the scene of the Three Marys at the Tomb inside the letter and, within the curved bow, for the scenes of Christ appearing before the two Marys.

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92Grape clusters are especially prominent on the south side of the Bewcastle Cross vine scroll panel. See Cassidy, The Ruthwell Cross, plate 52.

93Homilies on the Gospels 2: 136. From Homiliae Genuinae, PL 94, col. 174. Ó Carragáin, “The Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem” 34, refers to Rosemary Cramp’s remarks on the vine scroll on Acca’s cross as the “symbol of the church in union with Christ, or Christ’s sacramental presence in the Eucharist”; Early Northumbrian Sculpture (Jarrow, Lecture, 1965) 7. Ó Carragáin, above, associates Christ as the door (viewing the broad margins enclosing the scrolls on the Ruthwell Cross as a door-frame) and as the vine in John 10.9 and John 15.1, considering the former as the one who “alone could admit them to participation in the life of his mystical body the church” (35).

94Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 9428.

95Joachim E. Gaehde, Carolingian Painting (New York: George Braziller, 1976), 92, plates 28 and 29 for this and the next initial. They occur on fols. 15v and 58.
(possibly also a subject on a Ruthwell Cross panel\textsuperscript{96}) and Mary Magdalene at the feet of Christ (likewise associated with the Passion as on the Ruthwell Cross). Emotional engagement on the Ruthwell Cross is enhanced pictorially by the moving scene of the Mary Magdalen panel and poetically in the borders framing the vine scroll panels by the personified cross which speaks to the Anglo-Saxon viewer of its suffering and triumph. The enclosed vine scroll panels inhabited by the birds and animals add further symbolic dimensions to the visually literate Christian by suggesting that the stone commemorates the living cross which is identified with Christ and, just possibly, the viewer-listener who abides in Christ and in whom, appropriately, “my words abide” (John 15. 7).

Having privileged their intellectual understanding of a text over what their eyes saw, modern commentators on the Ruthwell Cross panel have, since Saxl, tended to interpret its details in relation to the Latin inscription and the misread commentary of Eusebius. This is perhaps not so surprising since the Latin inscription bordering the cross refers to what is happening in the panel, that the divinity of Christ was recognized by the beasts in the desert. This approach may have been prepared for by some of the early derogatory assessments of the quality of the carvings as “rude,” as judged in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{97} Gradually, greater interest was taken in the carvings, first in the vine scroll, “which would not disgrace a classic age.”\textsuperscript{98} Early in the twentieth century Baldwin Brown, entering the debates of that time about when and by whom the Ruthwell Cross was made, commented on the ambivalence concerning the quality of the carvings by observing the British idiosyncracy of assuming that anything

\textsuperscript{96}The inscription is difficult to read. See Howlett, “Inscriptions and Design of the Ruthwell Cross” 72 for the identification of the two women as Mary and Martha, rather than Elizabeth and the Virgin Mary. As such, they would represent the active and contemplative life.

\textsuperscript{97}Brendan Cassidy, “The Later Life of the Ruthwell Cross: From the Seventeenth Century to the Present,” The Ruthwell Cross 22 and n87. He refers to the comments of Gordon (1726) and Pennant (1809).

\textsuperscript{98}This is by Henry Duncan (1833) as quoted by Cassidy, “The Later Life” 23.
good was made by foreigners or by the Celtic population. Cassidy considers that Saxl and Schapiro “shifted the focus of scholarship” in their desire “to discover the meaning the cross might have had for the people for whom it was made.” Assuredly their intent was laudable, and their efforts did lead to an expanded interest in desert allusions and the monastic culture of early Northumbria.

In the attempt to line up with the messianic interpretations following from the work of Saxl and Schapiro, which relied on the misreading of Eusebius, the absence of the image of the cross used as a weapon in the sculpted panel of Christ Treading on the Beasts was used as an argument supporting the interpretation of the beasts as docile. Eamonn Ó Carragáin found it “highly significant that the sculptors completely avoided such heroic details and represented Christ […] with his right hand raised in blessing and a scroll in his left hand.” If it is indeed a scroll, much damaged, which he holds in his left hand, then it supports rather the distinction between this and the Mary Magdalene panel where he holds a book, the former in its antiquity suggesting the Old Testament, which is appropriate since the iconography of that panel derives from a psalm text, and the latter the New Testament. On another level, the document may be a visualization of the idea, based on I Peter 3.18-19 and I Peter 4.6, that during Christ’s descent into hell, he preached to the captives there. Augustine applies this also to those “in this life” who are “prisoners in the death of unbelief and wickedness.” In the panel Christ faces the viewer, for whom Augustine’s reference can be thought to be cautionary. For a monastic audience this sort

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100 Cassidy, “The Later Life” 30-31.


102 “Christ over the Beasts” 383.

103 Camille, The Gothic Idol 192.

of interpretation has particular relevance in that, like the desert saints, each person has to subdue demonic temptations and wrestle with doubt. The Prologue to the Benedictine Rule twice refers to doing “battle” under Christ. And as Ó Carragáin points out, “Psalm 90 was prescribed by the Benedictine Rule for compline every evening” in preparation against “the terror of the night” (Psalm 90.5), and for the recollection of daily sins. He also found that, until the end of the eighth century, it was read after the second Old Testament reading on Good Friday. It is apparent then, that anything to do with Psalm 90 was familiar on a personal level and also directly connected with the day of Christ’s crucifixion and death. The largest image on the Ruthwell Cross panel presents Christ’s victory over sin and death which made everlasting life possible for mankind, a triumph celebrated especially at Easter. On a personal level, it serves as an inspirational model for each religious person to overcome “the death of unbelief and wickedness” in daily life.

The addition of a weapon to the iconography of Christ Treading on the Beasts, however, was not introduced until the Carolingian period. It is true that Eusebius describes how, after Constantine’s vision, he had a cross made from a spear by attaching a transverse bar across it, but this was a make-shift cross and does not yet appear to have become part of the iconography of Christ Treading on the Beasts. In the Ravenna mosaic of the theme (fig. 3), Christ is not actively engaged in using it as a weapon; the action having already been completed. Probably the most influential of the Carolingian depictions is that in the Utrecht Psalter in which the deity holds a spear like that of David

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105 For the Latin see John Chamberlin, ed., The Rule of St Benedict: The Abingdon Copy, Edited from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 57 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982) 18 and 20 respectively.

106 Ó Carragáin, “Christ over the Beasts” 382.

107 Ó Carragáin, “Christ over the Beasts” 286-87. He also observes that after Psalm 90 “came the solemn reading of the Passion according to St. John, and the adoration of the Cross” (287).

108 The shaft of the cross is elongated in some early representations, such as depicted on an early Christian oil lamp such as the one shown in Saxl, “The Ruthwell Cross” fig. 9.
in the Durham Cassiodorus but thrusts one end, not the metal point, into the serpent.\textsuperscript{109}
The other illustrated verses for Psalm 90 forming part of the same Utrecht Psalter miniature include figures with spears and also archers shooting arrows from bows (the latter pertinent to the archer on the Ruthwell Cross\textsuperscript{110}). In the Stuttgart Psalter, below the upper scene of the Temptation interpreted with reference to the preceding verses as in Eusebius, is the depiction of Christ treading on the neck of the lion and piercing the mouth of the serpent with what looks like the arrow-end of a spear.\textsuperscript{111} Since the use of a weapon is not mentioned in Psalm 90.13, it is necessary to examine the confluence of related biblical images and their converging interpretations which led to this addition to the theme in the Carolingian psalters showing Christ using a spear or lance, which is then conflated with the cross in late Anglo-Saxon visualizations such as in the Tiberius C. VI Psalter\textsuperscript{112} (fig. 5) where Christ pierces the mouth of one of the beasts with the metal point on the bottom of the cross-shaft. Using the cross as a weapon in this way was not yet part of the repertoire available to the Ruthwell Cross carver, as may have been assumed by Ó Carragáin when he found the absence of the cross as a weapon significant and supportive

\textsuperscript{109}Reims, Utrecht Psalter, c. 820, fol. 53v.

\textsuperscript{110}Psalm 90.6 includes “the arrow that flieth by day” that need not be feared because of God’s protection. On the Ruthwell Cross, the archer panel doubtless supports and forms part of the militant theme of the panel of Christ Treading on the Beasts just as this subject is included in the Utrecht illustration of this psalm which emphasizes the combative features. For further discussion of the archer see Paul Meyvaert, “A New Perspective on the Ruthwell Cross: Ecclesia and Vita Monastica,” \textit{The Ruthwell Cross} 140-45. He tries too hard, however, to place a “positive meaning” on the archer near the end of the discussion and so departs from Psalm 90.6.

\textsuperscript{111}Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, MS bibl. Coc. 23, c. 820-30, fol. 107.

\textsuperscript{112}London, British Library, MS Tiberius C. VI, fol. 16. Other examples are Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 296, fol. 40, and the Winchcombe Psalter, Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff. I. 23, fol. 195v. In this last example, the cross transfixes the dragon, while in the others it is the lion that is pierced, as is also the case in the earlier Arenberg Gospels, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 869, fol. 13v.
of a messianic interpretation of the Ruthwell Cross panel.\textsuperscript{113}

This “missing link” is suggested by the initial in illustration of the text of a 
*Commentary on Job* by Philippus Presbyter (d. ca. 455 AD), made in an Anglo-Saxon 
center on the continent between 700 to 750\textsuperscript{114} (fig. 10). This initial is formed by the body 
of a bearded man in a tunic piercing the head of a dragon with his stake, which also forms 
the vertical upright of the letter. Like the initial of the Cathach (and the composite beast of 
the Durham Cassiodorus), the dragon has a pointed snout with an open mouth and a band 
on its neck, in this case, forming the top border of an enclosed panel of interlace within the 
body of the dragon. The interlace, with its bowed knots adapted to the corners of the 
space below the neck band, adds a certain ambiguity to the initial. It might be either a 
purely two-dimensional decorative pattern, or it might have reference to the labyrinthine 
interior of the beast, suggestive of the Jonah story,\textsuperscript{115} which was taken by Christ himself as 
prefiguring his death and resurrection (Matt. 12. 40). Because of its elusiveness, this panel 
of interlace within the Job initial seems to shift cryptically in value from the decorative to 
the symbolic.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{113}Ó Carragáin, “Christ Over the Beasts” 383. Furthermore, on the narrow 
Ruthwell Cross panel, there was really very little room to add a cross. Historically, the 
later Anglo-Saxon representations, in which the point of the cross shaft pierces one of the 
beasts, may reflect a new development in weaponry. Marc Bloch points out that, “As the 
logical consequence of the adoption, about the tenth century, of the stirrup, the short 
spear of former days, brandished at arm’s length like a javelin, was abandoned and 
replaced by the long and heavy lance which the warrior, in close combat, held under his 
armpit and, when at rest, supported on the stirrup itself.” See Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{114}Cambrai Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. 470, Anglo-Saxon center on the 
continent, first half of the eighth century, fol. 2.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{115}As an indication of its popularity, see Paul E. Szarmach, “Three Versions of the 
Jonah story: an investigation of narrative technique in Old English homilies,” *ASE* 1 
(1972): 183-92. Possibly reflecting an Anglo-Saxon eighth-century version is a 
Carolingian illustrated *Carmen Paschale* by Sedulius showing Jonah thrown out of the 
boat and also Jonah regurgitated by the whale in Antwerp, Museum Plantin-Moretus, MS 
17. 4, fols. 9v and 10.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{116}Adding to the ambiguity is its tail which ends in a tripartite vegetal spray. To 
show the continuity of the use of this decorative vocabulary, compare the initial on p. 52 
of the Cædmon Manuscript, a work I will discuss shortly.
\end{quote}
The subject of the initial gains significance from its placement in a copy of a Commentary on Job. To contextualize Philippus Presbyter’s commentary on Job and to show that his was not an uncommon reading, it is of interest to look first at a few other patristic commentaries. These associate related images from the Psalms about God crushing the heads of dragons and humbling the “proud one,”117 from Isaiah about his striking the proud one, wounding the dragon, and slaying him with a sword,118 and from Job 40.19-21:

In his eyes as with a hook he shall take him, and bore through his nostrils with stakes. Canst thou draw out the leviathan with a hook? Or canst thou tie his tongue with a cord? Canst thou put a ring in his nose, or bore through his jaw with a buckle?119

Gregory of Nyssa interprets this last as a passage about Christ’s “humanity being bait swallowed by Leviathan.”120 Commenting further on this passage from Job, Gregory the Great elaborates:

this Leviathan was caught with a hook, because when in the case of our Redeemer he seized through his satellites the bait of His body, the sharp sting of His Godhead pierced him through. For a hook held as it were the throat of its swallower, when both the bait of the flesh appeared for the devourer to seize, and at the time of His passion His Godhead was concealed in order to kill him. For in this abyss of waters, that is, in this boundlessness of the human race, this whale was rushing hither and thither with open mouth, eager for the death, and devouring the life of

117In addition to Psalm 90.13, cf. Psalm 73.13-14 referring to God’s crushing and breaking “the heads of the dragons in the waters,” Psalm 57.7 concerning his “breaking in pieces the teeth in their mouth,” and Psalm 88.11 addressing the Lord God who has “humbled the proud one, as one that is slain.”

118Isaiah 51.9 reminds the Lord: “Hast thou not struck the proud one, and wounded the dragon?” Isaiah 27.1 associates leviathan with the serpent and the whale whom the Lord shall visit with his “hard and great and strong sword” and shall slay.

119The Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem 764 has: in oculis eius quasi hamo capiet eum et in sudibus perforabit nares eius an extrahere poteris Leviathan hamo et fume ligabis linguam eius numquid pones circum in naribus eius et armilla perforabis maxillam eus. As in the translation from the Douai version of the Vulgate, I have not included verse numbers in the text.

120Rosemary Woolf, “Doctrinal Influences on the Dream of the Rood,” MÆ 27.3 (1958): 143. She refers to Gregory of Nyssa, Oratio Catechetica, Magna 24; see PG 45, col. 66.
The identification of the Leviathan as a whale (cf. Isaiah 27.1) is not unusual since all these large sea beasts were taken to relate metaphorically to death and the sea to hell. Rufinus, who also refers to the hook which is divinity concealed beneath human flesh, says that Christ's descent into hell is foretold in Psalm 68.2 ("I am come into the depth of the sea"). The sort of interpretation offered by Gregory the Great helps explain the weapon which pierces through the dragon's head and the attempt by the dragon to swallow the man's foot in the illustrated initial.

In the Philippus Presbyter initial the figure portrayed without a halo plays upon the associations of Vir 'man,' the first word Job 1.1. Just as the Cathach of Columba initial with its zoological terminal at the beginning of Psalm 90 refers not to the first verse but to verse thirteen, perceived in Christological terms, so here the figure initial for the beginning

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121 Morals on the Book of Job by S. Gregory the Great, vol. 3 of A Library of the Fathers of the Catholic Church Anterior to the Division of East and West (Oxford: John Parker, 1844) 572-73. See Moralita 33, 9 in PL 76, cols. 682-83: Sed Leviathan iste humano captus est, quia in Redemptore nostrodum per satellites suas escam corporis momordit, divinitatis illum aculeus perforavit. Quasi hamus quippe fauces glutientes tenuit, dum in illo et esca carnis patuit, quam devorator appeteret, et divinitas passionis tempore latuit, quae necaret. In hac quippe aquarum abysso, id est in hac immensitate generis humani, ad omnium mortem inhiens, vitam pene omnium vorans, hoc illucque aperto ore cetus iste ferebatur, sed ad mortem veti istius hamus in hac aquarum profunditate caliginosa mira est dispositione suspensus [...] Ne ergo iste humanus mortibus cetus insidians quos vellet ultra devoraret, hamus hic raptoris fauces tenuit, et sese mordentem momordit. As Rosemary Woolf, "Doctrinal Influences" 143, points out, the source of the image is Job 40.20.


123 A very similar Norman initial is reproduced in Francis Wormald, "The Bayeux Tapestry: Style and Design," Collected Writings. I. Studies in Medieval Art from the Sixth to the Twelfth Centuries (London: Harvey Miller; Oxford: UP, 1984) 143, illus. 183, for the "V" beginning the text of Job that shows a similar configuration elaborated to three figures, including a woman (possibly the Virgin in an allusion to the Incarnation). They use a hook and cords on the bestial devil, with leonine mane, who seems to emerge from the dragon on the left.
of Job anticipates Philippus Presbyter’s lengthy commentary on Job 40.19-21, also seen in Christological terms. There he makes reference to Christ’s humanity disguising his divinity when he overcomes the devil:

Therefore he will seize him in the eyes, this Behemoth, with the hook of the divine will—that is, God took to himself clothes from the flesh of man. The father said about the son that the devil was to be seized. He says in the eyes, that is, in the light itself of intelligence, where the sight of the wisdom of the rational nature is: there into that (nature) he was ravished by the divine wisdom, while through his cleverness and stratagem he does not see whose flesh he might have seized to be devoured by death. Therefore according to this mode the devil was captured. And now the nostrils of that one are pierced through with spikes. That is, Christ the Lord destroys and drives away the one burning with rage and panting for the destruction of the saints in the seethings of anger [...] Thus certainly the Lord humbles and breaks into pieces the enemy, while through the same saints with the wood of his cross he smashes him.

Interestingly, the beginning of this commentary on verse 19, intentionally or not, uses the word “man” instead of “hook,” that is homo instead of the hamo in quoting the biblical text. Following this interpretation, Philippus Presbyter then refers the Behemoth of verse 19 to the Leviathan of verse 20, one an inhabitant of the land, the other of the sea.

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124 I would like to thank Janie C. Morris, Research Services Librarian in the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library at Duke University for sending me a photocopy of the relevant pages from the early printed copy of Philippus Presbyter, In Historiam Job Commentariorum Libri Tres (Basileae: Per Adamum Petrum, 1527) 4-7 and 195-203.

125 From Philippus Prebyter, In Historiam Job Commentariorum: Hunc igitur Behemoth hamo diuini numinis, id est, deus hominis adsumpti carne vestitus, in oculis capiet eum. Pater inquit de filio quod diabolus esset capiendus. In oculis ait, id est in ipso intelligentiae lumine, ubi est usus sapientiae naturae rationabilis: ibi in quam, a diuina sapientia raptus est, dum per calliditatem suam atque uersutiam non uidet, cuius carnem morte adprehenderit deuorandam. Secundum igitur hunc modum captus est diabolus. Et nunc sudibus nares illius perforantur. Id est, furentem faciucia, atque in sanctorum interitum irae aestibus anhelantem Christus dominus conterit et proturbat [...] Sic utique humiliat, et confringit dominus inimicum, dum eum per eosdem sanctos ligno suae crucis retundit. The translations of the passages from Philippus Presbyter in my text are by Linda Olson.

126 Philippus Presbyter, In Historiam Job 199, reads Job. 40.19 as: In oculis eius quasi homo capiet eum. I am grateful to Linda Olson for the observation about the substitution of homo for hamo.
but both signifying the devil. Like Eusebius, Philippus Presbyter sees the conquest of the beast as prophetic of encounters at various stages of spiritual history:

And the Prophet Isaiah regarding him prophesied, saying thus: In that day, or in the time of the passion of Christ, or in the coming of his justice. In that day [...] he will slay the sea-creature, who is in the sea. Following this itself is that which another prophet similarly says to God: You confirmed in your power in the sea; you crushed the head of the dragons over the waters.\(^{127}\)

The figure initial depicts not only the Incarnate Christ but also, in a sense, incarnates in its actual letter shape Christ the man, whose foot is apparently going to be devoured by the dragon, who is himself in the process of being skewered through the eyes and nostrils by the power of Christ’s divinity. Identifying the figure with the symbol, in parallel fashion, the red stake is suggestive of the “wood of his cross.” At the bottom of the stake is a pronged hook (it appears to be a double-pronged hook as indicated by its black tip and its slight curvature\(^{128}\), that in turn symbolizes Christ’s divinity. Philippus Presbyter says that the implements of verse 21 are to be understood as “words of divine potency.”\(^{129}\) The hook of the illustration suggests these other implements as well; all are to be understood as symbolic of Christ’s divine power that enabled him to overcome the devil, even though Christ seemed to be just a man. Not only is this initial among the first to use human figures\(^{130}\) (in this case the figure represents the manhood of Christ), it also is among the first in the West to depict the direct use of a weapon to pierce the head of a beast figuratively representing the devil, in this case the weapon indicates Christ’s divine power. This use of a weapon is a feature that was added to the iconography of Psalm

\(^{127}\)Philippus Presbyter, *In Historiam Iob: Et Esaias Propheta de eo uaticinatus, ita dicens: In die illo [...] occidet cetum, qui in mari est. Secundum hoc ipsum est, quod alius Propheta similiter ait ad deum: Tu confirmasti in virtute tua mare; tu contruisti caput draconum super aquas.* The scriptural references are to Isaiah 27.1 and Psalm 73.13-14.

\(^{128}\)Compare the implement used on the whale swallowing Jonah in the *Pearl* Manuscript, London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero A. x, Article 3, fol. 86. Jonah in the whale foreshadows Christ’s Harrowing of Hell. See my chapter 6.

\(^{129}\)Philippus Presbyter, *In Historiam Iob: sermones divinae potentiae.*

\(^{130}\)Alexander, *The Decorated Letter* 11. He suggests that this type of initial may have been “invented in the British Isles.”
90.13 in Carolingian psalters. In late Anglo-Saxon representations of the related subject of Christ Treading on the Beasts, the weapon is transformed into a cross whose shaft becomes a spear point transfixing one of the beasts.

Seen within its historical context, the subject of the main Ruthwell Cross panel can be seen to represent Christ’s victory over the beasts figuratively representing the devil. Because his divinity was hidden by his humanity, as indicated in various commentaries, he was able to triumph over the devil, who thought he could devour Christ the man. It is the divinity of Christ that the defeated beasts recognize. The imagery of this panel is militant—not pacific, as suggested by those following Saxl’s mistranslation of Eusebius—divine power is victorious over the forces of death. In this, the subject of the panel is consistent with the tenor of the vernacular poem in which Christ is described as a heroic warrior attacked by his enemies but, as revealed at the end of the poem, he triumphs over death because he is the Lord of Heaven. The images and words are not unrelated fragments but work together to convey the promise that this new religion offers.

**Reading Twofold Signs: Verbal and Visual Literacy**

The surviving artifacts of this period can be seen as evidence of the visual as well as the verbal literacy of their designers and makers, not to mention of their audiences, both of whom gained access to the word and to the image through the visible signs recorded on material surfaces. Modern appraisals of some of these works have often been the result of a misunderstanding of the sophisticated apparatus required to “read” them visually. This study has reconsidered the nature of the visual-verbal interaction from its earliest insular manifestations.

To decipher the Codex Ussherianus Primus monogram with its Greek letters requires the sort of knowledge obtainable from experience with manuscripts and art objects imported from the Mediterranean world. The visual amplification of the text in the Cathach of Columba initial effectively dissolves the distinct boundaries between visual and verbal symbolic elements. This initial is so calligraphic that it must have been made by the scribe. Since the scribe was obviously literate, it is reasonably certain that, in the instance of Psalm 90, itself familiar from daily recital, the introductory initial with its cross above a dragonesque creature was intended to serve as a visual typological commentary on the
psalm’s Christological significance. It is even more demanding than a verbal commentary, since it assumes among its audience those for whom such an abbreviated visual cue calls upon a store of patristic knowledge and sufficient experience with Christian visual signs to understand the meanings to which they point. The cognitive pleasure of recognition and the aesthetic pleasure of the visual shapes would likely lead the monastic reader to a greater spiritual involvement with the passage, resulting in a renewal of efforts to conquer evil within and to battle it without. That the spiritual engagement had an application to the circumstances of this world as well is suggested by the fact that the Cathach, which as Alexander points out, “means ‘battler’ in Irish,” was later enshrined and carried into battles as a talisman to ensure victory. This is a story reminiscent of the military power that the cross itself was still considered to have in the seventh century as described in Bede’s account of the battle at Hefenfelth. The Cathach was itself a relic since it was thought to have been copied by Columba himself. As such, every detail of

131 Earlier on fol. 6 in this manuscript, a similar cross is placed in the space between the vertical bars of an “N,” suggesting, if not in as particular a way as the “q,” a Christological frame of reference. It may be that as this innovative scribe proceeded through the psalms, more specifically directed applications of the decorative features came to mind in relation to the text of individual psalms—on the descender of the “q” on fol. 40, for example, there is the ornamental beginning of the zoological shape that become more developed on fol. 48 where it is related meaningfully to the bestial imagery of Psalm 90.13. See Nordenfalk, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting, illus. 2b for a reproduction of the “N” and Alexander, Insular Manuscripts, illus. 3 for the “q” of fol. 40.

132 Alexander, The Decorated Letter 9. See also Margaret Rickert, Painting in Britain: The Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 216, n.12, for the legend associated with this; and Alexander, Insular Manuscripts 29, for the qualification of this. Alexander points out that the shrine was made at Kells between 1062 and 1098 and it was in this it was carried into battle, hence the name Cathach.

133 Educated in the Columban tradition, King Oswald set up the “heavenly sign,” or standard of the cross, which led to his “heavenly victory,” enabling him to regain ascendancy in Northumbria in 634 AD. See A History of the English Church and People 3.2, 140. Historia Ecclestastica, PL 95, col. 117.

134 Relics were accorded preference over images even among Byzantine iconoclasts, according to Gero, “The Libri Carolini and the Image Controversy” 16.

its making acquired an added aura of holiness and significance, contributing to the influence of its precedent-setting approach.  

Up to this point, the visual expansions of the text would not have disturbed the type of thinking that gave way to iconoclasm in the East. With the introduction of figural art, both desirable and dangerous in times of image-making sensitivities, the possibilities for expanding the impact of a chosen subject increased dramatically. Most particularly, by picturing Christ, the Incarnation could be manifestly expressed. The Ruthwell Cross, itself provocatively a huge sculpted monument eighteen feet high and covered with relief panels of holy figural images, defies iconoclastic censure and boldly asserts the Incarnation, distinguishing the evidence of Christ’s divinity and of his humanity on the two largest panels. The history of the Ruthwell Cross is in many ways a fascinating study of the fall of idols: it was broken down and smashed into pieces in 1642 following an act by the General Assembly at Aberdeen against “idolatrous monuments.”  

The viciousness of the attack is suggested by a letter of John W. Dods, the mason and sculptor who re-erected it in the church in 1887, recording “My impression of the Mutilated heads on the Figure work has all been vandalism Smashed either with a hammer or with stones the stroke dents are visible (sic).” By the time an effort was made to bring together the broken pieces in the first of the reconstruction attempts in the early nineteenth century, the combined monastic, social, and aesthetic conditions which inspired its design were no longer relevant.

In terms of Northumbrian culture with its warrior aristocracy, however, the subject

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136 Rickert, Painting in Britain 15 suggests that there are at least four ornamental links between the “rudimentary beginnings” in the Cathach of St. Columba and the earliest of the surviving elaborately illuminated Hiberno-Saxon manuscripts, the Book of Durrow, Dublin, Trinity College MS A. 4. 5 (57), late seventh century, fol. 192v: “the practice of graduating the sizes of the letters from the large initial to the following text letters; the introduction of simple spirals and trumpet patterns as terminals of the letters; the use, though rare, of open-mouthed animal heads as terminals; and the frequent use of the S-chain both as filling and as external ornament for the initial letter.”


of Christ triumphing over his enemies grew from its minimal visualization in the margin of the Cathach of Columba, where the text is the source of the image, to the sculpted center of the largest Ruthwell Cross panel, where the image is bordered by Latin script, theologically defining its context. Also serving as a border on the narrow sides, vernacular runes reconstruct the Passion from the first person point of view, providing immediacy while casting the reader as listener. This distinction of languages seems to imply that the designer considered Latin as suitable for authoritative intellectual communication and the vernacular for amplifying the psychological dimension through poetic recreation. Shaped as a cross, it recalls Christ’s heroic sacrifice and his triumph over death, as voiced by the inscribed vernacular poem, making possible the salvation of all the faithful. In the Ruthwell Cross the various visual and verbal elements do not merely “translate” each other; rather, they create a “field of force” acting upon one another. The panels and frames encourage viewers to think associatively, both visually and verbally, recalling other depictions of the subject and related scriptural and patristic texts, to achieve a unified vision of cosmic triumph. The audience, however experienced in verbal and visual literacy, is stimulated to enter into the experience: to look, to read, to recall, to listen, to feel, and to imagine.

Perhaps commemorating a dead person or functioning as a center for outdoor preaching, the Ruthwell Cross likely also served as a beacon, literally and figuratively, showing “the way” to travelers. As Farrell and Karkov observe, it lies “at a series of major nexus points” being situated “at the end of Hadrian’s wall, with easy communication by land with the monastic centers at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, and a quick, direct route by sea to Ireland.” What would have been apprehended first by travelers is the monumental size of the sculpture shaped as a cross, defining it as a Christian symbol of salvation. Upon approaching closer, travelers would have begun to make out the pictorial

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140Stone, *Sculpture in Britain* 10.

features of the panels within the enclosing shape of the cross which gives significance and overall context to each of the scenes. The first scene to resolve itself to the eyes of the approaching viewer would have been the largest panel, that of Christ Treading on the Beasts, making it instantly appealing and relevant within its historical and cultural milieu. Those who had heard preachers talk about Christ’s conquest of death and the message of salvation offered by Christianity, with its “more certain knowledge” of “what went before this life, and what follows,” could have explained to others this story powerful enough to lead to conversion. The greatest number of viewers of the cross in Anglo-Saxon times would have been visually literate by experience with similar symbolic images and through having had the associated narratives explained to them, needing only the stimulus of a few pictured details to refresh these in their minds.

An important form of literacy evidenced by the border panels around the vine-scroll sides of the Ruthwell Cross involves knowledge of the vernacular runic alphabet, which must have seemed more distinctly Germanic at this early period and was used on a few other roughly contemporary carvings such as the Bewcastle cross, the Franks Casket, and the Gandersheim Casket. The runes on the Ruthwell Cross convey not only the vernacular text but, by their nature, imply that the sacred mysteries must be unlocked by the viewer. What is interesting about the content of the runic passages on the Ruthwell Cross is that they imaginatively reconstruct the Christian story using the heroic vocabulary of the Germanic scop to reinforce, from a completely different direction, the militant iconography of the sculptured panel of Christ Treading on the Beasts.

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142 Farrell and Karkov, “The Construction” 36, suggest this panel would have been the original front face.

143 As mentioned by the one of King Edwin’s chief counselors who gave this as his chief reason for adopting Christianity in the moving passage about the length of man’s life extending no longer than the time it takes for a sparrow to fly through a warm banqueting hall back into the wintry storms outside. See Bede, A History of the English Church and People 2.13, 125. Historia Ecclesiastica, PL 95, col. 104.

144 See the discussions and reproductions of these in Beckwith, Ivory Carving 13-19. See also my previous note on the St. Cuthbert coffin which has runic inscriptions.

145 This sense of runes is made explicit in the Cædmon Manuscript, which I discuss in the next chapter.
Although the audience of the Ruthwell Cross would have been more socially varied than that of the Cathach of Columba, a richer experience would have been available to those verbally bilingual and visually literate, the latter not a lesser but a vital requirement for a fuller spiritual understanding of the whole. What is by now evident with respect to the vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon designers is their flexibility and ease in moving between the pictorial and the verbal, the symbolic and the literal, allowing multiple levels of meaning to accrue and demanding the fullest possible participation of the audience. It would be difficult for a contemporary, however literate, not to be moved by such a testament of faith, so carefully designed and executed, without wanting to learn more and become more involved, no matter at which level the experience (itself a kind of communion) begins.

Conclusion: Pictorial and Poetic Rhetoric

Now that I have reclaimed the militant context of the main panel of the Ruthwell Cross, which reflects the runic poem's transformation of the suffering hero into divine victor, it is perhaps instructive to turn briefly to another aspect of Mediterranean influence, whether classical or Byzantine, on both insular art and poetry, namely, the practice of rhetoric. Henry Maguire, in his study of the importance of classical rhetorical genres and techniques on Byzantine art itself, points out that the prestige and impact of rhetoric was greater in the East than in the West from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries, and so it may have been primarily from the former that rhetorical expertise passed to Britain. On the Ruthwell Cross aesthetic appeal as well as paradisal and Eucharistic symbolism is provided by the rhetorical embellishment of the decorative vine scroll panels. Controlled and ordered as it is in its design, the Ruthwell Cross contains and directs responses to move the audience in every possible way both to contemplate the divine mysteries presented and to incarnate them in their own lives, the latter suggested by the panel showing Mary Magdalene (and perhaps another one which might also depict her with her sister

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146Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* 3.
With respect to verbal rhetoric, Bede mentions in particular his elder contemporary Aldhelm, whose name has been linked with the composition of the poem on the Ruthwell Cross, as a learned man with a "polished style" as exemplified in his book *On Virginity*. Addressed to the nuns of Barking, Aldhelm’s book encourages them to engage in active combat against the dragons of vice, in itself an interesting expansion of the sort of conquest modeled by Christ in such visualizations of Psalm 90.13 as on the Ruthwell Cross and in the manuscripts discussed. Aldhelm studied not only at Malmesbury, settled by an Irish community that had an unbroken tradition of grammar and rhetoric, and at Canterbury where Theodore of Tarsus taught, but he was also an enterprising collector of books, searching the merchandise of the ships arriving at Dover for them. This talented churchman, who was apparently the first writer of Latin verse in England, also communicated the Christian narrative to the ordinary people by playing his harp and singing songs in the vernacular. In a letter to King Aldfrith of Northumbria, Aldhelm included a hundred metrical riddles, the first written examples in England of the

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147 Howlett, "Inscriptions and Design" 73 considers this the subject of the panel of the two women. The words appear originally to have contained the words “marja” and “maria.” The panel has, however, also been identified as the Visitation.

148 Howlett, "Inscriptions and Design" 92-93. In addition to manuscript evidence of echoes of the poem in other Anglo-Saxon works, Howlett also refers to the story told in William of Malmesbury that King Alfred considered him the best of all poets.

149 *A History of the English Church and People* 5.18, 299.


151 Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (1952; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 192. The latter information, as she points out, is preserved by William of Malmesbury. Aldhelm was also in correspondence with continental churchmen such as CeUan of Péronne (194).

genre delighting in intellectual puzzles, enigmas, obscure and ingenious parallels and paradoxes.\textsuperscript{153} These are not unlike the Ruthwell Cross poem, a rhetorical tour de force arousing compunction\textsuperscript{154} David Howlett speculates that the Ruthwell Cross might have been made during the time of Pecethelm (d. 735) who was bishop of the see closest to Ruthwell and was for a long time a deacon and monk with Aldhelm.\textsuperscript{155} Whether or not Aldhelm wrote the poem which came to be inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross or whether the designer was a direct heir to his influence, what is evident is that the intellectual and artistic traditions associated with the practice of rhetoric existed in England at the time the stone monument was designed, accounting for its sophistication, a feature which is in contrast to the early fourteenth-century illustrated vernacular works which grew out of a different tradition.

The interplay between word and image which began in the Cathach of Columba and developed into its fuller expressions on the Ruthwell Cross eloquently demonstrates the sort of sophisticated productions these early works were in all their component parts. The early signs of a developing intimacy between vernacular texts and visual manifestation, both more naturally accessible to an English audience gaining confidence in their own national identity and its expressions are manifested in the panels and borders of the Ruthwell Cross. This process was interrupted for a time by the Viking invasions which began in the late eighth century and continued sporadically until King Alfred began to gain military ascendance. When cultural activity began to flourish again, the period of iconoclasm in the East was at an official end.

\textsuperscript{153} Whitelock, \textit{The Beginnings of English Society} 193.

\textsuperscript{154} See the study by Margaret Schlauch, "The ‘Dream of the Rood’ as prosopopoeia," \textit{Essays in honour of Carleton Brown} (New York: UP, 1940): 23-34.

\textsuperscript{155} Howlett, "Inscriptions and Design" 92.
III

The Wisdom and Power of the Creative Word: Images for Meditation and Transformation of Self and Society in the Late Anglo-Saxon Period

Introduction

The main panels of the Ruthwell Cross, as I have shown, feature the dual nature of Christ, the suffering human side and the triumphant divine aspect of the heroic Christ. Unlike, for instance, late medieval meditations, like Nicholas Love’s vernacular Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ (c.1409), which focus on the emotional and carnal aspects of Christ’s Passion,¹ both natures of Christ are poignantly and exuberantly brought out in the vernacular rune poem inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross. The works I am now going to examine continue to demonstrate the importance and centrality of images to an incarnational theology, serving as a link to the divine to guide the meditation of the devout. The residue of the iconoclastic debates, in terms of its effect on English works, was that there was an interest in portraying the image of the Incarnate Christ as a stimulus to meditation. In some of these post-iconoclastic English works, a sharpened interest is often shown in the connections, even identifications, between verbal and visual expressions, so that instead of two panels being devoted to the subject as on the Ruthwell Cross, both natures of Christ are alluded to in a single image manifesting the Word made flesh.

In addition to serving as a site for meditation and prayer by way of engaging viewers in a multifaceted way with different aspects of the deity concentrated in a verbal and visual complex like the Ruthwell Cross, both images and words become synergistically involved in narrative movement in the late Anglo-Saxon Caedmon Manuscript. After meditating on the icon of the deity in the frontispiece and responding with the opening words of the poem facing it at the beginning of the Caedmon Manuscript, the audience is

propelled into the pictorial and verbal narrative which makes accessible to the meditative reader God's intention and his plan for the salvation of mankind as unfolded in history. In this manuscript, the power of the eternal Word activated in time is revealed to the spiritual understanding of the audience prepared to look within and to see, in the succeeding miniatures which function as visual exegetical "gathering" sites\(^2\) for the monastically educated reader, the "hidden" Christological meaning of the scripturally based Old Testament narrative.

Because the Cædmon Manuscript represents an extraordinary phenomenon in being the first extant European vernacular poetic manuscript with an extensive program of illustrations, it needs some contextualizing in terms of the historical and cultural events that gave rise to it and in terms of a few of the personalities whose commitment to building a Christian state in England created the circumstances that nurtured this unique development. This progression from representations of iconic to narrative images in conjunction with vernacular poetry did not come about all at once, but resulted from the impetus given to the process by a combination of dramatic events in which the vernacular became a key feature of national policy and by a subsequent revival of monasticism which led to a concomitant revival of the visual arts as part of its program of expansion. The Viking raids which all but devastated Hiberno-Saxon culture were partially stemmed by King Alfred who, in view of the sharp decline of Latin literacy, promoted vernacular literacy among the ruling class as an instrument of moral governance to ensure overall victory. The Alfred Jewel can be viewed as a symbol of his achievement, the image reflecting to the meditative viewer at once the wisdom of the Logos and that of the king as his earthly vicar, inheritor of the Christian empire, who modeled himself on the divine exemplar. This object demonstrates the first connection between the idea of the vernacular and an interest in the Wisdom of the Incarnate Word which is of particular interest in this chapter.

The concept of the king as God's earthly representative was actively promoted and

embellished in the time of Alfred’s grandson, King Edgar, by his chief advisor, Dunstan. This was the versatile man who initiated a monastic revival in the second half of the tenth century, providing the seed-bed for the cultural growth that followed. An early product of this was Dunstan’s own self-portrait before an image of the Incarnate Word. Because it is drawn on vellum, rather than inscribed on a monument or embellished on an object, this shift in medium allowed subsequently for more extensive narrative development with respect to the dramatic potential of images of the creative Word. It marks the first appearance in English manuscripts of the continental figure style, which was more developed than the abstract formulations characteristic of Hiberno-Saxon art; in its added color it introduces the characteristic English-style colored outline drawing (Dunstan also made designs for embroidery), and it initiates the style of the famous “Winchester” school of English illumination associated with the Benedictine revival. While Dunstan’s accompanying verse inscription is in Latin, echoing the psalms whose recital was such an integral part of monastic life in the early period and became again a measure of its reestablishment, this post-iconoclastic miniature also affirms the paradox of the Incarnation by means of a visual image representing the invisible Word. In doing so it exhibits a sophistication about the function of the religious image as a means of access to the divine, modeling a relationship between the meditative viewer and God that also informs the more extensive program of image-word relationships in the vernacular Cædmon Manuscript.

It is difficult to escape the observation that both the circumstances which led to the promotion of the English vernacular and the influence of the iconoclastic debates resulted in a heightened awareness of words and images as highly charged vehicles of power and revelation. Because of their potency and hence danger of misguided use, a defensive attitude attached itself to both. The increasing use of the vernacular is also important in connection with images because it signals that the English were making the imported religious influences and cultures from the continent their own, accessible to a larger range of native speakers. When the Vikings under Cnut gained power in England in the early

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eleventh century, there was no longer any apparent attempt to destroy the religious culture established in England at the time; rather the desire seems to have been to become part of it, as exemplified by the miniature of Cnut made in imitation of an earlier representation of the English King Edgar. In the Cædmon Manuscript, which was likely made during the time of the Viking ascendancy, there seems to have been an attempt to accommodate Viking tastes and even to model Noah’s ark on a Viking dragon ship such as formed the splendid fleet marking Cnut’s arrival. The program of visual narrative in this manuscript, representing the biblical past, was flexible enough to incorporate visual elements of the national present, informing both to form part of the same story, making salvation history intelligible to those viewing the drawings and reading, or following the reading, of the vernacular poetry. Increasing access to a text by pictorial and verbal means also directs the thinking of a community of viewers and strengthens the newly converted in their values. At this moment and in this manuscript, when a representation of Viking power is viewed not as a threat but as a model for a biblical symbol of the Church and of the celestial city, the assimilation of formerly disruptive forces into native culture is surely if precariously manifest—before political conflicts again led to changes in the linguistic and artistic landscape.

Part I

The Wisdom of Alfred: Vernacular Reading and Moral Governance

Associating the moral state of the nation with its vulnerability to the Viking raids which began in his own time in the late eighth century, Alcuin writes to the Northumbrian King Ethelred and his chief men that pillaging by Viking “foxes” of “the chosen vine” was perhaps a judgment against them for their sexual excesses, including sins committed against nuns, and their immoderate luxuriousness in personal habit and attire at the expense of the hungry and cold poor. By way of solution, he urges his “fellow-soldiers”

to defend their country through prayers and acts of justice and mercy, obeying the priests of God, for "they are interceders for you, you [...] defenders of them." As advisor to Charlemagne, Alcuin's view of the *imperium Christianum* no doubt also contributed to the way in which the Carolingian empire came to be empowered through this mutually supportive interdependence of ecclesiastical and political authority.

In England when the Viking threat was somewhat contained after close to a century later, King Alfred (871-99) likewise wanted to ensure peace in the earthly realm by improving the moral life of his kingdom. To this end, he engaged not only in military combat and established a critical network of forts but, upon defeating the Viking army at the battle of Edington in 878, gave priority to reviving religion and learning so as not to renew God's displeasure. Just as Bede claimed that students came to Northumbria in his time, Alfred recalls, in his prose preface to his vernacular translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, previously foreigners came to learn wisdom and now this flow is reversed. According to Alfred, who may have exaggerated to make his own contribution stand out, virtually no one could translate Latin into English any longer but some could read English. After learning from various teachers himself, he determined to translate the most important books which people should know into English books. As he says in his preface, he made the translation after having prepared himself by learning it as best he could understand it and as he could clearly interpret it. What he does is, in effect, what Bede says Cædmon did, and what artists tend to do when they "translate" one form of communication to another: that is, he reconstituted it within the context of his own historical situation. Of course, there would have been a strongly biased input into this process since he learned it from his archbishop, his bishop, and his mass-priests, their very


6For a discussion see Bullough, *The Age of Charlemagne* 165.


number suggesting, however, that the moral governance issues, whether for the clergy to whom it was addressed or for the present and future leaders they would guide, involved contemporary applications that were not all that easy of solution and were much discussed. As Keynes and Lapidge point out, Gregory’s insistence on learning as a qualification for those in leadership is echoed by Alfred’s insistence, as recorded in Asser’s biography of him, that ealdormen and reeves should devote themselves to the study of wisdom, accessible in the vernacular.\(^9\) There is no sense that, as in some strains of late medieval thought,\(^10\) the vernacular was not up to the task. When he remembers how the law was first known in Hebrew, and again by the Greeks and Romans and now by Christian nations, his own joining the ranks, Alfred appears consciously aware also that, in translating crucial texts into English (including books with a historical perspective such as Bede’s *History*) or in encouraging others to translate them, he is engaging in a transferral of power and is enhancing the status of his own nation.\(^11\) His interest in a historical perspective and the siting of English history within the continuum of God’s plan is further demonstrated by the works he made available in the vernacular. These include the free English prose translations Alfred made or had made of the first Christian history of the world written by Orosius, the *History against the Pagans*—into which he interpolated an account told to him orally by Ohthere and Wulfstan about their travels around

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\(^9\)Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, introduction, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London: Penguin, 1983) 29. For details see the Life in this collection, chapter 106, pp. 109-10, concerning Alfred’s compelling unjust judges to learn to read, or to be read to from English books, in order to acquire wisdom.

\(^10\)Watson, “Conceptions of the Word” 94-95. He is talking about Love’s *Mirror* which maintains that simple souls and the vernacular are incapable of moving beyond the literal in terms of the scriptures and therefore the latter should not be translated.

\(^11\)Ruth Evans, Andrew Taylor, Nicholas Watson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “The Notion of Vernacular Theory,” *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1999) 318. They discuss Middle English theory, but the same view of “a transferral of the Roman *imperium* to another people” seems applicable to the Alfredian enterprise.
Scandinavia\textsuperscript{12}— and the translation of Bede’s \textit{History} originally written in Latin. Initiated under Alfred’s program encouraging the making of English texts, the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle} includes descriptions of his own victories against the Danes. As indicated in his preface to the \textit{Pastoral Care}, his target audience is freeborn youth wealthy enough to have the time to learn, in other words, the future leaders who would rebuild the nation along English lines and unite the people under their direction.\textsuperscript{13} This situates the vernacular as the literary language of the court, rather than of the middle and lower classes only as was the case in the early fourteenth century when French was still the primary language of the ruling class even centuries after the Norman Conquest.

Consolidating control by the Christian state, Alfred’s laws emphasize loyalty to lord and king,\textsuperscript{14} reflecting contemporary reality and the toll taken by treacherous factions.\textsuperscript{15} His nationalist ambitions were partially realized in 886 when, according to the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle}, all the English except those under Danish rule acknowledged his

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12}This was suggested to Orosius by Augustine and inspired by the latter’s \textit{City of God}. See Janet Backhouse et al., \textit{The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966-1066} (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 20, cat. no. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{13}While Latin would be for those more advanced in learning and destined for holy orders, Greek seems to have disappeared as a desirable language, probably because it was impractical in the circumstances in which getting leaders to learn to read English was an accomplishment.
\item \textsuperscript{14}Alfred, “The Laws,” \textit{The Early Middle Ages} 269-70.
\item \textsuperscript{15}This is apparent from Æthelweard’s unique tenth-century version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which he translated into Latin for the abbess of Essen, Matilda (the granddaughter of Edith, a sister of King Athelstan who had married the German Otto), both being descended from the royal house of Wessex. See “Æthelweard’s account of the closing years of Alfred’s reign,” \textit{Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources}, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, (London: Penguin, 1983) 190. For a discussion see F. M. Stenton, \textit{Anglo-Saxon England}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947) 342 and 455. He finds it remarkable that a lay nobleman tried to write a Latin history, proof of the effects of the tenth-century revival of learning. On the latter, see my following discussion.
\end{itemize}
leadership (only in King Edgar's time did the Danes submit too, a situation facilitated by allowing them to keep their social and legal customs).

Like the continental Charlemagne and his successors, Alfred appears to have been inspired by King David, hence his personal prose translation of the first fifty psalms, to which he added explanatory comment when he thought it necessary, even to the point where he described David's difficulties in terms of his own. His translations were applauded by his contemporaries and successors, as exemplified in one Latin acrostic poem which describes him as running "confidently through the fields of foreign learning," and later in Æthelweard's Latin version of the Chronicle, which refers to his "divine learning." This last is evidenced by his translation of Boethius "from rhetorical Latin

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17 These have recently been shown to be in his hand according to Simon Keynes, "The Age of Alfred," The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600-900, ed. Leslie Webster and Janet Backhouse (London: The British Museum, 1991) 254.

18 Bately, "The Nature of Old English Prose" 75-76.


20 "Two acrostic poems on King Alfred," and "Æthelweard's account of the closing years of Alfred's reign," both from Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources 192 and 191 respectively. My quotation is of the last line (below) of the acrostic poem given in Michael Lapidge, "Some Latin poems as evidence for the Reign of Athelstan," Anglo-Saxon Studies 9 (1981): 82:

Letus eris semper, ælfred, per competa aterE. [=leta]
Fletas iam mentem sacrís; satis rélaF. [=faleris]
Recte doces, properans, falsa dulcidine mureR. [=rerum]
Ecce aptas clara semper lucrare talitE. [=talenta]
Docte peregrine transcurre rura sophie. [D?]

Lapidge translates this as: 'Behold, may all the Graces descend from heaven upon you! You shall always be joyous, Alfred, through the happy walks [of life]. May you bend your mind to heavenly affairs; be disgusted with trappings. Rightly do you teach, hastening from the deceptive charm of [worldly] things. See, you apply yourself ever to gain the shining talents [cf. Matthew xxv.16]:
speech into his own language—so variously and so richly,” that it aroused “tearful emotions not only in those familiar with it but even in those hearing it [for the first time].” This passage allows a glimpse of contemporary reading, re-reading, and listening practices and expectations and, most significantly, of the success of Alfred who was able to perform this feat in so accomplished a manner as to move and unite his mixed audience in a common response.

Rule by the Word: the Alfred Jewel as an Image of Divine and Earthly Kingship

In this court-based culture, it is likely that the exigencies of time and resources during the period of reconstruction, as well as Alfred’s emphasis on the written word, resulted in a vernacular textual rather than an artistic legacy. Notable exceptions to this observation are the Alfred Jewel (fig. 11) and the Fuller Brooch (fig. 12). The Alfred Jewel, like the Ruthwell Cross, speaks in the vernacular, in this case declaring in large Roman capitals (reaffirming the sense of continuity with Roman Christianity and empire):

+AELFRED MECH HEHT GEWYRCAN ‘Alfred ordered me to be made.’ The enclosed cloisonné figure portrays an enthroned man holding two floriated rods. The identity of this figure has caused much speculation. It has been described as a personification of Sight by analogy with the representation of the figure holding the two cornucopias (or sprouting vegetal forms) at the center of the design featuring the five senses on the Fuller Brooch, and as Christ incarnating the Wisdom of God (I Cor. 1.24 and 30), with the back

Run confidently through the fields of foreign learning.”


21Æthelweard’s account of the closing years of Alfred’s reign,” from Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources 191. The Latin is given in Campbell, The Chronicle of Aethelweard 51.


representing Wisdom as the Tree of Life (following Proverbs 3.18). A figure of Wisdom depicted as the Incarnate Christ holding a book in his right hand and a flowering rod in his left is shown standing within the "D" beginning the Book of Wisdom in the earlier continental Grandval Bible, a copy of Alcuin’s revision of the Latin Vulgate (fig. 13). This pictorial type combines motifs associated with Isaiah 11.1-2 (concerning the flower that would rise from the root of Jesse, taken as an incarnational image) and John 1.1 (referring to creation by the Word). The flowering rod or shoot or scepter, as Schiller indicates, was portrayed in a variety of ways. While the Incarnate Word as Wisdom is shown holding one branch in the Grandval Bible initial, Christ is shown holding two flowering rods in a position similar to that in the Alfred Jewel in the panel inset into the Temple in the miniature of the Third Temptation in the Book of Kells, where it represents the human nature of Christ, while his divine nature, challenged by the devil, is represented by the figure of Christ above.

Another level of meaning for this figure with the two flowering rods in the Alfred Jewel may be understood from its use. It has been associated with the æstel, worth fifty mancuses (approximately one-half pound weight in gold), which was to accompany each copy of Alfred’s translation of the Pastoral Care sent to all the bishops, and which was later glossed as a “pointer,” the Alfred Jewel itself possibly forming the head of such a

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25 Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources 204.

26 London, British Library, MS Add 10546, Tours, c. 840. It contains fifty-five initials as well as four full-page miniatures. I will discuss the Genesis miniature with respect to the concept of creation by the Word in connection with the Cædmon Manuscript.


28 Dublin, Trinity College, Ms 57, fol. 202v. This analogy was noted by Joan Clarke, The Alfred and Minster Lovell Jewels (Oxford: UP, 1961) 8, where she also draws attention to similar configurations in Celtic art.
tool or of another sort of book-mark or reading-aid. I do not think it beyond the realm of possibility that the figure with light reddish brown hair on the Alfred Jewel represents, on different levels, both the Incarnate Word as a figure of Wisdom (Alfred’s designation for *Philosophia* in his translation of Boethius) and Alfred who fashioned himself on the model of Wisdom, the source of all authority according to Boethius. If Alfred were not meant to be identified with the figure, there would be little point in the framing inscription. Such an identification of the king with Christ is suggested in another contemporary acrostic poem addressed to Christ but having the name AELFRED as its “left-hand legend.” If this dual application is correct with respect to the Alfred Jewel also, then the

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30*Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* 205-06. Keynes and Lapidge, consider also the possibility that the Alfred Jewel was also a symbol of worldly office, fitting for one who valued wisdom so highly.


33*Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* 191. As seen below, the name of “Aelfred” is spelled, vertically, down both sides of the poem. It is given in Lapidge, “Some Latin poems as evidence for the reign of Athelstan” 82:

> Admiraanda mihi mens est transcurrere gestA.
> Es erce astrifera, cito sed reddes arbiter indE.
> - Lex etiam ut docuit typice, portendere faede -  L.
> Flagrantice simul moles mundi arserit igne.  F.
> Rex, formasti. His sed melius gnarum, optime, flammis  R.
> Eripis - atque chaos uincens, Christe, ipse necasti -  E.
> Divino super astra frui per secula uultu.  D.

Lapidge translates this as “[To Christ]
It is my intention to run through some amazing events.
You reside in the starry citadel: but You will return swiftly thence as Judge
- Even as the Law taught figurally, You are foretold awesomely -
And the mass of the universe shall burn at once in searing flame.
O king, You created it (thus). But, Great One, you seize the wise man from these flames
- And, triumphing, you destroyed chaos [i.e. death?]
In order to enjoy the Divine Visage beyond the stars forever.
gold filigreed bestial animal head at the base of the portrait can be read variously as death over whom Christ triumphed, as described in the acrostic poem, or as the Viking fox defeated by Alfred. As in the acrostic poem, the “wise man” triumphing, may then “enjoy the Divine Visage.” Indicating a renewed interest in intellectual and exegetical matters, this assemblage of images of wisdom, triumph, and sight, prominent verbally in the poem and visually in the Alfred Jewel (comparable in some respects to the Fuller Brooch), reinforces the identification of Alfred with Christ, the stable center of the earthly kingdom modeled on that of the heavenly citadel, the latter described in the king’s translation of

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34 A similar visual configuration occurs in the tenth-century Salisbury Psalter in which the deity stands on a bestial lion’s head at the apex of the “A” beginning Psalm 119, illustrating the psalmist’s cry to the Lord to deliver him from the “wicked lips” and “deceitful tongue” of his enemies. For Salisbury Cathedral Library, MS 150, fol. 122, English, c. 969-78, see Temple, Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066, illus. 57. That the decorated letter is intended to be meaningful in the context is indicated by the relevant words from the psalm written beside the illustration as well as being repeated in the text itself. The bestial metaphor referring to enemies is further emphasized by the smaller beasts in the rest of the decoration of the letter.

