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Royal materials: the object of queens in Late Medieval English romance

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ROYAL MATERIALS:

THE OBJECT OF QUEENS IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH ROMANCE

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

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ABSTRACT

As historicist as it is materialist, my dissertation both reads the fictional queens portrayed in romance against the fraught positioning of historical queens such as Isabella of France, Anne of Bohemia and Margaret of Anjou, and traces the ambivalent function in late medieval English society of objects including the sacring-bell, the Lollard bible and the royal sword. Merging the traditionally historicist field queenship studies with typically postmodern fields like thing theory and sound theory, I investigate how queens in late medieval romances coopt, queer and reconfigure material objects of masculine power. Each chapter examines a literary queen typically dismissed by subject-oriented ontologies as insubstantial. Analyzing romances that include *Richard Coer de Lyon*, Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* and the Marian romance of "The Child Slain by Jews" from the Vernon Manuscript, I argue for the overlooked significance of literary queens as figures whose circulation illuminates the construction of medieval masculinities. Through contact with charged material objects that are pivotal to romance plots, queens query patriarchal materials, exposing their underlying "thingness" and malleability. Whether tracking the disturbing afterlife of a church bell used to exorcise the hero's queen mother in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, or analyzing links between the "Britoun book" that rescues Chaucer's Custance and Anne of Bohemia's vernacular books, my chapters tell a new story about the foreign queens of late medieval English romances by showing how they blur boundaries between male and female, subject and object, West and East, priest and parish, Christian and Jew, orthodox and heterodox, mother and child.

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INTRODUCTION

IRON LADIES AND FEMININE (MIS)RULE: WHY MEDIEVAL QUEENS MATTER

When future British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher vehemently spoke out against the Russians during the nuclear arms race détente in 1976, she was quickly labelled the "Iron Lady," a derogatory epithet that couched critiques of her tenacity as a woman. The Russian military journalist and war captain, Yuri Gavrilov, suggested the unnatural nature of Margaret's power; as a hard, 'Iron' militaristic woman, she lacks the softness and femininity characteristic of 'real women.' More than thirty years later, in an article entitled "The Iron Lady," Ryan Lizza, writing of Hilary Clinton's final weeks in the 2008 presidential primary campaigns in Ohio and Texas, called attention to her unnatural thirst for power as she "defiantly ignored" falling support and "pounded away" at her opponents, leading Lizza to compare her to Freddy Krueger and Jason, psychopathic serial killer horror movie mainstays. "[E]erily unflappable," the powerful former queen/First Lady gave way to her corporeal femininity as she struggled to become the first female President of the United States: during her "fusillade" of verbal barrages, she fell into a fit of coughing, her feminine body unable to sustain the strain of masculine martial political attack. Indeed, "she lost her voice."[1] In this moment, Lizza implies, Clinton's body betrayed her sex, unable to meet the demands of her mannish ambition.

I see medieval conceptions of female power inform questions Americans ask now, like "Is America ready for a female President?" Though I am by no means suggesting that medieval queens and contemporary female presidents and prime ministers are the same, the ways in which their power is critiqued through gender is striking. Tellingly, both accounts of Thatcher and Clinton mirror similar attacks leveled by chroniclers at late medieval English queen consorts like Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou. Isabella,

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[1] Ryan Lizze, "The Iron Lady: The Clinton Campaign Returns from the Dead, Again," *The New Yorker* (March 17, 2008), http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/03/17/080317fa_fact_lizza?currentPage=all (accessed April 18, 2008)

like Thatcher and Clinton, was derided as a "ferrea virago," Latin for Iron Lady, when she successfully invaded England in 1326 and established herself regent with her lover, Roger Mortimer.[2] Margaret was derided as "a grete and strong labourid woman" who "spareth noo peyne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power."[3] Both Gavrilov and Lizza, like acerbic medieval chroniclers like Geoffrey Le Baker and John Bocking, employ a rhetoric of gendered power and female embodiment that figures female power as inherently unnatural. Modern Western media and governments employ similar rhetoric and even the same terminology in continuing to critique female power, and this critique crosses party lines: Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton have been attacked just as much for their wardrobes as for their platforms, while critics have focused on Sarah Palin's maternity whilst others have castigated Hillary for her cold marriage.

Queens undoubtedly occupied unique and anxious positions in late medieval England. At once local and foreign, fecund and virtuous, their bodies became the site of medieval anxieties. As unusually public women, they were some of the first female "celebrities" in Western culture. Their royal position placed them in opposition to many medieval models of chaste behavior that relegated women to the private sphere. The public nature of their sexual bodies made quite a few of their male clerical chroniclers and poets nervous. Implored to model themselves after seemingly irreconcilable feminine models like the virginal yet maternal Virgin Mary and the biblical sexualized intercessor, Queen Esther, medieval queens were simultaneously urged to behave chastely and to produce male offspring to secure the royal line.

Medieval queenship attracted much critical attention in the early nineties; before, the prevailing view had been that medieval queens probably exercised little if any power. This earlier attitude may be a result of the very confusion over the many terms used to

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[2] Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*, ed. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), 20, 29, 17.

[3] *The Paston Letters*, 1422-1509, ed. James Gairdner (London: A. Constable & Co., 1900), 378.

refer to a queen, especially in the earlier medieval period. As Pauline Stafford has noted in her work, *Queen Emma & Queen Edith*, queens were called by a number of titles in medieval England, including 'domina' or 'hlaefdige' (lady), 'regina' (Queen), 'conlaterana regis' (she who was at the king's side/Bride), and 'regis mater' (king's mother).[4] Even the title of queen was plastic and ambiguous: Stafford argues that none of the titles imbued the queen with power equivalent to that of a king: "[w]hatever *regina* meant, it did not transform a woman's status once and for all, as the acquisition of kingship did that of a man" (63). Just like First Lady and Madame President mean different things, these medieval terms for queens connoted very different roles.

Queenship scholarship, while focused on formulating and theorizing female power in the Middle Ages, remains largely historical. Many critics in the 90s wave of queenship criticism including John Carmi Parsons, Pauline Stafford, and Paul Strohm focused their efforts on recuperating queenly power from a field then absorbed in studies of kingship. John Carmi Parson's 1993 seminal collection of essays on medieval queenship explored the ways in which queens' roles elevated them considerably, bringing lives usually relegated to the private sphere into the public as subjects waited for the arrival of male issue. Within this narrowly defined role which André Poulet has termed "the mechanical role of transition between generations" and "the genealogical vocation," queens still exercised power indirectly, whether as intercessors, matchmakers, or patronesses.[5]

Of course, some queens exercised more direct power than others, and these queens attracted particular vitriol. Reactions to queens performing masculine modes of rule varied, from Gervaise of Tilbury's contradictory praise and disparagement of the classical Queen Semiramis in his *Otia Imperialia* to Chaucer's Man of Law's railing

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[4] Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 56.

[5] *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 98, 103.

against the 'mannysh' ambition and treachery of both the Sultaness and Donegild. L. O. Aranye Fradenburg has acknowledged a "plasticity of gender in the field of sovereignty" that allowed queens some leeway due to the public nature of their role.[6] In the case that a king died and his heir was yet an infant, queens occasionally acted as symbolic regents, and reactions ranged from praise of Queen Melusine of Jerusalem to acerbic diatribes against the Empress Matilda. Medieval critiques of the classical Queen Semiramis' unnatural rule often include the accusation that she wore men's pants, a strange charge that gains larger cultural currency when we consider Hilary Clinton suffered similar attacks for her ubiquitous "manly" pantsuits, leading fashion icon Tim Gunn to allege Clinton is "confused about her gender."[7]

Critical work on medieval queenship still remains overwhelmingly antiquated in its ties to historical and even recuperative aims while largely avoiding the possibilities of applying queenship studies to literature and to newer literary theories. Twenty years later, queenship merits another look through literary interpretive frameworks, and my project attempts to place queenship studies in dialogue with theories including the gender theory outlined below, but also such diverse fields as sound theory and thing theory. While recuperative feminism has remained a necessary field in reaction to both the historical tendency to erase the actual lives of real women and as a response to the masculine academic preoccupation with kingship studies, giving up the project of rescuing real women from the scathing pens of anxious medieval clergymen and societies phobic about female power opens up new avenues for exploring literary queenship as a construct. Treating romance queens as constructs interesting in and of themselves rather than as puzzle pieces for sleuthing our way to the hidden kernel of an actual woman opens up

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[6] *Women & Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 2.

[7] Janet Shan, "Hillary Clinton Comes Under Fire for 'Manly' Pantsuits But Are Women Power-Brokers Viewed In Terms of their Wardrobes and Not their Abilities?," *Hinterland Gazette* (July 29, 2011), http://hinterlandgazette.com/2011/07/hillary-clinton-comes-under-fire-for.html (accessed April 18, 2014).

avenues for cross-cultural, cross-temporal critiques. In other words, the cartoonish caricatured Hillary Clinton who wears both a scowl and the never-completely-convincing "manly" pantsuits can tell us much more about our society than the real woman could.

My dissertation reads the fictional queens portrayed in romance against the fraught positioning of historical queens such as Isabella of France, Anne of Bohemia and Margaret of Anjou. I see, for example, in the late fourteenth-century *Richard Coer de Lyon*'s fictional and demonic mother, Cassodorien, a response to her historical counterpart, Isabella of France. *RCL*'s fourteenth-century redactor attempts to contain the very real shadow Isabella of France left over the reign of her son, Edward III, who had been party to her successful invasion of England in 1326. *RCL*'s fourteenth-century redactor uses Richard's demonic heritage to explore both the inconvenience of Edward's French heritage through his mother, figured here in terms of the demonic, with the necessity of that heritage as Edward III used his mother's bloodline to lay claim to the French throne, beginning the Hundred Years' War. Similarly, Chaucer's version of the Custance narrative, his *Man of Law's Tale*, adds the episode of the Breton book to interrogate issues of queenship and Wycliffism stemming from Anne of Bohemia's appropriation at the pends of Wycliffites and her affinity for vernacular bibles. My third chapter examines the Queen of Heaven, the Virgin Mary, in "The Child Slain by Jews" Marian romance in the Vernon manuscript. Though not a historical queen, Mary served as a model for late medieval English queen consorts, and her depiction in "The Child Slain by Jews" positions the Virgin against the vilified and abject figure of the male Jew, emphasizing the Virgin's regality and purity whilst scapegoating medieval associations of feminine abjection onto the Jews. My final chapter, exploring Malory's Morgan le Fay in the *Morte Darthur* in the context of the Wars of the Roses, close reads episodes of Morgan's poisonings, interaction with the king's sword, and alignment with the North in light of Margaret of Anjou's role as leader of the Lancastrian army in the 1450s and 1460s and similar charges made against the maligned "She-Wolf" tying her to poisonings,

feminine misrule, and the peripheral North. I argue that Malory's Morgan reveals masculine misgivings about female power and rule influenced by Margaret's role in the Wars of the Roses.

Late medieval English anxieties over queenship and power often centered on the queen's sexual body. The title of this dissertation declares a focus on "Royal Materials," which of course includes the materiality of the female royal body. Louise Fradenburg posits in the introduction to her collection of essays, *Women & Sovereignty*, that the distinguishing factor in queenship is often "an extraordinary body or sexuality" which marks its separateness via incest, blood, and the body politic.[8] Medieval women, after all—including queens—were scientifically regarded in Aristotelian theory as incomplete men, malformed in the womb due to a lack of sufficient heat and thus in constant need of menstrual purging.[9] Medieval women's alignment with imagination and abject effluvia made them—to medieval thinkers—particularly susceptible to demonic influence. As Alexandra Cuffel has noted, medieval thinkers believed that menstrual blood was the most corrupt kind of blood, evidence of the instability and polluted nature of those weaker female bodies.[10] Dyan Elliott draws attention to vulnerabilities arising from medieval human failures to achieve impossible standards of purity. For late medieval queens, this impossibility was the Virgin Mary, a woman who remained chaste and virginal yet conceived Christ.[11] Vulnerabilities were thus located on the queen's body—

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[8] Fradenburg 2.

[9] See e.g. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500, Part 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 8.

[10] Elaborating on the Jewish-Christian polemical debate over Jesus' gestation in Mary's womb, Cuffel writes, "[e]specially unworthy were the impure fluids in and around the womb . . . any kind of body, even a physical body, would have been a more acceptable receptacle for God than one derived from the blood of a woman's uterus." Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (U of Notre Dame P, 2007), 59.

[11] Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, & Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). See particularly the second chapter, "From Sexual Fantasy to Demonic Defloration: The Libidinous Female in the Later Middle Ages," 35-60.

particularly her womb—and fraught with religious anxiety over the inevitability of defilement.

Medieval queens, almost exclusively foreign-born, came with "divided loyalties" which placed them at once 'inside' and 'outside' their communities. As such, queens occupied a decidedly dangerous and liminal space in medieval politics and literature, as they could embody both "unity of nation or people or land" and "the forces that might tear that unity to pieces."[12] John Carmi Parsons sees in several integral episodes of a medieval queen's life—her marriage and coronation, and birthing of a son—acts which imbue the queen with power often through her sexuality while simultaneously enacting her subservience to the king. The secular queen's body is for many of the critics in Carmi Parson's collection a site of conflict and hybridity. As opposed to the "fictional virginity" praised in the queen at her marriage, the "physical reality" of the queen's necessary reproductive role in producing heirs legitimated a sexualized body that stood at odds with medieval gender ideals.[13]

My project is aimed at revitalizing the field of queenship studies and opening it up for further inquiry, and one way I seek to do this is through incorporating theory typically removed from the historicist field of queenship studies. Placing the historicist field of queenship studies into conversation with the typically postmodern field of thing theory, I argue that writers and redactors tease out the paradoxical positioning of queens as both quasi-objects, circulated internationally and legitimating masculine rule, and as quasi-subjects who queer and query that power through contact with charged material objects of masculine power: the sacring bell, the vernacular bible, the king's sword, and the lily. Still quite concerned with historical research and inquiry, my project reads literary queens in light of paradoxes raised by formidable English queen consorts like the 'She-

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[12] Fradenburg 5.

[13] Carmi Parsons 62.

Wolves'—Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou—who overstepped the boundaries of passive queenship and raised suggestive links between women and such charged issues as warfare and heresy. Avoiding deterministic historical comparisons, I instead suggest throughout the dissertation that issues at play in late medieval queenship surrounding the composition of late medieval English romances influenced English poets' constructions of queens in those romances, particularly in periods where English queen consorts attracted considerable attention for their political involvement, whether as heads of armies—as was the case with both Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou—or as figureheads of religious movements—as Anne was coopted by Wycliffites as a model of English vernacularity and the Virgin Mary's cult expanded and her regality was emphasized in late medieval English Marian romances.

Thing theory broadly informs my approach to queens in the dissertation. Importantly, thing theory decentered the subject and laid bare the production and fetishization of objects. Bill Brown pioneered the field, noting that we have lauded the human subject over objects—we assume human subjects act on objects and not vice versa—when in fact objects can also mediate between subjects.[14] Bruno Latour formulated middle spaces between the subject and object—quasi-subjects and quasi-objects—arguing that the ontological distinction between inanimate objects and human subjects is artificial.[15] Latour's formulation works particularly well with medieval queens, who operated partially as quasi-objects to be traded among men and used to produce heirs. Directing focus specifically upon literature as a ripe source for inquiry into the nature of things, Brown contends that literature can "ask why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or re-make ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears and shape our fantasies"; that is, texts "describe and enact an

[14] Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 18.

[15] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (La Découverte, 1991), especially 51-54.

imaginative possession of things that amounts to the labor of infusing manufactured objects with a metaphysical dimension."[16] This process of "infusing" objects becomes critically important in my project. Often marginalized in late medieval English romance, queens' relation to England, the king, and the English people is often defined by their interactions with 'things' infused with patriarchal and gendered significance: items like the medieval church bell, a Breton bible, the king's sword, and a floriated scepter.

However, I formulate postmodern thing theory a bit differently than Brown, incorporating feminist thing theory and medieval thing theory. As this dissertation focuses on representations of queens in late medieval English romance, my examination of queen's interactions with objects typically associated with masculine power borrows from feminist thing theory. Queens, as transmitters of royal power and royal wombtanks, were often treated as objects. Feminist thing theory acknowledges women's historical treatment as objects.[17] Medieval science to some extent legitimated treating woman as objects. Aristotelian thought held that women were associated with 'mater' or matter, contributing only the physical matter of a fetus while the male contributed the form and spirit of the child. Women were thought to be cold and wet, tied to the earth, while men were by nature hot and dry, elevated with the ethereal and spiritual.[18]

Medieval thing theory focuses especially on historically contextualizing objects. Every medieval object is inevitably "determined in part by the sedimented notions of thinghood operative at the moment of its own production."[19] Kellie Robertson argues that

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[16] Brown 4.

[17] See e.g. Tracy Lemaster, "Feminist Thing Theory in Sister Carrie," *Studies in American Naturalism* 4.1 (Summer 2009): 41-55, at 42; Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), 14.

[18] See e.g. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 729a, trans. Arthur Platt, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (Random House, 1941).

[19] Kellie Robertson, "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto," *Exemplaria* 22.2 (Summer 2010): 99-118, at 110.

the boundaries between objects and subjects blurred in the Middle Ages. He notes, as I have in my summary of Aristotelian conceptions of the female body, the distinctly Aristotelian flavor of medieval materialism, in which the scientific, metaphysical, and humoral joined in creating objects.[20] Queens functioned, thus, as multilayered quasi-objects representative of Aristotelian base matter, genealogical vessels, and as pricey commodities in the marriage market of medieval Europe used to negotiate treaties and form alliances. Thing theory works particularly well in examining literary queens as constructs. Recuperative feminist strains of queenship scholarship rely on rescuing the queen as subject, but viewing the queen as both "quasi-subject" in her agency and "quasi-object" in her symbolism and circulation among masculine agents provides greater insight into the subject-object relationships illuminated in medieval romances.

As "quasi-subjects" located between subject and object, queens in late medieval romance often queer and query objects of masculine power with which they come into contact. Queer phenomenologist Sarah Ahmed has explored the ways in which subjects can queer objects and their orientations, often inverting hierarchies: "To make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things . . . the effects of such a disturbance are uneven, precisely given that the world is already organized around certain forms of living— certain times, spaces, and directions."[21] Every chapter close reads a moment in which a romance queen comes into contact with an object of masculine power and alters that object's function, queering it and, often, calling into question the masculine economy of the romance.

My first chapter, "Cassodorien and the Sacring Bell in *Richard Coer de Lyon*," focuses on the late 14th-century redactor's additions to the romance, and particularly material pertaining to Queen Cassodorien and the employment of bells to 1) exorcise

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[20] Robertson 111-2, 115.

[21] Ahmed 161.

Richard's fictional mother from the romance during the Mass, 2) adorn a teenage Richard's armor during his first tournament, and 3) enable a demonic mare to overcome Richard during the climactic battle of the poem at Acre. Originally staged as a symbol of priestly power at the exorcism, the bell's meaning alters after its aural contact with the demonic queen consort. From the first pealing of the sacring bell, contact with Richard's demonic mother queers the patriarchal functioning of the bell, transmogrifying it from a symbol of the church and the expansion of Christendom in the Crusades to the inverse: the East, Saracens, the feminine embodied in Saladin's belled mare, and fragmentation, disorder, and chaos. By time of the Acre battle, Richard, astride a demonic colt gifted him by Saladin, must face his mount's demonic mare whose cacophonous bells disorient the English in a three-mile radius.

Drawing upon recent work on sound theory, I argue that Cassodorien sets in motion a trajectory that, ultimately, exposes the bell's openness and malleability, as well as its use by the English to legitimate masculine power and crusading conquest. *Richard Coer de Lyon* explores sound as both a structuring and fissuring force. Initially, the bell serves to unite masculine Christian community around a foreign and demonic feminine force, sounding to exorcise Queen Cassodorien from the text. However, the bell through its resurfacings becomes a fracturing force, disorienting the English and exposing Richard's monstrosity. Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's landmark theory of the refrain (*ritournelle*) from their seminal *A Thousand Plateaus*, I explore how the refrain of the mare's bells deterritorialize Christian conquest by aural assault.[22] Deleuze and Guattari explicitly link the refrain—indeed, all music—to woman and child: "musical expression is inseparable from a becoming-woman, a becoming-child."[23]

[22] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 312.

[23] Deleuze and Guattari 299.

Bells operate in RCL to hearken back to Richard's mother and his dependence upon her, emphasizing their connection despite the romance's narrative impulse to expel her and extricate the young king from her influence. *Richard Coer de Lyon* explores the refrain in a distinctly maternal context: the church bell first peals as Richard's mother is exorcised by the English during the Mass and supernaturally flies through the church roof. Through repeated pealings of the church bell, sound collapses distinctions between Saracen and English, heathen and Christian, male child and mother, as each pealing of the bell recalls Richard's initial separation from, but conversely attachment to, his demonic queen mother. These new details in *RCL* speak to the fraught nature of the imperial invocation of Isabella of France (1295-1358) by the queen consort's son, Edward III (1312-77), during the Hundred Years' War. Maternal blood is reimagined in *RCL* as demonic inheritance, which Richard displays in his superhuman prowess and violence on the battlefield. Via the fictional and demonic queen Cassodorien, *RCL* explores Isabella of France's foreign influence over Edward III, and suggests English queen consorts' influence over sons put them in direct conflict with notions of Englishness and made kings like the historical Richard the Lionheart and Edward III traitors and insurrectionists. Transmitting culture, birthmarks, and blood, queens in medieval literature expose the fiction of unified communities, undisturbed royal patriarchal lines and seamless national borders.

Chapter Two, "Custance, Anne of Bohemia, and the 'Britoun book' in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*," centers on the pivotal role played by a vernacular bible. Falsely charged with fatally stabbing her female bedmate, Custance is acquitted thanks to the use of a "Britoun boke" (e.g., a Celtic bible) to elicit the truth from the foreign princess's accuser. The vernacular bible initiates events that lead not only to Custance's acquittal but also her marriage to the Northumbrian king, Alla. Engaging recent scholarship on heresy, vernacularity and the materiality of the book, I argue that this episode and related moments from the Canterbury tale reveal how Chaucer's imperial princess, so often

dismissed as an "empty thing" traded among patriarchs, is instead an adept quasi-subject who performs abject femininity so well that she is not only able to conquer the heart of a king, but also to convert a pagan English population. Chaucer's Custance displays characteristics which would have read Wycliffite and heretical in the 1390s, and she engages with issues of vernacular hermeneutics central to Anne's queenship and appropriation by Wyclif and his followers.

This chapter employs a necessarily historicist approach. I argue that the *MLT*'s Northumbrian setting resonates with fourteenth-century English ties to Rome in its union of imperial lines and cultural transmission. The distinctly imperial flavor of the tale reflects a renewed English interest in the Holy Roman Empire following Richard II's marriage of Anne of Bohemia and the promises of increased trade with cosmopolitan Bohemia and ties with the Holy Roman Empire—as Anne's father was the Emperor—that the marriage entailed. Further, I trace the ways in which Chaucer's additions to the homiletic romance reflect historical facet of Anne's queenship, whether that be an added nautical arrival in Northumberland that matches Anne of Bohemia's portentous arrival in England, or tracing ties between Custance's brand of apostolic Christianity—itself incongruous with sixth-century Catholicism—and nascent late fourteenth-century Wycliffism. Custance's contact with the vernacular bible changes the tome from a sixth-century relic of Breton defeat at the hands of Alla's people to a symbol of feminine apostolic and vernacular Christianity that resonates with fourteenth-century Wycliffism. Moreover, Custance's charged relationship to the vernacular bible resonates tellingly with Richard II's wife Anne of Bohemia, who brought into England Czech and German bibles. Critically under-examined and dismissed by both critics and her contemporaries as a non-entity, Anne was instrumental in both Richard II's imperial ambitions and in the burgeoning Wycliffite movement. Appropriated at the pens of Lollard scholars like John Wyclif, who saw in Anne's books her potential as an unimpeachable royal model for vernacular bibles in England, Anne—like Custance—becomes an unexpected mouthpiece

for vernacular religion and a heretical model for a return to a more apostolic, grass-roots Christianity, freed from the trappings of medieval Catholicism.

Chapter Three, "Marian Displacement in the 'Child Slain by Jews,'" branches out to that holiest of queens whom all medieval Christian queens were exhorted to imitate: the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven. Long before the well-known Reformation attacks on the cult and iconography of the Blessed Virgin, Mary was the subject of heated debate during the Middle Ages, when Christians and Jews alike meditated on the idea of a woman giving birth to God, an idea that flew in the face of widespread misogynistic thinking. Late medieval England particularly latched onto the idea of Mary as "Maria Regina," emphasizing her regality through depictions of her coronation and allusions to her role as Queen of Heaven and Earth. English Queen's Entries at the same time exhorted England's queens to model their intercessory and maternal roles on the Virgin Mary. At the same time, a furtive Jewish-Christian polemical debate over the physical purity of the Virgin was reaching a boiling point: Jewish thinkers denied that the son of God would spend nine months in a place believed to be corrosive and polluting, while Christians countered that Mary's womb was not like that of other women, but a pure unpolluted space from which Christ emerged bloodless, leaving Mary's hymen intact.[24] Rumors circulated long after the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 that Jewish men menstruated, purging hemorrhoidal blood; hence, the centrality of the Jewish privy in chorister narratives.

My chapter focuses on deployment of various objects—among them, a lily, the Virgin Mary's womb, and a privy—to manage and overcome Mary's abject womanhood and Jewishness/foreignness in a series of related miracle tales that project Marian abjection onto the bodies of male Jews. For medieval thinkers, both the Virgin Mary and Jews were associated with the carnal and the text, and both Jews and English queen

[24] Though my third chapter expands upon this debate in much greater detail, for a perfunctory and concise summary, see "Filthy Womb and Foul Believers: The Incarnation and Holy Spaces in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Debate," in Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 117-55.

consorts were regarded suspiciously as interior foreigners. In the "Child Slain by Jews," Mary destabilizes the gendered semiotics of religious items and masculine authority, taking up issues of alternative feminine power raised in the previous chapter. Placing a lily in the dead boy's mouth, Mary inseminates him with the Word. The Virgin Mary utilizes the singular lily in "The Child Slain by Jews" to effect the boy's resurrection and aural miracle. The representation of the lily in the accompanying illumination mirrors floriated late medieval queens' scepters, imbuing the queenly item with a masculine and feminine agency which supersedes that of the masculine grain or seed used in other analogues of the romance. The floriated lily scepter featured on English queens' seals, and works with the Vernon manuscript's comprehensive project of emphasizing Mary's regal nature and agency while deemphasizing her abject femininity.

Mary's assertion of queenly power and purity assumes a distinctly aural element, similar to the maternal refrain associated with the sacring bell in *Richard Coer de Lyon*. "The Child Slain by Jews" employs the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" Marian antiphon, as the boy wanders through the Parisian Jewry making sense of the space aurally through his melodic assertion of Marian physical purity even when he is murdered and thrown by the Jews into the bottom of a privy pit. Growing louder and louder and never ceasing, the boy singer's Marian antiphon becomes a Deleuzian "ritournelle," reterritorializing the Parisian Jewry as a Christian space. This reterritorialization becomes complete when the Christians invade the Jewry, discover the boy's body, and parade him throughout Paris, eradicating once and for all the boundaries between the Christian and Jewish sections of the city.

My final chapter, "Romancing Excalibur: Queenship and the Sword in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*," explores the queering of phallic royal objects through gendered semiotics. Focusing on the repeated theft of Excalibur and its scabbard at the hands of Morgan le Fay, I contextualize Malory's text in terms of Margaret of Anjou's (1430-82) bid for power during the Wars of the Roses. Issues of feminine misrule occupied the

thoughts of chroniclers who railed against the queen consort's abuse of authority in the stead of her incapacitated husband, Henry VI (1421-71). As a quasi-subject, Morgan realigns the relations between objects, notably the sword and scabbard, showing both to be plastic and also queering their gendering: the vulnerable men who possess Excalibur in the *Morte* bleed profusely while those who possess the scabbard are corporeally impenetrable.

Morgan le Fay inverts the gendered semiotics of objects. Using an unguent to poison rather than heal an ailing knight, Morgan reveals feminine agency in the *Morte* and exposes the fiction that women are passive objects. Instead, she reveals, women choose to support masculine power, and can just as easily undermine that power. Morgan's gift of a mantle reinforces this point: sending Arthur an ornate gem-encrusted royal mantle, Morgan seeks to poison and kill the king with an object typically used to affirm masculine royal power. Excalibur and its scabbard provide the clearest examples through which Morgan's machinations invert the gendered semiotics of the romance. Through her counterfeiting and repeated thefts of Arthur's sword, Morgan reveals the scabbard—and, metonymically, the queen's womb—as the true source of power. Peggy McCracken has contended that in romance, "the male body is permeable, promiscuous in its bleeding."[25] In a masculine economy where men die in masculine exchanges characterized by heavy blood loss, women act as preservers, whether as the Lady of the Lake keeping Excalibur safe, or as the vaginal sheath for the king's sword, guaranteeing the stability of royal lines through providing heirs. Vivifying Merlin's claim that the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, Morgan ultimately exposes Excalibur's status as dependent upon the scabbard and promulgates an alternative mode of *feminine* political power based on safely acting through masculine agents which resonates with Margaret's consolidation of power in the 1450s.

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[25] Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 14.

CHAPTER ONE
"HERE BELLES TO RYNG":
MATERNITY AND THE SACRING BELL IN *RICHARD COER DE LYON*

A romance unapologetically centered on the cannibalistic twelfth-century crusading king, Richard the Lionheart, might seem an unlikely place from which to explore anxieties over queen consorts in late medieval England. In the last decade, *Richard Coer de Lyon*, hereafter *RCL*, has been singled out not for its inclusion of a fictional and demonic queen-mother, but rather for the unabashed episodes of Richard's cannibalism. Admittedly, the fictional queen consort Cassodorien occupies only a small section of the sprawling romance; she is literally exorcised from the text within the first couple hundred lines. Richard's acts of cannibalism on the other hand, while similarly small within the vastness of the romance, comprise moments of fantastical transposition which continue to attract the majority of critical attention. As Geraldine Heng, Alan Ambrisco, Heather Blurton and several others have demonstrated, rather than injuring the English king's reputation, Richard's acts of cannibalizing Saracens in this exceptional romance reinforce a sense of his English national identity.[1]

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[1] Geraldine Heng locates *RCL*'s episodes of cannibalism in the evolution of national romance from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, arguing that in *RCL* the Englishman is defined by "his delight in eating up the natives in his march of conquest"; *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 74. Alan Ambrisco reads the act as similarly nationalistic but historically derived from the Christian Tarfurs' cannibalism in the First Crusade and problematic because of a "dangerous hybridity" resulting when the English become characterized by the barbaric act of cannibalism; "Cannibalism and Cultural Encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lion*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.3 (1999): 499-528, 499, 522; Heather Blurton has more recently argued that cannibalism "becomes the basis for the romance's politics of asserting a model of English dominance in a post-crusading Europe"; *Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 121. Nichola McDonald situates Richard's anthropophagy in the "alimentary logic" of the romance, suggesting that rather than serving as a bizarre act, Richard's consumption of Saracen flesh actually punctuates religiously the English destruction of the Saracens and fits within the romance's repeated instances of eating and feasting ("Eating People and the Alimentary Logic of *Richard Coeur de Lion*," in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nichola McDonald (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester UP, 2004): 124-50). Most recently, Lynn Shutters has argued that Richard, as a lion/human hybrid, consumes Saracens prepared as animals to distinguish the noble lion from the animalistic Saracens ("Lion Hearts, Saracen Heads, Dog Tails: The Body of the Conqueror in Richard Coer de Lyon," *Masculinities and Femininities in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, vol. 23, ed. Frederick Kiefer (Brepols: Turnhout, 2010): 71-100, at 97.)

The cannibalism episodes appear only in *RCL*'s later revisions, the two later and longer *a* versions, which are distinct from five earlier and shorter *b* versions.[2] By all standards a prolific romance in late medieval England, *RCL* currently exists in seven versions purportedly derived from a lost thirteenth-century French manuscript, including seven manuscripts and two early sixteenth-century Wynkyn de Worde printed editions. The main general difference between the *a* and *b* versions is the addition of shocking scenes like Richard's acts of anthropophagism. Cannibalism is not the only outrageous aspect of the later fourteenth-century revised *RCL*, however; among these fantastical additions is a striking demon bride episode involving Richard's fictional mother, Cassodorien.[3] In this added episode placed at the beginning of the romance to explain Richard's origins, a reluctant Henry sends his men abroad to find him a suitable bride and they encounter Cassodorien of Antioch on a strange golden boat and bring her back where she is hastily wed to the king. However, the beautiful young bride harbors a demonic secret: she cannot hear the Mass. After bearing Henry three children, the oldest

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[2] Karl Brunner's edition of *RCL*, the primary source for criticism of the romance, draws primarily from a later fourteenth-century reworking of the romance, Caius 175, and incorporates emendations from the Wynkyn de Worde printed editions which were most likely compiled from a complete version of the Caius manuscript. Quite a few studies of the romance expound on key differences between the different manuscripts and printed editions. Although a somewhat older study, John Finlayson's essay on the historical versus fantastical aspects of the romance does a particularly thorough yet accessible job of highlighting and classifying differences between the *a* and *b* versions; "*Richard, Coer de Lyon*: Romance, History, or Something in Between," *Studies in Philology* 87.2 (1990 Spring): 156-180. Finlayson classifies the *a* version as an adventure romance and the *b* version as a heroic epic "less contaminated" than the later expanded version (161). Brunner's typical division of the romance into *a* and *b* versions oversimplifies the individual differences among manuscripts. The 14th century Auchinleck, generally acknowledged to be the earliest extant MS containing the romance, is the only manuscript containing a b version of *RCL* completely free of fantastical additions. See e.g. McDonald, 129. There is evidence that the Auchinleck manuscript (c.1333), which contains the earliest and definitive *b* version of *Richard Coer de Lyon*, was read to Edward III's court. Moreover, Edward's mother, Isabella of France, often occupied chambers at the royal hunting lodge in Clarendon decorated with murals of Richard's literary confrontation with Saladin. Some critics also assert a copy of the Auchinleck was either known or owned by Chaucer later in the fourteenth-century. See e.g. Jeremy J. Smith, *Essentials of Early English* (London: Routledge, 1999), 186.

[3] Heng classifies *RCL* as a historical romance blending fantasy and reality; *Empire of Magic*, 67. Alan Ambrisco, 500, contends that the "accretion of fantastic or marvelous matter" in the *a* versions distinguishes it as romance. John Finlayson characterizes the *b* versions as epic and the *a* versions as romance; "*Richard, Coer de Lyon*," 160-61.

of which is Richard, the queen is restrained during the Mass at the behest of Henry's steward and his frightened subjects. As the Mass bell rings, Cassodorien breaks free of her captors and reveals her demonic nature as she flies through the roof of the church, never to be seen again.

One reason critical attention has eluded Cassodorien and focused almost exclusively on Richard's cannibalism is that she never resurfaces in human form in the romance after her flight from the church. Scholars who have acknowledged the demon queen's importance read her as a source for Richard's martial prowess. Ambrisco, addressing Cassodorien through the lens of Richard's cannibalism, attributes Richard's demonic nature in the romance to Cassodorien, linking the exorcism with demon bride legends which imbued the Angevin line with a "demonic pedigree.[4]" He contends that Cassodorien's exorcism is an addition to the *a* version designed as a "ready-made, self-contained explanation for his barbarism in the romance."[5]

Richard's power is repeatedly called superhuman, and he is referred to as a "deuyl" by Saladin and his countrymen as well. *RCL* gained through its fourteenth-century revisions and additions new cultural relevancy in the wake of Edward III's coup of his mother, Isabella, and Roger Mortimer's *de facto* government in 1330.[6] Heng has argued that RCL's long-spanning and complicated textual history attests to its popularity: "Because the text of *RCL* is collectively produced," she writes, "a reading of *RCL* is thus truly a reading of the sedimented locations of culture—of aggregated cultural markings

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[4] Ambrisco, "Cannibalism and Cultural Encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lion*," 506.

[5] Ambrisco, "Cannibalism and Cultural Encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lion*," 507. See also McDonald, 140, who argues that Cassodorien's aversion is to the visual consumption of the elevated Host and thus fits in with the alimentary logic of the romance which similarly informs Richard's two episodes of cannibalism. Shutters, 77, who argues that Richard acts as a masculine lion/man hybrid, reads Cassodorien's inclusion as conventional and a reason for her son's heroism. Yet, this reading does not account for the a version redactor's hesitancy to place Richard and his mother in the same scene, and elides the importance of the demonic in Richard's character. As opposed to the lion, which Shutters reads as masculine and noble, Cassodorien is foreign, feminine, maternal and demonic, and complicates a gendered reading of the romance.

[6] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 67.

felt by many to be necessary to lodge—over the long period that produced the distinctive spoor and text of this romance." Edward III utilized his own cultural hybridity in his bid for the French throne following Philip VI's death sans an heir, and his maternal bloodline became a tool to expand England's international holdings. Richard the Lionheart had been England's last successful heroic martial king, and was thus seen as a kingly model for the martially ambitious Edward III. John Finlayson has suggested that a late-fourteenth century audience reading *RCL* would have naturally noticed the legendary Richard's resemblance to Edward III:

> the parallels between Richard I and Edward III as upholders of chivalry, great warriors and scourges of the French (the French who supported the Angevins, that is, not of Aquitaine and the large part of France which was allied or tributary to Edward as it had been to Richard) would be fairly obvious to a late fourteenth-century audience, whether living in the reign of Edward III or Richard II.[7]

Similarly, Lynn Shutters has recently suggested that a single redactor conceived the *a* version of *RCL* in response to the English-French conflict in the Hundred Years War: "In the case of the Hundred Years War, English and French authors and campaigners alternately sought to frame this ongoing conflict in terms of crusader activity and to contrast it with such activity, claiming that the monarchs of England and France needed to make peace and unite to regain Jerusalem."[8] Neither critic, however, situates Cassodorien within this fourteenth-century political milieu. Yet, the decision to include a fictional, foreign, and demonic mother inevitably would have conjured for late-fourteenth

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[7] Finlayson, "Legendary Ancestors and the Expansion of Romance in *Richard, Coer de Lyon*," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 79.4 (1998 July): 299-308, 306. Alan Ambrisco, "Cannibalism and Cultural Encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lion*," 520, dates the Caius *a* version to the Hundred Years' War.

[8] Shutters also notes that Hugh Despenser cited the Third Crusade in justifying English attacks on France before the Hundred Years War. See e.g. Christine Chism, *Alliterative Revivals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 170–71, cited in Shutters 75, who summarizes both Philippe de Mézières's *Le Songe du Vieil Pelerin* (1389) and *Epistre* to Richard II (1395), which called for an end to English-French conflict in order to focus Christian efforts on new Crusades.

century readers the powerful Isabella the "She-Wolf" of France, recalling her control over her son which marred the early days of his kingship.[9] If readers drew comparisons to Edward III's martial exploits in the Hundred Years' War, then they certainly may have drawn parallels between Cassodorien's flight from the church and Isabella's flight to France in 1325. This essay suggests that *RCL* reimagines Edward's cultural hybridity as son of Isabella of France and reconfigures her foreign influence and blood as the romance Richard's demonic empowerment which enables him to perform great feats as a crusader-king.

As many critics have acknowledged, English national identity is both the focus and locus of anxiety in the romance.[10] In *RCL,* sound redirects the focus of the romance back to Richard's mother. Bells reverberate during three pivotal episodes in the narrative which were added in the longer *a* version to signal moments in the text where the romance Richard's national and heroic identities are most fraught with his connection to his queen consort mother: (1) at Cassodorien's exorcism, in which Cassodorien flies through the church roof in response to the sound of the Mass bell's pealing and Richard is conspicuously absent and out of earshot; (2) at Richard's initial appearance as an adolescent king at the Three Day's Tournament, in which he disguises himself in a coat of black armor embellished with a bell and barbarically slays his countrymen; and (3) in his climactic battle with Saladin at the gates of Babylon, where Saladin's necromancer

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[9] *Empire of Magic*, 97, 156. Ambrisco similarly acknowledges the convenience of replacing Eleanor, who "unlike the fictitious Cassodorien . . . was in contact with Richard throughout his life and a staunch supporter of him in his early quarrels with his father Henry II"; "Cannibalism and Cultural Encounters in *Richard Coeur de Lion*," 506. While Eleanor's life and reputation mirrors in many ways Isabella's, for the sake of focus for this essay I focus on the *a* version's fourteenth-century context. I am contending in this essay that Cassodorien is added to the *a* versions not to detract from Richard's French heritage but rather to address anxieties over late fourteenth-century queen consorts following Isabella of France's invasion. The *a* version poet makes a conscious decision to include a maternal figure, demonic no less, where there had been none previously, and in the wake of Isabella's successful invasion and flawed three-year regency.

[10] See particularly Heng, *Empire of Magic*; Ambrisco, "Cultural Encounters in Richard Coeur de Lion"; and Carolyn B. Anderson, "Constructing Royal Character: King Richard in *Richard Coer de Lyon*," *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 6 (1999): 85-108.

summons a bell-laden demonic mare and her colt to lure Richard into an elaborate aural trap. Queen Cassodorien problematizes Richard's English identity in the same way that cannibalism collapses boundaries between the English king and his Saracen foes. Much as Heng has suggested *RCL* takes pleasure in its nationalistic depictions of English cannibalism, I would argue the romance through its repeated returns to Richard's mother delights in the king's problematic maternal heritage.[11] This essay argues that the romance does not contain Richard's mother; rather, the sound of bells in added episodes in the *a* version of the romance signals key points in Richard's identity formation in the romance, culminating in the oedipal resurfacing of mother and son in the pairing of a demonic belled mare and her colt. Each sounding of the bell recalls Cassodorien's exorcism and casts both queen and son as *outside* of the English Christian community, signaling Richard's alterity whilst *physically* removing his mother from the romance.

Medieval scholars have begun to explore sound as a means of addressing bodies and alterity in medieval literature. Bruce Holsinger, in his study of the corporeality of music in the Middle Ages, proposes a "musicology in the flesh" at work in medieval Europe, and views the body as a *site* of music inseparable from the ethereal numerical sounds it produced.[12] *RCL* seems particularly receptive to this type of reading, as bells seem to be fused to the bodies of son and mother, whether as an integral part of Richard's arms, or as the bells on the crupper of Saladin's demonic mare. The figure of the bell becomes a salient symbol for alterity in a romance so fiercely bent on constructing an English hero. As a symbol of the church in a romance set during the Third Crusade with obvious implications in the wake of Edward III's claim to the French throne, bells aurally redirect the romance back to the queen consort and the romance hero's complicated

[11] See Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 65.