35 Clarke, The Alfred and Minster Lovell Jewels 6, mentions that the animal has been generally thought to represent a lion’s head or a boar, although she says that neither is known to have any particular significance. However, if it is a lion’s head then, in conjunction with an interpretation of Christ as the figure above, the beast suits the iconography associated with Christ Treading on the Beasts, the latter representing death and evil, as previously discussed in my section on the Ruthwell Cross. The leonine head by itself was often used to depict hell in later Anglo-Saxon representations such as in the Tiberius C. VI Psalter, fol. 14 and in the Caedmon Manuscript, pages 3 and 16. If it is a boar, then it is more difficult to relate to the figure above. In Scandinavian mythology the boar is associated with the goddess Freya; on the Sutton Hoo helmet its presence appears to signify protection for the warrior.

36 “Two acrostic poems on King Alfred,” Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources 192. See the last three lines of the Latin poem in my earlier note.

37 Leslie Webster mentions this with respect to the Fuller Brooch, connecting the central figure with that of Sight/Wisdom on the Alfred Jewel; see “The Fuller Brooch,” The Making of England 281.
The message of the vernacular text of the frame is applicable immediately to the jewel, to Alfred's vernacular translation of the Pastoral Care which the jewel accompanied if indeed it was part of an aestel and, on another level, to the construction of a nation, Christian and English, to which the very existence of this richly wrought object so eloquently testifies. Since the enclosed figure represents, on one level, "Christ 'Logos' as the figure of Wisdom," the inscription together with the image fittingly declare, on another level, the power and authority of the "Word" by which Alfred tried to govern. The flowering rods held by the figure conjure up the idea of pa blosms 'blossoms' of learning referred to in some of the incipits and explicits of Alfred's version of Augustine's Soliloquies. Martin Irvine compares Alfred's metaphors to Boniface's in Ars grammatica where the latter develops the image of collecting the best fruits and flowers from the ancient forest of the grammarians to form a "fragent garland" for youthful talent. The image on the jewel further declares the intent of Wisdom 1.1: "Love justice, you that are the judges of the earth," which was the message Alfred hoped a vernacular reading program would advance in his administrators to ensure the peace and stability of the English nation. In this formulation of incarnational theology associating the Wisdom of the Word with such a program as instituted by Alfred, the vernacular is promoted as an official instrument of national empowerment allied with Old Testament conceptions of justice and the values of Latin textual culture. Irvine advances the position that early medieval textual communities "were constituted by grammatica, the discipline that governed literacy, the study of literary language, the interpretation of texts, and the

38This anticipates a similar application of the concept articulated in the Squire's Tale and accentuated by the design of the Ellesmere Manuscript, as I will indicate in my subsequent discussion on that work later in this study.


41Irvine, "Medieval Textuality" 201.
writing of manuscripts. It is this basis in classical learning that distinguishes the growth of the written vernacular in Anglo-Saxon culture from its popular resurgence in the early fourteenth century in England, accounting for the different levels of sophistication both in the texts produced and in the expectations governing the illustrations for those texts.

On the Alfred Jewel, there is little sense of a linking of Wisdom with Love as part of a pastoral preaching mission to bring the humanized Word to the English masses, as there was to be after the fourth Lateran Council of 1215; instead, it is the divine power of the Word as the spiritual basis of political victory and stability that appealed most to the Anglo-Saxon heroic temperament. The very richness of the visual and verbal complex of the Alfred Jewel would have encouraged prolonged meditation on its meaning and intent, inspiring religious and patriotic viewers to carry out their part in making this Christian state a reality. In the intimacy of the relationship between the verbal inscription to the image, which is of the Word, it foreshadows the fascination with the multiple levels and interpenetrations of meanings which serve as sites for meditation in the Dunstan and Caedmon Manuscript miniatures which follow next in my discussion.

Tenth Century Monastic Reform: Dunstan and the Anointed King

Once the learning encouraged by Alfred had spread further and the repeated Viking depredations in the intervening generations had been subdued, the arts began to thrive during the sixteen-year period of peace and stability in the reign of King Edgar, Alfred's great-grandson. Promoting this explosion of artistic and poetic activity was the reformation of the monasteries in England initiated by the king's chief advisor, Dunstan.

Since the monastic reform which led to the development of a rich religious literature in English—highlighted by the late tenth-century writings of Ælfric, whose

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42Irvine, "Medieval Textuality" 184-85.

43Watson, "Conceptions of the Word" 102-04, in which he discusses conflicting attitudes to the poor either as containing in themselves the essential meaning of the faith or as needing instruction by the established authorities.

44It is fashioned in cloisonné enamel and gold encrusting the one-quarter-inch thick crystal heart of this object. See Clarke, The Alfred and Minster Lovell Jewels 5-6.
alliterative prose translation of the early books of the Bible was illustrated in the second quarter of the eleventh century, and by the poetic retelling of scriptural history in the Caedmon Manuscript likely illustrated around the same time—was so closely linked with Dunstan, it is of interest to glance briefly at his life. His career also informs the surviving miniature connected with him which, in content and style, contains features more fully developed in the Caedmon Manuscript.

Before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury during Edgar’s reign, Dunstan’s life was fraught with enmities. Connected to the royal family by birth, Dunstan, unpopular with other young nobles, decided to become a monk after an illness. He attended King Edmund at court, but was disgraced as a result of the jealous intrigues of others and was about to be exiled when the king, whose horse bolted, came to the revelation that Dunstan had been wronged. Consequently, he made him abbot of Glastonbury, which still retained some traditions of Celtic and Saxon monasticism. There Dunstan organized the first reformed community, which was not to everyone’s liking. Although he was supported by King Eadred, Edmund’s successor, he made a powerful enemy during the anointing of the next king, Eadwig. When this new king, who may have been only thirteen years old, left the ceremony in progress without returning, Dunstan came upon him in dalliance with his future mother-in-law and with the woman who was to become his wife. The former never forgave him and through her influence forced Dunstan into exile. He left for Ghent, strengthening ties with the continent which would eventually benefit English monasticism and the arts. Within less than two years, he was able to return to England in 959 after Edgar succeeded to the throne. Shortly thereafter Dunstan became Archbishop of Canterbury, the previous archbishop being removed. Subsequently he and his disciples

45 London, British Library, Cotton Ms Claudius B.IV. It shares some significant visual motifs with the Caedmon Manuscript, as will become evident in my discussion of the latter.


Æthelwold and Oswald brought about the Benedictine monastic reform in southern England. ⁴⁸

The coalition between Edgar and the monastic movement he patronized effected a further strengthening of the power of each. The idea that the king is Christ’s vicar on earth, held by Alcuin and embodied in Alfred, was developed further. As indicated by the Monastic Agreement or Regularis Concordia, resulting from a synod called by Edgar and attended not only by prominent English ecclesiastics but by monks from Ghent (where Dunstan had spent his exile) and Fleury (which Oswald had visited), the king was viewed as the primary representative of God on earth. In a local transformation of the story of David and the lion, and so to be viewed in the same tradition of divinely sanctioned authority as that held by the biblical king, Edgar is described as the “Good Shepherd” rescuing and defending his sheep “from the savage open mouths of the wicked—as it were the gaping jaws of wolves.” ⁴⁹ As pointed out by Christopher Brooke, this invocation of royal authority also weakened “the grip of secular lords on monastic property.” ⁵⁰ Many of the secular lords, as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle repeatedly testifies, had been inclined to rebel and side with the Vikings when it suited them. Edgar was crowned, not at the time he came to power when he was only sixteen, but in 973 when he reached the age of 30, the earliest age at which a priest could be ordained. Strengthening the ordination parallel, the essence of the ceremony was the anointing that set him apart from other men, as

⁴⁸Dunstan died in 988 after years of attendance on Edgar and on the next two kings, Edward the Martyr and Æthelred II. These details of his life are from the biographies of 996 and 1006, as well as from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; see Stenton, Anglo-Saxon England 360-63, 439-44, 454-55. As mentioned by Mildred Budny and Timothy Graham, “Dunstan as Hagiographical Subject or Osbern as Author? The Scribal Portrait in an Early Copy of Osbern’s Vita Sancti Dunstani,” Gesta 32.2 (1993): 84-85 and 91, there were three Anglo-Saxon versions of Dunstan’s vita, and three Anglo-Norman versions, the latter being further removed from the historical figure emphasize his visions and miracles; Osbern’s version, the first of the Anglo-Norman ones with which their article is concerned, relates that demons, sometimes in the guise of animals, regularly appeared to Dunstan; see “Dunstan as Hagiographical Subject” 84-85 and 91 respectively.


⁵⁰Brooke, The Saxon and Norman Kings 126-27.
Stenton points out with respect to the drafts for the coronation order produced by Dunstan and his associates.\(^{51}\) This special anointing deliberately aligns the king with the power emanating from Christ, an identification which may have been influenced by the interpretation given to Psalm 44.7-8, which had a special significance for Dunstan as indicated by the inscription of verse 7 on the rod held by Christ in the miniature which includes Dunstan’s self-portrait (to be discussed shortly). Concerning these verses evoking the straight rod of divine justice, Cassiodorus, for instance, says the anointed Christ signifies both king and priest,\(^{52}\) a concept evidently taken as applicable to his earthly representative, Edgar, in view of his delayed coronation. Edgar’s crown was not the simple one of earlier times but, perhaps reflecting something also of the sense of the flowering rods associated with wisdom and power in the Alfred Jewel, “blossomed into the *fleur-de-lis*”\(^{53}\) used by his successors.

Corresponding with royal power, strengthened by its ritual associations with divine power, was that exercised by monasteries supported by the king while simultaneously advancing his authority. A visualization of this can be seen in the New Minster Charter frontispiece showing Edgar offering up the charter to the cross-nimbed deity above (fig. 14).\(^{54}\) The latter, signaling approval by blessing the proceedings, holds a book, presumably the scriptures but, in appearance, very like the charter held by Edgar. His feet rest on a footstool, suggestive of the earthly realm (Isaiah 66.1; Acts 7.49) occupied by the king below. Just as Christ’s golden mandorla is held up by angels, so Edgar is flanked on one side by the Virgin holding a feather or branch\(^{55}\) and a cross, and on the other, by a figure

\(^{51}\) *Anglo-Saxon England* 363. Stenton refers to the probable Frankish influence on Dunstan in this concept.


\(^{53}\) Brooke, *The Saxon and Norman Kings* 66.

\(^{54}\) London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A. viii, fol. 2.

\(^{55}\) This may have reference to the branch held by the Virgin, representing the Church, shown within the “Q” at the beginning of Psalm 51.10 in the Bury Psalter. See Rome, Vatican, MS Reg[inensis] lat. 12, English, early eleventh century, fol. 62. John of
holding a large key, evidently portraying St. Peter shown with a tonsure. As Wormald summarizes, the main substance of the document is that "the king has removed the wicked and licentious canons from New Minster at Winchester and replaced them with Benedictine monks who have the right to choose their own abbot." Since its form and substance is unusual, Wormald speculates that it was concocted, possibly by Æthelwold, after the event, to be displayed on the altar. The painted frontispiece framed by a double golden trellis entwined with acanthus leaves, an early example of the full Winchester style (to be manifested most spectacularly in the famous Benedictional of St. Æthelwold), serves as effective propaganda for the installation of the Benedictines, demonstrably supported by royal power, which itself is shown encompassed by a superfluity of golden Christian symbols. Further guaranteeing its legitimacy, it is attested by King Edgar, followed by Dunstan the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other members of the royal family, as well as the Archbishop of York and, of course, Æthelwold. Benedictine monks at this time not only participated in worldly matters, as shown by Dunstan's powerful influence in both ecclesiastical and political spheres, but also sponsored the educational, artistic and architectural projects required by the growth of the monasteries.

Dunstan before an Image of the Word: Private Meditation as a Communal Model

Dunstan himself was not only a man with great administrative ability, he was also

Damascus identified the fruitful olive of this verse with Mary as the abode of every virtue. See "The Orthodox Faith," Saint John of Damascus: Writings, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., The Fathers of the Church, vol. 37 (1958; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1970) 363. Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art 1, 15, mentions that the "rod" or "shoot" from the tree of Jesse (Isaiah 11.1) was also associated with the Virgin, whose "fruit" was the incarnate Christ. Accordingly, she was often shown holding a branch-like shoot.

Wormald, "Late Anglo-Saxon Art: Some Questions and Suggestions," Collected Writings 108-09; see also 110-11 for further discussion. The details of the Charter and Wormald's observations are from this source.

an artist and scribe." In a configuration that was to become enormously influential for future self-portraits of artists, authors, saints, and patrons, suggesting that this model was available to successive generations as an exemplar of how to engage in a personal dialogue with God via an image of the Incarnate Christ, Dunstan portrayed himself before a figure of Christ (fig. 15). The form this particular dialogue takes is indicated by the inscribed words near the prostrate Dunstan and those on the rod and in the book held by huge figure of Christ.

While artistically, the "linear design," as T. D. Kendrick observes, having "no

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58 And harpist, as pointed out by D. H. Turner, "Illuminated Manuscripts" The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art: 966-1066, ed. Janet Backhouse et al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984) 51. In addition to manuscript illustrations, Dunstan is known to have made a design for a stole for Lady Æthelwyn to embroider, a clear indication of the close relationship between embroidery and colored outline drawing which originated in England; see David Wilson, The Anglo-Saxons (1966; Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1971) 58.

59 Examples include (1) the late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon ivory of the Transfiguration in London, Victoria and Albert Museum, No. 253-1867, in which Sts. Peter and John prostrate themselves at the bottom, while St. James between them is bent over backwards in ecstasy, reproduced in Beckwith, Ivory Carving in Early England cat. no. 21, illus. 49; (2) the Monks presenting the Rule to St. Benedict, London, British Library, MS Arundel 155, English, 1012-23, fol. 133; for which see the subsequent discussion in my text; and (3) Dunstan himself is shown in the same position before an altar, while an angel at his back shoes away a devil in an early twelfth-century stained glass window in Canterbury Cathedral, reproduced in Mildred Budny and Timothy Graham, "Dunstan as Hagiographical Subject" 89, fig. 7. Further examples can be found in Joan Evans, ed. The Flowering of the Middle Ages (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966).

weighty shadows, comes glittering to the surface of the page." Theologically, the effect is that it suggests the concept of the “outline” as that which is shared between prototype and image, allowing the invisible to be seen. The outline on the vellum surface conveys a sense of material form by circumscribing a shape which is nevertheless surrounded and filled by space, suggesting the mystery of the spirit which cannot be circumscribed. In his discussion of the outline which distinguishes late Anglo-Saxon art, Wormald appears to intimate something of this when he observes that it was used “to express the spiritual content of a scene.” This delineation of the physicality of Christ in the most minimal way in the Dunstan miniature allows for a deliberate ambiguity regarding the paradox of his dual nature in the Dunstan miniature. This ambiguity, which encourages meditation on the mystery of the Incarnation, is fostered in a number of ways. The confident thick-and-thin outlines imply roundness, conveying something of the graceful, static quality of classical sculpture, echoing the monumental style in vogue on the continent, while the animated fly-away sash of drapery implies airiness and movement by an unseen wind. Further, the

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61Kendrick, Late Saxon 4. Appreciation of this kind of pre-Renaissance aesthetic has not altogether disappeared, as evidenced by Robert Amos in his review of a local Victoria artist who, like Cezanne (influenced by medieval art), is not ruled by “the tyranny of shading when he emphasizes the internal luminosity of the painted object whose form has not become lost in atmospheric effects.” Amos refers to the art of Marin Honisch in “Honisch selects simple works for his showing in Victoria,” Times Colonist (May 31, 1997): C7.

62See my previous discussion of this in connection with Theodore the Studite, On the Holy Icons 21, as mentioned in Barasch, Icon 268, also 282.


64David Talbot Rice, Byzantine Painting and Developments in the West 12.

65The fly-away sash seems to have become attracted to the hole in the vellum, making it part of the composition and seemingly explaining its errant behavior, an anomaly in view of the solemnity of the rest of the drawing. It is an intriguing possibility that this feature, which was to become characteristic of late Anglo-Saxon art, was borrowed from the Utrecht Psalter to deal with a hole in the vellum. An example of this fly-away drapery in the Utrecht Psalter can be seen in the figure of Christ who is standing on death and raising two figures out of the pit of hell on fol. 8. A late Anglo-Saxon example can be seen
wavy cloud which covers the deity’s lower legs alludes to an ethereal dimension, recalling Bede’s commentary on their function: “clouds take him up when he ascends and will escort him when he returns for judgment” (see Matt. 24.30), implying that it is the resurrected Christ who is portrayed here. The impression of divine power is evoked by his large scale in relation to the small figure of Dunstan. Yet again, denoting solidity is the rubricator’s color on the edge of Dunstan’s tonsure and on the trim of his hood and hem, as well as the dark brown of his hair and that of Christ. This impression is both reinforced and yet contradicted by the same pigment that also fills in Christ’s cross-nimbed halo and the first letters of the two inscriptions, neither of which suggest material substance since the former refers to light, and would seem like the sun with light filtering through the vellum when the page is turned, and the latter merely fills empty space inside the letters, echoing a Hiberno-Saxon decorative technique. Since Dunstan may have been responsible only for the self-portrait and the inscriptions above it, this added coloring was also a practical way to integrate the addition with the rest of the miniature, in the same way that annotations by this same hand serve to link the different, unconnected parts of the

in the Tiberius C. VI Psalter miniature of Christ Treading on the Beasts (see my fig. 5).


67Wormald, “English Drawings” 74. Wormald also points out that the original dots on the end of the virga were of a faint brown. This added coloring would support the view that Dunstan could have been the one to add the rest of the coloring by way of integrating his own portrait to the rest. See also Hunt, “Introduction” VI-VII. The later inscription at the top of the page attributing “the picture and scripture seen at the bottom of the page” to the hand of Saint Dunstan himself could be read either way since the “below” might mean everything below the inscription or the figure and scripture by Dunstan at the bottom of the picture. I am grateful to Linda Olson for transcribing and translating the Latin on this page; hers are the translations I use for the rest of my discussion on this work.
The relationship between word and image in one of the first works in the famous Winchester style is intriguing not only in view of the instability of forms in earlier insular work, but most particularly in the context of the theoretical basis for the justification of images. The figure before whom Dunstan prays and meditates signifies "Christ 'Logos'" as a figure of wisdom, the subject also of the Alfred Jewel. A close Byzantine parallel to the classical style of Christ's body and to his portrayal as the figure of Wisdom, before whom the Byzantine emperor Leo VI, the Wise (886-912), prostrates himself, is the mosaic in the Hagia Sophia. This subject of Wisdom in conjunction with kingship testifies to the persistence of a concept of the quality desirable in a ruler whose wisdom and power are conceived of as stemming from and sanctioned by Christ. That it was also adopted for author/artist portraits, probably derives from portrayals of David, both the author of the words of the psalms and the king whose words are listened to (a sign used by the Beowulf poet to indicate the power of Scyld Scæling). The portrayal of Christ,

68 The three parts that are linked by the annotations in this hand are ninth-century works including a grammatical work (popularly referred to as a "Classbook"), possibly from Brittany, a commonplace book written in Wales, and part of Ovid's Ars amatoria; all these were apparently at Glastonbury while Dunstan was abbot (c.940-56). A fourth part from the eleventh century, now bound second, was added at an unknown time. See Turner, "Illuminated Manuscripts" 51.

69 Compare the Cathach of Columba initial previously discussed.

70 Alexander, Anglo-Saxon Illumination, 7. For background on the iconography of Christ as the figure of Wisdom see Hunt, "Introduction" VI, n. 1. See also my previous analysis of the Alfred Jewel.

71 For a discussion of this composition of Leo VI Prostrate Before Christ Enthroned see Grabar, Byzantium: Byzantine Art in the Middle Ages 121; and Kurt Weitzmann et al., The Icon (1981; London: Studio Editions, 1990) 11-12; color plate on p. 25.

72 See my following discussion of the Bury St. Edmunds Psalter, the Saint-Bertin Psalter, and the Saint-Bertin Gospels in connection with the prostrate figure.

invoking both his corporeality\textsuperscript{74} and his divinity, is a logical visual development of the sort of explication offered by John of Damascus who, as will be recalled, said: "Fleshy nature was not lost when it became part of the Godhead [...] just as the Word made flesh remained the Word."\textsuperscript{75} The Anglo-Saxon miniature demonstrates a fine awareness of the issues regarding images on the part of Dunstan, who presents himself before the Word of which the image is merely a symbol, or in another sense—reflecting the theological paradox—he is prostrating himself before the image of the Word Incarnate.

This image of the prostrate figure is closely related to similar ones in the art connected to Flanders shortly after Dunstan's period of exile there in the mid-tenth century. This is but one artistic example\textsuperscript{76} of the strong cross-channel links consequently strengthened, especially during the abbacy of Odbert of Saint-Bertin (969-1007 or 1012\textsuperscript{77}). Also an artist, Odbert portrays himself in a similar worshipful position at the bottom left of the letter "Q" (fig. 16), at one remove from the ox and the ass who look adoringly at the Virgin and Child in the scene of the Nativity enclosed within the descender of the "Q" at the opening of St. Luke's Gospel in the Saint-Bertin (Otbert

\textsuperscript{74}The mosaic of Leo VI Before Christ Enthroned alludes to the Incarnation in the two side portraits of the Virgin and the Angel. See the discussion in Grabar, Byzantium 121.

\textsuperscript{75}Barasch, Icon 209.

\textsuperscript{76}See my discussion of the Saint-Bertin gospels, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 333 (below). In that manuscript, at the top of the border of fol. 85, there is what is possibly the first recorded example of the "disappearing Christ" popular in Anglo-Saxon art, possibly alluded to by the wavy line of the clouds in the Dunstan Christ, and also, in the left border, possibly the first example of Christ Harrowing a leonine mouth of hell, also subsequently popular in Anglo-Saxon art—but since these renditions appear to be abbreviations of previous examples, there is a likelihood that one or more lost manuscripts of this Channel school would have contained these iconographic configurations. For discussions of MS 333 see Meyer Schapiro, "The Image of the Disappearing Christ" 266-87, especially 277-79, and fig. 8 (on page 277, there appears to be an accidental inversion of 986 for the beginning of the rule of Abbot Odbert, also probably the artist who portrays himself in the tail of the "Q", it should read 968).

\textsuperscript{77}See also Dodwell, Painting in Europe 78-85 for more on Odbert and cross-channel artistic influences.
[Odbert]) Gospels. Perhaps the traditional connection of Luke the artist with the Virgin prompted this self-identification of Odbert with the holy pair.

A similar figure but dressed as a monk, like Dunstan, kneels in the margin beside the opening of Psalm 24 in the Bury St. Edmunds Psalter (fig. 17), which shares this iconographic feature with the Saint-Bertin Psalter. While Dunstan genuflects before an image of the Incarnate Word, this monk seems to prostrate himself before the actual words of scripture, entrusting his soul to the Lord and asking that his enemies be confounded (Psalm 24.1-4). The words are also duplicated in the small book the corresponding figure holds in the Bury Psalter, where he is to be imagined as reading aloud the verses the manuscript reader encounters. “This device imparts to the reference a quality of the declamatory and prophetic,” as Harris observes, so that the “line of reference becomes a thing spoken, immediate in its dramatic appeal, an active extension of the character of the figures.” Seen in their immediate manuscript context, the monks in the margins of the Bury and the Saint-Bertin Psalters can, however, also be seen as prostrate before the drawing of the “King of Glory” in the upper left margin above the illustration for Psalm 23. 7-10 in the former and on the previous facing page in the case

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78 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 333, fol. 51.

79 Rome, Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Reg[enensis] lat. 12, fol. 37v, English, early eleventh century.

80 Boulogne, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 20, fol. 30, c. 1000. The tinted marginal drawings were made by an Anglo-Saxon artist while Odbert made the historiated initials and three prefatory paintings, according to Dodwell, Painting 79. Harris has noted that Psalm 24 is illustrated by an image of a genuflecting David in Greek monastic psalters, and that there is one of a genuflecting ninth-century poet, Milo of S. Aman, serving as a “pictorial colophon” at the end of his work in Leiden, Bibl. Univ., MS 190, fol. 206r, also related to Odbert’s scriptorium at Saint-Bertin, as well as a Belgium ivory c. 1000 of Notger, as Milo, genuflecting before a church; see Robert Mark Harris, “The Marginal Drawings of the Bury St. Edmunds Psalter (Rome Vatican Library MS Reg. Lat. 12) [with] Figures,” diss., Princeton U, 1960, 135, 129, and 131 respectively.

81 Harris, “The Marginal Drawings” 122.

82 Harris, “The Marginal Drawings” 131. The illustration of the deity with shield and resurrection banner in the Bury Psalter indicate that these verses were obviously taken
of the latter. I am not aware of anyone having observed the comparison between this interpictorial pair of Psalm 23 and 24 in both the Bury and Saint-Bertin Psalters, based on a lost Canterbury prototype, with the miniature of Dunstan, who became Archbishop of Canterbury (959-988).

Dunstan's first verse *Dunstanum memet clemens rogo Christe tuere* 'Merciful Christ I pray that you watch over me,' echoes the sentiment of the verses of Psalm 24 referring to mercy and fear. It does not appear to have been previously noticed that Dunstan's words exactly duplicate those of Hrabanus Maurus (780-856), Abbot of Fulda and Archbishop of Mainz, written over his kneeling figure as he adores the cross in the poem *De Laudibus Sanctae Crucis* (fig. 18). Dunstan may well have seen and meditated upon a version of this during his continental exile. Only the name of Dunstan has been substituted for that of Hrabanus, and the figure of Christ (analogous to the risen Christ forming part of the interpictorial pair previously mentioned with respect to the illustrations for Psalms 23 and 24 in the Bury St. Edmund and Saint-Bertin Psalters) for that of the cross. This in itself is interesting because the image of Christ has replaced the cross of the Carolingian work, implying that the substitution was itself an assertion of the right to make an image of the deity. Dunstan's work appears to have resulted from a distillation of remembered phrases, images and, as I suggest below, patristic commentaries that coalesced and surfaced during his personal creative endeavor when he worked out his own

to refer to Christ's Harrowing of Hell, a typological association inspired by verse 7, "Lift up your gates," as interpreted, for example, by Cassiodorus to mean "the gates of death." See Cassiodorus: *Explanation of the Psalms*, vol. 1, 244.

83Doddwell, *Painting* 80 and Harris, "The Marginal Drawings" 119.

84This and the following verse were transcribed by Linda Olson.

85Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 652, fol. 33v. See also PL 107, cols. 261-264 and figura 28. I am grateful to Linda Olson for the translating for me the words within the outline of Hrabanus Maurus. It is true that the construction of tuer/e is part of a two-line sequence which includes etuerca...tepe (underlining mine), but since tuere can be formed from the letters within the outline of the poet, this reading also presents itself. For the words written over the cross itself, see George Henderson, *Early Medieval* (1972; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 222.
stand on the issue of images, setting the precedent for the works of the Winchester school which were to follow.

Further, the second verse of Psalm 44 (it is verse 7 that is inscribed on the rod) is fittingly apt in relation to the interpictorial pair for Psalms 23 and 24 just discussed and to the Dunstan miniature: “My heart hath uttered a good word: I speak my works to the king. My tongue is the pen of a scribe that writeth swiftly.” It is, however, Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 44 that most particularly informs this illustration in telling ways, suggesting that Dunstan was likely influenced by that. Augustine connects the idea of uttering a good word to the creation, saying “by the Word ‘all things were made’ and the Word is of God […] How then were these good things made? Because there was ‘uttered […] a good Word.’” In a particularly relevant observation (applicable to Dunstan’s miniature specifically and to this study generally), Augustine says that the first verse (the second in the Biblia Sacra Vulgata and the Douai versions) suggests that the Word is incarnated by the scribe’s pen: “What likeness, I ask, has the ‘tongue’ of God with a transcriber’s pen? […] Yet such comparisons have been made; and were they not made, we should not be formed to a certain extent by these visible things to the knowledge of the ‘Invisible One.’” In the miniature, the Word is incarnated in the inscription and in the image. Augustine goes on to discuss Psalm 44.8, the words inscribed on the rod in

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86 See Emrarationes in Psalmos, Oeuvres 12: 358.

87 See Hunt, “Introduction” VI, who mentions the source from Psalm 44.7 but not Augustine’s commentary on it. Cf. also Heb. 1.8. Psalm 44.7 is 44.8 in Augustine. See also the discussion of this by Lewis, Reading Images 69-70. She makes the point regarding the tripartite petal at the end of the rod held by the image of Christ in Majesty in such thirteenth-century Apocalypse miniatures as Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig III.I, fol. 3v, reproduced as fig. 31 in her book, alludes to the Tree of Jesse. This
Dunstan’s miniature: + uirga recta est...uirga regni tui “The straight rod [...] is the rod of your reign’ and connects it to the penitential Psalm 50.11 “Turn away thy face from my sins,”89 which is what is visualized in the miniature where God’s face is turned from the prostrate Dunstan! Yet the second verse of Dunstan’s inscription, Tenarias me non sinas sorbisisse procellas, in asking that the storms not be allowed to swallow him, echoes the metaphor in Psalm 68.14-16, in which the next verse but one asks the Lord: “And turn not thy face away from thy servant: for I am in trouble.” The miniature, in a sense, seems to be asking that the Lord turn away from Dunstan’s sins but not from Dunstan—which is actually the sense Augustine derives from the verses of Psalm 44 since he continues the discussion as follows: “Consider an instance in the penitential Psalm: ‘Hide Thy face from my sins’. Did he mean ‘from me’? No: for in another passage he says plainly ‘Hide not Thy face from me.’”90 Clearly Augustine connected Psalms 44 and 68, as did Dunstan. Augustine discusses God’s righteousness, in connection with the rod, and God’s mercy, the latter reflected in the first line of Dunstan’s inscription. If Dunstan did not actually draw the outline of the deity, then it may have suggested to him the associations explored by Augustine, inspiring Dunstan to add the inscriptions on the rod and the book, as well as the one above his own self-portrait, the words and images emanating from his “heart.”

Such associations may have had a poignant relevance to Dunstan during a tempestuous time in his own life when he felt himself in imminent danger, either from his earthly enemies, as when he was exiled, or from the press of worldly matters, the “fierce storms of this world,” and the personal “deep of sins.”91 In the picture, Christ’s large

is relevant to the trinity of dotted lines in the Dunstan miniature which images the Incarnate Christ as the Word. If Dunstan added the colored dots on top of the faint brown ones, as considered possible by Wormald, *English Drawings* 74, then he must have done so to emphasis the incarnational aspect of the miniature.

89The connection is made by Augustine in discussion of the metaphor in Psalm 68.14-16, *Enmarationes in Psalmos, Oeuvres* 12: 369.

90See *Oeuvres Enmarationes in Psalmos*, 12: 369.

“Byzantine” eyes staring in the opposite direction into the beyond emphasize Dunstan’s need. As for the drawing of Dunstan himself, it would be nice to think that his prominent nose is a personalizing feature of the self-portrait, especially since it appears somewhat distinctive also in a later portrait of him preceding a mid eleventh-century copy of the *Regularis Concordia.*

The book Christ holds is elongated to ensure that the words spoken: “Come, children, listen to me; I, the voice of the Lord will teach you fear” are prominent, their importance reinforced by the speaking gesture of the hand pointing to them. Dunstan holds his right hand over his forehead, perhaps indicating his fear and awe before the image. As pointed out by Hunt, the words recall Proverbs 9.10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” More specifically, they are the words of Psalms 33.12 and 110.10. This miniature sets up a “dialogue in prayer” in the spirit of Augustine’s *Confessions,* between Dunstan and Christ Logos. As such, it manifests a private devotion. These words also occur in the Prologue to the Benedictine Rule which Dunstan, together with Æthelwold and Oswald, used as the basis for the religious institutions they revived or established, and so they summon up a larger audience. The outline of the humble monk before the iconic drawing of the Incarnate Word, therefore,
serves as a meditative model for the entire monastic community of readers for which it was made. This is supported in the Eadui Psalter by the replication of the figure of the prostrate monk in the “self-portrait” of the scribe and artist Eadui (fig. 19), holding a book, in the manner of the comparable figure of the Bury Psalter, at the feet of St. Benedict while a group of monks to Benedict's left present him with a book inscribed with the opening words of the Rule. This Canterbury manuscript brings together the prostrate figure of the psalter tradition with the Rule of St. Benedict, both alluded to in the Dunstan miniature. Since the latter prefaces a variety of works bound together with it, it also indicates the spirit in which they are to be read and understood. The allusions to the psalms are consonant with the psalter readings which are urged throughout the Rule and are evidence of the “richly networked memory of the Bible” linking both Dunstan and his audience.

Perhaps the Rule also provides relevance for a further personal application, if

97London, British Library, MS Arundel 155, c.1012-1023, fol. 133. As Janet Backhouse, in The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 72-74, cat. no. 57, indicates, this solitary full-page miniature is placed between the Psalms and the canticles in this manuscript. Belted around Eadui is the scroll with the words zona humilitatis. As Backhouse observes, this miniature, with its painted rendition of Benedict and Eadui within the arch on the left and the outline drawings of the presenting monks within the arch on the right, “provides the best surviving example of a deliberate marriage between line-drawing and fully colored painting” (74). It is interesting that the upper body of the artist, however humbly he presents himself, is in the same dimension of reality (in color) as the haloed Saint Benedict in paradise, while his lower part, although colored, is on the side of the other monks who exist merely as outlines in the earthly realm. A similar technique, implying that the celestial realm is more “real” occurs in the contemporary Cædmon Manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, page 11, showing the frontal deity within the Heavenly City in color, while Adam and Eve and the animals below are in outline only.

98See my previous note on the contents. A good topic for a future study would be to see how Dunstan's annotations to these works guide the reader and relate to medieval concepts of authorship.

99Mary Carruthers, The Craft of Thought 167; see the full discussion 165-70. Carruthers applies this specific observation to a “figura mystica” at the beginning of the Psychomachia of Prudentius. To “find out” the hidden meanings the reader must be an educated “insider” who shares the secret with other members of a community identifiable by having such knowledge.
indeed this miniature was associated with Dunstan’s exile to Flanders, in the admonition in chapter 67, “On Brethren Who Are Sent on a Journey,” which says that at the end of each canonical Hour of the day when they return, “let them lie prostrate on the floor of the oratory and beg the prayers of all on account of any faults that may have surprised them on the road.”

But since Dunstan was a member of the community, his performance is, by way of coming back full circle, exemplary in its function. And so the interaction of word and image in this miniature indicates that this performance is both visual and acoustic, personal and communal, an interaction which is also elicited in a different way in the Cædmon Manuscript. This vernacular production could not have been made had not the preconditions of Latin culture, Christian monasticism, national aspirations, and Dunstan’s introduction of a new style of art existed.

**Part II**

**The Visual Exegesis of the Cædmon Manuscript: Imaging the Creative Word**

The reader’s entrance to the Cædmon Manuscript is through the frontispiece archway which opens to an iconic image of the enthroned deity in the ethereal realm of wavy clouds (fig. 20). In the sense that the arch leads the eyes of the viewer into the spiritual dimension, it is a visual counterpart of a passage in the text of Exodus, one of the poems included, in which the poet interrupts the narrative to declare to the audience that the deep meaning of the words of Moses can be understood:

> gif onluecan wile. lifes wealhstod.
> beorht inbreostum. banhuses weard.

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101 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11, page 2. There are some forty-eight miniatures near the beginning, with spaces left in the rest of the manuscript for more. See the early facsimile edition by Israel Gollancz, *The Cædmon Manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Biblical Poetry* (Oxford UP, 1927). My figures have been downloaded from the Oxford site. (These JPEG images automatically decompress to image sizes in excess of 100 megabytes each, so it is not recommended that this be attempted unless the computer used is capable of handling extremely large image sizes.)
gin fæsten god. gæstes cægon.
Run bið gerecenod.102

(if the interpreter of life, the guardian of the bonehouse [the mind], bright within the breast, will unlock the great good fastness with the keys of the spirit. The mystery will be explained.)

This metatextual reference makes it clear that the events of the scriptural narrative signify more than their literal meaning; rather they are meant to be understood spiritually. This is specifically enjoined by Paul in the third chapter of II Corinthians which refers to the veil upon the face of Moses as being analogous to the veil placed on the heart of those reading the Old Testament that is taken away when it is understood according to the spirit, not the letter, by those converted to Christ. Augustine connects the veil over the face of Moses with the veil over the Ark of the Law and explains that these refer to the things hidden in the Old Testament but revealed to those who follow Christ.103 Bede describes this altered perception as the “gift of seeing” which was given to the disciples when “the mysteries of his incarnation had been brought to perfection” so that they could “understand plainly” what was conveyed figuratively and typologically in the Old Testament.104 He says that “the mysteries which Moses, the prophets and the psalms proclaimed” were fulfilled in Christ.105

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102George Philip Krapp, ed., The Junius Manuscript (1931; New York: Columbia UP, 1969) lines 523-26; Cædmon Manuscript page 169; transcription mine.

103Expositions on the Book of Psalms, vol. 8 of A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 369 (on psalm 78); see also 20, 446, and 581. Laura Kendrick, Chaucerian Play: Comedy and Control in the Canterbury Tales (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 12 discusses this passage from Paul indicating that the true meaning of the Old Testament is revealed in the Incarnation with respect to a thirteenth-century painting showing the Christ child pointing to a book covering his pryvetee and symbolizing “God’s hitherto hidden intentions, that ‘is’ the Word made flesh.”

104Bede the Venerable, Homilies on the Gospels, Book 2, Homily 2.9,136-37. See Bede, Homilae genuinae, PL 94, col. 175.

That this sort of thinking is still applicable to the time the Cædmonian poems were composed is made clear repeatedly by the most important scholar of the period, Ælfric (c.950-c. 1010), the disciple of Oswald who became abbot of Eynsham. His partial translation of the first books of the Old Testament was illustrated in the eleventh century, which makes his treatise, “On the Old and New Testament,” and his “Preface” to the biblical translation especially relevant since it elucidates how contemporaries read the scriptures. In the “Preface” he explains that he undertook the request by Ealdorman Æthelweard to translate the first part, that is, Genesis up to Isaiah, with trepidation because of the dangers of making the vernacular version more accessible. He says that the foolish might think they can practice polygamy and incest like the Old Testament Fathers and that the unlearned priest might not understand the spiritual sense of the Old Testament and how Christ’s Incarnation was a fulfilment of all the things it prefigured concerning him. Like the poet in the Exodus poem, Ælfric repeatedly insists on the importance of the deep meaning of the Old Testament in this regard, giving numerous examples. In the “Preface,” he says that by these examples one can understand hu deop seo boc is on gastlicum andgyte, ðeah de heo mid leohtum wordum awritten sy ‘how deep the book is in spiritual understanding, although it be written with light (simple) words.’ This is also true concerning the illustrations which were later made for his own work and likewise those for the Cædmonian poetic narrative. They appear deceptively simple at first viewing.

Both the images and the verses of the Cædmon Manuscript open up to a Christian audience the secrets of the scriptures. This makes of the reading experience a mystical journey inwards, as sacred history is visually and verbally revealed from the initiating events, beginning with the war in heaven and the creation of Adam and Eve through to the

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107 The Old English Version 78-79.
triumph of Christ over Satan. The framing of many of the miniatures implies that the way is inward and the content of the miniatures reveals the manifest power of the Word. Creation by the Word corresponds to poetic creation as implied by the poet's self-conscious references to the Word. The images themselves not only portray this concept in material form, affirming that the creation is itself a kind of Incarnation, but also, in a particularly intimate and symbiotic relationship with the words of the poem, indicate the power of the divine voice that elicits audience response or effects direct consequences as revealed in the unfolding pictorial narrative. Encoding the idea of access to the Word, the framing arches and architectural images lead into or out of celestial, paradisal, and infernal spaces, a reminder also to the viewer to see beyond the literal and to explore the deep meaning of the words of the poem to bring about inner transformation.

The opening archway of the Cadmon Manuscript showing God in heaven and the poetic passage explaining that the gin festen god has to be unlocked conjure up related meditative tropes which Mary Carruthers discusses with respect to the Psychomachia of Prudentius. This is not an irrelevant work here, since the second Cadmon artist was also the artist who illustrated the series of pictures in the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 23 version of Prudentius, one of the manuscripts Carruthers mentions in connection with a portrait, showing Prudentius giving thanks to God before a temple. She observes that in the text the New Temple into which the triumphant virtues pass is constructed out of biblical motifs brought together into a "common place" of Christian memory including Noah's Ark, the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, the Temple of

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This occurs in Christ and Satan, the last poem in the manuscript, in the episodes of the Temptation and the Harrowing of Hell, reversing the effects of the Fall and making possible the salvation of mankind. Although this is the only poem in the manuscript that is not based on the Old Testament, the compiler must have felt that it was necessary not only to complete the cycle of events initiated in the Genesis poem but also to emphasize the all-important role of Christ, as indicated by the miniatures. The Incarnation, as indicated by the defenders of images as previously discussed, justifies the portrayal of God, who in this manuscript is shown with a cross-nimbus.

Carruthers, The Craft of Thought, especially 149-50. This is the source for the other quotations and the information in the rest of my paragraph excluding its application to the Cadmon Manuscript.
Solomon in the citadel of Jerusalem, and “the visionary citadels (arces) of Ezekiel and of John.” The literary troping of the Psychomachia Carruthers notes as being built up by mnemonic catena—“ark” or “chest,” both of Noah and of the Covenant, where God’s arc-ana, “secrets,” are hidden away; arc-es, “citadels,” the walled cities of Ezekiel’s and John’s vision; and also arc-us, “arches”—becomes visual troping in the Caedmon Manuscript beginning with the archway of the frontispiece and continuing throughout.

The pictorial frame serves as a transition to the spiritual realm, encouraging the meditative viewer to look within, to enter through the doorway which figuratively is also Christ (John 10.9). “The beautiful gate of the temple is the Lord,” says Bede “Whoever enters through him will be saved.” He reflects further that in Old Testament times the people of Israel were brought by the words of the law and the prophets in an enfeebled way up to the “interior places of wisdom,” the ancient tabernacle with “the golden doorpost,” but that Peter is the guide with the keys of the heavenly temple, so that all the world can flock “to the threshold of truth.” The inner double outline archway of the Caedmon frontispiece is suggestively filled with yellow, making of this meditative visual trope a conversion image as well. In this instance, the golden entrance is applicable not to the Jews as in Bede, but has a particular resonance with respect to the amalgamation into English religious life of the Viking faction, whose tastes are reflected in other miniatures in this manuscript, likely dating from the period of their rule (1014-43). This archway serves symbolically as the “threshold of truth” to the place of “wisdom” revealed in the images and words of the manuscript. Also interpreting the gate as a conversion image, Cassiodorus, commenting on Psalm 110.10 (“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” which is quoted in the book held by the Incarnate Word in the Dunstan


112 Kendrick, Late Saxon and Viking Art 33, 98-99, and 105.
miniature) says this fear is “a kind of gate” through which “we gain access to the Lord,” for if “we are untouched by fear of His judgment, we neglect the remedy of conversion.”

For the converted, the image functions, to appropriate the words of Bede in his discussion of the ascent of the contemplative, to direct the “eye of the mind” to “heavenly things,” giving a “foretaste of the joy of perpetual blessedness” for those long practiced “in the rudiments of monastic virtue.” It makes accessible to such a viewer that which is achieved by the “sublime ones” who “ascend to the contemplative.” In other words, the image reveals with physical immediacy what Bede says the contemplative achieves, a vision of God. Carruthers puts forward the idea that word pictures and paintings can function as “gathering” sites for meditation to paint mental pictures, as the Dunstan miniature itself demonstrated. The viewer becomes immersed in a mystical experience and, like the visionary, becomes, as Jeffrey Hamburger suggests, a “seer.”

Christian mysticism is based on the concept of man being made in God’s image and the corresponding doctrine that God was incarnated in man’s image. In Christian devotional practice, the image of the divine functions to serve as a meditational focus for such


115 Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels, Book 1, 90. From Homiliae genuineae, PL 94, col. 47.

116 The Craft of Thought 151.

117 Jeffrey E. Hamburger, The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany (New York: Zone Books, 1998) 29. He is discussing the literature written by and for nuns which offers “the most compelling and most concentrated bodies of evidence from the entire Middle Ages of the ways in which images were used” (29).

118 The Visual and the Visionary 27. In his study, this is made more complex by the place of women in this system since they do not share the male form. He argues that “virginity, eucharistic piety, and imitation of the Passion offered possible outlets” for them.
common, eliciting a mystical experience.

In the case of the Cædmon frontispiece, the appropriate response to the vision of the deity offered by the frontispiece image is vocal and immediate. Just as Cassiodorus intimates that the people who attained access to the Lord upon passing through the gate of fear “gave voice with thanks to the Lord to the sentiment of their devoted hearts; [which] is what men of piety must do in this life, and what the blessed as we know are to continue to do in the heavenly Jerusalem,” so the Cædmonian Genesis poem facing the image and interacting with it begins:

![poem](image)

(It is very right for us that we should praise with words, with heart's love, the Guardian of the skies, the Glory-King of hosts.)

This establishes an interesting three-way dynamic involving (1) the text of the poem, (2) the “we” who are invited to “praise with words” the king of heaven, and (3) the visual icon of this eternal and powerful deity who conveniently faces “us” through the arch of the frontispiece. These verses imply that “we” are the speakers, both in terms of rendering a praise to God and as oral readers of the poem, which is itself a verbal act of praise.

Dunstan, responding to the image of the Incarnate Word, is here replaced by the audience.


120 Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript* 3, lines 1-3. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from this edition. Line numbers are subsequently enclosed in brackets following the quotation in my text. In the manuscript, the first hemistich, taking up a full line, is capitalized. The first letter is composed of one wyvern biting the tail of another (this is the typical Anglo-Saxon style of dragon with a lion’s head and fore paws, wings, and reptilian tail which, in this case, shape-shifts into a version of acanthus leaf).


122 These qualities of the deity are emphasized in the lines immediately following in the poem.
of the Cædmon Manuscript.

Not only are these opening words reminiscent of the original Cædmon's Hymn, but they resemble the Preface of the Canon of the Latin Mass. The frontispiece can therefore also be imagined as leading through an arch in an Anglo-Saxon church, confirming the iconic status of the deity addressed. The eyes of the audience are then drawn to the face of the deity by the compelling eyes which penetrate, as Ellert Dahl observes with respect to the comparable look of the late ninth-century statue of St. Foy of Conques, “the secret recesses of the heart.” Dahl finds that it is the piercing look that characterizes the hieratic cult image and imparts to it, according to medieval perceptions, the “lifelike” quality. Certainly, eyes are a prominent feature of the Cædmon miniature since the numerous eyes of the cherubim surround the enthroned deity (see Apoc. 4.6). Among the instructions given to Moses in the making of the sanctuary, he is told to make two cherubim for each side of the covering of the ark from the midst of which the Lord will henceforth speak to him (Exodus 25.18-22, cf. Numbers 7.89). This Old Testament instruction was taken as authorization for the veneration of images by the second Council of Nicea in 787, an argument which the theologians of the Libri Carolini opposed on the grounds that this was an exception since it was inspired by God himself and did not apply to man-made art. Representing the deity himself in the midst of the cherubim is,

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123 Paul Gardner Remley, “The Biblical Sources of the Junius Poems Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel,” diss. Columbia U, 1990, 12-13; and also Remley, “The Biblical Sources of the Junius Poems,” 13-16, where he compares each phrase. See also the discussion of these lines by Doane, Genesis A: A New Edition 225, noting that the resemblance to the Preface of the Canon of the Mass was first noticed by Holthausen in his note to these lines; see Ferdinand Holthausen, Die æltere Genesis mit Einleitung, Anmerkungen, Glossar und der Lateinischen Quelle (Heidelberg, 1914).


126 Israel Gollancz, in the introduction to his facsimile edition of The Cædmon Manuscript xxxix, points out the references to six and two-winged cherubim in Ezekiel 10.12, Rev. 4.8, and Psalm 98.1.

127 Dodwell, Painting in Europe 18.
therefore, an appropriate visual statement by the Anglo-Saxon artist. These cherubim appear to be visually cross-referenced also with the images of the singing seraphim who surround the enthroned Lord in the temple as seen by Isaiah (6.2 ff.) on his gästlicu gesiðhe ‘in his spiritual vision’ and who, according to Ælfric, betoken the Old and New Testaments. Such a symbolic meaning makes the winged figures of the Cædmon frontispiece especially relevant with respect to the “unlocking” of the following Genesis narrative in terms of the New Testament. Echoing Isaiah 6.3, there are also creatures with eyes surrounding the throne in John’s vision, when “a door was opened in heaven,” and he encountered them likewise singing “Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of his glory” (Rev. 4.1 and 8), references which add an eschatological cast to the Cædmon frontispiece, collapsing the beginning and end of human history. Below the deity’s feet, incorporating 2 Kings 22.11 (about the Lord riding upon the cherubim and sliding on the wings of the wind) are small winged heads, the left one energetically blowing the wind. The image borrows elements from more than one biblical reference, demonstrating a breadth of internalized knowledge and familiarity with scriptural images that made up the iconographical tradition.

From the midst of the cherubim in the Cædmon Manuscript, the Lord “speaks” to the Germanic audience in the following vernacular text. And it is, above all, the power of the Word of God that both the poetry and the pictures celebrate. The Scriptures, which provide the verbal basis for the poems, are visually indicated by the scroll or book which

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129 Compare Ælfric’s Hexateuch, fol. 2, where the first image serving as a frontispiece shows, in the upper half, the enthroned deity within a mandorla supported by angels.

God holds in one hand in many of the illustrations, including the frontispiece. The scroll, a kind of antique “first edition,” is appropriate because it typically represents the Old Testament in art, as observed by Michael Camille. With his other hand, the deity gives a blessing gesture which, with three fingers raised, mystically implies the Trinity, a concept reinforced by the cross-nimbus of the pictured deity. This inclusion of the second person of the Trinity in the portrayal hints at the “hidden” meaning of the Genesis narrative which is about to be revealed verbally and pictorially to meditative readers who understand it spiritually with reference to the Incarnation of Christ.

“Seeing” Creation by the Word of God

The poet enriches the accounts in Genesis which begin, “And God said [...]” with the fuller potential of John 1:1,

In the beginning was the Word:
and the Word was with God:
and the Word was God.

Within the text the poet develops this by progressing imaginatively from (1) God taking counsel in his thoughts as to how he might fill the spaces left empty in heaven by the fallen angels (92-97), to (2) God willing or desiring to create a replacement earth (97-102), to (3) God looking with his eyes on the joyless dark waste (106-110), until (4) through the word this glorious creation came into being (110-111).

Creation itself is effected by the generating activities of the Word: commanding and naming. For example, in the text, God $\textit{heht}$ ‘commanded’ (121) light to come forth, a $\textit{haes}$ ‘command’ (124) which was quickly fulfilled (123), as he $\textit{behead}$ ‘bade’ (125).

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See Camille, _The Gothic Idol_ 192, 198. Compare also Rev. 6.14. On page 41 in the Ædmon Manuscript, the deity holds a book in the top register when he condemns the serpent to crawl on the ground and a scroll (shorter, and not with seven seals) in the bottom when he walks in the garden to see what Adam and Eve are doing, indicating that the scroll and the book can be considered interchangeable when necessary, as here, to help distinguish two separate events.

Having by command separated light from darkness, the Ruler of Life shaped their names (128), this naming being accomplished, as the poet reminds us, through the Lord’s word (130). The word is repeatedly mentioned by the poet as the mighty force responsible for this glorious creation (111), dividing the waters (149) on the second day, and causing the dry land of the earth to appear on the third day (158).

In the facing creation miniatures on pages 6 and 7 (fig. 21), the domed registers are suggestive of the circumference of the firmament from which God does everything by word, as discussed by Otto Pächt.\(^\text{133}\) He compares this creation cycle with a fourteenth-century illustrated English manuscript, London, British Library, MS Egerton 1894, which also shows the Creator sitting on a semi-circle, but with another inner round representing the earth, as he does all things by a word. In the Cædmon miniature on page 6, the earth is emphasized by the red outline of the “footstool” (Isaiah 66.1). In the scenes on page 7, the cross-nimbed deity is shown speaking creation into existence by means of the *benedictio latina* gesture of his right hand, used in the classical manner as a speech gesture,\(^\text{134}\) while his left holds a codex of his words, representing, in a dual way, the creative “Word.”

The creative hand of God (Isaiah 66.2 and Psalm 8.4) is usually represented in the Cædmon miniatures by this *benedictio latina* to indicate his speaking voice, its meaning made clear in the miniature showing Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac in the Prudentius manuscript (fig. 22), previously mentioned as the work of the second Cædmon artist, where the inscription clearly labels the hand of God as representing his words and active power: *Her Godes swyðra forbead Abrahame [...] ‘Here God’s right hand forbade Abraham to kill his son, as he had been commanded, and provided a ram for him to offer to God.’*\(^\text{135}\) The power of the Word is demonstrated by Abraham’s reaction as he turns his


\(^{135}\)The full Anglo-Saxon inscription reads: *Her Godes swyðra forbead Abrahame hæt he his sunu ne ofslige swa him béoden wæs ac funde him anne ram Gode to geoffrigenne*, transcribed (I have used a w for the wynn) and translated by Mildred Budny,
head to hear the voice and arrests his action just at the point where he would have moved Isaac by the hair onto the altar and then swung the large Anglo-Saxon sword held upright in his right hand\textsuperscript{136} onto his son's neck, and by the ram's reaction as it looks dolefully towards the sacrificial altar.

In the Caedmon miniatures, it is not the disembodied hand of God\textsuperscript{137} but the personification of the incarnate Word who moves into action, just as he does in the creation scenes in the Carolingian Grandval Bible\textsuperscript{138} (fig. 23), previously mentioned in connection with the historiated initial of the personified Word which introduces the Book of Wisdom (fig. 13). After the Caedmon Manuscript's hieratic presentation of the central and full-faced iconic image of the frontispiece facing the viewer, the deity is generally shown in three-quarter profile as he moves into action laterally across the pages as his speech becomes manifested in historical time and he relates to his creation.\textsuperscript{139}

In both the top and in the third registers on page 7, the deity in the Caedmon Manuscript bends his head and looks down at the things he is creating. There is a fine distinction between the gestures in the first and the third register. In the third, the deity's

\textit{Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue} (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1997) 292. That this artist is the second Caedmon Manuscript artist is discussed on 283.

\textsuperscript{136}The Anglo-Saxon sword is clearly shown as a one-handed sword which would have been lowered in this manner, its weight serving to cleave, in this case, the victim's neck.

\textsuperscript{137}Except on page 49 where the disembodied hand of God is shown descending from the clouds above the sacrificial offering of Abel, a scene probably adapted from the iconography of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.

\textsuperscript{138}London, British Library, MS Add. 10546, fol. 5. For a discussion of "the representation of the Lord Creator as Christ, the preexistent 'Word,'" see Mutherich and Gaehde, \textit{Carolingian Painting} 73-74.

\textsuperscript{139}See Meyer Schapiro, \textit{Word and Pictures: On the Literal and Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text} (Paris: Mouton, 1973), who distinguishes between the "theme of state" to represent the sacred and regal character of frontally posed hieratic images and the "theme of action" as represented by figures shown in profile, especially in the three-quarter profile view.
arm is lowered into a horizontal position. If its visual line of direction is extended, it also
serves to point to a related scene on the preceding, facing page 6. In both these scenes, a
descending angel pours, out of an upturned bowl, what may be interpreted as rays of light,
visually connecting the first day when “the spirit of God moved over the waters” and light
was made and divided from the darkness (Genesis 1.1-5) and the fourth day when God
made the lights in the firmament, including the sun, moon, and stars, to divide the day and
night (Genesis 1.14-19), both emphasizing the idea of light. In the interconnected, two-
tiered illustration on page 6, the deity points down with his left hand to the other angel
with his eyes covered by a cloth, indicating the deorc gesweorc / semian sinnihte ‘the dark
mist brooding in eternal night’ (108-09; not mentioned in the Bible) The right arm of the
seated deity on page 6 is extended in an open-handed gesture, as if sweeping the light
outwards and downwards to illumine the darkness of the deep below. If the arc of this
raised arm were continued, it would direct the eye of the viewer back to the facing deity in
the top register of the opposite page, reinforcing the suggestive triangularity of the three
cross-nimbed figures on these two pages.

Bede, in his homily on John 2: 1-11, connects the creative Word with the Trinity in
a reference to Psalm 32.6: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all
the power of them by the spirit of his mouth,” when Bede says “By the Word of the Lord
and the Spirit understand the whole Trinity, which is one God.” That the three figures
on pages 6 and 7 are intended to represent the Trinity is suggested by the subtle
differences between them with respect to halo, beard (or its absence) and hair. Analogous
to these three figures are the corresponding ones in the nearly contemporary illustrated

140 At the top of the miniature on page 13 a figure sits looking into a similar bowl,
turned on its side and forming the right half of a mandorla, almost like a mirror, with rays
of light surrounding it and descending down to Adam and Eve in paradise. In this
miniature beginning the inserted Genesis B account, the figure with the bowl probably
represents the Lord having returned to heaven after forbidding them the fruit of one tree
as described in the text above (235-245a). They are still God’s beloved as long as they
listen to the holy Word (245b-46).

141 See Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels 1: 138. Homiliae genuinae,
PL 94, col. 70.
vernacular translation of parts of six Old Testament books, Ælfric’s Hexateuch, where the three images of God differ somewhat with respect to such details as the colour of their clothing, indicating the consubstantiality of the three persons of the Trinity. In his treatise “On the Old and New Testament,” Ælfric makes clear that the Trinity is responsible for creation. The emphasis on the creative “Word” in the text appears also to be taken in the plural sense, as indicated by Doane in his glossary, suggesting that the Cædmon poet thought of it in terms of the Trinity. And it is the focus on the Trinity that appears to inform the layout of pages 6 and 7 in the Cædmon Manuscript rather than representing an attempt by the artist to show the successive days of creation. The figure

142London, British Library, Cotton Ms Claudius B.IV, second quarter of the eleventh century, fols. 2v and 3. This manuscript contains the prose translations by Ælfric and “another translator” as noted by Malcolm Godden, “Biblical literature: the Old Testament” 207. This work has over four hundred illustrations by the same hand. See the facsimile by C. R. Dodwell and P. Clemoes, The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 18 (Copenhagen, 1974).

143As observed by Asa Simon Mittman in his paper, “‘Light words,’ Weighty Pictures,” given at the Medieval Association of the Pacific annual meeting on Feb. 26, 2000 at Victoria, B.C. He did not mention the comparable configuration in the Cædmon Manuscript.

144“On the Old and New Testament” 17. In the “Preface” 78, he describes the Trinity as comprised of the almighty Father and of the great Wisdom of the wise Father who since released us from bondage by taking flesh from Mary, and of the Love of them both who is the Holy Ghost who animates all things.

145Genesis A: A New Edition 408.

146The poet elsewhere varies the appellations of God, as when the brego engla, godspedig gast ‘the ruler of angels, the spirit speedy-in-virtue’ (1009), asks Cain why he slew Abel.

147Previous attempts to read these miniatures in sequential order has only confused the issue. For a discussion of some of these see Pamela Z. Blum, “The Cryptic Creation Cycle in Ms. Junius xi,” Gesta 15. 1-2 (1976): 215 ff. One solution to the problem of sequence is that the partial inscription should be reconstructed as “Before He separated water and earth” rather than “Here He [...]” The possibility that the pictures on page 7 should be read from bottom to top is also considered, along with the idea that these scenes are a conflation of the days of creation. All these have merit. My suggestion is that the primary function of the two-page composition is to feature the creative activity of the
on page 6 may represent the Holy Ghost who, according to Ælfric, is *Godes gast geferod ofer wateru* "God's spirit borne over the waters." The bearded figure at the top of page 7 would then appear to refer to God the Father and the beardless figure below to the Son. Since all three have a cross-nimbus, their participation in the Trinity is implied. By analogy with the Hexateuch, which also features one figure of the Trinity on the bottom of a left-hand page with the other two evenly distributed on the top and bottom halves of the facing right-hand page, it would appear that these two manuscripts shared a model featuring the Trinity or that the artist of one had seen and was influenced by the other.

**In God's Image: Lines of Descent**

The miniatures involving the creation of Adam and Eve deal not only with the complex relationship of prototype and image but also suggest the unfolding, in human history, of its implications. The concept of man being made in God's image (Genesis 1.26) is implied by the parallelism of the bodies of God and the sleeping Adam at the bottom right of the miniature on page 9 (fig. 24). This *anlicnesse* 'likeness' (1529 hints at the future role of the second Adam who will redeem mankind after the fall of the first, as indicated by Ælfric who says that Adam foreshadows Christ. In the Caedmon miniature, this significance is emphasized by the ladder behind the deity and by the unusual rocky hillock under the sleeping Adam: both are allusions to Genesis 28.11. There Jacob dreams of a ladder between earth and heaven upon which angels ascend and descend, and upon which the Lord leans as he gives Jacob and his seed the land upon which he sleeps. When he awakens, Jacob renames the city Bethel and the stone "shall be called the house of God." Bede interprets the ladder as the Church and the angels ascending and descending as the evangelists announcing variously the divinity and the humanity of Christ, while the rock which Jacob anoints with ointment he sees as the Redeemer, since from "this ointment (that is, 'chrism') Christ received his name, and the

Trinity.

148c "Preface" 78.

mystery of his incarnation is the mark of our redemption. Jacob was thought to prefigure John who leaned on Christ's breast imbuing of "the hidden mysteries" of Christ's divine nature which he was going to reveal in the Apocalypse. Bede says that John represents the contemplative life whereby vision of the Lord and the heavenly citizens commences here and is perfected after death. The Benedictine Rule mentions that the sides of the ladder represent the body and soul into which the monastic vocation has inserted the steps of humility and discipline that must be climbed, reinforcing for a possible monastic audience the relevance of this scene. The ladder, as Denise Depres points out, signifies spiritual growth. In the Cædmon Manuscript the journey can be seen both in historical terms in which the events at the creation foreshadow the redemptive role of Christ and the establishment of the Church, with hints also of the Apocalypse, and in personal terms as an interior journey in which the viewer attains to a visionary experience. This evocative miniature prompts the reader to begin to see and to understand what the contemplative commences to see. Understanding of the heavenly mysteries and visual seeing are, in effect, integrated in such a loaded representation, making the audience with "pure hearts" privy to the vision of the contemplative.

Reinforcing the complex incarnational associations of Christ/Adam/Christ-as-the-

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152 Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels 1: 92-93.


155 This condition for seeing God is emphasized by Bede in The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles 206. Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica 315: mundis cordibus.
second-Adam is the view of the deity as he turns to look down at Adam in the miniature of God’s Pronouncement on Adam and Eve on page 44 (fig. 25). This time the fingers of the deity are lowered to signify a negative pronouncement. The cross-nimbed figures of the deity are positioned not only on top of a mountain, but on top of the huge tree in its centre which defines the shape of the mountain. This allusion to the tree of Jesse, associated with the tree of life, identifies the Incarnate Word, the new Adam, with the old Adam. In this miniature of the Fall of Man is included the promise of man’s redemption by the Christ to come, indicating a synchronicity of sacred time as well as a chronological sequencing of historical time.

This incarnational process may appear to be entirely patriarchal in its concerns, but the complex characterizations of Eve and her descendants are quite striking in the Cædmon miniatures. Unlike the Hexateuch, which features Adam in the creation scenes, giving Adam by himself charge over the animals in a separate miniature (folio 6) before Eve is even created and both are forbidden to eat from the tree, the Cædmon Manuscript gives more prominence to Eve. This is apparent in the visual vignette of the animation of Eve on the left side of the miniature on page 9 (fig. 24), an example of the

156Cf. his similar gesture at the top of the Cædmon miniature on page 41 where he condemns the serpent to crawl on its belly.

157This is also the most striking use in this manuscript of what J. J. G. Alexander terms the “system of continuous narrative by which the passing of time is suggested by repeating a figure.” See Alexander, *Anglo-Saxon Illumination in Oxford Libraries* 10. Here Alexander is referring to the Translation of Enoch on page 61 of the Cædmon Manuscript. He says that it is “a narrative device of the Antique period and shows that the artist had much earlier models available to him for his miniatures.”

158Both the Grandval Bible (fig. 23) and the Hexateuch (fol. 7v) show a tree separating God from the sinners, but there is no hint of the deity at the top of the tree.

159Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Toronto: Academic Press, 1982) 150, where he observes that “Another image of the tree of life which associates it with history is the ‘branch,’ the epithet of the Messiah as a lineal descendant of David. This appears in Isaiah 11:1 as a ‘rod out of the stem of Jesse,’ David’s father.”

160Cf. the Hexateuch artist who presumably interpreted Genesis 1.26 about making man in God’s own image literally as “a man.”
The inscription above her reads, *Hærfrahten gescéop ædæmes wifu eowam* ‘Here the Lord created Adam’s wife Eve.’ The poetic text above the miniature tells us simply that God *wif aweahhte* ‘a wife awakened’ (174). In the illustration the deity’s eyes and the two fingers of his hand direct the viewer’s gaze to the short inscription: *EVA*, signifying that, for the Word, naming and creating are one.\(^1\) His left hand simultaneously touches Eve’s, contextualizing the *benedictio latina*. Eve’s profile is turned to the Creator while her raised arms suggest both joyful awakening and an attitude of prayerful thanks.

In the lower right corner the Creator, bearded and with a red rather than the golden halo (the distinction again subtly implying the Trinity), is shown at an earlier stage bending over the sleeping Adam to draw out a rib, an act separate from the animation and naming of Eve. In the Grandval Bible, a similar action is featured on the right side of the top register (fig. 23), while Eve’s torso is drawn from the side of Adam in the Hexateuch (folio 6v). The Cædmon artist, on the other hand, has given the animation of Eve as a separate entity special prominence. This may have been because of the interest shown in the role of women by the illustrator and because of Eve’s typological significance as a figure of the Church which, according to Ælfric, sprang from God’s side.\(^2\)

In the following miniature on page 10 (fig. 26), Eve’s gestures and bodily stance are similar to Adam’s: both respond to their Creator with *byrrende leifu* ‘burning love’ (191), as indicated in the text above. Eve’s right hand, however, projects in front of the framing column into the space of the future beyond, anticipating in this early gesture her last in paradise, as depicted on page 45 (fig. 27) where the clothed Adam and Eve are

\(^1\)See the miniatures on pages 20 and 24 for the temptation of Eve; pages 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 62, and 63 for women as brides or mothers of offspring; page 66 for Noah’s wife gesturing toward the ladder up to the ark as if to exclaim: “you expect me to climb up *that*?” (her hesitation to go into the ark is not mentioned in the text); and page 88 for the beautiful Sarah in Egypt (she does not look pleased that she is supposed to pretend to be Abraham’s sister).

\(^2\)Although the fingers are slightly lowered, this is in accord with the entire body of the deity, so a negative pronunciation is obviously not intended in this context.

\(^3\)“On the Old and New Testament” 23.
about to be expelled from the safe fortress of paradise. Indicative also of ambivalence and prophetic in its significance (see 910-916 and Genesis 3.15), Eve's foot in the miniature on page 10 treads on the foot of a lion at the base of the column on the left. In a visual reference to the beasts who are trod upon in Psalm 90.13, it is paired with the dragon underneath the deity and at the base of the framing column to the right. Its demonic purpose is indicated by the flames issuing from its eyes and nose, a feature visible in the original manuscript, especially if this page is examined by sunlight. This pictorial exegesis and metatextual reference seems to have been suggested solely by the word *tredad* (203) in the text above which mentions simply that all the creatures which "tread" on land are being given into Adam and Eve's power (cf. Genesis 1.28). This word evidently called to the illustrator's mind the popular Anglo-Saxon iconography of Christ Treading on the Beasts, taken to refer to Christ's conquest of the devil who brought death. That the beast signifies death in this manuscript is evident by analogy with the miniature depicting the beast upon which Enoch treads on page 60 (fig. 28), a visual way of showing that, of all the Old Testament figures, as signified by the text above, he is the only one who *nales deade swealt* 'did not suffer death' (1205). The facing full-page miniature on page 61 shows Enoch in his bodily garments (1212) ascending to the wavy clouds of heaven. The flexibility of the illustrator is shown in the adaptation of existing exegetical commentary and visual iconography. In the miniature of Adam and Eve (fig. 26), it serves as a reminder to the meditative reader not only of the original sin about to be committed, but of God's subsequent goodness in redeeming fallen man when the Incarnation is made possible through Eve's successor, Mary (Gen. 3.15).

In due course, as the narrative indicates, God's people multiply and fill the earth *odhaet* 'until' (1248)—the fateful word that frequently also begins a dramatic change in

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164 That the gesture is intended to indicate a cross-over to different dimension is suggested by the contemporary illustration in the Eadui Psalter (fig. 19) in which Benedict, who is in heaven, reaches his hand across the column separating him from the earthly monks holding his Rule.

165 Compare the flames issuing from the leonine mouth of hell at the bottom of page 3.
and in the Caedmon manuscript is emphasized with a large initial composed of biting dragons (fig. 29), making of this a new section—concord is disturbed. The reason is that men begin to seek as brides the beautiful and sinful women among the kindred of Cain. God regrets having created man and in his anger decides to destroy all that is on earth, except for Noah and his family. What is unusual in the Caedmon tripartite miniature is that on the left side, Noah's mother and her midwife are depicted. This emphasizes the role of women as mothers of kings. The grown-up Noah is shown in his role as king in the middle scene and in that on the right side. The Hexateuch (folio 12v) does not represent Noah's mother, but shows Noah and his family in the left frame and men embracing women on the right frame of the equivalent miniature. In the Caedmon Manuscript women are shown to play an important role in genealogical succession. They are shown as giving birth or holding infants on pages 51 (a woman and her offspring within the first city), 53 (a woman with a crib in the top register and a woman holding a child in the middle register), 54, 56, 57 (a woman and child behind a curtain, a king in front), and 62. Often the woman with the child is placed near a column or other architectural feature, like Noah's mother. In the Hexateuch, on the other hand, as Catherine Karkov has recently observed, wives are usually shown with their husbands and children and are not accorded a particular role in the creative process.167 Karkov sees this emphasis on the matriarchs in the Caedmon Manuscript as an amplification of the text which gives women an "active role in the procreation of sons and, by extension, the creation of genealogy and history."168

Complementing the patriarchal images of the Creator in the Caedmon Manuscript are the more varied and complex images not only of female culpability, but of "female power and

For example, when the dragon held his treasure for 300 winters "until" (2280) a thief enraged him by stealing an ornamented cup; likewise, Beowulf as king survived every hostility "until" one day (2399) he encountered the dragon.


Karkov, "The Anglo-Saxon Genesis" 222. She points out that in the Cædmonian text the poet "takes care to give us Eve's thoughts, perceptions, and motivations (while not, of course, denying her guilt)" (230).
Noah’s Ark as a Meditative Gathering Site

Following the miniature showing the engendering role of Noah’s mother in relation to his regal power are several scenes of the ark; its construction, loading, locking, and floating are all meticulously depicted on pages 65, 66 (fig. 30), and 68 (fig. 31) by the first artist and on page 73 (fig. 32) where the second artist begins his work. This is only one scene less than those devoted to showing a very similar ark in the Hexateuch (fig. 33).\(^1\)

The primary theological reason for this interest in the ark is doubtless its typological significance. Bede succinctly describes this for those who “see at a more profound level” saying that the ark can be understood as the Church, Noah as Christ, and the water “which washed away the sinners as the waters of baptism.”\(^2\) When the waters subside, the idea that this is indeed a rebirth, a second creation, is indicated in the illustration by the second artist showing the deity with a scroll, referring still to the actions of the Word, blessing Noah and his sons (fig. 34), a parallel to the illustration on page 10 (fig. 26). Noah is shown offering animal sacrifices to God who, in the text, gives all the animals into Noah’s power, the latter being told to teem and multiply (1512). The prominent role of the Church in this new creation is indicated by the superstructure of the ark (fig. 30), which looks very like a splendid Anglo-Saxon church\(^3\) with its stone construction, round and triangular or gable-end arches, the tower-like third floor (compare Genesis 6.16\(^4\)) and the

\(^1\)Karkov, “The Anglo-Saxon Genesis” 231.

\(^2\)Fols.13v, 14, 14v, 15, and 15v.

\(^3\)Bede the Venerable: Homilies on the Gospels 1:140. Homilae genuinae, PL 94, col. 71.

\(^4\)Compare the plates in Fisher, The Greater Anglo-Saxon Churches. P. Brandt, Schaffende Arbeit und Bildende Kunst im Altertum und Mittelalter (Leipzig, 1927) 240, noticed the likeness of the ark’s superstructure to a church, as mentioned by Broderick, “The Iconographical and Compositional Sources” 323.

\(^5\)The ark has only two floors in the two renditions on page 68, but it is likely that the demands of space limited the height given it. The variations between the three
flanking turrets perhaps suggested by *hlifigean*, referring to the towering ocean-house in the text above (1321). In this illustration, it is the ark, not the cross-nimbed deity, that is emphasized by much red outlining. As a kind of visual footnote at the bottom of this miniature is a detail not mentioned in the text and not included in the equivalent illustrations in the Hexateuch: Noah’s wife stands outside the frame at the bottom of the ladder, making a gesture similar to that of Eve on pages 10 (fig. 26) and 45 (fig. 27), as she evidently argues with the man who is half-way up the ladder beckoning her to come along. Perhaps her presence here suggests a link not only to Eve, but also to Mary, who signifies the Church, as does the ark itself.

In the miniature on page 66 (fig. 30) and in the bottom register of the miniature on page 68 (fig. 31), the cross-nimbed deity is shown making the *benedictio latina* gesture at the doorway of the ark. In the first instance, *belec heofonica weard / merehuses mud* ‘the guardian of the heavenly realm locked up the sea-house’s mouth’ (1363-64) and blessed the inside of the ark. In the second, he locks it again and blesses it after the rains start (1390-91). The two illustrations follow the text in this dual representation, the locked ark on the waters in the top register of page 68 making a third representation in which the locking is featured. This raises the question as to why there is so much emphasis on the locked ark. To a meditative viewer it confirms Christ’s protection of the Church against the fierce storms of this world, reflecting imagery similar to that of the Psalms as implied in the Dunstan inscription. Unlike the Hexateuch miniatures where they are absent, the tempestuous rolling waves (and in the top of page 68, the rains) are a dramatic feature of the Caedmon renditions, as are the images of the deity standing on the waves, exemplifying his power (pages 66 and 68; figs. 30 and 31). For the person of *deop
drawings also suggest the passage of time.

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174 This may be a visual allusion to the *eordan lime* (1322) mentioned in the text above, this caulking representing the power of faith, as suggested by Doane, referring to Bede, in *Genesis A* 263.

175 Broderick, “The Iconographical and Compositional Sources” 324, mentions other works, beginning with the Cotton Genesis which share this double depiction of the ark.
understanding, unlocking the mysteries of the ark with the keys of the spirit, the explanation of the Old Testament episode reveals that *usser nergend* ‘our Saviour’ will protect the Church, figuratively represented by the ark as indicated by exegetical commentaries with which the educated viewer would be familiar, from the *waeghtrea* ‘threatening waves’ (1484 and 1490) and provide *lagosida rest* ‘rest from sea-journeys.’ This makes of the Flood episode an allegory for man’s life on earth and for the spiritual journey of the individual Christian. Noah is a model of one who *hyrde* the holy voice and did as the *seo stefn bebead* ‘the voice commanded’ (1493-94), expressing his gratitude by a sacrificial offering.\(^{176}\) Noah is also a type of Christ whose name, according to Ælfric, means “rest” on English.\(^{177}\) While in the Cædmon illustration (fig. 34) the remnant from the Flood are released from the ark by the Saviour to enjoy the *faeger on foldan* ‘fair earth’ (1487), the implication for those able to see the true meaning of this episode is that the real goal of the spiritual journey is eternal rest in the heavenly paradise, as the visual troping around the idea of the ark suggests. In this illustration by the second artist, the ark is rendered more as an abstract diagram than as the dragon ship favoured by the first artist, implying that for him, the symbolic resonance of the ark is paramount.

The ark on page 66 (fig. 30) by the first artist alludes to its significance in a different way by including a feature not mentioned in the poetic context: two flanking cherubim with eyes on their wings looking “one towards the other” (Exodus 25.18-22). By analogy, this feature relates to the cherubim in the frontispiece where the cross-nimbed deity appears in their midst, not as the unseen “voice” of the Old Testament (Numbers 7.89), but as an image of the Word. It is the visual presence of the Incarnate Word engaged in creation and active in subsequent Old Testament events that gives the kind of double vision which encourages the viewer to see their Christological significance.\(^{178}\) In

\(^{176}\)The animals are not killed on an altar in the miniature on page 74, perhaps in illustration of lines 1518 ff. against eating food with blood and against depriving man made in God’s image of life.


the creation cycle and in the renewal associated with the Flood, the Cædmon Manuscript illustrations demonstrate that he geworhte by the power and wisdom of the Word, visualized especially by the subtle variations of the benedictio latina gesture. The viewer can see the Word in action and share in the creative joy God himself experienced when he looked at his works. As expressed by Ælfric:

Se ælmightiga Scippend geswutelode hine sylfne þurh þa micclan weorc ðe he geworhte æt fruman, 7 wolde þæt þa gesceafte gesawon his mærþa 7 on wuldre mid him wunodon on ecnisse.179

(The almighty Shaper manifested himself through the great work which he made in the beginning and would that his creation saw his glory and lived with him in eternity.)

If the images successfully arouse a strong emotional response, then it will manifest itself in a transformation of life directed to God’s purpose, the meditative viewer now becoming, as expressed by John of Damascus, a living monument and image.180

The Dragon-ships and the conversion of the Viking

While the images I have examined show that the scriptural and exegetical references involved in their composition would have served as gathering sites for the educated reader able to tease out their meaning by repeated and sustained meditation, serving as conversion images in the sense of promoting spiritual insight leading to personal transformation and a recommitment to the spiritual life, and functioning this way even for the whole community, there may have been a wider audience involved. That the poetry is in the vernacular suggests this in itself, but the obvious allusions to the Viking dragon-ships in the images of the ark, indeed their very number, implies that the net cast for conversion applies also to the Viking ruling faction, even if on a less sophisticated level. The arrival of King Sven’s fleet of Viking ships in the invasion of England in 1013 must have imprinted itself on the visual imagination of the English, as indicated by the following description:


180Saint John of Damascus: Writings 369.
On one side lions moulded in gold were to be seen on the ships, on the other birds on the tops of the masts indicated by their movements the winds as they blew, or dragons of various kinds poured fire from their nostrils.\textsuperscript{181}

The fascination with the appearance of these splendid and terrible ships is evident in the several miniatures devoted to their depiction in the Cædmon Manuscript, the Hexateuch, and the Bayeux Tapestry, in the case of Harold’s ship,\textsuperscript{182} as well as in literary descriptions in the Icelandic sagas (Heimskringla and King Harold’s Saga).\textsuperscript{183}

The difficulty is to explain how Noah’s ark, representative of the Church and the heavenly Temple came, in the Cædmon Manuscript and the Hexateuch, to be depicted as a Viking ship. In the early years before the Viking ascendancy following Sven’s invasion and Cnut’s successful triumph in 1016, the Vikings were clearly the enemy, their attacks having been renewed as early as 991 (as the Anglo-Saxon poem, The Battle of Maldon, indicates). It is hardly likely that the artists would represent a symbol of the Church as a pagan Viking ship, however impressive it might be. The only acceptable explanation is that these pictures were made after Cnut became king. As Stenton points out, he is distinguished by being the only foreign ruler who tried to win the respect of the English church, although he was formerly a heathen.\textsuperscript{184} Finding to his benefit the English concept of the king as


\textsuperscript{182}For instance, at the beginning in the fifth subject scene, three of the four ships en route to France have dragon heads at the front and back.

\textsuperscript{183}The earliest being in 868; see Dodwell and Clemoes, The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch 71. In comparing the dragon heads to the Great Beasts of Scandinavian art, it is possible to see a distinct similarity in the elongated snouts, lappet-like crest, and in the case of one, a long protruding tongue as on page 66 of the Cædmon Manuscript. In the Hexateuch the heads have acquired the Scandinavian snout lappet and, on the right side of the pictures, a crest or multiple lappets. This is one occasion for which even Wilhelm Holmqvist admits “Scandinavian influence,” in “Viking Art in the Eleventh Century,” Acta Archaeologica (1951): 22.

\textsuperscript{184}Anglo-Saxon England 390-91. The information in my next sentence is likewise from this source. Stenton discusses more fully the extent of Cnut’s acceptance into the “civilized fraternity of Christian kings.”
God’s vicar on earth, Cnut devoted himself to the interests of the English church leaders, identifying himself with them in reestablishing authority in a country demoralized by decades of war.

The first miniature in the New Minster Liber Vitae,\(^{185}\) which was brought daily to the altar,\(^{186}\) shows a royal couple, with accompanying inscriptions identifying King Cnut and queen Ælfgifu/Ælfgyfu (Emma of Normandy), as they present a large golden cross to the deity above the altar (fig. 35). The angel above Cnut places a crown upon his head with one hand and points with his other up to God in his mandorla, clearly demonstrating the source of kingly authority. The layout of this miniature is remarkably close to the earlier one of King Edgar offering God the New Minster Charter (fig. 14), so close that it suggestively implies an unbroken line of continuity between the English King Edgar and King Cnut, both God’s agents on earth—which is doubtless the intent of this visual propaganda. One difference between the two miniatures is that, in the earlier one, Edgar is flanked by the Virgin and St. Peter, whereas in the later one, Cnut is balanced by his queen. Care has been taken to inscribe Ælfgifu as REGINA. Karkov, in detailing the powerful role of Ælfgifu as king-maker, hints that this queen may have been linked to the making of the Cædmon Manuscript.\(^{187}\) Not only was she married first to Æthelred II and then to Cnut, consolidating the latter’s power, but she appears also to have been involved in the political machinations regarding the succession after Cnut’s death. Seen in this historical perspective, the Cædmon Manuscript miniatures are instructive not only for a monastic audience, possibly female, but also, at a different level, for the newly converted Viking ruling faction. These miniatures indicate that the creation and the subsequent redemption of fallen man were brought about by the power of the Incarnate Word. They also model the peaceful transition of power through the role of women and foreshadow the importance of the Church. In suggesting the contemporary relevance of the past, these

\(^{185}\)London, British Library, MS Stowe 944, fol. 6, c. 1031. This also contains the famous Last Judgment miniature.


\(^{187}\)Karkov, “The Anglo-Saxon Genesis” 221-36.
miniatures demonstrate that all is within the compass of God's plan.

When another set of invaders came to England a couple of decades after the death of Cnut in 1035, they brought a language that had become differentiated from that of their own Viking ancestors, and so the culture supported by the new ruling aristocracy, while Christian, was no longer Anglo-Saxon. When figural art again served together with English vernacular poetry to give importance to a subject, it was not intended to reveal the secrets of the scriptures but to verify the authenticity of a legendary national past in a late thirteenth-century manuscript of Laȝamon's *Brut*. 
IV

Images of the Author in the Thirteenth Century

Introduction

Even by Chaucer’s time, the concept that God was sole author was still operative and is reflected in his leave-taking at the end of the Ellesmere Manuscript where Chaucer acknowledges, however sincerely, that al wit and al goodness proceeds from God, repeating what had become a commonplace: “Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine” (1081 and 1083). While God was considered “the source of auctoritas in Scripture,” as Suzanne Lewis reflects, in the thirteenth century, the “rediscovery of Aristotle’s theory of causality contributed to a new awareness of the individual human authors of the Bible.” This interest in the gospel writers, the composer of the psalms, and the writer of the Apocalypse created a milieu in England which led to the writer and artist Matthew Paris self-consciously portraying himself in a frontispiece to a version of his English history and, in the Caligula Manuscript, to the making of the first extant portrait of a vernacular English poet. This last shows Lagamon within the initial beginning his Prologue to the Brut, his verse history of England. From the portrayal of the human authors of the scriptures to that of the author of a Latin history of England, and from there to the posthumous pictorial representation of a historian at his task repatriating the history of England by using the English vernacular for the purpose for the first time since the Conquest, there is an implicit sense of continuum. Divine sanction seems to be conferred on the authors of nationalistic works as if they are inspired authors adding to scriptural history. Both the religious and the political aspects of this process are linked by the idea of the Incarnation of the divine Word in the physical text, first of the scriptures and then subsequently of vernacular texts. Laura Kendrick has shown how this idea works in illustrated Latin texts, Jeffrey Hamburger in illustrated German vernacular works written


2Kendrick, Animating the Letter.
for nuns, and Nicholas Watson for English vernacular texts. Watson argues that the prestige that came to be accorded to vernacular languages was so closely involved with incarnational theology as to become "coterminal." Before examining the function of the portrait of Laȝamon in relation to his vernacular history, I will look at some twelfth- and thirteenth-century examples of biblical author portraits: those of David related particularly to the idea of the Word becoming incarnated in the flesh, as it were, of the physical vellum, and one of John whose spiritual source prompts him to incarnate the Word in the book that records his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. Matthew Paris’s self portrait, pictorially and textually informed by the concept of the Incarnation, shows how a contemporary author inscribes his personal relationship with the source of his inspiration, a relationship which gives authority to his historical text. Laȝamon’s portrait, enclosed within the first letter of the prologue to his verse history of England in English, shows the progression of interest from biblical to native English authors.

Biblical Author Portraits

From early Anglo-Saxon times until the thirteenth century, the divinely inspired gospel-writers continued to be portrayed before the beginnings of their gospels. David, thought to be the human author of the psalms, had sometimes been portrayed with his harp within the bottom of historiated initials of the “B” at the beginnings of the psalms

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6For thirteenth-century examples of portraits of all four evangelists see, for example, The Lothian Bible, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 791, fols. 318, 327v, 333v, and 343v; as well Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 350/367, fols. 283, 293, 309v, and 320, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D.4.8, fols. 549, 566, 577v, 596v, both bibles also. These are mentioned in Nigel Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts II* 1190-1250 (London: Harvey Miller and Oxford: UP, 1982, Cat. nos. 32, 70, and 77 respectively.
since the eleventh century in England, and even earlier with his scribes and musicians in a full-page colored miniature facing Psalm 26 in the eighth-century Anglo-Saxon Vespasian Psalter.

David was still clearly a favorite in the mid twelfth-century St. Albans Psalter where there are three portrayals of him harping (not to mention the crowned figure within numerous historiated initials). In view of the drawing of the battle between two armed and mounted knights above the Beatus on page 72 (fig. 36)—a physical metaphor for the spiritual battle of Christ's warriors using as weapons wisdom and tranquility of mind, as stated by the artist himself commenting in the margins on his own portrait of David— it is pertinent to remember the subject inside the initial also alludes to the story of David playing the harp to refresh Saul when the evil spirit was upon him (I Kings 16.23). This particular author portrait of David places the psalms within the framework of the battle of good and evil and indicates that the recital of the psalms serves as an aid for triumphing over evil and for acquiring spiritual solace. The importance of David as a musician, a reminder that the psalms tended to be sung in medieval times, is further stressed in the St. Albans Psalter by the two full-page miniatures of that subject, one on page 56 and the second on page 417 where it serves as a visual epilogue. The first of these shows a large dove which emerges from a wavy boundary, suggestive of the celestial realm from which it has come and which surrounds David, and speaks into his ear, showing that the Holy

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11This is reminiscent of the dove above David harping in the eleventh-century Tiberius Psalter, London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius C. VI, fol. 30v. Wormald, English Drawings, Cat. no. 10, plate 36, also discusses Cambridge, Corpus Christi
Spirit, as indicated by the flanking inscription, is inspiring David who is "incarnating" the Word by his singing and playing.

In the Beatus initial just referred to (fig. 36), this theme is amplified. This physically large dove speaks into David's ear the words which David sings and writes in the psalter, whose incarnational meaning is indicated by the words inscribed on the book David holds: Anuntiationem sancti spiritus eructavit beatus David psalmista quem Deus elegit. His choice of eructavit, which can be translated simply as "uttered," is given the more physical sense of "belched forth" by the curvilinear flow in the picture where, forming the top half of a kind of "S" shape, the dove bends down to pour the words into David. The choice of the verb eructavit resonates with its use in Psalm 44.2 where, according to the commentary by Augustine, it refers to the creation by the Word through God's tongue which is analogous to the pen of the scrivener (see my previous discussion of the Dunstan miniature). In the St. Albans initial, the words of the Holy Spirit are implanted by the bird, apparently pass through David's head, and seem to flow out from the other side, like the words "uttered" by the Creator, to form the streams of the upper and lower loops of the initial "B," this letter itself beginning the manifestation of the psalms. This appears to be the artist's thoughtful transformation of the more common lion's mask spewing forth acanthus leaves at the juncture of the loops of many "B" initials (there is an acanthus remnant at David's right shoulder). Textually, the artist also

College, MS 389, fol. 1v, showing St. Jerome writing and receiving inspiration from the dove speaking into his ear.

12 This was transcribed by C. R. Dodwell, "The Initials," The Saint Albans Psalter 206. He translates it as "the blessed David as psalmist indited the Annunciation of the Holy Spirit." I am grateful to Linda Olson for her translation of this as "Blessed David, the psalmist whom God chose, uttered the announcement of the holy spirit." I thank both Linda Olson and Thea Todd for discussing the initial and the text with me.

13 The first instance of this occurs in the Anglo-Saxon Ramsey Psalter, London, British Library, MS Harley 2904, fol. 4, 974-986. Eleventh-century English examples also occur in London, British Library, MS Arundel 155, fol. 12; Oxford, Wadham College, MS A.10.22, fol. 3; London, British Library, MS Arundel 60, fol. 53; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 391, fol. 25; the Winchester Bible, Winchester, Cathedral Library, fol. 218; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 296, fol. 9v.
seems to play on annuntiationem since the Holy Spirit announces to David the Annunciation—both senses employing incarnational imagery since David incarnates the words of the psalms which are to be taken as prophesying the Incarnation of Christ. The book David holds is identified as the psalter in the artist’s marginal commentary on this picture, where he refers to the wisdom of David and reiterates that the significance of the psalms is that they point to the Redeemer, i.e., to his Incarnation (this was also the deop message of the Cædmon Manuscript illustrations).

The effect of the dove’s announcement to David as it somewhat erotically penetrates his ear with its large beak is that it causes his eyes to open wide while his hand strums his harp, leading to the words being made into sound and incarnated in the flesh, literally and figuratively, in the manuscript book he holds and which is laid out in the following pages of this psalter for the reader. In this case, the primary reader appears to have been Christina of Markyate, the reclusive mystic and later prioress. Her use of a psalter was constant, as described by her biographer who says that during her stay at the cell in Flamstead, it lay “open on her lap at all hours of the day.” A special resonance is given to the imagery of the dove-inspired psalmist by the fact that Christina was also chosen by the Holy Spirit from the time the dove nestled in her pregnant mother’s lap for

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15On erotic visual imagery see Madeline H. Caviness, “Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed,” *Speculum* 68 (1993): 333-62, although the intent here is obviously different from that attributed to the fourteenth-century King Charles IV in giving his young bride an illustrated Hours that would serve as a “psychological clitoridectomy” to control his wife’s sexuality and prevent any adulterous longings on her part, as Caviness suggests (356).

16Her connection with this psalter is indicated by the addition, for instance, of the obit of her sister Margaret and, even after Christina’s death, of those people associated with her. See Francis Wormald, “Description of the Manuscript,” *The St. Albans Psalter* 30.

seven days.\textsuperscript{18} The forty prefatorial full-page miniatures of Christ’s life (including the Annunciation in which Mary holds a book\textsuperscript{19} which, in this context, might be intended as a psalter) that precede the psalms not only reinforce their Christological significance but also have a particular application to Christina. In a sense she incarnated Christ in her own person as suggested by the fact that she changed her name from Theodora to Christina in imitation of her divine model. The larger audience for this psalter who would ideally carry this identification into their own lives was probably the religious community to which Christina was attached.

The incarnational references of the Beatus in the Saint Albans Psalter help to explain the Beatus initial in the early thirteenth-century psalter, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 284 (fig. 37) showing a frontally posed Virgin Mary with the Christ child on her lap in the upper loop of the “B” above the portrait of David tuning his harp within the lower loop. This upper scene functions visually as a forward pointer to the Incarnation of Christ, the antetype of David and, allegorically, to the establishment of Ecclesia—bringing the psalms within the communal sphere of Alexander Neckham, abbot of Cirencester (1157-1217), the book’s probable owner.\textsuperscript{20} The arcaded columns of the cushioned thrones on which both David and the Virgin are seated also suggest church architecture and so strengthen the allegorical significance.

Echoing the Old Testament psalmist’s intimate relationship with God, but conceived in terms of other roles as well, portrayals of John in thirteenth-century apocalypses show a new approach tending towards the “individualization of the author in

\textsuperscript{18}Talbot, \textit{The Life of Christina of Markyate} 35.

\textsuperscript{19}Page 19. This is an early instance of the presence of a book in Mary’s lap, evidence also of the growing cult of the Virgin, according to Pächt, “the Full-Page Miniatures,” \textit{The St. Albans Psalter} 66-67.

\textsuperscript{20}See the discussion in Morgan, \textit{Early Gothic Manuscripts II: 1190-1250}, cat. no. 31, illus. 110. He mentions that the commentary on the Psalms and Athanasian Creed is by Alexander Neckham and that such a glossed psalter was intended for scholarly study rather than liturgical use. It is, however, a very large book measuring 410 by 300 mm., indicating that it would have rested on a support and would have been accessible to several viewers at one time.
Western culture," as Suzanne Lewis has shown. In these John is portrayed as author and protagonist, apostolic preacher, and human intermediary in intimate touch with the divine. As Lewis points out with respect to these English illuminated apocalypses, the figure of John not only serves as a witness but reenacts the "I saw" and "I heard" repeated in the text so that the reader becomes a sensory participant of that experience. (This is a technique that Chaucer was to borrow to give the reader a sense of being there with him and seeing his visionary environment in The House of Fame where an eagle, bird of Jupiter but, not so coincidentally, also the symbol of John, takes him into the starry realms during his dream.) An example of John as witness, in this case forced slightly backwards by the impact of his dramatic vision, is seen in the miniature where he sees the "ark of his testament" inside the "temple of God [...] opened in heaven" (Rev. 11.9, fig. 38). Lewis points out that an English innovation, fusing the writer of the gospel with the visionary John, is the introduction of illustrations of the Life of John preceding and succeeding the revelation in the pictorial cycle. One result of this is that the narrative becomes an account of an interior pilgrimage supplanting, in a sense, the pilgrimage to the earthly Jerusalem, the city that fell in 1244. In reading the illuminated Apocalypse, the reader goes on a spiritual pilgrimage or even Crusade, the goal being the heavenly Jerusalem.

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21 Lewis, Reading Images 19.

22 Lewis, Reading Images 19-20.

23 Below the framed image, the commentary of Berengaudus indicates that the Temple can be interpreted as the Old Testament while the ark within, pictured here as a Gothic shrine with arcades, signifies the New Testament and its sacraments. This is mentioned by Hassall, The Douce Apocalypse 24. See also Lewis, Reading Images 118 for Berengaudus on the ark and 363n183 for the quotation from PL 17, col. 958.

24 Lewis, Reading Images 25.

25 Lewis, Reading Images 32-33.

26 Lewis, Reading Images 21, 32-34. The distinctions between the author and the reader become erased in apocalyptic allegory, as she points out, and the act of reading, as urged by Hugo St. Victor, becomes a peregrinatio in stabilitate. See also Ivan Illich, Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon (Chicago: U of Chicago P , 1993) 23-25.
In another Douce Apocalypse miniature, as in the Cædmon Manuscript frontispiece, the image of the doorway to the New Jerusalem becomes potent (fig. 39). In this illustration manifesting the instructions given the saint for his pastoral letter to the church in Philadelphia (Rev. 3. 7-11), the spatial limitation of the pictorial surface showing John on Patmos is transcended in three ways: at the top left by wavy clouds through which the instructing figure has come, on the right by the turrets of a church (similar to the transitional style architecture of the temple in heaven on page 41) which pierce through the top of the rectangular frame of the miniature and, on the left, by an open door saturated with a deep blue color, implying another dimension beyond. This open door is suggested not only by Rev. 3. 20, but, again connecting the writer of the Apocalypse with John the evangelist, with John 10.7 in which Christ says “I am the door.” Echoing Isaiah 22.22 referring to the key of the house of David, the miniature illustrates Rev. 3. 7-8:

> And to the angel of the church of Philadelphia write: These things saith the Holy One and the true one, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, shutteth and no man openeth: I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name.

The angel of the church of Philadelphia who is to receive the pastoral letter is pictured within holding white objects, presumably referring to the instruction to hold fast “that which thou hast,” as mentioned in verse 10.28 The continuation of this same verse, “that no man take thy crown,” may help account for the colored gems decorating the outer rim of the gold haloes. The same feature suggests that a statue with a gem-encrusted halo could have been the inspiration for the paintings of John in this manuscript.

It is the portrayal of John as writer that is of chief interest in this miniature. He is sitting on a grassy, flowery hillside on Patmos poised to write. Shortly before, he had mentioned that he “was in the spirit” when a “great voice” told him to “write in a book” what he saw (Rev. 1. 10-11). The book beside him on a small hillock is ruled like the

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27. The mixture of round and pointed arches defining this style in the miniature was observed by A. G. and W. O. Hassall, *The Douce Apocalypse* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961) 16.

Douce Apocalypse but is still without text. The haloed figure emerging from the clouds is gesticulating in an urgent manner to John, pointing to the open door with his left hand and seemingly waving his right hand in John's face as if to gain his attention. On the flowery turf is an unstoppered ink pot attached by a cord to a pen case, which would have held the quill and knife which John is holding in readiness. The golden knife points horizontally to the large golden key hanging from the arm of the instructing figure. It is the assumed reference to Matt. 16.19 that makes explicit that the key is to the "kingdom of heaven," to be imagined beyond the open door facing the viewer, but it also identifies the figure in the clouds who is "alive and was dead" and has the "keys of death and of hell" (Rev. 1.18). On another level, the key and the quill knife by their proximity also relate to the forthcoming text of the hidden celestial mysteries. This visually links the writer of the apocalypse with John the evangelist, guaranteeing the testimony of the Apocalypse because it was written by the one who "reclined on the breast of the Lord in which all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are concealed," as argued by Berengaudus. It is, of course, the Incarnation itself which allowed the treasures of the Old Testament to be revealed according to their Christological significance. In the Douce Apocalypse, the divine Word is passed to John by God's hand and is incarnated on vellum when John writes it down with his quill pen. Simultaneously, as indicated by God's other hand, the mysteries are unlocked for mankind by means of the open doorway, which is Christ. For the devout viewer, the picture reveals that the spiritual journey involved in reading the text will open the door to the celestial kingdom, figured by the house of David.

The Incarnational Vision of Matthew Paris as a Frontispiece to his English History

Just as John is shown responding to the subject of his vision in one of the Douce miniatures (fig. 38), and recording the divine instructions in his book (fig. 39), so the

29 Alternately, the thin red line could be a trace-line for the illustrator. The key could then be seen as dropping towards John's book, as suggested to me by Anthony Jenkins.

30PL 17, col. 844, as translated in Lewis, Reading Images 28 and quoted in 349n54.
writer, scribe, and artist Matthew Paris depicts his own response verbally and visually to his vision of the Virgin and Child, possibly prompted by a shrine image, in the frontispiece to the mid thirteenth-century Historia Anglorum (Chronica Minora), which describes events in England from 1066 to 1253\(^3\) (fig. 40). While his histories are in Latin, Matthew also composed saints' lives in vernacular Anglo-Norman verse.\(^3\)

In the iconic image above him in the Historia Anglorum, the crowned Virgin symbolically encloses the Christ child with her cloak or mantle (fig. 40). This last feature is an early pictorial representation of a "metaphoric explanation of Christ's incarnate body as a 'garment' bestowed upon him by his mother," as Gail McMurray Gibson explains with respect to fourteenth and fifteenth-century works.\(^3\) She points to the subsequent destruction of such subjects on panel paintings, so that only a few manuscript examples remain.\(^4\) She also refers to Margery Kempe's fifteenth-century vernacular account of her pilgrimage to Aachen where, among the relics, she is shown Our Lady's smokke, which explains also the significance of the marginal drawing of this garment in the only extant


\(^{32}\) Suzanne Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris in the Chronica Majora (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987) 9-10. These include the illustrated Life of St. Alban, and probably also the illustrated lives of St. Edward the Confessor and St. Thomas of Canterbury which we are probably influenced by the picture cycles of such works earlier in the century as the Guthlac Roll. The idea of illustrating his histories so extensively might have come from this hagiographical tradition.

\(^{33}\) Gail McMurray Gibson, The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989) 53. She sees the concept as being popularized by the thirteenth-century Pseudo-Bonaventure's Meditationes Vitae Christi in which the Virgin's veil also girds Christ as his loincloth at the Crucifixion (52-53).

\(^{34}\) See fig. 3.1 and fig. 3.2 in McMurray Gibson's The Theater of Devotion showing, respectively, The Virgin and Angels Swaddling the Christ Child, a fifteenth-century German memorial painting (epitaph) for Konrad Winkler and his wives (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum), and Madonna and Child with Goldfinch, from the Robert de Lisle Psalter, London, British Library, MS Arundel 83 II, fol. 131v.
manuscript of the Book. In the Matthew Paris version, it is a nice added detail that the bottom edges of Mary’s protective garment ripples over into the border separating the sacred space within from the terrestrial space inhabited by Matthew, as well as by the viewer. An apple in Mary’s hand alludes to the initiating event which necessitated the Incarnation.

What is remarkable about the relationships of the Virgin and Child to each other and of Matthew to both is its emphasis on a deeply personal element. Unlike the Christ whose face is turned away in the Dunstan miniature, to which this might be a self-conscious reference, here, as the picture shows and the inscription explains, the infant boy happily “presses kisses” on the face of his mother. The “crawling” infant partly supports his weight by standing with his bare toes on his mother’s belt as he touches her rippling hair and looks at her with lover’s eyes. Such intimacy draws attention to the human nature of the incarnated Christ who plays with his mother and kisses her. This evokes from the kneeling Matthew, emotionally drawn into the loving scene, the exclamation, “O happy kisses.” Both the image and the verbal response imply a sanctification of physical love.

Both the illustration and the inscription also appeal to Christ’s divine nature. The monumentality of the figures of the holy pair, the crowned Virgin’s halo which intersects with (and in a double reference also partly encloses) Christ’s, and the richness of Mary’s garments all imply the celestial and divine within the framed space. Unlike the earthly dimension inhabited by Matthew, and defined by the brown-black text and outline of the monk (except for the rubricated ecstatic “O”), the color washes that enhance the strongly outlined figures of the Virgin and Child suggest a different reality. Along with the colored


36J. J. G. Alexander, Medieval Illuminators and their Methods of Work (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992) 25-26, suggests that Matthew might have known the Dunstan miniature first-hand. If that is so, then Matthew’s picture itself becomes a kind of reader’s response in which the prostrate monk receives his heart’s desire.

37In this sense, the apple is also a ball, and recalls the orb of the world, as suggested to me by Anthony Jenkins.
outline technique which shows he drew upon Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts, perhaps for patriotic reasons since his history is about Britain, he may have also been influenced by the distinctions which some of these make between transcendental and earthly reality (as in the Cædmon miniature on page 11 which differentiates the painted deity within the fortress of heaven from the outlined figures on the earth below). While in the Matthew miniature the playfulness of the infant Christ relates to his human mother, as the inscription states, the Son is also engendered by God the Father who “commands.” The gestures of Matthew’s hands at once reveal the parallelism of the construction and also separate the contrasts between the human and divine aspects in the inscription, as observed by Linda Olson, who also noted that Matthew’s right hand cups the “a” of infancia. This letter both emphasizes the sense of infancia as a beginning and alludes also to the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end […] who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1.10). At the corners of a Veronica by Matthew Paris, pasted into the second volume of a Chronica Majora, Part II (fig. 41), are the two letters representing the Alpha and Omega. This Veronica appears to have been copied from the Majesty panel of a silver diptych at the shrine of St. Alban, the other panel being a Crucifixion, the diptych itself placed in proximity to the iconic image of the Virgin and Child Enthroned. The heads of all three—the crucified Christ, the Christ in Majesty, and the Virgin and Child—are depicted on a folio of the Chronica Majora, Part I, in

38 Alexander, Medieval Illuminators 109.

39 I am grateful to Linda Olson for these observations in conversation and for translating for me this difficult inscription.

40 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 16, fol. 49v. See Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris 126.

41 See Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris 422 and 511n56 for Matthew’s description in the Gesta Abbatum. I do not think there need have been a second work showing a more intimate relationship between the Virgin and Child, as Lewis postulates (425); the self-portrait miniature itself shows the new tendency towards the intimate type. See my following discussion.
Cambridge\(^2\) (fig. 42), explaining the association which could have led Matthew to emphasize the “a” of infancy since the Alpha and Omega of the Veronica allude to Christ’s divinity which is infused even in the Christ Child.

It is of some consequence too that Matthew’s self-portrait occurs near the beginning of his history, not a religious work per se, but one which is thus contextualized by this miniature as being within God’s overall plan.\(^3\) It is also significant that this is the work in which Matthew wanted to inscribe himself, defining himself as monk, artist, historian, and scribe. He does not directly name himself on this page. As in the Dunstan miniature, the identification, here in red and blue, was added later by a scribe for the immediate comprehension of subsequent readers. He does, however, name himself *frater Matthaeus Parisiensis* on the verso of this folio where, also in his own handwriting, he records the donation of this book to St. Albans.\(^4\) As Laurence de Looze has argued, in the thirteenth century a shift in mentality took place in which “the authority of a text was related to the personal experience of its author” and the “life he lived.”\(^5\) In the dedication for this history, authority proceeds from the life of a monk named Matthew; in the preceding illustration, this monk is seen in devotion before the Virgin and Child.

He does not look directly at the holy images, only at the words he is, as it were, handling. This raises the question of his physical relationship to these images. If the rendition is based on the image of the Virgin and Child on the west end of the shrine of St. Alban, then this serves also as a documentary representation paying tribute to the

\(^2\)Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 26, p. 283.

\(^3\)It follows an itinerary and maps and precedes tinted drawings of English kings holding models of churches. See Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts* 142, cat. no. 92.

\(^4\)Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts* 143.

original. But then, the representation of the kneeling monk becomes even more ambiguous. Does Matthew’s miniature record his personal response to this image? If so, then this, in effect, separates the identities of Matthew the monk in devotion from Matthew the artist. The success of the actual image on the shrine is not that it is idolatrously worshiped as having life in itself, but that it has so effectively served as a conduit for a mystical experience for Matthew. As the thirteenth-century writer William Durand rationalizes with respect to images in churches, they are not worshiped because they are accounted to be gods, because that would be idolatry; they are instead adored for the remembrance of things past and because they are more moving and immediate than verbal descriptions. The image on the shrine of St. Alban is probably most like the one Matthew copied on a separate occasion (fig. 42), showing a formal, albeit close, relationship between the Virgin and Child. What Matthew’s portrait of himself before the Virgin and Child reveals is the vision he recalls seeing in his mind’s eye resulting from his act of affective piety before the image. The church image, itself a memory of the Incarnation, would appear to have prompted in Matthew, deeply engaged in devotion before it, a vision of the Child kissing the Virgin in a display of affection; that arouses so strong a desire in him that he identifies with the Christ Child not only spiritually but posturally as he composes the ecstatic apostrophe. This has a theological dimension in that

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46Lewis, The Art of Matthew Paris 422. In 512n63, she considers also the possibility that Matthew may have been inspired by a mid thirteenth-century fresco in the nave of St. Albans abbey church on which there are still traces of a kneeling monk before an enthroned Virgin and Child. She also notes two slightly later examples of monks before the Virgin. Whether it was the shrine image or the fresco which inspired Matthew’s version, his is still unique in adapting this configuration to reveal his personal act of devotion and vision, pictorially and verbally recorded. Of course this whole iconography in England goes back to the Dunstan miniature and its relation, for example, to the prostrate monk opposite the Nativity portrayed in the tail of the “Q” at the opening of St. Luke’s Gospel in the Saint-Bertin Gospels (New York, Pierpont Morgan, MS 333, fol. 51), both of which I discussed previously. The many examples of subsequent adaptations (see my note in the discussion of the Dunstan miniature) shows not only the popularity of the motif, but that Matthew wanted to portray himself within this tradition of devout monks.

Matthew, imitating Christ corporeally, is also identified spiritually with Christ who, in the Incarnation, took on the humanity which defines Matthew the man, but which in turn derives from the image of God as described in Genesis, making the relationship mutually reflexive. Matthew, in the intensity of his contemplation becomes one with Christ, demonstrating the role images have in this process. For Matthew, this pictorial rendition further memorializes the vision and his ecstatic participatory response by making it concrete for himself and for posterity.

The record of the personal "incarnational" experience of the author himself also empowers his history, placing it within the tradition of divinely inspired writers of the past who, in the case of the evangelists, actually saw Christ in the flesh. Matthew's imitatio Christi inscribes the history as "gospel," as does the portrait of Laȝamon at the beginning of his vernacular work.

**Authenticating a Vernacular History of England: The inspired Laȝamon at Work**

If Matthew was considered not only "a magnificent historian and chronicler," as well as "an artist unequalled in the Latin world" (according to an entry, perhaps a little biased, in the Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani by Thomas Walsingham), a cultural event in the English-speaking world perhaps worthy of equal applause but so far substantially unremarked is the first visual portrayal of an English vernacular poet, Laȝamon. Although he completed the Brut, his verse history, in the 1240s, it was not until the second half of the thirteenth century when interest in religious authors spread to other writers that a portrait was made of him at the beginning of the Caligula manuscript (figs.

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As Jane Roberts points out, neither of the Brut manuscripts caught "the eye of Dr. Morgan or Dr. Sandler"; see "A Preliminary Note on British Library, Cotton MS Caligula A.ix," *The Text and Tradition of Laȝamon's Brut* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994) 1. Rosamund Allen discusses the historiated initial as supporting the text's fabrication of the author in her discussion in the article, "The Implied Audience of Laȝamon's Brut," *The Text and Tradition* 126. Neither Roberts nor Allen comment on the historical significance of this being the first illustration of a vernacular English author.
43 and 44), perhaps the earlier of two extant manuscripts of his work.\(^4\) This is all the more extraordinary since, as Bolton points out, the names of only two English vernacular poets before him are known:\(^5\) Cædmon, whose name is mentioned by Bede and who was associated with the illustrated manuscript I discussed earlier, and Cynewulf whose late eighth- or early ninth-century Anglo-Saxon poems were not illustrated in any extant manuscript although he is the first English poet to sign his name.\(^6\) The Caligula glosses of the Brut, this time in Latin, may have been copied from an earlier exemplar since all the source materials were available a century earlier\(^7\) and could themselves have been made soon after Laȝamon composed his work,\(^8\) since their expressed interest in church history and the reigns of kings accords, as Carole Weinberg observes, with that of monastic chroniclers of the same period.\(^9\) She points out that the holdings of Worcester Cathedral Priory, about ten miles downstream from Laȝamon’s church, indicate a similar interest and that its annotators of Old English around the close of the twelfth century show “a particular concern with the vernacular past” at a time when the Worcester monks were at odds with Norman prelates and when the Anglo-Saxon Bishop Wulfstan was canonized in 1203.\(^10\) It may be too that the loss of Normandy in 1204 led many people to identify even

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\(^10\)Carol Weinberg, “The Latin Marginal Glosses,” The Text and Tradition 115. She refers to the study by Christine Franzen, The Tremulous Hand of Worcester: A Study of
more fully with England and its history. When the Caligula manuscript was made it would appear that the thirteenth-century interest in the portrayal of authors coincided with that in the "historicity of the English language," reflections on the national past, and in genealogies and family trees of English rulers. Weinberg adds that the Caligula marginalia is a sign that the Anglo-Saxon poem "was taken seriously as a historical text." Even many of these correspond to passages in Bede, the most authoritative historian of the early history of England.