[12] Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 12.

origins.[13] Importantly, while the text of the romance emphasizes Richard's brutally heroic acts freed from his mother's physical presence, the bell aurally sounds and resounds to tie the romance hero to his mother and cast him as inherently hybrid, English and foreign, civilized and barbaric, loyal and traitorous.

The First Pealing of the Bell:
Cassodorien and the "She Wolf" of France

Richard's father, Henry, is barely present in *RCL* and resembles the reviled Edward II more than he does the historical Henry II. More like the reputedly homosexual Edward II, *RCL*'s Henry seems reluctant to marry: "When he was twenty wyntyr olde . . . He wolde no wyff, j vndyrstonde" (43, 45). Married in 1307 at the age of twenty-three, Edward II largely ignored his new bride, and many historians and contemporary chroniclers attribute his husbandly neglect to his having fallen in love with Piers Gaveston in 1297.[14] The romance also eliminates Henry notably earlier than he

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[13] In a special issue of *Exemplaria* on medieval sound from Fall of 2004, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen contends that sound is monstrous and other, while Michelle R. Warren argues that the sounding Oliphant in the *Chanson de Roland* challenges differences between Christian and Saracen. See, respectively, Cohen, "Kyte oute yugilment: An Introduction to Medieval Noise," *Exemplaria* 16.2 (2004): 267-276, and Warren, "The Noise of Roland," *Exemplaria* 16.2 (2004): 277-304. Michael Uebel's contribution to the issue, "Acoustical Alterity," develops this notion of sound as monstrous even further, positing that "sound is . . . part of the fabric of alterity" and that "alterity is also part of the condition of sound"; "Acoustical Alterity," *Exemplaria* 16.2 (2004): 349-365, 349. Other critics have further explored Holsinger's notion that music can be a product of bodily pain. Alice Jorgensen, for example, reads the noise of clamoring weapons, animal noises, and trumpets as inherently violent, whereas Brigitte Cazelles explores noise in Old French literature from an etymological perspective, seeing violent etymological underpinnings in the Old French "noise" derived from "nocere" (to harm). See Jorgensen, "The Trumpet and the Wolf: Noises of Battle in Old English Poetry," *Oral Tradition* 24.2 (2009 October): 319-336; and Cazelles, *Soundscape in Early French Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

[14] Evidence of Edward's homosexual relationships is ample, though not undisputed. Historian Paul C. Doherty, for example, contends that "It was in 1297 that the young Prince of Wales met the real love of his life"; *Isabella and the Strange Death of Edward II* (London: Constable, 2003), 25. The fourteenth-century author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* similarly writes of the king's relationship with Gaveston: "Certainly I do not remember having heard that one man so loved another. Jonathan cherished David, Achilles loved Patroclus; but we do not read that they went beyond what was usual. Our king, however, was incapable of moderate affection, and on account of Piers was said to forget himself, and so Piers was regarded as a sorcerer"; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. and trans. Wendy R. Childs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29. Public opinion seemed to reflect this perception of Edward II as homosexual. The *Annales Paulini* report that "Rex vocavit Petrum, prae amore nimio, fratrem suum; vulgus vero eum regis ydolum vocitabat, eui disciplicere ut patri timuit, et ut superiori studuit complacere" (The King called Piers his great love, his brother, but the people said he was the king's idol, and that he was afraid to rebuke him, and

historically perished; after his wife flees he never returns to the church and "after his endynge" (239) Richard is immediately crowned "in his XV yere" (243). The historical Henry died during his son's final rebellion in 1189 when Richard was in his early thirties. However, in the fourteenth-century, Edward II most likely died in confinement (similarly to *RCL*'s Henry who retreats from the public eye after Cassodorien's exorcism) during Isabella and Mortimer's de facto reign when Edward III was fifteen, the same age at which the romance Richard loses his father. The diminishing of Richard's father highlights not the king, however, but the foreign queen, Cassodorien.

Cassodorien is a striking addition to the late fourteenth-century *a* version of *RCL*. Her origins in Antioch geographically position her with the Saracens outside of the Christian West, linking the queen consort with England's enemies in a way eerily evocative of the late medieval Isabella of France's alignment with Edward's banished subjects and enemies abroad. Henry's men encounter the fairylike maiden in the middle of the ocean.[15] Her discovered position "on mydde þe see" (57) perhaps operates as a geographical metaphor for Isabella of France's divided national loyalties, as she arrived in England initially as the new queen consort but finally as an invading queen.

In *RCL* the problem of the queen consort's divided national loyalty is exposed through her aversion to holy sounds. Like the demon brides of medieval *conte de fées* such as *Henno-with-Teeth* and *Mélusine*, Cassodorien stipulates a condition to the marriage based on the mysterious bride's aversion to the Church. She tells Henry soon after their marriage that she cannot attend Mass, following a fit in which she "fel in swowne" (fell in a swoon) at the elevation at the exact moment "A preest on morwe þe

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tried to please him); *Chronicle of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II: Annales Londonienses and Annales Paulini*, ed. William Stubbs (London: Longman & Co., 1882), 259. The *Annales Paulini* describe how the nobles, angry at the inordinate amount of favor Edward II showed Gaveston, complained that there were two kings: "Unde indignatus est populous universus, duos reges in uno regno, istum verbaliter" (The populace was angry, and it was said that there were two kings in one kingdom) (259).

[15] *Richard Coer de Lyon* is cited by line number. All quotations come from the widely-used complete modern version, *Richard Löwenherz*, ed. Karl Brunner, *Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1913).

messe song" (A priest in the morning the mass sang) (190, 188). The queen consort's adverse physical reaction to the holy sounds of the Mass localized in the musicality of the priest's vocal chords incites horror in the English parishioners, who are "adrad" of their demonic queen (191). Fifteen years later and after bearing three children, the foreign Cassodorien continues to arouse suspicion in her Christian neighbors through her repeated absences from Mass, culminating in the king's earl's request that the king allow his queen to be restrained for the entirety of the Mass.

Chroniclers in the latter half of the fourteenth-century writing around the same time that the Caius *a* version was likely composed viewed Isabella as a demonic foreign invader, staging her as a sacrilegious foreign queen consort in the same way that *RCL* stages the foreign Cassodorien as demonic. While Isabella initially faced little opposition during her invasion in 1326, the failure of her reign with Mortimer which resulted in her removal and forced retirement led later chroniclers to cast her as a sacrilegious enemy to the English, a woman whose lack of faith and excessive lust almost destroyed England. Geoffrey le Baker, perhaps the queen's harshest critic, emphasizes Isabella's demonic nature, attributing Edward II's death in captivity not to starvation or murder at the hands of conspirators, as earlier chroniclers believed, but rather to her unholy lust and feminine misrule as a modern "Iesebele" (Jezebel) and machinations through her demonic priests ("sacerdotis Baal" (priests of Baal)).[16] Medieval homilies on Jezebel stemming from Aelfric's translation of *Kings* identify the Old Testament villainess queen with feminine usurpation of masculine authority and heresy.[17]

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[16] Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*, ed. Sir Edward Maunde Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), 21, 29.

[17] Stacy Klein provides an in-depth discussion of Aelfric's slight changes to *Kings*, particularly his decision to emphasize Jezebel as key antagonist and her role as a controlling evil counselor with more power than the king. See Klein, *Ruling Women: Queenship and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006): 125-61.

The key way the *RCL* poet identifies Cassodorien as threatening is through sound, a marked difference from the visually focused *conte de fée* (fairytale) legends influencing Cassodorien's exorcism.[18] In the demon bride legends which undoubtedly influence *RCL*'s exorcism of Cassodorien, the visual is emphasized over the aural. For example, Giraldus Cambrensis writes in *De Principis Instructione Liber* of a demon-bride legend intimately connected to Richard's family and which Giraldus points out was known by Richard himself, in which his ancestor Fulk Nerra meets a mysterious woman "facie pulchrior quam fide" (more fair in face than faith) who "nunquam autem usque ad canonem Missae secretum in ecclesia remanebat, sed cito post Evangelium semper exire solebat" (never remained in the church until the celebration of the secret canon of the mass, but always went out immediately after the gospel).[19] In the story of "large-toothed Henno," written by Gervase of Tilbury, a protégé of Henry II, around 1210 in the *Otia Imperialia*, the hero, Henno, encounters a maiden who survived a shipwreck; he marries her only to find that she, like Cassadorien, avoids the Mass. When he espies her in her

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[18] In demon bride legends haunting Richard's family lines and serving as the source material for Cassodorien's exorcism, writers foreground the visual aspect of the demonic queen's revelation scene. In the story of "large-toothed Henno," recorded by Henry II's protégé, Walter Map, in *De Nugis Curialium (Courtier's Trifles)*, ed. and trans. M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 344-349, the hero and Richard's distant ancestor, Henno, encounters a maiden who survived a shipwreck; he marries her only to find that she, like Cassadorien, avoids the Mass. When he espies her in her true form—as a dragon—and sprinkles her with holy water, she jumps across the roof and disappears, although she returns at night in the form of a serpent to nurse her children. This legend foregrounds the visual: Henno voyeuristically witnesses his wife's monstrosity in a visual spectacle of exorcism. Frank McLynn suggests that Richard's Angevin dynasty also co-opted the story of Mélusine, the serpent-bride; *Lionheart and Lackland: King Richard, King John and the Wars of Conquest* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 7. In Jean d'Arras' fourteenth-century romance, *Mélusine*, Mélusine suffers a curse which causes her to change into serpentine form on Saturday, and when Count Raymondin pledges to marry her, the *fée* agrees only on the condition that he not see her on Saturday; she demands that he "swere . . . ye shal not peyne ne force your self for to see me on the Satirday"; Jean d'Arras, *Mélusine*, ed. and trans. A.K. Donald (London: Published for the Early English Text Society, 1895-), 32. In this legend, as in the others, the emphasis is visual: Raymondin's voyeuristic act of seeing his wife's true form violates their covenant. Similarly to Henry in *RCL*, Raymondin is coerced into breaking the stipulation by his suspicious subjects, and through an act of voyeurism reveals her monstrous form as half-woman, half-serpent while she bathes; this visual violation of the contract results in her spectacular transformation and flight through a castle window in the form of a dragon.

[19] *Gerald of Wales: Concerning the Instruction of Princes*, trans. J. Stevenson (Felinfach, 1991), 98.

true form—as a dragon—and sprinkles her with holy water, she jumps across the roof and disappears, although she returns at night in the form of a serpent to nurse her children.[20] This legend also emphasizes the visual: Henno voyeuristically witnesses his wife's monstrosity and confirms it in a visual spectacle of exorcism. King Richard historically believed his Angevin lineage was tinged with the demonic. Frank McLynn suggests that Richard's Angevin dynasty co-opted the story of Mélusine, the serpent-bride.[21] In Jean d'Arras' thirteenth-century *Mélusine* romance, Mélusine suffers a curse which causes her to change into serpentine form on Saturday, and when Count Raymondin pledges to marry her, the *fée* agrees only on the condition that he not see her on Saturday. In this legend, as in the others, the emphasis is visual: Raymondin's voyeuristic act of seeing his wife's true form violates their covenant. Similar to Henry in *RCL*, Raymondin is coerced into breaking the stipulation by his subjects, who confide in him that

> la commune renomee de people court partout que vostre femme vous fait deshonneur . . . Et les autres dient et maintiennent que c'est un esperit fae, qui le samedy fait sa penance.
> (The common opinion of the people is spreading everywhere that your wife is dishonoring you . . . And others say and maintain that she is a fay who on Saturday does her penance).[22]

Raymondin's decision to follow his subjects and violate his wife's condition reveals her monstrous form as half-woman, half-serpent and culminates in her flight in front of all the people in the form of a dragon.

Given the well-established history of the visual catalyst in demon-bride legends, one might expect the parishioners' ensnaring of Henry's queen to fixate on the visual

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[20] James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 123.

[21] McLynn suggests that Richard "relished" the notion that his Angevin ancestry might be the "devil's brood" (7).

[22] Jean D'Arras, 241.

elements of the Host, emphasized in the visual ritual of the Mass during the Elevation of the Host. However, *RCL* clearly foregrounds the *sound* of the pealing bell as the catalyst for Cassodorien's transformation:

> And whene þe belle began to *ryng*,
> *And when the bell began to ring,*
> The preest scholde make þe sakeryng,
> *And the priest was about to do the sacring,*
> Out off þe kyrke sche wolde away.
> *Out of the church she tried to go away.*
> þe erl "For gode, sayde, nay,
> *The earl, "For God, said, nay,*
> Lady, þon schalt here abyde,
> *Lady, you shall here abide,*
> Ffor ony þyng þat may betyde." . . .
> *For anything that may betide." . . .*
> Out of the rofe she gan her dyght,
> *Out of the roof she began to make her way/transform,*
> Openly before all theyr syght . . .
> *Openly before all of their sight . . .*
> That never after she was isey.
> *That never after was she seen*. (221-34)

Sound catalyzes Cassodorien's exorcism. While her transformation itself is visual, taking place "openly before all theyr syght," the pealing bell acts as a catalyst. The queen consort's foreign threat is exposed at the precise time "*whene* þe belle began to ryng." At this point, the visual elevation of the Host has not yet occurred. Sound catalyzes spectacle, and revealed by the pealing of the Mass bell, Cassodorien transforms and flies through the roof of the Church, thereby physically declaring her position "Out of the rofe" and 'outside' of Christian space.

Medieval thinkers interestingly conceptualized the church bell as an agent for revealing both foreign and demonic threats from within the community.[23] Durandus expounds on this function of the church bell:

[23] Thirteenth-century French liturgical writer and bishop, Guillaume Durand, explains the significance of the pealing of bells: "when the bell rings . . . the people are unified with the unity of faith and charity"; *The Rationale Divinorum Officiarum of William Durand of Mende*, trans. Timothy M. Thibodeau (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 51. Cassodorien's inability to stay through the Mass thus evinces a

> Also, the bells are rung in processions so that the demons who fear them will flee . . . . They are so fearful when they hear the trumpets of the Church militant, that is the bells, that they are like some tyrant who is fearful when he hears in his own country the trumpets of some powerful king who is his enemy.[24]

This passage is striking in its conflation of the demonic with foreignness, both qualities embodied in Cassodorien, who is queen consort of England yet hails from Antioch. Moreover, Cassodorien, acting as England's queen whilst in reality a *fée* masquerading as a human woman, transgresses multiple boundaries and destabilizes the binaries of self/Other, human/monster, English/foreign, and Christian/heathen as one who occupies an intimate position within the English Christian community as England's queen, despite the fact that she is neither English nor Christian. In this respect, she operates as an enemy within the English Christian community who represents the qualities of the Saracens Richard will later struggle to master to establish his English heroic identity. One of these qualities is of course the cannibalism typically associated with Saracens in the *chanson de geste* genre, which Richard turns into a decidedly, if disturbingly, English act.[25]

The bell identifies Cassodorien as a traitor like the more contemporary fourteenth-century Isabella of France, whose position within the English and French royal families both problematized and legitimated Edward III's English conquest and commencement of the Hundred Years' War. Isabella aroused particular anxieties over queenship in the late fourteenth-century. Late medieval chroniclers, writing around the time of *RCL*'s *a* version additions, retroactively attributed her defection not to her mistreatment by the

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refusal on her part to submit to the religious authority of the church and king and casts her as a dangerous and demonic maternal presence, a *discordant* presence against which the ordered bell is positioned.

[24] Durand, *The Rationale Divinorum Officiarum*, 53.

[25] Heather Blurton, *Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature*, makes this argument in the final chapter of her work on cannibalism in late medieval literature. Whereas Ambrisco contends that *RCL* forgets distinctions between east and west, Christian and other, Blurton argues that "the romance does not at all forget. Rather, it is involved in a quite conscious and systematic project of appropriation of the 'traditional distinctions between East and West'" (131).

king and his lover, Hugh Despenser, but rather to her own scandalous relationship with the king's ousted enemy, Roger Mortimer.[26] Jean le Bel in his *Chronique* writes that Mortimer "assez estoit privé de madame la mere au roy secretement et aultrement, que renommée en couroit couvertement" (was quite privy to his lady, the Queen mother, secretly, that it spread secretly and was known).[27] Geoffrey le Baker, writing thirty years after Isabella's *de facto* reign, is particularly acerbic in his criticism of the queen consort, claiming the French-born queen was an "irata virago" (irate virago) and "ferrea virago" (iron virago) motivated by "avaricia insaciabilis feminine concupitis frustrata" (frustrated avaricious and insatiable feminine desire).[28] Chroniclers writing in Isabella's wake assume a function similar to that of the bell, signaling the queen consort as a demonic presence which needs to be excised. Nevertheless, the romance's willingness to brand Richard a "deuyl" exposes a crucial irony: Richard, as son of a demon-mother, is the product of that which he seeks to defeat, and his demonic nature will be used to aid and define the 'English.' In the late fourteenth-century context in which these episodes were added to the romance, Richard's demonic nature operates as a refiguring of Edward's foreign blood and maternal connections, which at once staged him as both a member of the treasonous army which deposed the English king and invaded England and as the English champion whose claim to the French throne would fuel a prolonged period of English nationalism and French conquest.

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[26] Contemporary views of Isabella's refusal to return to England initially show sympathy with the queen, blaming the king's favoritism of Hugh Despenser. Isabella herself insisted in her response that her husband's improper relationship with Despenser was the cause for her remaining in France:

> I feel that marriage is a union of a man and a woman, holding fast to the practice of a life together, and that someone has come between my husband and myself and is trying to break this bond; I declare that I will not return until this intruder is removed, but discarding my marriage garment, shall put on the robes of widowhood and mourning until I am avenged of this Pharisee. (*Calendar of Close Rolls, Edward II-Richard II*, 24 vols (London, 1892-1927), 245-47)

[27] Jean le Bel, *Chronique de Jean le Bel (1370)*, v.1, ed. Jules Viard and Eugène Déprez (Paris: La Société de l'Histoire de France, 1904), 101.

[28] Geoffrey le Baker, *Chronicon Galfridi le Baker*, 20, 29, 17.

The bell, that most recognizable sounder of Christian community, also assumes a significance inextricable from the event of Richard's separation from his mother at the beginning of the romance. Ironically, instead of revealing the sacraments' religious reality as flesh and blood, the bell's sounding instead reveals Cassodorien's demonic transubstantiation into a monstrous form. This co-opting of the bell resonates with Isabella of France's flight to France. Increasingly maligned with the Despensers, Isabella had been deemed an enemy and alien to England and her lands confiscated, making it appear that she was cast out of England. However, Isabella had her own motives for securing passage to France. *The Chronicle of Lanercost* contends that "the queen had a secret motive for desiring to cross over to France."[29] The opportunity to go to France to help ensure Edward's inheritance of his title as duke of Aquitaine (a title shared with Richard the Lionheart) prompted Isabella to use her status as outsider to sow the seeds of rebellion once under the protection of Charles IV of France, her brother.[30] Cassodorien's flight displays a similar confusion of agency. Although she is essentially driven out of England by the ringing of bells at the insistence of Henry's counselor, her flight is also defiant. She does, after all, break free of her male captors, displaying superhuman strength and abilities culminating in her flight "out of the rofe" which blasts open the confined space within which she is contained. Like Cassodorien, then, Isabella refused the curtailed and confined position in which she was placed. Thus, the bell signals not only Cassodorien's foreignness and danger, but her refusal to submit herself to the demands of the king's counselors, a defiance that certainly bears striking similarities to Isabella's response to Hugh Despenser's closeness with the king and pressure to have her disenfranchised.

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[29] *The Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272-1346*, ed. and trans. Sir Herbert Maxwell (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1913), 249.

[30] See e.g. *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, 254.

Revealingly, Richard is not mentioned as being present at his mother's flight from the ringing bell. Everyone else—King Henry, the congregation, the earl, even Richard's brother John (who is dropped during the flight) and sister Topyas (who disappears with her mother)—is present within the acoustical space of the Church. Perhaps the bell would have had a similar banishing effect on the "deuyl" Richard and therefore he, too, avoids the Mass. Richard's absence at this crucial scene becomes all the more obvious because all other members of the English community are present. His absence betrays anxiety in placing him in the arms of his mother. Rather, his brother, John, and sister, Topyas, are carried away in the arms of their mother. It would not be a stretch for late fourteenth-century readers to imagine, by Richard's conspicuous absence when his siblings are carried off, the historical Edward III's very real flight to the arms of his mother in 1325. In fact, this essay suggests that the redactor reimagining and contemporizing *RCL* seeks to elide the historical reality of Edward III's dependent relationship on his mother leading up to his coup. Richard's conspicuous absence at his mother's exorcism—it is one of the only times in the lengthy romance Richard is not present and central— evinces a desire on the poet's part to keep Richard and his mother physically apart, perhaps because such a pairing would inevitably conjure up for the late medieval reader the close relationship between the more contemporary Edward III and Isabella of France. For the late fourteenth-century *a* version poet, projecting Edward III's kingship onto Richard's Levantine crusade necessitates an early physical severance from maternal ties that elides his participation in Isabella's insurrection and invasion of England in 1326.

Yet, as the English Edward III initiated the Hundred Years' War based on an inheritance claimed through his mother's French royal blood, he needed that namesake and the power it imbued him with. Banishing his mother from court and forcing her into retirement, Edward attempted to exorcise Isabella's hold over him. Only with his mother out of the political eye and relegated to the shadows could Edward III fashion himself a legendary king and conqueror. Similarly, for Richard to become a romance hero,

Cassodorien cannot be present, but paradoxically her demonic status serves as the fount of his superhuman strength and brutality. Cassodorien's demonic gift accounts for the kind of brutality imperative for him to prevail in the battles he goes on to participate in within *RCL*. In *RCL*, Cassodorien's exorcism nonetheless casts mother and son as *outside* of the Christian community, and straightaway establishes the bell as an aural symbol whose sound will signal Richard's alterity and his connection to his demonic mother.

Containing the Bell:

Harnessing the Demonic in Her Heraldic Arms

The story of Cassodorien's demonic flight remains at the core of Richard's identity as he comes into his own as a crusading knight, just as Isabella's flight to France and its repercussions haunted the historical Edward III as he made his claims on the throne of France. Immediately following Cassodorien's exorcism, the narrative jumps ahead to Henry II's death and Richard is crowned king at age fifteen. In his first year as king, and less than twenty lines after his mother's exeunt, Richard announces a tournament at Salisbury that lasts three days. Disguised first in black, then in red and finally in white, an incognito Richard mysteriously reveals to his countrymen his violent and monstrous inheritance.[31] Instead of aiding his countrymen, the young Richard, like the young Edward who followed his mother into France, fights against them. On the first day of the tournament, Richard wears "orgulous" (272) and "coleblacke" (273) armor that features a belled raven on the crest of the helm:

> Upon his creste a rauen stode,
> *Upon his crest a raven stood,*
> That yaned as he were wode,
> *That gaped as if he were mad,*
> And aboute his necke a bell,
> *And around his neck a bell,*
> Wherfore the reason j shall you tell:
> *The reason for which I shall you tell:*

[31] Richard's black armor functions symbolically, reflecting his black spiritual monstrosity, or his Frenchness reconfigured.

> The kynde of the rauen is,
> *The nature of the raven is,*
> In trauayll for to be, jwys;
> *To be in toil, truly;*
> Sygnyfyaunce of the bell,
> *The significance of the bell,*
> With holy chyrche for to dwell,
> *With the holy church to dwell,*
> And them to noy and to greue
> *And them to annoy and grieve*
> That be not in the ryght beleue.
> *That are not of the right belief.* (275-84)

Richard's black armor suggests he is still under his mother's hold, and his eventual blanching during the tournament represents his attempt to differentiate himself oedipally and religiously from his mother. Like the raven, Cassodorien is confined and then expelled with the same symbol of the church: the bell. The raven's posturing atop the crest re-enacts Cassodorien's flight from the church walls and the reverberating sound that sought to contain her. Just fifty lines earlier, Cassodorien was annoyed and grieved by both the church and a pealing bell, suggesting Richard's coat of arms, while the poet claims them to be operating as symbols of the church, are in fact re-imaginations of Cassodorien's exorcism that lead the reader back to Richard's mother and identify him as an enemy to the English, much as Edward III was identified as a traitor to the kingdom while preparing in France for his mother's invasion. The intentional placement of the emblems on Richard's crest never lets the reader forget that Richard's "kynde," the nature of the raven, is also that of his mother. When given the choice, Edward chose his French mother and her homeland, fleeing to his mother's side and acquiescing to her arrangement of his marriage with Philippa of Hainault without the consent of his father.

Although Cassodorien and Richard have not been materially present together in either the church scene or the tournament, the aural symbolism of both scenes acts to unite them. The bell is placed around the raven's neck, and the raven sits "Upon his creste," the heraldic device attached to the top of his helmet, a prioritized location in the symbolism of a knight's arms (277, 275). The bell occupies a focal position on Richard's

arms, and harks back to Cassodorien's exorcism as a symbol for the demonic prowess inherited through his mother. The poet tells us that the raven "yaned as he were wode," its mouth agape and crying out in madness, about to take flight as the bell upon its neck seems always about to ring, reminding the young knight and the reader of his absent mother (276). The raven threatens to visually enact Cassodorien's flight, escaping the trappings of Richard's arms the same way Cassodorien violently and madly escaped the confines of the church.

The raven, though a symbol of travel, was not typically associated with Christianity in medieval Europe. Instead, the raven was thought to be the carnal foil to the spiritually pure dove, a further indication of Richard's inherited demonic traits.[32] In Genesis, the raven "went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth," while the dove returns faithfully each time it is deployed.[33] Surely, this is the Biblical verse *RCL* has in mind when asserting that the raven is in "trauayll for to be, jwys" (280). Reading the raven as a traitorous messenger seems to suggest the more contemporary Edward III, who was similarly in "trauayll" and refused to return to England after being sent to France to reunite with Isabella and secure English holdings. Jean le Bel emphasizes the status of both queen and son as exiles in 1326, recording that "luy et madame sa mere furent enchassez dehors en France comme bannis, il usa grand temps du conseil madame sa mere" (he and the lady, his mother, were pursued from outside of France like outlaws; he in these hard times followed the counsel of the lady, his mother).[34] Le Bel portrays Edward III as puerile, an incapable boy completely under

[32] Arthur Collins, reflecting on the symbolism of animals and birds in English church architecture, comments that "[t]he raven is sometimes depicted with a dove in pictures of Noah and the ark. While the latter bird is thought to symbolise the Christian, the former means the carnal-minded Jews"; *Symbolism of Animals and Birds represented in English Church Architecture* (New York: McBride, 1913), 34.

[33] Gen. 8: 6-7 KJV

[34] *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, v.1, 101.Adam, the fourteenth abbot at Melsa recording the events of this tumultuous period, writes that "rex Angliae Edwardus, de consilio dictorum duorum Dispensatorum, exligavit et bannivit publice in Londoniis et alibi dictos uxorem suam et filium, tanquam regni proditores" (King Edward of England, on the advice of the two said Dispensers, exiled and banned his wife and son

the influence of his defiant mother. Like the Biblical raven sent to survey the post-Flood situation, Edward III did not return to his sender, instead disobeying and suffering similar banishment as a result. The author of *The Chronicle of Lanercost* writes that "public proclamation was made in London that if [the queen] herself or her son (albeit he was heir of the realm) should enter England, they were to be arrested as enemies of the king and kingdom."[35] (250). The young Edward III was essentially akin to the young Richard in black armor, a misguided knight fighting against his countrymen in a bid to ally himself with his mother. This identification of the raven with the troubled spiritual "other" is of special importance for *RCL*, as both the bird and Cassodorien are incongruous with notions of Christian community.

Even on Richard's coat of arms, Cassodorien is triumphant in asserting her demonic influence over Richard. Bells do not hang jessed from the raven's feet as a sign of ownership. Rather, the raven wears the bell around its neck, a clever co-opting of the very thing that, in the poet's own explication of Richard's arms, sounds to ward off heathens. Just as the Biblical raven flies from the ark never to return, Cassodorien flies from the church "That never after she was isey" (234). Yet, at the same time, the presence of these emblems on Richard's arms suggests his mother retains her hold over him.[36] Both Richard the Lionheart and Edward III made significant contributions in the evolution of England's royal coat of arms which incorporated French maternal emblems into England's coat of arms. Richard incorporated three left-facing golden lions on a red background, the emblem of Eleanor of Aquitaine, whose coat of arms consisted of one left-facing golden lion on a red background, while Edward III finalized the coat of arms

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publicly in London and elsewhere as traitors to the kingdom) *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, v.2, ed. Edward A. Bond (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1867), 350.

[35] *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, 250.

[36] See Charles Boutell, *A Manual of Heraldry, Historical and Popular* (London: Winsor & Newton, 1863), 133.

in the latter-fourteenth century, incorporating Isabella's arms, the fleur-de-lys, in 1340 to bolster his claims over French lands. Thus, as I have argued that Richard's arms take the reader back to the scene of his mother's exorcism, Edward III's coat of arms recapitulated his loyalty to his French mother at the same time it bolstered his claims over French lands as the English king. Isabella, as Queen of England and daughter of Phillip IV (the Fair), shared with Edward III three golden lions at left with the fleur-de-lys pattern at right. Fascinatingly, then, the historical Edward III seemed to inherit his lion heart from his formidable mother. Richard's armor in the romance echoes the danger of this shared maternal heraldry: the raven's talons rest atop the crest, the bird perhaps threatening this time to carry the young Richard off into the ether just as Isabella successfully carried Edward III off to treason and insurrection. Through this cataloguing of Richard's arms, the *RCL* poet seems to intentionally undermine his orthodox description of the bell, suggesting instead that Richard still is unable to free himself from his mother's influence despite the fact that she is no longer present in physical form.

Although the *RCL* poet stages the bell's reappearance as an assertion of Richard's Englishness and Christianity, the bell signals Richard's foreign status just as it does for Cassodorien. Richard fights the *English* in the Three Days' Tournament. His excessive violence in the tournament provokes one English knight to remark that "þis is a deuyl, and no man, / þat oure folk felles and sleth!" (500-501). Like the parishioners who were "adrad" at Cassodorien's reaction to Mass, Richard's countrymen see him as the heathen, the devil who slays "oure" people. Even Foulk Douly, Richard's future ally, wanders if "þat knyȝt was a pouke" (568). A *pouke* is in medieval folkloric belief a malicious spirit, akin to a *fée* and evocative of Cassodorien's fairylike nature.[37] Richard's people perceive him as an interior threat, a *fée* like his mother who must similarly be purged from the

[37] The *MED* defines a pouke as "an evil spirit, a devil, goblin" or "a devil" while the *OED* defines it as "an evil, malicious, or mischievous spirit or demon of popular belief"; *Middle English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "pouke, *n.*," accessed June 9, 2010, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/; *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "pouke, *n. (1).*," accessed June 9, 2010, http://dictionary.oed.com/.

Christian community. Edward III's defection to Isabella's side and his refusal to return to England in 1326 prompted a similar response from some English subjects. Before Edward III could become an English champion, overthrowing the tyrannical Roger Mortimer and his mother, he first supported Isabella during her invasion, earning him the official status as traitor to the English. Thus, England's champion in the Hundred Years' War had once been the enemy of his own countrymen, aligning himself with his French mother to "noy" and "greue" the English.

With its inescapable ties to Cassodorien's aural exorcism, the bell, even as it rests on Richard's body, ultimately fails at this point in the romance to purify him and extricate him from his mother's demonic heritage. Richard's changing armor reflects his plasticity as a hybrid and troubled young romance hero: he must learn to master the demonic heritage that simultaneously empowers and damns him. Though Richard's armor eventually changes to white in the tournament as he makes an oath with his English allies to launch a Crusade, his arrival in Acre "in blood" with "hornes grete vpon hys hede" (2672, 2673) problematizes any reading of the young king as wholly English and Christian. Richard's demonic guise indicates a regression to maternally-inherited monstrosity that conflates the ferocity of a Christian crusader with that of a heathen monster and prefigures his monstrous acts of anthropophagy.[38] It is in this harsh climate that the bell reappears and Richard's maternal ties are once again tested with the resurfacing of a monstrous maternal figure.

The Bell Resurfaces:
Saladin's Demonic Mare and Isabella's Regency

After the tournament, Richard amasses an army of Englishmen begins his conquest with French allies (who later prove traitorous) against Saladin. Following a

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[38] Heather Blurton in particular has explored how Richard's acts of cannibalism at once solidify and problematize his English national identity in the romance. See *Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature*, 121-31.

fever which is only cured after consuming Saracen flesh, Richard prepares for his epic battle against Saladin at the gates of Babylon. The bell resurfaces in this climactic battle with a second pairing of mother and son, reimagined in the form of a demonic belled "mere" (5540) and her "colt" (5541) summoned by Saladin's necromancer:

> A maystyr nigromancien,
> *A master necromancer,*
> þat coniuryd, as j ȝow telle,
> *That conjured, as I you tell,*
> þorwȝ þe ffeendes craft off helle
> *Through the fiend's craft of hell*
> Twoo stronge ffeendes off þe eyr
> *Two strong fiends of the air*
> In lyknesse off twoo steeds ffeyr,
> *In likeness of two steeds fair,*
> Lyke boþe of hewe and here;
> *Like both of hue and hair;*
> As þay seyde þat were þere,
> *As those said who were there,*
> Neuere was þer sen non slyke.
> *Never was there seen the like.*
> þat on was a mere lyke,
> *That one was like a mare,*
> þat oþer a colt, a noble stede.
> *The other a colt, a noble steed.* (5532-41)

A knight's mount is often an extension of himself: taming his horse parallels his taming of himself in adhering to the strict codes of knighthood and chivalry. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has argued that the knight and horse operate symbiotically as an "inhuman circuit," a posthuman hybrid body in which the identities of horse and rider are relational: "The horse, its rider, the bridle and saddle and armor together form the Deleuzian circuit or assemblage, a network of meaning that decomposes human bodies and intercuts them with the inanimate, the inhuman."[39] By taming a horse, a knight is in effect taming himself, yet in this romance Richard's mount cannot be tamed while it is still dependent on its mother. Though Richard's consumption of the lion's heart, the source of his

[39] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "The Inhuman Circuit," *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002): 167-86, 171-2.

sobriquet, has attracted some critical attention, the implications of Saladin's demonic mare and colt have been unexplored. Shutters, for example, notes that Richard literally absorbs his cognomen in slaying the lion and eating its heart, and cites Cohen to bolster her argument that Richard becomes a hybrid of lion and man.[40] However, given Cohen's particular mention of knight, horse, and accoutrements as a "network of meaning," the pairing of demonic colt and mare, and by proxy the demonic colt and Richard—himself the demonic progeny of a demon-mother—seems a much apter comparison. Moreover, as this essay demonstrates, Saladin's demonic mounts serve as a culmination of demonic imagery nascent in Cassodorien's appearance and exorcism and developed through the symbolism of Richard's orgulous accoutrements in the Three Days' Tournament. The *a* version redactor consciously seems to be developing a cluster of demonic images centered on the figure of Richard's demonic mother, and as a knight, Richard's accoutrements which harken back to Cassodorien as well as his coltish mount at the Battle of Acre suggest that the very core of his identity, the matrix of demonic images thoroughly developed in this fantastical revision of *RCL*, is inextricably linked to his demonic mother.

Richard has struggled in his adolescence to free himself from his mother's demonic inheritance, from blanching his armor over the course of the Three Days' Tournament to taking up arms to reclaim Acre. Yet, the very quality which gives Richard the ability to destroy the Saracens is that demonic strength passed on from his Eastern mother. Therefore, Richard and his mount can be seen as the same entity, the coltish mount an extension of its unmarried young rider, both tied to a demonic mother against whom they struggle for masculine independence. The two steeds represent a pairing of demonic mother and son that the romance suggests, but refuses to actualize, in human form. Brunner's standard translation interestingly varies in this passage from Caius 175;

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[40] Shutters, "Lion Hearts, Saracen Heads, Dog Tails," 79.

Brunner's "mere" (5540) is in fact "dame" in Caius 175. Brunner's emendation essentially dehumanizes the demonic mare, whereas Caius stresses not only the mare's humanity, but suggests her high rank as a lady or dame/*domina*.[41] Late fourteenth-century chroniclers tend to ally Edward III with his French-born mother in the same way that the colt and mare are paired. After his reunion with Isabella, Edward III is called "filius suus, dux Aquitanniae" (her son, the duke of Aquitaine) instead of the English prince in the *Annales Paulini* (1307-1341) and counted amongst the queen's traitorous supporters, while the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* abruptly ends with "notwithstanding these [Edward II's] letters mother and son refused to return to England."[42] Historically, the coltish Edward heeded his mother's call and joined her side, refusing to return to the English king.

The *a* version's equestrian pairing responds to a shared set of symbols developed through the episodes of Cassodorien's exorcism and Richard's emergence at the Three Days' Tournament in black armor. In 1192, Saladin reportedly sent two new horses to Richard after his horse was slain in battle.[43] In *RCL*, the poet changes these two horses to demonic "ffeendes off þe eyr" (5535), inevitably recalling the only other concrete example of demons and flight in the romance: that of the fiendish Cassodorien in response to the church bell. This emphasis on the ethereal nature of the equestrian pair also recalls the winged, belled and sinister gaping raven on Richard's crest when he enters the Three Days' Tournament in black armor. The redactor of the revised romance shows sophistication and intention in constructing a "cluster" of images of demonic flight centered on mother and son absent from its earlier iterations.[44]

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[41] I noted this change during a funded trip in June of 2012 to Caius College in Cambridge to view the Caius 175 *a* version of *RCL*.

[42] *Annales Paulini*, 314; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, 246.The *London Brut* refers to Edward III in this context as "Duc of Gyene, her son," similarly aligning the young prince with his mother and France rather than with Edward II and England; *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, ed. Friedrich W.D. Brie from MS. Rawl. B 171 (London: Oxford University Press, 1906).

[43] For an overview of this event, see Sir Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades, Vol.3*: *The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 73.

While the bell on Richard's arms evokes and recapitulates his mother's flight, Saladin's demonic mare overtly connects the bell once again with demonic maternity. Arrayed in bells and serving as Saladin's mount, the mare will neigh during the battle. Her call, blended seamlessly with the cacophonous sound of her infernal bells, will lure her colt to abandon Richard and rush to her to nurse, rendering the English king vulnerable to defeat. The *a* version poet describes the plot to lure Richard to his doom in the upcoming battle:

> Where that he were, in ony need,
> *Wherever he was, in any need,*
> Was neuere kyng ne knyȝt so bolde
> *There was not king or knight so bold*
> þat whenne þe *dame* neyȝe wolde,
> *That when the dame would neigh,*
> Scholde hym holde again his wylle,
> *Should hold him against his will,*
> þat he ne wolde renne here tylle,
> *That he would not run to her,*
> And knele adoun, and souke hys dame:
> *And kneel down, and suckle his dame:*
> Thewhyle þe Sawdon wiþ schame
> *During which time the Sultan with shame*
> Scholde Kyng R. aquelle.
> *Should King Richard slay*. (5542-49)

The necromancer's boast that the colt would defy any king to heed the call of his mother and her bells reflects the suppressed historical closeness between the fourteenth-century Edward III and Isabella of France. Like the mare who can command her colt "in ony need," despite the command of any "kyng ne knyȝt," Isabella won Edward III's allegiance from Edward II when her son chose to remain by her side and refused to return to England at his father's behest. Edward III was declared a traitor with his mother as a result, and his father begged him in a final letter to return to England preceding Isabella's invasion:

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[44] Nicola McDonald similarly suggests that a single redactor consciously added episodes like Richard's cannibalism, Richard's consumption of the lion's heart, and Cassodorien's exorcism ("Eating People and the Alimentary Logic of *Richard Coeur de Lion*," 141).

> Understand, certainly, that if you now act contrary to our counsel, and continue in willful disobedience, you will feel it all the days of your life, and all other sons will take example to be disobedient to their lords and fathers.[45]

However, Edward III heeded his mother's call. As historian Agnes Strickland hypothesizes, "the evil influence of Isabella prevented the paternal remonstrances . . . from having any effect on the mind of her son."[46] In *RCL*, the poet figures the mare's demonic maternal power or "evil influence" in terms of aurality; when she neighs and her bells ring, her colt will abandon any rider to "souke hys dame," an aural and demonic refiguring of a nightmarish symbiosis of foreign mother and English son. Edward III was for a time under the auspices and control of his mother, and in 1327 owned no home and was still being fed and clothed in her household.[47] Still nourished in her household and acting more like the dependent young son of a Capetian queen than the grown heir of the king of England, Edward III was essentially still "souk[ing] hys dame." When faced with the decision to remain loyal to his king or betray the English and reunite with his mother and her forces in France, Edward heard his mother's call and joined her in insurrection. Historical maternal and French attachments are reconfigured in the romance through the mare and colt in terms of the demonic, turning Edward's multicultural inner conflict into Richard's conflict of religion.

The bell, of course, rests at the core of these conflicts. Tellingly, the mare, as one of only two mothers in the romance, uses the same aural symbol to assault the English Christians that they had used to exorcise Cassodorien, suggesting her summoning should be read as a maternal resurfacing. Having taken great pains to outline and emphasize

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[45] *Rymer's Foedera*, vol.4, Close Rolls of 19th of Edward II, cited in Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England: From the Norman Conquest*, vols. 1-3 (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1852), 149.

[46] Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England,* 288.

[47] See *Cal. Mem. Rolls* 1326-7, nos 1608, 1717; *Brut*, i, 248, cited in W. Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 60.

acoustically the danger inherent in Saladin's mare nursing Richard's colt, the *a* version's poet introduces the demonic mare as she proudly strides onto the battlefield, arrayed in cacophonous bells:

> þerffore, as þe book vs telles,
> *Therefore, as the book tells,*
> Hys crouper heeng al ful off belles,
> *The mare's crupper hung all full of bells;*
> And hys peytrel, and his arsoun.
> *From the armor, too, and the saddlebow,*
> þree myle men myȝten here þe soun.
> *For three miles men could hear the sound.*
> *Þe* mere gan nyȝe, here belles to ryng,
> *His mare began to neigh, her bells she rang*
> Ffor gret pryde, wiþouten lesyng.
> *With great pride, it is no lie*.[48] (5753-58)

Whereas the church bell is a singular symbol of order, symmetrical and "acoustically demarking" space with its meted refrain, the bells of the mare are multiple, discordant, chaotic, and cacophonous, designed to disorient rather than to unify.[49] The mare takes to extremes the ironic functioning of the bell on Richard's arms, which served while he was in disguise to "noy" and "greue" the English. While animals were typically belled in order to alert the owner to their whereabouts, the mare is belled so that "þree myle men myȝten here þe soun," implying that, like the raven on Richard's crest, she re-appropriates a bell typically used to assert control over the animal.[50] To 'bell' in Old and

[48] Fascinatingly, Brunner again diverges in this passage from Caius 175, and changes "þe mere" to "his mere," further stripping the demonic mare of her agency.