While Matthew Paris controlled the reception of his own image by depicting himself in the act of rapturous identification with the Christ Child, Lagamon is shown by the Caligula manuscript artist in the act of writing, and so validating by his presence the

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56 Rosamund Allen, "The Implied Audience of Layamon’s Brut,” *The Text and Tradition of Layamon’s Brut* 130, thinks this process may have begun even before, with people identifying themselves with England even if their ancestors were Norman. If there is a political message it seems to be that, according to Allen, “as the Saxons, once converted, became the English, so the Normans [...] will become part of the familiar landscape” (137).

57 Lesley Johnson, “Reading the Past in Layamon’s Brut,” *The Text and Tradition of Layamon’s Brut* 158. She says that this does not necessarily exclude readers of French or Latin, as evidenced by the glosses and the inclusion of Anglo-Norman material in the rest of the manuscript. See the list of these items in Jane Roberts, “A Preliminary Note” 4.

58 Elizabeth Bryan, “The Two Manuscripts of Layamon’s Brut: Some Readers in the Margins,” *The Text and Tradition* 92. She observes that this is especially true of the of the Otho manuscript.

59 Carole Weinberg, “The Latin Marginal Gloses,” *The Text and Tradition* 113. Interestingly, her study of these sixteen marginal glosses (excluding the names of people, places, and artefacts) shows that only the Arthurian section of the poem, which Layamon expanded considerably, lacks annalistic glossing (103).

60 Carole Weinberg, “The Latin Marginal Gloses,” *The Text and Tradition* 102-103, mentions that five of the sixteen refer directly or indirectly to his *Ecclesiastical History*. In her summary, she mentions affinities of these glosses with Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum*, the *Worcester Chronicle*, the *Chronicon* of Marianus Scotus, the Anglo-Saxon litanies of the saints, Bede’s *De Temporum Ratione* and the Epitome to his *Historia* (113).
authority and truth of his English history and its expansion of Arthurian material. Unlike the gospel writers in their portraits, however, he is not accompanied by an evangelist symbol, but appears as a tonsured figure within a kind of arbor defined by a blue semi-abstract plant-like border within a red five-letter high “A.” He writes with a quill in a book supported by the suggestion of a table formed by the cross-bar of the letter. The horizontal lines of the cushioned seat run parallel to the book and its support, reinforcing the impression of a cross-bar as required by this letter, while another horizontal line across the bottom serves as a floor. Visually connecting the prologue with the main text, a flourished overgrowth of herbaceous swirls drapes over the left “wall,” reemerging in the second column of text to decorate the three-letter high “N” surmounted by a trellis-like border in the middle margin. A small blue bud in line with the cross-bar of the “A” metaphorically conveys the idea of the text as the “fruit” of the writer’s efforts. This vegetal fructifying of the letter suggests that there is an extra dimension to the text, that in fact the Spirit quickens the letter, signifying by the physical ornament the “ornament of spiritual understanding covering the poverty of the letter,” as the twelfth-century Rupert of Deutz expressed it, and in this case, covering the humility of the vernacular poet. The continuity between text and writer is provided by a blue horizontal flourish which passes from the top of the larger “A,” over the head of the writer, to form the top of the small “A” beginning the text of the poem. This extended blue flourish ending in a trilobed leaf reinforces the idea of the text as the fruit springing from the inspired mind of the writing poet but which, in its finished version and for the convenience of the reader, has been placed frontally and enlarged. In the upper and lower margins are outlines of confronted winged creatures with humanoid faces, like the winds in the Caedmon Manuscript frontispiece or the Douce Apocalypse. These wispy creatures look beyond the left margins into the past as if they were recalling to the poet’s memory the events of the following history.

Personal details and the identification of the narrator are constructed in the text adjoining the large initial by the author himself, speaking in the third person. He stakes out

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61 This is quoted and discussed in Laura Kendrick, Animating the Letter 70. It is from Rupert of Deutz, De Trinitate: In Ezechielem 2.12, PL 167, col. 1473.
his cultural identity and authority as an author. His societal role is mentioned first: he is a
priest of the people, connected with both divine authority and with the common people,
i.e., the Anglo-Saxons, in his pastoral care. He is visually presented in the initial as a
tonsured figure either to approximate the detail of his religious calling, “corresponding
roughly to ‘fact’ in the way Langland’s Will roughly embodies the poet’s circumstances” —or to accord with a possible monastic audience. This is followed by his name,
Lagamon, and his ancestry; he was Leouenaðes sone (1-2). This self-naming,\(^\text{65}\) which he repeats three more times in his Prologue to make sure future readers remember (and to
ensure that a later copyist will not accidentally omit it), together with the use of the third
person, inscribes him into his history. Then the place of his living is mentioned, at a church
at Areley near Redstone, on the bank of the Severn. His aesthetic sensibility, conveyed by
his appreciation of its beauty, _sel par him puhte_ (4), is reinforced by the setting visually

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\(^{62}\) Rosamund Allen, “The Implied Audience of Lagamon’s Brut,” _The Text and
Tradition_ 126.

\(^{63}\) Since the glosses accord with those of monastic chroniclers, as previously
mentioned; see Carole Weinberg, “Latin Marginal Glosses” 115. Rosamund Allen, “The
Implied Audience of Lagamon’s Brut,” _The Text and Tradition_ 134-35, casts her wide net
to include the possibility of an audience in a “small house of religion.” Elizabeth Bryan,
“The Two Manuscripts,” _The Text and Tradition of Lagamon’s Brut_ 98, suggests that the
red name glosses were “prepared with institutional interests in mind, perhaps scholastic
but more likely monastic,” and that they served as mnemonic cues.

\(^{64}\) I have used the line numbering in G. L. Brook and R. F. Leslie, eds. _Lagamon:
Brut / Edited from British Museum MS. Cotton Caligula A. IX and British Museum MS.

\(^{65}\) Compare similar usage subsequently by Robert Mannyng in his _Chronicle:
Prologue_, as mentioned by Helen Phillips, “Robert Mannyng, _Chronicle: Prologue,_” _The
Idea of the Vernacular_ 20 and 23. She mentions that the naming of the author and his
request for prayers at the end of a prologue is a common Anglo-Norman historical and
hagiographic convention. Lagamon’s fourth mention of his name is in a similar context at
the end of his Prologue. See also John Burrow, _Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle
English Literature and Its Background_ 100-1500 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997).
alluded to in the initial, creating an air of tranquility suitable for divinely inspired work. It is a fine spot for reading books (5), and further defines this Lagamon as a reader.

It seems to follow that the brilliant idea of writing would come into his mind, of telling about the deeds of the English, who they were and from where they came, those who first possessed the land after the Flood (5-13). This last classifies the story of Britain as an offshoot of scriptural narrative. The result is a history of Britain, from its legendary foundation by the Trojan hero Brutus to the baptism and death in 689 of the last British king, Cadwalader, that is placed within the classical tradition as well as the biblical.

Lagamon raises the question of sources himself by mentioning the three books he procured by traveling widely throughout the nation. The impression given is that, with great difficulty, he acquired the best that was available, and that by taking and assembling these, his work represents a contribution to an ongoing tradition while it also surpasses. In this, as Helen Phillips points out, he establishes the prologue convention in the vernacular. The difficulty of obtaining authoritative books at this time unwittingly underlines further the fact that the authors of two of these are not clearly or correctly identified in his sources. He seems to be under the impression that the later Old English prose translation of Bede was by Bede and that Bede’s Latin original was by Seint Albin and be feire Austin (Augustine) who introduced baptism here (17-18). This makes Lagamon’s own

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66 Andrew Taylor, “Authors, Scribes, Patrons and Books,” The Idea of the Vernacular 354, discusses the modern notion of “the tranquil monastic scribe cut off from worldly cares.” It may be that this was also a cherished medieval ideal. Taylor mentions that most monasteries did not have a special room set aside for writing.

67 As Helen Phillips, “Robert Mannyng,” The Idea of the Vernacular 23, mentions, this prologue convention was established in the vernacular by Lagamon and followed by Robert Mannyng in his Chronicle. It is not impossible, however, that he may have remembered reading Alfred’s Preface to Gregory’s Pastoral Care, which was sent to each bishop.

68 J. A. Burrow, Medieval Writers and Their Work: Middle English Literature and its Background 1100-1500 (1982; Oxford: UP, 1989) 33. See also Fernand Mossé, A Handbook of Middle English, trans. James A. Walker (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1952) 349n17 concerning Albinus who “was the abbot of Saint Augustine at Canterbury, and died in 732. He was one of Bede’s chief sources of information, but we do not have any of his own work. Albinus certainly could not have collaborated with Augustine (+604).”
assiduous self-naming, along with the selection of (auto)biographical details he wished to pass on, all the more valuable for subsequent readers.

In addition to these personal facts, he seems intent on conveying authority to his work not only by appealing to “the contemporary reader’s love of authority,” but also by showing that he himself has the qualifications necessary since he consults a source in each of the languages used at the time: the Anglo-Saxon of most of his parishioners, the Latin of the educated clergy, and the Anglo-Norman of the nobility. This last was the language of his primary and almost exclusive source, Wace’s *Roman de Brut.* He also conveys the right attitude regarding himself as a reader when he describes how he reverently laid these books before him and turned the leaves, beholding them *leafliche* (25). In the second hemistich of the same line, he relates this process to the Lord by invoking his aid once again (compare line 2), asking that he be *lifhe* ‘kind’ to him. Immediately, as if indeed divinely inspired, he takes the quill with his fingers and writes true words on the book-skin (26-27). This series of associations implies that the Lord approves his vernacular enterprise. In his anxiety to speak truly, he anticipates the persistent concern of late English writers of the vernacular. In the initial, he seems to be adding red around the edges of the text, as if to indicate that the Latin marginal glosses were also written by him. This may have been a further reason for the inclusion of the historiated initial which functions not only to validate the truth of this English history, seen to be written by the inspired Layamon, but also to transfer the same authority to the glosses.

He describes writing as the craft of setting words together (27), almost as if he were setting jewels into an intricate framework as suggested visually by the colored spots—a good description of his actual translation and transformation of Wace’s *Brut,* whose octosyllabic couplets he converted into Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. As for the genre of history, veracity is also affirmed by this care in setting the true words together.

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69 Burrow, *Medieval Writers* 32.

70 Burrow, *Medieval Writers* 33.

(his status as priest further ensures this). His statement that he condensed the three books into one (28) reinforces this sense of a distillation of the best to produce truth.

Together with what he adds to his verse history, what he does can also be seen within the medieval context of the four ways of “making a book” summarized by the thirteenth-century Franciscan, St. Bonaventure:

Sometimes a man writes others’ words, adding nothing and changing nothing; and he is simply called a scribe [scriptor]. Sometimes a man writes others’ words, putting together passages which are not his own; and he is called a compiler [compilator]. Sometimes a man writes both others’ words in prime place and his own added only for purposes of clarification; and he is called not an author but a commentator [commentator]. Sometimes a man writes both his own words and others’, but with his own in prime place and others’ added only for purposes of confirmation, and he should be called an author [auctor].

All of these can be variously applied to Laȝamon although, as Chaucer was to do later, his narrator modestly claims to be only a compiler. That way, Laȝamon’s narrator (not to mention the poet himself) avoids responsibility and culpability for anything that might be considered politically or morally reprehensible and so dangerous, while at the same time placing his own major Arthurian additions to Wace within the same framework of historical truth as the rest. Not only does he introduce Arthur, the national hero, into English vernacular literature for the first time, but his additions include a fuller account of the Round Table, the departure of Arthur in the company of two maidens who take him in a ferry to Avalon, and other additions “that arise from the poet’s temperament,” such as descriptions of animal subjects and natural backgrounds, armings and scenes of ferocious battles, and a pre-chivalric Arthur of generosity and warlike deeds.

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This interest in creating a national hero and appealing to a taste for both the beautiful and the bloodthirsty may also reflect the poet’s hoped-for audience, at least on one level. His ambitions are hinted at by his mention that Wace presented his French book to the adele Eleanon, Henry II’s queen (22-23). This repeated word “noble” (with a resonance at least equal to the word for “truth”) seems to betray a hope, however distant, that his own work about the noble deeds of the English (7), composed in the vicinity of a noble church (3), will be indeed be read by a noble man (29). This may be further supported by Layamon’s petition that he wishes to be remembered by name in the prayers of his readers but, unlike his predecessor Cynewulf, Layamon gives his lineage (2) and concludes his prologue by asking each noble man who reads his book and learns its runan, that he say soñeste word53 for Layamon’s father’s soul, his mother’s, and his own (30-35). This, at any rate, is the internal reader addressed within the poem and occasionally addressed in the second person throughout. Rosamund Allen points out that Layamon must have had either a wealthy living or a patron to provide funding for the wax tablets and skins necessary to produce the 16,000 lines of text; she also suggests that he may have been writing in the reign of John or shortly after, this king having been buried at Worcester near his patron saint, Wulstan.

The introduction of the author portrait and the quality of the decoration and calligraphy of the Caligula manuscript made some 50 to 100 years after Layamon wrote

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54This is the only source for this information regarding Wace’s audience, as observed by Ferdinand Mossé, A Handbook of Middle English (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1952) 350n21.

55Rosamund Allen, “The Implied Audience,” The Text and Tradition 123, speculates on the meaning of these line, asking if this narratee is asked to recite “these (peos) true words” together, understanding the text as a request for each of his readers “to recite (segge) the entire text to another audience.” But she admits that it is more likely a directive to say prayers for Layamon and his parents.

56Rosamund Allen, “The Implied Audience,” The Text and Tradition 123. She identifies lines 1346, 2635, and 2996; with the relationship of the “I” and “thou” established by the written page, the boc-spellen of 9691.

also suggest an audience of some means, interested not only in hearing the alliterative
poetry but in reading the manuscript. Malcolm Parkes has remarked upon the
palaeographical resemblances between the script of the Caligula Brut and, as Jane Roberts
describes them, "two very splendid books," one a psalter of c. 1284 likely prepared as a
royal gift, and "a handsome copy" of Peter Comestor's Historia scholastica from
Ashbridge in Hertfordshire, possibly marking the foundation of the community there c.
1283.78 While these examples are of gothic quadrata script, the somewhat less formal
semiquadrata of the Caligula manuscript79 nevertheless gives an indication of the company
it approaches.

But Rosamund Allen, on the other hand, finally considers Lagamon's Brut as a
family book, appropriate for amusing and informing "merchants, managers of estates,
families and parish priests." She refers to Lagamon's presentation, behind the heroic
subjects, of the lives of the non-privileged, along with domestic acts, and an interest in
money, merchants, and ships' cargoes.80 She allows that "a small house of religion."81
might also be a context, noting that "only a literate, clerical readership" would recognize
its stylistic features, this being its ideal audience.82 What is evident is a text with the
potential for being read on various levels by a variety of readers. The task of determining
the actual readership of Lagamon's work and of localizing either of the extant Brut
manuscripts further is made more difficult because there is no medieval provenance for

78The observation was made in a personal communication to Margaret Laing, as
noted in Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English
The Text and Tradition 6. The manuscripts are, respectively, London, British Library, MS
Add. 24686 and London, British Library, Royal 3 D VI.


80Rosamund Allen, "The Implied Audience," The Text and Tradition, for example
on 127, 132, and 135.

81Rosamund Allen, "The Implied Audience," The Text and Tradition 136 and 134
respectively.

82Rosamund Allen, "The Implied Audience," The Text and Tradition 122 and 130,
fn. 26.
them, nor is it known how they came into Cotton’s library.\textsuperscript{83}

What the Caligula manuscript itself suggests is a monastic readership, as indicated by the tonsured author figure and by the Latin glosses, but this does not exclude access by lay people nor local aristocracy with political interests charged by a national perspective. Despite all the information provided by the prologue, the exact social context is still somewhat elusive, perhaps because of all the details of the large canvas of Lagamon’s subject matter. Nevertheless, the initial enclosing the first portrait of an English vernacular poet is a momentous sign of confidence in an English authority writing about subjects of interest to a native audience who might thereby be encouraged to see the possibilities for a new Troy or a new Camelot, an earthly paradise not beyond reach. The promise of the closing lines of the Arthurian section, that he would yet come to help the Britons, is alluded to at the end of the \textit{Brut}, which mentions that the Britons are still ruled by foreign kings, a situation which the author seems to equate with Anglo-Saxon submission to Anglo-Norman rule. This ideologically encoded myth of national origins may again have had an urgent contemporary political appeal at the time the Caligula manuscript was made. Just as Suso in a twelfth-century woodcut\textsuperscript{84} is depicted holding a book sprouting a flowery branch similar to that forming the garland around his head, perhaps the makers of the Caligula Manuscript had some hope that this British history, written by the inspired Lagamon, would also bear political fruit. That his history is in the English vernacular\textsuperscript{85} makes it immediate and relevant. The portrait of Lagamon provides a personal link to the narrative of the dynastic past and, together with the prologue and annotations, institutes its canonicity for its thirteenth-century audience, encouraging them to read this history with a view to projecting past glories into the future. The portrait of Lagamon

\textsuperscript{83}As mentioned by Jane Roberts, “A Preliminary Note, \textit{The Text and Tradition of Lagamon’s Brut} 12.

\textsuperscript{84}Henry Suso as Beatus. Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität Basel, cod. E.111.12. This is reproduced in Hamburger, \textit{The Visual and the Visionary} 241 and discussed on 240.

\textsuperscript{85}Benjamin C. Withers, “A ‘Secret and Feverish Genesis’: The Prefaces of the Old English Hexateuch,” \textit{Art Bulletin} 81.1 (March 1999): 58, makes this point with respect to the Old English translation of the Hexateuch (see also my previous chapter).
authenticates the truth of the Arthurian promise and that, as the last lines of the Caligula Manuscript indicate, *i-wurde þet i wurðe:* *i-wurðe Godes wille. Amen.* ‘what will be will be, will be God’s will. Amen.’ The divine will is, in a sense, taken to be incarnated in the vernacular text and communicated by the author, pictured in the act of completing his inspired writing of an English history.

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86 This ending is not in MS Cotton Otho C.xiii.
Idols and Icons: The Fourteenth Century Auchinleck and Vernon Manuscripts

Introduction

The subjects of the some of the illustrations of fourteenth-century English vernacular literary manuscripts reflect the same kind of defensive stance as do some of the vernacular texts, as if justification were needed for image-making or for writing in the vernacular. In the illustrations in the Auchinleck Manuscript (c.1327- c. 1340), the visual distinction made between heathen idols and Christian icons and, in the Vernon Manuscript (c.1391-1400), those proving the efficacy of holy images, fall on one side of a theological divide that separates them from the illustrations of the Pearl Manuscript and the Ellesmere Manuscript of the Canterbury Tales, which depict no sacred figures at all. This latter phenomenon would seem to have been due to a prudent reticence about producing holy images which the Lollards and their followers, like the Byzantine iconoclasts of the past, condemned and sometimes even burned or threatened to burn from the mid-1380s.

Even as early as the late thirteenth century when the use of images had already become well established in the Christian world, William Durand evidently felt compelled to

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1 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19.2.1. Some fragments include Edinburgh University Library, MS 218, St. Andrews University Library, MS PR.2065, and London University Library, MS 593; all these are reproduced in the monochrome facsimile by Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland, Advocates’ MS 19.2.1 (London: Scholar Press, in association with The National Library of Scotland, 1977). The earliest possible date, not allowing for production time, would have been 1327 as indicated by a textual reference to the accession of King Edward III; see Derek Pearsall, Introduction, The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland vii and my ensuing discussion.


deal with the issue again because of western contact with the Muslims during the successive Crusades. He says that the Saracens who do not adore, possess, or look upon images, cast “in our teeth” the restriction against making graven images. Durand goes on to discuss the meaning of various images inside and outside churches, calling attention to their devotional purpose in serving as a means for ongoing meditation. The challenge posed by Muslim attitudes is evident in the first of the Auchinleck Manuscript miniatures, which deals with the supposed distinction between a Muslim idol and the sculpted body of Christ on the cross. Further, all but one of the rest of the extant miniatures deal with English heroes who fought against the Saracens. Durand’s explication of the devotional use of images is still relevant in the case of the Vernon Manuscript which includes illustrations for the poems on the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus as well as on the Miracles of the Virgin. Some of the latter miniatures actually show the Virgin, who appears to have emerged from her statue in response to prayer, performing miracles. The Vernon may have been made in part to present the orthodox position demonstrating the value of meditating on holy images. In this chapter, I will deal with the illustrations in the Auchinleck and Vernon Manuscripts which affirm the use of holy images. Both manuscripts demonstrate the increasing popularity of vernacular literature to the extent that each one incorporates so many items as to provide the owner(s) with what would effectively have been a whole library in one huge book.

While English might still have been the “cradle” language of some aristocracy, it

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4 Durand, “Rationale,” 121.

5 The Auchinleck Manuscript originally contained more than 386 leaves now measuring 264 x 203 mm and includes 44 items (plus 5 missing at the beginning). The Vernon Manuscript originally contained 422-426 leaves, of which 350 survive, now measuring 544 x 393 mm and includes approximately 403 items (many short). Further, each (bifolium) sheet of the Vernon was made from a single calf-skin, with the whole manuscript now weighing 48 3/4 pounds. See, respectively, Pearsall and Cunningham, Introduction, The Auchinleck Manuscript vii-xvii; Doyle, Introduction, The Vernon Manuscript 1 and 11. Derek Pearsall, Introduction, Studies in the Vernon Manuscript, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990) x, observes that the Vernon Manuscript is “by far the largest that the student of vernacular literature will ever be likely to have to deal with.”
did not have the social status associated with the French spoken at court nor the
intellectual prestige of Latin, knowledge of which was thought to be essential for anyone
deeded literate. This situation meant that the literature that was recorded was not created
only by a Latin-educated religious elite incorporating the techniques of oral Germanic
heroic poetry and its cultural values into their works for the benefit of court and
monastery, as I have shown was the case in the Anglo-Saxon period; but rather,
fourteenth-century literature grew largely from the needs of the native population, not
just those of the ruling classes. As an oral medium, English had become increasingly
diversified and idiosyncratic because of regional dialectical variants and the incorporation
of foreign words. In the process, it lost the kind of standardization provided by the
grammatical disciplines shaping educated discourse. The renewed demand for vernacular
literature arose not only from political nationalistic interests (such as appear to have been a
motivating factor behind Lasamon’s Brut), but also from the need to provide for the
pastoral care of the population generally following the requirements of the fourth Lateran
Council of 1215. The desire of the upwardly mobile middle class to enjoy translations of
the French romances popular at court also stimulated the production of vernacular
versions. Not to be excluded from this is the vital role played by religious women such as
anchoresses and nuns throughout the Middle Ages, because they kept the vernacular alive
as a written language since they needed texts providing spiritual nourishment and
guidance. It is largely the spiritual needs of women and of a broader lay public in the late
medieval period that fostered the production of works like books of hours as well as

6To be literate, that is to know Latin, had legal consequences, as indicated for
instance in Passus 14.126-34 of the C-text of Piers Plowman where lewede thieves are
hung but lettered ones (who could read a verse of Latin) are saved from hanging because
they can claim benefit of clergy. See Derek Pearsall, Piers Plowman: An Edition of the C-
text (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1978) 241, n. 128; and also my
discussion of this and the drawing of the Hanged Thief illustrating Passus 17. 130-48 (fol.
79) in “Retributive Violence and the Reformist Agenda in the Illustrated Douce 104 MS

7See Corinna Gilliland, “Celebrating the Mundane: The Feminine Influence in Early
catechetical, meditative and devotional works, including many in the vernacular.\(^8\)

The accomplishment of this spiritual aim involved incarnational theology in three ways in the verbal and visual presentation of the Auchinleck and Vernon Manuscripts. First of all, the Incarnation continued to be used to justify the making of images, as Durand says, referring to Pope Adrian’s statement that Christ became man, Christ must be portrayed in a man’s form.\(^9\) Secondly, the extant religious illustrations in these manuscripts encourage devotion to the body of the crucified Christ and to the Virgin from whom he received his humanity. Affective devotion to these subjects in image and words was encouraged by the Franciscans as an experiential means of arousing penitential remorse, conversion, and love, especially in the unlearned and the laity.\(^10\) New Testament subjects involving Christ’s humanity were considered appropriate for these groups because they could identify with them carnally.\(^11\) The sort of spiritual or deep reading of the Old Testament encouraged by the Anglo-Saxon text and miniatures of the Cædmon Manuscript, made to oppose a literal reading, would have been considered inappropriate or beyond the capacity of an early fourteenth-century vernacular audience. Christ’s divinity could be approached only by those spiritually mature and literate, i.e., those who had all the interpretive intellectual resources for abstract thought provided by a Latin education. Reinforcing this evaluation of the limited grasp of those uneducated in Latin was the way the vernacular itself was sometimes considered at this time, which leads to the third way incarnational theology was involved. Thomas Usk speaks of the


\(^9\) Durand, Rationale Divinorum Officiorum of the Divine Offices, 123.

\(^10\) Denise Despres, Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature 5-9.

\(^11\) The information in the rest of my paragraph on the scope of the vernacular in relation to incarnational theology, unless otherwise noted, is primarily derived from the discussion of this complex subject by Nicholas Watson, “Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God” 87-124. References to specific pages of this article are enclosed in brackets in my text.
embodiedness of plain unadorned English, our mother tongue, which can best move our hearts and provide life-giving food, which leads us to love the Creator. Unlike the emphasis on the power of Christ in the incarnational theology manifested in the Anglo-Saxon works I have explored, there is now a greater emphasis on the love between God and humanity. This concept of love, expressed in twelfth-century writings, was influenced by “Ovid’s erotic taxonomy,” as Watson puts it. According to this view, the Incarnation is the result of the power of God’s love descending to the lowest places on earth, a view which led to a reappraisal of the spiritual status of the uneducated (including women), the vernacular writer, and the vernacular itself. A Vernon Manuscript illustration even shows the Virgin descending to the waters of death to rescue a sacristan who, though sinful, had always greeted her image when he passed.

The level of vernacular literacy required for most of the items in the Auchinleck Manuscript and Vernon Manuscripts is not all that high. This feature, especially as shown in the metrical romances, was parodied later in the fourteenth century in Chaucer’s Tale of Thopas with its “dogerel” rhyme (2115). Even the Host, hardly a genius, says to the narrator that it makes him very wednedesse (2111). For all that, however, the

12Thomas Usk, “The Testament of Love: prologue (Extract),” The Idea of the Vernacular 29-31, especially II. 5-10, 29-30, 42-49, and 95. For his emphasis on the corporeality of words and writing see for example II. 1-2 mentioning men with spread ears swallowing the deliciousness of jests and rhyme. This imagery echoes that behind the portrayal of the St. Albans Psalter miniature of David, discussed in the last chapter, in which the Dove inserts the divine words into David’s ear, emerging from his mouth as the first letter of the Psalms. (Like Boethius before him, Usk wrote in prison before his execution. In 1388 he had been accused of treason, together with his employer, the Lord Mayor of London, a councillor of Richard II.) Watson discusses the symbolism of the mother tongue in “Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God” 90.


14See Philippians 2. 5-11 for the basis of the concept of kenosis (which is more applicable here than in relation to the interpretation of the main panel of the Ruthwell Cross; see my earlier discuss of this sculpture). The simple commons were occasionally seen as the “very key to the nature of God,” as mentioned by Watson, “Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God” 102, see also 104.
Prologue of Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* indirectly appears to echo the opening lines of *Sir Orfeo* in the Auchinleck. As for the Vernon Manuscript, Carol Meale observes that neither the devotional needs served nor the offered spiritual insights of the Miracles of Our Lady are profound, although they do convey fundamental religious truths, while John Thompson says the Vernon Lyrics deal with religious and moral matters with "varying degrees of consistency, subtlety and imagination," suggesting different sources. Excepting *Piers Plowman*, Avril Henry even considers the lack of theological depth of the Vernon items as a possible reaction against excessive intellectualism. This attitude derives in part from the late medieval movement away from the emphasis on the veiled, transcendent meaning of scriptures towards a more superficial, i.e., "surface" meaning consequent upon the study of logic as influenced by the rediscovery of Aristotle (which, as I mentioned previously, also led to a greater interest in the human authors of the Bible).

Observations about the lack of great depth or sophistication in many of the texts in these two manuscripts also apply to their miniatures. Relative to Anglo-Saxon illustrations, these tend to be fairly simple, visually projecting the limited expectations assumed by some contemporaries with respect to the scope of the vernacular; for the

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vernacular was now not the official language of the nation as instituted by King Alfred, but
the primary language of the English commons, the rising middle class, and most women.
The miniatures are fairly literal in relation to the texts as compared to those, for instance,
in the Caedmon Manuscript—a feature that does not, however, detract from their
effectiveness in arousing interest in the texts of the Auchinleck Manuscript or in
promoting the "healing of the soul" in the case of the Vernon Manuscript. In both a
single illustration tends to preface the work illustrated, encapsulating, compressing,
typifying or anticipating the main idea or narrative action.

Part I
The Revival of Illustrated Vernacular Manuscripts: The Auchinleck Manuscript
The making of the Auchinleck Manuscript represents not only a major step in the
restoration of the English vernacular as a literary language of consequence, but also,
perhaps not so coincidentally, its revival along with an extensive set of accompanying
miniatures which would have made it even more accessible to lay readers with varying
levels of education. It is the first miscellaneous collection of English vernacular poetry
(with the exception of a list of Norman barons and a few small inserted passages of Latin
and French), marking, as Derek Pearsall continues in his estimation of its importance, "the
first significant emergence of a new class of readers." He speculates that, with its largely
secular interests and "unsophisticated tone," this was a collection designed for popular
taste, with a relish for "familiar piety and instruction" and a desire for access to the
fashionable mode of romance—and, as I will show, an interest in the details of combat; in
other words, it was probably made for a wealthy middle-class audience. From its

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20 This is mentioned as title of the book in the first part; for the full inscription see
the beginning of my detailed discussion of the illustrations in this manuscript.

21 Derek Pearsall, "Literary and Historical Significance of the Manuscript," The
Auchinleck Manuscript vii-viii.

22 Pearsall, "Literary and Historical Significance" viii.
reference to the death of Edward II and a prayer to *saue pe gong king edward* (the III), it would have been made in the decade or so following his accession in 1327. Since the last item is a political work on the evil times of Edward II, it may be that the making of the manuscript expresses the optimism and national fervor of a new reign. Doyle sees the making of this London manuscript not as a routine production but as the result of an “exceptional effort.”^{24} Jeremy J. Smith describes the language of the six scribes as “Type II or early London English up to about 1380,” the East Anglian forms reflecting “a period of immigration into the capital from that part of the country.”^{25} It appears to have been still in London at the time of Chaucer, whose *Sir Thopas* may have been influenced by it.^{26}

In view of the textual significance of the manuscript, it is regrettable that most of the miniatures have been roughly cut out in 13 places (reflecting a desire for the visual when the verbal content was no longer valued), which were later patched, and that the folios at the beginning of 18 items have been removed, probably for their miniatures.^{27}

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^{23} Fol. 317. This evidence for dating is pointed out by Pearsall, “Literary and Historical Significance” vii.

^{24} A. I. Doyle, “English Books In and Out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII,” *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V. J. Scat


^{27} I. I. Cunningham, “Script and Ornament,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript* xv. Although the illustrations which are cut out as opposed to folios roughly torn out may represent vandalism on different occasions, there is no consistent pattern that distinguishes them. In each case, there is a mixture of the lives of saints and other religious works, as well as romances, for which the pictures have been or might have been removed.
There are no illustrations for six of the more weighty items. Of the 6 illustrations remaining, the main part of the one on folio 256 has been damaged beyond easy recognition. Concerning the rest, three framed miniatures are placed within one of the two columns of script (fols. 7, 167, and 304), a small one in the middle of the page is appended to the left of a three-line initial “P” at the top of the second column (fol. 72), and a historiated initial forms the top of a bar border (fol. 176). These remaining miniatures have not received critical attention partly because their features are difficult to distinguish due to their small size, some deterioration and fading, and the fact that the facsimile is in monochrome. With the aid of computer technology, I have been able to increase their clarity in a larger format so that their subject matter can be more easily seen.

The first of the extant miniatures may also have been one of the first in the book, if not the first, since it occurs where scribe I, the main scribe who wrote most of the manuscript, changed the layout and ruling from one column in which the verse is in long lines for the Legend of Pope Gregory to two parallel columns of verse per page. There is a page cut out before the end of the Gregory Legend and before the romance of the King of Tars, but it is likely that it was a continuation of the incomplete version of the former. The fact that the last gathering in the collection, comprising the item on the Poem on the Evil Times of Edward II.

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29However, see Melissa Furrow, “‘De Wenche’, The Fabliau, and the Auchinleck Manuscript,” N & Q (December 1994): 440-43, who sees in it the remains of a bed, with blue bedcovers, and the shape of the scraped area suggesting two figures.

30I used Adobe Photoshop for this purpose.

31I. I. Cunningham, “Script and Ornament,” The Auchiineleck Manuscript xv, mentions about 72% of the manuscript is by this scribe distinguished by a “clear, legible bookhand.” There were six scribes working on this manuscript. Scribe II who also switched from the one column to the two column format probably started at the same time as scribe I and made the change for the same reason.
Times of Edward II, is also in a single column (the only other item in which this is the case) and lacks an illustration suggests that the single column format was not planned with illustrations in mind. Switching to two columns facilitated the introduction of the style of miniatures used throughout since they occur primarily within one of the two columns. One can imagine a patron inspecting the offerings at this stage and insisting that pictures be added to accord with some envisioned ideal, increasing the prestige of the production. Economic exigencies may have allowed for the introduction of small miniatures throughout, but not full-page ones.

**The King of Tars: Idol versus Icon**

The first miniature occurs at the top of the left column of folio 7 just below the rubricated inscription *The king of Tars* (fig. 45). It is enclosed in a double outline frame separating the picture from the text, with a central framing column further dividing it into two compartments. Below this small framed miniature, a Lombard capital *h* more than three lines high extends its flourishes vertically beside the miniature above and down along the text below. This ornamental letter begins the first line of text: *he knept to me.* This suggests that the romance is intended to be conceived of as harkening back to an oral tradition, even though the poet refers to a written source. In its contemporary use it would likely have been read aloud for a small family circle gathered round, “rated” as it is for *bole eld 7 sing* (1). Displayed on some support such as a lectern or table—since this

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321 x 62 mm according to I. I. Cunningham, “Script and Ornament,” The Auchinleck Manuscript xv.

33F. Krause, “Kleine Publicationen aus der Auchinleck-HS.: IX. The King of Tars,” Englische Studien 11 (1888): 34, l. 40. Subsequent lines references are from this source and will be enclosed in brackets within my text. My subsequent plot summary is also from Krause’s edition.

34For example, line 309: *in rime al so we rede* (the Vernon Manuscript, whose text for this work Krause sets beside the Auchinleck version, reads *in stori*, an interesting variation in view of the rhyme which Chaucer parodies in the Tale of Sir Thopas).
book is much too substantial and heavy to hold—the miniature and the other decorative features of the ordinatio of the page would have been available for viewing by its admiring audience conscious of the prestige of this library in one manuscript book.

While it is not known what the first five items of the Auchinleck might have been, if indeed they were illustrated, which is unlikely in that they were in single columns (see my previous discussion), the first extant illustration of an obviously religious nature sets the tone for the whole book, placing what follows within a Christian framework as did the Matthew Paris and Laȝamon prefatory images. The main outlines of the story are based on an incident in the late thirteenth-century crusades. Because of its subject, this first illustration of the Auchinleck raises the issue of images and image worship. To determine how the miniature prefacing this romance functions, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the story concerning the conversion of the Sultan of Damascus by the savvy daughter of the King of Tarsus, who shows intelligence, breadth of vision, and strength of character. This chaste princess is described initially as a typical courtly-love lady, with skin as white as the feathers of a swan, a cheerful countenance, a rosy complexion, and grey eyes; she is so beautiful that, to summarize the narrative:

Word reaches the Sultan of Damascus who immediately conceives an overpowering desire to marry her or, failing that, to win her in battle. Her Christian father swears by him pat dyed on be rode (40) that he will not give her to a Saracen unless she consents. He asks her if she will forsake Jesus who suffred woundes fiue (57) to marry this pagan overlord, but the maiden will not, of course, agree. The message is sent to the Sultan that she will not forsake her God. The result is that both sides prepare for war, but the side of Mahoun (78) succeeds. The daughter, sorrowful at being the cause of more than thirty thousand Christian knights having been slain, asks her father to let her marry the Sultan whom she will

35 After having been cropped, now measuring about 250 x 190 mm.

36 Derek Pearsall, “Contents of the Manuscript,” The Auchinleck Manuscript xix, mentions that, going by the “contemporary numeration of items,” five have been lost.

37 See Judith Perryman, “Historical Background,” The King of Tars / ed. from the Auchinleck MS, Advocates 19.2.1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980) 42-44, for chronicle analogues in Latin, Italian, Spanish, and German. The basic story concerns “a Tatar king who was converted to Christianity by his Christian wife after the miraculous transformation of their monstrous child,” the miracle being associated with a victorious battle (42).
serve in every way except that she will still believe in God almighty. She convinces both parents, and so the message is sent to the Sultan. When she arrives at his court, she weeps and then dreams of 100 hounds barking at her while she is unable to smite them because of her dread of three loathsome devils burning like dragons. All her thought is on Jesus Christ, so that when one of the hounds with broad hoary brows is about to draw her down, she is saved. It seems to her that, through the might of Jesus, one of the hounds who was following her speaks to her in human form. Clothed like a knight, he explains that she need dread nothing of Teruagiant no of Mahoun (451) because her lord who suffred passioun (452) will help her at her need. When she wakes up she is convinced that all will turn to a good ending. The Sultan takes her to his temple and asks her to kneel to his pagan deities or else he will slay her father through war. She agrees to do as he asks and to serve his will, which means that she kisses them all and learns their laws. In her thoughts and in private, however, she prays to Jesus. The Sultan arranges a tournament for her sake, marries her, and in due course she becomes pregnant. The child is born without limbs or facial features. The Sultan blames her false belief, but she says it is because of his belief and tells him to take the lifeless flesche (604) to each of his gods. He takes the flesche (619) and lays it before his gods and raises his hands to them, kneeling and crying until he becomes hoarse. Nevertheless, the flesche lay stille as ston (636). His gods failing him, he strikes them down and yet lay be flesche stille as ston (659). Then he takes it to his wife who says she will recche (675) him, if he gives her leave, whether her god is not a better healer. He agrees that if she succeeds, he will forsake all his gods and turn to Jesus. She asks him to find a Christian priest among his prisoners and then tells this priest that they shall make Christians out of hounds. Upon being christened, the flesche (766) is miraculously restored to wholeness. The baptised child now has life and all that belongs to a whole child (770-74). Finally, the Sultan agrees to be converted.

In Krause’s parallel texts of the Auchinleck and the Vernon accounts of this story, it is apparent that the Auchinleck version delights in amplifying the gory details of slaughter (139-41, 1161-66,38 1096-98).39 While the Vernon ends with a brief summary of the joy of the wedded couple both in this world and the next, concluding with a prayer to Graunt vs alle, in heuene liht / To see þi swete face! Amen (1121-22), the Auchinleck

38The description here that the Sultan struck King Carmel through the helmet to the brain so that no leech could heal him is, however balanced by a similar account in the Vernon a few lines later (1096-99), but for those lines the Auchinleck has: & purch his hert be swerd gan glide, / be blod ran out bi ich a side, / & so he him a-queld (1096-98).

39I have used the Auchinleck line numbering. For the alternate numeration methods for the Vernon, see Krause, “Kleine Publicationen” for the appropriate lines.
continues with a long account of the violence done by the forces of the Sultan coupled with those of the King of Tars, now allies, to five heathen kings and their followers who refuse conversion. This moral position is consistent with that in other texts in this manuscript, as in the item [On pe seuen dedly] simees requesting Jesus to send peace and sle Sarazins. The assumption is, of course, that the latter are identified with the devil. The Auchinleck is comparable to a fifteenth-century manuscript from the North Midlands, now also in the National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.3.1, exhibiting a "mixture of bloodthirstiness and piety," the similarity making that manuscript less "extraordinary" and having more to do with the interests of a certain class of readership, or with the makers' perceptions of what these might entail.

Given enough space to develop the narrative, an artist might have illustrated the combat scenes. The last subject, while obviously judged to be of interest to the intended patron, was left for illustrations for the other romances, to be discussed shortly. As it was, the artist filled in the small space allotted under the rubricated title with a picture "welches den grundgedanken des gedichtes zur anshauung bringt," as Krause describes it without elaborating. The prefatorial miniature does what he so perceptively observes, it brings to view the fundamental idea of the narrative. To achieve this, as Kolbing describes it, the miniature consists of "ein bild in zwei abteilungen, links ein gekrönter heide, vor anem götzen in thiergestalt kniend, rechts zwei christen, mann und frau, betend vor einem crucifix" (a picture in two compartments, left a crowned heathen kneeling before an idol in

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40The narrative of the King of Tars ends in a fragmentary state. Pearsall, "Contents of the Manuscript," The Auchinleck Manuscript xix, says that "a precise estimate of what is lost is impossible, but is probably no more than 40-60 lines."


43F. Krause, "Kleine Publicationen aus der Auchinleck" I.
animal form, right two Christians, man and woman, praying before a crucifix). To medieval viewers, as to Kölbing who assumes that the figure on the left is a heathen, this would instantly have signaled the main idea of the story as a conversion from idolatry to Christianity.

The contrast between the two scenes is telling. The column with its support on which the idol reclines stresses its artificial status, as Camille remarks with respect to this standard sort of presentation for heathen idols. While the text mentions a number of names for the false gods of the Sultan, the Sultan is not shown before any classical style or deformed demon-like figures on the columns. Limited space dictated to some extent the restriction of number, but aesthetic considerations doubtless played a role, the contrast of the heathen deity with the Christian one creating a far more powerful sense of opposition. The fact that it is a beast that is displayed on the column not only increases the contrast, but suggests that the artist was familiar with the text, particularly since the line in the Auchinleck which ends the list of pagan gods with alder best (657) the Sultan formerly prayed to and then destroyed is not in the Vernon equivalent which has On Astrol instead. Either the exemplar was unclear on this point or the Auchinleck scribe made the change deliberately. The image of a beast also picks up on the dream of the hounds which the Christian wife sees as symbolic of heathens to be converted. On this level, the praying Sultan is also a heathen hound, which is what the King of Tars had called him (93); such references to his hide (922) rather than “skin” or colour (in the Vernon) supporting the bestial associations, as do the similes of wilde bore (98; the Vernon equivalent is wod mon) and lyon (105) used in referring to his anger. Of course it is not too clear what sort of beast the illustration represents—something between a goat, given its hint of a beard, and a greyhound is conjured up by the reclining form. This antirepresentation of an idol, to use Michael Camille’s term, may have been deliberately obscure concerning its species


45Camille, The Gothic Idol 27.

46Camille, The Gothic Idol 27.
(medieval representations of animals usually being more naturalistic than those of people),
reflecting the prohibition against artists making idols. The kneeling Sultan, crowned like
a western king, raises his hands, as mentioned in the text (623), to the idol.

The artist does, however, develop further the implication in the Auchinleck text
concerning the lump of flesh which is transformed into a human being after being baptized.
The text increases the contrast between the *flesche* and the transformed child by the
repeated emphasis on its former state. The Vernon Manuscript mentions the *flesch* only at
the beginning (577) and then refers to *hit* (604, 636), *child* (619, 659, 765), and *pat
wrecche* (746), all the while the Auchinleck insists on repeating *flesche* in each of these
instances. Although the Sultan had previously promised to forsake his gods if his wife’s
god succeeded in making the flesh *fourmed after a man* (611, 665, 689), he needs to be
reminded after the event. She tells him that the child will be his only if he converts, his
protestation that it is already his notwithstanding. The first aberration, humanly conceived
and of unformed flesh, is his; the baptized child, fully formed and reborn spiritually, is no
longer his. *Jesu Crist, pat made man* (674) in his own image had made the lump of flesh
whole, reminiscent of some medieval illustrations showing God forming Adam as if
shaping a lump of clay. The wife’s hope that the flesh should have *fourme to se bi sist*
(755) is fulfilled when the Sultan admits that he sees *bi sist* (824; omitted in the Vernon
account) this evidence of the might of Jesus. The implicit analogy in the text between the
lifeless flesh and man-made heathen idols is explicit in some medieval visual
representations of idols as deformed amorphous blobs or as inferior in shape compared to

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47 See the discussion and notes in Camille, *The Gothic Idol* 21 and 30. He mentions
that in the thirteenth century Durandus repeated this. For a sculpted bullock on a column
see fol. 33 of *Queen Mary’s Psalter: Miniatures and Drawings by an English Artist of the
14th Century, reproduced from Royal MS. 2 B VII in the British Museum*, introd. George
Warner (London: British Museum et al., 1912) 75 and Plate 57. According to the
descriptive title, Gideon destroyed the *Maumeht* and the altar of Baal (cf Judges 6. 25).

48 See, for instance, the twelfth-century Lambeth Bible medallion of this subject,
London, Lambeth Palace, MS 3, fol. 6v, reproduced as fig. 21 in Camille, *The Gothic Idol*
33. Such illustrations may have influenced the formulation of some of the features
of the story of the King of Tars.
holy images.\(^49\) In the Auchinleck miniature, the bestial idol which the Sultan worships makes it essentially redundant to add before it the lump of flesh, which is described in the text as laying \textit{stille as stone} before the idols (635, 659; echoing its state at birth, 582). Instead, revealing a detail not previously observed but which my computer-enhanced enlargement shows, the artist placed the \textit{transformed} baby on the right altar just below the image of Christ’s body on the cross, emphasizing the connection between the human form of the child and that of the incarnated Christ.

Both the text and the miniature feature the cross as an object of veneration, reflecting late medieval devotional practices. The artist has both added to and condensed the textual account of baptism and transformation of the child followed by the conversion and transformation of the King upon his own baptism. On the right side of the miniature (spatially and morally), the artist created a church-like atmosphere in which all these sequential events are represented as if they were one event. The marbled column behind the figures reinforces this ambience and serves further to provide a transition from this religious space to that of the temple on the left. The diapered gold background enhances this effect. Absent from the Christian scene is the priest Cleophas who performed both baptisms at separate times. While the cross and the Christ’s passion are mentioned in the text, the image of the sculpted body of Christ on a cross in a church is not, but it serves to suggest that everything took place at one time in a church since it is placed above an altar conventionally covered with a white cloth. The church scene is an anachronism since a it had not yet been built, but for functional purposes in the miniature, it encapsulates the contrast between pagan and Christian worship. The main difference is the prototype, not any intrinsic difference between one sculpted object as opposed to the other except that one is bestial and the other human.

That this miniature itself is a two-dimensional man-made representation is obvious in that, as in the Matthew of Paris miniature, there is no attempt to conceal the ruling of the borders which extend beyond the miniature into the blank vellum, sharing its space with the two-dimensional script. There is, however, the suggestion of a further refinement

\(^{49}\)Camille, \textit{The Gothic Idol} 67.
here in that the long arms of Christ are stretched up to the cross-beam which lines the inner border of the frame, giving the impression of being stretched on the frame itself.

While there was the suggestion in early medieval combinations of letters and figures that the Holy Writ was itself perceived spiritually as the body of Christ, conveying the idea that Christ-the-Word is present materially in scriptures, as Laura Kendrick contends, this Auchinleck representation may be a visualization of the idea textually expressed in the Vernon Manuscript’s Testamentum Christi which is derived from earlier sources. A charter inscribed with a Christian pardon is described in terms of Christ’s body, making the analogy between Christ stretched on the cross and parchment stretched on a frame:

Here now, and ȝe schul witen
Hou þis chartre was I-witten.
[.................................I-written]
ȝe perne þat þe lettre was wiþ writen,
weore scourges þat I was wiþ smiten.
How mony lettres þeron beon,
Red, and þou miht wite and seon:
fiif þousend foure hundred fyfti and ten
woundus on me, boþe blak and wen.
To schewen on alle my loue-dede,
Mi-self I wole þis chartre rede.
ȝe Men þat gon bi þis weye,
A-byeþe a luytel, I ow preye,
And redeþ all on þis parchemyn,
þif eny serwe beo lyk to myn [...]52

50Kendrick, Animating the Letter 45.

51These include the works of Richard Rolle, Ancrene Wisse, and other religious treatises as mentioned in the introduction, Pore Caityf: Prologue, The Idea of the Vernacular 239.

52This is published in The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS., ed. F. J. Furnivall, Part II, EETS, os, 117 (1901) 644, lines 81-96. As evident in London, British Library, MS Harley 2382, leaf 114, which Furnivall also gives, the end of the line blak and wen in line 90 of the Vernon is, instead, rendered as red and wan. It seems to me likely that an earlier version would have mentioned colors consonant with the colors used by scribes, that is, black or brown and red. The changes might have been due to the requirements of rhyme. In the MS Downside 26542 version of Pore Caityf as transcribed by Watson, “Conceptions of the Word: the Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God” 106, the analogy between Christ stretched on the cross and parchment stretched on a rack is made
(Hear now, and you shall know, how this charter was written. [...] The pen the letters were written with were the scourges I was smitten with. How many letters that there are, read and you will know and see: five thousand four hundred and sixty wounds on me, black and blue. To show to all my love-deed, I will myself read this charter. You men who go by this way, stop a little, I pray you, and read all that is on this parchment, [to see if] any sorrow is like mine [...] )

If this incarnational analogy was intended by the artist for this vernacular text, perhaps itself conceived in such terms, then it not only reinforces the corporeal connection between the body of the child on the altar and of the crucified Christ above, but it makes a statement about image-making itself, whether on two-dimensional parchment or in three-dimensional sculpture. A representation of a cross by itself would have sufficed if it were intended merely as a sign. Clearly, the artist was affirming the efficacy of the sculpted image on the cross as evidenced by the transformed child.

Demonstrating the kind of affective piety encouraged in late medieval devotional practices, the large upraised hand of the wife of the King of Tars seems to reach out as if to touch the small body of the sculpted Christ as if it were her child, identified as the two are in this representation, making it seem all the more corporeal. While Timothy Shonk complains of the lack of proportion in the hands and feet,\(^3\) this exaggerated feature was likely deliberate for the same reason that Mary Magdalene’s hands are disproportionally large in the Ruthwell Cross panel where this expressionistic feature reveals with greater poignancy how feelingly she wraps her hair around Christ’s feet in anticipation of his coming death. Further, the large hands and feet of the kneeling couple express not only their own emotional involvement in the crucifixion, but are reminders of the importance of the human limbs which were entirely lacking in the lump of flesh of their child before its transformation upon being baptised. This feature seems to have been deliberately exaggerated to stimulate readers to imagine themselves likewise participating corporeally, reaching to touch the body of the suffering Christ. Perhaps the paint is flaked away from

the lower body of Christ and that of the child because of "tactile" readings in which the
desire to touch the bodies on the vellum was irresistible.

The stance of the praying couple is similar to that of two figures before an altar in
a thirteenth-century miniature showing King Edward's vision of the Host turned into the
Christ child. As Denise Despres points out, images of child-as-Host were prevalent in
fourteenth-century English manuscripts. While she refers to the transformation of the
small boy who is lifted up to the altar in Chaucer's *Priorress’s Tale*, her observations on
the social context are also relevant for the Auchinleck image. She examines fourteenth-
century sermons on the doctrine of the Transubstantiation which address Christian doubt
and involve the subject of conversion. A contemporary audience would likely have seen
the Eucharistic overtones in the Auchinleck image of the child on the altar which is itself
linked to the image of Christ. The elevation of the host in connection with a crucifix is
illustrated in a historiated *Teigitur* initial beginning the Canon of the Mass in the early
fourteenth-century English Tiptoft (Sarum) Missal. There the elongated stem of the
crucifix, with the body of Christ suspended on it, forms the vertical bar of the letter which
also functions as a column that separates two arches behind the tonsured celebrants of the
Mass as the Host is elevated before the altar. A crucifix, with the body of Christ on it, is

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54 Cambridge, University Library, MS Ec. Ill. 59, fol. 21. For a reproduction see

55 Denise Despres, "Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer's *Priorress's Tale*," *Modern
Philology* 91.4 (1994): 413-27. See also Miri Rubin, "From Jewish Boy to Bleeding
Host," *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale
UP, 1999)7-39, esp. 22-24 concerning the increasingly violent Marian stories about the
Jews and children in connection with an increased "eucharistic and liturgical sensibility."
See also David Aers, "The Humanity of Christ: Reflections on Orthodox Late Medieval
Representations," *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late
Medieval English Culture*, ed. David Aers and Lynn Staley (University Park, PA:
Pennsylvania State UP, 1996) 15-42, esp. 25-26 concerning the bleeding flesh of Christ,
whether represented as an infant or as an adult on the cross.

56 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.107, English, 1311-1332, fol.142. It
is reproduced in John Plummer, *Liturgical Manuscripts for the Mass and the Divine
Office* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1964), cat. no. 28, plate11; also, Sandler,
*Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385*, cat. no. 78, illus.199.
again shown above an altar in *Omne Bonum*, written by the scribe James Palmer (d. 1375), in the historiated initial beginning the entry for *Imagines* (Images). This time the accompanying text says images are to be looked at and it justifies their making because they serve as memorials. These two historiated initials indicate that the subject of the Eucharist and of image-making *per se* were part of an ongoing exploration of sacramentalism in the fourteenth century even before they became the hot topics the Lollards made of them.

Since the Islamic religion was anti-iconic, the miniature depicting the Sultan’s former idolatry and his transferal of devotion to the crucified Christ in imitation of his wife projects this Christian involvement with and concern about images early in the fourteenth century in England. Although the Auchinleck miniature with its crucifix which depicts Christ on the cross is an image of an image that is worshiped, more obviously than in the earlier miniatures of the deity and of the Virgin with the Child, respectively, in the Dunstan and Matthew Paris miniatures, there is a reversal here in that the human figures are larger than the object of their devotion, privileging their link and sense of identity with the audience. This change in the visual focus of attention subtly reflects a shift from the divine to the human, and from Latin to the English vernacular, in a way that characterizes this first English collection of religious and secular subjects.

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57 This initial in London, British Library, MSS Royal 6 E VI-6 E VII, fol. 531, is reproduced in Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Omne Bonum: A Fourteenth-Century Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge*, vol. 2 (London: Harvey Miller, 1996) 245. It was compiled between 1360-1375 by James le Palmer for his own use. Sandler gives both the Latin and an English translation of the relevant text.


59 In the two historiated initials discussed in the previous paragraph, the image of Christ on the cross is slightly smaller than the human figures at the altar. That icons were sometimes pictured as smaller than their devotees already in the thirteenth century is shown, for example, in the miniature of Yolande de Soissons kneeling before a statue of the Virgin and Child on an altar in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 729, French, c.1290, fol. 232v. This is reproduced in *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts: Major Acquisitions of the Pierpont Morgan Library 1924-74* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1974), cat. no. 18. In the two historiated initials just discussed, the image of Christ on the cross is slightly smaller than the human figures at the altar.
Following the King of Tars miniature, the next extant illustration is a small one attached to the Lombard capital "P" of the Pater Noster (fig. 46). Timothy Shonk refers to this one as the "troublesome miniature inserted on fol. 72r, in the work of Scribe III." Shonk speculates that this scribe left no space for the miniature because he was ignorant of the intention to include such decoration or simply forgot to skip enough lines to leave room for it. For him the importance of the miniature is that it shows the steps in the production of the manuscript because the item number had to be put above the second column instead of at the top of the middle margin where this small miniature was inserted.

For present purposes it is of interest that the image identified by Kölbing in 1884 as "Christus" was considered of sufficient importance to insert in an unorthodox manner in the margin. Attached as it is to the Pater Noster this frontally placed hieratic image of the deity serves as an icon, a conduit to the divine for the viewing and listening audience, the lewede men, pat ne be þ clerkes who are exhorted Lesteþ and ß sschollen here, iwis, / What soure Pat(er) n(os)ter is (6). The unfurled banderole which the deity holds in his left hand is to be imagined as containing the original words spoken by Jesus during his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6.9-13), which the Auchinleck audience will hear.