[49] See R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Random House, 1977), 55.

[50] The question of agency between Saladin and his mare perhaps reflects Isabella's regency with Mortimer better than it would Eleanor of Aquitaine's defection. As the raven wears the bell in an unorthodox manner around its neck as opposed to it being jessed to its feet, the mare wears an unusually large number of bells, and the romance specifies that, although the crupper ("*hys* crouper"), armor ("*hys* peytrel") and saddlebow ("*his* arsoun") belong to Saladin, the bells belong to the mare ("*here* belles to ryng"). The mare rings the bells to aurally assault the English army, yet she is the mount of Saladin and to an extent under his control. Contemporary accounts ascribe agency to both Isabella and Mortimer. Edward II had written to Charles IV in March of 1325 in light of Isabella's affair, urging him to return Isabella and Edward III "without having regard to the pleasure of woman." See *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1323-7*, 579. Geoffrey le Baker similarly blamed the dire situation in England after Isabella's settlement with the Scots on the queen rather than on

Middle English could also operate as a verb meaning "to roar, bark" or "bellow," a meaning now extant but very much in use in the later medieval period.[51] In the romance, bellowing and roaring are qualities allocated to Cassodorien and the demonic mare. At Cassodorien's exorcism, the king's earl chauvinistically claims Henry will see his wife "brayd" at Mass, which verb could be translated in Middle English as either a desire to have her 'beaten' or to hear her 'cry out' or 'bellow'; the latter interpretation ascribes Cassodorien an animalistic sound identical to the verb 'bell' even as the Christian community seeks to silence her with the Mass bell. Saladin's mare further conflates the linguistic significance of 'bell,' as her calls and jangling bells sound in unison, linking the animal with human, demonic with religious, and meted with chaotic.

The mare's layering of calls (neighs) and bells links mother and son in an animalistic demonic lullaby. Demon-brides like Cassodorien are often noted for their entrancing voices. In Jean d'Arras' fourteenth-century *Roman de Mélusine*, King Elynas discovers the fairy lady Presine and "herde a voice that song so melodiously & so sweetly/ that he supposed none other/ but it had the voice of an Angel," after which "he was as rauysshed & knew nat yf it was daylight or nyght, ne yf he slept or wakked."[52] The effect of the fairy/demon-bride's song is such that it disorients and reterritorializes its male listener. If the colt hears its mother's song, it will be similarly co-opted and abandon any Christian king or rider. Layering sounds, as Deleuze and Guattari have theorized, can eradicate boundaries. In their discussion of the reterritorializing effects of layered song, Deleuze and Guattari provide the strikingly maternal example of Debussy's *Sirens*, which, they posit, integrates voice with orchestra to make the voices of child and woman

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Mortimer (17). The Rochester chronicler, on the other hand, claims that while Isabella ruled, Mortimer reigned. See *B.L. Cotton Faustina B.V: Rochester Chronicle*, fol. 50v, cited in Ormrod, *Edward III* 63.

[51] *OED Online*. "bell, v.4."

[52] D'Arras, 7.

inextricable from "the sea and the water molecule."[53] In much the same way in *RCL*, the mare's layering of voice over bells seeks to make the dichotomies of the romance—mother and son, east and west, chaos and order, demonic and angelic—implode as the demarcated boundaries between them are dissolved in her cacophonous demonic lullaby. In much the same way that Heather Blurton has argued that Richard's cannibalism blurs the boundaries between East and West, Richard's Antiochian demonic mother aurally signals this blurring at the core of Richard's hybrid identity, which is paradoxically quintessentially English as the king of England were more often the products of hybrid English kings and foreign queen consorts.[54] The mare's blending of bells and voice seeks to reterritorialize her colt, calling him from his new Christian master back to her demonic maternal body and to his foreign and monstrous origins. The semiotic union which would occur were the colt to suckle is figured in terms of demonic heritage: Richard is the "deuyl" son of a demonic mother just as the colt and mare are "ffeendes."[55] The *a* version poet reconfigures Edward's closeness and alliance with his French mother in this demonic pairing. This union of mother and colt is the very union avoided in Cassodorien's exorcism, one in which Cassodorien clings to the boy Richard and flies away with him in a demonic and nourishing maternal embrace, and not unlike the maternal belled raven which clings to Richard's arms at the Three Days' Tournament.

Since the romance stages foreign maternal threat acoustically, the solution the *a* version poet offers is for the romance Richard to become deaf. Before the battle at Acre, an angel descends and speaks to Richard, alerting him to Saladin's trap and advising Richard that he must bridle and weigh down the colt. The angel says nothing of stopping

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[53] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum, 2004), 340.

[54] Blurton 131.

[55] I use 'semiotic' in a Kristevan rather than a Sausserian sense, meaning that this union of mare and colt gestures to an emotive, pre-verbal and pre-oedipal union between mother and son.

the colt's ears; nonetheless, Richard knowingly stops colt's ears with wax: "Wiþ wax he stoppyd his eeres þore, / And sayde: 'Be the aposteles twelue, / þouȝ þou be the deuyl hymselue, / þou schalt me serue at this nede!'" (5588-91). The epithet "deuyl" clearly links Richard to the colt: both are called "deuyl" repeatedly in the romance and both are employed against their demonic nature in the service of the English. As Richard appropriates the demonic colt as a tool for English nationalism, the *RCL* revision appropriates Richard who is similarly the demonic son of a demon mother as a romance hero in a romance centered on English nationalism. It is at this point in the romance that sound is the integral part of Richard's solution. Just as Richard could not be present at the ringing of the Mass bell when Cassodorien was exorcised, the colt cannot hear the bells lest it run to its mother.

Though the colt may be a product of hellish necromancy in Saracen lands, Richard attempts to appropriate him for England and the church. The poet's move mirrors his appropriation of a king historically associated with France and rebellion for a decidedly English nationalist revision of a romance in light of the Hundred Years' War. After all, Richard, like Edward III, had been involved in insurrection, defying his father, Henry II, and taking his mother's side in 1189 Richard dictates that the colt will leave behind its hellish origins and become an agent of the Catholic Church and of the English. That is, regardless of whether the colt is "þe deuyl himselue," it will now "serue" at Richard's "wylle" (5590).

Nevertheless, the success of Richard's attempt to excise the colt from its mother's demonic influence is fraught with uncertainty. Saladin succinctly states this problem after witnessing Richard's escape from the mare's trap and his superhuman prowess in battle: "He is a deuyll or a saynt" (6951). Though he has avoided hearing the reverberations of bells once again, Richard's identity still hangs deliberately in the balance. Sound is crucial to Richard's fraught identity. At the same time the figure of the bell implies containment, whether by purifying the demonic within England's church walls or

repressing the excessive violence and desire of the hero's body within an emblazoned suit of armor sealed with a bell, it gestures towards maternal excess, embodied in Cassodorien. Bells become by the end of the romance reveling sites of rupture, so full of conflating meanings that they are no less symbols of the Mass than they are reminders of Cassodorien's flight from the church and her return as the mare.[56] Richard's solution of stopping the colt's ears has an inescapable and ironic implication. The colt is not truly free of the mare's influence; it is merely prevented from listening to the deterritorializing layering of her hellish lullaby. Like Richard is pulled away from his mother's exorcism, taken out of earshot, so the colt is kept from hearing its mother's call.

On the other hand, Edward III's overthrow of Isabella and Roger Mortimer's *de facto* government in 1330 perhaps explains this perplexing moment. Informed by an angel of Saladin's treachery and the mare and colt's demonic origins, Richard reasons that the only way to maintain control of his colt during the battle is to stop its ears so that it cannot hear its mother's calls and the sound of her bells. During his coup in 1330, Edward III avoided his mother's gaze and stopped his ears to her pleas as his forces stormed the Queen's chamber in Nottingham Castle and captured Mortimer. Probably in disguise, Edward III remained outside his mother's chamber, steeling himself against her pleas while she cried out "Bel fitz! Bel fitz! Etiez pitie du gentil Mortimer!" (Fair son! Fair son! Have pity on kind Mortimer!).[57] Edward stopped his ears against his mother's cries and hid from her gaze. Eventually he had Mortimer executed as a traitor, and confiscated his mother's lands, assigned her a fixed income and forced her into retirement.[58] The co-opting of the colt as an agent of the English Christian forces

[56] Medieval noise can convey mixed messages. For example, in a reading of the oliphant in *Le Chanson de Roland*, Michelle Warren argues that the oliphant challenges the portrayal of Christian/Saracen difference as absolute. She notes, "Noise and song together pose the fundamental stakes of interpretation. Finding the 'right' interpretation usually means cutting out the 'noise' to reveal the message"; "The Noise of Roland," 304. The demonic mare, I would argue, calls the alterity of the bell into focus.

[57] Alison Weir provides a thoughtfully and prosaically reconstructed narrative of the events of this night compiled mainly from the chronicles of Adam Murimuth and Geoffrey le Baker; *Queen Isabella: Treachery, Adultery, and Murder in Medieval England* (New York: Ballantine, 2006), 340-43.

suggests a fourteenth-century reimagining of Richard's epic battle in which a colt (Edward III) closely aligned with a demonic mare (Isabella) frees himself from her clutches to fight for the English and use that demonic heritage to bolster English nationalism. In the wake of Philip VI's death, the Capetian throne was once again disputed in the absence of a son, but this time there existed a direct male descendent or royal Capetian blood, yet he was problematically the king of England. When Edward III used his mother's heritage in 1337 to facilitate war with France, he was relying on his now ostracized mother's ability to transmit the French royal bloodline.[59] Infused with her blood in much the same way *RCL*'s Richard is demonically empowered through his mother, Edward III employed his French heritage to retaliate against seizure of his lands in Gascony and declare himself rightful heir whilst distancing himself from Isabella physically, as she had formerly overshadowed him and coerced him into traitorous acts.

It would seem likely that the *a* version poet saw in Edward III what many of the king's contemporary chroniclers envisioned: a powerful king who stepped out of his mother's shadow to become one of the longest reigning and most admired kings in late medieval England, restoring the monarchy to its previous prestige, succeeding against the Scots where his mother and father had failed, and holding a legitimate claim to the French throne. Yet still, the ambiguity which haunts *RCL*'s Richard haunts Edward. As a king tied to acts of insurrection against England, Edward, like Richard, is a problematic English hero. The question the romance asks, tantalizingly, and refuses to answer is materialized in the words of Saladin, who confusedly states after his defeat with the mare

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[58] See *Chronica monasterii de Melsa*, 360.

[59] Angela Florscheutz explores the ambivalent status of Capetian women in fourteenth-century succession disputes, contending that Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as a late fourteenth-century work challenges and critiques notions that women could neither carry nor transmit bloodlines. "'A Mooder He Hath, but Fader Hath He Noon:' Constructions of Genealogy in the *Clerk's Tale* and the *Man of Law's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 44.1 (2009): 25-60.

"He is a deuyll or a saynt" (6951). Perhaps, for the English kings struggling to maintain and acquire French holdings, it was necessary to be both, and even more so in Edward's case. Like the romance Richard who is physically distanced from his mother whilst benefitting from her demonic power, Edward III's martial feats in the Hundred Years' War depended wholly upon maternal blood and Isabella's status as a Capetian royal. *RCL* handles this tightrope act of distancing and appropriation aurally, and the bell sounds to remind us that, even when the young king seeks to establish himself as an independent martial hero, he nonetheless remains indebted to that maternal presence he so seeks to excise.

CHAPTER TWO
CUSTANCE, ANNE OF BOHEMIA, AND LOLLARD BOOKS IN CHAUCER'S *MAN OF LAW'S TALE*

That Chaucer frequently depicted influential female monarchs hardly surprises, given the preponderance of such women during the fourteenth century. In the wake of influential heralded queens like Philippa of Hainault who interceded on behalf of the populace, and castigated queens like Isabella the "She-Wolf" of France, Chaucer represented fictional queens who influenced public policy and manipulated their royal husbands.[1] To name just three examples, in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* King Arthur defers to Guinevere's judgment in determining the fate of an errant knight rapist; Chaucer writes himself into *The Legend of Good Women* as a court poet acquiescing to his queen and patroness Alceste's plea that he frame women in a more favorable light; and, in the *Knight's Tale*, the Amazonian Queen Hippolyta convinces Theseus to allow Palamon and Arcite to live. Reflecting how queenship scholars have found historical influences in Chaucer's fictional queens, Paul Strohm discerns in the Amazons' pleas on bended knee traces of Philippa of Hainault's famous intercession on bended knee on behalf of the burghers of Calais in 1346: the queens, he clarifies, "magnify Theseus' regality—much as Philippa's abjection finally enhanced rather than detracted from the manly prowess of Edward III."[2]

Among these historical referents, Anne of Bohemia, the childless bride of Richard

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[1] See Paul Strohm's seminal essay, "Queens as Intercessors," *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 95-119, for an extended discussion of the paramount importance of the queen's intercessory role in late medieval governance and queenship. Though the queen's powers became increasingly symbolic from the thirteenth century, a number of late medieval queens still managed to effect considerable political clout. Isabella of France managed to oust her husband and successfully invade England in 1326, while Margaret of Anjou in the 1560s became head of the Lancastrian army.

[2] Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, 112. Strohm notes, however, that Philippa of Hainault was most likely not pregnant during this episode, and Froissart's account, while tantalizing, is embellished.

II and Chaucer's claimed patroness, holds a special place as a recurring queenly muse in Chaucer's corpus. Critics name her, more than any other contemporary fourteenth-century queen, as an influence for several of Chaucer's queenly figures. Chaucer's dream vision, *Parliament of Foules*, seems to allude to negotiations for Anne's marriage amongst her suitors in its concluding segment.[3] Additionally, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* appears to refer to Anne; Chaucer writes of Criseyde "Right as oure first lettre is now an A, / In beaute first so stood she," hinting at a comparison between the classical beauty and the present beauty of "now," Anne of Bohemia.[4] While these and other references suggest that Chaucer had Anne of Bohemia in mind throughout much of his writings, Chaucerian scholars most often acknowledge her as patroness, imagined or real, for the *Legend of Good Women*.[5] Much of the basis for tying Anne to the *Legend* rests on Queen Alceste's instruction to Chaucer to dedicate and deliver the work to "the quene . . . At Eltham or at Sheene" (496-7).[6] As the English queen consort for much of Chaucer's

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[3] Written around 1380, the poem may very well reference Anne (the formel eagle) and her suitors, the German prince to whom she had been betrothed, Friedrich of Meissen, the French dauphin, later Charles VI, and of course the boy-king, Richard II (the three tercel eagles vying for the formel). See Alfred Thomas, *A Blessed Shore: England and Bohemia from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Ithaca, 2007), 28, 64; Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 1992), 121-27; Larry Benson suggests that *Parliament of Fowls* was written to speed up negotiations with the English and Bohemian ambassadors to secure the marriage between Anne and Richard II (*Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield* (Kalamazoo, 1982), 123-44).

[4] Thomas notes that the Ricardian court often used initials, citing the 'A' on the queen's mantle on her tomb in Westminster Abbey ("Margaret of Teschen's Czech Prayer: Transnationalism and Female Literacy in the Later Middle Ages," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74.2 (June 2011): 309-23, at 318). Some other well-known arguments that Chaucer compares Anne with Cressida include Stephen Barney's comments in the *Riverside Chaucer*, 1027; John L. Lowes, "The Date of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde," *PMLA* 23.2 (1908): 285-306; and David Wallace, "Anne of Bohemia, Queen of England, and Chaucer's Emperice," *Litteraria Pragensia* 5/9 (1995): 1-16, at 3.

[5] That Anne is the imagined literary patron of *The Legend of Good Women* is commonly accepted. See e.g. Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 18-64; Wallace, "'If That Thou Live': Legends and Lives of Good Women," *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, 1997), 337-78; Wallace, "Anne of Bohemia"; Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*; Donald W. Rowe, *Through Nature to Eternity: Chaucer's* Legend of Good Women (Lincoln, 1988); John Norton-Smith, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (London, U.K., 1974), 63; Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queen of England, from the Norman Conquest: With Anecdotes of Their Courts, Now First Published from Official Records and other Authentic Documents Private as Well as Public*, Vol. 2, (London, U.K., 1840), 416.

[6] All quotations of Chaucer are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston,

career, Anne played an important role in cementing Chaucer's approach to queenship in his works, as a patroness and as a model of queenship upon which Chaucer drew for his fictional representations of queens.[7]

While the *Legend of Good Women* and other texts possess a clear relationship to Anne of Bohemia, the focus of this essay—the *Man of Law's Tale* (herein *MLT*)—may initially seem to bear few ties to the historical queen. After all, the Man of Law sets his tale in sixth-century Northumberland in a pre-Christian England seemingly far removed from the complex milieu of fourteenth-century international court politics and religious fissure. Moreover, the tale's saintly heroine Custance bears a son and heir to the English throne, an act that distinguishes her from the famously childless Anne. Yet, dismissing historical influence on account of formalistic discrepancies overlooks the complex relationship between medieval history and medieval fiction. Custance's life need not parallel that of Anne on all points for Chaucer to have drawn inspiration from the English queen consort; rather, influence can be metaphorical and symbolic—what the queen represents—rather than merely the particulars of a queen's life. Strohm delineates the dangers of oversimplifying historicizing texts, and his central argument merits reiteration in its entirety:

> Many critics still suppose 'historical' readings to consist of good literary detective work, leading to the identification of discrete events of occasions to which a work refers. Yet no less historical than such events are the larger interpretive structures within which social and literary events are

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1987).

[7] There is much to recommend the argument that the *Legend* was dedicated to Anne of Bohemia. Anne's favorite residences in the late 1380s were Eltham and Shene, and Chaucer, as Clerk of the King's Work from summer of 1389 until that of 1391, would have handled matters for seven of Richard and Anne's royal manors, including Eltham and Shene. See e.g. Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 416; Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 28. Furthermore, the *Legend* was composed partially before and after 1392, when Anne famously interceded on behalf of London. Though it is Queen Alceste who entreats Chaucer to dedicate his work to Anne, some critics have noted her similarities with the English queen consort. Strohm cites a "cult of flowers and pearls which became virtually synonymous with Anne in English court poetry" and, like Wallace, traces this floral symbolism to Alceste, who wears a crown of pearls and is called a "dayesye," the flower primarily associated with Anne (*Hochon's Arrow*, 111, 27). See also Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*; Wallace, "Anne of Bohemia," 8.

> produced—the queen as politically powerless but spiritually influential mediator, for example, or the queen as a persuasive counselor. The historicity of these schemes lies in their origins, and . . . their transmission and the varied uses to which they are subject.[8]

Anne of Bohemia, as an imperial princess imbricated in trecento modes of intercessory queenship, represented larger and often contradictory modes of queenship in the wake of both English imperial aspirations and burgeoning Wycliffism, modes unfortunately overlooked in studies devoted to point-by-point historical comparisons. Thus, I am concerned with not only the historical Anne of Bohemia but also with this malleable, constructed Anne filtered through the lens of late fourteenth-century queenship.

This essay will argue that despite the *MLT*'s sixth-century setting, the tale's passive yet proselytizing apostolic heroine, Custance, was inspired by Chaucer's queen and imagined Lollard patroness, Anne of Bohemia. The hagiographical royal heroine and historical English consort both engage "interpretive structures" of gendered agency, particularly via passive modes of intercessory queenship. Queenship scholars have long since delineated the ways in which high and late medieval queens modeled themselves on intercessory topoi like the heavenly virgo mediatrix and earthly Esther. Unfortunately and despite their research, Anne has largely been critically dismissed until recently in favor of more ambitious and radical English queen consorts like Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou, the "She-Wolves" of France.[9] Custance and Anne of Bohemia share, as titled imperial princesses, a longstanding reputation as passive or blank figures open to masculine circulation and appropriation. Critics overwhelmingly have noted Chaucer's failure to create an agential Custance, reading her instead as hollowed, de-sexed or

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[8] Strohm, "Queens as Intercessors," 117.

[9] See e.g., Lois L. Huneycutt, "Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos," in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women,* ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 126-46; John Carmi Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England," *Power of the Weak,* 147-77; Parsons, "Ritual and Symbol in English Medieval Queenship to 1500," in *Women & Sovereignty,* ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1992), 60-77, at 64-5.

emblematic. John Yunck, for example, contends that she is "a vehicle for the providential theme and a vessel of divine grace. In herself and for herself . . . she is nothing."[10] More recently, Geraldine Heng has termed Custance "a zero to be filled in" while Carolyn Dinshaw concurs that she is "indeed an empty 'thing,' 'a sign and nothing more,' whose value is arbitrary and ascribed to her by men."[11]

A look at contemporary late fourteenth-century analogues reveals fascinating parallels between critics' interpretations of Custance as a non-entity and late medieval conceptions of Anne: Anne, though daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia, Charles IV, was similarly dismissed by many contemporary chroniclers as a non-entity, largely divorced from the dangerous fourteenth-century political climate. The Westminster chronicler typifies this dismissive attitude to the new Queen consort, sardonically referring to her as "this tiny scrap of humanity."[12] Jean Froissart, Adam Usk, and the author of *A Short English Chronicle* all devote considerable attention to Richard II but mention Anne only in passing for her marriage and death.[13] Critics have until

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[10] Edward Block, "Originality, Controlling Purpose, and Crafstmanship in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*," *PMLA* 68.3 (1953): 572-616, at 592, typifies this trend in noting that the Roman princess is "too perfect to be a credible human being"; John Yunck, "Religious Elements in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*," *ELH* 27 (1960): 249-61, at 257. Sheila Delaney, "Womanliness in the Man of Law's Tale," *The Chaucer Review* 9.1 (1974): 63-72, at 63-4, has similarly argued that Custance "is to be seen not as woman at all but rather as an emblem . . . of humanity at large." Some have written on Custance's voice within the narrative. For example, Robert Dawson proposes that Custance relies on a "rhetoric of victimization" which implies self-awareness and intent, and concludes that she does have a voice ("Custance in Context: Rethinking the Protagonist of the Man of Law's Tale," *The Chaucer Review* 26 (1992): 293-308, at 299).

[11] Geraldine Heng, "Beauty and the East, a Modern Love Story: Women, Children and Imagined Communities in *The Man of Law's Tale* and Its Others," *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York, 2003), 181-238, at 215; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 99. Dinshaw cites French anthropologist Lévi-Strauss's structuralist reading of woman. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell et al., revised edn. (Boston, 1969), 496.

[12] The original Latin reads "pro tantilla carnis porcione" (*The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394*, L.C. Hector and B.F. Harvey, eds. (Oxford, U.K., 1982), 25).

[13] See Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. & trans. by Geoffrey Brereton (New York: Penguin, 1968), 252, 416; Adam Usk, *Chronicon Adae de Usk: 1377-1421*, ed. & trans. by Edward Thompson (London, U.K., 1904), 139-40, 150; "A Short English Chronicle," *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. James Gairdner (Westminster, U.K., 1880).

recently treated Anne similarly as an empty and unimportant blank.[14] Nigel Saul contends that Anne was "content with the limited role that convention found for her" and "aroused little interest in the chroniclers," while Elizabeth Biebel-Stanley limits her importance to the transplanting of Bohemian fashions such as crakows and hatpins.[15] For both Custance and Anne, becoming the passive queen has unfortunately meant for posterity that they are dismissed as objects to be circulated, lacking agency of their own.

However, passivity need not preclude agency. Under the veneer of a passive princess set adrift in a rudderless boat, Custance effects the conversion of Syrians and the Northumbrians. Moreover, once she is on Briton soil, Custance converts through means that in certain respects suggest her status less as saintly than as a near heretical figure. Custance, that is, spreads Christianity via a hermeneutics that both eschews priestly mediation and relies on the vernacular. In other words, Custance's saintly actions at times assume what appears to be a Wycliffite form. Ultimately, the salvation of the accused Custance at her trial for murder rests on a vernacular gospel, a "Britoun book" which exonerates the imperial princess and initiates the conversion of the pagan Northumbrians. This "Britoun book," found only in Chaucer's version of the Custance narrative, resonates with Wycliffite bibles and bears consideration in light of issues of vernacularity and late fourteenth-century queenship.

Anne, typically regarded as orthodox in her religious leanings, brought with her to England copies of the Bible in her native Czech, German, and Latin. Though quite orthodox in the context of the Bohemian court, Anne's possession of vernacular bibles

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[14] Thomas notes many critics' tendency to conclude "the queen was little more than an empty vessel into which Richard II and his court poets projected their own fantasies of Bohemian glamour and prestige" ("Margaret of Teschen's Czech Prayer," 310).

[15] Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 455; Elizabeth Biebel-Stanley, "Sovereignty through the Lady: 'The Wife of Bath's Tale' and the Queenship of Anne of Bohemia," in *Studies in Medieval Culture XLVIII: The English "Loathly Lady" Tales: Boundaries, Traditions, Motifs*, ed. S. Elizabeth Passmore and Susan Carter (Kalamazoo, 2007), 73-82.

fanned the fire of Wycliffite vernacular translations in England, attracting the attention of Wyclif himself. Many orthodox English, including members of Chaucer's coterie of readers, owned vernacular bibles with little risk for charges of heresy.[16] However, many of Anne's Bohemian retinue would become Lollards and Hussites, spreading heresy amid the largely unpoliced literary and academic exchange blossoming between England and Bohemia.

I suggest that Chaucer's imperial queen Custance in fact engages with the larger interpretive structures at play in Anne's queenship, particularly the queen's relationship to vernacular hermeneutics in a religiously fractured period of late medieval English history. Absolutely crucial to my assessment of the tale is the fact that Anne's queenship marked a very important step in English politics, when the political decision of queen consort hinged not only upon the domestic relations between England and France, but also negotiated the politics of the Western Schism, nascent Wycliffism, and England's increasing cosmopolitan internationalization. England was embroiled in the larger Western Schism from 1378, in which England had chosen to back Rome and its king chose to marry the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor. More locally, the Blackfriars Council in May of 1382 shined light upon burgeoning heresies circulating in the University of Oxford, resulting in a period of Lollard paranoia. In a hagiographical romance purporting to explain the Catholic conversion of pre-Christian England, it might at first seem illogical to allege that Chaucer's heroine harbors vernacular ties that could be read as heretical in the contemporary context of Wycliffism and trecento queens. However, Custance's brand of apostolic vernacular Christianity resonates more with contemporary late medieval Lollardy than with sixth-century Catholicism, just as the

[16] See e.g. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond, *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 1997), who persuasively argue that Wycliffite translation practices, including the widespread possession of vernacular bibles, proliferated in late fourteenth-century England. Andrew Cole's study, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2008), takes the view that Wycliffite hermeneutical practices changed late medieval literature and influenced several canonical late medieval writers, including Chaucer.

tale's anachronistic setting nonetheless resonates with fourteenth-century English ties to Rome in its union of imperial lines and cultural transmission.

The first part of this essay will establish Anne of Bohemia's cultural currency as a vernacular patroness in England, appropriated by both Richard II for imperial ambitions and by Wycliffites as an unimpeachable exemplum of Wycliffite hermeneutical practices. As the essay develops, discussion will turn to thematic resonances between Custance's arrival in Northumberland and Anne of Bohemia's popular and chronicled reception in England in 1382. Finally, I will pursue Custance's use of and reliance on a "Britoun book, written with evaungiles" to smite her enemies, a key detail that bears comparison with Wycliffite appropriation of Anne of Bohemia's possession of vernacular gospels. Aligned with vernacular Bibles and a Christianity freed from priestly mediation, Custance at the very least displays in the *MLT* amenability to Lollard tenets, the same heretical inclination that clouded Anne of Bohemia's queenship.

Glossing Anne:
Imperial Ambition and the Lollard Doctors

Anne of Bohemia (1366-1394) was the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV. Anne's marriage was arranged after negotiations fell through for a union between Richard and Caterina Visconti of Milan. Unlike traditional medieval queen consorts, Anne arrived with no dowry. Consequently, many of Richard's nobles viewed Anne as a nonentity, bringing no wealth and fewer political connections. She was received quite negatively by the English upon her entry in 1382, no doubt in part due to the exorbitant dower—(£4,500) before the marriage and £12,000 shortly after—paid for her.[17] Anne's cantankerous contemporary, Thomas Walsingham, decries in typical

[17] Nigel Saul writes that the marriage of Anne and Richard was one "of which the king approved, but of which his subjects were suspicious" (*Richard II*, 95). See also Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 19; and Andrew Taylor, "Anne of Bohemia and the Making of Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 19 (1997): 95-115, at 95-6, who relates "pro tantilla carnis porcione" to Anne's diminutive size, lack of a dowry, and plainness. Chronicler Thomas Walsingham concludes upon Anne's death that the childless queen failed to return on the exorbitant dowry invested in her: "[h]er funeral was famous because of its expense" (*The* Chronica Maiora *of Thomas Walsingham 1376-1422*, trans. David Preest (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 292).

fashion the expense of the royal marriage: "The king had chosen this woman to be his wife and had bought her at great expense and after much negotiation, even though the daughter of [the duke of Milan] had been offered to him together with an enormous sum of gold."[18]

Later into her queenship, Anne's contemporaries thought differently, particularly after her successful intercession on behalf of Londoners in 1392 who had become estranged from Richard II and fined excessively. Richard Maidstone, a Carmelite friar, composed that same year a 548-line Latin poem, the *Concordia*, praising Anne's intercessory skill and comparing her to the Biblical queen consort, Esther. As scholars like Lois Huneycutt and John Carmi Parsons have demonstrated, Esther acted as a literary model for late medieval queenly intercession.[19] After Anne's untimely death, chroniclers would call her Anne the Good and Anne the Wise, reflecting this mitigating and intercessory role.[20] David Wallace in his study of the queen consort notes that critics have tended to underestimate Anne's importance: "the cultural and political significance of Anne of Bohemia has been grossly underestimated by Chaucer's critics and biographers; she certainly brought more to England than side saddles, hatpins, and extravagant shoes."[21] In fact, Anne played a prominent role, not only as a pawn in Richard's bid for

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[18] Walsingham, *Chronica Maiora*, 170. England's native queen mother, Joan of Kent, like many of Richard's English subjects, clearly favored the Navarrese proposal of Charles V of France over that of Anne's father, Charles IV, the Holy Roman Emperor. See e.g. Saul, *Richard* II, 83. The English suspected the likelihood of a lucrative return on this investment, a practical opinion which contrasted sharply with Richard's idealistic imperial ambitions. The Westminster chronicler, *The Westminster Chronicle 1381-1394*, at 24, complains that for the English Anne "represented a purchase rather than a gift" ("videbatur non dari set pocius emi"), a clear reference to the expensive dowry Richard paid to marry her.

[19] See e.g. Lois Huneycutt, "Intercession and the High Medieval Queen"; John Carmi Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England"; Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 24.

[20] Taylor, "Anne of Bohemia and the Making of Chaucer," 102, surmises that within the excepted intercessory modes of queenly behavior, Anne was an "astute player" who managed to overcome her initial negative reception in England.

[21] Wallace, "Anne of Bohemia," 2. See also Elizabeth Biebel-Stanley, "Sovereignty through the Lady," 73-

imperial title and as a wise intercessor and counterpoint to the temperamental Richard, but also as a figurehead of Lollardy.

Richard II sought an imperial title through his marriage, and Anne literally embodied his imperial ambitions, which date to the time of his marriage to Anne in 1382.[22] As daughter of the Roman Emperor and sister to Wenceslaus IV, himself "rex Romanorum" until his deposition in 1400, Anne, like Chaucer's Roman Custance, came to England an imperial princess with the highest imperial connections. Indeed, following the Anglo-Imperial alliance arranged between Richard II and Václav IV and bolstered by Anne of Bohemia's arrival, England garnered unprecedented access to and largely unpoliced trade with Bohemia.[23] In 1383, the royal couple traveled to the Great Hospital in Norwich to view the imperial eagles crowning its roof, and Richard's commissioned carving of an imperial head in the York minster commemorated his imperial ambitions in the 1390s.[24] 1395, the year following Anne's untimely death from plague, saw the commissioning of two important imperial works of art: the Wilton Diptych, depicting Richard's personal device, a white hart, resting on a bed of rosemary, one of Anne's devices; and Richard and Anne's joint tomb in Westminster Abbey. Both works symbolize the union of the Plantagenet and imperial Bohemian families and evince Richard's yen even in the wake of Anne's death for imperial recognition and title. For Richard, who had no blood connection to the imperial family, Anne was instrumental to

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82. Biebel-Stanley relegates Anne's importance in England to transplanting Bohemian fashions.

[22] For example, the colorful fourteenth-century chronicler, Jean Froissart, praised Richard II's marriage to Anne in terms of its political and imperial alliances, noting that "the King of England's position had been strengthened by his marriage to the sister of the King of Germany" (*Chronicles*, 252). Thomas writes of Anne: "Both during her life and after her death in 1394, she was, so to speak, the jewel in Richard's fantasy of an imperial crown" ("Margaret of Teschen's Czech Prayer," 310). Taylor, "Anne of Bohemia and the Making of Chaucer," deems the marriage a political "alliance designed to promote [Richard's] imperial ambitions" (95).

[23] Michael Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia: Heresy and Communication in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), adduces this period as one of a "heterodox transfer of ideas" (5).

[24] See Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 65-66.

becoming emperor and cementing English ties to Bohemia, then a cultural and cosmopolitan European hub.[25]

As a highly literate woman tied to a legacy of literate and pious Czech queens, Anne of Bohemia presented an appealing prospect for English Lollards as well.[26] Following the Blackfriars Council of 1378 spearheaded by Archbishop Courtenay which made previously academic religious debate at Oxford open to public charges of heresy, Wycliffites would need increasingly public figures to justify their religious practices.[27] Anne was primarily orthodox in her religious practices and beliefs and, as a French-speaking Bohemian, might not at first seem the most likely candidate for Lollard textual appropriation.

Yet, many factors made Anne appealing to the Lollards, particularly her public status as queen consort of England and as a cultural ambassador for Bohemia, a fourteenth-century European hotbed of heretical dissidents. Anne also shared the namesake of St. Anne, and was actively involved with the proliferation of the cult of St. Anne, the saint most often associated with female literacy in England in the late fourteenth-century. A recently rediscovered Latin eulogy for the queen, translated and discussed by Michael Van Dussen, connects the deceased queen etymologically to St. Anne, whose name in both medieval vitae and the feast of St. Anne was synonymous with "gratia" (grace/mercy): "For from themselves they brought forth Anna, worthy to be

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[25] For a detailed discussion of Bohemia's cultural and political import in medieval Europe, see Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 1-10.

[26] Anne's queenly ancestors, St. Ludmila, Agnes of Bohemia, Abbess Kunigunde, and Hedwig of Silesia, all eschewed conjugal marriage for lives of chastity and were known for their literacy. See e.g. Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 43-45.

[27] Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*, reassesses the impact of the Blackfriars Council, which critics and historians have typically regarded as censoring late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century English writing. Instead, Cole contends that increased literary exchange with Bohemia conversely increased English treatment of Wycliffite hermeneutical principles. In any case, rendering academic proceedings public and intra-university debates as heretical public preaching rendered fourteenth-century Wycliffites increasingly vulnerable and in need of unimpeachable public models for support.

called / By such a name, which resounds 'grace.'"[28] As a royal woman connected to the cult of St. Anne, Anne of Bohemia would have represented the laity as a figurehead of vernacularity. As Susan Groag Bell has explored, queens like Anne of Bohemia acted as transmitters of culture through their traditional patronage of vernacular literature.[29] Wycliffites likely saw in Anne an appropriable safe figurehead for potentially heretical hermeneutical vernacular practices. The Evesham Abbey chronicler reports that due to Anne's petitions, the pope mandated in 1383 that the feast of St. Anne be observed in England.[30] Like her father, Anne was a patron of learning, and funded establishments like Coventry Charterhouse, Eye Priory, and Queen's College in Oxford.[31] Additionally, Anne was accompanied by an entourage of Bohemians upon her arrival in 1382, and many of her followers would later become influenced by Wycliffe's teachings in England and spread Hussite heresies upon their return to Luxembourg.[32]

Most importantly, the literate queen consort brought with her personal copies of the New Testament gospels in her native Czech, German, and Latin, an act that while not necessarily heretical in itself took on new significance in the English controversy of

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[28] The original Latin reads: "Nam de se gignunt Annam, que nomine tanto / digna vocari sit, 'gratia' quod resonat." Prague, Knihovna Metropolitní Kapituly, MS H.15, Fol. 90v, l.23-24, cited in Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia*, 28-29, for a discussion of the etymological connections to St. Anne in "Nobis natura florem"; 131-4 for the poem in original Latin; and 139-41 for Van Dussen's English translation.

[29] Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs* 7 (1982): 742-68.

[30] *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi*, ed. G.B. Stow (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 134. See also Saul, *Richard II*, 324; Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 38.

[31] Taylor 98.

[32] The Bohemian reform movement, of which John Hus was a major leader, began as a result of traffic between scholars of Oxford and Prague facilitated by Anne's marriage to Richard. John Wycliffe's ideas heavily influenced the Hussites in Bohemia. For a brief but detailed account of Wycliffe's influence on the Hussite movement, see Thomas, *A Blessed Shore*, 98-118. Walsingham typifies a popular negative opinion about the extravagant Bohemians who accompanied Anne. He writes, "[t]he Bohemians, the queen's compatriots . . . were enjoying the delights of England, and, forgetful of their own country, they refused to go back home, but with no sense of shame stayed on as guests who gave no pleasure" (*Chronica Maiora*, 220).

Wycliffite biblical translations.[33] As scholars like Andrew Cole and Margaret Deanesley have argued, owning vernacular texts, even bibles, did not by itself constitute an act of heresy.[34] Yet, Anne's possession of vernacular New Testament gospels provided an unimpeachable exemplum for John Wyclif's English Bible and linked the young queen to Lollardy in England. In his *De Triplici Vincula Amoris* tract, Wyclif writes:

> Whence is their folly clearly seen, who wish to condemn those writings as heretical for the reason that they are written in English, and acutely prick sins which disturb this realm. For it is lawful for the noble queen of England, the sister of the emperor, to have the gospel written in three languages, that is, in Czech and in German and in Latin: and it would savour of the pride of Lucifer to call her a heretic for such a reason as this![35]

Wyclif constructs Anne as a Wycliffite reader, regardless of how orthodox she actually was, and through doing so seeks to reframe Wycliffite hermeneutical practices as orthodox. Appropriating the English queen consort for the dissemination of Lollard gospels in the vernacular, Wycliff relies on Anne's royalty (noble queen of England) and imperial status (the sister of the Roman emperor) to buttress claims that "those writings" cannot be heretical, for they were practiced by pious royal women who commissioned a number of vernacular Books of Hours and gospels. Rhetorically, Wyclif's claim that "it would savor of the pride of Lucifer to call her a heretic" operates to force readers to

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[33] What precious little informs us of Anne's reading practices and library exists in secondhand accounts. As of yet, nothing from Anne's library has been identified. C.f. Thomas, "Margaret of Teschen's Czech Prayer," 310.

[34] See Cole, 82-84, who adduces that English vernacular translations and translation theory were not inherently viewed as heretical after the Blackfriars Council of 1378. See also Margaret Deanesley, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1966), who argues that although Anne's enjoyed special status as a queen entitled to reading vernacular biblical translations, she was nonetheless appropriated by Lollards for her Bohemian connections to vernacular hermeneutics (278, 280).

[35] See Deanesly, 248; for the original Latin, see e.g. *De triplici vinculo amoris, John Wiclif's Polemical Works in Latin*, ed. Rudolf Buddensieg (London: Trubner & Co., 1883), l.163. The original Latin reads: "ex eodum patet eorum stulticia, qui volunt dampnare scripta tamquam heretica propter hoc, quod scribuntur in anglico et acute tangunt peccata, que conturbant illam provinciam. Nam possibile est, quod nobilis regina Anglie, soror cesaris, habeat ewangelium in lingwa triplici exaratum, scilicet boemica, in lingwa teutonica et latina, et hereticare ipsam propterea implicite foret luciferina superbia."

imagine Anne as a Wycliffite, and in so doing aims to force those same readers to see Wycliffite vernacularity as orthodox. Indeed, the queen's possession of gospels in three vernaculars seems to justify Wyclif's project of translating the Bible into English. Wyclif's language transforms Anne into a Lollard martyr suffering at the imagined actions of orthodox detractors warped by the "the pride of Lucifer." In effect, Wyclif performs a tentative and imaginary *hagiographical* repurposing of his imagined patroness, framing the diminutive queen as a martyr for the vernacular vulnerable to her detractors and the "prick/touch/tangunt" of their sins.

Other Wycliffites similarly capitalized on Anne's championing of vernacular gospels. By 1401, many years after Anne's death, Wyclif's former friend and fellow Lollard, John Purvey, recounted in a treatise on Lollard translations the alleged words of Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury, at the funeral of Anne of Bohemia in 1394:

> The bichope of Caunterbiri, Thomas Arrundel . . . At the biriyng of quene Anne . . . In his comendynges of hir, he seide it was more Joie of hir than of any whoman that euere he knewe; ffor, not withstanding that sche was an alien borne, sche hadde on Engliche al the foure gospeleris with the docturis vpon hem, and he seide sche hadde sent hem vnto him, and he seide thei weren goode and trewe, and comended hir in that sche was so grete a lady and also an alien, and wolde so lowliche studiee in so vertuous bokis.[36]

Though most evidence seems to indicate that Anne spoke French and had a difficult time with the English language, it bears consideration that authors like Chaucer, John Clanvowe, and, later, John Lydgate, imagined Anne, though an "alien borne," as a patroness of works in the English vernacular.[37] Extending patronage of vernacular texts

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[36] John Purvey, "Purvey's English version of his treatise, founded on the debate on biblical translations between the Lollard, Peter Payne, and the Dominican, Thomas Palmer, at Oxford, 1403-1405," in Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, 437-45.