There are at least four cut out and five pages missing for the 12 intervening items, probably removed for their pictures.


E. Kölbing, "Kleine Publicationen aus der Auchinleck-Hs," 47-49 for a transcription of the Pater Noster. The quotations in my sentence are from lines 3 and 5-6. Subsequent lines references from this source will be enclosed in brackets in my text.

Laura Kendrick points out that the scroll can signify spoken words, as in a vault painting from the monastery of Saint Apollo at Bawit, Coptic Museum, Cairo, Egypt where the infant Christ in Mary's lap hold a scroll, "representative of his oral teachings,"
banderole also identifies Christ as the Word made flesh, in this case, very like an Englishman, given his blond hair and beard, as it extends out of the frame and into the space of the top margin above the text. The double outline of the frame is filled with blue like the large decorated “P” beginning the Pater Noster, making the connection between the speaking image and the spoken word continuous, similar in effect to the historiated initial beginning Laamon’s _Brut_.

The reader for a small group gathered round might be inclined further to point to one of the seven decorated small capitals beginning the Latin phrase of each of the _oreisouns_ (21) as he comes to them, pronouncing them, translating them, and then continuing the explanation of their meaning for the next dozen lines, more or less, in each case. Looking at the iconic image again—and this more extended and intensive viewing required by the amplification of the prayer might be why this work is illustrated and the preceding one which also contains the Pater Noster is not—the audience is reminded, for example, of the fuller implications of the first line, _Oure fader in heuene-riche_ (29), which is that, correspondingly, _be we hise children_ (34). This means we should live a good life and leave aside the deadly sins so that we can say _Je(s)u Crist oure fader is_ (44). If we are shriven clean, then we can claim the eternal bliss that is our heritage from our father.

As the successive lines of the prayer were being translated and explained, in the case of a reader delivering this orally, the audience would have the image firmly in mind even when the page was turned and they could only listen. The relationship of image to text is similar to that in the Cædmon Manuscript in which the frontispiece shows the enthroned deity as the creative Word also holding a scroll (although rolled up) and blessing the viewers who, in return, praise him with the words of the facing text. Like the

while the flanking apostles who spread those teachings hold books. See _Animating the Letter_ 46.

66These are two or three lines high. The seventh one can be made out from the stub (72a).

67It follows [On þe seuen dedly] sinnes which precedes it in the gathering but does not have a miniature even though it also contains the text of the Pater Noster, but it is without textual explanations.
one in the Cædmon frontispiece, the Auchinleck deity is shown as a singular entity. That
the Trinity itself was not attempted here might, apart from obvious spatial restrictions,
have been because it was considered too difficult a concept for vernacular readers to
grasp. Picturing a single entity was also perhaps a wise strategy in a manuscript
collection with numerous works relating to the battles against the Saracens who thought
that the Christians were polytheists because they worshipped the Trinity. Having
demonstrated the distinction between a Christian icon and an idol for the King of Tars
illustration, the artist was obviously cognizant of the finer issues concerning images,
especially in view of Muslim misperceptions.

National Icons: King Richard

While many of the illustrations for religious subjects have been vandalized,
including those of saints, there are, fortunately, two remaining miniatures and a
historiated initial showing the heroes of English romances. Just as in our time some
political figures have become national icons—Churchill, John Kennedy, and Trudeau come
to mind—so in the Auchinleck Manuscript, the figures of these English heroes serve much
the same function, concentrating in their persons the essence of national dreams of
strength against all odds and impersonating valued qualities that shape the self-image a
country has of itself. In this case, they have in common a cutthroat ruthlessness. The three
English heroes featured in the illustrations are also all knights, appealing further to the
social aspirations of this class (pretensions which the Ellesmere designer was to exploit in
his portrayal of the Merchant in relation to that of the Squire, as will be shown). The
visual preface to the romance of King Richard, which is also the last miniature in the
Auchinleck (and second-last item coming just before that of the Poem on the Evil Times

68 See the discussion by Watson, “Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue
and the Incarnation of God” 96-97. He refers to contemporary observations by Nicholas

69 Beatrice White, “Saracens and Crusaders: from Fact to Allegory,” Medieval
Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway, ed. D. A. Pearsall
of Edward II, which is not illustrated), features these aspects most graphically (fig. 47), leaving the viewer with a last impression of the might of a thoroughly English hero. The feature Shonk notes of the illustration of Richard, that it is “far out of proportion to the other figures,”\textsuperscript{70} is the very characteristic that is given prominence in the romances: he is meant to be larger than life; that is why he is a national icon.

Specifically, the long romance of King Richard I concerns the fight against the “heathen hounds” or Saracens, this time during the third crusade from 1189-1192. There are a vast number of episodes which the illustrator could have chosen for his purpose. Given the title of the work, \textit{King Richard}, placed above the space allotted for an illustration, it would seem appropriate to show the main protagonist. But in what role? The first few lines of the text introduce him in the role of victor, the king who \textit{neu(er) was founde coward}!\textsuperscript{71} The narrative is full of successive victories of one sort or another. A tempting one to illustrate might have been the one that led to his being called \textit{Richard Coer de Lyou(n)} (1118), at least in this romance, by the German King Modred. Because Richard slew this king’s son and also made love to his daughter, the king has a hungry lion attack Richard. Forewarned by the daughter and with her help, Richard wraps 40 silk scarves around his arm and thrusts it down the lion’s throat to tear out its heart (and lungs and liver). It would have been easy for an artist to depict such a scene by adapting the popular iconography of Samson or David and the Lion. The incident of Richard’s encounter with the lion is recorded, for instance, on one of the roof bosses in Norwich Cathedral,\textsuperscript{72} if not in the Auchinleck. Unless a similar subject was illustrated elsewhere in this manuscript, perhaps this subject did not serve the primary nationalistic or social reasons for including this romance. Although it appeals to “the ghoulish taste of a popular


\textsuperscript{71}See Karl Brunner, \textit{Das Mittelengische Versroman über Richard Löwenherz} (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1913) 6, 1. 4. Subsequent line references from this edition will be included in brackets in my text.

\textsuperscript{72}White, “Saracens and Crusaders” 187.
audience," it may have been considered too gruesome for the family book of a patron with social pretensions to gentility, as might have been the case with respect to the banquet scene for which this episode, which is followed by Richard eating the lion’s heart, is but a foretaste, namely, when Richard has the heads of the richest and most famous Saracen prisoners brought in as the first course for Saladin’s messengers, Richard himself despatching one of them with great relish. Richard had developed a taste for Saracen meat when his cook served him the flesh of a tender young boy instead of the pork Richard longed for once when he was sick, a taste for pork being, as Beatrice White put it, “difficult to gratify in a Saracen neighborhood.” Even the poet transfers responsibility for describing Richard’s cannibalism by declaring so says be ieste (3439). (This section is in the part that is now missing from the Auchinleck.)

What was chosen for illustration is more suitable for a mixed early fourteenth-century audience interested in heroic action. Most particularly it is representative of a succession of episodes involving ships. One effect is that this illustration serves an anticipatory purpose in creating suspense, a strategy also used for the miniature prefacing the Reinbrun romance, as will be seen shortly. In one of the episodes on the way to the Holy Land, three of Richard’s ships are destroyed in a tempest off Cyprus, whose emperor slaughters the survivors and takes their treasure. Richard, lion-like, takes vengeance and uses his twenty-pound axe (2214) to crush his enemies. He has the defeated emperor of Cyprus, Isaac, bound and taken aboard ship. Once more they sail towards Acre with 200 ships and 50 galleys, encountering a Saracen supply ship on the way which the English despatch after a sea-battle in which Richard uses his axe which no armor can withstand any more than wax does a knife (2577-78 and 3163-64). The details of these events are suggestive, but they are not the exact event pictured.

Finally, audience anticipation is rewarded by recognition of a detail in the picture which seems, upon first glance, to be the foamy tips of waves but, as made clear by

73White, “Saracens and Crusaders” 187.

74White, “Saracens and Crusaders” 189.
computer enhancement of the image, turns out to be the chains which the Saracens placed across the harbor of Acre to prevent entry by ships to help the besieged, starving Christians who were themselves besieged by the Saracens. Nothing daunted, Richard has a strong galley steered right into the middle of the harbor, making the mariners both sail and row to gain maximum speed (2625-32). Then Richard, as the romance describes it:

> Wiþ his ax in foreship stood,
> And wherme he come to þe cheyne.
> Wiþ his ax he smot it on twayne. (2634-36)

This is the specific event illustrated. Richard, raising his mighty axe that even pierces through the frame of the illustration, is about to cut the chain around Acre. Not only his giant size but the three leopards (now just barely visible) on his red surcoat identify the figure with the axe as Richard. He wears chain mail and a kettle helmet with a crest on top. There is a hint of the red cross, possibly surrounded by a circle of red dots, not on the shoulder of his crupper (doublet) worn during an earlier joust (389), but on the banner just behind him, emphasizing that this is a holy war. Below the other banner is a face, possibly of Isaac, which may have been the one Kölbing mistook for a woman. The paint for a sail

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75In the colored drawing of this miniature made for the title page of Owain Miles and other Inedited Fragments of Ancient English Poetry (Edinburgh, 1837), this detail is represented by waves. As noted by Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Investigations into the Processes of Book Making in the Fourteenth Century” 97, Pamela Rosemary Robinson, “A Study of Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Medieval Manuscripts,” diss. Oxford U, 1972, 132, identifies the scene in the miniature as the attack upon the walled city of Acre. I have not seen this work and so I do not know on what basis she made her identification or if it involves the detail of the chains which does not occur in any of the other episodes in the romance.

76This detail has also been omitted in the miniature for the title page of Owain Miles; see previous note.

77Although not mentioned in the romance, Richard evidently had Isaac and his family dropped off and imprisoned at the castle of the Knights of St. John en route to Acre. See John Gillingham, The Life and Times of Richard I (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973) 103-04. It may have been the episode about the woman in the ship who becomes Henry’s wife and Richard’s mother that led Kölbing to describe the illustration briefly as representing “enen ritter mit einer dame auf einem schife; er trägt eine axt in der
may have flaked off from the gold background of the miniature. In the bottom of the
galley oars can still be seen dipping into the water. Behind Richard are his men in chain
mail, some wearing kettle helmets also. The structure with holes from which spears
protrude may have been the famous wooden tower, *Mute-Gryffon* ‘Greek-Killer’ (1856),
which Richard had constructed to attack castles.

The fortified seaport city of Acre, with waves crashing against its walls, looks very
like the ruins still remaining today, as shown in a recent photograph.\(^{78}\) In the Auchinleck
illustration, three heads of armored men look over the crenellations of the roof and
another three look out from the top floor window, the one closest to Richard holding a
small shield. In the middle floor a face peers out of a window with bars. From the cross-
slits in the lower floor two spears point across the closed portcullis to threaten Richard.

While there are further descriptions of the full assault on Acre—such as assault by
sea to rescue the Christians held in the tower at Jaffa by Saladin, when Richard leaps onto
the land shouting: *with my pollaxe j am come* (6814)—the illustration shows the essential
character of all of them but depicts the specific moment when he is about to begin the
assault of Acre. What the artist has shown is the high point of Richard’s crusading
activities, his victory at Acre which helped end one of the longest sieges of the Middle
Ages,\(^{79}\) lasting not the seven years as mentioned by the poet but from the summer of 1189
to July of 1191 when Richard arrived. The French contribution is not shown in the English
miniature. Since Jerusalem was not recaptured, Acre became the capital of the Latin
kingdom in the Holy Land. The subject of the illustration appeals to national pride,
recording the English contribution to the Third Crusade, allowing the viewer to “be
there” with Richard at the moment of his triumph.

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\(^{78}\)This is reproduced in Elizabeth Hallam’s *Chronicles of the Crusades* (New York,

\(^{79}\)Hallam, *Chronicles of the Crusades* 184.
And Reinbrun, Son of Guy of Warwick

The largest of the surviving Auchinleck miniatures, occupying the space of over 15 lines of text, depicts Reinbrun gig sone of warwike, as indicated by the rubric above (fig. 48), a metrical romance which follows immediately from that of his father, Guy of Warwick, whose own adventures had just been recounted at great length, one of them at least probably illustrated on one of the three pages that were later cut out. The miniature for Reinbrun occurs near the top of the right-hand column on folio 167, just below the last couple of lines of the ending of his father’s romance where another scribe takes over. It shows, within a castle setting, a fight between two combatants with swords, while a horse looks on. While defining the subject matter of the following text, the illustrator also raises the viewer’s expectations for a precise description of such an encounter, a technique which is exploited so effectively in the romance of King Richard.

Engaging the audience directly, the writer asks the Creator to grant success, jeue hem grace wel to spede to all those who herkneh what y schel rede. In combination with the illustration, this defines, once again, a listening audience, in this case, one for whom gaining success is important, whether this is spiritual or material is left for them to determine. The prayer to Jesus, god in trone (9) would also recall to memory for this audience the earlier image of the enthroned deity for the Pater Noster. The immediate effect of the Reinbrun text together with this picture is to place whatever armed conflict is about to be narrated within a religious framework.

The specifics of the illustration would naturally tease the curiosity of the audience about which battle is illustrated. The illustration itself shows the moment when Reinbrun

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80 See stubs 107a, 118a, and 120a.

81 Shonk’s scribe I; see his “A study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century” 73-75.

hits Haslak, his tutor’s grown-up son he does not recognize, on the helmet. The details of
Haslak’s red arms and his white horse clinch the identification of this episode as the one
illustrated. In the miniature, calling attention to itself, Haslak’s white steed not only
witnesses the event with alarm but raises his left leg as if to give Reinbrun’s backside a
kick in aid of Haslak. The artist’s strategy has been to illustrate an incident near the end of
the narrative, heightening audience suspense and keeping them interested while waiting for
the description pictured. Numerous earlier incidents come close and share the main
characteristics of the fight in the miniature, with the one just prior almost duplicating this
one. Accumulatively, the previous combats anticipate and lead to this last one in which all
is revealed, resolved and restored.

Identifying *sir beues of hamtoun*

Immediately following the romance of Reinbrun is that of *sir beues of hamtoun*,
which also raises questions of identity, but this time for the modern scholar. As Shonk
points out, the small illustration preceding the romance (fig. 49) represents the only
historiated initial and, extending from it down the left side of the text and across the
bottom of the page, the only foliate border, making this page “unlike anything else in the
manuscript.”[^83] Why is this historiated initial attached to a bar border different? Like the
Pater Noster illustration, it contains only one figure, but in this case, that is unusual since
there are innumerable action scenes in this loosely episodic romance in which this figure
could be engaged. One apparent reason is that there was not enough space left for
showing the main character engaging in some drama. On an obvious level the figure of a
knight armed with a spear which he holds in his right hand and wearing a sword suspended
from a belt extending across his right shoulder must represent the English legendary hero,
Beues. In the case of King Richard I, the leopards on his surcoat identify him. This is
where a problem arises with respect to Beues. The text of the romance mentions an

[^83]: Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Investigations into the Processes
of Book Making in the Fourteenth Century” 95-96.
episode in which Beues and Terry arise in the morning and equip themselves with
ornamented arms that are royal in appearance: *With egleh of asur brigt, the chaumpe of
gold ful faire tolede*, and *Portrait al with rosen rede.* That is not what the knight in the
historiated initial is wearing. My own attempts to identify these arms failing, I
corresponded with D. V. White, Rouge Croix Pursuivant, of The College of Arms in
London. He has not been able to identify them either, saying of the arms in the historiated
initial that “it is rather odd to find gules on azure, i.e., red on blue in medieval heraldry,
but this is not unknown.” Why did the artist not make an attempt to portray the arms of
Beues as described in the text, a surprising omission since the artist was obviously
cognizant with details in the other texts, used to effect in the relevant miniatures? The only
plausible explanation for this unusual, non-existent coat of arms is that, along with the
special demi-vinet border, this page was singled out and meant to refer obliquely to the
middle-class patron of the manuscript, endowing him with an imaginary coat of arms
embodying his social aspirations to knighthood in an initial preceding one of the
vernacular romances of English superheroes.

The versatility of the Auchinleck artist whose miniatures were identified by J. J. G.
Alexander as “a later product of the Queen Mary Psalter atelier,” might well have

84Eugene Kölbìng, *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (Millwood, NY: Krause Reprint, 1975) 177, lines 3783-86. See also the variant version below: *Sir Beuvys bare of colour poyment(!) / A rede lyon of golde rampant* (3479-80).


86Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century” 81, quoting Robinson’s dissertation, “A Study of Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Medieval Manuscripts” 135, mentioning Alexander’s comments to her. Following this lead, Robinson observes the “long slender bodies and feminine faces characteristic of the work of this atelier.” The latter characteristic may have led Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Investigations into the Processes of Bookmaking in the Fourteenth Century” 94-95, to considering the possibility that the Pater Noster figure has “the bust of a woman” (my computer-enhanced image shows this to be the folds of drapery at the waist of the figure) and Kölbìng, “Vier Romanzen-handschriften” 190, to identify the figure in Richard’s ship as a woman.
extended to such a compliment, just as the details of the portraits of the Knight and of the Squire in the Ellesmere Manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* appear to contain allusions to King Henry IV and his son Prince Henry, as I will argue subsequently. The Auchinleck artist’s most ambitious of the extant miniatures, that of the King of Tars, demonstrates an ability to condense the main ideas of this conversion narrative by featuring the opposition between an idol and an icon, while highlighting the fleshly connection between the transformed child, the crucified Christ stretched on the cross like vellum on a rack, and the Host of the Eucharist. The artist also provides an iconic focus for the listening and viewing English-speaking audience guided through the meaning of each verse of the Pater Noster, manifested verbally in the banderole extending above the text and in the image of the Incarnate Word who holds it. The matter of the metrical romances, themselves simply narrated and featuring endless accounts of physical violence, involving their respective national heroes, are each illustrated by a typical but specific scene of combat occurring near the end of the relevant text, causing the audience to pay attention to the intervening episodes for the telling details until the right one has been reached, a strategy employed today by the better covers of paperback novels.

**Part II**

**Conceiving the Word and Demonstrating the Efficacy of Icons and Relics in the Vernon Manuscript**

Despite the size of the Vernon Manuscript and the number of items listed in the Index, only the second of the five major sections contains pictures. The blank shield at the bottom border at the beginning of the second section suggests that it may have been intended for armigerous owners,\(^7\) which could also explain why there are pictures in this section. Since many scholars of the Vernon Manuscript consider the possibility that it was

\(^7\)P. R. Robinson, "The Vernon Manuscript as a ‘Coucher Book,’” *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* 43.
made for a community of nuns, it may be that it was associated with a pious woman from
an aristocratic family who, in the process of its making, entered such a women’s religious
community, with the other parts then being added to it to serve most of the spiritual needs
of the group. It was obviously intended as a safe book, a compendium for the religious
life, with no evidence of influence from Wyclif’s teachings and “absolutely no taint of
heresy.” The vast selection and range of its religious contents in vernacular verse and
prose means that the resources of a large monastic library were available for copying.

There are four extant works in Part II of the Vernon Manuscript that are
illustrated. The first, the sequence of miniatures for the story of the Gospel in English and
the third, comprising a historiated initial beginning the Prick of Conscience, are likely
made by one artist and the miniatures for the Miracles of the Virgin by another. As I will
show, the first artist’s works are not entirely “naive” or “unsophisticated,” featuring, as
they do, incarnational issues in quite a striking way for meditative readers willing to
spend time looking at them, which is what the text actually enjoins in the case of the initial. The
work of the artist of the Miracles of the Virgin sequence is more three-dimensional and, as

Vernon Manuscript 57. Blake has analyzed the contents of the five parts showing that it
would suit such an assumption: Part I “legends to act as models of Christian behavior; the
emphasis in Part II on Mary and supplication; the need for general counsel as provided in
Part III; the possibility of a more elevated spiritual life in Part IV; and lyrics of a
devotional nature in Part V” (58). See also Carol M. Meale, “The Miracles of Our Lady:
Context and Interpretation” 132 and throughout, who convincingly argues for the
likelihood of a female readership, especially for the Miracles of the Virgin, such cycles
having been made for or mostly owned by women.

Vernon Manuscript 57. Blake has analyzed the contents of the five parts which would suit
the assumption. The inclusion of Piers Plowman may have meant that it was perceived as
spiritually edifying by the compiler claiming it for the orthodox camp.

Blake, “Vernon Manuscript” 58.


Scott suggests, possibly introduced the International style into England with these miniatures. This artist shows more interest than the first in following the plot of each narrative about the efficacy of devotion to the Virgin, especially by way of her statues and relics. Only the last of this artist’s extant miniatures iconographically extends the spiritual range of an otherwise more superficial presentation executed, however, in a more modern way. The fourth illustration by a third artist is a complex diagram of the Pater Noster which has been studied by Avril Henry and will not be included here.

Hit is be holigostes dede: The Birth of John and of Jesus according to Luke

The first miniatures in the Vernon Manuscript illustrate both the human and the divine aspects of Christ’s Incarnation as described in the poem la estorie del Evangelie en engleis ‘the history of the Gospel in English’ as it was translated from Latin. This is the poem with its miniatures which, as Doyle suggests, may once have been intended for the beginning of the volume or even for a separate volume. If that was the case, the poem and the miniatures would have been particularly apt for this volume of religious poetry and prose in the “mother tongue.” The long French title continues with a list of subjects which are repeated, in English, with some additions, in the early fifteenth-century Index, beginning with Of be Annunciation theses cristi. Of his Nativite and ending with Of be

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93 Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts II.30.

94 Avril Henry, “‘The Pater Noster in a table ypeynted’ and Some Other Presentations of Doctrine in the Vernon Manuscript” 89-113. This article is accompanied by a color plate of the diagram.

95 Doyle, introduction, The Vernon Manuscript 8-9. At present, it begins Part II of V in the Vernon Manuscript.

96 Mary S. Serjeantson, “The Index of the Vernon Manuscript,” MLR 32 (1937): 222. This date for the Index is based on information told to her by J. A. Herbert. It is interesting that in the early fifteenth century it was considered useful to make this extensive index in English, indicating that, at the time when vernacular writings could be suspect, this very orthodox collection was being read extensively enough to warrant such a massive effort to make individual works easy to find.
comyngge to be day of dom. And opere diverse Stories of ihesu crist and of his modur; be whyche [be] in diverse paneles in peyntur, and every panel had his scripture accordaunt per to, be whiche peynture his table suffisaunt. Only the first two subjects of this outline are extant, the rest possibly having been removed for the miniatures, as might also have been the case with the following section. The various panel paintings mentioned in the Index would appear to describe the framed miniatures, seven of which, on foilo 105 recto and verso, survive. Since each miniature has a decorated letter below it attached to its frame, the words immediately following might have been thought of as an inscription by the person making the Index.

The gospel history begins with the poet, formerly bound in sin but having turned to Jesus, writing in English as a means of gaining reward from Jesus who shed his blood for him and so that, through his labor, those who hear it might learn something of what is written in the gospel. Here the act of writing in the vernacular is identified as a labor

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98 N. F. Blake, "Vernon Manuscript: Contents and Organization," Studies in the Vernon Manuscript 51. The following are noted in the index: Diverse orisones to be fadur and to be sone and to be holy gost, whit peyntures and Salutaciouns to vre lady wyt peynture annex. See Serjeantson, "The Index of the Vernon Manuscript" 234. The Miracles of vre lady, which follows after a number of intervening subjects, are illustrated with miniatures, some of which survive (see my subsequent discussion), but there is no mention of these in the relevant part of the index.

99 But see Doyle, Introduction, The Vernon Manuscript 9, who speculates that "the lister knew that the set was derived as a whole or in part from an actual panel-painting with shorter legends, since the poem is not here presented as a series of separate ‘tables.’" There may or may not have been panel paintings of the subjects elsewhere but a table or tablet can also refer to a “(writing) tablet”or “tablet (for inscription),” and so may have been intended to refer to what the fifteenth-century compiler of the index considered as paintings with inscriptions all contained within the three columns of text. See A Chaucer Glossary, compiled Norman Davis et al (1979; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 149.

100 "La estorie del Euangelie," The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS 1-2, II. 1-39. Compare also 73-76 in which the poet asks for grace to begin and love to forgo the sin in which mankind was bound. Subsequent line references to this will be enclosed in brackets
spiritually beneficial to poet and audience.\(^{101}\) Since the earliest manuscript of this English poem dates from around 1300,\(^{102}\) it reflects one attitude about vernacular writing and reading (or listening) as a spiritual experience which was apparently still seen as relevant near the end of the fourteenth century when the Vernon Manuscript was made. Because the Vernon has pictures for this poem, it was meant to be seen as well as heard. The audience could have included a small devout group gathered round to look at the pictures while listening to a reader on special occasions, but this would not have excluded individual meditative readers from having personal access to this large, heavy volume where it was kept on a lectern or on some sort of support on a table.

Although each of the seven extant miniatures, out of a possible thirty-five or more,\(^{103}\) does not preface a separate poem as tends to be the case in the Auchinleck Manuscript, it functions in a similar way to emphasize the main idea of the section it illustrates in a relatively simple and direct way, reflecting these qualities in the text. What it does additionally is to illustrate those episodes, based on the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke, which deliberately bring to view the correspondences between the birth of John and the birth of Jesus. Except for the Visitation and the two birth scenes themselves,

\[\text{in my text.}\]

\(^{101}\) Compare Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary* 234, who says that “Suso writes so that he and his readers can achieve bliss in paradise: reading, writing, and transcription serve as instruments of initiation through which his disciples can assimilate themselves to Christ.”

\(^{102}\) The earliest manuscript containing an incomplete version of this work dates from around 1300 and is found in Dulwich College, MS XXII, fols. 81v-84v, as mentioned by Thorlac Turville-Petre, “The Relationship of the Vernon and Clopton Manuscripts,” *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* 29. This early version of the poem has been edited by Gertrude H. Campbell, “The Middle English *Evangelie*,” *PMLA* 30 (1972): 43-48.

\(^{103}\) Doyle, introduction, *The Vernon Manuscript* 9. For a possible list, based on a comparison of the blank spaces left for miniatures in most complete version of the poem recorded in the early fifteenth-century Clopton Manuscript version, London University Library, MS V.17 (C), see Thorlac Turville-Petre, “The Relationship of the Vernon and Clopton Manuscripts” 30-31.
the angel’s annunciations to Mary, Zacharias, Joseph, and the Shepherds, together with their respective responses, are illustrated. Accumulatively, the presence of the angel in the four annunciation scenes stresses the divine element, while the various gestures of the respondents dramatizes their humanity.

Before going on to tell of the Incarnation, the poet gives sufficient background to explain why it was necessary. People were ignorant of God and instead worshiped idols (4-68), the devil had power over everyone, and when they died they went to hell, the wicked to be the devil’s food, and the good to await in prison the fulfillment of the prophecies about one who would take on flesh in a virgin and lead them out of pain (77-100). The first of the annunciation miniatures is that of the angel Gabriel to Mary (fig. 50), inserted near the beginning of this subject in the poem, the life of Christ. Gabriel’s address to Mary, *Heil ful of grace*, is introduced by a two-line decorated capital, shown just above the miniature. Within the miniature, it is repeated in Latin on the banderole the angel holds, emphasizing his speaking voice. Just below the miniature and attached to it is the two-line high decorated letter introducing his actual announcement, *penne him spac...Marie, nouht ne dreed þou þe! / A child schal beo boren of þe*. This does not initially seem any great comfort to her, especially since, as she protests, she is still a virgin.

Then the angel *hire herte dihte* ‘indited into her heart’ the news that the Holy Ghost shall *alihte* ‘alight/descend in(to) her’ (125-27). When Mary finally accepts this, she says these words in her heart, *Wip me do God as þou hast sayde*, and at that moment the child who is both man and God is conceived in her (125-44). As a verse in *Psalterium Beatae Mariae* in the Vernon describes it, God made her the chamber *Of word þat is mad flesch*. It is

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104 In line 92, this striking image of a kind of reverse communion by which sinners become food for the devil was doubtless derived from artistic depictions of the bestial mouth of hell popular since the eleventh century as shown in such works as the Cædmon Manuscript.

105 The title in the Index for this work is *Of every psalme of þe sauter þe furste vers* which was applied to Mary in a Latin poem by Albertus Magnus called the *Beatae Psalterium Mariæ*. Following the Latin, this is translated into English in the Vernon Manuscript. See *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript* I.95, lines 1041-42.
worth noting that the significant part of the conversation with the angel occurs on a mental/verbal level within Mary, specifically, within her heart, a subject I will return to shortly.

The miniature conflates the sequences described in the text: on the left the angel, wings still unfolded and drapery still wafted by the wind, makes his announcement; on the right the Virgin, no longer experiencing dread, is shown crossing his hands over her heart and bowing her head at the moment of acceptance and simultaneous conception. The pot of lilies in the center symbolizes not only her purity but, as a variant of the flowering branch, her fruitfulness (also reinforced by the daisy or marigold buds\(^{106}\) surrounding these miniatures). Another poem in this manuscript, “Maiden Mary and her Fleur-de-Lys,” likens this blossom to her and to her son.\(^{107}\) In this miniature, it also serves to separate the angelic messenger just arrived from heaven (his wing tip seems to have passed through the boundary of the border on the left) from the Virgin on the right (although her halo, at the moment of fruitfulness, likewise breaks through the top border, suggesting another dimension). While the red fill of the border on the angel’s side is distinct from the blue on her side, reinforcing the distinction in substance between the two figures, the bottom border is solid earth, emphasizing the material incarnation both in the Virgin and in the connected letter of the text below.

In the poem, as proof that no word is beyond God’s might, the angel tells Mary that her relative Elizabeth, formerly barren and old, is now six months pregnant. Changing the order of Luke’s Gospel, in which the story of John’s conception comes first, the poetic text continues with the account of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, whereupon she is asked by

\(^{106}\)Doyle, Introduction, \textit{The Vernon Manuscript} 8, says these sprays are common in the fourteenth century but disappear early in the fifteenth century, noting their occurrence in the royal charter for Ipswich of 1378, the Westminster Liber Regalis after 1382, and its Litlynton Missal, 1382-84, Thomas of Gloucester’s Wycliffite Bible, British Library, MS Egerton 617-18, not after 1397, and the Ellesmere Manuscript.

the latter how it is that the Mother of the Lord has come to her. Further proof that it is the
Lord in Mary’s womb is that the child in Elizabeth’s womb *made gle* (160) as soon as
Mary speaks. Elizabeth returns the greeting and declares both Mary and her fruit blessed.
Right after the inserted miniature (fig. 51), the text mentions the meeting in which the two
women clasp and kiss.\(^{108}\) The Visitation miniature condenses the text, showing the two
women about to kiss as they appear to touch each other’s pregnant bellies, presumably
feeling the stirring within.\(^{109}\) Their fruitfulness is emphasized by the tree, with a smaller
branch coming out the middle of the trunk, on each side of the miniature. The heraldic
quality of this miniature reinforces the imperial stateliness and importance of the subject,
the royal divinity of the “fruit” of their wombs. As the continuation of the poem makes
clear, enhancing the gospel account, the Holy Ghost was involved in both conceptions.
The earth in which the trees are rooted, in complementary fashion, alludes to the human
nature of the two infants.

The poet picks up the story of John’s begetting at this point, telling the story of
how the priest Zacharias, Elizabeth’s husband, loses his voice until their son John is born.
An angel comes to Zacharias while the latter is performing his service in the temple. He
calls him by name, *Zakarie*, telling him not to dread, God has granted his request for a
child. Whereas in the text Zacharias answers *wip dreki chere* (197), asking how that can be
since both he and his wife are old (she is at least forty), the miniaturist dramatizes the
reaction of the tonsured Zacharias to the news of his wife’s pregnancy by showing him
wildly swinging the incense burner high above the altar (fig. 52). The angel tells him that
he shall see the proof of the announcement, but that he will be struck dumb until the child
is born because, as the Latin inscription on his banderole indicates, *non credidisti verbis
meis*, he did not believe him (Luke 1.20). After the angel departs, Zacharias glumly leaves

\(^{108}\) Just preceding the miniature, ll. 163-66 about Mary staying for a time with
Elizabeth, are misplaced and should follow 275, according to Horstmann, *The Minor
Poems* 5, marginal note.

\(^{109}\) One woman’s arm is slightly higher than the other and seems to touch the
other’s stomach rather than belly, but this may have been the artist’s way of avoiding
overlapping arms.
without speaking, causing people to think he has seen some wonder in the temple. Dutifully, Zacharias goes home and *dude his dede, / Nout for his fleschliche nede, / But child to wynnen*. (213-14)—an amplification not mentioned in the gospel, which simply states that after the days of his priestly office, he went home and his wife conceived (Luke 1.23-24).

The biblical announcement that John “shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1.15), is expanded in the poem to indicate that the child was got *forw godus mihte, / forw Godus heste* (221-22). And further, paralleling the description of the immaculate conception in Mary (124-25;146-47), the poet says that *In Elisabeth þe holigost lihte / And þat child in hire dihte* (223-24). The word *dihte* can also meant ‘indite’, a kind of incarnation of the Word by word, which seems to be the sense when the Angel communicated his announcement to Mary in her heart (124); further, it can mean ‘have sexual intercourse with,” all these meanings singly or together indicate that the conception of John also involved a divine source. This explains why, in the preceding miniature, the overlapping haloes of Elizabeth and Mary extend into the space of the border above, suggesting not only their holiness, but also the divine origin of their pregnancies. It also explains why the two births with their various announcements for them are visually accentuated as parallel events by the miniatures: they are both more or less immaculate conceptions.

The poem, citing Bede, says that Mary stayed with Elizabeth until she gave birth (271-74). The birth of John is the subject of the next miniature (fig. 53), with a woman, probably intended as Mary, standing beside the bed. At the foot of the bed, the seated old man holding a blank scroll might be intended as Zacharias writing, since he could not speak, the name the child should be called (245-48), whereupon God gave him back his voice. The account in Luke 1. 67 indicates that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost and began to prophesy, which the scroll in the miniature might also signify, especially since

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110The sense of ‘indite’ echoes the kind of announcement given by the dove to David in the St. Albans Psalter illustration previously discussed. See *A Chaucer Glossary* 37.
it is quite long. The miniature of the birth of John is closely identified with, and obviously derived iconographically from that of the birth of Jesus (fig. 54), both mother and child similarly displayed on the left, except that Mary and Jesus have haloes. Joseph with his cane sits at the foot of the bed in the same position as Zacharias. Replacing Mary beside the bed in the former miniature are the ox and the ass peering over the wicker fence at the Christ child. The prominence of these animals in the middle of the picture highlights the significance of the event, that this is indeed the child prophesied by Isaiah 1.3: \textit{Pe Oxe and pe Asse hedde kennyng} / \textit{Of heore lord in heore stallynge} (373-74). The poet adds further that these two animals are mentioned in (the Old Latin Version of) Habacuc: \textit{And Abacuc also havep i-seyd: / By-twene two bestes he sholde be leyd} (375-76). (This is the verse Ó Carragáin used in support of the beasts under Christ’s feet in the Ruthwell Cross panel recognizing Christ in adoring fashion, but as this late medieval poem makes clear, it was applicable in quite another sense than in connection with the beasts of Psalm 90.13\textsuperscript{111}). The Vernon artist makes this acknowledgment of the Lord by the ox and ass the signifying feature of the miniature by their centrality and their size reinforcing, for the meditative reader, the emphasis in the text.

Between these two nativity miniatures, that of John and that of Jesus, is the “annunciation,” as it were, of the angel to Joseph (fig. 55). When Mary came home from her three months stay with Elizabeth, she is with child, causing Joseph some consternation since he had \textit{nuere hire Mouvh custe} (302). Her apparent loss of her maidenhead has fatal legal ramifications, which he does not like, especially since he always knew her to be good. In the midst of his dilemma, he falls asleep, whereupon God sends him an angel who addresses him by name, telling him not to have dread. \textit{It is pe holigostes dede} (328)

\textsuperscript{111}Ó Carragáin, “Christ over the Beasts” 383-390. He does mention other applications where these verses were taken as Christ being recognized between the two thieves (Jerome), applied by Bede also to the recognition of Christ between Moses and Elijah by three of the disciples during the Transfiguration, but these are very different form the beasts trodden by Christ in the Ruthwell panel. Usefully, he also gives the Old Latin version from the beginning of the Vespasian Psalter: \textit{In medio duorum animalium innostercis}, which he translates as “In the midst of two animals you will be recognized” (384). Compare the difference in Habacuc 3.2 “in the midst of the years.”
explains the angel, adding that he should call the child Jesus. The illustration conveys a
dreamlike quality by the wave-like rocking motion of the cradling earth and plants
surrounding Joseph, suggesting a suspension of normal reality. Seemingly arising out of
Joseph's body, the angel bends over Joseph. The banderole indicates the Angel's spoken
message to which, even in his sleep, Joseph responds with a raised hand, as if
acknowledging and accepting it, analogous in its interiority to Mary's earlier acceptance of
the words "in her heart."

The last of the extant miniatures for this poem depicts the annunciation to the
shepherds (fig. 56). Like that of the Joseph miniature, the landscape seems to enfold the
shepherds and their flock, signaling that something unusual is taking place. In the poem,
the angel tells them not to dread the strange liht pat was per hem aboute (384; Luke 2.9).
And it is the sky that the artist appears to be featuring here, the white swirling light of God
in the dark blue night sky forming, amid the streams of light, a blossom. The angel in the
sky holds a banderole, indicating the words he speaks, that a child is born who will lead his
folk out of pain. The shepherd in the middle raises his free arm to touch the banderole,
acknowledging the message, as did Joseph, the shepherd on the right blows his twin-reed
flute in celebration, and the shepherd on the left raises his face to the sky in awe. The
dog barking at the sky is added gratuitously to the scene, increasing the drama and, by its
contemporary realism, drawing the audience into the charged supernatural atmosphere.

The Trinity in the Letter

Near the bottom of the third column on folio 265 the Prick of Conscience begins
with a historiated initial "b" superimposed on a rectangular "panel" or frame over 22 lines
of script in height (fig. 57). Above this is the title of the work: Prikke of concie(n)s hette
his book. Doyle knows of no parallel for this illustration in any other copies of this poem,
which was the most widely circulated Middle English poem. Just below the title is the

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112I am grateful to Wayne Hilmo for researching this instrument, popular since
Greek and Roman times, on the internet for me.

113Doyle, introduction, The Vernon Manuscript 9.
intriguing instruction: *Hosanna mai rede and look*. The most immediate subject for looking is, of course, the historiated initial leading into the text. The dove is absent in this representation of the Mercy Seat, a configuration of the Trinity usually showing a seated God the Father holding the crucified Christ while the dove representing the Holy Ghost descends from above. The triple emphasis on the Trinity and its eternal existence in the introductory lines of the poem is reflected in the historiated initial itself. The third person of the Trinity is alluded to by the red cross-nimbus around God the Father and is implied in the triplicate forms inside and outside the historiated initial. These include the three black spikes which pierce the hands and feet of Christ, the spray with three red buds, the black outlines of three plants with trefoil tops, and the three notches in the gold frame. All these visualizations reflect the triple emphasis on the Trinity and its eternal existence in the introductory lines to the poem beside and below the pictorial panel.

The earth of the grassy patch below the letter is shared with a kneeling figure outside the boundaries of the letter, and so refers to Christ’s humanity, as in some of the Gospel miniatures just discussed. This kneeling figure, reminiscent of the Dunstan or Matthew Paris miniatures, holds a banderole inscribed with *miserere mei deus scemdm magnum misericordiam*. Here the first verse of Psalm 50, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy,” the fourth of the penitential psalms, is appropriate to the subject of the *Prick of Conscience* and also to the illustrated subject of the Mercy Seat within the “P.” It reflects much the same sentiment as part of the inscription by Dunstan. As in the case of these two predecessors for this sort of portrait, the tonsured white monk, together with the columbines in the bottom border might be associated with an artist or, in this case, an “artistic school and period,” likely monastic

114 This is transcribed from Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts* II.19, except that, since I am using italics for all Latin, Anglo-Saxon, and Middle English texts, I have placed the silent expansions in brackets where she has italicized them. Psalm 50 is also included in the Vernon with each Latin verse followed by an English translation and amplification. For the text see *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS* I.12 ff.

115 Doyle, introduction, *The Vernon Manuscript* 9. This is a complicated issue and I can best defer to Doyle, see also 7 and 14-15 above, and Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*
in its associations.

Most striking of all, however, is the “P” itself. The part that overlaps the framed miniature delineates a sort of swaying triangular shape that defines the Trinity in its design. The descending curve of the thorn forms a boundary separating the kneeling figure outside from the spiritual dimension showing the object of contemplation inside the letter. As it ascends, the prayer scroll crosses over the boundary of the letter into the space within, while the bottom of the cross breaches this same boundary as it descends into the monk’s earthly realm. The educated reader of this manuscript can also perceive the Trinity in abstract form in the way the letter “P” is composed of three strands, purple, blue and red, which join at the descending curve and the vertical bar to enclose the scene within. These three strands are interwoven, interlaced, and interlocked as they combine, separate, and recombine, only to start all over again unendingly. This echoes the emphasis in the adjacent poem on the eternal existence of the Trinity. The invitation above the pictorial panel signals the reader to emulate the monk and to look and look until the Trinity is seen to be both incarnated and symbolized in the letter beginning the vernacular poem. This is a unique visualization of the idea of the Word being incarnated in the vernacular letter. The emphasis on the bleeding gash in Christ’s side is a further reminder of this sort of corporeal analogy.

Although Scott considers the compositions, in particular the Gospel miniatures, made by this first artist “pleasantly, even gracefully arranged along a horizontal plane,” she says “they show uncertainty of design in their framing, which varies between four, three,

23 for further discussion. There is a tonsured white monk in “The dying monk healed by Our Lady’s milk,” the miniature on folio 126v, and a tonsured black monk in “The priest who lay with a nun,” the miniature on fol. 126. Both these illustrations are in the “Miracles of Our Lady” section in the Vernon Manuscript.

I am grateful to Margot Louis for the observation that the scroll and the crucifix cross over the boundary.

See the discussion of this idea, though not with respect to the Vernon historiated initial, by Watson, “Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God” 87-124.
two and no sides." As I indicated in my discussion of the Gospel miniatures, the frames are often utilized to suggest boundaries between the spiritual or earthly dimensions which are transcended by haloes and wings, for instance. In the case of this historiated initial for the Prick of Conscience, the frame formed by the letter shape itself becomes a manifestation of the meaning of the Trinity. The green earth at the bottom, as in the Gospel miniature of the Annunciation to Mary, represents the earthly dimension shared, in this case, by the crucified incarnate Christ and by the monk. Yet Christ, as the second person of the Trinity, is also separated from the monk’s reality, hence the separation by the oblique line of the letter. This artist has obviously utilized the potential of frames to convey the spiritual and corporeal distinctions which characterize the Incarnation miniatures of the Gospel poem, redeployed to new uses incarnating the Trinity in the letter itself at the beginning of the Prick of Conscience.

Miracles of vre lady: The Efficacy of the Relics and Images

The nine extant miniatures for the poems on the Miracles of Our Lady out of a probable forty-one, made by another artist, are more favored by modern critics because the style is more three-dimensional than the more linear style of the artist who made the Gospel miniatures and the Trinity initial just discussed. The frames by this second artist are broached less to indicate a different spiritual dimension, although that is implied too, than for dramatic effect to accommodate such features as church spires, spears, and in one instance, an axe. The most obvious difference is that this artist is interested less in conveying special moments of sacred time in which contact with the supernatural occurs than in packing in as many stages of the narrative plot as possible within one miniature in order to tell the story visually. Of course, the first artist was able to present a series of miniatures for a long poem whereas the second had to make do with one miniature for

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118 Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts 2.21 and 20 respectively.

119 Carole M. Meale, “The Miracles of Our Lady: Context and Interpretation,” 117. As she points out in this study of the Miracles, they occur on folios 124-126v of the Vernon.
each comparatively short poem, but even so, the approach is very different. The first artist elicits extended mediation on the meaning of the subject whereas the second provokes interest in following the action of the plot, the miniature itself constituting visual proof of the miracle in question. Guided by the content of the Miracle stories, this artist demonstrates the efficacy of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary for those who revere her statues or relics. In five of the miniatures, a small sculpted image of the Virgin and Child is shown in a church niche, shrine, or entrance; in three of these, the prototype of the image is also shown, large as life, actually performing a miracle in aid of one of her devotees. I will discuss a representative sample of the extant miniatures which display some of these features.

The first of the Miracle miniatures is for the poem referred to in the Index as *hou he cite off croteye was deleyuered of thair enemys by ure lady coote* (fig. 58). It is placed at the bottom of the middle column on folio 124 and so precedes the accompanying poem which begins at the top of the third column. The spire of Chartres extends from the miniature frame up to the last of the Hail Mary stanzas of the *Psalterium Beatae Mariae* above, seemingly balancing the decorated A of the *Ave* on the opposite side of that text as if carrying on that text. This is not inappropriate since the *Psalterium* ends with a request to have mercy on all / *Pat wip deuocioun / And wip preising on he calle / Dou herest heore Oriso,* which is what the miracles demonstrate.

Prominent near the middle of the miniature is its focus, the Virgin’s white tunic / *deyntely diht vpon a spere* (59). The particular importance of the tunic, not mentioned in this miracle but indicated in two separate verses of the *Psalterium Beatae Mariae* preceding the Miracles of the Virgin, is that it is an incarnational image in which the Virgin herself is described as the garment of God because through her he took on the clothing of flesh. Both address her in a similar way: *Heil porwh whom godhed i-wis / Of wre flesch tok cloping* (505-06) and *Heil porwh whom God cloping / Of feirnesse tok at morwe* (737-38). This last image is based upon a Christological reading of Psalm 92.1: “The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength and hath girled

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120*The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.* 72 and 82.
himself.” I have mentioned this concept with respect to the Virgin’s cloak in the Matthew Paris miniature.

This Miracle of the Virgin in which her tunic plays a prominent role concerns the victory of Bishop Waltelin against attack from Rollo121 and his Norsemen who, with his great host from Norway and Denmark, conquered many countries including the land up the French coast he subsequently called Normandy. When these Northmen besiege the city of Crotey (Chartres) in 991 AD,122 people see no other option but to yield the city or to be slain. Its bishop, however, has the citizens kneel down and pray to Christ and to his Mother Mary. Then he himself goes to the Minster’s treasury where he finds the relic of Our Lady’s tunic and kneels to pray to Mary. As illustrated also on the right side of the miniature, he has the relic mounted upon a spear like a standard and leads the people in procession until they come to the city’s gate, which he orders to be raised. When the astonished enemies see this extraordinary sight, they immediately become blind. The citizens then exercise their will against the defeated enemies, ransoming some and killing the others. The miniature, on the left side, shows instead the leader kneeling in submission, while his armed men crowd behind him, their numbers extending beyond the frame. Not included in the poem or the miniature is any mention of the arrival of the Count of Poitiers and his troops to reinforce Chartres, causing Rollo to flee into the night.123 The poet ends with a prayer to Our Lady and her Son, reminiscent of the sentiment of the romances I discussed in connection with the Auchinleck Manuscript, to grant mercy to all Christians.

Following this prayer is the next Miracle, *Hou pe Iewes in despit of vre lady frewe a chyld in a gonge*, as the Index describes this analogue to Chaucer’s *Prioress’s Tale*. The little clergeon of Chaucer is, in this version of the tale, a beggar child who sings in the streets of Paris for food for his family. He sings the Antiphon called *Alma Redemptoris*

121For a discussion of the historical sources see Beverly Boyd, *The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin* (San Marino, CA: 1964) 115-16.


Mater which the poet says means *Godus Moder, Mylde and Cleene, / Heuene sate and Sterre of se, / Saue bi peple from synne and we* (22-26). He sings it so pleasantly that the Jews become envious and order him to be slain. One Saturday when he goes through the Jewry singing this, one of the Jews lures him to his house and then slits the child’s throat.  

This is the first of five episodes from the narrative that is illustrated in the somewhat claustrophobically laid-out miniature for this Miracle (fig. 59). It reads from top right to top left and then continues bottom right to bottom left into the margin. Across the top the Jew, shown with a large nose, gestures the boy, dressed in green, to come into his house; inside, the same man summarily slits the boy’s throat in a manner similar to that shown for slaughtering sheep in December scenes of the Occupations of the Months; and at the back of the house, arms swirling in all directions, the Jew thrusts the boy down the black hole of the latrine in a manner reminiscent of illustrations showing a devil thrusting a condemned soul into hell. Across the top, the three bodies of the Jew overlap, seemingly engaged in continuous motion like a modern filmstrip, one bodily action emerging from the other. At the bottom right and extending below the bottom of the

124 In this version of the story, the child spares nothing and keeps on singing. Afraid of being discovered, the Jew decides to throw him down a latrine. The child keeps on singing louder than ever. In the meantime, his mother, accustomed to waiting until noon each day for him to bring some food, becomes concerned when he does not appear at that time and so searches the streets for him. She hears his voice when she gets to the Jewry, but the man denies the presence of the child. She appeals to the Mayor who summons the people to go with him. When they get to the Jew’s house, they hear the angelic voice. The Jew does not dare refuse them entry and has to acknowledge his wrong. A search results in the child being found drowned in the filth of the latrine. The Mayor has him pulled out and it is discovered that his throat was cut, so the Jew is judged a murderer. By this time the Bishop arrives and searches with his hand in the child’s throat, where he finds a lily with golden letters everywhere inscribing the words the boy sings. When he pulls the lily out, the boy stops singing. The Bishop has the corpse borne in procession through the city, with priests and clergymen singing and the bells ringing, until they come to the Minster where the Requiem Mass is begun. To everyone’s astonishment, the corpse rises up and begins singing.

125 Compare, for example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D. inf. 2. 11, fol 12.
frame is the scene of the mother pleading, which the artist represents by having her kneel before the Mayor, shown seated and flanked by a figure holding his staff of office. Not depicted is the gruesome scene of pulling the boy out of the filth of the latrine, indicative in this nicety of the social class of the audience, nor the procession to the Minster. Instead, after this narrative hiatus, on the bottom left, the shrouded corpse of the white-faced boy is shown sitting up on his bier, hand raised to signal his song. As indicated by the words on the boy’s banderole, *Salve sancta parent*, it is obvious to all that he has served Our Lady and she has brought his soul to bliss. The handles of his bier extend into the margin on the left, overlapping the large figure of the Bishop. He holds in his left hand a lily so large it could only have been got out of the boy by another miracle. A banderole emerges from it with the words which, in the poem, are described as written in gold on the lily (123), but here, they make it seem as if the lily itself is singing *Alma redemptoris mater*, the Antiphon the boy was wont to sing. In his right hand the Bishop, with a blessing gesture, holds the scroll with the words beginning the Requiem Mass (138). Because of the large scale of the Bishop and the lily, and because these are isolated in the left margin, the viewer would tend to encounter this configuration first, seeing it as a visual title and endorsement of the story inside the miniature, and then having followed the visual narrative within, would naturally return to it since it completes the story and functions as a kind of epilogue.

That such a story and illustration are so biased against Jews needs some explanation since, as Denise Despres observes, there was little historical memory of the them since Jews were expelled from England after 1290. In exploring the cultural and religious context for the transformation of the boy, she considers the legacy of the fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Constitution number 1 promulgates the dogma of the Transubstantiation of the Host, number 21 requires yearly confession and communion,

126 Despres, “Celtic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer’s Litel Clergeon” 413-27. Information about this subject in my paragraph is from this article.

127 The *Constitutions of the Fourth Lateran Council: 1 2 1 5 A.D.* are available in English at http://www.pax-et-veritas.org/Councils/lateran4htm.
and numbers 67-70 are strongly prejudicial against Jews.\textsuperscript{128} The Vernon Miracle poem, like the Prioress’s Tale which Despres examines, can be seen as reflecting a “displaced anxiety” about the Transubstantiation of the Host, while it symbolically introduces and then expels unbelievers from the community to achieve purification and unity.\textsuperscript{129} It is from the latrine, a metaphor for carnality and pollution (a black hole as seen in the Vernon miniature), that the boy’s body rises to eternal life as from the baptismal waters of death.\textsuperscript{130} The anti-Judaism in such stories serves as a vehicle for reaffirming the authority of the Church. In the Vernon miniature, the scale of the Bishop and his placement outside the miniature and text reinforces the idea of episcopal authority. In this case, the Bishop performs the Requiem Mass, holding the lily, symbol of the Virgin’s purity. Bordering the miniature, the lily suggests that what is to follow is one of the popular “Lily” miracles.\textsuperscript{131}

Although there is no lily in the miniature, the last of the extant Miracle poems is also a version of another “Lily” miracle, Of an incontinent monk, pat was drowned, and rered azen by vre lady to lyfe. The incontinence referred to is sexual. In one version of the “Lily” story, such a monk is refused Christian burial because of his sins, but Our Lady whom he had served, orders that he be buried in the churchyard, and a lily grows from his mouth as a token of his devotion.\textsuperscript{132} In another version, Mary orders the proper interment of the drowned monk’s body whereupon the words Ave Maria are found upon his tongue.

\textsuperscript{128}Number 67 condemns the perfidious usurious practices of the Jews and enjoins that if they extort excessive interest, they are to be removed from contact with Christians; number 68 requires that the Jews wear a distinctive dress and limit the times of their public appearances; number 69 forbids them to hold public office; and number 70 states that converted Jews may not retain their old rites.

\textsuperscript{129}Despres, “Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer’s Litel Clergeon” 417 and 424.

\textsuperscript{130}Despres, “Cultic Anti-Judaism and Chaucer’s Litel Clergeon” 424-25.

\textsuperscript{131}For variants see Tryon, “Miracle of Our Lady in Middle English Verse” 328-30, 335, 339-40.

\textsuperscript{132}Tryon, “Miracle of Our Lady in Middle English Verse” 328.
linking this with the “Lily” motif. Unfortunately only the first part of the Vernon text of this poem is extant so it is not possible to know to what degree the artist’s adaptation of existing iconography is innovative (fig. 60). It does not help that the miniature itself has been damaged, a subject I will discuss shortly. According to the poem in the Vernon, a sexton of the Order of Grey monks who loved to worship Our Lady had fallen into lechery. When everyone was asleep, he would leave the cloister silently and perform his misdeeds, but he always greeted the image of the Virgin in the church with an Aue as he passed by in his going and returning. One night after he greeted her and was walking on the stone bridge over the river which passed under the abbey, he fell in and drowned. Angels came to help him but the devils wanted to fetch him to hell because of his misdeeds. The angels could not find any counterbalancing good deeds, but Our Lady arrived quickly and told the blue and black fiends that this was false: he always greeted her with an Aue in passing. The issue is put before God for judgment and it pleases him to send the soul to the body again so that he can amend himself until God sends for him again. The extant text ends with the brothers awakening and wondering what was taking the sexton so long.