[37] The likelihood that John Clanvowe, a Wycliffite sympathizer and "Lollard knight," dedicated his *Booke of Cupide* to Anne suggests that Anne was viewed as a patroness of works in English not only by Chaucer, but also by several members of his coterie of readers. Taylor, 98, discusses the likelihood that Clanvowe refers to Anne in a passage in which bickering birds turn defer to the queen's judgment, though he does not address Clanvowe's well-documented Wycliffite leanings and status as "lollard knight" (citing V.J. Scattergood, *The Works of Sir John Clanvowe* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1965), 9-10). Paul Strohm names

to Wycliffite vernacular bibles was not as far a leap in the late fourteenth-century as would be imagined; in fact, many otherwise orthodox English aristocrats owned such vernacular bibles.[38] In the above example, Purvey's appropriation of Arundel is fascinating given Arundel's well-known antipathy towards Lollardy and persecution of Lollards, and is most likely an interpolation added to the accounts of the orthodox Richard Ullerston.[39] However, in this Wycliffite reimagining of Anne's queenship, Anne's performance of feminine abjection, her "lowliche studiee" of vernacular gospels, moves Arundel to the extent that he loses his anti-Lollard fervor and commends her for her piety. Though this particular anecdote is most likely a fabrication of Lollard propaganda, Anne may very well have owned an English Bible or gospels. Margaret Deanesly, for example, argues that Anne, whose father founded the Lollard-receptive University of Prague, probably did have Purvey's translations and glosses of the Four Gospels in English by or before 1394. She explains, "[a] princess who read the Latin text could certainly, with license, read the English gospels, with the doctors' exposition on them . . . ."[40] Thomas' recent archival work seems to corroborate Deanesley's claims: he recently discovered an English Book of Hours containing a Czech prayer which belonged to Margaret of Teschen, Anne's lady of honor who accompanied her to England, indicating that Margaret and her royal benefactress were probably literate in English as

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Clanvowe as one of Richard's "Lollard knights," and Cole, 80, uncovers that Clanvowe's heir, Thomas Clanvowe, owned among other things "four quayres of Doctoures on Mathewe," which Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond surmise, "might well have been part of the Wycliffite glossed gospels" (Aston, Margaret and Colin Richmond, *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 1997), 18).

[38] See e.g. Aston and Richmond, *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Late Middle Ages*, for an insightful study of the pervasiveness of Wycliffite translation practices among the late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century gentry. Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*, contends that Wycliffism had a far greater impact on literature of the period than is typically assumed, and posits that otherwise orthodox and canonical authors engaged with Wycliffite concerns. In his fourth chapter, Cole cites the Wycliffite bible as a strong influence on Chaucer.

[39] Van Dussen 17.

[40] Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, 278, 280.

well as Latin and Czech.[41] Even if we dismiss the tantalizing possibility that Anne did in fact commission Wycliffite glossed bibles, the fact that famous Wycliffites imagined her doing so—in much the same way that Chaucer conceives of Anne as a real or imagined patroness of English texts—complicates readings of the imperial queen as inconsequential and emptied and situates her instead as a literary patron and inheritress of Bohemian literary pursuits.[42]

While Anne's actions eventually left her unscathed and earned her the posthumous epithets Anne the Good and Anne the Wise, some of her orthodox contemporaries perceived her retinue as heretical. The Merciless Parliament of 1388 targeted many of Anne's servants for reasons that Agnes Strickland rightly attributes to "the tendency to Lollardism in her household."[43] Furthermore, Anne may have played an important role in enlisting the aid of Joan of Kent to protect Wyclif and numerous rebels from Archbishop Courtenay's judgment in the Council of Lambeth in 1382.[44] Anne's

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[41] Thomas, "Margaret of Teschen's Czech Prayer," 309.

[42] Anne's imagined role as a Lollard patroness echoes her imagined role as Chaucer's patroness in *The Legend of Good Women*: critics similarly disagree as to whether Anne actually commissioned the English *Legend* or Chaucer merely imagines her as a fictive patroness but, as Wallace has posited, what is most important is that Chaucer *imagines* Anne as his patroness. See e.g. Thomas, who suggests that Anne's influence on Chaucer was most likely symbolic because she spoke French (19); Wallace, "Anne of Bohemia, Queen of England, and Chaucer's Emperice," notes that Anne spoke French and had little knowledge of English upon her arrival in England in 1382 and hence may have been an imagined patroness for Chaucer; Judith M. Bennett conjectures that Anne "spoke little English on her arrival and might have never become proficient in the tongue" ("Queens, Whores and Maidens: Women in Chaucer's England," *Hayes Robinson Lecture Series* No.6 (London: Royal Holloway, 2002): 1-27, at 11).

[43] Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 415.

[44] While typically dismissed as strictly orthodox, Anne's possession of vernacular gospels, association with heretical Bohemians, and rumored intercessions on behalf of Lollards evince a striking degree of agency and indicate a sympathy with Wycliffite translation practices. Taylor dismisses the rumor that Anne interceded on behalf of Wyclif as "legend," misattributed to the young queen instead of Joan of Kent (100). See Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 410; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, 363; Anthony Bedford Steel, *Richard II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 90, citing *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1216-- (London, 1893), 1381-5. Strickland writes that "Anne of Bohemia has the honour of being the first of that illustrious band of princesses who were the nursing mothers of the Reformation" (409), a claim with which many critics take issue. Early modern Reformer John Foxe singles out Anne as one that "most rightly deserveth singular commendation; who at the same time, living with the king, had the gospels of Christ in English, with four doctors upon the same" (*The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, ed. George

public perception as passive nonentity in many chronicle accounts or, at best, as a deft performer of traditional intercessory queenship, afforded her an agency through which she could support translation practices, which may otherwise have been viewed as potentially heretical, under the umbrella of queenly passivity. Additionally, her status as queen consort of England may have allowed her a degree of unimpeachability, as queens served as patronesses of romances and devotionals in the vernacular.[45]

Custance and the "Britoun book"

Custance, the heroine of Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* (c.1390-1395), takes shape against the backdrop of Richard's imperial ambitions, Wyclif's bid for vernacular translations, and an overall climate of religious upheaval following the Blackfriars Council in England which targeted nascent heresies brewing in Oxford.[46] Not surprisingly, Chaucer's version of the Custance legend explores ties between heresy and queenship which are tethered to a seemingly passive imperial princess. Chaucer emphasizes Custance's special passivity in his appropriation of Gower and Trevet's Constance narratives. Unlike Trevet's Constance—who acts as party to her marriage negotiations, is a polyglot, and beguiles and converts in equal measure—Chaucer's Custance cannot speak Saxon and is bartered away in a political marriage, and she

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Townsend (London: Seeley, Burnside and Seeley, 1844), 202). Taylor's article takes issue with these critics and with the legacy of Foxe's retroactive outing of Anne as proto-Reformer, and instead focuses on her many acts of orthodox intercession and patronage.

[45] For example, Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, notes that while Anne could get away with commissioning glosses of the gospels in English, "for a professional scribe, or middle class Lollard, to use the bare text at will was a different matter" (280). Thus, Deanesly suggests that queens had special license with regard to reading vernacular translations of religious texts.

[46] Dating of the MLT varies from 1378, following Chaucer's travel to Italy, to 1395. Most scholars have accepted 1390 as a likely date for the tale's composition, relying on Chaucer's mention of Pope Innocent III's *De miseria* and Nicolas of Lynn's *Kalendarium* and Chaucer's response to Gower's 1390 version of *Confessio Amantis*. For a concise summary of the dating of the tale, see Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, 856-7. See also Benjamin Willem Lindeboom, *Venus' Owne Clerk: Chaucer's Debt to the Confessio Amantis* (Rodopi, 2007), 108; John Strong Perry Tatlock, *The Development and Chronology of Chaucer's Works* (Chaucer Society, 1907), 175; Carol Falvo Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 35; Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 125.

models her speech on her subjection to and reliance on patriarchal law and God.[47] At key moments in the narrative where Gower and Trevet's Constance speaks and acts to protect herself, Chaucer's Custance instead prays for divine intervention whilst resigning her life completely to God. Chaucer centers Custance's performance of feminine passivity on the metaphor of the rudderless boat, which has been interpreted as a microcosm of life's journey at the mercy of fate and also as the journey of masculine circulation that many medieval aristocratic women, particularly queen consorts, had to endure.[48] The controlling motif of Custance's journey at the mercy of nature and God in a rudderless boat effectively demonstrates the hermeneutics of passivity operating in Chaucer's tale.[49] Tossed among the "wilde wawes" (469) and directed by "Fortune," Custance frames herself as a victim in need of protection from "the feend and fro his clawes" (454). During these nautical interludes, Chaucer's Man of Law similarly emphasizes Custance's passivity and status as victim, calling her "this creature" (464) and "this woful faire mayde" (316). Nevertheless, the Man of Law's language simultaneously imbues the heroine upon her arrival in Northumberland with a striking degree of agency over her situation and environment: "[s]he *dryveth* forth into oure ocean" (505) and sticks "so faste" (509) upon English soil that her influence cannot be expunged.

The Man of Law's description of Custance's nautical arrival in Northumberland parallels in some of its particulars chronicle accounts of Anne's arrival in England. In

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[47] Trevet's Constance beguiles her would-be rapist, setting him overboard into the sea, and she preaches to and converts the Saracen merchants, while in Chaucer her agency is significantly more obscured. Instead, Chaucer adds Custance's prayers while at sea, emphasizing her passivity and vulnerability. See e.g. Christine Rose, "Chaucer's 'Man of Law's Tale': Teaching Through the Sources," *College Literature* 28.2 (2001): 155-77, for a basic overview of Chaucer's thematic revisions of Trevet in crafting a passive Custance; Peter Nicholson, "The 'Man of Law's Tale:' What Chaucer Really Owed to Gower," *The Chaucer Review* 26.2 (1991): 153-74; *The Riverside Chaucer*, 857.

[48] See e.g. V.A. Kolve, "The Man of Law's Tale: The Rudderless Ship and the Sea," in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), 297-358.

[49] Robertson, "Nonviolent Christianity" notes the particular effectiveness of Custance's passivity in engendering violent conversion in Syria and Northumberland (339).

both cases, the seemingly benign queen acts as a harbinger of political and religious upheaval, though in Custance's case that upheaval is positively viewed as the successful conversion of the pagan English. However, the wreck of her ship amid violent waves serves similarly as an omen for the political and religious turmoil which ensues. Custance's ship wrecks violently upon her arrival: the "wrak" of her vessel "stiked so faste" in the Northumbrian soil, a result of the tumultuous "wilde see" (513, 509, 506). Custance's arrival engenders the religious conversion of England, and her influence is embedded in English soil, like the boat "stiked so faste."

Anne's contemporaries retroactively saw in her turbulent arrival in England ill portents signaling religious fissure and political unrest. Walsingham reads the wreck of Custance's arrival as an omen of the Wycliffite controversy to follow:

> And on that day there occurred an omen . . . . For just when the princess, disembarking from the ship, had set foot on the ground and everybody else had safely left the ship, there suddenly followed a disturbance of the sea greater than any that had been seen for a long time, and which so tossed about even the ships which were anchored in the harbor that they were suddenly driven into collision with each other, and the ship, in which a moment ago the princess had been sitting, came apart and was dreadfully smashed into many pieces.
> Some people . . . thought it was a forecast of the princess bringing trouble to the land or of some other disaster happening to it. Subsequent events will show why it was a dark, perplexing omen of doubtful meaning.[50]

Looking back at this omen with the benefit of hindsight, Walsingham sees Anne's arrival as disastrous for the English nation in much the same way that Donegild immediately perceives a threatening strangeness about Custance that prompts her to bring about the Roman princess's exile. Walsingham writes in the midst of Wycliffite religious fissure and after Richard II's deposition and likely murder. Donegild, I would argue, perceives similar portents of religious fissure and political upheaval. The end of the tale confirms her suspicions: Northumberland is converted to Christianity, Alla dies, and Maurice

[50] Walsingham, *Chronica Maiora*, 170-1.

becomes more of a Roman ruler than an English one. Walsingham reads in the wild see omens of political unrest; in the errant boats he locates precursors of political and religious factions in England violently clashing and colliding. The fate Walsingham rues retrospectively, that of a nation in turmoil with a king murdered, is not unlike Northumberland in the wake of Alla's death at the conclusion of Chaucer's tale. That is to say, though Chaucer clearly condones Custance's conversion of sixth-century Northumberland, her arrival nonetheless leads to a succession of disasters like that following the death of the childless Anne and later murder of Richard II. At the same time, however, Chaucer's hagiographical romance imagines an England bolstered by the very imperial connections Richard sought in his bid to become Emperor.

Chaucer's additions to his version of the Custance narrative help shape a heroine who echoes Anne's queenship and engages with issues of religious fissure in late fourteenth-century England. One key difference between Chaucer and his sources, Trevet and Gower, is his decision to render Custance unable to speak Saxon upon her arrival in Northumberland, a move that not only amplifies his heroine's passivity, but also echoes Anne's linguistic limitations following her arrival in England. Chaucer's Custance cannot speak Saxon and only speaks a "maner Latyn corrupt" that is nonetheless understood by the Northumbrians. Anne most likely spoke French and Czech, and several scholars have suggested that her English ability may have been marginal at best even by the time of her death in 1394.[51] Yet, like Custance, Anne's linguistic limitations did not impede her role in England. In fact, both queens' lack of fluency in the native English tongue paradoxically renders each imperial princess more dazzling as a patroness of the English vernacular. In a miracle of xenoglossia, Custance is understood by the native English and so beloved by the Northumbrians that they "Wepen bothe yonge and olde in al that place"

[51] See e.g. Wallace, who argues that it is more important to see Anne as an imagined patroness rather than a real commissioner of works in the vernacular ("Anne of Bohemia, Queen of England, and Chaucer's Emperice"). See also Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 248.

when she is set adrift by order of Donegild's counterfeited letters (820).[52] In the same vein, Chaucer recognized Anne, despite her attachment to French and Czech, as a literary patroness in his English vernacular *Legend of Good Women*. Anne's fidelity to her native tongues enhanced rather than hindered her role as a Lollard figurehead in England. For Wyclif, Anne's possession of gospels in her own languages served as a quintessential example for championing his native tongue in England.

However, the most telling instance of Anne's influence on Chaucer's Custance is in Custance's connection to a vernacular "Britoun book" added in Chaucer's telling of the Constance legend. Though Chaucer, like Gower, generally consolidates and condenses Trevet's excessively detailed narrative, Chaucer again diverts from both sources in embellishing Custance's trial with Alla's presence and the summoning of a vernacular bible.[53] Whereas Trevet and Gower include the episode of Hermengyld's murder and the knight's false accusation against Custance, neither imagines Alla presiding over her trial and neither includes a British bible as an agential object of conversion and salvation. Chaucer, on the other hand, depicts Custance staging the conversion of the English in particularly heretical terms: she relies on a vernacular copy of the gospels understood by the Northumbrians, a copy which engenders their conversion with no mediation.[54] The priesthood of all believers, a central tenet of fifteenth-century Lollardy claiming that predestined laypeople could preach and convert without ordination or mediation, had its nascent roots in late fourteenth-century

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[52] See e.g. Christine Cooper, who ties Custance's xenoglossia in the tale to medieval saints' lives ("'But algates therby was she understonde': Translating Custance in Chaucer's Men of Law's Tale," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36.1 (2006), 27-38). For an alternative interpretation, see William Rothwell, "The Trilingual England of Geoffrey Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 16 (1994): 45-67, at 54, who proposes that Latin was a *lingua franca* in sixth-century England and imagines Chaucer's Custance as speaking a pigeon Latin.

[53] See e.g. Peter Nicholson, "'The Man of Law's Tale': What Chaucer Really Owed to Gower," at 160; Edward Block, "Originality, Controlling Purpose, and Craftsmanship in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*."

[54] See *Riverside Chaucer* for a concise catalog of Chaucer's principal additions to Trevet and Gower. Custance's trial before Alla (606-89) is Chaucer's invention.

Wycliffism. While Wyclif differed from later Lollards in distinguishing between lay clergy and ordained priests, he nonetheless in works like *De Potestate Pape* and *De Eucharistia* argues for the priesthood of predestinate lay people—men *and* women—who could perform the offices of priest.[55] The Man of Law repeatedly iterates that Custance is among the predestinate and so sanctions her actions sans priestly mediation: "God liste to shewe his wonderful miracle / In hire, for we sholde seen his myghty werkis" (477-8) and "the wyl of Crist was that she shoulde abyde" in England (511).

Custance's conversion of the English, staged in her performance of passivity, involves no ordained priestly mediator and instead rests solely on her predestinate lay status. Refusing to accede to the sexual advances of a Northumbrian knight, Custance is soon accused by the slighted Northumbrian knight of murdering the constable's wife, Hermengyld, found slain in her bed with a bloody knife. Custance, unable to rely on Northumbrian law for her salvation, relies on "A Britoun book, written with Evaungiles" (666) summoned by Alla presumably from "Walys," where Chaucer earlier notes "Alle Cristen folk been fled" (544, 541). That Alla summons the book rather than Custance foregrounds Chaucer's heroine's queenly passivity, and may initially seem odd given that the Northumbrians are pagan and have persecuted the native Christian subpopulation to the point of driving them from England. Yet, Custance instigates Alla's summoning of the book through her masterful performance of abject queenly passivity. Brought before the Northumbrian court, Custance enacts feminine subjection in front of Alla by throwing herself "doun on knees" (638) and publicly praying:

> Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
> Fro false blame, and thou, merciful mayde,
> Marie I meene, doghter to Seint Anne . . .
> If I be giltlees of this felonye,

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[55] John Wyclif, *De Eucharistia Tractatus Maior*, ed. Johann Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1892), 98-9; *Tractatus de Potestate Pope*, ed. Johann Loserth (London: Wyclif Society, 1907), cited in David Aers, *Faith, Ethics, and Church: Writing in England*, 1360-1409 (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), at 129.

My socour be, for ellis shal I dye! (639-44)

Custance's rhetoric professes passivity, and the imperial princess envisions herself, and encourages Alla to envision her, as a sexualized feminine victim and typological "doghter" of falsely accused women subject to the penetrating male gaze. Moreover, Custance specifically mentions St. Anne, linking her etymologically to the cult of St. Anne which Anne of Bohemia helped proliferate as queen. At the same time, Custance allies herself with orthodox Marian modes of queenship modeled on the Virgin Mary, framing herself as an intercessor rather than preacher in opposition to both a spiritual judgmental God, but also the earthly presiding judge, Alla.[56] Custance locates herself in a figurative family of literate pious women including St. Anne but also implying an affinity with Anne's contemporary namesake and Chaucer's patroness, Anne of Bohemia. Late fourteenth-century royal poets were already tying the queen consort to St. Anne: one of the recently discovered three verse eulogies of the queen consort, "Nobis natura femina," echoes both Maidstone's *Concordia* and the iconography of St. Anne in its attention to floral imagery.[57] For a late fourteenth-century audience, Chaucer's hagiographical framing of his victimized royal heroine—and, indeed, her hagiographical framing of herself—is not unlike Wycliff's hagiographical repurposing of Anne when he chides orthodox clergy who might call her a "heretic for such a reason [owning vernacular bibles] as this!"[58] In the tale, Custance's deft performance of Christian feminine passivity unmans Alla such that "from his eyen ran the water doun" (661), immediately after which he calls for the Britoun book. Thus, while Alla seems to be the primary agent coming to the defense of

[56] Much has been written about the queen's intercessory role, and quite a few scholars in the 1990's delineated some of the ways in which queenship was a performance modeled on the Virgin Mary. See e.g. Strohm; *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), points out that in even the Marian figuration of queenship limited late medieval queens: "as Queen of Heaven, she does not judge. . . She merely intercedes" (310).

[57] Van Dussen 29.

[58] Deanesley, *The Lollard Bible*, 248.

the calumniated princess, he is in fact, via Custance's adroit knowledge and performance of feminine abjection, manipulated through her passive proselytizing into summoning a copy of the gospels that he hopes against his own pagan religion will circumvent Northumbrian law and miraculously exonerate the alluring object of his gaze. Robert Dawson has similarly detected a subversive element to Custance's character, albeit within the context of aggressive colonization rather than queenship. He concludes that a "more sinister Custance" utilizes her status as daughter, wife, and Christian in a "rhetoric of victimization" for mass conversions and cultural takeover.[59] Later, when a mysterious divine voice proclaims the sins of the Northumbrians, they convert, tellingly without any sort of priestly mediation, and I would argue that Custance's performance has as much to do with the conversion as divine intervention. The disembodied voice of God primarily acts to confirm Custance's predestinate status, declaring "Thou hast desclaundred, giltelees, / The doghter of hooly chirche in heigh presence" (674-5) and rhetorically hinging the act of conversion not on the godly judge but on his lowly and merciful queenly intercessor.

Lollard accounts of Anne of Bohemia's religious devotion similarly highlight the English queen's abjection, thematically resonating with Chaucer's Custance's rhetoric of passivity. John Purvey's posthumous account of Anne's funeral stresses that Arundel, a well-known nemesis of Lollard heretics, was nonetheless so moved and unmanned that he praised the deceased young queen because "sche was so grete a lady and also an alien, and wolde so lowliche studiee in so vertuous bokis."[60] Though written after the *MLT*, the

[59] Dawson, "Custance in Context," 307, 299. Interestingly, though he acknowledges in a cultural materialist manner that Custance utilizes her affluent socioeconomic status, he chooses to address class in terms of aristocracy rather than queenship. See also Robertson, who notes that "Chaucer's representation of Constance's apparently passive submissiveness is more complex than it first seems" (161). Laurel L. Hendrix sees Custance as a currency to be invested in conversion, "'Pennannce profytable': The Currency of Custance in Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale," *Exemplaria* 6 (1994): 141-66, at 154. Heng similarly reads the seemingly benign Roman princess as a representation of "the dissemination of religious hegemony and the economic ascendency of the West (the westering of empire) as conversion" (198).

[60] Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, 437-45.

account evinces a similar vocabulary for talking about the queen's pacifying nature and astute performance of feminine abjection. Like Chaucer's King Alla, Purvey's fictionalized Arundel sets aside his native religious beliefs on account of the queen's expert performance of feminine abjection amplified by her status as foreign queen consort. The "adversitee" (654) Custance faces at court as a foreigner is like that faced by Anne, herself an "alien" who simultaneously becomes the more "lowliche" because of her twice removed 'otherness' as woman and as foreigner. Purvey's emphasis on Anne's "lowliche" nature rhetorically aligns her with the common Lollard and laity, implying that they too can come to a greater understanding of God through diligent study of translated Bibles, without priestly mediation. Like Custance's carefully performed kneeling, which evokes "swich compassioun" (659) "Among the peple" (622) and even from the king, Anne's "lowliche" performance of religious devotion is mentioned to elicit sympathy from Purvey's readers. He reports Anne could turn even the archbishop Arundel, a masculine authority of religious opposition—not entirely unlike Alla who, we assume, played a role in driving the indigenous Christians into Wales—into an advocate for Lollard translations and religious devotion without mediation.[61]

Custance's performance under the voyeuristic gaze of Alla and his Northumbrian court bears comparison with Anne's portrayal as the sexualized Biblical queen, Esther, in the celebratory *Concordia,* lauding Anne's successful intercession in 1392 on behalf of London. Richard Maidstone typologically frames Anne as the Biblical Queen Esther:

> "The queen will be able to speak on behalf of her grateful people:
> What a man does not dare, the woman alone can.
> As Esther stood fearfully before the judgment seat of Ahasuerus,
> She made void the proclamations which he himself first ordained.
> There is no doubt that the Almighty gave you as the companion of this kingdom

[61] The likelihood that Anne primarily spoke Czech and French does not necessarily mean that she did not commission and/or read works in English. See e.g. Deanesley, who takes the stand that Anne probably did have Purvey's translations in English: she elaborates, "A princess who read the Latin text could certainly, with license, read the English gospels, with the doctors' exposition on them: for a professional scribe, or middle class Lollard, to use the bare text at will was a different matter" (*The Lollard Bible,* 280).

for this: May you be like Esther for your people."[62] (441-46)

Situating Anne's intercession in the topos of religious persecution, Maidstone compares the queen to the Jewish Esther, whose Biblical intercession prevents the slaughter of the Jews at the hands of the Persian king, Ahasueris. Like Custance, Esther's life is in danger as she pleads her Jewish people in front of a pagan king, and her bravery in the face of death and performance of feminine abjection leads him to "void the proclamations" made against the Jewish people. Similarly, Custance's ploy at the Northumbrian court unmans Alla such that he reneges on driving out the Christian subpopulation and retrieves the "Britoun book" to prove not only her innocence, but also the truth of her religion, to his people. Though an imperial foreigner much like Anne, Custance nonetheless becomes a figurehead for the early British Christians driven out by Alla's regime, a queen whose intimate foreignness—her imperial ties recall the myth of Brutus and the Northumbrians' Roman ancestors—amplifies her position as queenly intercessor. Recent critics like Thomas and Taylor have similarly read Anne's performance of intercessory queenship as brave and politically apt: Taylor concludes that "in her numerous acts of intercession Anne appears to have followed an analogous pattern, achieving a degree of freedom and self-expression within the social constraints of chivalric culture."[63] Fascinatingly, Maidstone conceives of Anne in terms of the queen's religious agency, and while Esther is a common topos for depicting late medieval queenship, Maidstone's decision to

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[62] See Richard Maidstone, *Concordia: Facta inter Regem Riccardum II et Civitatem Londonie*, ed. and trans. Charles Roger Smith (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972): 213-15; qtd. in Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, 109. The original Latin reads:
"Grata loqui pro gente sua regina valebit:
Quod vir non audet, sola potest mulier.
Hester ut Assueri terpidans stetis ante tribunal,
Irritat dicta que prius ipse tulit.
Nec dubium quin ob hoc vos omnipotens dedit huius
Participem regni-sitis ut Hester ei." (213-5)
Strohm engages the poem significantly as a literary model of late medieval intercessory queenship, while this essay focuses on its religious elements.

[63] Taylor 99.

foreground Esther's religious role in the *Concordia* suggests an awareness of Anne's importance as a figurehead of English religious reform and as a foreign queen consort, there to plead with a powerful king for the deliverance of her people and their religious autonomy.

Chaucer's seemingly enigmatic description of the "Britoun book" in fact recommends it as a copy of the gospels translated into the Breton vernacular, a vernacular gospel not unlike those historically championed by Anne of Bohemia in the political climate in which Chaucer's tale was composed. "Britoun" (666) refers to the Breton vernacular, spoken in the Western region of Britain in the early Brythonic community.[64] Chaucer acknowledges Christian influence in Western Britain, as his Man of Law notes "To Walys fledde the Christyanytee / Of olde Britons dwellynge in this ile" (544-5). This "Britoun book," presumably, is an artifact from the remaining Christian strongholds in Wales, written in vernacular Breton. Curiously, however, no historical records support the claim that early medieval Celtic Bibles were translated into the vernacular from Latin. Thus, the more likely explanation is that Chaucer superimposes fourteenth-century Wycliffite concerns over Biblical translation onto the distant past. That Chaucer inserts the British Bible where both Trevet and Gower omit this object of vernacular religious controversy evinces the poet's engagement with issues of vernacular translation and fourteenth-century Wycliffism.[65] Chaucer invents the "Britoun book," indicating a conscious attempt to engage with issues of vernacular religion. Importantly, Chaucer appears to retroactively attribute engagement with vernacular Bibles to the early apostolic Christian community, giving the contemporary Wycliffite vernacular movement a historical precedent, at the core of English Christianity no less.

Furthermore, the Man of Law's "Britoun book" is "written with evaungiles," the

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[64] See *Middle English Compendium*, "Britoun," adj. (1) Celtic; (2) Breton.

[65] Nicholson 160.

"evaungiles" meaning of course the four gospels of the New Testament. Of import to the religious controversy of late fourteenth-century Lollardy, the gospels were often the subject of Lollard translations like those which John Purvey posthumously attributed to Anne of Bohemia.[66] As of yet, very little has been written on the "Britoun book," which is astounding considering it may very well be the most dynamic contribution to Chaucer's account. What little exists situates the book in the tale's sixth-century British context. A few years ago, Karl Steel opened up the mystery of the "Britoun book" for critical inquiry in a post on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's blog, "In the Middle," sparking a significant and lively discussion of the nature and origins of the book in the tale.[67] While entirely convincing arguments, these interpretations locate the glossed book as an artifact set firmly in the sixth-century setting of the tale and overlook the book's status potential as a displaced fourteenth-century Lollard gospel. Elizabeth Robertson is singular in entertaining any possible fourteenth-century heretical implications of the book: she asks, "Is this a version of the Gospels into british? Given the controversy concerning English Bibles in Chaucer's own day, the presence of this 'underground' Bible reinforces Constance's mysterious power."[68] Robertson begins to suggest what this essay aims to tease out; namely, that Custance's performance of abject passivity and use of a New Testament in the vernacular resonates more with late fourteenth-century Wycliffism than with pre-Christian sixth-century Northumberland.

While the *MLT* deftly engages with issues of Lollardy under the cover of a story

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[66] See *Middle English Compendium*, "evaungile," n. (1) the message or the teachings of Jesus Christ; also, the record of his teachings embodied in the four Gospels; (2) a book containing the Gospels.

[67] Steel posits that the "Britoun book" could allude to both Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the King's of Britain*, which mentions "a certain very ancient book" detailing the reigns of English kings from Brutus and serving as a source for Monmouth's work; and Deuteronomy, the "book of the law" rediscovered in 2 Kings 22 in Jerusalem. Cohen, on the other hand, has contended that Chaucer's "Britoun book" may be an indictment of the early Anglo-Saxons' failure to thoroughly proselytize England. Karl Steel, "Weekend Fun? Reading Alla's Britoun Book," In the Middle (3/6/09); J. J. Cohen, "Britoun Books, Written with Evaungiles, Again," In the Middle (3/21/09).

[68] Robertson, "Nonviolent Christianity," 337.

about a sixth-century queen, in the Epilogue to that tale, Chaucer makes one of the very few direct references in the *Canterbury Tales* to Lollardy, and this reference needs to be reexamined in light of the possibility that the "Britoun book" could be a Wycliffite bible.[69] After asking the Parson to tell his tale next, the Host is chided by the Parson for using God's name in vain, a charge that leads the incited Host to exclaim, "I smelle a Lollere in the wynd . . . This Lollere heer wil prechen us somwhat" (1173, 1177). The Shipman's comments further build on the Host's accusation and address issues of Lollard glossing and translation central to both Anne of Bohemia, whose alleged English Bibles were glossed with exegetical Lollard commentaries, and the narrative of the *MLT*. The Shipman interrupts the Host to insist that the Parson will not tell his tale; he will "no gospel glosen here ne teche" (1180).

While many read this epilogue as somewhat disjointed, in light of Custance's female preaching and heretical reliance on gospels in the vernacular, the accusation of Lollardy hints at several larger issues in the tale illuminated by the religiously fractured milieu of late fourteenth-century England. The epilogue in fact provides Chaucer's readers with a hermeneutic for interpreting the *MLT* and its religious stakes. Tellingly, the Parson's imagined "gospel glosen/glossed gospels" is not the first encountered in the *MLT*: the "Britoun book" functions similarly as a translated or glossed gospel. As the most pious and least lampooned pilgrim, the Parson demonstrates that even the most orthodox pilgrim could potentially own a Wycliffite Bible, perhaps a point Chaucer thought to make in defense of the many members of his coterie of orthodox readers who owned vernacular Wycliffite bibles. The paranoia pervading the Epilogue delineates and distinguishes safe religious practices from dangerous heretical acts: one may own gospels and bibles in the vernacular—and Wycliffite bibles did spread to the households of

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[69] Among the few references to Lollardy: the Host calls the Parson a "Lollere" twice, the Wife of Bath quotes vernacular scripture, and the *CT* are replete with thinly veiled critiques on the clergy. Oddly, nothing has yet been said about the Lollard potential of Custance's "Britoun book."

otherwise orthodox Englishmen including a number of Chaucer's coterie—without risking the charge of heresy. Custance can employ a temporally queered Wycliffite Bible in the conversion of Northumbria's populace, just as Anne of Bohemia brought vernacular bibles to England and fostered the spread of the cult of St. Anne. In the end, Custance becomes the Christian mother of the English, just as Anne became Anne the Good and Anne the Wise.

The Itinerant "Doghter of Hooly Chirche"

In addition to instigating the conversion of the Northumbrians utilizing an English Bible, Custance proselytizes without priestly mediation. Well before her trial in front of Alla, indeed immediately upon her arrival in Northumbria, Custance disseminates Christianity. Taken in from the elements by the pagan constable, Custance first converts Hermengyld, the constable's wife. Later in the narrative, while Custance and Hermengyld take a walk, they encounter a crypto-Christian blind man who demands that Hermengyld return his sight "In name of Crist" (561). Hermengyld cowers in silence for fear of how her husband may punish her, but Custance incites her newly converted friend to act contrarily and perform a miracle: "Custance made hir boold, and bad hire wirche / The wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche" (566-7). Chaucer imagines his royal heroine in particularly Wycliffite terms safely transferred to an earlier apostolic context. As critics like Van Dussen and Cole have demonstrated, late fourteenth and early fifteenth century heretical proceedings dealt largely with charges of public preaching rather than with issues of Wycliffite vernacularity and translation practices.[70] Notably, Chaucer seems to privilege in the *MLT* a type of Christianity more aligned with the early apostolic Church freed from the confines of the Latin language and priestly mediation typical of fourteenth-century English Christianity.[71] Late fourteenth-century Lollards likewise held

[70] Van Dussen, 5; Cole, 83, notes that "English was not necessarily conducive to heretical thought."

[71] Robertson, "Nonviolent Christianity," reads Custance's Christianity in the *MLT* as invoking the early Church, which was far different from the more institutionalized fourteenth-century form of Christianity (340).

up the early apostolic church as a model from which the Catholic Church had strayed. William Kamowski, for example, notes obvious similarities in Chaucer and Wyclif's critiques of the contemporary Church and argues that both romanticize the early Church, which performed true "miracles" as opposed to the trickery inherent in characters like the Pardoner.[72]

Chaucer and his Man of Law condone Custance's "boold" action in calling Hermengyld a sisterly "doghter of [God's] chirche," suggesting that her active conversions of the English are orthodox and rely on basic religious truths, unlike the falsified relics and rhetorically sophisticated sermons the Pardoner utilizes. Chaucer seems to suggest that even as a laywoman, Custance can act in some sense as an ordained priest without mediation. While the Lollard notion of a priesthood of believers solidified in the early fifteenth-century after the *MLT*, Wycliffites promulgated in the later fourteenth-century the underpinnings of this belief, suggesting that laypeople and women had as much right to preach and convert as ordained priests, provided they were among the elect. In his *Tractatus de Potestate Pope*, for example, Wyclif proposes that "Omnes sancti viri et femine membra Christi sunt sacerdotes" (All of the men and women who are sanctified members in Christ are priests).[73] Custance and Hermengyld's status as "doghter[s] of his chirche" confirms their position among the predestinate and accredits Custance's proselytizing. Moreover, Chaucer's language buttresses Custance's actions with a long lineage of female saints and martyrs who were also daughters of the church.

The pagan Hermengyld's fear is ironically orthodox by late fourteenth-century standards, as she suspects this foreign woman who boldly proselytizes without the mediation of a priest, even though Custance does so in an England devoid of priests.

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[72] William Kamowski, "Chaucer and Wyclif: God's Miracles Against the Clergy's Magic," *The Chaucer Review* 37.1 (2002): 5-25, at 6; see also Andrew Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," *Speculum* 77.4 (2002): 1128-67, who argues that Chaucer borrows from The Wycliffite *General Prologue* in his prologue to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*.

[73] John Wyclif, *Tractatus de Potestate Pope* 312.

Custance's proselytizing with no mediation qualifies as preaching, a heresy nascent in late fourteenth-century Lollardy. Though Chaucer emphasizes Custance's pious reticence, in fact, Custance's actions might have read as heretical to staunchly orthodox fourteenth-century English readers, especially in light of late medieval associations of female evangelism with Lollardy.[74] Chaucer's *MLT* is curiously devoid of the trappings of late medieval orthodox Christianity; in both her trial at Alla's court and her emboldening of Hermengyld, Custance acts with no priestly mediation. The Northumbria of the MLT is not the historical pre-Christian England, however; the Man of Law mentions and interpolates into the narrative recusant Christians who we are told fled to Wales. While Chaucer includes the blind recusant Christian, priests do not mediate at all in the tale, reflecting Lollard distrust of the priesthood and the contemporary fourteenth-century Lollard belief in the priesthood of all believers; that is, the belief that laymen could act as unordained priests.[75]

Faced with the spectacle of Custance and his wife conversing with the crypto-Christian blind man, the constable is unnerved and "weex abasshed" (569). Yet, far from passively acquiescing to her role as traded commodity in a foreign and pagan land,

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[74] Robertson, for example, proposes that Chaucer uses a sixth-century setting and a foreign Roman princess to voice concerns such as Lollard female preaching contemporaneous with the tale's composition ("Nonviolent Christianity," 148). Though Wycliffites denigrated the cult of the Virgin Mary and often saw women as more susceptible to adultery, orthodox men associated Lollardy with female evangelism and preaching. See e.g. Margaret Aston, "Lollard Women Priests?," *Lollards and Reformers* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), 49-70, who argues that Lollardy afforded women greater access and compiles accusations from men such as Henry Knighton and the poet, Thomas Hoccleve, that Englishwomen in late fourteenth century England were reading Wycliffite bibles, preaching, and debating scripture. Importantly, little evidence exists that women were active as preachers in the Wycliffite movement. Rather, this essay simply points out that orthodox clergy and laypeople imagined Lollard women as preachers and evangelists. For a study which complicates the assumption that heterodox religion offered medieval women greater religious opportunity, see i.e. Shannon McSheffrey, *Gender & Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

[75] See e.g. Hudson, *The Premature Reformation*, 99. The trial of layman Walter Brut brought these issues to a head in the years 1391-93 immediately preceding the likely composition date for Chaucer's *MLT*. In this trial in Hereford, William Woodford examined Brut concerning his radical beliefs that women could preach and that laymen could act as priests. Importantly, as Hudson stresses, fourteenth-century Lollards must be distinguished from later early modern Reformists, who believed more generally in the priesthood of all believers. For Lollards, on the other hand, "'priesthood of those predestined' is more accurate" (325).

Custance uses the opportunity to convert the astonished constable:

> Custance answerde, "Sire, it is Cristes might,
> That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare."
> And so ferforth she gan oure lay declare
> That she the constable, er that it was eve
> Converteth, and on Crist made hym bileve. (570-4)

Whereas before Chaucer avoids flagrantly depicting a Christian woman preaching in the tale, assigning the miracles to God even when actuated by Custance, such as when "Jhesu" converts Hermengyld through Custance's witness, here a slippage in pronouns reveals Custance as the agent of conversion as "*she* gan oure lay declare" and "*she* the constable . . . Converteth" (572, 573-4). Yet, as in Custance's later performance of feminine abjection at Alla's court during her trial, she masks her agency under "Cristes might," and the Man of Law hinges her conversion of the constable "on Crist."

Custance's language reflects not only the rhetoric of medieval female mystics like Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen, but also Wycliffe's negation of priestly mediation in favor of the dominion of the predestinate. A priest was not necessary, Wyclif posits, since all acts—including those such as excommunication, confession, indulges—are given by God and not by a priest. In the thirty-sixth chapter of his *De Civili Dominio*, for example, Wycliff writes that "it is not possible for a man to give another something legitimately unless God grants it to him."[76] The earlier conversion scene between Custance and Hermengyld similarly blurs the line between predestinate agent and divine grant: through Custance's "orisons, with many a bitter teere . . . Jhesu hath converted [Dame Hermengyld] thurgh his grace" (537-8) Custance's rhetoric of passivity negotiates the tricky play between passive subject and acting agent, here played out in Chaucer's web of pronouns and prepositions. Her passing of this "lay" to

[76] Johann Wycliffe, *Tractatus De Civili Dominio: Liber Primus*, ed. Reginald L. Poole (London: Trubner, 1885). The original Latin reads: "similiter non est possibile hominem dare donum Dei legitime recipienti nisi Deus ipsum prius donaverit" (291).

Hermengyld represents a fostering of unmediated religious literacy among women, showing her that feminine abjection and passivity can afford women a mode of subversive but active agency.[77]

Custance's persistent victimization and sexualization in the tale—and her own words—align her with virgin martyrs and female saints. Custance, like many female saints, faces a trial in which her sexual purity is tested and miraculously proven. The knight's accusation of murder after all rests on Custance's refusal to acquiesce to his sexual advances. Yet, Custance's saintly persona goes beyond the chaste narratives of female saints venerated in medieval England. Custance names Susanna in her trial, choosing one of the most sexualized and voyeuristically calumniated biblical women. Susanna, unlike female saints popular in England like Cecilia and Margaret of Antioch, was married. Custance frames herself thus not as a virgin martyr, but rather as a wife. The Man of Law similarly sexualizes his hagiographical heroine not as a virgin, but rather as a wife and mother. As a hybrid of romance and hagiographical elements, the *MLT* endorses marriage as a model for femininity, a position at odds with virginal female saints' lives but reflective of Lollard philosophies of femininity and human sexuality. Bound for marriage and queenship, Custance's journey is predicated on her circulation in the marriage market, not her voluntary removal from it. Lollards inherently distrusted late medieval vows of chastity and attacked the primacy of female chastity, as the Lollard attack on the sexual depravity of nuns in convents in the eleventh of the Twelve Conclusions demonstrates.

Whereas female saints' lives allow women a special place within which they can perform miraculous feats typically unavailable to Christian women, this religious power is ultimately hinged on their virginity.[78] Queens, on the other hand, derived power from

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[77] Custance's attention to strengthening the power of women here perhaps echoes Anne of Bohemia's activism in promulgating the cult of St. Anne in England.

[78] Hendrix reads Custance in terms of female mystics like Julian of Norwich ("Pennannce profytable," 142).

sexual acts, holding sway over a king in her intercessions which often occurred in the royal bedchambers, and through providing the king with an heir. As L.O. Aranye Fradenburg has surmised, the distinguishing factor in queenship is often "an extraordinary body or sexuality."[79] Lollards, on the other hand, privileged marriage, so choosing a queen made logical sense, especially since a queen's power and reputation was predicated on her sexuality, which in turn influenced her ability to intercede and ideally provided the kingdom with a male heir.[80] Queenship scholars have elaborated on the sexualized customs of late medieval queenship, including intercessions performed in the queen's bedchambers. Custance's journey is facilitated by a unique admixture of her sexuality and virtue—she is renown "as wel hir goodnesse as beautee" (158)—and the Man of Law in his description immediately frames her not as a saintly woman whose virginity must be preserved but as a capable woman who he "wolde she were of al Europe the queene" (161). Even before she is circulated through the marriage market, Chaucer and his Man of Law clarify early that their destination for Custance is queenship rather than a nunnery. Chaucer's Custance ultimately privileges sex and marriage over chastity, as the Man of Law emphasizes when she weds Alla:

> They goon to bedde, as it was skile and right,
> For thogh that wyves be ful hooly thynges,
> They moste take in pacience at nyght . . .
> And laye a lite hir hoolynesse aside,
> As for the tyme—it may no bet bitide. (708-10, 713-4)

Divine providence legitimates Custance's sexuality, as "Crist ymaad Custance a queene"

Cooper ties the miracle of Custance's xenoglossia, the ability of the Northumbrians to understand her Latin, to saints' lives. However, neither critic addresses the problem of Custance's sexuality which is tied to her queenship.