The miniature shows a statue of the Virgin and Child within the entrance of the church on the top left and, on the bridge extending from it, the prototype of the Virgin, also crowned and wearing blue, separating the red-gowned angels on the left from the hideous black devils on the right side. Not shown is God’s judgment. Instead, in the bottom left of the miniature, there is a woman sitting slumped in a deep sleep. Like the prototype of the Virgin emerging from the statue of the Virgin and Child where their blue gowns overlap at the bottom of the miniature in which the Virgin restores the leg of a man who had had it amputated (fig. 61), here in the miniature of the drowned monk, another

133 Tryon, “Miracle of Our Lady in Middle English Verse” 339.

134 This miniature illustrates how a man, for ache, cur of his foot, and was healed again by ure lady on fol. 125v of the Vernon Manuscript. The story involves a pilgrim who goes to a shrine of the Virgin to seek healing for his foot which burned like fire. Even though others were healed by Mary, he was not. He was advised to have it amputated, which he did. Despite this, he kept on praying to the Virgin. Finally one time he fell asleep when he was at prayer to her and it seemed to him that a fair lady came and pulled a
woman seems to flow out of the sleeping figure at the same point, where their gowns overlap, and reaches into the river to pull out the drowned monk. In a parallel to Christ’s Harrowing of Hell, this extraordinary configuration appears to suggest that the Virgin has allowed herself to enter the state of death and, once in the underworld, to rescue her monk from the waters of death. Mary’s powers over death are referred to in the Miracle involving Mary’s restoration of the amputated leg (above) where the text refers to her as Emperisse of helle (73) and in at least two other works in the Vernon Manuscript: in the Psalterium for Psalm 129. 1: “Out of the depths I have cried to thee O Lord,” Mary is hailed as the bearer of the flower who returns life to the dead, and in A salutacijon to stre lady, she is acknowledged as the Queen of heaven, earth, and hell.135 In one of the two illustrations for this miracle in the Queen Mary’s Psalter136 (fig. 62), Mary bends over to lift up the drowned monk in a configuration reminiscent of the iconography of Christ raising Adam during the Harrowing of Hell. (With her other hand she gestures in the direction of the devils engaged in throwing him into the river on the left.) These textual and visual examples of Mary’s power suggest that the parallel to Christ’s descent into the underworld is deliberate, and that the divestiture of Mary’s rich attire in the bottom portion of the miniature where she is shown as a ghostlike figure reinforces this sense. It would seem that she is gowned in a grey shroud-like garment, but this is not certain because of the damaged state of this miniature. This raises the question of whether such damage was deliberate or accidental.

healthy leg out of the knee. When he awoke, he was whole and sound, his patience rewarded.


136 See Queen Mary’s Psalter fol. 213v, which is reproduced as plate 227, bottom. The other is on folio 205, reproduced as plate 220a, and shows the devil throwing the sacristan into the water from a boat on the left, with Mary confronting the Devil on the right, this latter similar, iconographically, to the Temptation of Christ. The Miracle of the Virgin illustrations are not accompanied by text in the Queen Mary’s Psalter, suggesting that the stories were well known.
Reaction Against Holy Images

I began this chapter with the observation that the Auchinleck and Vernon Manuscripts were distinguished from the Pearl-Gawain and Ellemere Manuscripts by the presence in the former of pictures of the deity and of the Virgin which are entirely lacking in the latter where they are studiously avoided. While the makers of the vernacular Auchinleck and Vernon Manuscripts affirmed the right to make images not only by including them but by featuring the very incarnational issues which justified their making and by encouraging devotion to their heavenly prototypes via the images themselves, as I have shown, it would appear that the images themselves did not entirely escape censure by iconoclastically minded readers. While it is difficult to determine for sure whether the damage was deliberate or accidental, given the age of these works, there are enough patterns to the destruction to raise questions. The miniature of the drowned monk appears to have had some liquid acting as a solvent spilled on it and may have been scraped or rubbed as well, especially on the top right where the devils are portrayed. If deliberate, this may have been done to rob them of their evil power, as might also be the case for the damage to the Vikings in the miniature of the Virgin’s tunic, and to the face of the man with the large axe in the miniature of the man with the amputated leg. In the Gospel miniatures, the facial features both of the Virgin and of the angel are obliterated in the Annunciation, as are the faces of Mary and Zacharias in that of the birth of John the Baptist, and the faces of the angel and of Zacharias in the temple scene, and probably also the face of the angel in the scene of the Shepherds. As Doyle points out, the first initial, possibly inhabited, at the top of the first page of Part II beginning of the Gospel story was cut out. This selective damage, especially to the faces in the Gospel miniatures and to the evil figures in the Miracle miniatures suggests purposeful if surreptitious activity, as seems to be the case also for the rubbed devil and the damaged face of Mercy in the early fifteenth-century Douce 104 Manuscript of Piers Plowman. Similar impulses may have

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137 Doyle, introduction, The Vernon Manuscript 8.

138 See folios 96 and 94 respectively in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104. These may be seen in color in Derek Pearsall, ed., Piers Plowman: a facsimile of Bodleian
been behind the damage to the Auchinleck Manuscript in the faces of the King of Tars and his wife, where a solvent-type of liquid seems to have resulted in color loss similar to that in the miniature of the drowned monk. In the same manuscript there may have been some rubbing of the Pater Noster miniature, making it difficult to see it clearly, but there was certainly a deliberate attempt to damage the miniature of *De wenche pat loued a king* on folio 256v where the center portion was scraped away, although this last may have resulted from much later censorship. Also post-medieval are the erasures or lines crossing out the word “pope” and texts about St. Thomas of Canterbury in the Vernon Manuscript. Doyle speculates that Protestant reformers might also have removed some of the missing leaves because they contained texts or miniatures considered objectionable. The patches over some of the missing miniatures might have been made at that time or before since a patch over twenty-three lines of the *Prick of Conscience* was written over with the missing words in a mid-sixteenth-century secretary hand. There would appear to have been successive outbreaks of iconoclastic activity in these manuscripts. Of interest in the present study are the reasons for those that could have been made in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries soon after these manuscripts were made. This is what I will explore in the introduction to the following chapter where I will discuss the views of Lollards and other reformers towards images and how these may have influenced the choice of subjects in the miniatures in the *Pearl* Manuscript, not to mention the actual design of the Ellesmere Manuscript, the subject of my last chapter.

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139 Doyle, introduction, *The Vernon Manuscript* 11.

140 Doyle, introduction, *The Vernon Manuscript* 11.
VI

The Image Controversies in Late Medieval England and the Visual Prefaces and Epilogues in the Pearl Manuscript: Creating a Meta-Narrative of the Spiritual Journey to the New Jerusalem

And again the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13.45-46)

And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each... (Apoc. 21.21)

Introduction

The modest size of the Pearl Manuscript of 90 vellum leaves, about 4 3/4 by 6 3/4 inches, makes it easily portable and so particularly suitable for private reading. It is the antithesis of the Vernon Manuscript, the largest extant Middle English work, which is about four times that length and dimension. Both are literary manuscripts, but their respective measurements signal what their illustrations manifest: diametrically opposed influences with respect to the image controversies that disturbed, as they stimulated, the cultural productions of the late fourteenth century in England.

Before I discuss the twelve miniatures in the Pearl Manuscript, it is best to consider when they were made in relation to the copying of the text and why this matters. On the basis that the first folio of the Pearl poem looks worn, as if it had lain unprotected for a time before the bifolium of pictures was added in front of it, the miniatures added to the Manuscript were thought to have been executed sometime after the scribe had finished the text. As late as 1996 Kathleen Scott stated in her catalogue that the poems in this manuscript were composed after about 1360, copied between 1375-1400, and illustrated about 1400-1410. In the following year, the hiatus in time between the copying of the


2The Vernon Manuscript measures about 393 x 544 mm (about 15 1/2 x 21 1/2 inches) and now has 350 out of an original 422 or 426 leaves, according to Doyle, introduction, The Vernon Manuscript 1.

3Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts, vol. 2, 62. This appears to be based on A. I. Doyle, "The Manuscripts," in Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background, ed. D. Lawton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1982) 92-93, who suggested it had been copied in two stages, the script in the last quarter of the fourteenth
script and the making of the miniatures was challenged by Paul Reichardt, who observed that the first of the pictures preceding the text, especially the lower right quadrant, looks just as worn. This, among other reasons concerning their quality (discussed below), means that the Pearl Manuscript illustrations could have been made shortly after the script, that is, around the last decade of the fourteenth century when the Vernon Manuscript was made. Such a date for their composition makes all the more informative any differences in content and style in the illustrations of these two manuscripts. These differences are telling with respect to the Pearl Manuscript illustrations which, seen in isolation from their historical context, have been much maligned.

Extensive literary attention has been paid to the poems in the Pearl Manuscript—Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight—which are extant only in this small, unpretentious book. Except for the pioneering work of Israel Gollancz, there was little interest in the miniatures until they were taken somewhat more seriously by Jennifer Lee who saw them as an early form of audience response, although she thought that the artist was “neither a skilled illuminator nor an able literary critic.” Close to a decade later, Sarah Horrall considered that “in a simplified form” the artist presents “the main elements of the stories” (the criticism about their lack of adaptation to the stories being “much exaggerated”). Within another decade Kathleen Scott accorded the artist professional status, although she disagreed with Lee about him as a critic or

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4Reichardt, “‘Several Illuminations, Coarsely Executed’” 137-38. That the pictures were likely made after the pages were assembled into gatherings is evident from the fact that the Jonah scene was painted over the two large holes in the vellum to show through to the folio underneath in those places. Horrall, “Notes on British library, MS Cotton Nero A x,” 193-94, attributes the high belt on the women’s gowns and the men’s bag sleeves to the early fourteenth century. However, the women’s belts are worn no higher than the one shown on the Virgin Mary in the Vernon Manuscript on fol. 126v. The Pearl dreamer’s houpelande sleeve styles are similar to those of the bag-sleeves of the angel appearing to Zacharias and of the wide sleeves worn by the sleeping Joseph on fol. 105r and 105v respectively of the Vernon. See also Iris Brooke, Western European Costume: Thirteenth to Seventeenth Century (London: G. Harrap, 1939) 60-62. The blue chaperon with liripipe on fol. 41 and 86v is similar to the fourteenth-century example of fig. 32A in Brooke 74.

5Gollancz, “The Illustrations,” Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain 9-11.

6Lee, “The Illuminating Critic” 44.

7Horrall, “Notes” 198 and 196 respectively.
interpreter of the poems because of his “lack of attention” to them. Around the same
time, Blanch and Wasserman made a detailed study of the hand imagery in the poems
which, in the context of the iconography of the dextra Domini in art, provided a useful
context for the writing Hand in the miniature of Belshazzar’s Feast. Previous to this study
which observes in passing that the illuminations “have been consistently described as
‘crude,’” almost all of the modern critics who have mentioned them at all have given, at
best, only a lukewarm assessment concerning their quality and their relevance to the text.

It is this very issue which Reichardt takes up in “‘Several Illuminations, Coarsely
Executed’: The Illustrations of the Pearl Manuscript” (quoting Sir Frederic Madden’s
words in the first part of his title) and makes the real basis for his re-evaluation of the date
of the miniatures. He sees the common scholarly assumptions that the texts and
illustrations were “produced in isolation from each other” as “a variation on the old theme
of the disparity between the excellence of the poems and the ineptness of the pictures
bound with them,”10 a preconception based on Madden’s pronouncement about their
inferiority and extraneous character. Reichardt argues that the repetitive nature of the
illustrations, one of the criticisms of them by Horraill, actually contributes to the
impression that the four texts form part of an integrated and consistent literary vision. To
this end he discusses the numerical resonances of the twelve miniatures, which I will not
elaborate upon; instead, I take up where he leaves off to show the sort of continuity the
illustrations provide.

In the section immediately following, I consider the relevance of the image
controversies of the times with respect to their style and content, both features which
appear to have misled critics questioning their quality and relevance. Then I demonstrate
that these miniatures provide a spiritual “reading” integrating all four poems within a

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8Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts, 2: 67.

9Blanch and Wasserman, From Pearl to Gawain: Forme to Fynishment 65-110.

10Blanch and Wasserman, From Pearl to Gawain 110. They are referring to the
use of gestures.

11This is, as previously noted, in Studies in Iconography 18 (1997): 119-42. For the
quotation, see Sir Frederic Madden, ed., Syr Gawaine: A Collection of Ancient Romance
Poems, By Scottish and English Authors (London: Rand J. E. Taylor, 1839) xlvii.

12Reichardt, “‘Several Illuminations, Coarsely Executed’: The Illustrations of the
Pearl Manuscript” 137-38.

13Horraill, “Notes” 197. Reichardt, “‘Several Illuminations, Coarsely Executed’: The
Illustrations of the Pearl Manuscript” 136.
liturgical and apocalyptic discourse. In the process I show, for the first time and with the aid of modern technology, what is revealed underneath the dark wavy “spot” of the first miniature. I also explore the implications, in terms of design and significance, of the presently misaligned worm holes and repairs along the spine, previously unnoticed, in the miniatures preceding the Pearl poem.

The Image Controversy in England

To understand the nature and purpose of the Pearl Manuscript illustrations, given their extreme plainness and the absence of holy images, it is useful to see them in the context of the image debates sparked in the late fourteenth century by Wyclif and the Lollard movement. The miniatures of the Pearl Manuscript not only deal with the dangers of idolatry but strictly avoid occasions for it. Yet they do not avoid featuring orthodox views about the Eucharist and utilizing conventional iconographic expectations in relation, for instance, to the Noah and Jonah cycles. In this section, I will present the iconodule position favoring the use of holy images as argued by Walter Hilton, along with a visual example from the Vernon Manuscript which includes two of Hilton’s works. Following this I will refer briefly to iconomachic views about the dangers of images as expressed by Wyclif and the Lollards.

Part IV of the Vernon Manuscript includes the first book of the Scale of Perfection, composed in the 1380s by Walter Hilton. He is also associated with De Adoracione Ymaginum, a tract in defense of images which is not included in the Vernon but demonstrates significant parallels in content and phraseology to the Scale. In this tract, Hilton quotes John of Damascus who answers those who “complain loudly against

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14 These are the first book of the Scale of Perfection (see below) and Letters to a Layman: On the Mixed Life.


us adoring and honoring the image of our Savior and of our queen and the mother of God” by referring to Basil’s statement that the “honor of the image comes through to the prototype.” By illustrating the efficacy of devotion to images of the Virgin in the miniatures for the Miracles of Our Lady, where it is the prototype who is actually shown responding, and in its inclusion of texts such as the Scale, the Vernon Manuscript, in effect, becomes a participant in the debate by manifesting the orthodox position on images. N. F. Blake even considers it possible that the onset of the Lollard heresy prompted the Vernon collection.

The Vernon Manuscript demonstrates, in a particularly interesting way, the orthodox view on representing, for example, the Trinity. This subject is enclosed within the “P” beginning the Prick of Conscience (fig. 57), discussed in my previous chapter. In his tract on images Hilton argues in favour of the legitimacy of representations of the Trinity, a practice the Lollards condemned. He excuses simple folk who might think the three persons in the Trinity are separate persons because they would do better if they could. Although Hilton condones the use of corporeal analogies by the uneducated, he also discusses the more sophisticated use of images by the literate who kneel before


18 In the Vernon Manuscript, on fol. 125v, the prototype of the Virgin has come out of her statue to restore the amputated leg of a faithful man who had prayed many times before her image; on fol. 126, a priest who had prayed before her statue on behalf of another priest who lay with a nun then administers the Eucharist to the former fornicator, attended by the prototype of the Virgin herself; and on fol. 126v, the prototype of the Virgin has again left her statue in the minster church to dispute with the devil about the fate of her sacristan who had always greeted her statue in passing (she also rescues the latter from drowning). In De Adoracione Ymaginum, in Clark and Taylor, Walter Hilton’s Latin Writings 1:194, Hilton, quoting John of Damascus, refers to Basil: Ut enim ait deiferus et magmus in divinis Basilius: Ymaginis honor ad prohotipum pervenit.


images that serve as a reminder, whereupon they forget them and pray to God and the saints. In the bottom right corner of the Vernon depiction of the Trinity, just such a literate figure is represented. The representation of the corporeal aspects of the bleeding Christ might have served the kneeling figure as a reminder of the actual crucifixion but this, in turn, would have led to the contemplation of a more abstract apprehension of the Trinity, as implied by the three interwoven strands that compose the initial “Φ.” In the same chapter of John of Damascus that Hilton refers to, the former emphasizes the Incarnation as the justification for the making of holy images: because God was made man in substance, the image of his crucifixion, for instance, reminds us of his saving Passion and we fall down and adore that which is represented. This is what the Vernon pictorial panel demonstrates.

Within the framework of Hilton’s Scale and De Adoracione Ymaginum, his tract on images, the role of such an image can be seen as more than just an aid for the simple to meditate upon the incarnate Christ. By becoming more proficient in the spiritual life and exercising the imagination in a life of prayer, the spiritually advanced person can come to a vision of the divine. At the beginning of the second book of the Scale, reflecting his mature thought, Hilton speaks again of the process and the goal of contemplation:

Gostly to oure purpos, Jerusalem is as mikel for seyen as sight of pes, & bitokenenµ contemplacioun in perfit luf of God. For contemplacioun is not ellis bot a sight of Iesu, whilk is verrey pes. Pan if þu couete for to come to þis bessed sight of verrey pes & ben a trew pilgrym to Jerusalem-ward, þawȝ it be so þat I were neuer þere, nerþesles as ferforþ as I kan I schal sette þe in þe weye pederward.

21Owst, Literature and Pulpit 138.


23See Russell-Smith, “Walter Hilton” 197, who compares passages and analogies of thought between Hilton’s Scale and this tract on images.

24See especially Coming to Perfection, transl. by David L. Jeffrey, Toward a Perfect Love 60. For a comparable passage in his treatise on images see Russell-Smith, “Walter Hilton” 194.

What were the circumstances that may have stimulated Hilton’s spiritual explorations regarding contemplation and such defenses as the *De Adoracione Ymaginum* in late medieval England? Anne Hudson observes that while several points go back to the earlier iconoclastic controversies in the East, the matter must have been debated in schools during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Oxford scholars in particular being engaged in the subject. Hilton and Wyclif both supported religious writings in English, but these contemporaries diverged on other issues. Wyclif himself did neither originate opposition to images nor did he completely condemn them, as indicated in his treatise on the Ten Commandments. Commenting on the first two Commandments, he admits that the prohibition against images predated the Incarnation but they are justified as books for the unlearned since they can excite religious devotion and raise the mind to God, although worship of the dead image itself is idolatry. He considered that representations of the Trinity in the Mercy Seat configuration could mislead people into thinking God the Father and the Holy Spirit each have a separate physical existence because they are visually represented as an old man and as a dove respectively. One of the “Twelve Conclusions

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26 In addition to the Augustinian Hilton, the defenders of holy images were to include the Dominican Roger Dymmock, Robert Rypon, Robert Alynton, the Franciscan William Woodford, the Carmelite Thomas Netter, and Reginald Pecock. Most of them were “Oxford-educated, first generation anti-Wyclifites,” as observed by Jones, “Lollards and Images” 37. Anne Hudson also refers to John Deveros. See her *Selections from English Wyclifite Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978) 179-81.

27 Hudson, *Selections from English Wyclifite Writings* 179-81. She supports this by noting the use of scholastic terminology and of contemporary examples, as well as overlapping citations, suggesting they derive from a continuing debate. She also mentions that such associates of Wyclif as Robert Alynton later wrote against him.


29 Wyclif, *Tractus* 156.

of the Lollards" singles out this sort of image of the Trinity as the most abominable.31 Seen in this context, the Vernon historiated initial of the Mercy Seat with a monk praying before it makes a twofold statement affirming the orthodox position on images and on the monastic life, both mistrusted by Wyclif and the Lollards.

The Lollards not only championed access to religious truths by lay folk but considered that both men and women who were worthy32 could preach in the vernacular, a direct challenge to the ordained male priesthood. Connected with the issue of preaching was that of the status of the Eucharist. As early as 1382 one of Wyclif's propositions was that Christ is not present in the sacrament of the altar.33 Associated with the dangers of idolatry attendant upon veneration of the man-made object was Wyclif's concern with the excessive materialism and sensuous indulgence provoked by the image delighted in for its beauty or costliness.34 According to one of his sermons, worshipping images and the consecrated host is a twin transgression against the first commandment.35 Wyclif considered that the sooner the accidentals or externals of images, rather than what they stood for, were left behind, the better.36 The lavishness of scale, the gold leaf of the borders, and the ornamentation of the Vernon Manuscript would undoubtedly have represented everything that the Lollards found disturbing, and might even account for the surreptitious rubbing out of the faces of some of the images.37 An early fifteenth-century

31 "Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards," Selections from English Wyclifite Writings 27.


33 For the "Wycliffe Propositions condemned at London, A. D. 1382," see Henry Gee and William John Hardy, Documents Illustrative of English Church History (London: Macmillan, 1910) 108-09. Wyclif also proclaimed that formal confession is unnecessary if a person is repentant.

34 Wyclif, Tractus 156, previously quoted in context in my earlier note.


36 See the discussion by Aston, Lollards and Reformers 139.

37 In the La Estorie del Evangelie or Gospel miniatures, the facial features of the Virgin and of the angel are obliterated in the Annunciation (fol. 105), as are the faces of Mary and Zacharias in that of the birth of John the Baptist (fol. 105v), and the faces of the angel and of Zacharias in the temple scene (fol. 105), and probably also the face of the angel in the scene of the Shepherds (fol. 105v). In the miniatures for the Miracles of Our Lady, the evil figures of the devil (fol. 126v) and the faces of the Vikings (fol. 124) appear also to have been rubbed to rob them of their evil power. This combination of damage to
text in an anthology of works mostly critical of the church reflects tolerance for images without wealthy adornments such as a *pore ymage stondying in a symple kirk or chapel.*\(^{38}\)

The concept of humble images brings me to the illustrations of the *Pearl* Manuscript. W. R. Jones lucidly presents the main concerns of both sides of the image controversy in England at this time, but he concludes that the image debate “never attracted the attention of the medieval artist nor led to a reappraisal of the basic theory and practice of representing divinity in pigment and stone.”\(^{39}\) Referring to the “astringent effect” of the Lollard antipathy to images, in the introduction to her catalogue, Kathleen Scott says that it seems unlikely that opposition to images did not have an influence on the manner in which books were decorated.\(^{40}\) Yet surprisingly, since she does consider the Lollard impact on art, she does not apply these theoretical observations in her catalogue entry for the *Pearl* Manuscript illustrations.

What I am proposing is that contemporary image controversies had a *profound* effect exactly in the contentious space where conflicting and overlapping currents met: illustrated vernacular literary manuscripts. The Vernon Manuscript emphatically manifests the orthodox position both visually and verbally. But why was the *Pearl* Manuscript illustrated in so plain a style—especially in view of its poetry, which is a tour de force of verbal ornament and polished style, a rhetorical performance that draws upon the alliterative tradition of Anglo-Saxon poetry and exhibits no lack of confidence about the resources of the language—if it does not reflect a sensitivity to some of the image issues raised by the Lollards? It is unrealistic to expect that “the medieval artist” was unaffected and did not change “the practice of representing divinity in pigment and stone.” The very absence of images of “divinity” in the *Pearl* Manuscript suggests that the contrary is true. While the illustrations do not identify the Pearl Manuscript as a Lollard product, it may be that they reflect to some extent an awareness of Lollard concerns either by the artist or by the intended readers. There may also have been an element of caution, for if people were

holy and unholy figures also occurs in an illustrated *Piers Plowman* manuscript where the face of Mercy (fol. 94r) and the figure of the devil (fol. 96) have been rubbed and darkened. These may be seen in Pearsall, *Piers Plowman: a facsimile.*

\(^{38}\)“Images and Pilgrimages,” *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* 84. The text is from London, British Library, MS Additional 24202, fols. 26-28v, as mentioned by Hudson, *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings* 179.

\(^{39}\)Jones, “Lollards and Images” 50.

\(^{40}\)Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, vol.1, 43-47. Her catalogue entry for the *Pearl* Manuscript is no. 12 in vol. 2.
being told that *false ymagys and bokis were worthi to be destroyed*, then wise artists would not have wanted to provoke destruction of their labour. Aston gives three examples of the burning of sculpted images including one of St. Andrew, one of a cross, and one of the head of a Virgin, and one example of service books in which the Lollards destroyed the names and illuminated haloes of saints. If, out of an appreciation of Lollard ideas about images, or out of caution, holy images were best avoided, what is left if an artist is restricted from direct illustration of many of a text’s subjects? To do so indirectly is far more demanding and requires a more intimate knowledge of that very text.

When the subjects vary, as they do in the *Pearl Manuscript*, from elegy to heroic romance, the difficulty is increased. What a modern reader would naturally expect by way of illustration for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, for instance, is not there. In none of the four miniatures for this poem is the famous pentangle shown on the front of Gawain’s shield, nor an image of the Virgin on the inside. There is not even a green garter (1829-32, 2395-96; also described as a *belt*, 2485, and a *bende*, 2517). It is no wonder that modern critics have questioned the literacy of the artist or the relevance of the miniatures. Although Phillipa Hardman does not discuss the tokens in relation to the illustrations of the manuscript, she astutely points out that they would have been understood by pious medieval readers as having ambiguous overtones and might even have been viewed by some as idolatrous. She argues that Lollard views on image worship might have provoked questioning of the courtly Gawain’s religious practices while his reliance on tokens could have reminded medieval readers of the tensions between orthodox and irregular beliefs.

The illustrator is also engaged in some of the current social issues alluded to by the poet including those involving images, the Eucharist, and preachers. Emphasis may be given to some subjects by repetition, as in the recurrence of “preaching” figures, or by

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42Aston, *Lollards and Reformers* 171-73. These were the image of St. Andrew from the cemetery at the church of St. Andrew at Trowse Newton in 1427, the cross at Bromehold in 1424, and the image of the Virgin at the parish of Byfield in 1416. The incident of the service books occurred in 1417 when the abbot of St. Albans had a nocturnal search made. One of these defaced service books, as Aston mentions, “was sent to the king who passed it on to the archbishop of Canterbury to serve as an object-lesson for Londoners” (173).


44Hardman, “Gawain’s Practice of Piety” 261.
omission, as in the absence of the tokens mentioned in Gawain. In the visual prefaces and epilogues, it is the deeper spiritual meaning of the poems which the illustrator features to create an allegorical meta-narrative unifying and shaping reception. Whatever one may think of the purely aesthetic value of these images, the rest of my study will show that the artist demonstrates a comprehensive vision of the text and conveys it thoughtfully. The Pearl images do not invite worship nor do they illustrate miraculous powers, but perhaps, in the end, they do inspire contemplation of the celestial, the “vision of peace” that is Jerusalem, in the spiritual pilgrim who reads the manuscript.

**Intimations of the New Jerusalem in the Miniatures of the Pearl Manuscript**

It is as prefaces to Pearl that the first four miniatures function, preparing the viewer for a spiritual quest whose goal is not fully achieved until the very last miniature in the manuscript. This final illustration serves as an epilogue not only to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight but also to the whole compilation, coming back full circle. Some of the intervening miniatures pick up on the sacramental emphasis of the last lines of the Pearl text relating to the priest’s administration of the Eucharist, by means of which we can become the servants of God. Further, by transforming two illustrated courtly feasts into liturgical events, they investigate the priestly and prophetic calling itself. What the artist has done is to create a visual allegory in which many of the biblical and romance incidents of the poems become a progressive series of variations on the pilgrimage to the court of heaven, ultimately seen in apocalyptic terms. In effect, the poems in this compilation have been linked by a visual program. The artist was faced by the same challenge as that which confronted the Ellesmere designer of the Canterbury Tales who decided to illustrate the pilgrim narrators beside the beginnings of their respective tales in order to strengthen the sense of coherence and unity of that compilation. The Pearl Manuscript illustrator’s manner of rendering the featured subjects of the four texts unites them. Even the principal characters look alike, as if this same cast were dramatically enacting the successive events, producing the sense of an autobiographical journey in which the viewer participates spiritually in a variety of roles. The Pearl Manuscript avoids direct depictions of God, the Virgin, and the Saints, sensitive subjects for illustration in view of the iconophobic views of the followers of Wycliffe, the Lollards, and various other reformist factions active during this period—hence the exclusion of portraits of the celestial court where modern readers might expect them, and the visual substitution of indirect representations.

The first miniature in the manuscript establishes the visionary framework of what is to follow by showing the dreamer asleep on the side of a flowery hill with stylized trees (fig. 63). Like the illustration of the dreamer on the first folio of the Douce 104
manuscript of *Piers Plowman*, this figure functions as a kind of author portrait since the viewer follows his progress. The dreamer's body parallels the lines of the undulating hillside above and of the dark green spot below him, inviting the viewer to allow the identification of the bereaved dreamer with the landscape. Upon first glance the *erber grene* 'green arbor' seems to be part of the typical sort of pleasure garden which could extend to several acres and include treed areas with streams, as indicated in the study on contemporary aristocratic gardens by Laura Howes. What is intriguing about this visual representation is the prominent dark green spot below the dreamer towards which he reaches even in his sleep.

Since it is not obvious in looking at the original manuscript what the spot "contains"—whether it was meant to represent a spot within the earth or a pond of water—I was fortunate in having the opportunity to discuss the problem with Anthony Parker, the British Museum's Senior Conservation Officer in the Manuscripts Conservation Studio. By the application of sophisticated technology, he was able photographically, as it were, to lift off the dark layer of paint to reveal what is underneath. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is just a continuation of the flowery meadow on the hillside (fig. 64). The dark paint was added later. It is the same streaky paint as that applied roughly to the streams in the other three *Pearl* miniatures (figs. 65-67). Because this blue paint was applied on top of the yellow grass at the center of the hill, consistent with dry spots in August, the wavy spot is of a darker aqua green color than the blue of the streams in the other three miniatures.

So what does the spot, which was deliberately colored in to complete this picture, signify? Clearly it was considered important to emphasize the multi-layered suggestiveness of the "spot." The possible levels of signification include: 1. The spot where, on a symbolic level, the pearl flowed through the grass to the ground (10). 2. The flowery turf into which he felle into a sudden sleep (57). 3. His daughter's grave. 4. The spot where the

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46Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, eds. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978) 10, 1, 38. Subsequent line references to the poems will be from this edition and will be inserted in brackets following the quotations in my text.


48He used a Video Spectral Comparator and an IC8 Integrator Comparator.
sede (34) will sprout into flower as the dreamer tries to console himself with the knowledge that his buried pearl, like a seed, will likewise come to life again. The seed image resonates with the parables of the mustard seed in which the “Kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field” (Matt. 13.24), preparing the way for the rendition, in both the text and the last Pearl miniature, of paradise as a kingly estate. Further, it anticipates the grown-up version of the daughter he encounters later in the Pearl poem, in that it is “the least indeed of all seeds: but when it grows up, it is greater than all herbs and becomes a tree” (Matt. 13.32). This last adds an extra layer of meaning to the trees in the miniature. The “pearl of great price” later in the same chapter in Matthew (13. 45-46) links both seed and pearl images with the kingdom of heaven. The visual program intimates that this is the real goal of the quest. 5. The stream, a little later in the vision, beside which strophe-men ‘marsh-men’ sleep (115) and on the bottom of which jewels shine like those that glint through glass, as the steaming stars glitter in the clouds in the winter night (109-120). The semi-translucence of the paint is particularly effective in conveying this in that some of the white and red spots of the flowers originally underneath are still visible, allowing for this conflated or alternate interpretation of them as luminous stones reflecting the stars above. In the poem, the jeweled stream reflecting the starry skies (113-16) serves as an analogy of the subterranean or interior state from which the dreamer is transported to his vision of the New Jerusalem. 49 The gestures of the dreamer in the second Pearl miniature (fig. 65) appear to refer to this inversion. 6. An anticipation, also, of the stream as a barrier preventing the dreamer from crossing over to the Pearl Maiden in the celestial realm. As prominently featured in the following miniatures in which it slashes obliquely across the visionary landscape (figs. 64-66), it becomes a river of death as indicated by the large sea-creatures (showing through the paint), not mentioned in the Pearl text but occupying the deep in the miniatures of Noah, as well as of Jonah and the Whale. 50 At the beginning of the Pearl poem the dreamer is likewise frustrated when he cannot grasp either the fallen pearl or, as the reader soon finds out, the dead child symbolized by the pearl, which in turn is seen to symbolize the kingdom of heaven from which man is excluded by sin. Thus, like those in Dante’s Divine Comedy, the introductory landscapes “are also the containers for the seeds of the future

49 See the discussion in Despres, “Pearl: Penance Through the Dream Vision,” Ghostly Sights 89-118.

50 Fols. 60 and 86 respectively.
In this first miniature, the dreamer is not wearing his chaperon with its scalloped lirripipe which seems to have taken on a life of its own, as if lifted by a breeze. In his dreamscape, represented in the second miniature on the verso folio (fig. 65), he walks hatless through a transfigured forest of trees where *As bornyxt sythe ben on styde* (77). Since these trees occur in his dream, they are close replications of those in the landscape in which he fell asleep, as the miniaturist astutely implies not only by their similarity, but also by the compositional masses which occupy the same spaces on both the recto and verso sides, as does the hillside (even the dark wavy spot, located below the dreamer in the first, is replaced by the stream in the second). The miniatures indicate that it is the perception of the ecstatic dreamer that has changed. The sense of a disjunction of realities, however, is implied by the alteration of the dreamer’s red houpelande, which in the four *Pearl* miniatures varies between two different shades of red (not to mention the loss of whatever cord was tying it in at the waist in his recumbent position) and different styles of sleeve, suggesting the time lapses and the unexplained shifts characteristic of dreams. Despite the artist’s cautionary choice of subjects, the face of the dreamer in the second miniature appears to have been rubbed out, suggesting that the person responsible was unaware of the referent.

The standing dreamer points down to the stream he cannot cross with his left hand while beckoning with his right hand to the Pearl maiden across from him in the facing, third miniature (fig. 66). This landscape seems an extension of that of the second miniature—but for a slight jog at the joining edges. While these Pearl miniatures are on a bifolium added to the text of Pearl, there is a circumstance that allows, among other things, for the possibility that these facing scenes were drawn continuously on the same sheet originally—namely, the presence of three worm holes which now do not quite line up but once obviously did. Likewise previously unnoticed, there is evidence that this

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52Gollancz, “The Illustrations,” *Pearl* 9, thought this might be a “metaphorical idea” indicating the dreamer’s spirit has sped forth. A similar chaperon can be seen on the man leaning on a cane in the miniature of Jonah preaching in Nineveh, fol. 86v. See my subsequent discussion.

53One of them is just visible as a white dot on the top left tree (fig. 63) of the first miniature. In the manuscript itself it measures 1.4 cm. from the top and 3 cm. from the
bifolium was expertly repaired along the spine with an added strip at some time in the past, as Anthony Parker pointed out to me when we were discussing the problem of continuity. This, in addition to the non-alignment of the worm holes, means that each leaf of the bifolium was separated, and the vertical strip of the original fold at the spine cut off, presumably because it was damaged, to be replaced by new backing to the remaining portion of each leaf to make a bifolium once again. What this suggests even more strongly than at present is that the repetitiveness of the settings in these miniatures was intended to suggest the spatial paradoxes intimated by the poem—of continuous yet simultaneous realities and of passing from one to the other by visionary means. Elisabeth Petroff Martin describes this sort of relationship in geometrical terms: "the interrelationship of successive landscapes...is not only linear, but circular and reciprocal."

The third miniature gives the first view of the Pearl Maiden herself, significantly displaying only three pearls, rather than the profusion described in the poem. This can only be an allusion to the Trinity, an early indication of her true significance. The Pearl Maiden herself looks across to the dreamer on the previous, facing miniature, repelling his summons with a gesture of reproach. In the poem she chastises him for his attempts to cross the stream. In the role of teacher, she reproaches him for seeking to recover that which is transitory and for failing to accept her transformed status from child to Queen. Like a preacher, she recounts to him, in the vernacular of course, the parable of the vineyard by way of explaining the doctrine of salvation by grace, exemplifying divine generosity at the court of heaven where all are equal. As if to reinforce her message, the

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54 Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that there may have been more folios between the pictures and the text.

55 Petroff Martin, "Psychological Landscape," 368-69.

56 Compare Canon XXXV, illustrated as “W” in the Chirogrammatic Plate D and Gestus XXXIV illustrated as Chirogrammatic Plate B in John Bulwer’s mid seventeenth-century Chirologia 186, 193, 64 and 117. In speaking of the chastising hand of God, he refers the signification of Isaiah 11.15 when he prophesies that “the Lord...shall lift up his hand over the river” (Douai version; levabit manum suam Flumen in Biblia Sacra), a consideration that may not have been far from the mind of the designer of these miniatures.

57 This is in contrast to William Langland’s portrayal of the hierarchy in heaven, according to merit, as pictured by the marginal illustration of the saved thief on fol. 65r of the Douce Manuscript. See my discussion in "Retributive Violence and the Reformist Agenda in the Illustrated Douce 104 MS of Piers Plowman," 26.
figure in the bottom left of the same miniature seems to function not merely as the
dreamer but in the role of witnessing narrator, pointing to her with both hands the better
to direct the viewer’s gaze to the focus of the illustration.

In the last *Pearl* miniature (fig. 67), the dreamer likewise points up to the Pearl
Maiden whose right hand is now held to her heart as she holds out her left hand to him.
The two figures no longer seem as disconnected from each other as in the previous
miniatures. The dreamer’s eyes appear to look at the viewer, inviting spiritual
participation. As Queen, the Maiden is revealed within the New Jerusalem, shown as a
fortified castle with crenellated walls and a crenellated tower, the openings in the shape of
crosses helping to reinforce the transformed sense. By her position between the tower and
a church-like structure, she can also be identified as the pearl gate of John’s apocalyptic
vision (21.21). Dressed in white she is the Bride of Christ at the celestial wedding feast
referred to in the poem (although the bridal white can also serve as an allusion to her
shroud). This multivalent image of the Pearl Maiden implies that the New Jerusalem is
itself a body made up of the maidens within it, except that in the miniature their equality is
indicated by the one who represents them all and in herself represents the mystical body of
Christ. The mound on which the dreamer sleeps in the first *Pearl* miniature is also the
mound upon which the New Jerusalem is located, the love garden having become a
paradisal garden, supporting the observation concerning the text that “the opening
landscape is not fully understandable until we see its final transformation in the last
landscape of the poem.”

What is of particular interest in the last of the Pearl miniatures is that, unlike the
poem—which ends abruptly with the narrator awakening back in the arbor where he fell
asleep, seeking consolation in seeing, if not the Pearl, at least the Eucharist—here he is left
in his dream, looking up beyond the stream but unable to enter the New Jerusalem.
Likewise, in the miniature of the Flood, Noah is depicted in the Ark (fig. 68), but there is
no corresponding scene of his safe landing. This sense of destination deferred is

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58 Marti, in the chapter on “*Interior Intimo Meo: The Spatiality of the Heart,*” in his
dissertation, “The Figurative Use of the Body in *Pearl,*” 206-48, develops the significance
of the pearl at the center of the Pearl Maiden’s breast, corresponding with the location of
the heart, connecting it with the rose and the Eucharist.


60 See, for instance, the miniature of Jonah being cast up at the gate of a city, very
like the New Jerusalem in the *Pearl* miniature. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Liturg.198,
1350-60, fol. 60, is reproduced in Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285-1385*,
reinforced in the miniature of Jonah thrown to the whale (fig. 69), but his arrival on dry land is not shown.

The subject of the Eucharist with which the Pearl poem ends resurfaces at the beginning of Cleanliness, which comes next in the manuscript. The second prefatorial miniature for Cleanliness, showing Daniel interpreting the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast, contains some curious items among the Jewish holy vessels (fig. 70). Recalling the opening of the poem which mentions unclean priests who insincerely offer up the Mass, loathing God and his vessels, the illustrator has depicted the Jewish vessels as the Christian vessels of the Mass, a circumstance not noted by scholars before insofar as the miniatures are concerned. In his dissertation, however, Francis John Ingledew demonstrates that “the concept of cleanness proceeds unequivocally from the liturgical discourse of ordination and the eucharist, and that its use signals the poem’s concern with the priesthood.”61 The stories of Noah’s Flood, Sodom, and Belshazzar’s Feast, he continues, deal with the means by which cleanness is urged and with the “conventions of prophetic discourse on the Last Things.” He shows that the court of Babylon, a carnal court, is opposed to the divine court, described at the beginning of Cleanliness in the scene of the eschatological Wedding Feast.62

In the miniature of Belshazzar’s Feast, the vessels include a gold monstrance with the host of the Eucharist in the center, the chalice in the middle, and to the right, a bishop’s crozier. By this interpretation of the vessels seen in terms of those of the Mass, the artist is adhering to orthodox rather than Lollard ideas about the Transubstantiation. Such a visual reading was undoubtedly suggested by the mention of Belshazzar’s blasphemous honoring of heathen idols with cups which had formerly been blessed by bishop’s hands (1718, also 1445). The white table linen referred to in connection with the coverings upon which the treasures of Jerusalem were laid out (1440), suggests altar cloths, as well as the tablecloths shown in illustrations of courtly feasts, both of which the miniaturist exploits, the latter exemplified at the Christmas feast scene at King Arthur’s court at Camelot (fig. 71). There the golden columnned structure on the right of the bleeding blond head more closely resembles a ciborium used to house the Eucharist. Strangely configured in this scene is the placement of the Green Knight’s decapitated head against the backdrop of the white tablecloth, like a head of John the Baptist. Certainly, there appear to be ritual sacrificial overtones in this layout, possibly supporting Ingledew’s

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62Ingledew, “Jerusalem, Babylon, Camelot,” 63-64.
observations concerning the suggestions in the poem of the Circumcision, which was assimilated to the Passion in medieval homiletic literature about the Five Wounds of Christ. This subject is also symbolized in the poem, as will be recalled, by the Pentangle. The feast of the Circumcision, the first wound Christ suffered, is celebrated on January 1, placing it within the Yuletide season when the events of the poem begin. Certainly any reference to the Circumcision, which became a common subject in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century art, gives quite another dimension to the sharp weapons dominating this miniature. There is no biblical mention of where the Circumcision of Christ took place, but one late fourteenth-century half-page miniature for a Poem on the Life of Christ shows it taking place on a cloth-covered table or altar, with the Virgin and two figures shown behind it. Since the Circumcision refers, like the Baptism, to cleansing, any such overtones in this miniature, along with its liturgical emphasis, place this last poem in the manuscript within the framework of Christian salvation history.

The first prefatorial miniature for CLEANESS features Noah and his family in the Ark (fig. 68). One of his sons stirs the waves of the Flood waters. Above him is a praying figure in a red houpelande who looks like the Pearl dreamer of the earlier miniatures. This gives the impression that the dreamer-narrator is a witness and even participates emotionally. The fish which swam in the river of death separating the dreamer from the Pearl Maiden have now increased in size, and one symbolically swallows another, anticipating the next miniature prefacing Patience, which shows the Whale swallowing Jonah (fig. 69). The spiritual significance of these sea creatures derives from the discussion of the sins in CLEANESS where the proud are described as rushing into pe deuelez prote (180). This image is no doubt derived from visual representations of the mouth of hell popular since late Anglo-Saxon times. In the account of the Flood, there is only deth in

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63 Ingledew, "Jerusalem, Babylon, Camelot," 162.

64 See, for instance, the large sharp knife used in the Circumcision in such miniatures as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 1, fol. 24v, reproduced in Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts, vol. 1, illus. 21. On the Circumcision in art, see Schiller, Iconography of Christian Art 1: 88-90. Schiller points out that the knife used is included among the Instruments of the Passion and that the Circumcision itself is one of the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

65 See Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.10.15, fol. 7v, reproduced in Sandler, Gothic Manuscripts, vol. 1, illus. 323.


67 See, for instance, the hell mouth in the scene of the Fall of the Rebel Angels in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11, p. 3 which also contains several elements the poet
He depe stremez (374) and, at the end of forty days, there stirred no flesh that He flod made al freten (403-04). Even though the text of Patience says that no tooth touched Jonah (252), in the miniature the artist couldn’t resist following the dramatic iconography of the mouth of hell by having the whale’s sharp teeth closing over his head. That he has descended into hell is first implied by the analogies that the whale’s stomach stank as pe deuel and sauoured as hell and then is specifically stated when Jonah says the Lord heard him from hellen wombe (274, 275, and 306). Just as the Pearl Maiden in her person is also the New Jerusalem, so the infernal counterpart is represented in the miniatures by the swallowing sea creature which is identified as the body of Satan who is also hell.

The account of Noah is but one in the series in Cleanliness proving the might of God’s Word, closely identified with the power of his hands, provoked to punish or to deliver, as when the Flood waters had washed away the filth of the earth and the passengers in the Ark are told to go to the door (499-500). The story of the abominations of Belshazzar associates his lechery (he enjoys richly dressed concubines), his desecration of God’s vessels, and his idolatry. Daniel tells Belshazzar that he has defiled the sacred vessels in which were served

Wale wyne to þy wenches in waryed stoundes;  
Bifore þy borde hatz þou brost beuerainge in þ’edé,  
Þat blybely were fyrst bliest with bishops hondes,  
Louande þeron lese goddez þat lyfhaden nmier,  
Made of stokkes and stonez þat neuer styry most. (1716-20)

(Choice wine to your wenches in accursed hours; / Before your table you have brought beverage in the vessels, / That blithely were first blessed by bishops’ hands, / Honoring with these the false gods that never had life, / Made of sticks and stones that never could stir.)

There are elaborate descriptions of the artfulness both of God’s vessels and of the idols made of sticks and stones, both are gilded and adorned with silver, but they are differentiated by the fact that the former were consecrated as holy in His presens (1495). So while both the poem and the miniature (fig. 70) demonstrate an awareness of contemporary issues, they show support for the orthodox concept of the holiness of the vessels and there is no criticism of their material substance or beauty, as there might be if either were strictly Lollard endeavors. The miniature draws attention to the unclean priests who handle the Eucharist, as mentioned on the facing page where the poem begins. The visual lines of direction indicated by the hands of God, the king, and Belshazzar emphasize
describes in Cleanliness. Perhaps this manuscript, or one very like it, was familiar.

On the human level, the swords of the evil Babylonians “swolwed” the Israelites (1268; also, 1253).
the “reading” process involved in the interpretation of God’s Word.

The miniature conflates several stages of the process. In the upper left the Hand of God has just finished writing the three fateful words: *Mane Techal Phares*. Since the meaning of these mysterious *runisch sauez* (1545) is not given until after Daniel has read them (1727), they would initially have appeared as unintelligible letters. They are compared to the furrows cut by a ploughman into the earth (1547). Possibly the miniaturist portrayed the words on a scroll rather than directly on the wall because they are described as *schrapture* (1546). It also recalls the earlier image of the clean soul of the penitent being brighter than pearls and as smooth as newly scraped parchment (1134). There the poet indicates that whether it be a man’s soul or any kind of vessel that once served him, God forbids that it be made unclean on pain of his vengeance, as the story of Belshazzar proves. Here, however, God’s engraved words feel to the terrified Belshazzar as if they are fraying his very *flesche* (1553). In the miniature the writing Hand is further emphasized by Belshazzar’s right hand which is raised beside it (although palm out rather than turned like the Hand) as he looks at it. Beside him in the miniature is the Queen, who was not present during the writing episode, but who later counsels her husband to send for Daniel, infused with the spirit of God. Then in the lower left part of the miniature Daniel, whose position is almost a mirror image of the three-quarter profile of the King, looks off into the distance away from the letters to “read” their meaning. His gesture indicates that he is explaining them but, since his hands point down, their negative import is signaled: because of the King’s sinfulness, God has measured his kingdom, his reign is in the balance and is found wanting, and so his kingdom will be taken from him and given to the Persians.

The other miniature which shares with the scene of Belshazzar’s feast the central position in the twelve miniatures in this manuscript is that of Jonah being thrown to the whale (fig. 69). This first prefatorial miniature for Patience is depicted in the space below the end of the text of Clemens, as if in continuation of it, which in a sense it is because it also features the power of the Word. Jonah refused God’s request to preach his words to the people of Nineveh, so he was punished by being swallowed by the whale. The second prefatorial miniature on the verso depicts the rescued Jonah, releasing God’s words locked within him (350) by preaching at Nineveh as originally requested (fig. 72). This prophet is very like Daniel in dress. His gesture is also similar since it prophesies God’s vengeance against Nineveh, which will be swallowed by the deep abyss in forty days (362-63). His large size in relation to the audience to whom he preaches indicates his importance, just as the heroic axe-wielding King Richard, for example, is shown larger than his crew in the
But in the Patience illustration the ermine trim on his sleeve gives a further clue as to Jonah's typological significance. In Matthew 12.40 Christ speaks of his coming death and resurrection in terms of the story of Jonah who was in the whale's belly three days and nights. Following the Harrowing of Hell, Christ was thought to have preached to the captives in hell. Augustine considered that the spirits in prison to whom Christ preached according to I Peter 3.18-19 referred to the captives in hell and also to those "prisoners in the death of unbelief and wickedness." In the poem, the people of Nineveh are referred to as accursed fiends engaged in villainy and venomous beliefs (83, 71). The Patience miniature contains elements both of the Harrowing and the Preaching iconographies, the former reflected in the large Christ-like figure bending over the smaller figures who are often led by Adam and Eve raising their hands to him, a tradition suggested here by the woman figure. Beside them is a figure dressed in the same red houpelande and blue chaperon with liripipe (which he is now wearing) as the dreamer in the first Pearl miniature (fig. 63). This reinforces the impression that the dreamer-narrator is on a spiritual pilgrimage and is taking part in the Old Testament incidents. Now he is more dwarf-like and shrunken with age as he leans on his cane, perhaps having become identified also with the poet narrator of Patience who twice describes himself as poor and patient (35-36, 528-31). He consoles himself with the thought that, like the first and last of the blessed, he too shall inherit the kingdom of heaven as described at the beginning of the poem when he hears Matthew 5.3-11 read at Mass. The idea of an internal journey is reinforced too by the portrayal earlier of Daniel, the interpreter of dreams. A spiritual or internal journey is often in itself, metaphorically, a descent.

Descent myths involving transformations, as explored by Northrop Frye, include not only descents into the subterranean or submarine world but also, metaphorically, into the forest, often conceived in terms of the hunt, which includes sexual overtones. The first two visual epilogues of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight recapitulate the poem in just these terms. The first depicts the sexual temptation of Gawain by the Lady Bercilak (fig. 73). Like the Pearl dreamer whom he resembles, Gawain is asleep, in this case within

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69 See fol. 326 as reproduced in the facsimile, The Auchinleck Manuscript.


*comly cortynes* 'comely curtains' (1732). The Lady calls to him, rousing him from his dark dreams about his coming encounter at the Green Chapel. Instead of showing her kissing him, the artist has her chucking his chin in a courting gesture.  

Although in the poem, the lady’s fashionable gown is découleté (1741), the prudish artist has given her a high-necked, albeit fashionable houpelande. The fabric is gathered at her waist but there is no evidence of the green girdle she gives him at the end of this encounter, since that is not what the artist is featuring.

It is in the bedroom, as Phillipa Hardman argues, that the Virgin Mary’s knight needs her protection from danger, as mentioned by the poet (1768-69). The artist’s rendition is in accord with the issues raised in the preceding poems. According to *Cleanliness*, the sins which most outrage God are the fleshly ones (202, 265-70), for which he caused not only the Flood but the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet man appears to be repeatedly inclined to desecrate his own image by *harlotrye vnhonest, helpynge of seluen* (579). In the last part of *Patience* Jonah is annoyed because God saved the people of Nineveh, but God replies that naturally he would preserve his handiwork made in his own image; also, they were repentant (501-04). It is within this theological construct that the temptation of Gawain is seen. If he had allowed himself to be seduced, it would have been a sin not only against the lord of the castle, but against the Lord. It is after this episode that Gawain goes to make his confession in the castle chapel. Later Bercilak says that Gawain is to other knights as a pearl is to a white pea (2364-65).

The next Gawain miniature on the verso folio of the temptation scene depicts the armed Gawain riding to the dreaded Green Chapel at the appointed time on New Year’s Day (fig. 74). Although this miniature is much faded, it is still possible to see the artist’s imaginative recreation of the Wirral in this eerie, unearthly landscape. In the bottom half the fully armed Gawain searches for the chapel, sees nothing resembling such a thing, but comes to a barrow (2170-72). It is this that is portrayed at the bottom right. It does not appear to have been previously noticed, but there appears to be a faint outline of a hunched, seated figure inside the hollow of the mound (fig. 75). Perhaps this is a materialization of Gawain’s expectations as influenced by the servant’s earlier description of the inhabitant of that wasteland who loves to condemn to death with a strike from his hand anyone passing by (2098-2109). In the miniature (fig. 74) this being looks out of the barrow’s opening in the direction of the red reins of Gringolet and the hem of Gawain’s

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72See the display of amorous couples on the lid of the ivory casket of scenes from the tale of the Prodigal Son, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 41.100.159, French, 1325-50, reproduced in C. Jean Campbell, “Courting, Harlotry and the Art of Gothic Ivory Carving,” *Gesta* 34.1 (1995) fig. 4.
red cote (2026). Also facing in the opposite direction, like this figure in the darkness of the cave, is the Green Knight in the upper half of the miniature. Curiously, this allegorically charged figure, suggestive of Death with an axe, is an exact replica of Gawain in the prefatorial miniature (fig. 71), except that now he wears green instead of red. Gawain on his horse exactly duplicates the Green Knight on his horse in the earlier miniature (without loss of his head), except that he is now in red. What is one to make of this? The transposition of these two figures, now effectively separated by the design of the page into two registers, along with the figure in the mouth of the cave, seems to imply a sort of transformation of identity. This feature reinforces the presentation of the journey as a spiritual descent not unlike Jonah's into the whale, which is itself described as a cavern (Patience 272).

Visually, the denied access to the New Jerusalem, in which the last of the Pearl miniatures left the dreamer, is resolved in the very last miniature of the manuscript in which Gawain is shown at the threshold of Camelot, being welcomed back by the regal figure of King Arthur (fig. 76). Arthur raises up Gawain, just as in the iconography of the Harrowing of Hell Christ often raises the figure of Adam. Gawain is received at the arched entranceway which, in the visual allegory created by the artist, becomes the gate of Eden (out of which Adam was first cast by Michael with his flaming sword), visually prefigured in this manuscript's miniatures by the Pearl Maiden in her symbolic role as gate of the New Jerusalem in John's apocalyptic vision. The Queen's presence in this last miniature recalls the crowned Pearl Maiden. The artist has finally allowed the hero, albeit of a different poem, to enter the court of heaven. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight ends with a prayer that includes the audience, drawing the connection between Camelot and the bliss of the celestial court:

Now þat bere þe croun of þorne
He bryng vus to His blysses!  (2529-30)

73Except that here, Arthur's other hand is raised in a gesture of welcome instead of holding, as does Christ, a resurrection banner. See, for instance, the Harrowing of Hell in Sandler, Gothic Manuscripts, vol. 1, Illus. 314, showing the Fitzwarin Psalter, Paris, MS Bibl. Nat. lat. 765, 1350-70, fol. 15.
Framing the Canterbury Pilgrims for the Aristocratic Readers of the Ellesmere Manuscript

Introduction

In its restrained elegance, the visual presentation of the Canterbury Tales in the Ellesmere Manuscript is quite unlike that of the comparatively humble miniatures of the Pearl Manuscript. Surprising, especially in view of the books of hours owned by the wealthy, is the degree of circumspection involved in avoiding the portrayal of divine or saintly figures. This avoidance likely contributed to the decision to portray, instead, the pilgrim narrators. Such a strategy indirectly emphasizes authors, if not divine authorship, although that is alluded to in Chaucer’s leue or “confession” on the last folio (fig. 77). The portrayal of the English author and the fictive pilgrim authors of these English tales manifests and promotes the status of the vernacular at the beginning of the fifteenth century. That focus on authorship, however, does not account entirely for the reticence about making divine images in a manuscript intended, as I will suggest, for the new Lancastrian regime which was to become identified with the orthodox position advocating the use of religious images. Timing may have been a factor if this manuscript was made during a transitional phase very shortly after 1400, not only the year Chaucer died but the year Henry IV usurped the English throne, with all the accompanying implications of social change and attendant intellectual maneuvering that the latter implies. A sensitivity to

1 San Marino, Huntington Library, MS Ellesmere 26 C9, made in London probably within the first decade of the fifteenth century (see discussions in The Ellesmere Chaucer, cited below). I would like to thank Mary Robertson, the Chief Curator of Manuscripts, for granting access to the precious original, which made possible many insights, both technical and conceptual. This manuscript has been published in a facsimile, “a covetable object in its own right” (in the words of Jill Mann in the information brochure), by the Huntington Library and Yushodo Co. of Tokyo as The Ellesmere Chaucer in 1995. A companion volume, The Ellesmere Chaucer: Essays in Interpretation, eds. Martin Stevens and Daniel Woodward (San Marino and Tokyo, 1995), contains the most extensive studies of individual aspects of this manuscript to date. It includes bibliographical references, as does Kathleen Scott’s catalogue entry no. 42 for the Ellesmere in vol. 2 of her Later Gothic Manuscripts: 1390-1490, 2 vols. (London, 1996)140-43. In my transcriptions from the Ellesmere Manuscript, all Middle English expansions of abbreviations have been inserted in brackets and follow the line numbers in Larry Benson, ed., The Riverside Chaucer, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990). References are given parenthetically, employing standard abbreviations for the tales. Prologues are designated by “Pro,” so that “ProFrT,” e.g., indicates the Prologue to the Friar’s Tale. Citations of Chaucer’s other literary works are also from The Riverside Chaucer.
the image issues raised during the late fourteenth century, an intellectual distaste for excessive emotional displays of affective piety aroused in some fourteenth-century devotees by religious icons, and a sensible awareness of the changeability of political fortunes may have had a combined effect on the design of the Ellesmere which, in every possible way, is a manuscript which disapproves of ideological extremes and takes no risks.

Of no small importance as a contributing factor to the visual plan of the Ellesmere is the experience of the participating artists. As Margaret Rickert has pointed out, two of the manuscripts which are comparable in style to Ellesmere are Wycliffite Bibles. One of these, Egerton 617-618, was made for Thomas Duke of Gloucester (d. 1398), indicating sympathies initially held by some of the aristocracy before the battle lines were more clearly drawn. Around the turn of the century some of the artists exhibited a similar interest, tolerance, or flexibility with respect to the image question. This is exemplified by the Egerton artist who made only masks and dragons in the Wycliffite Bible, but included an Annunciation scene in a Carmelite Missal (c. 1398).

In her article arguing for an early date for the Ellesmere (1400-1405), Scott believes she has identified two of the Ellesmere border artists with two who worked on an Hours and Psalter Manuscript which has no illustrations.

That the designers of the Ellesmere were aware of the religious issues involved is indicated in the exaggerated details of some of the portraits, as the following examples show. While Chaucer refers to the Monk's swift greyhounds and says the jingling of his horse's bridle in the wind is as clear and loud as the chapel bell (169-71, 190), the Ellesmere portrait of the Monk increases the effect with elaborate gold ornaments on the

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2See especially Aers, "The Humanity of Christ: Reflections on Orthodox Late Medieval Representations" 15-42, for a stimulating discussion on the Incarnation and Christ's humanity topics in relation to social control.


4Rickert, "Illuminations" 566.

5This is Hand C of London, British Library, MS Add. 29704-05. See Scott, Later Gothic Manuscripts 2: 24-25.

6Kathleen Scott, "An Hours and Psalter by Two Ellesmere Illuminators," The Ellesmere Chaucer 87-119. She suggests that Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 4, Hand A is Ellesmere Hand B, and Hatton Hand C is Ellesmere Hand A.
decorated blue collars of the two accompanying greyhounds and with gold bells festooned from all the straps on the horse (fig. 78). These additional details reflect the sterner spirit of a text attributed to Wyclif which censures men of religion who clopen fatte horsis & gaie sadlis & bridlis & mytris & croceris wip gold & siluer & precious stonys. An instance of the last item in this list, the metal cross with (precious) stones that the Pardoner has (GP 699), becomes exaggerated into the large gold cross with jewels at its center and terminals in the Ellesmere portrait (fig. 79). The Pardoner is attired in more red cloth than any other pilgrim, a color perhaps suggested by the Pardoner’s comparison of his method of preaching to the common practice of the rubrication of Latin texts in vernacular manuscripts. And in Latyn I spake a wordes fewe, / To saffron with my predicacioun, / And for to stire hem to devocioun (ProPardT 344-46). The Ellesmere itself effectively proclaims the equality of Latin and English because it does not tend to privilege Latin with this sort of color hierarchy, as shown in the unrubricated quotation from Jeremiah 6.16 at the beginning of the Parson’s Tale (fig. 80). While the red clothing of the Pardoner calls attention to his admission concerning his preaching methods, the red habit of the Parson appears, rather, to distance this figure from Lollard preachers.

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8Contrast, for example, fol. iiiiv of the Vernon Manuscript, reproduced in Doyle, A Facsimile, plate1.
9Although saffron is usually associated with yellow, as when a few strands of the orange-brown dried stigmas of the saffron crocus are added to rice, saffron has had other uses in connection with manuscript illumination and textile dyes. For example, De Illuminatione Liborum in London, British Library, MS Harley 913, c. 1330, fol. 53 gives various instructions for using saffron. It can, for example, be mixed with brissillo ‘brasil’ to make an orange-red color, or it can be mixed with wine. I am grateful to Deborah Hatfield Moore for the information from Harley 913. Since true saffron is more expensive by weight than gold, it is likely that substitutes were often used, especially for dying textiles. Dyer’s Saffron (False Saffron, Wild Saffron, Safflower, Bastard Saffron) was used to produce yellow and red dyes for textiles, according to Magic and Medicine of Plants (Montreal: Reader’s Digest Association, 1986) 288.
10See Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice, “Scribe D and the Marketing of Ricardian Literature for a Westminster Audience,” English Literary Studies 85 (forthcoming Sept. 2001), for a discussion on the hierarchy of scripts in relation to the texts in vernacular manuscripts with Latin rubrications. In the case of the Parson’s Tale, the Latin is, however, set off spatially if not in color or by a change of script.
11The Plowman’s Tale, in Six Ecclesiastical Satires, ed. James M. Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1991) 87, line 925, a Lollard poem written around 1400, criticizes clergy who wear scarlet gowns. In Epilogue to the Man of Law’s Tale (1173-77), the Host calls the Parson a Lollere for his admonishment to the Host for swearing.
illustration of the Pardoner, the presence of the Veronica on his cap (685), the only divine visage shown in the Ellesmere, links his exploitation of people's credulity regarding images and relics with the large walet (681), hung around his horse's neck in the illustration. This is not to say that the Ellesmere abjures wealthy ornamentation, far from it. Rather, as I will show, it is seen to be appropriate only for the upper classes; any unseemly desires for rich display by others are mocked.

The decision to portray the pilgrim authors, rather than idolatrous images picturing the subjects of the tales, and to utilize the symbolic suggestiveness of the frames led to the making of a manuscript which presents a middle ground between orthodoxy and the opposite extreme that none ymage or should be.\textsuperscript{12} One consequence of the Ellesmere plan, whether deliberate or intended, is that the portrait of Chaucer (fig. 81) can be considered as a "kind of icon [ . . . ] with writerly instead of saintly attributes," as Derek Pearsall remarks with respect to the virtual mirror image of this portrait in the margin of Hoccleve's \textit{Regement of Princes} in London, British Library, MS Harley 4866, folio 88.\textsuperscript{13}

The penner or pencase hung around Chaucer's neck in the Ellesmere portrait is very like

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\textsuperscript{13}Pearsall, "Hoccleve's \textit{Regement of Princes}" 403. Pearsall refers to the observations on the Harley portrait by James McGregor, "The Iconography of Chaucer in Hoccleve's \textit{De Regimine Principum} and in the \textit{Troilus Frontispiece}," \textit{Chaucer Review} 11 (1977): 344 and by M. C. Seymour, \textit{Selections from Hoccleve} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 124. Harley 4866 might have been made for Prince Henry, as suggested by Derek Pearsall, An addendum to Pearsall's discussion regarding Hoccleve's commissioned Chaucer portrait is that it strengthens the possibility that Hoccleve was involved in some advisory capacity in the making of the Ellesmere. As a scribe, Hoccleve would have known the best artistic designers available for this project. He himself did not work on the Ellesmere as a scribe, even though he worked as Scribe E with the Ellesmere scribe, Scribe B, on a Gower manuscript, as indicated by Doyle and Parkes, "The production of copies of the \textit{Canterbury Tales} and the \textit{Confessio Amantis}," \textit{Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries} 185. An interesting feature of the Chaucer portrait is that the red on Chaucer's lips and underlining his eye, on his belt, and on the strap on his gold penner is the same color as on the red flowers in the grassy patch and in the border (more obvious in the original manuscript than the facsimile). This needs to be considered before attributing the portrait part to an artist brought in solely for that purpose (Scott, \textit{Later Gothic Manuscripts} 2: 142). The color evidence suggests that there was more collaboration among the artists, including those who made the borders, than previously thought.
that, for instance, of St. John in the Douce 180 Apocalypse miniature showing the empty case on the grass, with the quill and pen knife in his hands (see the discussion in my chapter 4). The portrayal of the serious Chaucer of the *Tale of Melibee* rather than the *popet* 'pet, doll' (701) who tells the *Tale of Thopas* (coincidentally, the topaz stone often has more than one color) accords with the "image" the makers of the Ellesmere wanted to project for this English author and for his English text. The ornamental and figural embellishments framing the *Canterbury Tales* in the Ellesmere Manuscript ensure the acceptance and preservation of the text by appealing to an aristocratic audience to shape their reading experience on their own terms, by promoting an appreciation of the eloquence and authority of this vernacular work and, in the end, by showing ethical readers the way to salvation.

**The Embellished Borders of the Ellesmere Manuscript**

That the Middle English word for *border*, 'bordure,' can also mean storyteller or mocker is uniquely appropriate in its various applications to the design of the Ellesmere Manuscript. Framing the beginnings of the relevant tales, each of the illustrated pilgrim storytellers either enters the enclosure defined by the demivinet border from the left

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14See also Alan T. Gaylord, "Portrait of a Poet," *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 121-42; although I do not think that the desire to reproduce the "grand idea of his importance" (138) excludes an attempt at the realistic portraiture of one aspect or persona of the subject. Concerning the name of Thopas, in *Reason and Sensuality*, John Lydgate's narrator is sent to a Garden of Pleasure to learn Love = Chess with a fair Maid whose two Rooks or castles were made of a *ryche stoon*, / Of a Thopas 'a rich stone, / Of a topaz.' See Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte: Edited from Bodleian MS. Fairfax 16 and British Museum Additional MS. 29729*, ed. Ernst Sieper, EETS, extra series 84 (1901) 176, lines 1619-20. Topaz can be yellow, blue, clear, pale green, or a combination of any of these, especially in combination with brown. Interestingly, Giovanni da Uzzano, a Florentine merchant writing in 1440, says that most of these stones look as if they are split, see Elena Lemeneva, "Symbolic Virtues of Gems," *Dress, Jewels, Arms and Coat of Arms: Material Culture and Self-Representation in the Middle Ages*, Central European University, Jan. 31, 2001 <http://www.ceu.hu/medstud/manual/SRM/symbol.htm>. Perhaps the implications of duality were exploited by Chaucer in choosing the name. Topaz is also referred to in Exodus 25.3, 28.15, 35.5-10; Ezekiel 28.12-19, and Rev. 12.4, 13.

15This French loan word in Middle English contexts is explored in Laura Kendrick, "The Jesting Borders of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and of Late Medieval Manuscript Art," *Animating the Letter: The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 1999) 217-25, especially 223. She suggests that Gothic marginalia may have provided a model for the structure of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* with its connective links and even for the relationship of some tales to others as bordering. I am grateful to Laura Kendrick for providing me with an earlier version of this.
margin on the verso folios or (except for the Miller) approaches the text from the open right side on the recto folios. The borders often serve as flourished serifs or supports for the large decorated initials, forming an organic transition into the field of the text which is to be imagined as being voiced by the respective tellers. While mimicking the pilgrims' spatial and temporal movement towards Canterbury, this progression of open-sided frames not only marks the divisions and transitions within and between tales but also provides authority, coherence, and continuity to the succession of diverse tales arranged by the Ellesmere literary editor to make the fragments seem as if Chaucer had finished ordering and compiling them.\(^\text{16}\)

The embellished borders, especially where they include the pilgrim portraits, serve at least three functions, which I shall outline briefly before examining them with respect to the intended audience. First they declare that, in this manuscript, the fictional domain of the text is an aristocratic preserve, as indicated particularly by the portrait page of the Knight who enters first and sets the compass for the rest of the illustrations. Although Chaucer's pilgrims ride along the road to Canterbury, the ornamental trellis-work of the Ellesmere borders visually summons forth movement through an aristocratic pleasure garden comparable to those laid out, for instance, by John of Gaunt and Henry V.\(^\text{17}\) Emphasizing the "extent of the owner's holdings and his wealth," such large gardens, enclosing up to a dozen or so acres, might include rows of various fruit trees and exotic trees, flowers in rectangular beds and growing on trellises, turf benches, walks, labyrinths, tunnels, fish ponds, and buildings or bowers for "solitary or social pleasures."\(^\text{18}\) The available ornamental vocabulary selected for the framework includes stylized motifs suggestive of plants that could be found within such an English *pleasance*: roses, daisy buds, trumpet and thimble flowers, barbed cinquefoils and marigolds, as well as oak

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\(^\text{17}\)Howes, *Chaucer's Gardens* 24, 29, and 31.

\(^\text{18}\)Howes, *Chaucer's Gardens* 26 and 30; and chapter 1, "Gardens Chaucer Knew," for the general information.

\(^\text{19}\)As described by Margaret Rickert's chapter on "Illuminations," in John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts*, vol. 1 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1940) 565-66, and by Kathleen L. Scott, "An Hours and Psalter by Two Ellesmere Illuminators," *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 92-94. Because of the stylization, it is difficult to determine the exact identity of all the floral and leaf forms.
leaves, vines and ivy. Traditional Hiberno-Saxon interlace clusters conjure knot gardens and mazes evocative of magical divination, infinity, and interiority. The kinetic potential of the border emphasizes movement with elements that twist, turn, straighten, push in, enfold, and then reverse direction and alternate the flow of energy in an ongoing fantasy of endless variation. The viewer is required to follow along at different speeds, pausing when the forms group together before being released. Adding interest at the bottom of the horizontal border on the first folio (fig. 82) is the dragon with one wing pointing backwards to the spiky zig-zag serrations which seem like a continuation of his tail, and which connote snakiness on other borders even without his presence there, while the other wing points forward to the bottom terminal of the spiraling border as he looks in the direction of the next folio. Just as a tour through a pleasure garden could lead to delightful and surprising discoveries, so a journey through the Ellesmere Manuscript becomes a transformative experience often signaled by the decorative paraphernalia.

Secondly, and related to the first function since pleasure gardens were often inspired by literary descriptions, they serve metaphorically to define the enclosed text as a garden of verse, a concept popularized since the Roman de la Rose and having special application to the works of Chaucer, praised by his contemporary Eustache Deschamps (who called a compilation of his own work a “garden”) for having established an English “orchard of poetry.” While the designation applies more particularly to Chaucer’s early

19 I am indebted to Leonard A. Woods for his invaluable suggestions concerning the ornamental vocabulary of the Ellesmere border

22 Even in the poem itself there are hints that the garden is one of artifice, evidently understood as such in Chaucer’s translation describing the plenitude of colorful flowers which grew there never in mede and which adorned the ground as if men had it peynt (Fragment A, 1434 and 1436). Howes discusses Chaucer’s use of literary gardens in connection with the conventions of courtly love to point out the tragedy that results when social and political realities intrude for lovers like Troilus and Criseyde (Chaucer’s Gardens 64-82). Terry Comito speaks of the “gardens of the Roman de la Rose flourishing in verse and floral motifs proliferated [on] tapestries, manuscripts and cathedrals,” in the late Middle Ages; see The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1978) 152.

23 This is mentioned in a letter-poem or “plant” for the orchard, evidently in reply to one by Chaucer to Deschamps. From Deschamps’ response, Chaucer seems to have referred to his own poetic ambitions in this metaphorical way: “Et un vergier, ou du plant
works, especially those actually set in gardens, the visual presentation of the *Canterbury Tales* as a literary garden in the Ellesmere minimizes the originality of much of its content. The richness of the border embellishment itself supports the status quo, affirming that the text is not revisionist. This is important for its acceptance during a period of conservative orthodoxy when the new Lancastrian dynasty itself needed to be viewed within the continuum of traditional English values. Related to this ideological objective is the literary aim of presenting Chaucer as a poet of "rhetorical finesse (aureate)" suitable for the refined tastes presumed in his audience. That the borders serve as a visual analogue of Chaucer's rhetorical dexterity is demonstrated, for example, by the Franklin's portrait page (fig. 83). This pilgrim's punning denial of the knowledge of *colours* (ProFranT 724) in the main text is visually played up and contradicted by the embellished border sprays which enclose the Latin source of this rhetorical disclaimer, proving the Franklin's

demandas / De ceuls qui font pour euxx auctoriser, / A ja longtemps que tu edifas [and long since you established an orchard and asked for plants from those who write poetry for posterity],” edited and translated in J. A. Burrow, *Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Anthology* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969) 26, 28. See also D. S. Brewer, *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature* (London, 1966) 243. In her comment on these lines from Deschamps, Laura Howes, in *Chaucer's Gardens* 5-6, says that the "metaphoric resonance of gardens was firmly established by the fourteenth century." As Laura Kendrick observes, Deschamps refers to a compilation of his own work as a garden in which he has sown "flowers" from various authors, possibly a "florilegium of extracts" or translations, see “The *Canterbury Tales* in the Context of Contemporary Vernacular Translations and Compilations,” *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 286-87.


25Contrast the way in which the text was viewed in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104. See Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Denise Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: The Politics of Book Production in the Douce 'Piers Plowman',* Medieval Cultures 15 (Minneapolis, 1999).


27From the Latin *colores* which Phyllis Hodgson reminds us is "a technical term for rhetorical embellishments"; "Notes," Chaucer: "The Franklin's Tale" 74. The Latin annotation is from the *Prologue* to the *Satires* of Persius (1-3): *Nec fonte labra prolui caballino, / nec in bicipit somniassae Parnaso i memini, ut repente sic poeta prodirem*, as noted in Gerald Morgan, ed. *The Franklin's Tale from the Canterbury Tales* (Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980) 89. Morgan also gives the translation by G. G. Ramsay, *Juvenal and Persius*, Loeb (London and New York, 1930) 311, as follows: “I never soused my lips in the Nag's Spring; never, that I can remember, did I dream on the two-topped Parnasus, [that I should thus come forth suddenly as a poet]” (brackets mine to indicate the words not continued in the Ellesmere annotation).
expertise. This sort of virtuosity and responsiveness to the text might have been displayed by a sophisticated and experienced master artist reacting sensitively and working closely with a literary editor in order to “illuminate” the intended English audience, while simultaneously effecting a visual laureation, or political sanction, of its poet.

Thirdly, the aristocratic and poetical gardens are transformed into intimations of a paradisal garden at the Parson’s Tale, which commands an impressive profusion of 16 out of a total of 71 borders—just under a quarter in the entire manuscript—supporting the likelihood that the program was designed by someone familiar with preparing expensively produced religious manuscripts. A floriated embellishment springing from the border at the top of the last page of the Parson’s Tale (fig. 77) underlines the annotation what the fruit of penance is beside his conclusion describing the joys of heaven. Like an ongoing series of open-ended square brackets, the demivinet borders that frame this manuscript from the first to the last pages imply that the real pilgrimage is, as the Parson proposes, Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage / That highte Ierusalem celestial (ProPar 50-51). In following along the Parson’s penitential wey in this viage (l. 49), made palatable by those lush borders and culminating in the “confession” which inscribes Chaucer’s salvation (in addition to ensuring his reputation for posterity regarding the works mentioned), the aristocratic reader of the Ellesmere Manuscript is led to a privileged sense of sharing in spiritual fruits.

This chapter will concentrate on the first function of the ornamental border as

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28 This also manifests Chaucer’s verbal-visual interplay in passages which self-consciously refer to the act of artistic creation such as that in the Clerk’s Prologue where, in declaring obedience to the Host’s request to speak plainly, the Clerk does the very opposite by relating a tale of ffrauencyeys Petrak, the laurial poete, / . . . whos rethorike sweete / Enlumyned al ytaile of poeterie (ProCl 18, 31-33). The Ellesmere Manuscript fulfills the self-promotional analogy.

29 Lerer, “Writing Like the Clerk” 24 and 49. See also the discussion by Derek Pearsall concerning Hoccleve’s effective creation of Chaucer as poet laureate in “Hoccleve’s Regement of Princes” 400.

30 See my introductory discussion and notes on the Wycliffite Bibles and Hatton 4. In addition to the two Wycliffite Bibles, Rickert, “Illuminations” 566, found comparable styles in five English manuscripts including two missals and two Psalters, the fifth being a Flores historiarum.

31 The Ellesmere borders prepare the reader for the idea of the pilgrimage as a “figure for the journey of man’s life through the world,” which the Parson’s Tale makes explicit (Pearsall, The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer 240). Upon subsequent viewings and within such a pious context, this would become part of the rich, multi-layered way the audience would appreciate their personal version of the Tales as being for oure doctrine (see Pearsall’s discussion, The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer 270).
emphasized by the representations of the Knight and of some of the other pilgrims whose social status has been adjusted. That this manuscript is intended for an aristocratic audience is, of course, immediately seen in its sheer size, which is close to four times that of two relatively contemporary illustrated manuscripts of poetry, the Douce 104 version of *Piers Plowman* and the *Pearl-Gawain* Manuscript. The luxury of unfilled space on every page marks one of the prerogatives of wealth. Further, it is too heavy to be held in one’s lap for meditative purposes; the size of the open codex resting on some support allows, in addition to its perusal by a solitary reader, for the possibility that a small courtly audience might gather around it. During the delivery process, the principal reader or a member of the audience might point out pertinent visual details that help establish the tone of the narrative. The quality of the vellum, the pigments, the gold leaf and, above all, the organization necessary for carrying the ambitious plan through to completion, testify to the physical and human resources made available for its construction.

Previous studies have already classified and described the Ellesmere pictures in relation to their accuracy as visual translations of the text. However, in applying their own analytical categories these modern studies have largely missed what the illustrative program really contributes to its aristocratic readership’s understanding of the *Canterbury Tales*. To be open to the ways the pictorial elements actually function is to study each page with all its interacting components in relation to every other page, and thereby gain a sense of the purpose of the whole endeavor. This study confirms the general observation by Doyle and Parkes that the illustrations “were designed as an adjunct to the apparatus, and not merely as an afterthought of decoration”; indeed, they are a principal and active part of the apparatus. The vocabulary of representation includes facial expression, gesture, posture, movement, dress, color, size, and attribute. First the Knight’s portrait will be examined, followed by some of the other portraits that are elevated to make them suitable models for an aristocratic family circle; finally, those of inferiors who are mocked will be

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33. See note 1 for references to bibliographical sources.

34. Doyle and Parkes, “The production of copies” 190.
shown to confirm the social attitudes of this elite audience.

*and at a knyght than wol I first bigynne*

On the framed page beginning the *Knight's Tale* (fig. 84) the text occupies less than half the page. A sense of stability is assured for the audience by the suggested rectangular structure of the demivinet border and by the regular rows of script anchored to it a hair’s breadth from its bars, the effect softened by the embellishments and the horizontal curves at the top and bottom. Visually balancing the illustration of the rider opposite, the large initial “W” with its background of scrolling plant motifs extends from the frame into the block of script, as if their planar dimensions were co-extensive. Because it also functions as the first letter of a word, this champ (large capital), like the others of various sizes, transfers to the rest of the script something of its decorative character as calligraphy to be enjoyed for its contribution to the pictorial field. As the first letter of *Whilom* it initiates the narrative and transports the audience back to the tale’s pagan past.

Recalling the General Prologue, it repeats, in its design and size, the large “W” introducing the *Canterbury Tales* on the first folio (fig. 82). There the border is an exuberant floriated outgrowth of this letter, seemingly propelled by the bursting energy of spring: *Whan that Aprill* [. . .] The border and the text have become identified as co-extensive, making of this manuscript a literary garden and accentuating the images of flowers, spring breezes, and melodious birds in the first verses of the General Prologue. Indicative of the designer’s conception of the structure of the *Canterbury Tales*, these two decorated letters are the two largest in the manuscript, demonstrating that the General Prologue and the body of the tales were considered two separate sections. Along with the smaller champs in this manuscript, they mark divisions in the text, a practice not utilized in the nearly contemporary Hengwrt Manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* which, although copied by the same scribe, has only parafs (paragraph markers), showing that these divisions in Ellesmere were the result of thoughtful editorial planning. Despite the equality in size of the two largest initials, however, the addition of an illustrated figure to

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36 Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 392D, copied by Scribe B; see Doyle and Parkes, “The production of copies” 185.

37 Ralph Hanna III, “(The) Editing (of) the Ellesmere Text,” *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 234. For a list of the occurrences of decorated letters and champs in the manuscript, see Martin Stevens, “Appendix A,” in *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 340.
the page beginning the tales indicates that the tales themselves were privileged over the
General Prologue. Further, as Kathleen Scott observes, the border of this illustrated page
"shows a somewhat greater mass of decoration than the rest" of the borders in this
manuscript, confirming its preeminence in the total scheme.

In coloring, the interlocking "V" shapes of the "W" at the beginning of the
Knight's Tale are a mirror image of their antecedent at the beginning of the General
Prologue, mnemonically tightening still further the narrative link between both parts. The
audience is reminded that the description of the Knight, the highest ranking pilgrim, comes
first and that he is to be the first storyteller. Finally, the large decorated "W," like the first
one in the manuscript it echoes, is part of the ornamental architecture of the demivinet
border and so not only defines the enclosed large feeld of the text (KnT 885) as a
cultivated space, but also appropriates it and, in the process, approves this vernacular
poetic garden for its privileged audience. Pleasure is intensified by confirming to its
readership their social rank. While the non-aristocratic pilgrims might have told their tales
for their mutual myriethe (GP 766) within Chaucer's narration, in this manuscript the text of
the tales and the portraits of the tellers are as artfully constructed for the delectation of
aristocratic eyes as are the courtly garden and amphitheater described in the Knight's Tale
itself. What V. A. Kolve calls "garden values" predominate, not only in the Knight's
Tale, but throughout the manuscript. Just as the chain of love binds all the elements and
the successions of species, as Theseus states in his final speech (KnT 2987-3016), so the
repetition of borders controls the reception of the narratives in an almost ritualistic
manner.

Scott, "An Hours and Psalter" 90.

This metaphor of verbal creation, fortuitously mentioned further down on the
same illustrated page (886-87), is reflected by the calligraphic rows of the letters. The
plowing analogy is based on Matt. 13.24 which compares the kingdom of heaven to a man
who sowed good seed in his field. In this manuscript, the agricultural image with its
paradisal associations offers a variant to the literary garden image derived from the French
romance tradition. In effect, it implies that the ensuing narrative, although set in pre-
Christian times, is "good seed" within a larger cosmic framework. See also the discussion
of the plowing image in Camille, "Labouring for the Lord" 434. V. A. Kolve astutely
observes that the "larger design" of the Canterbury Tales is "self-reflexive, concerned
with the nature of poetry itself"; see Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First
Five Canterbury Tales (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1984) 85. The artistic designer of the
Ellesmere, in kindred fashion, clearly responded to and elaborated upon this exploration of
the creative process, not only in specific instances but in the larger design of the codex
itself, obviously taking particular pleasure in exploiting any potential for interplay between
the sister arts.

Kolve, Chaucer 103.
Movement and imaginative scope, on the other hand, are fostered on the right side of the illustrated pages where there is no marginal restraint at the irregular edges of the script. Because of the extent of space, it is an area in the visual field which allows for a transition from the hieratic frontality of the ornamentally framed script on the left to the entry of the unframed illustration of the rider. Charging the blank space with atmosphere and three-dimensionality, the mounted Knight approaches at a slight angle as his horse turns toward the text. As Meyer Schapiro has argued, and as the illustrations of the creative Word in the Cædmon Manuscript have demonstrated, the three-quarter profile is ideally suited to movement into the narrative mode, as is confirmed at this juncture where the first of the tales begins. With respect to Chaucer's use of convention in affirming auctoritas, as Laura Howes observes in connection with the Book of the Duchess, the entrance of the narrator to the garden indicates that an organized story is about to begin. In the Ellesmere Manuscript likewise, the entrance of the first illustrated narrator to the garden of verse signals the introduction of the first tale. Below the illustration, about four-fifths of the way down the page, the word narratio confirms verbally to the audience the place where the immediate story begins. The unframed space on the right half of the recto page further allows the viewer, who is not separated from the narrator by seeing him through a framed aperture, to participate in the dynamic process of the narration. Within this extravagance of space which encourages leisurely viewing, each member of the audience, according to personal capacity, experience, and attentiveness, can fill in such imaginative details as might be prompted by the reading or stimulated by the visual features of the page. That such was actual practice is suggested by the little scene Chaucer added to the story of Troilus and Criseyde in which Criseyde and her ladies, read to by a mayden, stopped reading and listening in order to pause over and repeat aloud rubricated lines from the Thebaid describing the fall of a Greek soothsayer to hell: we stynten at thise lettres rede. It is clear that the Ellesmere, with its further

Schapiro, Words and Pictures.

Howes, Chaucer's Gardens 36-38 and 41-42. She refers specifically to the Book of the Duchess in which the first "tale" (designated as such at line 710 and used again for the second account at line 1034) begins with the entrance of the man in black to the garden. She also points out that the description of the garden lies between the two sections of the story.

Troilus and Criseyde II. 83 and 103 (see also Stephen A. Barney, "Explanatory Notes," The Riverside Chaucer 1031). Criseyde's use of the plural appears to refer to the maiden, the two ladies, and herself as being engaged in reading, listening, and pausing (100-03). Presumably, Criseyde quotes these rubricated words in the following lines (104-05; as Barney 1032, points out). See also Howes, Chaucer's Gardens 68-70, on the arrival of Pandarus who interrupts this reading scene to tell of the lovesick Troilus in the
addition of floral frames and figural illustrations, was "meant to be seen when read." If the red letters caused Criseyde and her ladies to linger, how much more would an illustration have piqued their interest!

The decision by the manuscript's creators to leave an amplitude of space on the right side of the recto pages on which some of the tales begin also allows for considerable flexibility and critical discernment in the exact placement of the illustrated figure. In the case of the Knight, there is further room for movement, but the horse has been halted in mid-stride at the threshold of the ornamental enclosure. This gracious entry allows maximum scope for the gestural vocabulary of the mounted rider. Since this is the first illustrated figure in the manuscript and the first tale, the sweeping open-handed gesture of this "master of ceremonies" serves as a formal greeting to the audience and as a courteous introduction to the text. His arm is raised in an authoritative gesture, conveying good will, indicating wisdom, and demanding silence preparative to speaking, according to the analysis of similar gestures in John Bulwer's mid-seventeenth-century Chirologia which relies primarily on classical sources and art works. In Roman art "one of the best-known images," as Moshe Barasch remarks, was the adlocutio or emperor's address to his army, portrayed with just this speaking gesture "requesting quiet and attention." A modern discussion on body language suggests that the original purpose of the hailing gesture with the open hand "was to show that individuals were unarmed," emphasizing trustworthiness. On this manuscript page, the Knight gesturally calls attention to the narrative just as the marginal annotation below does verbally. Further, as if the visualized authoritative and authorizing figure does indeed generate the story, his eyes also direct the gaze back to the script which is to be imagined as being voiced by him, inviting the reader to emulate the process. The title confirms the text as the knyghtes tale and, by proximity, identifies him.

castle garden, a situation which he assumes the literate Criseyde will know indicates that "Troilus is a conventional courtly lover."


45Bulwer, Chirologia, esp. 42-45 (Gestus XIV), 115 (illus. "O") of the Chirologia), 173-74, 180 (Canons II, III and XIX), and 193 (illus. "C" and "E") of the section titled "The Canons of Rhetoricians Touching The Artificial Managing of the Hand in Speaking."

46Barasch, Giotto 17.

Since there is no author portrait of Chaucer at the beginning of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* in the Ellesmere, this deferment and displacement of a kind of authorial responsibility represents a different strategy on the part of the designer. The playful yet defensive apology of the pilgrim Chaucer in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* that *I speke hir wordes* (729), meaning that he is only repeating the stories of the pilgrims in their own words, is confirmed by the successive illustrated portraits of the pilgrim authors and by the editorial colophon of the Ellesmere Manuscript that indicates the compilation of the stories is at an end. By spreading the attribution among the several pilgrims, both Chaucer and this manuscript’s designer attempt to emphasize the unity of the tales while at the same time deflecting any criticism these diverse tales in the vernacular might attract. Both also offer a double-take on the presumed orality of the tales. The absence of an authorial portrait of Chaucer at the beginning of the General Prologue in the Ellesmere Manuscript, like the pictorial absence of Chrétien from the corpus of his works, “harks back to oral culture.” The presence of a knight on horseback, on the other hand, as in many of the manuscript openings of Chrétien’s Arthurian romances, serves as an author portrait, signals the genre of chivalric romance, and evokes its performative function of oral delivery. Chaucer’s authorship has, in a sense, been temporarily subsumed into that of the Knight.

The blank space around the rider allows not only the strategic placement of the portrait but also permits overlapping interpretations of his identity. Most obviously, he is the Knight of the Prologue who, as one of a group of pilgrims on the way to the shrine of Thomas Becket, has agreed to tell a tale. As that Knight, he is mature in years and campaigns, as shown by his grey hair and beard, *worthy* as indicated by his serious expression, and *meke* (GP 68-69), as projected, in part, by the seemly and non-aggressive stance of his horse. When the details of the pictured horse and rider are examined, it becomes apparent that the illustration is no mere translation into visual form of the General Prologue’s description. In his recent study, Richard Emmerson has laid to rest the assumption the portraits are primarily intended to illustrate the General Prologue. The

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48 This is not the case within the inhabited “W” of London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 851, c. 1425 where Chaucer holds a book of the *Canterbury Tales*, and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 686, c. 1435, where Chaucer points to the text.

49 For the pictorial absence of Chrétien see Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment* 197; for her discussions of oral culture see 162.

50 Hindman, *Sealed in Parchment* 78, 83, and 162.

51 Emmerson, “Text and Image in the Ellesmere Portraits of the Tale-Tellers,” *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 143-70. He suggests that this “alternate set of portraits, now visual
Prologue is recalled, certainly, but important modifications and transformations have taken place.

Since the horses are also part of the visual re interpretations in the Ellesmere, a close look at the Knight’s horse yields some significant clues as to what the designer strove to present. In the General Prologue, Chaucer the pilgrim says the Knight’s _hors weren goode but he was nat gay_ (74). The illustration shows a horse that is by far the best specimen of any in the Ellesmere, its well-muscled body exuding power and the pride of breeding. Care seems to have been taken even in the rendering of his noble mane, the curls being underlined in black and highlighted with white. Not only is the horse better than _goode_, but the trappings of his harness are rather splendid, adorned at every interval with an abundance of gold bosses, hinges, and tips. Only five other horses in the manuscript are painted with decorative straps over the haunches, evidently an indication of the wealth or status of the rider, or an aspiration to them.52

The horse’s haunch is inscribed with an “M” which Terry Jones guesses is intended as a brand to stand for “Milano,” the city-state which employed English mercenaries such as the famous John Hawkwood.53 It is true that Uccello’s 1436 portrait of the mounted John Hawkwood, which Jones analyzes, depicts a similar horse, but it shows no evidence of a brand. Further, Hawkwood is clearly shown in armor beneath his surcoat in this fresco, unlike the Ellesmere Knight.54 The squiggle on the Ellesmere horse’s neck, which Jones (29) postulates is a “y” (although it is horizontally rather than vertically displayed and is more rounded than the angular “y” of _ffemenye_, the last word in line with the illustrated horse’s left leg, 866), is more competently rendered than the “M” and might be an abbreviation, showing through the brown paint, indicating an instruction to the illustrator. The “M” could, however, stand for “miles” with respect to the knights in the Drury family mentioned in the first flyleaf addition to the Ellesmere Manuscript—

52See those of the Wife of Bath, the Squire, the Prioress, the Monk, and surprisingly, the Nun’s (i.e., Prioress’s) Priest, which adds further status to the Prioress.


54See Jones’s illustration (_Chaucer’s Knight_ 214) and his speculation that Chaucer may have based some of the elements of his characterization on Hawkwood. That may or may not have been the case, but it does not follow that the Ellesmere artist’s illustration is based on a portrait of Hawkwood, the one mentioned by Jones being in any case later in date.
Robertus Drury miles. William Drury miles. Robertus Drury miles”—who may have been its early sixteenth-century owners, but it is unlikely to have been a mark made by the professional book artisans of this production since they left no other signs of such amateurish, shaky lettering.55

Just as the mount is richly appointed and more than goode, so the rider is considerably more than an ordinary knight. He is pictured with understated elegance. Particularly striking is his proud bearing. He sits straight and tall in his saddle, yet it seems to cause him no strain, as if it were a posture to which he had become long accustomed. The General Prologue describes the Knight’s array: *Of fustian he wear a gypon / al bismotered with his habergeon* (75-76). This portrait of a knight unostentatiously dressed in a *gypon*, a tight-fitting, padded garment of coarse fustian worn over his *habergeon* or short type of mail shirt,56 has been discarded. Instead, with only echoes of the text, the Ellesmere Knight displays a color-coordinated ensemble. He wears a knee-length, high-necked, and wide-sleeved houpelande which, because of the extreme slenderness of his illustrated body profile, is unlikely to cover a gypon over a habergeon. It is made of long panels carefully stitched together, producing scalloped edging. Restrained in color and thereby deflecting the criticism of estates satire against ostentation,57 it appears to be sober grey, although it seems to have a violet shimmer or iridescence characteristic of some silks, a fabric worn by the richest knights.58 A detail not previously noticed is that he wears not full rust-brown gloves, but fingerless mittens. They are like those worn by the dreamer, the Pearl Maiden, knights and royalty, as well as by the hand of God in the


56David Edge and John Miles Paddock, *Arms and Armour of the Medieval Knight* (London: Bison, 1988) 185-86. Fustian was “a cloth of wool and linen or latterly cotton, with a raised nap, giving the effect of velveten” worn by poorer knights (86). Gawain, in the *Pearl* Manuscript, fols. 95v, 129r, and 130r, appears to wear such a garment.


58Edge and Paddock, *Arms and Armour* 85-86.
miniatures of the Pearl manuscript. As Martin Stevens comments, the “long points” of his shoes indicate his rank more significantly than any other part of his attire. He is also the only pilgrim illustrated with a gold rowel spur, a spiked wheel introduced at the end of the thirteenth century. All the gold decoration of this portrait is painted on by hand, the first use of this method in the manuscript, unlike the gold-leaf applied to the bar border along with its ornamentation and the decorated initials. His outfit reflects the mode of the early fifteenth century as pictured, for example, on the riders in the first of May festivities in the Très Riches Heures of Jean, Duke of Berry and in the headgear, houpelande, and gold rowel spurs of the first rider in the “Riding Party,” one of the illustrations in the Collected Works of Christine de Pizan (fig. 85), both contemporary manuscripts. The Ellesmere Knight could easily be assimilated into one of these royal riding parties.

Were the Knight not placed at the beginning of his tale, the viewing audience might well identify him as a great lord rather than simply as a knight. As it is, like the other mounted pilgrims, he has the potential for affecting the reading of the tale and for being affected (i.e. being reinterpreted) by the tale itself. That this kind of enriching cross-

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59 This form of covering for the hand, excluding the fingers, is not immediately apparent in reproductions of the Knight because his fingers are darker than his face, but the shape is clearly noticeable once the image is enlarged on the computer screen. There is a cuff-like band at the edge where his fingers protrude. In the Pearl-Gawain Manuscript, see especially fols. 41v, 42, 42v, 60v, and 95v.

60 These are ties “by which armor was secured in place”; see Edge and Paddock, Arms and Armour 185.


62 Edge and Paddock, Arms and Armour 85. Some of the other pilgrims seem to have silver rowel spurs (the Squire, the Merchant, the Wife of Bath, the Monk, the Franklin, the Pardoner, the Summoner, the Manciple, the Clerk, and the Parson).

63 There are four other instances of gold paint in this manuscript: on Chaucer’s penner (fol. 153v), on the Wife of Bath’s belt (fol. 72), on the bells and ornaments of the Monk’s hounds (fol. 169), and on the Miller’s finger (fol. 34v). As will become apparent, this application of gold paint serves to raise the status of the pilgrim, to satirize inappropriate behavior, or to provide some humor.

64 Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 5v, before 1416. See also the figure wearing red headgear in the April scene, fol. 4.

65 London, British Library, MS Harley 4431, fol. 81.
reference was encouraged is indicated by the dynamics of the layout. First of all, the
horse’s respectful gaze is directed at the first sentence, especially at the identification of
Theseus:

Whilom as olde stories telleth us
There was a duc that highte Theseus
Of Atthenes he was lord and gouernour
And in his tyme swich a Conquerour
That gretter was ther noon under the sonne. (859-63)

The emphasis of the text is clearly on power, and the words nearest the horse —
gou(en)nour, Conquerour, and sonne — heighten this effect.

As if that alone were not enough, the two decorated gold-leaf initials, secondary in
size to the “W” of the opening, both point to Theseus. The first is the “T” at the top of the
page beginning the Latin quotation from the Thebaid of Statius referring to the approach
of Theseus to his native land after fighting with the Scythians (xii, 519-20): Iam(o)ue
domos patrias Scithice post aspera gentis prelia laurigero.66 Placed strategically under
the vegetal decoration of the border instead of in the margin, this quotation permits the
symbolism of the laurel, which as a garland crowns the mounted Theseus of Chaucer’s
Knight’s Tale (1026-27), to be transferred instead to the border of the garden of verse.67.
The reference to patrias in the inscription at the top of the Knight’s page also connects the

66 The full quotation from the Thebaid (xii, 519-20) is translated in The Riverside
Chaucer 37, see the first note: “And now (Theseus, drawing nigh his) native land in
laurelled car after fierce battling with the Scithian folk, etc. [is heralded by glad applause
and the heaven-flung shout of the populace and the merry trump of warfare ended].” The
chariot was abandoned for the horse in Chaucer’s version.

67 See also the garland given to the victorious Arcite on his bier (2875). J. B.
Trapp, in “The Owl’s Ivy and the Poet’s Bays,” Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld
Institutes 21 (1958): 227-55, traces the classical association of crowning both conquerors
and poets, pointing out that both Boccaccio and Antonio Pucci refer to the crowning of
Dante at his funeral in 1321. Trapp also mentions that Petrarch, who was himself crowned
poet laureate, took the trouble to marginate his Vergil, “against Servius’ comment on
Eclogues 8. 13, the information, buttressed by the line from Statius . . . that poets also
were entitled to the laurel,” 236-37. With these literary precedents, there may already have
been a hint on the Knight’s page that the Ellesmere border would take on something of
this function even before the Franklin’s page makes explicit that the enclosed garden is
poetical and also before Chaucer’s portrait (fol. 153v) suggests itself as a literary icon, all
of which point to this manuscript having been “intended as a commemorative volume,” to
use Kathleen Scott’s words in Later Gothic Manuscripts 2.142. It celebrates the flour of
eloquence by whose passing England was deprived of the sweetnesse / of retoryke
(Hoccleve, Regement of Princes, 1962 and 2084-85 respectively), a preliminary
confirmation of Chaucer as the poet laureate effectively created by Hoccleve, as suggested
by Pearsall, “Hoccleve’s Regement” 400.
idea of the laureation of conquerors (and their recording poets) with an emerging nationalism. The Latin itself lends authority to the tale and teller, and flatters the learned reader who must supply the name Theseus from memory, adding a further cachet to the principal reader if a translation into the vernacular is to be part of the performance. Upon first glance, it leads to the assumption that it is the inscription for the illustrated figure whose open-handed gesture points up towards it. It also provides a cultural, if not actual, genealogy for the Knight who is then identified by the title below which, in effect, supersedes it as an inscription for the mounted figure. The second gold initial, a "T," occurs near the bottom of the page, beside the narratio already mentioned, calling attention back to:

This duc of whom I make mencion
Whan he was come almoost unto the toun
In al his wele and in his mooste pride [...]

(893-95)

Both decorated gold-leaf initials, then, call attention to the approach of the proud conqueror, Theseus.

In these ways, the dynamics of the page allow for a multilevel interpretation of the approaching mounted rider. As storyteller, he is the Knight of the Prologue; as subject of the story, he is Theseus. As the latter, he lends additional status to the Knight, with the result that the audience sees the Knight as a powerful, worldly lord and so is prepared to respond to him and to his tale accordingly. Those features held in common reflect both ways, ferrying additional details from one portrayal to the other. For example, preceding his Boethian speech near the end of the tale, Theseus exhibits a sad visage before any word cam from his wise brest (2985 and 2983). This description could apply equally to the countenance and attitude of the illustrated figure, an elaboration of the wisdom attributed to the Knight in the General Prologue. Subsequent viewings of the mounted rider would be enriched with such details accrued consciously or unconsciously from previous reading. The visual portrait shows evidence of the selection of those features which are consistent with the presentation of the Knight as a lord whose pronouncements have authoritative weight. This sort of conflation functions as yet another unifying device which, like the decorated "W," pulls together more tightly the threads from the General Prologue and the Knight's Tale.

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68For a discussion of Prince Henry's promotion of poetry in the vernacular, or the translation of such tales of martial chivalry into English "to create a stronger sense of nationhood," see Pearsall, "Hoccleve's Regement" 397-98.

69Stevens, "The Ellesmere Miniatures" 124.
What the portrait of the mounted rider does not feature is quite striking with respect both to the Knight of the General Prologue and to Theseus—any evidence of a martial life! The first two-thirds of the General Prologue description of the Knight mentions more than two decades of military feats. The Knight served worthily in *his lordes werre* both in *cristendom* and in *Hethenesse* (GP 47, 49). The General Prologue stresses the Knight as a crusader, which Jill Mann says is a role the Church envisaged for chivalry, mentioned as a duty in the dubbing ceremony. It is interesting that the illustrated Knight in the Douce 104 Manuscript of *Piers Plowman* also lacks any evidence of armor. There this omission—along with the portrayal of his rueful expression, the gesture of immobility indicated by his crossed arms, and his stance in which his feet point ambivalently in opposite directions—manifests his failure as a secular authority whose role is to guard the Church against wastrels and evil men. The *Pearl* Manuscript does show Gawain and the Green Knight in armor and with a full complement of sharp weapons in two of the scenes, but there are spiritual overtones in the illustrative program of that manuscript.

In the General Prologue, Chaucer verbally frames the list of the Knight’s previous military expeditions with a description of his noble qualities. His love of the chivalric virtues precedes this sanitized list, while mention of his wisdom and gentility follow it, casting a moral tone over this Knight’s military career. The violence inherent in such a life is suppressed by the omission of grisly details. The only reminder of the Knight’s military role is that his *gypon* is *al bismotered* (GP 75-76). This is usually taken as indicating that it is soiled or stained by rust from his iron mail shirt dampened by perspiration. But another meaning of *bismotered* is “bespattered,” suggesting that bloodstains, whether his own or that of heathens, might have mingled with the sweat of his own martial exertions, bespattering his mail shirt. Chaucer turns even this small detail in favor of the

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70Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates* 113.


72Fols. 95v, 129, and 130.

73The Riverside Chaucer 24. As Timothy Haskett pointed out to me, this is interesting because one of the main jobs of a knight’s squire (or other manservant) would have been to clean and oil the mail, precisely because it was important that such a crucial and expensive piece of equipment not deteriorate and rust.

Knight's religious piety, implying that he is anxious to do the right thing spiritually by going on pilgrimage right after coming from his last viage (77), thereby overriding any desire for worldly approval when he does not change out of his bismotered habergeoun first.

On another level, Theseus too has just come from his latest conquest, that of the Amazons. The predominant image the audience has of Theseus at the beginning of the tale is his approach to Athens, which the narrator mentions three times (873, 894, and 1026-27) as a means of advancing the narrative while sketching in background information. The return procession follows the defeat of the regne of ffemenye (866). This victory prefaces the story of Palamon and Arcite, the young knights whose object of desire is the sister of the conquered queen. Voice is not given to the defeated warrior women; instead, sympathy is accorded to the weeping women Theseus meets on the way home. The Amazons' suffering is, as it were, transferred to the latter, finding emotional release and moral approval in this recasting of acceptable gender roles. At the same time, this worthy duc, this Theseus (1001) who up hente (957) the lamenting women is allowed to appear in a favorable light vis-à-vis women, rushing off as he does to defeat the tyrant who would not allow them to bury their slain husbands. The actual violence of both battle accounts occurs offstage.

While in the Knight's Tale violence, the expected means by which victory in warfare is effected, occurs only at the periphery of the events just referred to, in the Ellesmere portrait of the mounted rider there is no evidence of it at all. In contrast, for example, to the "mixture of bloodthirstiness and piety" that is found in MS Advocates 19.3.1, as well as in the Auchinleck and Vernon manuscripts, violence in the Ellesmere has been visually concealed, canceled even, certainly denied entry to the safe and beautiful surface space enclosed by the decorated border. There are no rust or blood stains anywhere on the Knight's person. Nor has he weapons. Hindman observes that "the

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75 Hardman, "A Medieval 'Library In Parvo'" 268, points out that, in this manuscript, the Gowther romance has had extra details of military violence added, making it "more like a ballad or folk-tale [...] brutal, frank, racy and bloodthirsty," in contrast to another version of this tale in London, British Library, MS Royal 17.B xliii, which includes more aspects of courtly observance. Similarly, the Ellesmere designer has amplified the courtly aspects of Chaucer's verse to suit a like-minded audience. Depicting the siege of Jerusalem in terrifying detail are the last two miniatures (fols. 190 and 190v) of a Book of Hours which also contains a "near-encyclopedia of devotional iconography," London, British Library, MS Egerton 2781, 1440-50; see Lucy Freeman Sandler, Gothic Manuscripts: 1285-1385, 2 (London: Harvey Miller, 1986) 127-28, cat. no. 115. I am grateful to Denise Despres for calling my attention to this manuscript in the de Bohun group. The Ellesmere Manuscript tends to shy away from punitive violence also, unlike the Douce 104 MS of Piers Plowman; see my "Retributive Violence" 13-48.
granting of arms, with the sword the principal emblem of power, had long been associated with the knightly function.”

This Knight has not even a serviceable sword such as is worn for self-protection by the illustrated figures of the Miller, the Reeve, and the Summoner in the same manuscript. Even his tiny dagger, with its gold pommel, guard, and scabbard chape, is more an accessorizing ornament than a weapon, unlike the more lethal dagger by which the illustrated Shipman (fol. 143v) presumably dispatched hem hoom to every land (GP 400). The illustrated Knight does not wear any armor that is visible and he carries no shield; nor is his horse protected by any covering.

The reason the Knight was portrayed not as a warrior, as the General Prologue would have it, but as a lord or seignor, likely relates directly to the person commissioning this manuscript or its intended recipient. It may well be that the first portrait in the Ellesmere, having accrued the noble aura of Theseus, provided a flattering mirror in which a noble patron might have cared to see himself. Further, by identification with the Gothic milieu of the lordly Knight, the pagan matter of the Theseus story is made familiar and acceptable to the patron and his family. Charges of idolatry are deflected in the scenes in which the pagan deities of Venus, Diana, and Mars are prayed to by Palamon, Emily, and Arcite respectively not only by Chaucer, who introduces oratories for each of them, but by the Ellesmere scribe, who adds annotations which place them in a

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76Hindman, Sealed in Parchment 93.

77This was not the case in the other depictions of the Knight as printed by Caxton and De Worde later in the century. For a discussion of these armored knights see Betsy Bowden, “Visual Portraits of the Canterbury Pilgrims: 1484(?)–1809,” in The Ellesmere Chaucer 177. Chaucer’s text does not mention the Knight’s weapons, but as these other depictions indicate, weapons are as much an assumed part of a knight’s accoutrements as the gypon which Chaucer does mention, but only because he makes the point that it is bismoted.

78Hindman, Sealed in Parchment 82, uses this term to describe a knight as “head of the household” to distinguish this status from that, for instance, of a knight as a bachelor.

79The merging of the Knight and Theseus was observed by Martin Stevens who says that the miniaturist, with “his own audience in mind,” created an image “which summons up the role of Theseus” (“The Ellesmere Miniatures” 124). The other design features of the layout of the page encourage this dual application.

80See the discussion on this process in Camille, The Gothic Idol 102.

81The Riverside Chaucer. 834n1884; compare the late Gothic temple created for Diana in Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9242, fol. 174v, which is reproduced in Camille, The Gothic Idol 113.
courtly love context as the embodiments of love, chastity, and chivalry. The Ellesmere portrait of the Knight as lord rather than as warrior excludes open signs of violence as inappropriate, not only in the cultivated garden of verse so carefully set up by the frame, but also within the pleasure gardens at the reader’s home, the latter projected as a calm place indicative of order and stability, prosperity, and good government. Violence has been effectively aestheticized.

Finally, the mounted Knight becomes the guide who initiates the literary pilgrimage for privileged readers. He invites them to see from his perspective, temporarily merging their identity with his. The rest of the page itself reinforces this perspective in the orderliness of its coordinated ornamentation. Further, it is an active zone across which the illustrated figure relates to the text and within which the audience has imaginative room to recreate the scenes under the subtle guidance of decoration and illustration. In the case of the illustrated portraits, the absence of a specific setting permits multiple and conflated interpretations. In this instance, the mounted rider functions alternately or simultaneously as the storytelling Knight from the General Prologue, as Theseus, as patron of the manuscript and, being the first portrait illustrated, as surrogate authorial guide to the Canterbury Tales generally as well as to the Knight’s Tale specifically.

The imagined setting could be the road to Canterbury, the road to Athens, the grounds of the patron’s estates, or an extension of any future viewer’s own richly

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82 They are as follows: The preyere of Palamon to Venus goddesse of Ioue, The preyere of Emeyle to dyane goddesse of Maydene, The answere of dyane to Emeyle, and The orison(u)n of Arcite to Mars god of Armes (KNT 2221-22, 2297-98, 2349-50, and 2373-74 respectively).

83 Subsequent illustrated versions of the Canterbury Tales portrayed not the tales, but the storytellers, the precedent having been established in this manuscript. Made within a decade or two after the Ellesmere, the only other manuscript with a program of illustrations for the Canterbury Tales is Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4. 27 (1), which now contains only six remaining pictures of the pilgrims at the beginnings of their tales, plus four remaining pictures of the personified Deadly Sins added to the Parson’s Tale, reinforcing the latter’s importance for a late medieval audience. The other miniatures of pilgrims and Sins have been cut out. Scott, *Late Gothic Manuscripts* 2:144, considers the “idea of using a sequence of mounted Pilgrims” as deriving from the Ellesmere Chaucer “or from a similar lost manuscript.” Scott incorrectly, however, distinguishes the Ellesmere placement of the pilgrims from that of Gg. 4. 27 (1) when she says that the latter’s designer “did not understand the subtlety of placing the Pilgrims at their Prologues” in the Ellesmere manner (145). In no case where there is a Prologue to a tale in the Ellesmere is the illustration placed there; rather, it is always placed within lines of the titles *here bigynmeth* [... ] announcing whose tale (not prologue) follows. Betsy Bowden, “Visual Portraits of the Canterbury Pilgrims, 1494(?) To 1809,” *The Ellesmere Chaucer* 171-204, traces early printed books and the first painted versions of the Canterbury Tales, all illustrated with pilgrim portraits.
appointed space. Perhaps most interesting in the absence of a pictured setting, for which there was certainly room, is the preservation of an element of mystery concerning the identity of the illustrated figure. The placement of these figures means that the storytellers, with the exception of the Miller, approach the text from the unknown space beyond the lateral sides of the open manuscript book. This design feature, where the illustrated figures ride toward the text from the outer margins, stresses the enigmatic nature of the pilgrims’ origins and identity. Not only is the “present” setting undefined, but the past venue exists only in the uncontrolled space beyond the page. There, for instance, the blood of heathens or Amazons may stain the earth, but it does not mark the ordered surface of the manuscript.