[79] L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Women & Sovereignty* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 2.

[80] In fact, Lollards specifically attacked the chastity of nuns in accusations of sexual depravity made against convents which culminated in the eleventh of the Twelve Conclusions, written in 1395 shortly after the composition of *MLT*. Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (Minneapolis, 1997), explores why the contained sexuality of nuns in particular may have been threatening to religious reformers.

(693), a decision that seemingly contradicts the tale's aims as a hagiographic romance but reflects accurately Lollard attacks on female chastity as well as late medieval models of queenship.[81] Custance's liminal tightrope act between Christian saintly heroine and proto-Lollard queen embodies not only the genre identity crisis of the tale, which is often classified as both hagiography and romance, but also the curious position occupied by Anne of Bohemia as a queen associated with a particular virtue but also the beloved wife of Richard II.

I would like to conclude by suggesting that through his framing of Custance as a sympathetically heretical queen, Chaucer champions a model of active queenship and Christian piety hinged on the performance of feminine abjection. Whereas Strohm concludes that queenly intercession became the primary function for queens whose roles were increasingly relegated to the symbolic in late medieval Europe, the fourteenth-century simultaneously ushered in queenly figures like Joan of Kent and Isabella of France who managed to achieve, to both the delight and chagrin of their contemporaries, a notable degree of autonomy despite their occasional disregard for the limited role of intercessor.[82] Anne of Bohemia displays this ambiguity: a praised intercessor who interceded successfully on behalf of Londoners in 1392, Anne for key figures in the Wycliffite movement embodied a positive model of queenly agency inextricable from Wycliffite issues of vernacularity. While this essay does not contest Chaucer's status as either orthodox or heretical, I would argue that Chaucer, like his heroine, balances orthodoxy with subversive agency. Recent scholarship has explored the ways in which increased contact with Bohemia created a largely unpoliced literary exchange with English authors after the Blackfriars Council of 1378.[83] The Lollard movement in late

[81] Robertson, "Nonviolent Christianity," similarly notes the categorical confusion of *MLT*'s secularized saint in this passage, but she attributes it to the hermeneutics of difference (336), whereas this essay locates the seeming contradiction in Custance's status as queen.

[82] See Strohm, "Queens as Intercessors," 95-6.

[83] See e.g. Craig Fehrman, who problematizes Chaucer's largely recognized status as orthodox father of

fourteenth-century England had permeated the English court. Thus, Chaucer and Wyclif shared a similar readership, among them many of the Lollard knights, Anne, Ralph Strode, John of Gaunt, Thomas of Lancaster, and Henry IV. Cole adduces that Chaucer's writing—indeed, English literature as a whole—incorporated Wycliffite concepts, and contends that Wycliffite vernacularity and hermeneutical practices were particularly widespread in England and not necessarily treated as heretical.[84] While this essay draws some of the same conclusions as Cole has about Chaucer's vernacular Wycliffite proclivities, it expands an understanding of Chaucer's response to Wycliffism to Chaucer's responses to gender and queenship. In the *MLT*, Chaucer addresses Wycliffite concerns through the lens of late fourteenth-century queenship in an increasingly international and cosmopolitan literary milieu.

Ultimately, the *MLT* is as much about queenship as it is about heresy. Chaucer's deft displacement of contemporary religious controversy onto the imaginary English Christian past allows him safely to tie this heretical interpretation of Anne of Bohemia to his Custance. In re-evaluating Anne's role as queen and literary patroness, this essay distinguishes between real power and cultural import. Importantly, in exploring how and why Anne was appropriated by Lollard doctors and polemicists, I conclude neither that Anne was a closet Lollard nor subversive heretical queen. Rather, I suggest that in dismissing Anne as a nonentity, historians and literary critics have overlooked the complex political and religious milieu surrounding the young queen which made her particularly ripe for cultural appropriation and imbued her with considerable cultural currency. Part of the reluctance to treat Anne seriously may stem from the romanticized impulse to imagine Chaucer as completely independent and freed from any political

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English literature ("Did Chaucer Read the Wycliffite Bible?," *The Chaucer Review* 42.2 (2007): 111-38). Cole concludes that "vernacular Wycliffite texts were circulating among this group [Chaucer's circle] and available to the poet" (80). Yet, Cole offers a more nuanced reading in arguing that Chaucer did not act heretically in championing English vernacularity and Wycliffite translation practices.

[84] Cole, 84, concludes that Chaucer "could explore Wycliffite vernaculatiry with impunity and interest."

obligations. As Andrew Taylor conjectures, "the repudiation of Anne and her authority has been closely tied to the construction of Chaucer as a self-sufficient author."[85] Yet, Wyclif and his followers took Anne seriously, and England took her seriously as a tie to the Holy Roman Empire. Ann's heretical appropriation would continue after her death from plague and after the *MLT*, when Wycliffites would promulgate the legend that Anne herself had commissioned a copy of English gospel glossed with Lollard commentary. Anne's posthumous reputation would develop from these Lollard constructions, culminating in her erroneous early modern reputation as a proto-Reformer, a "godly lady" who "deserveth all commendation" for her extraordinary devotion to vernacular bibles.[86]

In reading Anne as informing Chaucer's Custance, I mean to suggest that Chaucer took Anne seriously also, far beyond the ridiculed Alceste with whom she is most often associated. Anne's marriage resulted from a conglomeration of tumultuous factors including the Western Schism, which spurned England's alliance with Rome and created a rift with France; the Blackfriars' Council which brought private theological debates at Oxford into the public eye and fashioned Lollardy as a threat; and finally England's increasing desire to participate in a cosmopolitan and international cultural and intellectual trade in which Prague was a central hub. These issues—religious fissure, cultural conflict and exchange, and the negotiation of national identity in the face of change—inform the core narrative of Chaucer's *MLT*. In this important period of cultural and political development in England, Custance and Anne begin to coalesce: as international arbiters of culture, religion, and exchange, both represent something simultaneously dangerous for and beneficial to an England faced with inevitable change in a period of inevitable internationalization.

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[85] Taylor 96.

[86] John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or *TAMO* (1570 edition) (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011), Book 5, 626. Available from: http//www.johnfoxe.org [Accessed: 01.03.11].

CHAPTER THREE
MARIA REGINA AND THE PROJECT OF DISPLACEMENT IN THE VERNON MANUSCRIPT'S "THE CHILD SLAIN BY JEWS"

By the late Middle Ages the Virgin Mary's queenship had become a key component of medieval Mariology. Originating in early medieval Byzantium in the fifth century, the 'Maria Regina' (Mary the Queen) trope—called "Theotokos" or 'Godbearer' by the Byzantines—gained new currency in late medieval Europe.[1] Pope Innocent III, responsible for the anti-Semitic racial segregation laws in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), regaled the Virgin as 'Empress of Angels' and 'Queen of Heaven' in rhetoric designed to catalyze the Fourth Crusade. Meanwhile, the 'Salve Regina' (Hail Queen), now at the height of its popularity, reverberated from the walls of churches and cloisters throughout England. High and late medieval art reflected this fascination with Mary's queenship, incorporating the event of Mary's heavenly coronation and often depicting her as a queen, crowned and seated on a throne.[2] While many high medieval references to 'Maria Regina' fell under trope of 'Regina Coeli' (Queen of Heaven), late medieval clergymen, illuminators, and authors increasingly conceived of the Virgin Mary as Queen over earthly matters as well.[3] Late medieval English poets referred to the Virgin Mary severally as "Quene of heven and empress of helle," and "quene of paradis, / Of heven, of

[1] John Carmi Parsons, "The Pregnant Queen as Counsellor and the Construction of Motherhood," in John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Medieval Mothering* (New York: Garland, 1998): 39-61, at 42; Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 63; Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in late Medieval and Early modern Literature and Popular Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 50.

[2] See e.g. Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Casell, 2000), 33; Rubin 196, 306. Rubin focuses art historical discussion on the Romanesque facade of Poitiers cathedral (c. 1250), which depicts the Virgin Mary as "Maria Regina" wearing a crown and flanked by angels bearing crowns (plate 13).

[3] The 'Regina Coeli' was itself a prayer sung throughout Easter week regularly until the high Middle Ages in England. See e.g. Rubin 288. Eadmer of Canterbury typifies Marian compositions of the high Middle Ages in lauding Mary yet distinguishing between her earthly and heavenly functions as "mistress of the world and empress of the universe" (*Tractatus de Conceptione Sanctae Mariae*, ed. H. Thurston and P.T. Slater (1904), cited in Boss 1).

erthe, of all that is."[4] As the cult of the Virgin Mary grew exponentially, late medieval writers and artists humanized and sexualized the Virgin Mary, drawing her closer to Europe's many earthly queens and rendering her a personable intercessor and agent of piety.[5]

The English especially latched onto the idea of Mary as queen, and increasingly drew parallels between the ideal queenship of the Virgin Mary and the earthly queenship of England's queen consorts.[6] Some imagined her as 'mater regis' (mother of the King) while others likened the Virgin to the biblical peaceweaving queen, Esther, subject to the whims of a capricious king. As the Kentish priest William of Shoreham extols the Virgin in a c.1320 poem: "You are Esther, that sweet thing, / And Xerxes, the rich king, / Has chosen you for his wife."[7] European rites of queenship like the queen's royal entry and staged acts of intercession borrowed heavily from Marian tropes. Late medieval English queen's entry pageants contained particularly Marian themes, and paired scenes of secular queenly intercession with spiritual Marian intercession, stressing the analogy between Mary's heavenly intercession as Church and bride of Christ between God and man and the queen's role as earthly intercessor or bride (*sponsa*) between a judicious king and his royal subjects.[8] Thus, in intercessory proceedings such as Eleanor of

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[4] "Salve Regina," *Middle English Lyrics: Authoritative Texts Crtiical and Historical Background Perspectives on Six Poems*, ed. Maxwell S. Luria & Richard L. Hoffman (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 171, line 2; William of Shoreham, <untitled poem 195>, *Middle English Lyrics*, 185, line 7-8.

[5] Rubin, for example, notes that visual depictions of Mary's breasts became increasingly realistic and erotic in late medieval art, as opposed to "de-eroticized" high medieval Marian art (32).

[6] For example, Gary Waller's study of the Virgin Mary, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Popular Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), suggests French Marian late medieval plays emphasize Mary's typical femininity and humanity more, whereas English plays are notable in including divine episodes like the coronation of the Queen of Heaven (65).

[7] William of Shoreham, *The Poems of William of Shoreham, ab. 1320 Vicar of Chart-Sutton*, ed. M. Konrath (London, 1902), 128, lines 43-6, cited in Rubin 214.

[8] See e.g. John Carmi Parsons, "Ritual and Symbol in the English Medieval Queenship to 1500," in *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 60-77, 65. Parsons further contents that entry pageants mirrored Marian descriptions of the coronation of the Virgin in

Castile's intercession in St. Albans in 1275, the English relied on Marian devotional rhetoric to implore the English queen consort to act as an intercessor. In this instance they analogized between their hope in salvation through the Queen of Heaven and Eleanor of Castile's mercy and pity. To wit, the English queen absorbed Marian imperial qualities for her all of her English subjects.

The English conception of Mary enfolded the tropes of Mary as Queen and Mary as 'mater regis' (king's mother). By the fourteenth-century, Marian maternity and intercession had become key components stressed in the queen's coronation oath.[9] Adept late medieval English queens knew how to exploit both tropes, and performed a variety of charitable acts, distributing alms to the poor as a maternal and merciful figure as well as interceding on behalf of maligned English subjects. As John Carmi Parsons elaborates,

> The poor projected onto the king's wife their hopes for mercy and invested her with the clement and gracious image of the Virgin Mother; for the nobility, the submissive, interceding Queen of Heaven implied the queen's subjection to her husband and legitimized a role in which her power and influence were exercised for the benefit of the realm and its inhabitants.[10]

Maternal aspects of Marian devotion factored more into late medieval modes of English queenship, when chroniclers praised queen consorts like Philippa of Hainault for acts of intercession hinged on the queen's maternity, as Froissart—though falsely—praises Philippa of Hainault for kneeling down before the king "durement enchainte" (extremely pregnant) on behalf of the burghers of Calais in 1347.[11] Royal entries similarly emphasized the maternal role of the English queen consort, who was expected to provide England with an earthly heir much in the same way Mary redeemed mankind through

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crowning the English queen consort (65).

[9] Parsons 42.

[10] Parsons 66.

[11] Jean Froissart, *Chroniques de Jean Froissart*, trans. Siméon Luce (Paris: La Société de L'Histoire de France, 1873), at 62.

birthing Christ.[12]

On the other hand, Mary's role as intercessor or *virgo mediatrix* came to define the queen's increasingly symbolic role in English politics, a role hinged on acts of intercession.[13] When late medieval queens like the She-Wolves of France, Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou, usurped masculine power out of necessity, they broke with Marian models of intercessory queenship and their foreignness, a boon in creating international ties in marriage, morphed into something monstrous. When late medieval English queen consorts like Isabella and Margaret went 'bad,' the nation suffered from their intimately foreign infection. Anne of Bohemia, subject of my second chapter, became strongly associated with the Virgin in both her alleged chastity—in Anne's case a natural defense of her inability to produce an heir—and Marian symbolism through her association with flowers and positive reputation as intercessor. For Richard II, Anne's imperial connections as daughter of the Roman Emperor naturally reflected Christian inheritance of the kingdom of Heaven. The Wilton Diptych, an amazingly rich artwork commissioned to reflect Richard's imperial ambitions, unites Marian with Bohemian imperial aspirations in the two panels. In the left panel, Richard occupies the foreground buttressed by King Edmund, Kind Edward the Confessor, and St. John the Baptist, and he kneels and prays to a queenly Mary in the right panel, the Virgin holding the Christ child flanked by courtly angels. As Rubin, who discusses the diptych, has noted, Mary served as a model of royal aspirations and queenliness for late medieval English kings like Richard II, Henry V, and Henry VI.[14]

Nevertheless, aspects of the Virgin Mary fell outside of her construction as a beneficent intercessor and godbearer. Because she was venerated in England as both

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[12] See e.g. Parsons 67.

[13] See e.g. Adrienne Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England* (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2010), 104.

[14] Rubin 285-8. Rubin calls Mary "a companion to kings" (288).

queen and mother and increasingly humanized in the late medieval period, Mary became a fraught and contradictory figure whose sanctity was at odds with her status as a woman. Drawing on classical medical theories which legitimized gender hierarchies and misogynistic thinking, medieval thinkers, polemicists, and physicians saw the female body as inherently monstrous and women as monstrous, abnormal and undeveloped males. Aristotelian humoral medical theory which remained commonly accepted throughout the medieval period posited that females resulted from a colder, wetter generation than males. Lacking sufficient heat, that is, women's bodies could not develop, the womb and testicles could not drop, and blood could not reach sufficient heat to be transformed into that Aristotelian pinnacle of bodily fluids: semen. As Aristotle wrote in his *De generatione animalium*, "A woman is as it were an *infertile* male; the female, in fact, is female on account of an inability of a sort, viz., it lacks the power to concoct semen out of the final state of nourishment . . . because of the coldness of its nature . . . ."[15] For Aristotle, as for most eurotophobic Western thinkers, the state of being a woman was in and of itself a condition of monstrosity, a "deformity."[16] The womb became the seat of this abjection, and attracted the ire of medieval thinkers spanning the Jewish-Christian divide. According to medieval thinkers, women, lacking properly purified blood and formed in less than ideal conditions, needed to purge their superfluous humors through the process of menstruation and Mary, as a woman, was no different. Alexandra Cuffel elaborates,

> Of all the stages of the incarnation in which Mary played a role, the one about which the Jews and Christians became most exercised were the nine months of Jesus' fetal formation and nourishment in Mary's womb. God-as-Jesus' derivation from menstrual blood and proximity to Mary's unexcreted waste challenged Christian and Jewish ideals of holiness as

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[15] Aristotle, *De generatione animalium*, 727b, in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. Alcuin Blamires (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 40.

[16] Aristotle 775a, in *Woman Defamed* 41.

pure, fragrant, and clean.[17]

If semen occupied the premier position in the hierarchy of blood, menstrual blood fell near the bottom and was viewed as corrosive and dangerous.[18] Menstrual flux in particular was viewed as filthy and abject, a view stemming from classical thought and in no way limited to Jewish polemicists. Pliny wrote pejoratively about the abject effluvium associated with menstruation: "nothing could easily be found that is more monstrous than the monthly flux of a woman. Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren . . . a horrible smell fills the air: to taste it drives dogs mad and infects their bites with an incurable poison."[19] Jewish polemicists argued that Mary's womb was abject, and that no divine being would issue from such a place.

Mary, as a queen and woman, faced the same double bind in late medieval England that had plagued medieval queens in Christendom for hundreds of years: the non-negotiable divide between Marian chastity and the reality of their feminine corporeality and sexuality. Mary's womb drew considerable attention in late medieval Europe, thus became the anatomical focus of a medieval Jewish-Christian debate over the divinity of Christ. The issue of Mary's womb sparked controversy because Christian and Jewish polemicists, thinkers, and doctors associated the female body with decay, filth and waste. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that incarnation theology dominated polemics between late medieval Jews and Christians.[20] Jews and Christians increasingly engaged in polemical debates over the Incarnation and Jesus' fraught beginnings in the womb of the Virgin Mary in the thirteenth century. As Francisco Prado-Vilar succinctly states,

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[17] Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2007), 124.

[18] See e.g. Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 26, for a general synopsis of Western medieval views on menstruation. Later in this chapter in my discussion of the latrine as displaced womb, I engage with particular Jewish and Christian thinkers on the matter of menstrual flux.

[19] Pliny, *Natural History* 55-63, cited in Cuffel 30.

[20] See e.g. Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales* (Hong Kong: World Print Ltd, 1999), at 93.

"Judaism negated the bio-theological central mystery of the Christian dogma, the Incarnation, where Mary's sacredness was grounded."[21]

English Christian writers anxiously constructed a pristine imperial Mary divorced from the dirty associations of the womb to combat misogynistic ideas about women that they in fact shared. Picking up on the episodes of Mary's Assumption and Coronation, which both became regularized in the Church calendar and in English cycle dramas in the late medieval period, Christian thinkers stressed Mary's sinlessness, spirituality and purity. At the same time, late medieval artists and writers focused more and more on Mary's physical body. The Fourth Lateran declared that Mary's hymen remained intact before, during, and after Christ's birth and artists began to depict Mary much more realistically, with special attention to her breasts and the process of breastfeeding.[22]

Yet, late medieval English writers distanced Mary from her body, and the Virgin became more punitive and imperial. Whereas she sought to convert the Jews in early miracles, in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* and tales like "The Jewish Boy" condemning Jewish perpetrators to death. These late medieval miracles proliferated in answer to Jewish attacks on the Virgin Mary's sanctity. The romance Mary proved a heavenly warrior of Marian romance whose role it was to highlight the abject bodies of the male Jews who allegedly violently murdered Christian boys. So it was that Mary came to be an integral and imperial figure in fourteenth-century English retellings of the ritual murder narrative, creating the genre of the Marian romance. In the wake of high medieval stories of ritual murder stemming from historical incidents involving boy martyrs like William of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln, the chorister ritual murder narrative emerged. In this type of Marian romance, Mary acts behind the scenes to revive the body of the murdered

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[21] Francisco Prado-Vilar, "Iueus sacer: Life, Law, and Identity in the 'State of Exception' Called 'Marian Miracle,'" 115-42, in Herbert L. Kessler and David Nirenberg, eds. *Judaism and Christian Art: Aesthetic Anxieties from the Catacombs to Colonialism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 126.

[22] Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early modern Literature and Popular Culture* 32, 38.

Christian boy in order to expose Jewish perpetrators and transcend the abject nature of death and, often, the fetid location in which the boy's body is disposed.

This conflicted portrait of the Virgin Mary in the wake of thirteenth-century Jewish-Christian polemical debates—as abject yet pure, maternal yet virginal, imperious yet merciful—informs the Mary of Marian romance. Marian romance modifies the typical characteristics of the gargantuan category of medieval romance, keeping elements of *aventure*, mystery, and the eventual triumph of Christians over their enemies. The chivalric love of typical romance becomes Marian devotion; that is, the hero's praise for a lady becomes universal praise for 'Our Lady.' Moreover, Marian romance is characterized by transgression, violence, and a climactic miracle in which a powerful and imperial 'Maria Regina' reveals the treachery of the Jews and converts or punishes them. Gary Waller contends that Marian romance centers on the performance of a "climactic miracle," whereas Miri Rubin notes a movement of "transgression and return," figured in chorister Marian romance as the boy's journey into the Jewry and return to the Church.[23] The earliest Middle English example rests in the Bodleian Library MS Digby 86 (c.1280). Other notable examples include a group of seven tales in SEL (*South English Legendary*) (c.1280), seven tales scattered in the Northern Homily Cycle (c. 1315), and two tales in the Auchinleck MS (c.1330-40). Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* (c. 1390), nine tales of the Vernon MS group (c. 1390), and twenty-three tales attached to various homilies in John Mirk's *Festial* (c.1385) comprise the most notable late medieval Marian romances.[24]

The chorister narrative contains a number of original elements: a singing Christian boy whom the Jews capture before crucifying, bleeding, castrating, and/or circumcising. The Jews, enraged by the boy's singing of Marian hymns, eventually kill him and dispose of the body, often in a latrine full of feces. In these miracles, however,

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[23] See Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Literature and Popular Culture*, 58-59; and Rubin 183.

[24] See e.g. Boyarin, Adrienne, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 5.

the Queen of Heaven—here a powerful imperial feminine force contrasted against the powerless boy—enters the womblike place in which the boy's body is hidden and performs a miracle to reanimate him. Often, Mary overcomes the abjection of the site in an olfactory triumph, infusing it with the perfume of lilies and honey. Nonetheless, English writers typically refuse to describe the miracle itself, betraying an anxiety over depicting the Virgin Mary in an environment so intimately tied with medieval notions of feminine abjection. Through his posthumous singing, the boy as Marian agent aurally alerts the Christian community to the location of his body within the Jewry. Mary's journey into the abject space of the privy is of particular concern to this study, as it functions as a site of purging for Jewish men not unlike the fetid womb of medieval 'woman.' The question of what prompted Christian clergymen to compose Marian miracles in which Mary acts as a key agent, entering the bowels of the privy no less and effecting the punishment of Jewish communities, informs this chapter.

England entertained more ritual murder accusations than any other European country in the Middle Ages. The two most infamous English versions of the blood libel involved the murders of William of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln, resulting in violence against Jews in English communities and copycat allegations.[25] The Holy See in Rome

[25] Thomas of Monmouth's *Life of William of Norwich* (~1150s) alleged that the Jews of Norwich kidnapped William in 1144, kept him locked in the house of one of the Jews before crucifying the boy in imitation of Jesus and then dumped his body in the woods. Many critics cite the proliferation of this blood libel allegation as inciting copycat narratives and acts of violence against Jews throughout England. Further incidents erupted in 1234 in Norwich, 1215 and 1239 in London, and 1255 in Lincoln. The last of these incidents resulted from the blood libel accusation involving the murder of young St. Hugh of Lincoln. *The Life of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln* avouches that a Jew, Jopin, sold an abducted Christian boy to the Jews of Lincoln who crucified the boy and ate his heart. The corpse, though buried, resurfaced and was then thrown into a privy, from where it emerged again, was sealed in a well, and discovered by the Christians. The Jews of the city were historically accused of murder and nineteen people were executed. Thus, the core narrative of ritual murder stories was cemented in English history. See e.g. John D. Hosler, "Henry II, William of Newburgh, and the Development of English Anti-Judaism," in *Christian Attitudes towards the Jews in the Middle Ages: a Casebook*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Rutledge, 2007), 167-82, especially 172; and Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990): 237-62. Accusations during Henry II's reign went further than William of Norwich, including murders of three Christian boys at Gloucester in 1168, Bury-St. Edmunds in 1181, and Bristol in 1183. Indeed, by 1190 Jews had been attacked in Norwich, Stamford, Bury-St. Edmunds, Colchester, Thetford, Osplinge, and Lincoln, ending with the mass suicide of Jews within Clifford Castle at York. Hosler 172.

reacted to the increasing anti-Semitic violence throughout Europe by the thirteenth century. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council at the same time it was broadening Mary's agency and emphasizing her coronation as Queen of Heaven, required that Jews remain indoors during Holy Week, no doubt a legal product of the Christian paranoia that Jews might kill Christian children for blood to use in rituals.[26]

Much of the scholarship on Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* has acknowledged the importance of the body in these iterations. Steven Kruger, for example, writes that "the heart of the *Prioress's Tale* is an opposition between the Christian body, attacked and preserved, and the Jewish body, foul. . . attacking innocence, justly destroyed."[27] While Kruger correctly positions the binary of the lauded "gemme of chastite" (609) of the boy clergeon's body and the Jews who "purgen hire entraille" (573), he does not triangulate the rhetoric of abjection and purity with the body of the Virgin Mary.[28] Richard Rambuss similarly notes Marian miracles' preoccupation with the body, but focuses on Mary's liminal status as pure but also lactating, menstruating, and birthing.[29] While scholars like J. J. Cohen and Kruger have amply explored links between growing Anti-Semitism in

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[26] See e.g. Sharon Koren, "The Menstruant as 'Other' in Medieval Judaism and Christianity," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 17 (Spring 2009): 33-59, 47. See also Francesca Matteoni, "The Jew, The Blood, and the Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Folklore* 119.2 (2008): 182-200, 190-91, who explains of the folkloric associations between Jews and Christian blood: "Jews were believed to employ Christian blood during the rite of circumcision, and also at Passover when they used it in mixing the wine and baking the unleavened bread. They were also said to need it to, allegedly, make aphrodisiacs and magical potions; to prevent or cure epilepsy; to paint the bodies of the dead; to cover the foetur Judaicus—the stench that connotated them; to ease labour pains; to cure haemorrhoids; to redden their typical pallor; to heal skin diseases, sores and scrofula; to cure the blindness that was said to afflict all Jews at birth; to make children fertile; to remove the monstrous parts that distinguished Jewish infants, such as two small fingers, so similar to the Devil's horns, attached to their foreheads; and to stop haemorrhages and the copious menstruation that affected both Jewish women and men."

[27] Steven Kruger, "The Bodies of Jews in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Idea of Medieval Literature*, ed. James Dean and Christian Zacher (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 301-23, at 306.

[28] Kruger, "The Bodies of Jews," 308.

[29] Richard Rambuss, "Devotion and Defilement: The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Corporeal Hagiographics of Chaucer's Prioress's Tale,"In *Textual Bodies: Changing Boundaries of Literary Representation*, ed. Lori Lefkovitz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 75-99, at 78.

England and fractured English communities, few scholars have considered these stories as a response to Jewish attacks on the physical sanctity of the Virgin Mary's womb.

Amid a plethora of ritual murder narratives circulating in the fourteenth century, the Vernon manuscript stands out for its collection of Marian miracles and its allocation of an unusually active and powerful political position as queen for the Virgin Mary. While the South English Legendary boasts a larger collection of Marian miracles handling Jewish themes, the Vernon manuscript bears the distinction of the only collection of Marian miracles with accompanying illuminations. Composed around 1390 in the areas surrounding London, the Vernon manuscript boasts an unusually high number of Marian miracles incorporating elements of blood libel (9 miracles, 10% of the total).[30] "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination accompanies the Marian miracle and first of four anti-Semitic tales, "The Child Slain by Jews," in folio 124 of the Vernon manuscript. The story was one of the most popular Marian ritual murder tales in Europe, with over thirty versions of the miracle still extant, including its most critically acknowledged iteration, Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*.[31]

Although the Vernon's original audience is unknown, many scholars conjecture it was intended for a large Christian household, while others claim it was intended for a convent or an educated laywoman.[32] With its clerical ties, the Vernon's Mary answers Jewish attacks on the Virgin Mary's corporeality through persistent emphasis on her earthly dominion or queenship. Thus, we find Mary described in the Vernon romances as

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[30] Statistics were compiled by Henry Kelly, "'The Prioress's Tale' in Context: Good and Bad Reports of Non-Christians in Fourteenth-Century England," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History: Nation, Ethnicity, and Identity in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Ed. Philip Soergel (New York: AMS, 2006), 71-129.

[31] See Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 169-72, for an extensive list of variations of this chorister ritual murder narrative.

[32] See e.g. Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, at 22, who argues for a larger household; *Aelred of Rievaux's De Institutione Inclusarum: Two English Versions*, ed. John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, EETS, o.s. 287 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), xviii, who propose that the Vernon, due to its inclusion of Marian Miracles, the *Ancrene Wisse*, and other devotional texts evinces it was intended for a pious female audience.

a "comely qween in o chayer," a "blissful qwen," and, of course, the "Alma Redemptoris Mater."[33] The Vernon's chorister miracle, "The Child Slain by Jews," and its accompanying illumination, "The Miracle of the Boy Singer," have been largely overshadowed by Chaucer's remarkably similar *Prioress's Tale*, itself one among a widely dispersed cluster of late medieval chorister narratives.[34] Yet, the placement of "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" amid a collection of Marian miracles in which Mary is particularly active and in which we can study the only known surviving illumination to a chorister-type Marian miracle renders it ripe for contextualization. Moreover, the poet and illuminator made several interesting changes in "The Child Slain by Jews" to de-emphasize Mary's human femininity while stressing her regal nature as 'Maria Regina.' The most notable of these changes is the use of a lily rather than grain as the object which catalyzes the miracle, and the illumination's curious decision to depict Mary as a floriated lily scepter rather than in corporeal form.

This chapter aims to accomplish several things. Through engaging Mary in relation to two objects—namely, the object of her womb and the object of her representation in the illumination: a floriated scepter—this argument parallels concerns in the other chapters. Like the demon-bride Cassodorien, Mary asserts feminine power through objects aurally. Whereas Cassodorien transmogrifies the sound of the church bell in *RCL* from the orderly meted pealing of the church bell to the cacophonous sound of multiple bells, Mary effects an aural assault on the Parisian Jewry after embedding the throat of a murdered boy with a lily which catalyzes his miraculous and unceasing Marian refrain. And like Custance whose interaction with the Breton gospels in Chaucer's *MLT* results in cultural and religious takeover, Mary's entrance into the Jewish

[33] "The Jewish Boy," in *The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin*, ed. Beverly Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 39, l.57, 43, l.157; "The Child Slain by Jews," ibid., 33, l.22, 36, l.124.

[34] Kelly argues that critics have given Chaucer's Prioress's Tale too much importance in the spread of anti-Semitism in late medieval England, and attempts to decenter and contextualize Chaucer's tale as one among many late fourteenth-century iterations of the chorister narrative (73).

privy and manipulation of the lily results in Christian penetration of the Jewry and a conquest of non-Christian space.

I will begin by suggesting that "The Child Slain by Jews" and its accompanying illumination perform an active displacement of Christian anxieties over Mary's womb as locus classicus of woman's maternity in the wake of Jewish attacks on Mary's purity. "The Child Slain by Jews" projects concerns over Mary's corporeality and abject womb onto the equally abject privy, itself a womb-like site of purgation. Thus, the romance redirects feminine abjection onto the bodies of male Jews, who were by this time subject to rumors of menstruation and other feminine humoral afflictions. The argument will then move to another object: the floriated scepter that represents both Mary and themes of late medieval English queenship. The accompanying illumination, "The Miracle of the Boy Singer," refocuses attention on the regal symbolism of Mary's status as 'Maria Regina,' anchored in her representation in the form of a giant fleur-de-lys scepter. The lily and floriated scepter are objects much more fraught with feminine and queenly associates, as distinguished from the more masculine "greyn" or seed operative in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*. Scholars like Lisa Lampert, Anthony Bale, and Alexandra Cuffel have explored some of the ways Christian writers and polemicists utilized the tool of displacement in texts about Jews, but none have addressed displacement from the angle of Mary's evolving late medieval queenship and in terms of her feminine, queenly body.[35] "The Child Slain by Jews" focuses on Mary's queenly role, maintaining a fraught relationship between her femininity and the necessity to purge her of feminine associates.

Yet, as the chapter will conclude, the project of purifying Mary and extricating

[35] Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 34, likens the Jews as incomplete Christians to medieval views of women as incomplete men, and suggests this incompleteness rendered both categories ripe for comparison. Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), discusses the project of displacement in the chorister ritual murder narratives, suggesting "'Jewishness' as a repository of fantasy projections [was] central to the self-definition of medieval Christianity and to the cultural artifacts Christianity spawned" (2). Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2007), at 93, traces rhetorical similarites between medieval theories of the menstruating male Jew and feminine corporeality.

the Virgin from associations with the female body and abjection is fraught with anxieties. Tellingly, Mary is represented as a giant lily in the hand of the bishop in "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination, signifying the need to contain her power under papal authority. At the same time, the floral scepter of late medieval English queens and the imagery of the Marian Jesse Tree resonate with Mary's scepter and evince her queenly authority. Importantly, I read Mary in this miracle as subversive, the 'Maria Regina' who subverts masculine power on Earth, but as a potentially subversive queen, Mary must simultaneously be contained, whether in the hand of the bishop or through her dependency on the orchestrations of the mayor and patriarchal English institutions that propel the boy's discovery and recovery.

The "Minimal Schemata of Recognition" and Marian Displacement

Locating medieval art in a specific milieu is vital to understanding what medieval art meant to its intended viewers. Norman Bryson, refuting an overwhelming trend in art theory that assumed a timeless and essential truth to images, proposed that "[w]hat we have to understand is that the act of recognition that painting galvanizes is a *production*, rather than a *perception*, of meaning."[36] That meaning in art is a production is certainly old news to medievalists; perhaps the underlying ideologies of medieval art are more easily perceived due to the vast separation in time that makes medieval art, with its 'antiquated' stylistics and conventions, so glaringly constructed. The medieval Christian viewer was part of a community of viewers programmed to comprehend the socially produced signs in depictions of ritual murder. Bryson rightly urged that "[i]t is wrong to think of the social formation as characteristically exerting pressure on the sign from an area beyond the sign." Rather, for Bryson the sign inhabits an 'interindividual territory,' and codes of recognition involve a community of viewers. He elaborates, ". . . only

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[36] Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), xiii.

between individuals does the medium of signs take shape."[37]

Bryson's discussion of the 'denotative' register of art is broadly applicable to both "The Child Slain by Jews" and its illumination, "The Miracle of the Boy Singer." For Bryson, the 'denotative' register of an image consists of those elements which are immediately perceivable to a certain community of viewers located in a particular moment in time, and includes what Bryson terms the "minimal schemata of recognition," that is, the fewest amount of key pictorial (here, written cues also) cues needed to discern the core narrative of an image. In medieval depictions of ritual murder, the simplest cues form the basic phrase 'Jew-murders-Christian boy.' Most would probably agree that many of these visual cues would not be immediately apparent to an audience of American undergraduates in 2014.

Ritual murder narratives and images, however, problematize the 'minimal schemata of recognition' precisely because there is *more than one* schemata at work. Although Bryson allows for instances where a painting can contain two registers, such as Manet's *Olympia* (1863), which he argues contains the contradictory codes of woman as odalisque and woman as prostitute, he only allows such combinations when the codes are opposing and incompatible.[38] In medieval depictions of ritual murder, the repressed Marian code of Jesus' birthing from Mary's abject womb is *displaced* onto the code of ritual murder, uniting binaries. One view, of course, is to see Mary as an agent of Christendom operating to expose the Jewish 'Other' and his crimes. I suggest, however, that it is in the repressed register that medieval anxieties over self/other, 'Christian'/'Jew,' male/female and Mary's corporeality are played out.[39] In particular, medieval depictions of ritual murder in the context of Marian miracles relocate Jewish-Christian trauma over

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[37] Bryson 51.

[38] See Bryson 146-7.

[39] Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference*.

the womb of the Virgin Mary to the 'denotative' register of Jewish ritual murder, pictorially scapegoating the Jews whilst repressing Christian anxieties over Mary's corporeality.[40] That is, the Virgin Mary and the Jewish murderer she exposes are in a sense one and the same.[41]

"The Child Slain by Jews" traces a commonly told story which varies only slightly from Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*. A Parisian boy earns money for himself and his mother by wandering the streets of Paris and begging through singing the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" in his unusually clear and high voice (Chaucer's chorister wanders through the Jewry on his way to school). The boy crosses into the Jewry, where his song angers the local Jews, one of whom quickly lures the boy into his home and slits his throat. The boy continues his melodic refrain to the chagrin of the murderous Jew, who attempts to conceal his murder by throwing the boy into a "gonge-put" or privy (48). The boy's mother, distressed at his disappearance, traces the sound of his singing to the Jew's home, where she convenes with the mayor, bailiff, and a priest who discovers the source

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[40] As Anthony Bale has cogently argued, "'Jewishness' as a repository of fantasy projections [was] central to the self-definition of medieval Christianity and to the cultural artifacts Christianity spawned" (2). Literary scholars have mined medieval texts for constructions of this constructed 'Jew,' calling him (for he is invariably gendered male) the 'virtual Jew,' the 'hermeneutical Jew,' and the 'spectral Jew.' Sylvia Tomasch, "Judecca, Dante's Satan, and the Dis-placed Jew," *Text and Territory*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 247-67, posits "the virtual Jew" which replaces Jews, absent or present, with medieval constructions. On the other hand, J.J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), cites longstanding tradition of the "hermeneutical Jew" as opposed to real Jews. Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare*, takes up Cohen's "hermeneutical Jew," tying it to "hermeneutical woman" and arguing that both were carnal and body-oriented, associated with "veiled knowledge, a clouded seeing, and, of course, with carnality and the body itself. Steven Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), believes "spectral Jew" is better for his argument than "hermeneutical" or "virtual" because it acknowledges the "'protean' and complex, not reducible, despite their constructedness, to a single form or even a single (anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic) impulse" (xx). Art historians have made similar observations. Debra Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), notes that "medieval Christian rejection of their non-Christian enemies had less to do with the non-Christians and much more to do with Christian projections of what they viewed as undesirable and worrisome in their own lives and religion" (41).

[41] Lisa Lampert exemplifies this scholarship in her study, *Gender and Jewish Difference*, suggesting many medieval ideological similarities between women and Jews, both of which she argues were viewed as essentially incomplete.

of the boy's postmortem song: a lily flower with queenly connotations placed by the Virgin Mary in the boy's open throat. The priest parades the body of the boy around Paris before interring him in a pristine minster, where he again revives during a Requiem Mass and sings "Salve Sancti Parens," revealing Mary's role in the miracle.

Figure 1

"The Miracle of the Boy Singer," MS. Eng. poet. a. 1. fol. 124v (from the *Vernon Manuscript*)

In "The Miracle of the Boy Singer," several episodes from "The Child Slain by

Jews" are condensed into a narrative that reads circularly counterclockwise. Starting at top right, a Jewish conspirator lures the boy into his house. Next, the Jewish conspirator slits the boy's throat, and then throws the boy's corpse into a Jewish privy filled with excrement. At far left, a bishop stands over the boy's purified body, clothed in white. The highest figure in the illumination is the phallic lily the bishop holds which presides over the scene as the whitest and most disproportionate object in the illumination. The words of the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" erupt from the lily, while the "Salva Sanctus Parens" textually trails from the boy's slit throat. The story of the Marian miracle of the boy singer is not without its historical referents. In 1320 at Le Puy around Christmas time, for example, it was reported that Jews who hated the sounds of an altar-boy singing religious songs as he passed through the Jewry murdered him. Rumor spread that the boy revived on Palm Sunday and implicated the Jews in his murder.[42] Similarly, in "The Child Slain by Jews" and most of its variants, a boy clergeon walks through the Jewry singing a hymn for the Virgin Mary, is murdered by Jews, and revives miraculously, though in the miracles he continues singing the hymn after he is killed.[43]

Maria/hari'a and the Abject Privy

The disturbing and taboo privy serves as a fraught site of displacement and a repository of Christian anxiety concerning Mary's abject womb. Anthony Bale has acknowledged the emphatically abject nature of "The Child Slain by Jews" in the context of the expansive Vernon manuscript, commenting that "the Vernon manuscript repeatedly leads its readers into taboo places, like the Jew's privy …."[44] Despite its placement in a relatively brief ritual murder narrative of 152 lines, the privy garners particular detail as a "depe" (109) place filled with "fen and fulthe" (111). Even when not

[42] Bale 65.

[43] Moïse Schwab, "Le meurtre de l'enfant de choeur du Puy," *Revue des études Juives* 33 (1897), 277-82, cited in Bale 65.

[44] Bale 77.

drawn into the privy to gaze upon the bespattered body of the boy, the privy remains central as the narrative and geographical epicenter from which the undead boy's song emanates throughout and beyond the boundaries of the Jewry, acting as a clarion call to draw the Christian community as well as the reader to the privy. Polemical language from the Incarnation debate certainly treats the womb and latrine as similar spaces. Scholars like Miri Rubin have noted the resonances with the Virgin's womb in ritual murder stories like the Vernon's "Jewish Boy," in which a Christian or Jewish child is thrown into an oven but emerges unscathed.[45] Medieval religious utilized the object of the oven to emphasize the necessity of Jesus' spending nine months in the womb to leaven. Richard of St. Victor (d.1173) compares Mary's womb to an oven in which bread (Christ) rises, and analogizes the oven-as-womb to the cloister, in which the soft dough of the unformed spirit is leavened through devotion and prayer.[46] Denise Despres has likened the visual depiction of the oven in the Vernon's "The Jew of Bourges" to the "virginal womb" of Mary.[47] Yet, as Rubin also notes, the oven could harbor dangerous connotations as well, serving as a place where children perished:

> The oven is rich in connotations: it often represented the womb, the place where children were 'cooked,' a secret place. It could be familiar, domestic, warm and vibrant, as well as a destructive place where children were destroyed.[48]

In the Vernon's "Jewish Boy," Mary, the "blissful qwen" (157) enters into the burning oven to protect the Jewish boy from burning to death, emphasizing her transcendence

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[45] See e.g. Rubin, *Mother of God*, who writes that "[t]he oven is rich in connotations: it often represented the womb, the place where children were 'cooked,' a secret place. It could be familiar, domestic, warm and vibrant, as well as a destructive place where children were destroyed" (25). The oven metaphor was a typically positive one. Prado-Vilar compares the Jewish boy's emergence from the oven to "emerging from the womb of the Virgin, to be embraced by the Christian community" (129).

[46] Rubin, *Mother of God*, 179-80.

[47] Denise Despres, "The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript," in *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, ed. Sheila Delaney (London: Routledge, 2002), 145-64, at 151.

[48] Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 25.

over the feminine flesh, here again attributed to the Jewish male as the boy's Jewish father owns and mans the oven.

However, the latrine engages with feminine associations of abjection that the womb-as-oven metaphor avoids. Far from the clean process of leavening bread, the purging associated with the latrine conflates menstrual purgation with defecation. Cuffel notes that "Jews and Christians alike used the same vocabulary of dirt and stench to characterize the 'filth' of a woman's (Mary's) womb and that of latrines. Therefore, the dividing line between these two was very fine."[49] Medieval scribes often confused *menstruum*, or menstrual blood, with *monstrum*, monster.[50] Naturally, Jewish polemicists utilized and exploited medieval conceptions of the womb as abject to argue that the Son of God could not and would not have spent nine months in that space considered most corrupting to the male medieval mind. The popular genre of the Jewish-Christian disputation often imagined arguments over the Incarnation. Leo, a French Jew with whom Odo of Cambrai claims to have argued over the Incarnation, retorts incredulously to Odo's belief in the sanctity of Mary's womb:

> In one thing especially we laugh at you and think that you are crazy. You say that God was conceived within his mother's womb, surrounded by a vile fluid, and suffered enclosure within this foul prison for nine months when finally, in the tenth month, he emerged from her private parts (who is not embarrassed by such a scene!). Thus you attribute to God what is most unbecoming, which we would not do without great embarrassment.[51]

Leo's description of the abject maternal womb mirrors the space of the privy, enclosed and surrounded with abject bodily effluvia. Similarly, Joseph Kimhi, a Jewish polemicist writing in the twelfth century, queries

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[49] Cuffel 155. See also Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, 88, who writes that "accusations against Jews often include not simply accounts of Jewish violence against Christian bodies or holy objects but a strong association of that violence with the excremental."

[50] See e.g. Cuffel 91.

[51] Odo of Tournai, *On Original Sin* and *A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God*, trans. Irven M. Resnick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 95.

> how shall I believe that this great inaccessible *Deus absconditus* needlessly entered the womb of a woman, the filthy, foul bowels of a female, compelling the living God to be born of a woman, a child without knowledge or understanding, senseless, unable to distinguish between this right hand and his left, defecating and urinating, sucking his mother's breasts from hunger and thirst, crying when he is thirsty so that his mother will have compassion on him."[52]

Both Leo and Kimhi conflate the menstrual with the defecatory—"vile fluid," "foul prison," "filthy, foul bowels"—united in their excess and superfluity. As Alexandra Cuffel has pointed out, the Hebrew word for menstruation, *niddah*, is synonymous with "filth," "dirty," and "fetid."[53] Kimhi's horror conflates the two: Mary's "filthy, foul bowels" become inextricable from the "defecating and urinating" fetus symbiotically linked within.

A linguistic happenstance gave Jewish polemicists ample fodder for attacks on the sanctity of the Virgin Mary, concisely linking her with menstrual flux and feces. Mary's name—'Maria' to most medieval Christians—happens to rhyme with the Hebrew word for excrement, *hari'a*. Joseph Official was one of many Jewish polemicists who capitalized on this linguistic jackpot; he mockingly asks his imagined Christian audience, "is he [Jesus] not the one who is born from a clod of dust, from hari'a?"[54] If menstrual flux and fetal defecation could become indistinguishable, and one letter distinguished the Virgin Mary from shit, then Christian thinkers would need to carefully contain and deal with the issue of Mary's purity. With the sanctity of the venerated Virgin under attack, medieval Christians were charged with defending Mary's body against these assaults. To deal with such attacks on the bodily integrity of the Virgin Mary, medieval Christian polemicists and artists transferred associations of the maternal body with filth and

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[52] Joseph Kimhi, *The Book of the Covenant*, trans. Frank Talmage (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1972), 36-7; cited in Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, 57.

[53] See Cuffel 32.

[54] Cuffel 130.

excrement onto the Jews in an attempt to spiritualize and purify Mary's body, rendering it impermeable.

Part of the historical defense of Mary's feminine corporeality became the projection of that abject feminine corporeality onto the bodies of male Jews, who Christians tauntingly alleged menstruated from their anuses. For Jewish polemicists, Christians were feminized through associations with Mary's menstrual blood, while Christians associated Jews with a vocabulary of defecation and pollution, and believed Jewish men to be feminized because they reportedly menstruated from their anuses.[55] The term *monstrum*, though similar to *menstruum*, also referred pejoratively to Jews.[56] Allegations of Jewish male menstruation functioned undoubtedly as part of the collective defensive theology at work to displace attacks on the womb of Mary; Bale explains, "[t]he tropes forced onto the Jewish body, in particular the desexualizing 'wound' of circumcision and the imputation of Jewish male menstruation, have often been interpreted as signals of the Jewish man's emasculation and effeminacy."[57] Both Steven Kruger and Bale have associated the accusation of male menstruation with anxieties over and attacks on the male Christian body.[58] Bale reads ritual murder allegations "to indicate Christian sexual insecurity," while Kruger conjectures that "[t]he association of a 'feminizing' deficiency in Jewish men's bodies with the originary moment of Jewish violence against Christ was part of a complex economy that bound the 'degenerate' body

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[55] See e.g. Mitchell Merback, editor, *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Boston: Brill, 2008), at 20, who argues that Christian art dehumanized the Jews as "the bestial, the grotesque, the demonic, the polluted and the polluting"; Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew And Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1983), 50. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, 82, mentions the concocted story of the male Jews of Tyrnau, who reportedly confessed their menstruation and need to alleviate their flux with Christian blood.

[56] Cuffel 91.

[57] Bale 132.

[58] Bale 131-2; Kruger, "Becoming Christian, Becoming Male?," J.J. Cohen and B. Wheeler, eds., *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 21-41, 23.

of the Jewish man to attacks on Christian bodies."[59] In transferring *hari'a* from the Virgin Mary to the allegedly incontinent bodies of Jewish men, Christian writers utilized the same metaphors of heresy and idolatry to characterize the menstruants. Sharon Koren explains,

> [m]enstruation was not only a female physiological state, but a potential moral condition of both men and women. Jewish men, often slandered as effeminate, greedy unbelievers, would therefore be the most likely to be display it . . . . The notion of Jewish male flux, conceived as an excessive blood flow from the anus, was justified in terms of humoral science and Christian theology."[60]

In the same way Jewish polemicists relied on Talmudic and cultural traditions to align menstruation with spiritual and physical infirmity, Christians utilized science and religion to justify racial inferiority on the basis that Jewish men were cold and wet, needing to purge their humors much as they needed to purge their spiritual sin, including their role in the crucifixion of Christ.

While "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination is devoid of blood, the artist clothes the murderous Jew in red, visually evoking accusations that Jewish men menstruated. Medieval Christians associated the colors red and yellow with infamy and shame, and illuminators often chose these colors for representing Jews.[61] On the contrary, the Christian English are defined by a lack of blood. The stark white of the rescued boy, the priest, and the fragrant supernatural lily in the priest's hand visually counteract the hunched, rouged figures of the Jews. Even the site of the boy singer's slit throat lacks blood, the blanched phallic blade of the Jew's knife entering the equally pallid flesh of the boy's throat.

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[59] Bale 131; Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, 83.

[60] Koren 45.

[61] See chapter three of Debra Strickland's *Saracens, Demons & Jews* for a more thorough discussion of representations of Jews in medieval art, especially art in the twelfth century. By the twelfth century, Jews were most commonly depicted as bearded and wearing yellow or red, with hooked noses and hats (105).

Medieval Christians, responding to Jewish attacks, painted the Jew as abject and fetid. Guibert of Nogent, for example, in defending the Jewish accusation that Jesus could not have been conceived in the "meanness of a female womb," calls the Jews "most stinking and worthless" (putidissime et nequam).[62] Whereas Bale and Kruger have explored the ways in which feminizing the Jews asserted Christian masculinity, I am more interested in the ways feminizing male Jews in such a carnal way functioned as part of a systematic purification and anxious revelation of Mary's feminine corporeality. While both scholars rightly expose the constructedness of Christian masculinity and the anxieties within that construct, neither accounts for the striking presence of the Virgin Mary in these tales in late medieval England.

"The Child Slain by Jews" transfers charges of abjection and filth leveled at the womb of Mary onto the male Jewish body. The poet displaces the site of Jesus' gestation in Mary's menstrual effluvia onto the purging site of male Jewish *hari'a*. Whereas Jewish polemicists asserted that Mary's womb was a site of purging of excrement and her body porous and corrosive, in the miracle the Jews' bodies are depicted as open and porous, and they are associated with blood. Key critical readings of Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* have acknowledged the importance of Jewish bodily permeability.[63] As Chaucer emphasizes in his retelling of the miracle in his *Prioress's Tale*, the Jewry, a civic corporeal extension of the Jewish body, "was free and open at eyther ende."[64] The material trauma of birth is relocated to the boy clergeon's removal from the privy. The Christian search party locates the body of the boy "depe idrouned in fulthe of fen" (109)

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[62] Guibert of Nogent, *Tractatus de incarnatione contra judaeos, PL* 156, 489-528; , 492, 499; cited in Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, 57-8.

[63] See e.g. Steven Kruger, "The Bodies of Jews in the Late Middle Ages" 304-8; Lisa Lampert, 78-9, discusses the permeability of bodies in the *Prioress's Tale*, seeing it as part of the Prioress's rhetorical alignment of Jews with Satan.

[64] Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Prioress's Tale," 1396-1400, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Ed. Larry D. Benson. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), l.494.

and pulls him from the privy, his body "with fen and fulthe riht foule biwhorven" (foully bespattered with shit and filth) like an infant delivered in the abject effluvia of the placenta and womb (111).

"The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination, taking a cue from "The Child Slain by Jews" and its preoccupation with abject spaces, focuses the viewer's eye on the privy itself. The privy stands out as the darkest and starkest object, a nebulous perfect circle that defies the perspective of the rest of the illumination. Whereas the illuminator chooses to depict the figures of the Jew and boy and the roof of the Jew's house with a sense of depth, he paints the privy as a perfect circle lacking gradated shading and depth. Denise Despres, one of the few critics who has written specifically on the Vernon Marian romances, contends that the "dark, round hole . . . symbolizes Jewish physicality, corruptibility, and filth."[65] Seven of the eleven figures appear to be staring directly into the privy, instructing the Christian viewer how he, as a member of the Christian community, should be interpreting the illumination. The privy dominates the illumination as both the darkest image and the focal point of the gazes of the surrounding figures of the boy and his Jewish captor.[66] This visual image of a round and black circular hole evokes Jewish discussions of the abject nature of Mary's womb. In the *Nizzahon Vetus*, Jewish polemicists conflate the dirty manger in Bethlehem with Mary's womb, united in an abject darkness which foretells the return of sin and suffering after Jesus' death: "When Mary gave birth to her son Jesus in a hole in Bethlehem it was very dark there. As soon as Jesus was born there came to the hole a light greater than the darkness, but afterwards there returned a darkness greater than the light."[67] For these Jewish

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[65] Denise Despres, "The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript" 151.

[66] Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, 56, notes the ways in which Christians' response to Jewish corporeal rejection at the same time reveals Christian bodily abjection: "such an appeal to disgust is always, at least in part, implicated in a corporeality subject to disturbance and degeneration: at the sight of others' bodily corruptions, *this* body too becomes ill, 'revolts,' signaling its own susceptibility to disease and debility, even as it rejects these."

polemicists, the sty becomes indistinguishable from the "hole" from which Jesus emerges. The illuminator visually displaces the Jewish focus on Mary's dark womb onto the darkness of the privy, effectively displacing the menstrual to the fecal, the female to the male, and the Christian to the Jewish.

Consequently, the latrine is recognized by Christian viewers anxious over the abject reality of Mary's womb as the repository of Jewish abjection. The community of Christians who engaged with the Vernon united in a communal denigration of the permeable Jewish body, contrasted starkly with Mary's purity and fragrance. That is, the Christian readers of the Vernon manuscript participate in a self-aware fiction of displacement. The illuminator thus mounts an interesting attack on the bodily integrity of the Jews while defending the bodily integrity of the Virgin Mary.[68] The Jewry is a place of open boundaries penetrated easily by Christians, but also a place that 'bleeds' into its environs, contaminating the Christian areas of the city on both sides.[69] The Jewish male body represents this idea in smaller scale; unable to contain its superfluous humors, the Jewish body purges its excesses and exposes its openness.

Maria Regina and the Queen's Scepter

Even though "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" is a Marian romance, the Virgin Mary does not appear in corporeal form as a penetrable body. Instead, when the singing boy's corpse is raised from the abject privy "[w]ith fen and fulthe right foule biwhorven" ("foully bespattered with shit and filth") (111), the bishop discovers within his tracheal slit

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[67] David Berger, ed., *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus*, part of *Judaica: Texts and Translations* 4 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 215.

[68] Kruger, "The Bodies of Jews in the Late Middle Ages," has picked up on this rhetorical strategy, and notes that Christian bodies are "embraced" while Jewish bodies are reviled. Focusing on the body of the boy clergeon, however, Kruger does not address the rhetorical double standard in relation to the physical sanctity of the Virgin Mary (308).

[69] Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, elaborating on the aporia of medieval Jewries, writes that "[w]e might read European Jewry as a sort of aporia, a places where inside and outside collapse into each other" (29).

A lilie flour so briht and cler,
A lily flower so bright and clear,
So feir a lylie nas nevere seyen er,
So fair a lily had never been seen before
With guldene lettres everiwher:
With golden letters everywhere:
"Alma Redemptoris Mater."
"Alma Redemptoris Mater." (121-24)

Mary purifies the child's "biwhorven" body by impregnating his tracheal vaginal slit with the phallic lily, which sows his body once again with the seed of the Word. The "lyly" resonates with Marian themes and late medieval queenship as it was an object associated with both late medieval queen consorts and Marian iconography.

Figure 2

Detail from "The Man Whose Leg Was Cut Off," MS. Eng. poet. a. 1. fol. 125v (from the *Vernon Manuscript*)

In Marian miracles, we commonly see Mary associated with lilies, honey, and fragrant aromas, acting to cure diseases and rescue believers from corruption and decay. "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination stands out among other illuminations in the Miracles of the Virgin because the illuminator refuses to depict or imagine the Virgin Mary in corporeal form in close proximity to the privy. In the ensuing folio, Mary appears in a similar narrative but in human form amid images of blood and violence. This miracle, "The Man Whose Leg Was Cut Off," details the Virgin Mary's miraculous restoration of a man's amputated diseased leg, which she restores in a dream following the man's prayer before an image of a crowned Virgin with child. Far removed from the corrosive and mephitic menstrual effluvia, Mary is instead what Cuffel has quipped a "veritable warrior against rot," the antithesis of abject *hari'a*.[70] This image bears narrative similarities to "The Miracle of the Boy Singer": both depict a Christian man violently disfigured and then restored through the Virgin's intervention. However, this illumination depicts blood around the site of amputation, and includes both the image of the Virgin as "Mater Regis" with Child and in actual human form as the crowned Queen of Heaven who intervenes to restore the man's leg and cure his disease.

If the illuminator chooses to represent Mary in corporeal form elsewhere in the miracles, as in both "The Man Whose Leg Was Cut Off" and "Harlot of Rome Saved By Prayer," then why not in "The Miracle of the Boy Singer"? Sheila Delaney has contended that Mary's absence "creates anticipation and suspends the longed-for movement from sacrifice to sacramental wholeness symbolized by the boy's emergence from the virginal womb."[71] Yet, "The Man Whose Leg Was Cut Off" imagines the Virgin in corporeal form and engages with themes of sacrifice (through the man's amputation) and wholeness

[70] Cuffel 112.
[71] Denise Despres, "The Protean Jew in the Vernon Manuscript," in *Chaucer and the Jews: Sources, Contexts, Meanings*, ed. Sheila Delaney (New York: Routledge, 2002), 145-64, 151.

(through her restoration of the leg). Thus, I would argue instead that the illuminator cannot depict the Virgin Mary in corporeal form because of the obvious associations between feminine corporeality and the abject nature of the Jewish privy. Instead, as I will outline, the illuminator stages a re-gendering of the romance in which Mary—via the lily—must be divorced from her body to free her from associations between the feminine body and filth.

The boy's carved throat, bleeding and submerged in the Jewish excrement of the privy, operates as a vaginal receptacle for the life-giving flower, which in Chaucer's analogue, *The Prioress's Tale*, is a seed or grain. Inverting her Biblical role as passive vessel of the seed of God, Mary instead inseminates the boy's corpse with the seed of the Word, animating him and programming him to repeat robotically the "Alma Redemptoris Mater." Mary thus queers the typical Aristotelian theory of conception, in which the father's semen infuses the mother's form with spirit. Richard Allen Shoaf is singular in addressing the Virgin Mary's inversion of sexuality in the chorister narrative, but focuses on the inversion as it relates to Chaucer's Prioress in her analogue tale. He attributes the miracle to

> the dammed or blocked flow of sexuality in the Prioress and thus access as well to the displaced sexuality of the "greyn" or seed on the boy's tongue. This artificial insemination of the male oral cavity by the female, Mary, mother of God, which reproduces song from a dead body, is symptomatic of the Prioress's repression.[72]

Reading the seed as both a communion wafer and a sign of the Prioress's physical and sexual appetites, Shoaf sees the Virgin Mary acting subversively in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*. Chaucer's retelling of the miracle in the *Prioress's Tale* emphasizes more explicitly Mary's role as inseminator: the sweetness of the Vergin "perced" the boy clergeon's

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[72] Richard Allen Shoaf, *Chaucer's Body: The Anxiety of Circulation in the Canterbury Tales* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 24.

heart, after which she places a "greyn," or seed, into the boy's mouth instead of a lily.[73] In "The Child Slain by Jews," however, the "greyn" becomes the "lyly," significantly changing the politics of the miracle.[74] The lily eludes any simple gendering, encapsulating both the femininity of Mary and late medieval queenship and masculine phallic power. While the grain carries more explicitly phallic connotations, the lily operated, especially in the fourteenth century, as a symbol of both Marian purity and late medieval English queenship.

The illumination explicitly develops Marian and queenly connotations associated with the lily. The illuminator draws attention to Mary's role as queen or "Maria Regina" through a depiction of the lily that both resonates with and queers the functioning of the late medieval English queen's floriated scepter. Mary transcends her physical abjectness in the illumination, appearing only in the form of a giant lily held like a scepter by the bishop who presides over the downcast Jews and corpse of the boy. By the late medieval period, English queen consorts received scepters at their coronations, and the scepter remained central on the queen's royal seal. After carefully examining documentation of Philippa of Hainault's receipt of a scepter in 1330, Parsons claims that there is "every likelihood that in England the queen received a scepter and perhaps a virge by 1330."[75] Medieval artists depicted the queen's scepter as floriated, most often as a fleur-de-lys, and it could function as a symbol for both the Virgin Mary and the act of intercession. As Parsons elaborates,

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[73] Chaucer l.555, 662.

[74] Much has been written on the 'greyn' in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale. Most interpret the 'greyn' as a Eucharistic wafer or manna. See, e.g. Kathleen Oliver, "Singing Brea, Manna and the Clergeon's 'greyn'," *Chaucer Review* 31 (1997): 357-64; Lee Patterson, "'The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption': Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's Prioress's Tale," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.3 (2001): 507-60, at 510; and Sarah Stanbury, *The Visual Object of Desire in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2008), at 169.

[75] Parsons 63." For some queen consorts, especially French queen consorts like Eleanor of Aquitaine and Isabella of France, the scepter could be represented by a hybrid fleur-de-lys.

the scepter's persistent floriation in art and on thequeen's seals strongly recalls the flowering rods of Aaron and Jesse, Biblical images commonly seen as figures of the Virgin Mary . . . the Virgin, as the rod, mediates between her human origins, the roots of the rod, and her Son, symbolized by the flower."[76]

Figure 3

Detail of lily/scepter, "The Miracle of the Boy Singer"

Figure 4

Drawing of Eleanor of Aquitaine's seal, with floriated fleur-de-lys scepter

[76] Parsons 75.

The erect and imperial positioning of the lily in "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" starkly mirrors the queen's floriated scepter while avoiding unseemly associations with the queen's female body. The Vernon's collection of Marian miracles elsewhere confirms this association of the Virgin with feminine purity and reveals a pictorial project of foregrounding Marian queenship. "The Man Whose Leg Was Cut Off," a miracle with an accompanying illumination from the following folio, depicts an icon of the Virgin Mary as both "Maria Regina" and "Mater Regis" holding the floriated scepter of a late medieval English queen.

Figure 5

Crowned Virgin with floriated scepter and Child, "The Man Whose Leg Was Cut Off"

Her conspicuous placement of the lily scepter over the genitalia of the Christ-child unites her role as both mother of God and "Maria Regina." As holder of the rod, Mary visually

enacts in the illuminator her role as intercessor and genealogical transmitter of power between the lineage of Jesse and the flower of Christ. In "The Miracle of the Boy Singer," however, the bishop holds the lily as a fleur-de-lys (lily flower) scepter, and the scepter instructs the viewer of the illumination with the text of the "Alma Redemptoris Mater," indicating that 'Maria Regina' orchestrates the miracle and mends the fracturing within the imagined Parisian community. Yet, the bishop holds the lily, suggesting the need to contain and an anxiety over Mary's queenly power. Earlier in the century in 1337, Edward III quartered the lilies of his mother, Isabella the "She-Wolf" of France, into the English royal arms, adding to the lily the nuance of queenly insurrection. In "The Miracle of the Boy Singer," the visual pairing of clergy and queenly scepter comments on the increasing power wielded in late medieval England by the French-born English queen consorts like Isabella and Margaret of Anjou—powerful queens associated in heraldry with the fleur-de-lys—who exercised notable political power to the chagrin of English clergymen.[77] The romance corroborates this visual relationship. After removing the lily from the mouth of the boy, the boy 'dies' again and ceases his singing:

> Anon, that lilie out was taken;
> *As soon as the lily was taken out*
> The childes song bigon to slaken.
> *The child's song began to slacken.*
> That swete song was herd no more
> *That sweet song was heard no more*
> But as a ded cors the child lay thore.
> *And as a dead corpse the child lay there.* (125-28)

"The Child Slain by Jews" romance employs a lily rather than a grain to emphasize Mary's queenship and imperial power as 'Maria Regina.' The illumination visually depicts the fraught relationship between late masculine clergy and feminine power: Marian text issues forth from the flowered tip of the scepter/lily rather than from the

[77] the floriated fleur-de-lys scepter had also been associated with Eleanor of Aquitaine's seal, linking the lily to especially formidable English queen consorts.

silent and closed mouth of the bishop, yet the lily remains a tool of the bishop, held securely in his hand. Yet, the boy's revival during the burial Mass problematizes reading the lily as purely Marian subversive agency.

The Vernon manuscript, more so than the *Prioress's Tale*, stresses the dichotomy between Marian purity and Jewish abjection. Mary's "briht and cler" lily is starkly contrasted with the "fen and fulthe" of the acrid privy, a deft maneuver in both the manuscript and illumination which displaces Christian anxiety over Mary's womb onto the bodies of the Jews while purifying Mary and elevating her above the Jews, significantly visually opposite to the black privy which remains anchored to the floor. Positioned next to the privy-the blackest object in the illumination-the lily is the whitest, emphasizing not only Mary's purity but also her masculine role in the miracle. Mary's phallic lily, shining white, linear and erect, visually foils the round hole of the privy and evinces the illuminator's contrived effort to stage the male Jew as debased, polluted and feminine and Mary as elevated, pure and masculine. Opposed to the polluted latrine, Mary's lily reflects her imperviousness to rot and visualizes associations with Mary in the romance as "clene" (24), "briht" (120, 152), and "swete" (144). Additionally, the disembodied masculine lily offers a spiritual paternal alternative to the huddled earthly figure of the boy clergeon's mother weeping in the lower right of the illumination. Depicting the boy's mother deemphasizes Mary's maternal role in lieu of a more spiritual paternal role, one where Mary infuses matter with spirit actively rather than interceding on the boy's behalf, a role visually demonstrated by the mother pleading on bended knee for the mayor and city to take action against the Jews. In the illumination, objects of light surround the hole, including the bishop, the shrouded boy singer and the shimmering white imperial Marian fleur-de-lys presiding over the scene. Despres relates the contrast in light and dark in the illumination to "innocence in contrast to depravity," but I would

argue that the contrast takes on bodily and Marian significance.[78] In the illumination, the bodies of the Jews unite with that of the Christian mother, fallen and abject, located around and inside of the Jewish home. Only the boy's body, made whole after his recovery from the privy, shares in the whiteness which characterizes the bishop and lily. Disembodies and reconceived as a symbolic floriated scepter, the Virgin Mary aligns with the masculine and pure as opposed to the darker Jewish and feminine figures which dominate the right side of the illumination.

Re-gendering the Virgin Mary through the object of the lily, the poet and illuminator imbue the queen with masculine qualities. Aligning Mary with the masculine and spiritual and choosing not to represent her in physical form as female removes her from any danger of carnal similitude that existed between medieval 'Woman' and 'Jew.' For medieval thinkers, women and Jews were linked via a rhetoric of abjection: as Lisa Lampert explains, "the figure of the woman and the Jew are incomplete. Woman becomes complete by transcending her sex. The Jew also exists in a state characterized by the carnal and the literal and will only reach fulfillment through conversion, by becoming Christian."[79] Mary presented a special case for medieval Christian thinkers, who had to negotiate her sanctity and bodily impermeability with the fact that she bore Christ. Their solution was to insist that Mary's hymen remained intact, and that she did not bleed during the birth, removing her from Eve's curse. As Clarissa Atkinson clarifies,

> Mary was always a virgin—during and after, as well as before, the birth of Jesus. Sexual activity was unthinkable for her, as was a ruptured hymen: perfection was incompatible with the loss of bodily integrity, and despite evidence to the contrary (such as menstruation), medieval people believed that the hymen served as a kind of seal.[80]

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[78] Despres 152.

[79] Lampert 34.

[80] Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 112.

Cuffel similarly asserts that for medieval Christian thinkers, "[i]f Jesus passed through Mary like light through glass, then Mary experienced neither pain nor bleeding either from the breaking of her hymen . . . or from the tearing and afterbirth that normally accompany labor."[81] Glass is an interesting metaphor, as light can pass through it while the glass still maintains its physical integrity and impermeability as an amorphous solid. The Marian anti-Semitic romance, as I have argued, emphasizes the permeability of the Jewish body, from which excrement freely flows into the privy. Mary exacerbates this permeability, traveling in and out of the privy freely "like glass" without acquiring the taint of defecation and decay within. In this way, Mary acts the role of the spiritual seed which the Jews asserted could not stay within her physical womb. Odo of Cambrai similarly claims that God could inhabit the womb of a woman without contamination because God inhabits sinners.[82] In choosing not to depict Mary in physical form, the illuminator exhibits the very fear of bodily contamination and taint of femininity from which he seeks to extricate the Virgin Mary. Her corporeal absence, especially given her human depiction as "Maria Regina" in other Vernon miracles, belies deep anxieties over the possibility that Christian viewers might have aligned the physical body of the Virgin with the fallen, bleeding, and incomplete body of the Jewish perpetrator. For "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination—indeed, for the romance which elides Mary's physical presence in the privy as well—imagining Mary in the privy is an impossibility and demonstrates that for medieval thinkers an embodied Mary could not in fact transcend associations between the feminine body and abjection.

Reterritorializing the Jewry:

Mary and the Deleuzian *Ritournelle*

"The Child Slain by Jews" miracle and "The Miracle of the Boy Singer"

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[81] Cuffel 123.

[82] Berger 352.

illumination ideologically frame Mary as a powerful queenly intercessor while stressing her purity in a distinctly aural manner. Sound asserts Mary's power over the Jewry much in the same way that Richard Coer de Lyon's absent mother, Cassodorien, resurfaces in the climactic battle of Acre through an aural assault staged on the belled crupper of a demonic mare. In a romance of just a little over 150 lines, the word "song" occurs twenty times. The boy's song demarcates spaces in the romance as either Christian or hostile. In the Christian streets of Paris, "That song was holden deynteous" (27), but in the Jewry, the Jews "hidden that song in hayn" (33). The boy sings the "Alma Redemptoris Mater," a Marian votive emphasizing Mary's regal, maternal and intercessory roles, made explicit when the romance tells us it "is forthrightly to mene, "Godus Moder, mylde and clene, / Hevene yate and sterre of se, / Save thi peple from synne and we." (Mother of God, mild and clean / Heaven's gate and star of the sea / Save thy people from sin and woe) (23-6). The "Alma Redemptoris Mater" fixates more than other Marian hymns on the physical purity of the Virgin throughout her pregnancy and birthing of Christ. Part of the short Marian hymn exclaims Mary's status as "virgo prius ac posterius" (Virgin before and after (Christ's birth)), anchoring the Jews' violent response to the problem of Mary's womb and the Incarnation.[83] The boy's aural exclamation of Mary's purity angers the Jews, who "alle to hym envye" (30). Aurally, then, the romance aurally asserts Mary's purity and distinguishability from other women in her ability to transcend birthing and the abjection associated with it.

As my first chapter explores through Cassodorien's transmogrification of the sound of bells into an agent of demonic maternity, aurality often operates in romance as a form of queenly subversive power. Mary as Queen of Heaven enacts a similar

[83] J. Stephen Russell, "Song and the Ineffable in the 'Prioress's Tale'," *The Chaucer Review* 33.2 (1998), 176-89, noted the similar omission in the Prioress's Tale of the lyrics to the "Alma Redemptoris Mater," and attributes the omission to a privileging of the ineffable nature of song that has "little relevance to the words of the song" (186). I argue, however, that the words of the "Alma Redemptoris" do matter, as they acknowledge the ideological stakes of Mary's corporeality at the heart of both *The Prioress's Tale* and "The Child Slain by Jews."

repurposing of her own womb through a similar aural reterritorialization. Queering both the functions of the Jew's body (defecation becomes menstruation) and her own role (as passive vessel for Christ), Mary stages a scene in which she impregnates a boy with spiritual rather than physical life, spreading Marian hymns rather than physical progeny and emphasizing her spiritual purity whilst downplaying her physical abjection. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari begin the chapter of the refrain with the anecdote of a lost boy who sings instinctively to make sense of his environment. The example resonates with the plight of the disoriented boy clergeon as he wanders through the Parisian Jewry:

> A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, center in the heart of chaos.[84]

Faced with the need to sing for money, the boy clergeon, like Deleuze and Guattari's child, crosses into an unknown space—the Jewry—en route to an unspecified destination ("The childes wey thorw the Jewerie lay") (32). The boy never stops singing, not when the Jews conspire to lure him into the murderer's home, and not even when the Jew murders him—the boy "never-the-latere song forth his song" (50).

The purpose of the refrain, for Deleuze and Guattari, is to aurally assert space, to deterritorialize and then reterritorialize unfamiliar space. They explain the refrain/'ritournelle' as a threefold place of disorientation, the familiar, and escape:

> They are three aspects of a single thing, the Refrain (ritournelle). They are found in tales (both horror stories and fairy tales)…. Sometimes chaos is an immense black hole in which one endeavors to fix a fragile point as a center. Sometimes one organizes around that point a calm and stable "pace" (rather than a form): the black hole has become a home. Sometimes

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[84] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1987), 311.

one grafts onto that pace a breakaway from the black hole.[85]

Song remained an essential component of Marian piety and operated to assert the cult of the Virgin Mary both within and without the Church.[86] Historically, crusaders used the refrain of Marian hymn to territorialize the unfamiliar places they passed through en route to the Holy Land. Crusaders often sang the "Salve Regina" on the way to the Holy Land, emphasizing Mary's role as queen.[87] Mary, as regal Queen of Heaven and arbiter of mercy, became a stable center as the Crusaders continued their march, a queenly symbol of Christian territorialization of heathen space. The boy acts as such a Marian warrior, and his song serves as a litmus test in its assertion of Mary's physical purity. In "The Child Slain by Jews" and its accompanying illumination, Mary, as focal point in a Christian aural assault on the Jewry from the aporia of the privy, remains fragile in her physical absence. Her absence evinces complex anxieties anchored in Christian thinkers' shared notion of the abject nature of the feminine body and in the conspicuous absence of the human figure of the Virgin Mary in a collection that otherwise revels in displaying the crowned figure of the "Maria Regina." The bishop discovers Mary's lily after her intervention in the privy; like the illuminator, the poet refuses to envision or describe the Queen of Heaven submerged among the abject effluvia of the privy.

Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of the *ritournelle* resonates dramatically with the narrative of Marian abjection, as Mary must negotiate the space of the romance's black hole, the Jewish privy, without appearing there in physical form. The miracle tells us that even after his murder, the boy "Whon he hedde endet, he eft bigon," very clearly indicating that the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" has transmogrified into an unceasing refrain (43). Mary's textual insemination of the boy clergeon transforms his singing from

[85] Deleuze and Guattari 312.

[86] Rubin 291, for example, writes that Mary had long been associated with song.

[87] Boss 42.

the disquieting song of a boy struggling to earn money in an unfamiliar Jewry in Paris to a reterritorializing refrain creating a stable center in the black hole of the privy. Once thrown into the privy, the boy's song increases in both pitch and volume, "ever the lengor, here and here" (79). In this space, Mary intervenes and reterritorializes the Jewry, drawing the boy's mother, mayor, and Christian populace through the relentless repetition of the "Alma Redemptoris Mater."

"The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination visually depicts this Deleuzian/Marian reterritorialization of Jewish space. In the illumination, words erupt miraculously from the boy's throat—the site of insemination—and from the lily scepter itself, claiming space through the sound of Marian hymns. The romance distinctly conflates the lily embossed "[w]ith guldene lettres everiwher" (123) with the word and its aural recitation, here the words of the Marian "Alma Redemptoris Mater" literally inscribed upon the flower itself. The boy becomes a mouthpiece for the Virgin, disseminating the seed of Marian piety aurally throughout the Jewry in a refrain (*ritournelle*) that, in Deleuzian terms, deterritorializes the Jewry, eradicating boundaries and bringing the Christian community inside. Depicted only in the form of a queen's floriated scepter, Mary polices and reconstitutes the private, interior space of the Jew's home with Marian text, albeit in a distinctly queered way via the ministrations of the bishop who hold that scepter. Literally and conveniently centralized over the "black hole" of the privy—the epicenter of abjection and chaos in the miracle and illumination—the illumination contains and reterritorializes this most private and secret of Jewish spaces with Marian incantations encircling and containing the privy as they issue forth as melodic text from both the carved throat of the clergeon and the stamen of the erect lily. The discovery and recovery of the boy's body results in further aural reterritorialization of Jewish space as the Parisian Christian community parades the body "thorw al the cite" while the blending of voices and the sound of bells sanctifies each section of the city as a Christian space: "With presetes and clerkes that coutehn syngen/ And all the belles he het

hem ryngen" (133-4). Much like the first chapter explored the religious and territorial significance of the bell in Richard Coer de Lyon as a symbol for the church coopted by Richard's demonic mother, Cassodorien, this chapter similarly recognizes aurality as an important symbol of feminine power and religious space. Operating as a Deleuzian refrain, the procession, anchored in Marian hymn and the reverberating sound of bells, claims the Jewry as a Christian space wherein event he most private of Jewish spaces, the privy, becomes the centerpiece of Christian miracle and Christian voyeurism.

Mary's engagement with the text of the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" and instigation via the lily of the boy's ceaseless refrain from the privy metaphorically re-stages the Jewish nightmare of Jesus' carnal birthing from the fetid womb of the Virgin Mary.

Figure 6

Detail of privy, "The Miracle of the Boy Singer"

The Jewish murderer becomes the carnal abject mother, throwing the "mater" (physical form) of the boy into the abject privy/womb, after which the pure seed of the Marian lily impregnates the boy and elevates him from that abject well. Whereas Jesus emerged from the fetid womb of Mary to disseminate Christian teachings resulting in the vilification of Jews for the Sandhedron's role in his crucifixion, here Mary structures the noise from within the Jewish body-as-privy. Mary acts the role of Aristotelian father, imbuing him with spiritual life.

Through her queered staging of a miraculous birth viewed by both Jewish and Christian communities alike, Mary ultimately asserts the triumph of spiritual over carnal. Equal parts subversive and intercessory, Mary's lily-as-scepter asserts her regal power at the same time it contains her power, as the bishop terminates the miracle by removing the lily and thus demonstrates clerical power and feminine dependence on masculine power for intercessory prowess. Still, Mary demonstrates through her miraculous revival of the boy that one can emerge unscathed from the seat of abjection. This argument was a common one in late medieval polemics dealing with the sanctity of Mary's womb. In his twelfth-century polemic, *A Disputation with the Jew, Leo,* Odo of Tournai defends the Jewish reading of bodies as abject: "our sense despises our genitalia, viscera, and excrement and judges them unclean. Reason, however, judges nothing unclean but sin."[88] Odo goes on to reclaim Mary's name from its associations with *hari'a* and, by proxy, her body from sin and pollution. He asserts,

> Clearly the holy angel Gabriel said that she is 'full of grace (Lk. 1:28).' If full, nothing of hers was in any way devoid of grace. So, nothing of hers was emptied by sin, whose whole being was filled with grace. Therefore her sex was filled with glory, her womb was filled with glory, her organs were filled with glory, the whole of her was filled with glory, because the whole of her was filled with grace. Truly that woman surpassed sense; she was wise who said: 'Blessed is the womb which bore you, and the breasts which gave you suck (Lk. 11:27).'[89]

[88] Odo of Tournai, *A Disputation with the Jew*, 96.

[89] Odo of Tournai 96.

Guibert of Nogent relies on a similar rhetoric of fullness in his defense of the Virgin Mary's womb. In his *Treatise on the Incarnation against the Jews*, Guibert asserts, "those members, which then devoted themselves to that offspring, were more dignified than are those foulest of mouths, which…deride the life-giving sacraments."[90] For Odo, Guibert, and other polemicists, Mary, far from the purgation of *hari'a*, etymologically embodies fullness—of spirit and of womb. Reading Mary's womb as polluted and abject, they argue, ignores the spiritual aspects of Christ's Incarnation which supersede the flesh. Thus, Mary's womb and breasts, carriers of menstrual effluvia and breastmilk which were viewed as lower forms of corrupting blood by medieval doctors, become "blessed" and "filled with glory."

"The Child Slain by Jews" in the Vernon manuscript takes this Marian re-purposing further. In queering the gendering of a monstrously abject "birth" of the boy singer, Mary reads the Jewish male body as Jewish polemicists read her female body: as abject, incontinent, and polluting. Yet, through her intercession and purification of the boy, Mary shows the carnal Jews of the Parisian Jewry—importantly through the textually embossed lily and in the illumination through the text of the "Alma Redemptoris Mater" and "Salva Sanctis Parens" hymns which escape from the illumination in text—that the spiritual supersedes and transforms the literal and embodied.

From Womb to Tomb: Keeping Mary Intact

The project of scapegoating the Jews in "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" coincides with the sanctification of Mary's body, a movement from *womb* to *tomb*. The abject fetid womb of Mary attacked by Jewish polemicists in medieval religious debates is relocated to the immaculate tomb of the monastic church where the boy's body is

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[90] Guibert of Nogent, *Tractatus de incanatione contra Iudaeos* (A Treatise on the Incarnation against the Jews), I.I, *Patrologia Latina* I.6.156:491, cited in J.J. Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999), 194.

enshrined, there freed from any corporeal connections. "The Child Slain by Jews" identifies this place as the "munstre," defined in the *OED* as "the church of a monastery."[91] For the boy, I would argue, the entrance of the minster represents Mary's intercessory role as Heaven's gate, the figure who guides people from the material life into the spiritual, effecting a spiritual birth. When the boy first sings the "Alma Redemptoris Mater," the poet apprises us of Mary's significance as "Heven yate" (25), the gate of Heaven. The gate of course functions metonymically as vagina, a purified and spiritual version of the material gate through which all men pass from the womb into the world.

Medieval thinkers as well as contemporary scholars note the sexualized Marian architecture of medieval Gothic churches. The guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse*, conflates Mary's womb with the architecture of an anchorhold: "And was he not himself a recluse in Mary's womb? . . . Are you imprisoned within four wide walls? And he [Christ] . . . enclosed tight in a stone tomb. Mary's womb and this tomb were his anchorhouses."[92] An extensive Jewish compendium of anti-Christian arguments collected from German and French Jews, the *Nizzahon Vetus*, mentions Christian polemicists' use of the metaphor of a sanctified gate, which Christians argued was a symbol of Mary's womb, anchored in the book of Ezekiel: "Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which faces the east; and it was shut. Then said the Lord unto me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut."[93] Christians likened the gate to Mary's intact womb, using it as proof of her virginity before and after Christ's birth. Medieval Gothic church architecture reflects this metaphorical relationship. Though "The Child Slain by Jews" and accompanying illumination refrain from

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[91] munstre, *n*. 2. a. *OED Online*. 2009.
[92] *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, trans. Anne Sage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 186.

[93] David Berger, ed., *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages*, 93, citing Ezek. 44:1-2.

specifically describing the minster, the church's medieval Parisian locale places it within the trend of medieval Gothic architecture, often characterized by tall pointed archways and classical dimensions. Madeline Caviness has tied this style of architecture to Marian sexual anatomy, noting the labial shape of Gothic church entrances as "the architectural space of the Church-as-Mary."[94] The womb itself was thought to take on a cruciform shape like the layout of Gothic churches. The boy's procession ends from "all the cite . . . [i]nto the munstre," indicating a final passage through the doorway of the church.