While the pilgrim portraits visually guide the reading process, they themselves resist a single interpretation and are thus as elusive as Chaucer, whose own style is often intriguingly ambiguous. The mounted Knight as lord introduces this visually embellished romance, the first of the ongoing and open-ended sequence of tales. All that is congruent with his perspective regulates the experience of his audience for this tale and defines the attitude to be assumed toward pilgrims of lesser rank. His portrayal frames and overarches the reading of subsequent tales, as do the other elements of the ordinatio. At the same time, the viewing audience is encouraged to become actively and creatively engaged in filling in the “blank” spaces and in re-visioning both the tellers and the tales from an aristocratic viewpoint.

**Recasting Selected Pilgrims for Aristocratic Family Viewing**

If the Knight were the only illustrated figure to be raised in status, he would be out of place since noble lords are seldom found alone, especially within such an aristocratic space as that defined by the decorated border. This means that some of the other pilgrims needed to be elevated to present a suitable inner circle for this Knight in the Ellesmere Manuscript, thereby also providing entry into the exclusive society of the viewing audience.

After describing the small retinue of the Knight, the General Prologue turns to the person next in status, who happens to be the Prioress (fig. 86). Rather than depicting her as a woman with pretensions to the speech and manner of her social superiors, as Chaucer does, Ellesmere’s designer has raised her to the level of her aspirations. Nevertheless, the essence of the presentation on the page beginning the Prioress’s Tale is religious. In the

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84 Contrast, for example, the two-page spread illustrating the battle with the Amazons in a French manuscript of Boccassio’s *Tesedda* now in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 2617, c. 1455, fols. 18v-19. See Kolve, *Chaucer* 409n4.
border above the illustration, visual weight is given to the floral bouquet appended to the bars beside one of the stanzas in her Prologue concerning the Virgin’s bounty and anticipation of people’s needs. While this sort of bouquet with two flowers extending from the main mass might seem coincidental at this point, its recurrence in other passages dealing with women makes it less so. This shows the designing artist’s flexibility in using the available vocabulary, visually as ornament, but on occasion to achieve specific effects which support the overall presentation, in this case one possibly derived from previous work on religious manuscripts, especially Marian devotions. While the Prioress as illustrated adds a sober religious tone, she does not, however maternal she may be as indicated by her tale about a child, complete a possible family circle with the Knight and his son or visually present a model for a chatelaine in the audience. Since, for similar reasons, the Second Nun also presents an unlikely candidate for these purposes, the choice had to fall on the Wife of Bath. By happy coincidence, it proved possible to assimilate details from her narrative in order to adjust her social rank by the placement of her portrait near the tale her illustration frames.

The Wife of Bath’s gaze (fig. 87) is directed to the line: *The Elf queene with her holy compaignye* (WBT 860). The extremes of the General Prologue’s description are modified in this rendering or are suppressed entirely. There Chaucer describes her face as *Boold [ . . . ] and fair and reed of hewe* (GP 458). Instead of displaying outright boldness, her visual portrayal shows her as goal-directed and purposeful. Her fairness is played up, but her redness of hue is modified to a blush on her modeled cheeks, making her portrayal seem consonant with that of the *Elf queene* of her story. Her horse looks intently at the line referring to the time of the Elf queen’s reign—*manye hundred yeres ago* (863)—as if to emphasize the time factor which is so critical to her and to her tale of a magical

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85See, for example, that on the Knight’s page beside the reference to Ypolita and the Amazons (KnT 880-83) and on the Squire’s page beside mention of the king’s beautiful daughter, Canace (SqT 33-35). On the Miller’s page, fol. 34v, there may be some suggestion that a small floral bouquet with a rosette medallion and sprouting daisies is used ironically beside the Miller’s description of the chamber of the maid-like clerk at Oxford that was adorned with sweet herbs, while he himself was as sweet as a licorice root (3205-07). Some irony may also be intended on the Shipman’s page where a rosette medallion occurs beside the mention of the fair, young monk (25-28).

86It may be that she is portrayed as a widow since her pinched wimple (GP 151), worn over the chin in the illustration, was an important feature of widows’ attire until the sixteenth century; see Margaret Scott, *A Visual History of Costume: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (London: Batsford, 1986) 32, illus.16. The illustration shows a freestone effigy of a widow from the Church of St. Mary, Sprotborough, Yorks., now at Batsford, made by an anonymous English sculptor working after 1340. The wimple is meticulously crimped.
transformation from age to youth. The illustration portrays the Wife as a young woman, and she is gratuitously given a high forehead. She is *ywympled wel* but her *cowerchiefs*, while elaborate, do not seem to weigh *ten pound* (GP 453-54). Her hat, while broad, is yet not quite as large as a *bokeler* (GP 471); rather, it is the size of a suitable traveling hat such as that worn, for example, by Mary in the "Flight to Egypt" in a somewhat later miniature now in Vienna.  

Most notably, her overt sexuality is played down: if she is *Gat toothed* (GP 468), this is concealed by her closed mouth; likewise, if she is wearing *scarlet reed hose* (GP 456), this is concealed by her *foot mantel* (GP 472), as are her new shoes. Her *hipes large* (GP 472) accentuate her fashionably small high waist.  

The use of gold for her belt is a striking addition to the portrait placing her, like the Knight, in the same milieu of early fifteenth-century aristocratic fashion as that shown by the highborn lady with the high gold belt in "The Riding Party" (fig. 85) and also by the one who picks flowers in the April scene of the *Très Riches Heures de Jean, Duke of Berry.* The trappings of her horse are also gold, and hers is the only horse except the Knight’s that is fitted with gold stirrups. Her horse is sleek: more elegant than an *amblere* (GP 469). Its trappings seem to be a more modest, feminine version of the Knight’s in its style of gear. Its stance is also similar to that of the Knight’s horse. Unlike the two nuns in this manuscript who ride side-saddle, but like the illustrated Penthesilea in *Des Cleres femmes,* she sits easily (GP 469) astride her horse, suggesting an experienced traveler.  

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87 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. N. 2844, fol. 124v. This miniature from the Rothschild Prayer Book, Gent-Brüger School, c. 1510, is reproduced as a postcard available at the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.

88 Wide high belts were worn above the waistline early fifteenth-century fashion according to Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard, *Dress Accessories c. 1150 - c. 1450,* in Medieval Finds from Excavations in London 3 (London: HMSO, 1991) 35. Relatively high belts had already made their appearance in the late fourteenth century as evident in the illustration of the Virgin in the Vernon Manuscript on fol. 126v.

89 Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 4v. While it is unlikely (unless the crusades brought some knowledge of this), there is a remote possibility that it may have some reference to the Byzantine gold marriage belt, adding an interesting resonance in view of the Wife’s many marriages. On an early Syrian example, see Edwin Hall, *The Arnolfini Retrtothal: Medieval Marriage and the Enigma of Van Eyck’s Double Portrait* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) 21.

90 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 12420, fol. 46; reproduced in Sandra L. Hindman, Christine de Pizan’s "Epistre Othea," *Painting and Politics at the Court of Charles VI* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986) fig. 81.

mentioned in the text, adds complexity and ambiguity to her illustrated portrait, emphasizing her attempt to control her destiny while injecting, perhaps, a touch of humor for the reader who remembers her Prologue. This illustration, unaccompanied by marginal glosses, dominates the page by its medial position. As Susan Schibanoff has shown, where there are any glosses, whether for her Prologue or Tale, the Ellesmere supports or augments the Wife of Bath’s text, unlike the glosses of MS Egerton 2864 later in the century, which challenge it and denounce her immorality. With the intended audience obviously in mind, the Ellesmere scribe did not use the more conventional not(a) bene in the margin, as did the Hengwrt scribe, beside the Wife’s discussion about gentility, but, rather, he wrote De gen(er)osiitate\(^\text{94}\) (WBT 1109) beside this passage, pointing to the importance of generosity as a desired quality in people of noble rank. The Ellesmere scribe also added exemplum (WBT 1146) beside her discussion showing that a lord’s son is not naturally free of villainy, emphasizing to the highborn young reader the behavior to be avoided. The Wife is allowed to present herself as she would recreate herself if she could. By conflating with the Fairy Queen of her tale and without the sexual innuendo accorded her in the text, downplayed also by the glosses, the Wife has been sufficiently elevated in status to provide a female counterpart to the portrait of the Knight in the Ellesmere Manuscript, making her suitable as his partner and a model for an aristocratic female reader.

The General Prologue furnishes one pilgrim by way of a direct familial relationship to the Knight in the person of his sone a yong squier (79). The placement of his tale within the manuscript may have had repercussions on an audience attuned to subtle signs of differences in social importance. Just as the Knight is given authoritative status not only by coming first in the General Prologue and in the order in which his tale is related, but also by being illustrated first and accorded an enhanced status, so the Squire’s Tale itself is given a special distinction in the Ellesmere order. Unlike the jumbled arrangement of the earlier Hengwrt manuscript, probably the result of the copyist “working with exemplars


\(^\text{92}\)Nicole Green, “Variant Interpretations,” unpublished essay, U of Victoria, B.C., 1998, 14-15, develops the implications of the whip, seeing it in terms of the Wife’s need for control and yet her lack of control, her use of authority being “a verbal whip.”


\(^\text{94}\)The importance of generosity as a characteristic of those in power is heavily supplemented by the mass of marginalia on poverty (WBT 1177-1206), not found in Hengwrt, and so is possibly of more than passing relevance to the scribe or editor.
that were arriving on his desk in fragmentary form and unpredictable sequence,” as Pearsall speculates, the Ellesmere arrangement was “the best that could be arrived at” because the same scribe, or his editors, now had time “for a more leisured scrutiny of the papers, and a more reasoned ordering of them.” In this reorganization, Fragment V (Group F), containing the *Squire’s Tale* and the *Franklin’s Tale*, was placed in the center of the Ellesmere Manuscript, following the *Merchant’s Tale* (whose illustration, as I will show, plays off the Squire’s portrait) in Fragment IV (Group E). That there might have been a special distinction in the *Squire’s Tale* being placed in the exact center of the Ellesmere is indicated by analogy with the organization of some other fifteenth-century manuscript compilations, as mentioned by Seth Lerer (following the lead of Sylvia Huot), who notes that a work placed in the centre of a manuscript can refract meaning backwards and forwards. He refers specifically to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 346 in which the attempt to frame the compilation as Chaucerian is strengthened by mention of Chaucer’s name right at the middle, serving as “a central authorizing figure.”

If, indeed, intelligent compilers at the time favored such a location as a way of showcasing a subject, then increased attention might be accorded to a medial illustration if the details warrant it. The placement of the fragment containing, in this case, the *Squire’s Tale* and the *Franklin’s Tale*—both self-consciously demonstrating rhetorical finesse, a skill for which Chaucer himself was most admired in the fifteenth century—supports those other features of the Ellesmere’s presentation which combine to celebrate Chaucer’s art. In the *Squire’s Tale*, Chaucer seems to parody self-conscious rhetorical delivery when he shows the Squire more concerned with style than with the story itself, which he never gets to finish. This rhetorical focus is enhanced by the design of the page (fig. 88), whereby the last two lines of the Squire’s Prologue serve as an inscription, reminiscent of the Latin preceding the *Knight’s Tale*:

Haue me excused if I speke amys

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97Carl Lindahl says that in the ninety years between 1385 and 1475, next to “master” used 23 times, Chaucer is referred to as “rhetor” 14 times, followed by “eloquent” 8 times, revealing “an elite cultural view”; see *Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989) 166.
It is the same rhetorical trick of denying rhetorical accomplishment that is given visual prominence on the Franklin’s page. The effect of these lines at the top of the page, which the illustrated Squire’s self-referential gesture seems to express, was not possible in the earlier Hengwrt version because there, completely out of place, the Squire’s Prologue or Head-link comes after the Merchant’s Tale but before the Franklin’s Tale. As with the Franklin’s page in Ellesmere, the ornament enhances the effect; in this case the entire upper border serves as a wavy, flourished serif for the top bar of the squared decorated “A” beginning the tale, while the left oblique stroke of the “A” descends into a flourished vegetal scroll below the portrait of the Squire, causing his horse to jump.

The likelihood that the placement of the Squire might have had contemporary political relevance is reinforced by the details advancing the status of the illustrated Squire. Confirming an awareness of the notion of centrality is the annotation set off, in this manuscript, by scrolls in the border just below the illustration: *centrum* (*circuli*). This Boethian idea of a stable center within a circle draws attention to one of the qualities of the ideal ruler mentioned in Chaucer’s text: *Of his corage as any centre stable* (SqT 22). Given the addition of the illustration, a young aristocratic reader of this manuscript, likewise *yong fressh strong* (23), might find this exemplary. With its philosophical underpinnings recalling the Knight’s speech concerning the First Mover who *stable is and eterne* (KnT 3004), and within the larger context of this manuscript’s successive open-ended borders suggesting the progression of the religious pilgrimage, this integrated design helps confer a Boethian and divine sanction to the ruling faction, which the elevated status of the Squire represents. The interest in the qualities of a good ruler which this manuscript displays is supported, for example, by the expansion of Hengwrt’s annotation *No(ta) to No(ta)te do(mi)ni* (KnT 1774) beside Theseus’s reminder to himself not to be like a merciless lion when he decides to reduce to imprisonment the death sentence he formerly gave to Palamon and Arcite. Further, in the change from the singular to the plural form of the imperative, the intended readership of the Ellesmere is also defined.

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98 In *The Riverside Chaucer* these are lines 7-8 of the “Introduction to the Squire’s Tale,” but in the Ellesmere, if they were numbered, they would be lines 29-30 of *The prologue of the Squire’s tale*.

99 The same annotation is present in Hengwrt. *The Riverside Chaucer* (452 and 891n22) cites Boethius 4.pr.6.116-29.

100 This follows as his compassionate response to the cries of the weeping ladies of his court and to his own reasoning concerning men’s natural behavior in the matter of love (KnT 1748-72).
The Squire is attired in a manner which might well suit the *royal estat* (SqT 26) of the young Cambyuskan of his tale: he has ermine leggings (or leggings embroidered to look like ermine), certainly not mentioned in the General Prologue description. With the exception of the illustration of the ambitious Merchant, the pictured Squire has the longest points on his shoes, although much of their white paint has flaked off the point, making this less obvious to a modern viewer. He wears white gloves, like the victorious Arcite in the *Knight's Tale* who is clothed in them on his funeral bier (KnT 2874). Not previously noticed, but clear from an enlargement (fig. 89), is that the self-referential position of his hand displays a ring under his glove, near the top of his ring finger, carefully outlined and so distinguishing it from the flowers on his garment. It mirrors the fashion of Henry V (fig. 90) who is portrayed "in a black cap" and wears one of his rings near the top of his ring finger. The position of the ring near the top of the Squire’s finger calls attention to it, stressing its relevance with respect to the tale which mentions a magic ring given by

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101 A dark outline distinguishes his shoe from the leg of the horse which it overlaps; however, it is not continued to the point, where it was not required for articulation when the paint was intact. This sort of interrupted outlining for purposes of clarification and emphasis is also evident on other figures. Compare, for instance, the outline on the right leg of the horse of the Canon’s Yeoman on fol. 192 where, once again, the rider’s leg is distinguished from the horse’s by an outline. What this suggests is that someone looked over all the figures when they were finished, outlining where necessary. It is one technical aspect implying more collaboration and less separation of duties than previously recognized.

102 As described in the record of the collections of Henry VII and Edward VI (1542, 1547 [49]) as quoted in Oliver Millar, *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen* (London: Phaidon, 1963) 50, cat. no. 6. I am grateful to Sue Fletcher, Picture Library Assistant, Royal Collections Enterprises, for this information. It is possible that the short hair style Henry adopted was misunderstood and taken as a cap by the copyist (see note below). That this is likely is indicated by the cap-like hairstyle of Henry who has light brown hair in a miniature made during his lifetime and showing Hoccleve presenting him with the *Regiment of Princes* in London, British Library, MS Arundel 38, c. 1411-13, fol. 37, reproduced in color in Elizabeth Hallam, ed., *The Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses* (Godalming, Surrey: Bramley Books, 1997) 123.

103 There are at least six copies of this late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century panel portrait of Henry V besides the one at Eton College. According to Millar, *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures* 50, "The source of the portrait may have been a medal, the effigy of the King in Westminster Abbey (from which the head was stolen in 1546) or a votive portrait in miniature or on the scale of life in which the King appeared as a donor." The position of Henry’s open hand, shown from the back, also displays a ring on his little finger and on his index finger, both in the usual position. The artist would seem to have painted the hand in this position for the purpose of showing off these rings. In the Squire’s portrait, only one ring is relevant to the story. A distinguishing facial feature in the portrait is Henry’s nose, shown similarly in Arundel 38 (see preceding note), which might be compared to that of the illustrated Ellesmere Squire.
the strange knight to Canace, the king’s young daughter, enabling her to understand the language of birds (SqT 146-55). Particular attention is called to the properties of the ring in the marginal annotation adjacent to this description: **of the vertu of the ryng** (fol. 116v). The ring’s narrative importance is featured later when the peregrine falcon tells the princess the heart-rending story of being jilted in love by her false mate given to peynted words (SqT 560).

While the Squire’s ring has ample relevance to the story alone, other features of the illustrated Squire allude to fashions in excess of the description in the General Prologue. One such is the belt with clapper bells hanging by chains or cords from it, all in accessorizing white (which might be intended to suggest silver, like the rowel spurs he wears). Such bells became fashionable in England after 1393-94 when Richard II, borrowing from a German vogue, had two gold bells fitted to his belt. They reached the height of fashion in the first third of the fifteenth century as shown, for example, in the slightly later **Troilus and Criseyde** frontispiece, where a man in a blue garment has a profusion of them dangling from an elaborate collar and from a belt. Dangling from longer cords or chains, the illustrated Squire’s are very like the rumbler bells worn by Henry V in another early fifteenth-century miniature. A different view by way of social commentary on the fashion of suspended bells is that offered in the Douce 104 manuscript of **Piers Plowman** in the illustration of Pride (fol. 24), who is shown with gold rumbler bells. The Ellesmere portrayal, however, has no satiric edge.

The Squire’s high hat, which is broad at the top and in a slightly different blue from the border leaf nearest it, is in the same style as that of the black hat worn by Henry Bolingbroke (shortly to be Henry IV) in the **Histoire du Richard** by Jean Creton. The

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104Egan and Pritchard, *Dress Accessories* 336.

105Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61, fol. 1v.


107London, British Library, MS Harley 1319, fols. 30v, 53v, and 57. As stated by Gervase Matthew, *The Court of Richard II* (London: Murray, 1968) 209, Creton was “a ‘valet’ of Charles VI of France who had joined Richard’s court in 1398, had accompanied him to Ireland in June 1399 and who had the Earl of Salisbury as his patron.” This work, which is prejudiced in Richard’s favor, is “crowded with realistic detail and there are
“white embroidered insignia” on the Squire’s hat may be suggestive of the white swan, the device of the wealthy family of Henry V’s mother, Mary de Bohun, which Henry IV customarily wore in the form of a pendant. The hat itself is also comparable to that with a gold medallion worn by the second noble rider in the contemporary French manuscript, “The Riding Party” (fig. 85), and the gold medallion on the hat worn by one of the parents in the betrothal scene in the April picture of Très Riches Heures of Jean, Duke of Berry. In the latter the adjacent figure of the prospective groom wears a red chaperon similar to the one with the dagged gorgets of the other rider in the “Riding Party,” confirming that both the tall hat of the Squire and the headgear of the Knight belong to the same early fifteenth-century aristocratic fashion. This suggests that the illustrator, if not actually influenced by the fashions favored by the royal court, may have been aware of a manuscript illustration in which these two forms of hats were likewise paired, perhaps a calendar picture of April or May showing aristocratic outdoor pleasures with which the Squire, as fresh as is the monthe of may (GP 92), is associated.

The spirit of spring informs the illustration of the Squire. In the General Prologue, his short gown is embroidered like a meadow with fresshe floures whyte and reede (89-90); in the illustration, his short dark green houpelande is decorated with some small white four-petalled florets and with red-petalled flowers with white centers. It is lined with a red-brown (probably silk) lining, the same color as the reins, and is edged with ermine.

attempts at portraiture.” Fols. 53v and 57 are reproduced opposite 164.


109 Hallam, ed., The Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses 98. On this same page is a photograph of the Dunstable swan, now in the British Museum in London, an enameled version of this badge. On the evolution of badges which came to have political significance, see Joan Evans, A History of Jewellery: 1100-1870 (1953; London: Faber and Faber, 1970) 64-67. Evans points out that “John Gower the poet on his effigy in Southwark Cathedral wears [. . .] the swan pendant used by Henry in virtue of his first wife Mary Bohun” (65).

110 Musée Condé, MS 65, fol. 4v.

111 The gold medallions worn by some of the figures in the betrothal scene suggest that perhaps this is the insignia of a particular family. Jean Longnon and Raymond Cazelles, The “Très Riches Heures” of Jean, Duke of Berry (1969; rpt. New York: George Braziller, 1989) 175, speculate that the betrothal is that of the Duke’s granddaughter, Bonne, to Charles d’Orléans (April, 1410). The betrothal takes place on the castle grounds outside the walled orchard garden.

112 On the association of the spring months in calendar pictures with courtly activities, see Pearsall and Salter, Landscapes and Seasons 140.
Everything seems caught at the moment of take-off. The flowing sleeves of the rider (GP 93), as well as the horse’s swinging tail and saddle straps, accentuate the upward thrusting arc of the powerful horse. For the reader who approaches this tale more than once, this illustrated horse recalls and so anticipates the magical flying horse in the narrative which the Squire compares to a steede of Lumbardye and associates with the mythical winged horse Pegasus (SqT 193, 207). Given the extended ekphrasis or rhetorical description in the narrative, and the two marginal annotations—of the v(er)tu of the steede of / bras and i. equus pegaseus (SqT 115, 207)—it would be difficult for the reader, especially one as knowledgeable about horses as many aristocrats would be, not to linger over this illustration and even come back to it during the reading process. This magnificent horse’s eyes and ears seem intently focused on the title Heere bigymeth the Squieres tale, as if prompting the narrative to begin forthwith. In relation to the rider, the proportions of this horse are quite large by Ellesmere standards (and more realistic to the modern eye), engaging the viewer’s particular attention. The portrait of the Squire on his horse is granted ample personal space for a verso illustration, emphasizing the rider’s status. Like his father, the Squire sits high in the saddle, in this case displaying his straight shapely leg of euene lengthe (GP 83).

While the General Prologue describes him as being of greet strengthe and having been somtyme in chyuachie (84-85), this illustrated Squire scarcely looks twenty yeer of age (82). Certainly this weaponless youth does not call up violent battle scenes any more than did the Knight, although he does sit on his horse most elegantly (94). His serious facial expression is, rather deliberately, one of innocence. Like the quintessential squire and the picture of the youth in the Ages of Man iconography, he does have hair with lokkes crulle (81), recalling the miniature of Henry IV’s coronation in which his adolescent son holding the sword of justice has crimped-looking light brown hair (before

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113 In 1402 Parliament attempted to restrict anyone under the rank of knight banneret from wearing such wide sleeves; see Hallam, ed., The Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses 98. Terry Jones, in Chaucer’s Knight 29, says the Squire is executing “a ‘high school air’ known as the capriole.”

114 Jill Mann, Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire 120, draws a comparison between Chaucer’s Squire and the “unmarried gallant” described in Matheolus’ Lamentations: “He sings, leaps or rides; he makes himself taller than he is. He has his hair often washed, curled, combed and parted. He wears well-soled shoes and gowns that are tight or flowing.”

115 See for example the picture of the youth combing his hair in the medallion on the wheel showing the Ages of Man in the De Lisle Psalter, London, British Library, MS Arundel 83, c. 1308-10, fol. 126v.
he had his hair cut short as in his later portraits) and wears wide, slashed sleeves. Unlike
the portrait of the young Prince Henry, the Ellesmere Squire has no weapons, nor are
there symbolic floral shapes in the decorated initial or demivinett border as there are on
folio 57v concerning the god of love in the only surviving copy of Chaucer’s translation of
the Romance of the Rose. Rather, his serious expression resembles that of the
illustration of Langland’s liberum arbitrium in the Douce 104 manuscript who, as Kathryn
Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice have demonstrated, is depicted as a combination of
spiritual and courtly lover, dressed as he is in “tight hose and a red floral jacket, holding
[. . .] a mirror (emblematic of self-reflectiveness).” If the Ellesmere Squire seems too
modest to love so hoote all night that he scarcely sleeps (GP 97-98), his delicate features
and deferential gaze do confirm his courtesy as demonstrated in his attendance upon his
father’s table (99-100). In the text of his tale, what the Squire admires about the mounted
knight who enters the court is his courtesy which could not be faulted even by Gawain if
he were comen eyyn out of ffaiyre (96). What is perhaps most extraordinary about the
illustration of the Ellesmere Squire is that he is portrayed neither as a squire attendant
upon a warrior nor as a lover, according to conventional iconography, but as the epitome
of an innocent and courteous young noble. As Greg Walker has pointed out with respect
to Gawain’s response to the Green Knight in the Pearl Manuscript, “courtesy does not

116London, British Library, MS Harley 4380, fol. 186v. This is reproduced in color
in Elizabeth Hallam, ed., The Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses 94, and in Peter Earle,
to become Prince of Wales, as mentioned by Peter Earle, had been knighted by his father
the day before the coronation (39). Subsequently when he became king, Henry liked to
present himself to his people as “the embodiment of justice”; see The Chronicles (above)
123. This Ellesmere visualization accords with the description of the young Prince Henry
by one chronicler: “he was taller than most men, his face fair and set on a longish neck, his
body graceful, his limbs slender but marvelously strong,” while another chronicler draws
attention to him as being “tall, clean-shaven, tight-lipped, sinewy and agile, more clerical
than military in appearance”; see Hallam, 119 and 122 respectively.

117Glasgow, University Library, MS Hunter 409, English, c.1440-1450. This is
reproduced in color in Nigel Thorp, The Glory of the Page: Medieval and Renaissance
Illuminated Manuscripts from Glasgow University Library (London: Harvey Miller,
1987) plate 10. Thorp refers to the “exuberant play” of the “floral designs, chiefly of
Lords-and-Ladies or Cuckoo Pint” on this page; see 89, cat. no. 36. For an extensive list
of alternate English names, including “Knights-and-Ladies” see Cecil T. Prime, Lords and
Ladies (London: Collins, 1960) 216-17. Prime observes that during the medieval period it
was thought that a plant’s appearance revealed its uses to man; consequently, this plant
was used as an aphrodisiac as well as one of the ingredients in love philters (2).

118Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice, “Langladian Reading Circles and the
Civil service in London and Dublin, 1380-1427,” New Medieval Literatures 1 (1998): 68
and plate on the facing page for the illustration on fol. 74.
simply demarcate the battlefield, it explicitly offers an alternative to it—a means [. . .] of re-negotiating honor and courtliness in terms of his own choosing, in order that the direct, warrior-code challenge of the Knight might be deflected and neutralized.”**119** This same observation is appropriate to the illustrated Ellesmere Squire whose portrait models, as it were, an alternative to violence and licentious sexuality. The General Prologue does present him as an educated son who could both purtreype and write (96), accomplishments not accorded his father. Courteous and literate, he is visually presented on the Ellesmere page as representing the ideal young nobleman. Like the Gawain to whom he refers in his tale, *accordant to hise wordes was his cheere* (103). He is “stylish and polite” with a “taste for fancy,” as Seth Lerer argues in regard to “the ways in which the Squire’s persona and performance shaped the literary values of the fifteenth century.”**120**

**Mocking Social Inferiors**

While some of the pilgrims are pictorially elevated in status to suit the aristocratic space defined by the floriated borders, others are permitted entry by neutralizing through satiric representation—sometimes mild but occasionally to the point of demonization—any threat they might pose to social power. The superiority of the knightly class and their right to the privileged life are reaffirmed, while the aspirations of other classes to wealth, as well as their claims to culturally exclusive romantic, rhetorical, and chivalric attainments, are frequently mocked.

Of this there is no better demonstration than the Merchant’s portrait (fig. 91). The artist has exploited the potential of its placement on the page and in relation to that of the Squire which follows it in the Ellesmere order. If everything about the illustration of the Squire, placed at the top of the page, implies ascent, everything about the Merchant, placed at the bottom of the page, implies an unseemly upward mobility. Nothing could inscribe his ambitions more explicitly than his attempt to ape the Squire whose portrait comes next in the manuscript. Every lineament of man and horse can be viewed as a reflection of his social superior—from his own posture to that of his leaping horse. That the imitation is excessive, and therefore deserving of mockery, is apparent not only from his forked beard (GP 270) and his expensive Flemish beaver hat (GP 272), but also from his expression which is like that of the illustration of Covetousness in the Douce version of *Piers Plowman* who looks so hungrily and holow (VI:197, fol. 27). Whereas the elegant

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**120**Lerer, “Reading Like the Squire” 68, 59, and 58 respectively.
Squire’s ensemble is restrained in color, the Merchant’s red coat, slashed at the sides and embroidered with flowers like that of the God of Love in the *Roman de la Rose*,¹²¹ is entirely inappropriate to his position. His clothes reveal that he would like to become culturally assimilated with the class described in contemporary chivalric romances, but he is not in any position to play such a lover since he is in debt (GP 280), and the almost fawning attitude of the horse reassures the aristocratic reader that all this show is without substance. The extremely long, thin points on the rider’s feet, perhaps even longer than those of the Knight, not only violate all sumptuary laws about dress but demonstrate how he overreaches himself. Even his horse strains subserviently toward one of the leaves he sees in the border ornament above him.

As the coming man in the socio-political scene in the late medieval world, the Merchant is portrayed as young, there being nothing in the text to suggest his age even though his story is about a January-May marriage.¹²² The nature of the illustration recognizes this new force in society without approving or allowing its unchallenged entry and acceptance into the space occupied by the feudal aristocracy. As Sylvia Thrupp has shown, the boundaries between merchants and gentlemen at this time was permeable but fraught and complex.¹²³ Merchants and their children could climb the social ladder by such means as their wealth allowed, not restricted from rising by service to the powerful (as in the case of Chaucer who rose through service in the royal household), by education and the professions, by blood relationship to those advanced in ecclesiastical office, by military service, by taking up knighthood with all its burdens, by acquiring high positions such as that of mayor in urban administration, by purchasing a country house and living the life of a gentleman and, as in the case of the Wife of Bath who at least advanced her financial situation (leaving further ascent to the fantasy of her fiction), by marriage. Nor, at the other end, were those of gentle rank entirely aloof from the activities of trade, provided it did not involve manual labor and was in wholesale rather than retail engagement, often by way of silent partnerships. The practice of charging interest, which underpins capitalist

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¹²¹In Chaucer’s translation, lines 891-906; see *The Riverside Chaucer* 696.

¹²²Stevens, “The Ellesmere Miniatures” 125-26. Stevens has noted the similarities between the portraits of the Merchant and the Squire. He sees the Merchant as being rendered with “a spirit of joyfulness and play.” The only qualification I would make is that this is how the Merchant would have liked to appear, but his avaricious facial expression betrays him.

growth and expansion, did not, however, gain moral acceptance easily.\textsuperscript{124} In the Ellesmere, a visual response to the usurious practices of merchants, over which both church and state claimed jurisdictional authority,\textsuperscript{125} is expressed in the illustration of the Prioress (fig. 86). She shrinks back disapprovingly, as if responding to the annotation in the inner margin t\textit{ur}pe lucr\textit{um} 'indecent profits' beside the main text (PrT 490-91). Her horse, exhibiting an attitude that is even more severe, has seemingly dislodged the bar border with its decorative capital from its normal alignment.\textsuperscript{126} The precarious spiritual position of merchants is indicated in \textit{Piers Plowman} when the merchants weep for joy because Truth gives them a secret seal to the effect that, if they used their profits for charitable public works, no devil would harm them when they died.\textsuperscript{127} That there was social force to this conception about acquired wealth is evident in the number of contemporary merchants' wills which left substantial amounts to charity for the good of their souls.\textsuperscript{128} The illustration of the Merchant in the Douce 104 version of Langland’s work shows a merchant, also in red, counting his coins (fol. 102v), a fairly stereotyped image. He is placed not beside the line referring to those engaged in legitimate buying and selling (XXI: 238), but a few lines further down, beside the extended list of God's gifts to various professions and trades, including those who have to do with numbers, whom the illustrator represents as a merchant rather than as a diviner (240-41). As indicated by the Douce illustrator on other folios, it is the excessive concern for coins, implied by the number of them in the merchant’s lap, that perverts the utilization of God’s gifts and thereby threatens Piers’s efforts to cultivate truth.

The innovation of the Ellesmere portrayal is therefore the more striking in having the Merchant shown, not counting his coins or even carrying a money bag (like the illustrated Covetousness in Douce 104), but as a parodied version of the Squire whose place in the social hierarchy he attempts to emulate and, in a sense, displace. As in the

\textsuperscript{124}For a fuller discussion see Jacques Le Goff, "Trades and Professions as Represented in Medieval Confessors’ Manuals," \textit{Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages} (Chicago, 1982) 107-21.

\textsuperscript{125}Thrupp, \textit{The Merchant Class} 175.

\textsuperscript{126}See also the indentation of the bar border of the Chaucer illustration, fol. 153v.

\textsuperscript{127}George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, eds. \textit{Piers Plowman: The B Version, Will’s Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best} (London: U of London, 1975) 370-71, VII: 18-38. Merchants were not given an absolute pardon in the margin of Piers’s pardon because they would not keep holy days and because they swore.

\textsuperscript{128}Thrupp, \textit{The Merchant Class} 174-80.
Douce illustrations, it is not gold *per se* that is bad. The Ellesmere illustrator, cultivating an aristocratic audience, implies that the display of gold is appropriate to that estate, as shown in the illustration of the Knight wearing gilded spurs denoting his status, but should be restricted among the emerging middle class, never mind clergy or greedy peasants: a conservative attitude not unlike that of Christine de Pizan concerning the dress appropriate to bourgeois women. A similar conservatism is reflected in the Ellesmere portrayal of the Prioress who does not have the gold brooch at the end of her rosary as disclosed by Chaucer’s text. The illustrated Merchant looks like a squire, but his clothes do not make him an aristocrat.

The unruly Miller’s gold thumb, strikingly painted in the illustration (fig. 92), calls attention to his dishonesty in weighing corn (GP 561-62). Stout, thick-necked, drunk, weaponed, and entirely lacking in courtesy, this Miller is everything the Knight and the Squire are not, both in the text and in the illustrations. Since his *cherles tale* (ProMLT 3169) is a direct challenge to Knight’s—he even employs the same metaphor of literary creation used by the Knight when he mentions the *oxen in my plough* (3159)—it is interesting to note how the Ellesmere designer registers that opposition. The unique placement of the illustration of Robin the Miller on the inside of the gutter margin near the binding can be considered an accident of the manuscript’s production process. Alternatively, in view of the Miller’s insistence on paying back the Knight with a noble story of his own (ProMLT 3126-27), and the fact that this tale also begins with a “W,” perhaps the illustration reflects his attempt to answer the Knight since he also approaches his tale, as does the Knight, from the top right. This positioning would imply that the designer might also have been deliberately playing with the idea of a border, suggested by one or more punning comments in the General Prologue as to the Miller’s being a *janglere and a goliardes* (560) or teller of dirty stories since *border* meant “a storyteller, a mocker, a minstrel or jester.” The comparison of his beard to that of a *sowe* (552) which,

Ellis, “Spurs and spur fittings”125.

Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor: The Treasury of the City of Ladies*, trans. and introd. Charity Cannon Willard (New York: Bard Hall Press and Persen Books, 1989)189-90. She particularly warns against extravagance in dress by women of property who seek to “inflate” their status by wearing garments appropriate “for a gentlewoman.” The attitude reflected elsewhere in Ellesmere to the subject of gold and the new moneyed economy is indicated in the long, extended flourishes in the border bracketing the Latin source in the *Liber parabolinarum* by Alanus de Insulis which serves as an annotation to the Canon Yeoman’s reflection in his tale that everything which shines is not gold, and that every apple fair to the eye is not good (962-65). PL 210, col. 585.

See also 3110-13 concerning the pilgrims’ response to the *Knight’s Tale*. 
together with his other boorish characteristics, calls up the image of a boar (*bor*), and his playing of a bagpipe (565) might be associated with the French *Bordon*, a "bagpipe [. . .] or a mule." The portrayal conjures up the association of playing at hitting a mark, as in *border* or *beholder*, which is what the Miller does in relation to the Knight and his story.\(^{132}\) The Miller is allowed into the aristocratic space of the page as a fool or mocker (*border*), the role played by the other churls or churlish pilgrims.

Because the Miller insists on contesting the Knight's storytelling, the *Monk's Tale*, which should have followed the Knight's according to the Host's request, is judiciously delayed. The Monk's challenge to the Knight's position is evidently more serious than the Miller's bawdy parody of courtly love and the whole romance genre. Exaggerating his role as a narrator of tragedies, specifically one who tells about the fall of those in high degree—hence the Knight's *disease* when he calls for an end to so much heaviness (ProNPT 3961)—is his attire which, in the illustration, is funereal black from head to toe (fig. 78). Possibly because it would have added humor to the portrait, the illustrator resisted the impulse to portray the Monk's shiny bald head, emphasized in the General Prologue (198). This "blackening" of the Monk, whose narration concerning the tragic fall of those in power reminds the audience that the Knight's status is not necessarily secure, represents a different sort of portrayal, quite devoid of humor, on the part of the designer.

Although Lucifer is the tale's first example of a fall, the annotation *lucifer* in the space ruled for annotations nearly touches the base of the Monk's illustration. One of his greyhounds sniffs at the word *twynne* (2005), referring to the fallen angel who became Satan and could not escape from his misery in hell, further connecting the Monk with tragedies and black Satan. His facial expression is neutral (more evident in the original manuscript than in the photograph) and while his eyes do not seem to protrude or roll in his head, as described by the General Prologue (201-02), they do look at the first line of text ending in the word *Tragedie*. His horse and greyhounds demonstrate the impropriety of *dawn Piers* (ProNPT 3982) who favors hunting and worldly, rather than spiritual, wealth.\(^{133}\) Although it is not immediately apparent, because the black pigment on his clothes has been smudged,\(^{134}\) there may have been a suggestion of the gold pin under his

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\(^{133}\)The absence of pets in the case of the illustration of the Prioress shows that her portrayal has, by contrast, no ironic overtones.

\(^{134}\)As it not infrequently is in this manuscript, perhaps due to damp and/or the placing of pages on top of each other before the black, evidently added last, was completely dry.
chin to fasten his hood (195-97). The contrast between his sober clothes and expression on the one hand, and all the expensive ornamentation on his horse and hounds (even the very presence of the latter) undercuts somewhat the challenge he poses to the aristocratic class, perhaps even confirming, by imitation, their tastes.

Presented less soberly and more in the mode of low comedy is the portrait of the Cook (fig. 93). As David N. DeVries remarks with respect to the ways in which customers were cheated, fraud threatened "to destabilize the body politic" just as the rotten and unclean food sold by Roger of Ware threatened to "destabilize the body gastronomic." DeVries also points out that "the Host’s admonition specifically links fraudulent business practice to fraudulent narrative practice." This connection makes all the more interesting the illustration of the Cook whose right hand offers up a steaming (stinking?) plate in the direction of the text describing the apprentice Perkyn Revelour who was a short felwe / with lokkes blake (CkT 4368-69), very like the illustrated Cook himself. His left hand carries as an attribute a large black meat hook, not mentioned in connection with the Cook but declaring his identification with the very devil, as in the Summoner’s description of the damned being clawed with fleshhooks (SumT 1730-31). The illustration of the Cook confirms for the aristocratic audience what the most obnoxious and repulsive churls look like—and this is one par excellence with his large thick peasant’s foot so unlike the Knight’s long, thin elegant one. This association of the illustrated Cook with the lowest class caters to the Ellesmere audience’s sense of superiority in a way that the illustration in the Cambridge manuscript, showing him instead as a member of the professional middle class whose clothes cover his leg, does not. In the Ellesmere, it is impossible to ignore the exaggerated bloody spots illustrating the unappetizing mormal (GP 386) on his bandaged leg. He is depicted in his underpants (not mentioned in the text), ostensibly to present the sores, but there is a similar presentation of peasants in their “working clothes” in the September scene for the grape harvest in the lavish Très Riches Heures of Jean, Duke of Berry. One such worker in his underpants is displayed near the middle of the lower third of that painting, exposing his buttocks to the viewer and showing his thick,

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136 Devils in medieval art are often portrayed with this attribute. As far as I am aware, the earliest western depictions occur in the influential Carolingian Utrecht Psalter, Utrecht, Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit, Cat. Cod., MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae, 1, Nr. 32.

137 Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4. 27(1), c. 1420-30, fol. 192v. See the discussion and reproduction in Kolve, Chaucer 264-67, fig. 126.
hairy legs as he bends down performing his task. In the case of the Ellesmere Cook, the dirty bandage and apron draw further attention to his lack of cleanliness, signalling disease and moral degeneracy to medieval audiences. Both the calendar picture and the Ellesmere’s rendition of the Cook show, for their respective aristocratic owners, a view of manual laborers that is demeaning.

The Cook’s horse intensifies the negative impression of the portrait. The droll expression of the illustrated caput or nag, with his head turned back and his front leg raised and curved expressively in a manner unique within this manuscript, is perfectly explained when seen as anticipating the fall of the drunken Cook whose chyuachee or horsemanship is ridiculed in the Prologue to the Manciple’s Tale (65, 50). There the Manciple also charges the Cook with nightwalking (16-19), connecting him with thieves and prostitutes. This entire visual presentation would provide amusement to upper-class viewers confident of their own equestrian—and ethical—superiority. Of course, any laughter might be tinged with some queasiness concerning the quality of the food prepared, on occasion, for them!

Vying with the Cook in being the most revolting of the illustrated pilgrims is the puny Summoner (fig. 94), with a face to scare children (GP 624-28) that also associates him with the devil (SumT 1622). Whereas the illustrated Wife of Bath does not have red hose (contrary to GP 456), indicative of her sexuality, the lecherous Summoner does: a graphic example of the recasting of the pilgrims to suit the prejudices of an aristocratic audience. The placement of the angry Summoner so close to the lines about the friar who preached to get money for hooly houses (SumT 1718) emphasizes the quarrel between them in the text. The annotation on the facing page: sedet in insidiis cu(m) diuittib(us) ‘he sits in ambush with the rich’ (fig. 95) may also have affected the placement of the Summoner. Adjacent to the lines in the Friar’s Tale concerning the Hon who sits in wait to slay the innocent (FrT 1657-58), this Latin annotation gives the biblical source for the simile of the wicked man who lies in wait to ambush the poor man, contextualizing the

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138 This part of the painting (fol. 9v) was completed some seventy years later near the end of the fifteenth century by Jean Colombe, presumably working over the sketch by the Limbourgs, according to Longnon and Cazelles, The “Très Riches Heures” of Jean, Duke of Berry 178.

139 Kolve, Chaucer 258.

140 That the designer was familiar with the Manciple’s Prologue is apparent from the fact that the Manciple is illustrated with the gourd of wine (mentioned in ProMancT 82-83 and 91).

141 Kolve, Chaucer 259.
attempt of the Summoner of that tale to cheat the poor widow (FrT 1376-77). The placement of the illustration of the Summoner, so close to the text of his tale that his horse’s head is surrounded by it and touches it, is more comprehensible if he is viewed as lying in ambush, like his counterpart in the Friar’s Tale, in this case ready to serve the summons he holds.

Dominating the portrait of the Summoner is his overly large garland (GP 666) of red and white flowers, the colors duplicating the red and white splotches on his face. If the flowery coat is inappropriate for the not-so-courtly Merchant, this garland on the head of the obscene Summoner is a complete travesty of the image of a courtly or divine personage, as found in the Knight’s Tale. There, Emily makes a subtill garland from the white and rede flowers she gathers (1053-54) and wears a garland of oak leaves to the altar of Diana (2290); the statue of Venus is garlanded with roses (1960-61) like the God of Love in Chaucer’s Romanant of the Rose (907-08); and Arcite (2175-76), like Theseus (1027), wears one of laurel.

Within the format of this folio, the configuration of the Summoner visually balances the block of the decorated letter “L” with its scrolling serifs on the same horizontal level in the demivinet border as the illustration. The garlanded Summoner seems to have been thrust out of the bracketing vegetal scrolls on the left as if his presence there is inappropriate. The pimply Summoner waits to pounce, his garland serving not to crown him as conqueror, lover, or poet, but to camouflage his intent, whether with respect to young people (GP 664) or to the bribable recipients of his summons. The garland, however, is too obvious and therefore déclassé, unlike the subtle inferences which the perceptive reader might tease out of the visual apparatus in a leisurely viewing and reviewing of the manuscript.

The portrayal of social inferiors in the Ellesmere reflects cautious negotiations by the designers regarding the potential threats these classes posed to its aristocratic readers. The ambitions of the Merchant and the wealth of the Monk are acknowledged, but their power is defused by repellent and revealing details, allowing these ineffectual imitators of their betters to be dismissed. More easily dismissed is the drunken Miller with his gold thumb, showing how he cheats. Also reinforcing prejudice that the lower classes deserve no better is the portrayal of the Cook as a dirty peasant; even his horse is embarrassed by his lack of horsemanship. Not only is the Summoner revolting but, as with the others, his attempt to imitate aristocratic accomplishments is seen to be evil, suggesting that

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performing one’s job improperly and stepping out of one’s rightful place in society is sinful. The services performed by the working class and the monastic institutions, along with the wealth produced by the new economy have their useful place, as long as they are kept within bounds. The Ellesmere presentation of some of the pilgrims representing these societal forces invites responses of revulsion, laughter, and mockery on the part of aristocratic viewers, encouraging a sense of unity within their own group and of security from external threats. Yet at the same time, the tales of Chaucer, whose own former upward mobility is not mentioned, are introduced to enrich the cultural experience of the aristocratic readers.

The Layout of the Ellesmere Manuscript

The supertextual richness of such pages as those beginning the Knight’s and Squire’s tales is professionally designed to please the Ellesmere Manuscript’s aristocratic, or even royal, owners who might thereby lay claim to rhetorical expertise. In making the portrait of the Squire nobler and younger than called for by the Prologue’s description, in picturing him as a suitable riding companion to the lordly Knight, and in refining the Wife of Bath, the artistic designer doubtless had in mind the sort of family circle for whom this manuscript was destined. Sustaining this intention is the layout and decoration: even the more vulgar pilgrims bordering the tales are introduced into the ornamental enclosure, which serves metaphorically as a garden of verse and also reflects the ambience of the aristocratic reader, in a way that reinforces the latter’s self-perception of superiority.

Less certain is the exact identity of the intended readers. Was the Ellesmere Manuscript commissioned by someone like Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, or John, Duke of Bedford, as a gift for a youth like John de Vere, twelfth earl of Oxford, its first recorded owner later in the century? Or, in view of the suggestive visual allusions, perhaps including the small dragon on the bottom of folio 1v (fig. 82), was the Ellesmere

143 Pearsall, The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer 234-35.

144 See Pearsall’s observations about Chaucer’s innovative way of finding a place for the churl narrators of the fabliaux by “making the familiar equation between social class and moral behaviour”, The Life of Chaucer 239.

145 This is on the basis of a poem added to the head of the manuscript “copied by a hand probably trained in the third quarter of the century”; see Hanna and Edwards, “Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer” 13. The Duke of Exeter (legitimized son of John of Gaunt) and the Duke of Bedford (Henry IV’s third son) were the successive guardians of John de Vere; see Hanna, “Introduction” 1.
Manuscript made with Henry, Prince of Wales, in mind? The Knight's portrait might then refer to Henry IV himself—also portrayed with a mustache and beard, albeit as a slightly younger man, holding a red rose (one of the decorative motifs in the Ellesmere) in the portrait now in St. James Palace—or to one of the young prince's relatives or supporters. If such a scenario has credibility, then the book itself becomes a kind of seal of the relationship of guardian and young charge. The question then becomes: why are there not more direct signs of patronage? At present this is difficult to assess. If there was a perception, during the planning stages, that there might be an imminent change of power, then it was the better part of discretion not to be too direct.

Or was the focus, after all, to present an aureate Chaucer to an unidentified, albeit aristocratic, posterity? The only other border creature, the more worm-like dragon with the washed-out face on the bottom border of the Prologue to the Clerk's Tale, occurs just below the stanza concerning death who has slain fruaunceys petrak the lauriat poete (fol. 87v). Chaucer, in the voice of the Clerk, says alle shul we dye (31-38). The Ellesmere artist adds a kind of visual "Amen" by means of the backward-looking dragon who has also slayn Chaucer, implying that this manuscript was made after Chaucer's death, thereby beginning the process of posthumous laureation and fulfilling his own sense of planting a literary garden "for posterity."

All that can be said with any kind of certainty is that, given the care with which the text of the Canterbury Tales has been framed to provide every kind of visual guide to stimulate a conservative reading of Chaucer and, considering the conscious censorship of overt signs of violence and sexuality in the portraits elevated in status, the Ellesmere Manuscript presents to its readers a social vision of orderly control by a refined and courteous ruling class. Despite the absence of holy images in this manuscript, the ornamental sugar-coating framing endless passages of edification in the Parson's Tale offers this ruling class an aesthetics of salvation that is altogether agreeable.

146This assumes that it may be more than a pointer for the reader to turn the page, being instead an indirect hint of the Welsh dragon. There is also a possibility that, since dragons appear throughout London, British Library, MS Egerton 3277, a Psalter and Hours that was probably made for Henry V's mother, Mary de Bohun, as pointed out to me by Denise Despres, there was a family interest in the dragon as a design element.

147Acc. 256596; like the panel portrait of Henry V, there are a number of copies, including a 1618 version. See Millar, The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures 49, cat. no. 4.

148To use a term from Sandra Hindman, Sealed in Parchment 127.

149See the quotation from the letter by Deschamps (above).
Conclusion: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer

If, for example, the Parson’s Tale, along with the preponderance of decorated borders that make its content more amenable, were not included in the Ellesmere, it would have been a very different book. As it is, the visual and verbal components of the Ellesmere intimate that entry into the new Jerusalem is the desired goal both for its makers and its audience. In the same way, even though the times and circumstances of their making differ, the individual artifacts examined in this study are all informed by the theology of the Incarnation, most directly in the Anglo-Saxon period, but with reverberations even in the later medieval period. Prevailing theories about making images of God, especially in the form of the Trinity, as well as of the Virgin and the saints, influenced, in each case, what was represented (or not), how, and for whom. The disjuncture between medieval and modern standards of artistic judgement is most apparent with respect to the nature of the reality that is depicted. Modern expectations that good “art” should represent the sensuous surface of the three-dimensional world has led too often to a dismissal of the visual elements of medieval works whose referents necessarily transcend the physical world. Likewise, expectations that illustrations in connection with vernacular works should translate words into pictures, which often they do not, has led frequently to the assumption that medieval artists had little, if any, understanding of the written words. Intimately and symbiotically connected, words, pictures, and even ornament encourage “ethical” readers to become spiritually transformed.

During medieval times, for those who believed in the usefulness of holy images, Christ, who became man, could be represented in the form of a man. Even so, artists strained to suggest his divinity, which is also what devout viewers attempted to access. Christ’s dual nature could be implied alternately, as on the two main sculpted panels of the Ruthwell Cross, or sequentially, as in the inscribed runic poem naming the sides. In the late Anglo-Saxon Cædmon Manuscript, the Word, as mentioned in the text, is illustrated in the Genesis miniatures to suggest the involvement of all three persons of the Trinity in the creation, itself a materialization of the Word. The active presence of the cross-nimbed deity in the Cædmon miniatures ensures that the Old Testament narrative is understood in terms of its Christological significance. Scenes of heavenly harmony make the viewer privy to the contemplative’s object of the vision.

The focus on the divine Author was translated into an interest not only in the human authors of the Bible, but in those of historical narratives seen as continuations of scriptural history. The author portrait within the letter at the beginning of the Caligula Manuscript of the Brut functions in much the same way as does an evangelist portrait. In a
sense, not only do the scriptures incarnate the Word, but the words of inspired authors incarnate the divine intent. The metaphor of writing on parchment, used to describe Christ stretched on the cross, also supports this concept of human composition as an incarnational experience. This is perhaps especially so in the case of the vernacular which, like images, makes spiritual content available to a wider and more varied audience. This accessibility of vernacular texts and images also makes them inherently precarious in terms of the concomitant lessening of Church authority. There was always a danger, too, of idolatry, especially among those lacking the true faith. The first of the Auchinleck miniatures makes the distinction between a lifeless pagan idol and the living presence of Jesus on the Christian altar. The veneration of holy icons also gave way to that of heroes, as implied in the miniatures that precede the rough-and-ready romances they illustrate in the Auchinleck.

While the images in the Vernon Manuscript are all specifically religious, they appeal variously to those at different stages of their spiritual life, exemplifying in this the distinctions made by the literati like Walter Hilton. The miniatures for the Miracles of the Virgin demonstrate the efficacy of icons, while those illustrating the Gospel narratives feature the actual Incarnation of Christ. The way the initial panel beginning the Prick of Conscience is constructed invites meditation not only on the wounds of the crucified Christ, but projects a more abstract understanding of the concept of the Trinity.

The Pearl Manuscript illustrations, which are plain and incorporate no divine figures directly reflect a sensitivity to the contemporary issues and a distancing from the emotional extremes of affective piety. Serving as prefaces and epilogues, the miniatures unite the separate poems by creating a meta-narrative. This gives the impression that the events pictured constitute a spiritual pilgrimage in which the dreamer continues to participate until the goal, long deferred, is reached at the very end.

The visual presentation of the Canterbury Tales in the Ellesmere Manuscript was made with the new Lancastrian dynasty likely in mind. The choice to portray first the Knight, shown as a wise and noble conqueror, appears to compliment Henry IV. It also makes of his son the Squire, suggestive of the future Henry V, a central figure. By means of illustration, border decoration, and glosses, concepts of good government are advanced. Such a utopian vision of society was never far from vernacular enterprises. King Alfred, identified on the jewel as the earthly representative of the divine King, sought to create an English Christian empire. The Cædmon Manuscript reflects contemporary scenes, extending the history of creation to that time. Lagamon's Brut projects a Camelot into the future. The identification of Camelot with the New Jerusalem is made in the last of the Pearl Manuscript miniatures. The aristocratic space created by the Ellesmere demi-
vinet border extends to imply celestial space, giving its readers some foretaste of the
spiritual fruyt, not only of penance, as implied by the annotation underlined by a border
flourish at the top of the last folio, but of good rule.

Placed not at the beginning, the middle, or the end, the large portrait of Chaucer,
who created the rhetorical garden of verse, is nevertheless presented to his readers as a
literary icon. These readers are assumed to be "ethical" readers in the sense that, like those
of Ruiz's Book of Good Love, they will make appropriate choices about their own
subsequent behavior. Seen in a similar context, Chaucer's last words, not just for this
work but for his other literary works that he lists, including his translacions and
enditynges of worldly vanitees and those tales of Caunterbury thilke that sownen into
synne, indicate that, Chaucer, by revoking them, is simply making sure that the ethical
reader will approach the texts appropriately. After all, al that is writen is writen for oure
doctrine. Whether sculpted, drawn, or painted, the visual aspects of a work are also for
oure doctrine. These two, the verbal and the visual, interactively, manifest the real "text"
of illustrated English literary works.
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Durham. Durham University, Department of Archaeology: the Ruthwell Cross.
London. The British Library: MS Cott. Tib. C. VI. fol. 114v; MS Add. 10546, fols. 5, 262v; MS Cott. Vesp. A.viii, fol. 2; MS Cott. Claudius B.IV, fol. 14; MS Stowe 944, fol. 6; MS Royal 14.c.vii, fol. 6; MS Cott. Caligula A.ix, fol. 1; MS Royal 2B.vii, fol. 213; MS Cott. Nero A X, Article 3, fol. 41, 41v, 42, 42v, 60, 60v, 86, 86v, 94v, 129, 129v, 130; MS Harley 4431, fol. 81.
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Windsor, Berkshire, Eton College and London, University of London, Courtauld Institute of Art: panel portrait of Henry V.