While Mary physically and aurally breaks down boundaries between the Jewry and Christian sections of Paris, she reconstitutes the Christian minster as a place freed from associations with pollution and abjection. Medieval European consecration rituals, such as those invoked when consecrating old synagogues as Christian churches, relied on a Marian rhetoric of purification and passage. As the link between Christian and Jew, spiritual and physical, and Christ and mankind, Mary's body evoked a sense of passage and purification because, through Christ's Incarnation, Christians believed mankind was purified and Old Law superseded by New; Synagoga replaced by Ecclesia.[95] If "The Child Slain by Jews" is about Mary's body and the Incarnation, as I am arguing it is, then the miracle must offer an alternative womb-like space freed from carnal pollution and abjection. The minster, as final resting place for the corpse of the boy singer, operates as just such a place. The Vernon manuscript illumination stresses the boy's impermeability and purity from his "bewhorven" state as he is removed to his final resting place in the monastic church. The boy is shrouded in white, brightly contrasted to the dark privy to

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[94] Madeline Caviness, *Visualizing Women in the Middle Ages: Sight, Spectacle, and Scopic Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 7.

[95] See e.g. Mitchell B. Merback, "Cleansing the Temple : The Munich Gruftkirche as converted Synagogue," in Mitchell Merback, ed., *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 305-45. Merback argues that standard consecration ceremonies in 13th century Germany invoked the presence of Mary, whose maternal body represented a pure space of passage, transition and conversion, and who personified the Church as a mystical unity that superseded the Old Synagogue. He links these consecration ceremonies to ritual murder allegations erupting in Munich in 1295 and 1345. saw ritual murder allegations in Munich which he argues were also about space and reclamation.

the left. The boy's body is miraculously cleansed of the excrement that covered it, and his white burial shroud is tied with bands at the throat and waist, the two places where the boy martyr's body is most penetrable. These two locations are also the sites of circumcision/castration and its displaced location of the throat, the organ of the Word. The miracle of the Virgin secures the boy martyr's body and renders it impenetrable.

"The Child Slain by Jews" includes a second miracle: after the "Masse of Requiem" (138), the boy's corpse reanimates and sings the "Salve, Sancta Parens" hymn. I would argue this second miracle (as the bishop extracts the lily before the boy's removal to the minster) follows from a second spiritual birth in the minster, which should be read as a pure and spiritual womb-like alternative to the privy. During the Mass of Requiem, especially for important figures like martyrs and saints, holy water was sprinkled on the corpse to facilitate the soul's ascent to Heaven. Chaucer's analogue, the *Prioress's Tale*, as a longer version of the chorister narrative provides some clues. In Chaucer's version, an abbot questions the boy about his miraculous power, and after sprinkling the boy with holy water from the church baptismal font, the boy begins to sing the "Alma Redemptoris Mater":

> And whan they hooly water on hym caste,
> *And when they cast holy water on him,*
> Yet spak this child, whan spreynd was hooly water,
> *The child spoke when sprayed with holy water,*
> And song O Alma redemptoris mater! (639-41)
> *And sang 'O Alma Redemptoris Mater!'*

The act of spritzing a corpse with holy water had clearly Marian connotations in late medieval England when the Vernon was composed. High and late medieval Christian polemicists inherited a classical tradition which read the baptismal font as a Marian womb. Although the Vernon manuscript analogue does not acknowledge directly the act of spritzing the corpse with holy water, this was part of the Mass Requiem. Emerging from the baptismal font, an infant would be birthed into spiritual life. Pope Leo I (5th

century) contended that "for every man coming to a rebirth, the water of baptism is an image of the virginal womb whereby the same Holy Spirit who also impregnated the Virgin impregnates the font; just as the sacred conception casts out sin in that place, so here mystic ablution takes it away."[96] The maternal symbolism of the baptismal font was well known throughout Europe. For example, the thirteenth-century Spanish monarch Alfonso X of Castile incorporated the Marian symbolism of the baptismal font into his legal codex, in which he asserts that "With the holy water, the sacred font becomes pregnant with a new uncorrupted creature. Therefore those who enter in it will be remade as part of a celestial lineage. So the baptismal font, which is like a mother, produces children under the grace of that lineage."[97] In relocating the boy clergeon to the "munster," then, "The Child Slain by Jews" stages a purified womb-like alternative to the abject privy, a spiritual and feminine birthing space from which the boy can ascend to Heaven.

Of course, Mary's active intervention in the miracle queers the gendering of both spaces, rendering the privy abject and feminine and conflating paternal and maternal Marian roles. Mary's agency in placing the Marian lily in the boy's throat queers her role as intercessor and empty vessel, aligning her with the Aristotelian role of spiritual father as opposed to earthly mother. The boy clergeon's song in "The Child Slain by Jews" evinces this ambivalence. "Salva Sancta Parens," though clearly a Marian hymn, ambiguously addresses the "holy parent" responsible for creating the King of Heaven and Earth. In the miracle, the boy's choice of Marian hymn better acknowledges her transgendered hermaphroditic role as both father and mother, as both pregnant font and spiritual seed.

In conclusion, the project of displacement at work in both the narrative of "The

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[96] From Pope Leo's sermon, *Nativitate Domini IV*, cited in P.A. Underwood, "The Fountain of Life in Manuscripts of the Gospel," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950): 41-138, at 63. See also W. M. Bedard, "The Font as Mother or as Womb of the Church," in *The Symbolism of the Baptismal Font in Early Christian Thought* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic U of America P, 1951), 17-56.

[97] *Las Siete Partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio* (Madrid, 1807), 1:66, cited in Francisco Prado-Vilar at 129.

Child Slain by Jews" and "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination which accompanies it succeeds in repressing the monstrous qualities of the Virgin's womb. The Marian narrative and illumination work cohesively to actively displace the *hari'a* allegations onto the open Jewish privy, the womb-like marker of Jewish abjection and bodily permeability. Attempting to cordon off the division between imperial Mary and dissembling Jew, monastic royal tomb and Jewish quarter privy, "The Miracle of the Boy Singer" illumination encourages its community of viewers to repress the reality of Mary's humanity and body, highlighting her symbolic role as 'Maria Regina' through the image of the lily scepter and instead displacing all that could be seen as abject onto the privy and its Jewish users. Yet, just below the surface, the repressed registers anxiously slip past, whether in the womblike privy or the gender-bending reversal of Mary's insemination of the boy singer, an inversion which gives Mary a hermaphroditic and subversive agency not unlike seemingly paradoxical accusations of hyperfemininity and mannishness leveled at powerful English queen consorts like Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou. Similar to romance queens like Cassodorien, Custance, and Morgan le Fay, Mary is at once foreign and local, and she similarly queers and queries masculine power. Like Cassodorien, Mary's assertion of power is largely aural, and like Custance, Mary adopts a heterodox role in asserting the Christian religion as queen.

Mary emerges from the miracle and in the illumination as a subversively powerful queen. Diametrically opposed to the intercessory figure of the boy's mother, supplicating on bended knee and reliant on the judicial patriarchal figures of the bishop and mayor, Mary instead acts as the spiritual figure. Standing tall and presiding over the Jewish scene of the privy, the Marian lily as queen's scepter rests in the hand of the bishop, implying that 'Maria Regina' wields true power in the Marian romance, but that that power is ultimately hinged on masculine approval, much like queenly intercession hinged on the judgment of the king. Relocating the womb to the privy, penetrating that privy and, by proxy, the Jewish body, Mary reveals her own purity and exposes the Jewish perpetrator

as an inept and literal reader. Yet, the romance's refusal to picture Mary in the privy serves as a telling elision: clearly Mary's physical body, like the feminine bodies of queens similarly charged with both chastity and fecundity, aroused anxieties in late medieval clergymen like the Vernon poet/compiler of the Miracles of the Virgin who strove to construct her as "Maria Regina." In a tale about penetrating boundaries—the Christian quarters and Jewry, the body of the boy clergeon, the open bodies of the male Jews who purge over the latrine—Mary's feminine body alone remains impervious and incorruptible, again inverting gendered binaries governing the Jewish-Christian polemical debates over the Incarnation.

CHAPTER FOUR
MORGAN LE FAY AND FEMININE MISRULE IN MALORY'S *MORTE DARTHUR*

Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (c.1470), written during his imprisonment in the Tower of London, imagines an Arthurian Britain rife with powerful and disruptive queens. From Guinevere, whose adultery fractures the Round Table and the fraternity of Arthur's knights, to Morgan le Fay, who plots to seduce Arthur's knights and destroy his kingdom, queens pose a considerable threat in the *Morte*, more often leading knights astray than aiding them in chivalrous pursuits. Critics generally accept that Thomas Malory (1405-1471) was most likely Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, an affluent man with ties to both Lancastrian and Yorkist plots as well as a colorful life of crimes some critics still find inconvenient and incongruous with the high prose style of the *Morte*.[1]

Following accusations of assault and robbery in 1443, Malory was the subject of an inquisition at Nuneaton in 1451, where Hugh Smith alleged Malory "feloniously raped and carnally lay by" Joan Smith, and he was charged with raping the same woman again in Coventry.[2] While, as Catherine Batt has explored, charges of rape encapsulated both abduction and rape in the modern sense of the word, medieval law focused on the crime of rape as a property theft rather than a crime against women. That is, the Statute of Rapes of 1382, still law in the fifteenth century, gave husbands and fathers the ability to

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[1] See e.g. Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); T.J. Lustic, *Knight Prisoner: Thomas Malory Then and Now* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2014); Catherine Batt, *Malory's Morte Darthur: Remaking Arthurian Tradition* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). Three Thomas Malory's have been put forward as the author of the *Morte*.

[2] Catherine Batt, "Malory and Rape," *Arthuriana* 7.3 (Fall 1997): 78-99, discusses the inquisition in detail. The original Latin charges were "felonice rapuit & cum ea carnaliter concubit" and "de raptu Johanne vxoris ipsius Hugonis" (81). Christine Carpenter argues that Malory did not commit rape because Hugh Smith made the accusation rather than Joan. Batt counters that Joan could not have made the accusation before 1382 unless she had done so under her husband's name and with his consent (cited in Batt, "Malory and Rape," 82).

make rape accusations even if the female victim consented.[3] Batt productively expands this male-centered conception of rape to the *Morte*, where she posits that the language of rape gets relocated to male victims like Lancelot and becomes "an expression of anxiety, and perhaps disillusion, over the possible comforts for the masculine of the whole Arthurian project."[4] What Batt does not explore, and this chapter will develop, are the ways in which queens as necessarily public figures are perceived in the *Morte* as perpetrators of "rape," abducting, seducing, and threatening to violate the bodies of Arthur's chivalric knights.

While it is difficult to ascertain for certain Malory's views towards the two queens embroiled on opposite sides of the Wars of the Roses, the Lancastrian Margaret of Anjou (r.1445-1461) and the Yorkist Elizabeth Woodville (r.1464-1470), the indeterminacy of his own political allegiances suggests his opinion of the two queens would have been ambivalent and fraught at best. Malory was appointed M.P. for his native Warwickshire in 1445, but was by 1450 placed as M.P. in Dorset, certainly because of the patronage of the Duke of Buckingham and most likely through the nomination of the Duke of York.[5] Yet, early in 1450, Malory laid in wait with twenty-six men to ambush and kill the Duke of Buckingham but was unsuccessful. Buckingham had strong ties to the Lancastrians in the Wars of the Roses, later becoming one of the "Queen's Gallants" in 1457-1458 and dying in battle against the Yorkists. Malory, as M.P. for Wareham in Dorset, was a Yorkist and, as T.J. Lustic most recently claimed, "belonged to York" at this time.[6] This claim is further supported by the fact that the Duke of York pardoned Malory for robbery in 1455.[7]

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[3] Batt, "Malory and Rape," 82.

[4] Batt, "Malory and Rape," 93-4.

[5] Riddy 4.

[6] Lustic 75. At 95, Lustic claims that Malory turned against Henry VI in the 1450s.

[7] Christina Hardyment, *Malory: the Life and Times of King Arthur's Chronicler* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), reads Malory as a devoted Lancastrian, and even goes so far as to suggest Malory was involved in a

In prison at Marshalsea during most of the 1450s for his attempted murder of Buckingham, rape of Joan Smith, and various property crimes, Malory took advantage of a general pardon in 1462 following Edward IV's first tenure as king in 1461. He even helped the Yorkists assault Lancastrian castles at Alnwick, Bansburgh, and Dunstanburgh.[8] He benefited from a general pardon issued by Edward IV in 1462. Yet, by 1468, Malory was one of the few criminals excepted from Edward's pardon and for three subsequent general pardons, and remained in the Tower of London and composed the *Morte* before dying in captivity. Perhaps, as some have suggested, Malory had become a recalcitrant Lancastrian disillusioned with the Yorkist cause, or perhaps Edward IV thought of the unpredictable gallant as a threat.[9] Perhaps, when Malory began writing the *Morte* at a time when the English queen was head of the Lancastrian army, he became critical of women exercising political power but rejoined the Lancastrians after he saw the young prince as a possible heir.

While much of the period directly preceding the composition of the Morte remains blank, the *Morte* suggests Malory had become deeply distrustful and anxious about powerful queens, regardless of his alignment in the end with either the Yorkists or Lancastrians. Some critics have noted the unusual power women wield in Malory's iteration of Arthurian legend, particularly that of Morgan le Fay. Geraldine Heng contends that Morgan and Ninyve can "unleash actions which may playfully mimic the gestures of courtly-chivalric ethos, but without self-conscription," while Catherine Batt argues that "the *Morte* does not share the *Suite*'s consistent circumscription of female power" and thus "female power emerges as more autonomous" in the *Morte* than in

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plot against Edward IV and may have acted as a go-between for the imprisoned Henry VI and the exiled Margaret (420).

[8] Riddy 5.

[9] See e.g. Lustic, who refers to Malory in this period as "a beset Lancastrian" (96); and P.J.C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 1993), claims that "before the end of that decade [1450s] something had gone very much awry in Malory's Yorkist allegiance" (131).

Malory's source material.[10] Malory imbues Morgan more than in any of his sources in the *Morte* with the trait which continues to characterize her in retellings of Arthurian narratives: her unnatural thirst for power, the characteristic which also came to dominate demonized accounts of Margaret of Anjou's bid for power in the wake of Henry VI's mental collapse. Malory emphasizes Queen Morgan le Fay's "treson" throughout the *Morte*, compiling and altering episodes from his sources to create a cohesive portrait of queenly treacherous ambition.

Nonetheless, Morgan should not be read as an emblem of feminine misrule in the tradition that many continue to read Malory's women.[11] Rather, this chapter suggests that Malory critiques Margaret of Anjou's queenship through Morgan le Fay's misrule as queen. This chapter traces some of the specific ways in which Malory constructs his villainous queen to reflect historically localized events associated with the denigrated Lancastrian queen. Thus, Morgan's queenship, an oft-overlooked component to her power, is of paramount importance to understanding Malory's critical approach to her, as it necessarily involves acknowledging very real localized late medieval anxieties over female power.[12] Morgan's bids for power in Malory's *Morte* resonate with the contemporaneous vilification of the Lancastrian leader, the "She-Wolf," Margaret of

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[10] Geraldine Heng, "Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory," in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Contex*t, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Dalfsen: John Benjamins B.V., 1986), 283-300, at 290; Catherine Batt, *Malory's Morte Darthur: Remaking Arthurian Tradition* 66.

[11] Maureen Fries, "Gender and the Grail," *Arthuriana* 8.1 (1998), 67-99, typifies this trend in reading Morgan le Fay as the emblematic "(Very) Bad Woman" (69) who splits from the "male friendly" Ladies of the Lake ("From the Lady to the Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance," *Arthuriana* 4.1 (1994), 1-18, 1). Geraldine Heng, "Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory," argues that this critical trend of reading Malory's female characters as merely supportive quashes any possibility of feminine critique and subversion in *Le Morte*. Nonetheless, she reads Morgan le Fay as non-human, an embodiment of evil (106). Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen-Âge : Morgane et Mélusine : La naissance des fées* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1984), reads Morgan le Fay as lust incarnate ("une incarnation de la luxure") (275).

[12] Though none have sufficiently emphasized Morgan's queenship as an essential political component to interpreting her character, the same has been suggested of Guinevere by Kenneth Hodges in "Guinevere's Politics in Malory's Morte Darthur," *JEGP* 104.1 (2005), 54-79, in which he argues that to read Guinevere simply as a lover robs her of political significance as a queen and political actor (55).

Anjou, in the Wars of the Roses. Malory mirrors the rhetoric of attacks on Margaret in his aggregation of material on Morgan: both emphasize acts of poisoning and enchantment, the queen's fraught relationship with the king's sword, adultery, and a growing association of the queen with the Northern periphery. In the 1460s as in *Le Morte*, magic and adultery become tools with which to critique and imagine female power.

Malory explores Morgan's magic, adultery, and feminine power largely through objects. In opposition to women like Isolde who heal with salves, Morgan interacts subversively with objects, turning salves into poisonous unguents, subverting the hierarchy of sword over scabbard, and conferring upon Arthur a poisonous cloak designed to destroy rather than laud his kingship. Richard Kieckhefer defines sorcery in his study of medieval magic as the *misuse* of medical and protective magic.[13] Morgan very much behaves as a sorceress, then, as one who misuses medicine and corrupts objects. Morgan's interactions with these objects reveals a process of queering: that is, objects like the king's sword, a medicinal salve, and a royal cloak conferring masculine authority become other when contaminated by Morgan's touch, and their indeterminacy as objects is revealed and their sacred power stripped in Morgan's repeated revelations. Constructing a particularly educated and powerful queen in his Morgan le Fay, Malory evinces masculine anxiety over feminine rule and situates queenship in the *Morte* through Morgan as a destabilizing force that fractures masculine community.

The Making of a "She-Wolf"

Margaret of Anjou (1430-1482), a royal contemporary of Thomas Malory (1405-1471), holds along with Isabella of France the vitriolic epithet "She-Wolf" of France. Much of our modern assessment of the French-born English queen consort stems from her early modern villainous portrayals in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* and John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. By Shakespeare's time, Margaret had become the solidified villainess of

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[13] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 80.

the Hundred Years War, the "She-wolf of France . . . Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth," an unnaturally ambitious "Amazonian trull" characterized by her manly ambition and willingness to murder.[14] Similarly, John Foxe, writing during the Protestant Reformation, characterized Margaret as "of haute stomack," a "manly" woman "of wit and wilynes" who "tooke vpon her to rule and gouerne both the king & kingdome.[15]" Certainly, Margaret garnered a negative reputation for asserting power and protecting interests in circumstances that, to many a modern reader, would seem pitiable.

For a queen who eventually led the Lancastrian army and earned the ire of English authors for hundreds of years, Margaret came to England quite passively. A victim of peaceweaving negotiations between Henry VI and his enemy, her uncle, the French king Charles VII, Margaret brought no dowry when she arrived in England in 1445 at the age of 15, a circumstance which, as I discussed in my study of Chaucer and Anne of Bohemia, often attracted the ire of the English populace. Though her marriage was orchestrated to ensure a twenty-three-month truce—indeed, peace served as a central motif in her royal entry into London—by 1453 England had lost all of its French territories except Calais.[16] As a late medieval English queen consort, Margaret was expected to perform largely genealogical and symbolic functions: as intercessor for the English people and as mother to the next king. By the thirteenth-century and continuing through the late medieval period, as Peggy McCracken notes, queens were regarded primarily as intercessors and queenship was "a public office with only symbolic and, of course, reproductive functions."[17]

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[14] William Shakespeare, *3 Henry VI*, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. Herschel Baker et al (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), I.iv.111, 112, 114.

[15] John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or *TAMO* (1583 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011), Book 6, 729. Available from: http//www.johnfoxe.org [Accessed: 03.22.14].

[16] For an account of Margaret's royal entry, see e.g. Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 20.

[17] Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), at 6.

Initially, Margaret failed at both of these roles. She birthed Prince Edward only after a grueling eight and a half year wait following her marriage to Henry VI. Also, many of Margaret's attempts at intercession, between citizens and their creditors as well as between disfavored citizens and the king, seem to have failed and even in some cases angered the public.[18] Most notably, Margaret wrote to Charles VII of France to negotiate the cession of Maine, and her failure to sway the French king drew even more ire from English chroniclers and writers. Still, following the birth of Prince Edward, Margaret turned the tide of political opinion and briefly curried political favor and public support prior to her bid for power in the mid-1450s.[19] Swiftly, Margaret seemingly solved both of her major failings within a year: she famously interceded in Cade's Rebellion in 1450, resulting in the king's pardon, and became pregnant with the king's heir.

Margaret's vilification in the mid-1450s and early 1460s began not because of her failed acts of intercession or her delayed maternity, but rather as a result of her necessity to secure power for herself in the wake of Henry VI's mental collapse. Henry suddenly fell ill in July of 1453, and remained mentally incapacitated and catatonic for a year and a half, probably from a mental breakdown, leaving the kingdom in jeopardy with a wife and infant son. John Bale reports that Henry VI was "smyten with a ffrensy and his wit and reson withdrawen."[20] Concordantly, the *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae* simply states that "for a year and a half, [Henry] lacked both natural sense and intelligence sufficient to govern the realm."[21] Demonized in the aftermath of Yorkist takeover and

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[18] See e.g. *Letters of Queen Margaret of Anjou and Bishop Beckington and others, Written in the reigns of Henry V. and Henry VI* (from a ms. found at Emral in Flintshire), ed. by Cecil Monro (Westminster: Camden Society, 1863), 110, 138-9 (her failure to ensure a successor for the parish church of Cottingham), 142-3 (expressing her displeasure with William Chatterley), 161-2 (inciting the ire of the sheriffs of London for interceding to reinstate the corrupt Alexander Manning); also Maurer 2, citing Philippe de Commynes, who suggests Margaret was an upstart rather than an intercessor.

[19] *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VI: Vol. V, A.D. 1446-52* (London: Anthony Brothers, Ltd., 1909), at 338, reports on July 6, 1450 that Henry pardoned the Kentish rebels at "the request of the queen."

[20] *Six Town Chronicles of England*, ed. Ralph Flenley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 140-3.

propaganda in which the *Morte* was composed, Margaret shifted in public opinion from rightful queen and mother of the heir apparent to an outsider and usurper involved in plots of regicide, poisoning and adulterous affairs.

Margaret of Anjou was highly educated. Left in 1453 at the mercy of the ambitious and scheming Duke of York, Margaret of Anjou presented a bill of five articles to establish herself as regent until Prince Edward's maturity. In a dispatch from 1465, Louis XI expressed amazement at Margaret's literacy and brave rhetoric in requesting his aid to secure Prince Edward's inheritance, exclaiming "Look how proudly she writes."[22] York recognized the danger, and placed himself in a bid for the protectorate, which he won in March of 1454. Although Henry VI temporarily regained his sanity and ended this first protectorate, Margaret and York were now enemies. Although women could be named regents, fifteenth-century England was far removed from such times, and the women historically involved in such regencies were viewed as viragos, like Isabella the "She-Wolf" of France and the Empress Matilda. As Maurer points out, the protectorate was a position of martial and masculine power, and Margaret soon learned that she would have to exercise power through masculine agents rather than transparently in her own right, as direct feminine power would never be recognized as legitimate.[23]

In 1455, York confronted Henry VI en route to Leicester and demanded he hand over the Duke of Somerset, a favorite of Margaret's. York refused and fighting broke out, the result of which was the capture of Henry, the reinstatement of York as protectorate, and the murder of Somerset. In 1460, York forced Henry to disinherit Prince Edward, his

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[21] *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae de Regnis Henrici IV, Henrici V et Henrici VI*, ed. J.A. Giles (London: Typis Editoris Apud Brampton, 1848), reprint in University of Michigan Microfilms, 1980, 43-7, cited in *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom*, ed. Wendy Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 186

[22] 'Milan: 1461,' *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan: 1385-1618* (1912), pp. 37-106. URL: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=92252 [Accessed: 03.07.2013], 142.Louis wrote in response to Margaret's letter requesting aid in 1465: "guarda como scrive costei superbamente."

[23] Maurer 110.

son with Margaret who faced slanderous accusations of bastardy. Margaret out of necessity exercised increased control over the Prince in light of his father's compromised mental condition and the control Yorkists exerted over him. She appointed herself on her son's minority council using the privy seal, and essentially controlled all of his affairs by 1457.[24] Backed into a corner once again by the power-hungry York and threatened with the prospect that her son might be disinherited and killed, Margaret took charge, cementing her reputation as "She-Wolf."

The Loveday procession of 1458 demonstrates the strained triangulated relationship between Henry, Margaret, and York by the mid-1450s. Taking place on March 25, Lady Day, a procession of nobles walked at St Paul's, holding hands to symbolize their accord, followed by Henry and finally the Duke of York and Queen Margaret, holding hands and displaying "great familiaritie to all men's sights, whatsoever was meant to the contrary which appeared afterward."[25] Seeking reconciliation with the Yorkists, Henry VI forced his wife and the Duke of York to participate in the performance, which inverted gendered royal roles and cast Margaret as masculine adjudicator and rival to York while Henry, though central, acted the role of queenly intercessor, fostering peace and communication between his wife and her enemy.[26]

Margaret quickly assumed the role of leader of the Lancastrian army in Henry's stead. As a woman, however, Margaret could not fight on the battlefield. During the successful battle of Wakefield in December of 1460, Margaret was in Scotland seeking aid from the wife of King James II. Nonetheless, Yorkists blamed Margaret for the skyrocketing death count from civil war. Thomas Gascoigne, for example, writes that Margaret "ruled that nearly all the affairs in the realm were done according to her will,

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[24] Alison Weir, *Queen Isabella: Treachery, Adultery, and Murder in Medieval England*. (New York: Ballantine, 2006), 134.

[25] John Stowe, *Annales, Or a General Chronicle of England* (London, 1637), 404.

[26] Maurer provides an extended and insightful contextual reading of the the Loveday of 1458, 151-57.

for better or worse," and holds her responsible for the Duke of York losing his first protectorate: "Margaret labored so much herself and through other lords who were considered bad lords in the realm that the Duke gave up his authority."[27] Refusing to imagine Margaret as a multi-dimensional player in the Wars of the Roses motivated by the need to maintain the Lancastrian line and protect her son's interests, Yorkists instead fashioned a flat allegorical figure of unbridled feminine ambition and lust. Margaret struggled to maintain the appearance of deferring to Henry for her authority, but given his incapacitated condition, this became impossible, so she began to rely on her son for legitimation. Even when amassing an army to defeat the Duke of York in December of 1460 at Wakefield, Margaret relied on her status as mother, decorating her soldiers with Prince Edward's livery. A citizen of London writes that the Queen's Gallants, "every man and lorde bare the Pryncys levery, that was a bende of crymesyn and blacke with esteryge ys fetherys" and adds that "every man myghte knowe hys owne feleschippe by hys lyverey."[28]

Margaret's critics developed thematic attacks on her exercise of political power. Yorkist chroniclers accused Margaret of poisoning and adultery, located her lack of legitimate authority in her lack of a king's sword, and aligned her with what Londoners perceived as the wilder and barbaric North. In the fifteenth century, poisoning became a more common charge leveled against royal and aristocratic women, and began to take on magical components. Late medieval Yorkist chroniclers leveled accusations of poisoning against Margaret of Anjou. The unapologetically Yorkist author of the *English Chronicle* reports the death of the earl of Devon at Abingdon Abbey in 1458 as a guest of Margaret, "poisoned, as men said, and being there at that time with queen Margaret."[29] Richard

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[27] Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e Libro Veritatum,* ed. J.E.T. Rogers (Oxford, 1881), 204.

[28] "Gregory's Chronicle: 1461-1469," *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century* (1876), 210-39. URL: http//www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45560 [Accessed: 03.06.2013].

Kieckhefer explains in his study of medieval magic the ways in which poisoning began to be conflated with witchcraft in late medieval Europe: a woman "who gave people food and drink to do them harm," for example, "might be accused of 'poisoning' them, the distinction between normal and occult powers being as difficult to define here as elsewhere."[30] Thematically, this Yorkist charge emphasizes Margaret's betrayal of the role of queenly host and suggests she enacts perversely her role as intercessor for the people. By 1460, a more sinister accusation of poisoning had reached the Milanese ambassador, Prospero di Camulio, in France just roughly three months after Margaret's momentous win on December 30, 1460, at the Battle of Wakefield, which resulted in the beheading of the elder Duke of York. Camulio reports to the Duke of Milan from the safety of Brussels:

> They say here that the Queen of England, after the king had abdicated in favour of his son, gave the king poison. At least he has known how to die, if he did not know what to do else. It is said that the queen will unite with the Duke of Somerset.[31]

Unable to wield a sword, the villainous queen of the Yorkist imagination wields poison to quietly kill the king though Camulio later reports these rumors to have been false, as Henry VI was still alive at this point.

Concocting poisons in late medieval England was viewed as an offshoot of herbalism, a typically female-centered branch of natural magic.[32] In one of the most famous cases of sorcery pre-dating the *Malleus Maleficarum*,Eleanor Cobham, Duchess of Gloucester, was accused of necromancy and imprisoned in 1441 for conspiring "the

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[29] *English Chronicle* 75; cited in Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, 201.
[30] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 81.

[31] 'Milan: 1461,' 75.

[32] Ioan Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), notes that the Church had detected in late medieval Europe a "causal realtionship between the use of unguents made of plant extracts and the phenomenon of sorcery" (153).

kynges dethe" through "nigrymancye" and "wychcrafte." This alleged witchcraft involved herbalism; Eleanor had purchased an herbal potion from Margery Jourdemayne, the "Witch of Eye," allegedly for aiding in conceiving a child.[33] Jacquetta of Luxembourg, mother of the next queen consort, Elizabeth Woodville, and dowager duchess of Bedford who had accompanied Margaret from France, was charged with sorcery in 1469 for allegedly making effigies of the king and queen, although she was later acquitted. Within Malory's lifetime, then, England's own queen and several other illustrious noblewomen had been implicated in murderous schemes enveloping excessive feminine desire, feminine misrule, and magic. For Malory, both Morgan and Margaret actively seek the deaths of their husbands in order to promote knightly lovers who are subjects of those husbands, and both use (in Margaret's case, merely a Yorkist rumor) natural magic in attempting to achieve those ends.

Charges of poison combined with more nebulous charges of witchcraft, as Yorkist chroniclers claimed Henry VI had been "bewitched" and stupefied by Margaret. *Gregory's Chronicle* mentions that at the Battle of St. Albans "in the myddys of the batayle Kynge Harry wente unto hys Quene and for-soke all hys lordys," while Prospero di Camulio reported on March 9, 1461, that at Albany "the king was placed under a tree a mile away, where he laughed and sang" and later returned to Margaret.[34] In medieval literature, certain trees, especially in mid-day, were associated with fay and witchcraft. The fay Presine is encountered in a glade at midday in the *Roman de Mélusine* and the late medieval romance *Sir Orfeo* hinges on Heurodis' unintentional contract with the king of the Otherworld when she falls asleep under a fruit tree at noon. Focusing on Henry's lack of mental faculty, glamoring, and position "under a tree," Camulio subtly suggests Margaret has enchanted the King through witchcraft.

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[33] "A Short English Chronicle," *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, Ed. James Gairdner, Works of the Camden Society, ser. 2, vol. 28 (1881), 63.

[34] 'Milan: 1461," 74.

English chroniclers also incorporated charges of adultery into attacks on Margaret's exercise of political power in the Wars of the Roses. Yorkists arrested the Duke of Somerset in Margaret's bedchamber, fueling the persistent view of Margaret as an adulteress in accounts after the Wars of the Roses.[35] To write such an accusation directly against the queen would be treason, especially within English borders, so much of what we find is either foreign or written in the wake of Edward IV's coronation and Yorkist ascendency. The one rumor which did proliferate at the time alleged that Margaret's son, Edward, was a changeling, "a bastard goten in avoutry."[36] A famous Yorkist poem attached to the gates of Canterbury gives the following as the reason for England's prolonged state of civil war:

> This prevethe fals wedlock and periury expresse,
> Fals heryres fostred, as knowethe experyence,
> Unryghtewys dysherytyng with false oppresse.[37]

As Alison Weir writes of the various charges of infidelity against Margaret, "rumors of the queen's adultery was an integral part of the larger charge of misrule, while labeling Prince Edward a bastard paved the way for drastic change."[38] The *English Chronicle* retroactively claims that Margaret was "makyng pryue menys to some of the lordes of Englond" to have Henry resign in favor of Prince Edward, indicating that Yorkist propaganda was in fact widespread.[39] These "pryue menys" run counter to the very public intercessions late medieval English queen consorts typically performed, indicating a breach in conduct. Rumors of Margaret's infidelity spread far beyond English borders.

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[35] See e.g. John Stowe, *Annales,* 397.

[36] *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, and Henry VI*, ed. J.S. Davies, Camden Society, old series 64 (London, 1856), 80.

[37] *An English Chronicle* 91-2.

[38] Weir 178.

[39] *An English Chronicle* 80.

In a contemporary letter from Pope Pius II, the pope quotes the earl of Warwick as having reported in 1460 to a legate in Calais that Margaret "and those who defile the king's chamber" were taking over the English court while Henry VI was "ruled instead of ruling."[40] The pope conflates feminine exercise of power with a parallel excess of lust.

Yorkists also criticized Margaret's role in the Wars of the Roses as hyperfeminine or mannish. John Bocking, a contemporary onlooker, famously called Margaret in 1456 "a grete and strong labourid woman, for she spareth noo peyne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power."[41] Margaret's lack of a sword served as the focus of a famous account of her perceived unnatural feminine ambition following a procession in Coventry in 1457. The Coventry recorder focuses on Margaret's lack of the king's sword in a scathing report following a March 16 council meeting in 1457. Margaret demanded after the meeting to be escorted from the city like a king:

> The Meyre Rode next before her with a Mase yn
> his hande and the Shirrefs with here Whyte
> yardes next before the Meyre like as they before
> tyme did before the kyng, sauyng the kynges
> swerd was next to hym. And so they did neuer
> before the Quene tyll then, for they bere before
> that tyme alwey theire seuauntes mases before
> the Quene at her comynges at which doyng here
> Officers groged, seyng the Quene owed to be met
> yn like fourme as the kynge shold.[42]
>
> *The Mayor rode before [Margaret] with a mace in his hand*
> *and the sheriffs with their white yards*
> *rode before the Mayor as they had done before*
> *in front of the king, except that the king's*
> *sword was next to [the Mayor]. And they had never*
> *ridden before the Queen before then, because the servants*

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[40] Constance Head, "Pope Pius II and the Wars of the Roses," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, VIII (1970): 139-78, at 145, 152, citing the *Commentaries of Pius II on the Memorable Events of His Times*, trans. Florence Alden Gragg and ed. Leona C. Gabel (Smith College Studies in History, vols XXII, XXV, XXX, XXXV, XLIII, Northampton, Mass., 1937-57, reprinted New York, 1959), III, 268, 269-70, IX, 578.

[41] *The Paston Letters*, 1422-1509, ed. James Gairdner (London: A. Constable & Co., 1900), 378.

[42] *Coventry Leet Book, or Mayor's Register, 1420-1455*, Ed. Mary Harris, EETS (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1907), 298-99.

> *had previously ridden before the Queen; the Officers grudged this [procession], saying that the Queen had thought she deserved to be met in the same form as the king.*

Riding "as the kynge," Margaret nonetheless cannot exercise legitimate royal power, which the Coventry chronicler locates in the objective correlative of the king's sword, which is safely kept by the Mayor rather than the queen. The sword functions euphemistically, indicating that Margaret's role in the procession is unnatural, because she lacks a sword or penis. The same mentality lay behind Margaret's inability to pass the five bills allowing her to act as protector and regent until Prince Edward's maturity: the role of lord protector required a sword, and Margaret, as a woman, was excluded from the sword and the masculine power—phallic, martial, and political—the sword entailed.

Attacks on Margaret's assertion of power took on a geographical component when Yorkists increasingly associated her with the North in accounts from 1456 to 1461. Fleeing to the Midlands upon York's second dismissal as Lord Protector of the realm, Margaret learned of the Lancastrian defeat at Northampton only to flee again with Prince Edward to Wales and then Scotland. In 1461, Prospero Camulio reports that Margaret had again fled to the North after persuading Henry VI with Somerset to abdicate in favor of Prince Edward, a scandalous rumor of feminine ambition and excessive feminine lust which nonetheless ties the villainous queen to the North of England: "Accordingly the queen and the Duke of Somerset . . . Had persuaded the king to resign . . . and the queen, her son and the duke withdrew to York, a strong part of the island towards the North."[43] Margaret amassed an army of English from the Midlands and Northerners, and began to move her forces to London. Contemporary accounts complain of Margaret's association with the Northerners and of the havoc caused by their pillaging. Clement Paston, for example, wrote in 1461 that "the pepill in the northe robbe and styll, and ben apoyntyd to pill all thys cwntre."[44] "Gregory's Chronicle" reports that at St. Albans the "moste parte

[43] 'Milan: 1461," 74.

of Northerynmen" in "the Quenys party" fled the battle.[45] Helen Maurer cogently ties the fifteenth-century rhetoric of feminine misrule to diatribes concerning Margaret's army of northerners:

> The references to misrule, malice and wanton destruction, though usually understood as regional bias, can also be read within a gendered context. The reversal of right order implicit in female leadership, the ill will and anger believed to characterize the transgressive woman: all are supported by the same complaints that were directed against northern barbarians. Combined by rhetoric, gender and regional bias made a natural-seeming and very potent mixture.[46]

Yorkists had succeeded to such an extent in yoking Margaret with racialized portraits of barbaric northerners that as Margaret approached London with Henry and Prince Edward in tow, she was met by the duchess of Buckingham, the duchess of Bedford, Lady Scales and a retinue of aristocratic women sent to plead with her for mercy. This tactic highlights Margaret's alien status as foreigner, unnatural queen, and northerner. The duchesses in effect highlighted through example the proper role of the queen as an intercessor on behalf of her people, and their appearance evinces an element of chastisement on behalf of the city. Margaret, by contrast, should have occupied the position of these ladies, subjugating herself on behalf of the people to plead for mercy rather than leading an invading army of what Londoners perceived as northerners and foreigners through their gates. As Margaret could not be fully trusted by many of the Londoners, she was denied entry.[47]

Ultimately, Margaret lost. Part of the problem involved her sex: as a woman, Margaret could not legitimately lead an army and could not reasonably hope to replace

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[44] *The Paston Letters* 541.

[45] "Gregory's Chronicle: 1461-1469."

[46] Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou.*

[47] According to "A Short English Chronicle," "the comynes of the cite wolde not suffer hem . . . to entyr into London" because Margaret and Henry conspired to execute all those "as was a yenes the quene" (76).

York.[48] In July of 1460, Yorkists defeated the Lancastrian army at Northampton, and Margaret fled with the Prince first to Wales and then to Scotland. In December of that same year, the Lancastrians prevailed, and York was executed. Edward IV, fearing Margaret's intelligence and influence, made it a crime of treason to possess letters written by her, and beheaded six nobelmen in February of 1461 for possessing her missives.[49] By March of 1461, Edward of York, the Duke's son, marched on Margaret's army and secured a decisive victory, following which Margaret again fled, eventually reaching France. Margaret worked tirelessly to secure the throne for Henry and her son, and her orchestrations in Scotland and alliance with the Earl of Warwick eventually resulted in Henry's brief restoration in 1470. Returning to England with her son, Margaret's army was defeated at Tewkesbury on May 4, 1471, and Prince Edward was killed in the battle. Henry VI died conspicuously in the Tower of London shortly thereafter. Margaret of Anjou, however, survived, though she was imprisoned by King Edward and eventually transferred to the keeping of the Duchess of Suffolk before she was finally ransomed by Louis XI and returned to France in 1475. Thus, Margaret faded into the horizon of English history when she departed by boat for France, deprived of husband, son, and English title.

Every Little Thing She Does is Magic

Morgan's sorcery in Malory is strikingly mundane, often reducible to concocting poisons and seducing men using soporifics. The queen often seeks to secure or promote an adulterous lover through deft manipulation of what we would call herbalism or homeopathic medicine. These associations resonate starkly with the political climate of late fifteenth-century England, a climate rife with accusations of infidelity and sorcery against royal and courtly women. Morgan utilizes soporifics at various points in the

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[48] Maurer comes to a similar conclusion at 130.

[49] *Letters of Queen Margaret of Anjou* xviii (citing *Annales Rerun Anglie*, ed. Hearne (lib. Nig. Scace.) vol.ii, 492).

Morte to secure lovers. In a peripheral chapter after the wedding of Arthur and Guinevere, Malory relates Morgan's elaborate ploy to counterfeit Excalibur so her lover, Accolon, can defeat King Arthur in battle so that she can murder her husband, Uryens, unchecked and secure Accolon's rule. After being led to a ship decked in silk and feasted by maidens, Arthur, Accolon, and Uryens wake up in different locations, each only vaguely aware of what transpired. Accolon realizes they have been drugged, swearing revenge for the "inchauntementes" responsible for his vulnerable slumber.[50] He rages at being subdued and drugged by Morgan and her twelve maidens, swearing "I shall distroye them all" and confesses to Arthur after the king loses his sword and is mortally wounded that "she lovyth me oute of mesure . . . And if she myght bryng hit aboute to sle Arthure by hir crauftis, she wolde sle hir husbonde Kynge Uryence lyghtly."[51] Accolon's explanation highlights the interwoven relationship between feminine ambition, unbridled lust, and magic. Morgan works her magic because she loves Accolon excessively, "oute of mesure," and that excess naturally becomes a desire to see both of them seated in Arthur's place.

Notably, Morgan uses a soporific again at the opening of the tale of Sir Lancelot du Lake when she and her three comrade queens of the North encounter the quintessential Arthurian knight sleeping under an apple tree at noon. Morgan puts a sleeping "inchauntement" on Lancelot so that he can be conveyed to her Castle Charyot (Charrette) and releases the sleeping spell so that she can force him to choose which queen he will have. This episode fuses feminine desire with feminine ambition. Fifteenth-century chroniclers viewed Margaret similarly as an enchantress, a powerful woman who kept Henry VI under her control. Prospero di Camulio reported on March 9, 1461, that at Albany "the king was placed under a tree a mile away, where he laughed and sang" and

[50] Malory 87.

[51] Malory 86, 90.

later returned to Margaret.[52] Like the incapacitated Lancelot, Henry VI appears under a tree, associated in medieval romance with magic and slumber, where Camulio presumes he was placed during the battle so that he would remain, like the sleeping kings in the *Morte,* incapacitated and vulnerable to his ambitious queen's control.

The use of magic to render kings vulnerable or infirm bears comparison with some late medieval rumors and accusations leveled at queens and courtly women who were thought to have too much power and influence over ailing or infirm kings. Interestingly, contemporary accounts of these accusations similarly conflate female sexual appetite with feminine misrule. Alice Perrers had been accused in 1376 of using necromancy to bewitch and wield influence over the aging and infirm Edward III. Necromancy did not mean the ability to summon the dead as it does now, but rather referred to rituals learned and performed from books, as opposed to sorcery which referred to popular practices.[53] Thus, queens and aristocratic women were particularly susceptible to accusations of necromancy. Women became increasingly literate in late medieval England; aristocratic women amassed literary collections in the fourteenth century and lay women were increasingly literate in the fifteenth.[54]

Thus, when Malory tells the reader that Morgan is "put to scole in a nonnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye," he is very much contemporizing his sources.[55] In illuminations personifying the two main types of magic, like that in Lydgate's *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (1426), sorcery is depicted as a hag whereas necromancy is a young foolish man.[56] One of the most subversive things

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[52] 'Milan: 1461," 74.

[53] See Sophie Page, *Magic in Medieval Manuscripts* (London: The British Library, 2004), 53.

[54] See Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7.4 (1982), 742-68, 744.

[55] Malory 67.

[56] For a brief discussion of this illumination and the gendered personifications of sorcery and necromancy,

about romance sorceresses like Morgan is that they are literate and have access to masculine knowledge. In shifting Morgan's source of learning away from magic or Merlin's tutelage and calling her a "grete clerke," Malory suggests Morgan's knowledge is masculine and therefore transgressive.

Malory's Morgan excels in the concocting of poisons, mirroring late medieval charges brought against powerful aristocratic and royal women. Both the *Morte* and late fifteenth-century chroniclers view poisoning as an offshoot of necromancy exercised by powerful and ambitious women against the lives of kings and knights. The counterfeit sword episode involving Morgan's plot to destroy both Arthur and Uryens and promote Accolon is her longest appearance in Malory's *Morte* and parallels in many ways a widespread rumor that Margaret had poisoned Henry in an attempt to secure her own relationship with Somerset. The episode clearly fascinated Malory, and not without good reason. Morgan's plots against Arthur and Uryens mirror an accusation which had reached the Milanese ambassador, Prospero di Camulio, in France just roughly three months after Margaret's momentous win on December 30, 1460, at the Battle of Wakefield. He reports that the "Queen of England . . . Gave the king poison."[57]

Margaret's alleged motivations mirror those of Malory's villainess: she attempts regicide for the tangled reasons of securing an illicit relationship with a lover (Accolon/Somerset) and securing a power base for herself. That Margaret's reputed lover in this rumor is Somerset is also significant, as Somerset was a formidable enemy to the Yorkists and the one Yorkists demanded that Henry hand over. Adultery takes on a political component as Lancastrian political alliances are reconfigured in adulterous terms.[58] The fact that this rumor had reached the ears of the Duke of Milan, regardless of

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see Page 53.

[57] 'Milan: 1461,' 75.

[58] Hodges notes that in the Morte as in fifteenth-century England adultery takes on a "public dimension," particularly in relation to disputes in the Wars of the Roses over who should advise the king (64). Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery*, similarly argues that in medieval romance the queen's adultery

its historical accuracy, evinces its popularity.

Margaret's alleged motivation, like Morgan's, conflates sexual desire with feminine misrule. Like Morgan, Margaret attempts to murder her husband for the purposes of promoting or securing a relationship with her paramour, in this case Somerset, which is indistinguishable from her desire to rule. Concocting poisons in late medieval England was viewed as an offshoot of herbalism, a typically female-centered branch of natural magic.[59] Ioan Couliano, for example, notes that the Church had detected in late medieval Europe a "causal relationship between the use of unguents made of plant extracts and the phenomenon of sorcery" (153). These historical echoes indicate that Malory's women need to be reexamined historically rather than deemed emblems. Morgan is much more than a personification of 'evil'; she reflects a very real dark side of queenship visible in the years leading up to the *Morte*. While Margaret of Anjou in all likelihood never poisoned the king or any of her guests, the fact that Englishmen imagined her to do so betrays masculine anxieties over her power after 1453. Thematically, Morgan's poisonings like Margaret's operate to create rifts in English masculine community.

Malory's Morgan relies on concocting poisons to catalyze plots, bringing her in line with the types of accusations of sorcery brought against royal and courtly women in fifteenth-century England. Poisoning clearly had a political component. Malory clearly indicates that Morgan's poisons are perverse misuses of healing unguents, a neat parallel to her feminine misuses of masculine power. Malory includes in his expansive Sir Tristram sections an episode in which Morgan poisons Mark's renegade knight, Alexander le Orphelyne, who attempts to flee to the safety of Camelot to avoid his murderous uncle. King Mark of Cornwall sends a letter to Morgan asking her to capture

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"becomes the instrument of political contests between factions that compete for the king's favor" (108).

[59] Couliano notes that the Church had detected in late medieval Europe a "causal realtionship between the use of unguents made of plant extracts and the phenomenon of sorcery" (153).

Alexander. Morgan rescues the knight errant, initially giving him a poison "oynement that he sholde have dyed" before finally giving him a healing unguent. She then drugs him with a soporific and imprisons him in her castle, La Beale Regarde, for one year.[60] As in the Arthur, Uryens, and Accolon episode, Alexander as knight is similarly disarmed and rendered incapacitated and vulnerable by the powerful sorceress, a queen who operates unchecked by her husband, King Uryens, who is conspicuously absent.[61]

Not surprisingly, Margaret of Anjou also faced rumors that she had detained and poisoned Yorkist knights, enemy knights roughly equivalent to Arthur's knights, under the guise of hospitality.[62] Sorcery encompassed so broad a range of activities that any ill befalling a guest could potentially fall under its scope.[63] While twelfth-century queens wielded a degree of direct power, thirteenth-century queens became increasingly separated and marginalized in how they could exercise public power. Queenship scholar Paul Strohm elaborates on the queen's role in late medieval England: "a flood of commentaries, sermons, meditations, chronicles, ceremonials, and poems modeled and celebrated female subordination and self-marginalization as a source of characteristically feminine power."[64] Queens were expected to act as merciful intercessors and petitioners, to reinforce a "division of labor between judgmental kings and merciful queens" that

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[60] Malory 384. Though this episode was introduced in the thirteenth-century when French romances began to reimagine Morgan as a more ambivalent character, Malory's decision to selectively include striking examples of Morgan's poisoning while excluding the many examples of her healing capabilities evinces a conscious effort to construct female sorcery as a critique of female power.

[61] Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), for example, notes that although Morgan derives her status from King Uryence, he is "a largely ineffectual figure in the *Suite* and Malory" (39). Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, a contemporary chronicler, wrote in 1456 that Margaret "plura fecit in regno Angliae, ut creditor, postquam meritus suus . . . incidit in manifestam stulticiam" (Margaret "did many things in englnad, as is believed, after her husband . . . fell into manifest foolishness) (139).

[62] *English Chronicle* 75; cited in Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, 201.

[63] Kieckhefer 81.

[64] Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 96.

reinforced rather than undermined masculine power and privilege.[65]

Margaret inverts these roles, enacting judgment on her subjects and turning the private sphere and places of residence into public political spaces. Morgan's poisonings work similarly, accentuating her subversion of masculine authority and making the private space of her castle into a public place. Although Morgan seemingly complies with Mark's request for help and some may see this as obedient to the Cornish king, Mark's request relies on Morgan's control of her domain and a well-established network of powerful women so extensive that she "wolde sette all the contrey envyrone with ladyes that were enchaunters, and by suche that were daungerous knyghtes."[66] Morgan's utter domination of the inexperienced Alexander le Orphelin renders him so impotent and powerless that he contemplates castration ("I had levir kut away my hangers than I wolde do her ony suche pleasure!") over submitting to her feminine authority, an authority which is again conflated with insatiable feminine sexuality.[67]

Morgan's gift to Arthur of the death-dealing mantle utilizes magical poison to undermine and uproot Arthur's masculine power in Camelot, and Malory reorients this episode around the royal triangle of Arthur, Morgan, and Uryence to parallel political struggle between Edward, Duke of York, Margaret of Anjou, and Henry VI. Whereas in the *Suite du Merlin*, from which Malory inevitably borrowed this episode, the cloak is sent by "la plus vaillans damoisele et la plus biele . . . de l'isle faee" (the most valiant and beautiful maiden of the isle of fairies) for unclear reasons, in the *Morte* the cloak is a feigned peace offering sent by Morgan to kill Arthur as revenge for the death of Accolon.[68] The mantle normally functions as a symbol of kingly power, the gems

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[65] Strohm 103, quoting a conversation with John Coakley based on a presentation entitled "Female Sancity as a Male Concern among Thirteenth-Century Friars" (1990).

[66] Malory 382.

[67] Malory 385.

[68] "Le Manteau Enchanté," *La Suite du Roman de Merlin*, Tome II, Ed. Gilles Roussineau (Geneva: Droz,

originally designed to magnify Arthur's royalty and wealth. However, Morgan queers the functioning of the mantle, altering it to undermine rather than reinforce Arthur's rule. At the outset, Malory highlights the political intrigue underlying the mantle episode. Before Morgan's maiden arrives, Malory tells the reader that "all had mervayle of the falshede of Morgan le Fay. Many knyghtes wysshed hir brente," the conventional romance punishment for both queenly adultery and sorcery. The cloak itself displays many magical characteristics in its lapidary and sympathetic magical qualities; it is "the rycheste mantell that ever was sene," fitted with "precious stonys . . . The rycheste stonys that ever the Kynge sawe."[69] Seemingly, the cloak operates as an item to reinforce Arthur's absolute authority and kingship, displaying his wealth and power. After insisting that Morgan's maiden try on the mantle first, Arthur watches in shock as the mantle sets her aflame, mockingly enacting the very fate Arthur's knights wish upon Morgan le Fay. Whereas Malory's source, *La Suite de Merlin,* has Arthur announce Morgan's treachery to his court, Malory adds a critically ignored conversation between Arthur and Uryence:

> "Than was the Kyknge wondirly wroth—more than he was toforehande—and seyde unto Kynge Uryence, "My sistir, your wyff, is allway aboute to betray me, and welle I wote other ye or my nevewe, your son, is accounseyle with hir to have me distroyed."[70]

That Uryence resides at Arthur's court in Camelot rather than with his wife in their castles in the North resonates with the strained political relationship between Edward IV, Margaret, and Henry VI. Ineffectual like Uryence, Henry VI was captured by Yorkists at the Battle of St. Albans on May 21, 1455, and Somerset was killed after York demanded he be handed over. Henry returned with the elder Duke of York to London, where he played the part of a puppet king to be controlled by York and his sympathizers.

1996), 389.

[69] Malory 95.

[70] Malory 96.

Malory reflects this triangulation, placing Uryence in Camelot at the moment of Morgan's betrayal. Uryence, though a king, is very much Arthur's knight, a puppet king like Henry VI. In Malory's added conversation between the two kings, Arthur proceeds to disinherit Sir Uwayne, the son of Uryence and Morgan, because "I holde hym suspecte; therefore I charge you, putt hym oute of my courte." Malory's decision to follow Morgan's treachery with Uwayne's banishment, an alteration from the *Suite du Merlin*, better reflects the contemporary event of York's forcing Henry to disinherit Prince Edward.[71] After the Battle of Northampton in summer of 1460, Henry was again captured by Yorkists and forced to an agreement by which he would keep the crown but Prince Edward was to be disinherited in favor of York's heirs. This is the event I believe Malory had in mind when deciding to amend his source material and work in Arthur's banishment of Uwayne and confirmation of loyalty with King Uryence. Thematically, Arthur's anger involves Morgan's revelation of the object of the mantle. Thought to confer authority upon Arthur as king, Morgan instead metamorphoses the mantle into a symbol of feminine subversion, setting Arthur's lady aflame just as his subjects "wysshed hir brente." In effect, Morgan's exposes the contradictory valences of the mantle, changing it from a symbol of patriarchal royal power to a symbol not only of defiant feminine authority, but also as a symbol of fractured masculine community and the resulting chivalric violence against women men enact to fuse it back together.

The Gendered Semiotics of Excalibur

In addition to constructing Morgan's fifteenth-century brand of feminine ambition through the metaphor of romance sorcery, Malory highlights her thirst for power and usurpation through her fraught relationship with Excalibur, the king's sword. When Morgan attempts to control Excalibur, Malory calls attention to her "treson," indicating that any attempt by a queen to usurp the phallic patriarchal power of Excalibur is

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[71] Weir 134.

inherently unnatural.[72] Malory's focus on Morgan and Excalibur furthermore reflects fifteenth-century anxieties over Margaret of Anjou's co-opting of kingly power and roles while struggling to maintain the veneer of queenly submission to masculine authority. In both cases, the queen indirectly controls the sword in specifically female-gendered ways, but her ultimate control of kingly authority complicates how she is sexed and how her power is legitimated.

Malory makes explicit the fact that Excalibur, sword and scabbard, as a symbol of Arthurian patriarchy and martial prowess, does not belong in the hands of a woman. Merlin warns Arthur, "loke ye kepe well the scawberd of Excaleber, for ye shall lose no bloode whyle ye have the scawberde upon you," and Malory reiterates this admonishment later, emphasizing this time that Arthur must not leave the sword or scabbard with a woman: "kepe well his swerde and scawberde, [for he told hym how the swerd and the scaubard] scholde be stolyn by a woman frome hym, that he moste trusted."[73] Despite Merlin's warning, Arthur leaves the scabbard of Excalibur in Morgan's safekeeping, a decision which almost kills him when Morgan orchestrates an elaborate switch with a counterfeit sword and scabbard after administering soporifics via her maidens to Arthur, Accolon, and Uryence. Malory emphasizes the inherent dangers of leaving symbolic authority in the hands of a queen.

Merlin's rules concerning Excalibur and how it should be handled reflect late medieval conceptions of queenly power and how and when it can be used. Good women in Malory can possess Excalibur, but only transitionally and only in service of patriarchy. Thus, in later imaginings of the Arthurian narrative like *Suite du Merlin* and the *Morte*, Morgan splits into the villainous Morgan le Fay and the beneficent Lady of the Lake, who retains many of Morgan's ameliorative qualities form her portrayal in Geoffrey of

[72] Malory 88.

[73] Malory 52, 78.

Monmouth's *Vita Merlini*.[74] Arthurian feminist scholar Maureen Fries cogently argues that this splitting reveals "male Arthurian authors as increasingly unable to imagine powerful women in positive terms."[75] His Lady of the Lake operates within acceptable late medieval modes of queenly behavior. Malory's Lady of the Lake endows Arthur with Excalibur, returns the sword to him during his near-fatal encounter with Accolon, who possesses unbeknown to Arthur the true Excalibur, and finally she receives the sword dutifully from Arthur and vanishes into the lake. In her final appearance to reclaim the sword she is a disembodied and obeisant "arme and an honde above the watir," a dutiful placeholder who holds onto the sword only until the rightful king can claim it.[76] As such, the Lady of the Lake acts as late medieval queens were exhorted to behave: as genealogical placeholders whose power always hinged on the permission of a husband or son.

However, in the aforementioned counterfeit sword episode, Morgan operates as traitorous controller of the sword, rather than a placeholder. Instead of keeping the scabbard for Arthur, she lures Arthur, Accolon, and Uryence to her mystical boat, drugs them, and counterfeits Excalibur and its scabbard. She orchestrates an elaborate ruse concerning brothers fighting over land inheritance and stages a doomed fight between

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[74] There is a significant scholarly debate as to whether Morgan and the Lady of the Lake are iterations of the same character. Maureen Fries, "From The Lady to The Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance," *Arthuriana* 4.1 (1994): 1-18, contends that Morgan splits into the harmful Morgan le Fay and nurturing Lady of the Lake. Geraldine Heng, "Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory," *Arthurian Women: A Casebook*, ed. Thelma Fenster (New York: Garland, 1996), 97-113, similarly suggests that the two are the same, claiming "the distinction between them is slight" (104). However, Kenneth Hodges, "Swords and Sorceresses: The Chivalry of Malory's Nyneve," *Arthuriana* 12.2 (2002): 78-96, disagrees with Heng specifically and warns against conflating Morgan with Nyneve and the other ladies of the Lake (83). Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen-Âge : Morgane et Mélusine : La naissance des fées*, (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1984), notes the split between Morgan and the Lady of the Lake and blames villification of Morgan on the high medieval demonization of ancient dieties (267). Lucy Allen Paton, *Studies in the Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance*, 2nd Edition (New York: Burt Franklin, 1903), on the other hand, reads Morgan as a re-envisioning of the Irish war goddess, the Morrigan.

[75] Maureen Fries, "From The Lady to The Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance," *Arthuriana* 4.1 (1994), 1-18, 1.

[76] Malory 687.

Arthur, who thinks he possesses Excalibur, and her lover, Accolon, to whom she has the real Excalibur and scabbard delivered. Then the Lady of the Lake exposes Morgan's "false treson," causing Excalibur and its scabbard to fall from Accolon's hand and the knight to thus die of blood loss.[77] Malory uses this episode to critique queenly behavior in the transmission of royal power. Refusing to act as a placeholder, keeping the phallic sword until the next patriarchal ruler can claim it, Morgan purloins, replicates, and purveys the sword and scabbard in her own bid for power. Notably, Morgan does not wield Excalibur, though after this failed attempt she attempts to strike down Uryence with his own sword, again highlighting the unnatural lust and ambition which mark her as a hyper-feminine dangerous queen.

Instead, Morgan acts subversively in relying on her knight, Accolon, to wield the symbol of male power, even if the invisible hand behind that sword is female. Arthurian scholar Carolyne Larrington elaborates, "Morgan can only act through her male cat's paw, for there is no basis for overt female intervention in the political sphere."[78] In much the same way, Margaret relied on masculine agents to orchestrate her attempted overthrow of the Duke of York and her enemies. As a woman, she, like Morgan, could not be on the battlefield. During the successful battle of Wakefield in December of 1460, for example, Margaret was in Scotland seeking aid from the wife of King James II. However, Margaret's attempt to remain hidden behind male agents in an attempt to exercise political power failed and left her open to charges of unnatural feminine ambition and co-opting of masculine authority, the same charges embodied in Morgan's 'counterfeiting' of the sword and scabbard and, through them, kingly authority.

Reading sword as metonymy provides additional insight into Malory's veiled critique of fifteenth-century queenship in the counterfeit sword episode. As the "crown"

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[77] Malory 89.

[78] Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 40.

stands in for the "king," Excalibur, the king's sword, stands in for both his penis and for masculine patriarchal authority. As Geraldine Heng notes, swords are "the instruments on which all masculine accomplishment must turn, and therefore pivotal to conceptions of male identity and personal force."[79] Whoever possesses Excalibur and its scabbard, in the mythos of Arthuriana, possesses absolute impenetrable power. While Morgan lacks the king's sword (a penis), she is freely given the scabbard, which by its very nature stands in for the sword's counterpart, the vaginal slip. The word 'scabbard' is conflated in Latin with the female genitalia and called 'vagina.'[80] Merlin's warning particularly pertains to the scabbard, which he tells Arthur to entrust to no woman. Merlin insists the scabbard "ys worth ten of the swerde" because it renders Arthur impenetrable; he cannot bleed. [81] Historically speaking, Merlin is right; it is the queen's womb which insures the kingdom upon delivery of a male heir.[82] Control of the royal sword and scabbard, he insists, should be left to the king. However, Arthur gives the scabbard to Morgan for safekeeping, a move that imbues her with political power and makes her a formidable enemy of the crown.

The phallic nuances of sword and scabbard are not post-Freudian inventions and were not lost on medieval writers and thinkers. Late medieval diatribes against contemporary queens mirror the sexual metonymy of Malory's Excalibur and Morgan's relationship with Arthur's sword. For example, the bishop of Rochester, reflecting on late fourteenth-century mistress of Edward III and political actor, Alice Perrers, rails "it is not

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[79] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 98.

[80] Geraldine Heng makes this connection in her examination of feminine disruption in the *Morte* (98).

[81] Malory 38.

[82] André Poulet, "Capetian Women and the Regency," *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St Martins Press, 1993), calls queenship both "the mechanical role of transition between generations" (98) and "the genealogical vocation" (103). Thus, the queen's 'scabbard' provided a necessary and vital function in securing kingly interests and peace, making Merlin's advice particularly apt.

fitting or safe that all the keys should hang from the belt of one woman."[83] The bishop's sardonic tone mirrors Merlin's warning to Arthur and emphasizes his sense of how unnatural it is that the euphemistic keys to the kingdom should "hang" about the loins of a woman, who should have neither a penis nor the power those phallic keys entail.

Margaret of Anjou, unlike Alice Perrers, was queen, giving her potentially even more power over a king who was in a similarly enfeebled state. Not being able to lead the Lancastrian armies on the battlefield and to participate in the masculine economy of war, Margaret of Anjou had to exercise power from a distance, much like Morgan le Fay in the counterfeit Excalibur episode when she orchestrates the fight between Arthur and Accolon on behalf of feuding brothers. Still, contemporary chroniclers and recorders sometimes interpreted Margaret's actions as usurping the king's authority. The Coventry recorder particularly cites Margaret's lack of a sword as evidence of her transgressive queenship as she was escorted "as the kynge" from a council meeting in 1457. Margaret's performance is hardly convincing to the soldiers, who "groged" (grudged), and the recorder, who comments she was "like . . . The kyng, sauyng the kynges swerd.[84]" The recorder, obviously offended by Margaret's pomp during this procession, particularly singles out that the king's sword remains with the mayor. Though she may ride *like* a king, he implies, she lacks a penis and by proxy the sword to be the king. Thus, to the recorder as to the "seruauntes" of Coventry who begrudgingly oblige the queen's unnatural demands, Margaret's symbolic usurpation of kingly authority is, as Malory exclaims of Morgan in her attempt to coopt masculine authority through Excalibur, "false treson." It is an act of counterfeiting not unlike copying a sword. In both Morgan and Margaret's actions, "treson" encompasses impersonation and usurpation. As queens,

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[83] C. Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity* (New Haven, 1986), 147-48, cited in Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2003), 24.

[84] *Coventry Leet Book, or Mayor's Register, 1420-1455*, Ed. Mary Harris, EETS (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1907), 298-99.

Morgan and Margaret would be expected to mediate and influence kingly authority through intercessory acts which would highlight their passive status as subjects.[85] Margaret faced a highly unusual obstacle in her attempts to secure Prince Edward's inheritance: her husband, though incapacitated, was still alive.

Margaret had precedents for holding the place of her son until he came of age, but when a living king proved unable to rule effectively, as had been the case in the court of Edward II and Isabella of France, that other "She Wolf," public opinion quickly turned on queens once they assumed power and that power was quickly equated with insatiable lust and misrule. Thus, when Margaret tried unsuccessfully to secure herself as regent of the realm, a move last made by a queen in 1253, gendered conceptions of power in the English imagination prevented her from having any chance of succeeding. As a late medieval English queen, her only proper role was that of intercessor, and with a living husband her becoming regent would invert that hierarchical relationship. Moreover, York, named as Lord Protector in 1454 in her stead, encompassed the very masculine and martial domain of military defense, an arena expressly forbidden to women; literally and figuratively, women could not use swords.[86] Thus Margaret, like Morgan, would need to rely on knights to succeed politically.

Morgan's other act of usurpation, her theft of Excalibur's scabbard, further complicates Malory's critique of gendered power in fifteenth-century England. Earlier, Arthur makes the fatal mistake of taking the sword, Excalibur, rather than the scabbard from Merlin on the assumption that it is the more important of the two. This mistake

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[85] Paul Strohm, "Queens as Intercessors," *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, elaborates: "Female intercession is gratifying to men and answers the dictates of male desire, but it remains less than completely subsumed so long as it continues actively to specify the coordinates of actual female behavior in the world"(105).

[86] Maurer also notes the specifically masculine role of Lord Protector as martial defender of the realm: "the position York was given . . . was one that because of its military connotations could only be held by a man" (110). Fries, "Gender and the Grail," notes that "Women were forbidden to bear arms, in medieval literature as well as life," indicating that Morgan's choice to operate through male agents better reflects that actions of late medieval queens (76).

almost kills him when he nearly bleeds to death in battle with Accolon, yet Arthur initially blames his near-defeat on the sharpness of the sword rather than the lack of its scabbard, which he throws from him even after receiving it from the Lady of the Lake. After the Lady of the Lake intervenes and restores to Arthur both Excalibur and the scabbard and Accolon is slain, Morgan quickly moves to reclaim them. Gaining entry into Wales, Morgan approaches a sleeping Arthur at an abbey in a highly sexualized encounter:

> There she found Arthur aslepe on his bedde, and Excalyber in his ryght honde, naked. Whan she sawe that, she was passyng hevy that she myght nat com by the swerde withoute she had awaked hym, and than she wyste welle she had bene dede. So she toke the scawberde and . . . Put the scawberde undir hir mantell . . . .[87]

Morgan clearly desires masculine power, but is unable to purloin the "naked" symbol of Arthur's manhood, both because she is not the rightful ruler and because she is female. Nakedness functions as a nebulous modifier, suggesting that Arthur sleeps naked with the naked sword/penis in his hand. Afraid to co-opt such a symbol of masculinity, Morgan grabs the vaginal scabbard instead, and places it conspicuously under her mantle, suggesting both the sword and scabbard correspond to male and female royal genitalia and, by proxy, kingly and queenly power.

If Excalibur represents the royal phallus as well as kingly power and authority, the scabbard functions equally metonymically as both the safe containment of kingly power and as the queen's womb. Elsewhere in the *Morte*, Malory suggests such a comparison when Percival's sister shears her hair to make a girdle for holding Galahad's sword, and explains, "thys gurdyll was made of my hayre, whych somme tyme I loved well, whyle that I was woman of the worlde."[88] Percival's sister's hair operates as metonymy for her

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[87] Malory 93.

[88] Malory 567. Marion Wynne-Davies, "'Am I Nat An Erthely Woman?': Malory's Morte Darthur," *Women and Arthurian Literature: Seizing the Sword* (New York: St Martins Press, 1996), has noted the phallic

sexual body. Percival's sister, as a virgin, forms the perfect girdle for a sword belonging to the carnally inexperienced and spiritually pure Galahad, encasing and restraining his phallic weapon. However, for Arthur, as a king, Excalibur's scabbard cannot represent carnal purity. Instead, it represents Arthur's inability to control royal lineage, a political reality born out through the bodies of queens as Galahad's girdle is formed from the sexualized part of Perceval's sister. As Gillian Overing and Clare Lees have outlined, queenly bodies also functioned synecdochally for the empire: "The female body is the site of empire at its most incipient stage . . . In terms of aristocratic female bodies, queens and empresses quite literally fulfill the dynastic ambitions of their families."[89] Morgan's theft of the scabbard and ensuing disposal of it into the lake suggest Arthur's inability to control the queen's sexuality and also her refusal to accept the role of romance queen that has been handed down to her from her arranged marriage to Uryence.

When Morgan defiantly "let throwe the scawberde in the deppyst of the watir," she throws off her role as intercessor, the necessary merciful counterpart to the king's judgment. This move also demonstrates Morgan's prescience: with the womb of the queen out of control and without issue, Arthur's Round Table collapses. Without the scabbard, Excalibur cannot protect Arthur, just as without the queen acting as an outlet through which a king could safely exercise mercy, he could quickly be seen as a tyrant. As Guinevere eventually proves, both queens, she and Morgan, operate to ruin Arthur's kingdom from within and without, and both refuse to resign their scabbards to the privacy of the king's bedchamber. Arthur fails to police Morgan from the margins of his kingdom just as he fails to police Guinevere from within it. Thus, just as he fails to understand the importance of the scabbard, Arthur fails to understand the threat queens potentially pose to his kingdom.

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nature of this girdle in relation to Perceval's sword (76).

[89] Gillian Overing and Clare Lees, "Signifying Gender and Empire," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.1 (2004): 1-16, 11.

As mother to Edward of York's legitimate rival to the throne, Prince Edward, Margaret of Anjou had proven that the queen's womb could certainly disrupt a kingdom. Initially, her pregnancy upset Yorkist aspirations that Edward would be named heir in the absence of children between Margaret and Henry. Similar to Morgan, Margaret is portrayed in Yorkist propaganda as a queen who utterly rejects her role as intercessor and 'receptacle' of the king. Becoming the leader of the Lancastrian army by 1456, Margaret had to build a power base whilst maneuvering and presenting herself as intercessor; like Morgan, she could not outwardly appear masculine or wield traditionally masculine political power in the public sphere. Alison Weir elaborates, "Margaret's approach . . . was to continue to represent herself as subordinate and adjunct while asserting the king's authority, though in fact she wielded increased practical power herself."[90] That is, Margaret may have had access to the sword, but knew it was imperative to have it appear as though she did not.

Margaret's greatest power similarly came from her deft political posturing using her own 'scabbard.' Giving birth to Prince Edward provided Margaret with some political stability and a modicum of public support. Her ability to use her progeny in many ways, mass-producing Prince Edward's livery as political reproduction mimicking biological reproduction, circumvented her inability to act exactly like the king in a masculine manner. Her 'scabbard' in effect succeeded in giving her the means with which to raise an army to combat enemies to the Lancastrian crown.

Morgan's final act of defiance in the Excalibur episodes occurs when she changes both herself and her entourage into "grete marbyll stonys" to avoid Arthur's detection.[91] This act of enchantment works synergistically with the metonymy of swords and scabbards. In one sense, stone signifies a very feminine power. Much like the scabbard, stone functions as placeholder for Arthur's initial sword, keeping it safe until Arthur can

[90] Weir 127.

[91] Malory 94.

claim it and inherit his kingdom. Merlin is later trapped in stone by his apprentice, Nenyve, another powerful sorceress, apt punishment for the one who "wolde nat lette her have no reste" on account of his sexual lust.[92] If stone also operates sexually as vagina, Merlin's hamartia is his sexual lust and he is perpetually enslaved by it, just as it is the stone, the womb, that ultimately determines royal lineage and reveals Arthur's birthright.

Morgan's shapeshifting queers medieval conceptions of gender, presenting the female body as hard and impenetrable, while Arthur, no longer in possession of the scabbard/vagina, bleeds profusely and is glaringly penetrable. Peggy McCracken has argued that males bleed in romance because male blood binds covenants and valorizes martial acts, but Morgan's shapeshifting seems to be calling attention to the queered nature of this inversion. Morgan's read of the scabbard recasts it as a protective sheath that seals in, as opposed to an open boundary which purges abject menstrual effluvia. Historically, there is something to be said about the impenetrability of women's bodies as well. Not able to participate on the battlefield, Margaret's survival was all but guaranteed. Unlike Richard, Duke of York, and Prince Edward, her son, who were both slain in civil wars, Margaret's gender afforded her the distance and opportunity to survive English civil war, ending in her expatriation to France. Like her forbearer, the "She-Wolf" of France, Isabella, Margaret's sex prevented her from being seen as a threat once the new regime had taken over. Perhaps this is also why Morgan survives the *Morte*. In an episodic romance in which Morgan does all she can to wrest political power from King Arthur, he sees Lucius and Mordred as his most formidable enemies, underestimating his sorceress sister in much the same way he naively dismisses the scabbard.

Queen of the North

Malory furthermore changes the geographical location of Morgan's kingdom to Gore, tying the queen and her army of knights to the North of England, and characterizes

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[92] Malory 78.

her leadership as treasonous and full of evil customs. Malory's Morgan thus bears striking similarities to Margaret, who fled to the North to assemble an army of Northerners who then fought their way to London looting and pillaging in ways contemporaries saw as barbarous and evil, far removed from the civil customs of London. Malory conspicuously varies from his sources and aligns Morgan with the Northern periphery at a time when chroniclers increasingly villified Margaret of Anjou through aligning her with an army of Northerners. Malory deviates from his likely source, the *Suite du Merlin*, changing Uryence's kingdom from Garlot to Gore in his *Morte*. Garlot is presumably Lot's usual territory in the Scottish lowlands, a translation of 'caer-Lot' (Lot's fortress). Gore, however, is Northern English, encompassing the region of Rheged, typically ascribed to modern-day Cumbria, the north-westernmost region of England bordering Scotland to the South.

Malory is quite consistent in locating Morgan in Gore and thus with Northerners. Morgan, after her drugged captive, Lancelot, comes to, declares "I am Quene Morgan le Fay, Quene of the londe of Gore."[93] Later, upon fleeing following her rescue of Manessen, Morgan retreats "into the contrey of Gore, and there was she rychely receyved, and made hir castels and townys stronge."[94] When Tristram encounters on his journey a maiden sent by Morgan to lure him into an ambush at her castle, Malory indicates that this event takes place in North England near the Scottish and Welsh borders where King Carados of Scotland and the King of North Galys are holding a tournament.[95] Morgan's positioning on the fringe of England geographically reflects her peripheral status as woman. Fashioned from Adam's rib, medieval woman already inhabited a marginal position in late medieval England. Women often occupy the geographical periphery in romance, particularly in Arthurian romance. Critic William Fitzhenry points out that

[93] Malory 155.

[94] Malory 95.

[95] Malory 310.

"female characters haunt the borders of chivalric discourse," while Arthurian scholar Carolyne Larrington aptly notices that "enchantresses move on the periphery of the Arthurian court."[96] It is telling that Morgan features most in a chapter of the *Morte* entitled "Aftir Thes Questis," a chapter itself at the boundaries of Malory's core narrative.

Many critics have likewise treated Morgan and other women in the *Morte* peripherally, reading them as subsidiary to masculine plots.[97] Yet, locating Morgan within English borders frames her attacks on Arthur as civil war, conflicts from within England for political control which would obviously resonate with the fractured state of English civil war out of which the *Morte* was composed. Malory, in relocating Morgan to Gore, conflates gender and geography, placing his villainess within and without the patriarchal Round Table she aspires to topple. Analyzing the spatial coding of gender in an attempt to delineate the unconscious structuring of human civilization and thought, French anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu observed that male coding is almost always centrifugal; that is, being male often involves moving away from a center, and is associated with the south. Female coding, on the other hand, is centripetal, moving towards a center from the outside, and is associated with magic, the mystical, and the north.[98] This cultural geographical gendering seems to be at work in Arthurian narrative, where the sorceress queen, Morgan, infringes on Arthur's kingdom from the peripheral

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[96] William Fitzhenry, "Comedies of Contingency: Language and Gender in the Book of Sir Tristram," *Arthuriana* 14.4 (Winter 2004), 5-16, 7; Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, 3. However, Larrington suggests enchantresses inhabit the periphery as a kind of clerical critique, while this chapter argues instead that Morgan occupies the periphery of England to better reflect both attitudes towards late medieval queens but also the historical reality that Margaret of Anjou had recently raised an invading army of Northerners and engaged in a series of civil wars with Yorkists.

[97] Carolyne Larrington argues that Malory "consistently reduces the role of Morgan and other enchantresses" (45), while Maureen Fries, "From The Lady to The Tramp: The Decline of Morgan le Fay in Medieval Romance," *Arthuriana* 4.1 (1994): 1-18, surmises that "Malory's Morte, after all, like all Arthurian romance, is not really about women, but about aristocratic men and their adventures" (15); Wynne-Davies proposes that Arthurian gender roles are shaped by "an attempt to suppress female independence in the medieval and Renaissance periods" (3).

[98] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 92.

North, constantly trying to enter the central Camelot and take Arthur's throne. In fact, the Round Table visually acts as a masculine center, a unified, unbroken circle Morgan, with her magic network of "ladyes that were enchaunters," tries to infiltrate and break.[99] However, while her positioning may be feminine, Queen Morgan's goal is certainly a perversion of that geographical reality, as she seeks to penetrate Arthur's kingdom and usurp masculine authority from him. Arthur, on the other hand, seeks to expand his grip through conquest from Camelot, battling Lucius of Rome and the six kings of the North.

Morgan's status as queen amplifies her peripheral status. The queen's role had become much more peripheral and private in late medieval England. Following Eleanor of Aquitaine's insurrection in 1173, English queens lost much of their financial independence and their names no longer appeared regularly on charters.[100] By the thirteenth-century, as queenship scholar Peggy McCracken notes, queens were intercessors and queenship was "a public office with only symbolic and, of course, reproductive functions."[101] However, to better reflect the interior nature of the threat posed by Margaret of Anjou, I would argue Malory relocates the queen to Gore to render her at once both peripheral and interior, foreign and English, unnaturally mannish yet hyper-feminine in her flaws.[102] Marion Wynne-Davies has suggested that Morgan's shapeshifting into rocks to elude Arthur's pursuit reflects "the manoeuvres actually required of noblewomen during the Wars of the Roses."[103] However, Morgan's defiant

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[99] Malory 382.

[100] See Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery*, 2.

[101] McCracken 6.

[102] J. J. Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), writing about giants, applies the term "extimacy" to the condition I describe. Cohen defines "extimacy" as a state both "familiar and strange . . . hybrid and homogenous" (4). As an enemy queen and member of the royal family located within England's own borders, Morgan seems to be an Arthurian villainess too familiar for Arthur's comfort.

[103] Marion Wynne-Davies 68. Wynne-Davies suggests Morgan's narrow escape reflects the generally difficult position of many artistocratic women during the Wars. Nowhere does she suggest that Morgan

message after her successful escape suggests Margaret more specifically, as she instructs Manessen to convey her threat to Arthur: "tell hym I feare hym nat whyle I can make me and myne in lyknesse of stonys—and lette hym wete I can do much more whan I se my tyme."[104] As opposed to a cautious noblewoman navigating the tricky space of English civil war, Morgan boasts that she will exact revenge as a leader, one who not only feels no fear but also one who will "do much more" when the opportunity arises. She is, in essence, an impenetrable rock while Arthur's body, as Malory's narrative illustrates through repeated episodes of copious bleeding, is all too permeable. Thus, I would suggest Morgan's tone better reflects the Yorkists' portrait of an unnatural and mannish Margaret amassing an invading army of Northern peoples. Paston fears the approach of Margaret's army in 1461, claiming "the pepill in the northe robbe and styll, and ben apoyntyd to pill all thys cwntre."[105]

As Margaret approached London with Henry and Prince Edward in tow, she was met by the duchess of Buckingham, the duchess of Bedford, Lady Scales and a retinue of aristocratic women sent to plead with her for mercy and deny her entry.[106] This event resonates with Morgan's interaction with Guinevere as she plots to steal Arthur's scabbard. Attempting to enter Camelot, Morgan meets with Guinevere, asking "hir leve to ryde into hir contrey."[107] Guinevere, acting the role of queenly intercessor like the duchesses and Lady Scales with Margaret, asks Morgan to abide until Arthur returns, suggesting she will intercede on Morgan's behalf and plead for mercy. Denied immediate entry, like Margaret, Morgan leaves to encounter her enemy elsewhere.

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specifically parallels Margaret of Anjou.

[104] Malory 95.

[105] *The Paston Letters* 541.

[106] According to "A Short English Chronicle," "the comynes of the cite wolde not suffer hem . . . to entyr into London" because Margaret and Henry conspired to execute all those "as was a yenes the quene" (76).

[107] Malory 93.

Malory brings attention to the 'ill customs' of Morgan's kingdom. Her association with the North expands to her military tactics, consisting of switch-and-bait ploys, enchantments, and a series of ambushes. Morgan's tactics in the *Morte* parallel contemporary fifteenth-century allegations brought against Margaret's amassed army centered on repeated acts of pillaging. Tristram and Sir Dynadan uncover Morgan's plot to lure and slay Lancelot with thirty knights lying in wait "by the treson of Quene Morgan le Fay."[108] The two knights, aided by Bors de Ganys, defeat Morgan's thirty knights. The ambush ensues again soon after, when Gawain forces one of Morgan's maidens to confess the "custum" of the castle: thirty maidens seek Lancelot and Tristram, and will lure them to Morgan le Fay's castle under the pretense of doing "dedys of worship." Instead, "there be thirty knyghtes liyng and wacchyng" for an opportunity to slay Lancelot or Tristram.[109] Again, this tactic is declared treasonous, as Gawain decries, "that evir such false treson sholde be wrought or used in a quene and a kyngys systir, and a kynge and a quenys doughtir."[110] Gawain emphasizes Morgan's queenly status, chiding her for violating established modes of medieval queenship. Her attempted destruction of Arthur's knights is considered treasonous both to her sex and to her country. Compare to an alleged ambush of Margaret of Anjou against the earl of Salisbury on route to his lord, the Duke of York: "the Erle of Salysbery went from Medlame for to mete withe the Duke of Yorke and Warwyke his sonne . . . And the quene lay by the wey with iiijm men to stoppe his wey."[111] Margaret's tactics are represented as treasonous, and the chronicle adds that the earl escaped only through the grace of God. Like Morgan, Margaret lies in wait to ensnare the king's knights in situations where the good knights are outnumbered.

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[108] Malory 307.

[109] Malory 311.

[110] Malory 311.

[111] "A Short English Chronicle," 72.

This chapter suggests Malory includes and elaborates episodes of Morgan's ambushes to better reflect contemporary reports of Margaret's pillaging army and its unnatural practices as an extension of her unnatural performance as queen.

Morgan's third castle ambush reinforces her role as an instigator of civil war and an unnatural queen. Also in the narrative of Sir Tristram, this episode commences when Sir Palomydes and Sir Dynadan come upon a castle "fayre and ryche and also passynge stronge as ony was within this realme." Sir Palomydes recognizes the castle as belonging to Morgan, claiming it is impenetrable and that Morgan's custom is that "there shall no knyght passe this way but he muste juste with one knyght, other wyth two, other with three; and yf hit hap that Kynge Arthurs knyght be beatyn, he shall lose his horse and harnes and all that he hath, and harde yf that he ascape but that he shall be presonere."[112] Malory emphasizes pillaging in Morgan's third ambush; Arthur's knights will lose their knightly accoutrements should they lose. Contemporary chronicles attribute similar pillaging to Margaret's army of Northerners: "the quene reysed all the northe and all oÞer pepull by the wey, compelled, dispoyled, rubbed, and distroyed all maner of cattel, vetayll, and riches to Seint Albones."[113] Malory's intentional situation of Morgan in the North of England and framing her as a treacherous military tactician capable of launching ambushes and pillaging frames her less as the fay sorceress of her earlier iterations and more like his contemporary, Margaret of Anjou. Malory's Morgan becomes, in effect, a fifteenth-century villain queen, a dangerous woman who reflects in her martial brilliance and unnatural ambition Yorkist anxieties over Margaret's willful and stubborn resolve. The North functions in both Malory and in chronicled accounts of Margaret's queenship as a metaphor for the unruliness inherent in feminine (mis)rule. Spacially segregated from the centralized seat of masculine power—Camelot in Malory and London in

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[112] Malory 359.

[113] "A Short English Chronicle," 76.

fifteenth-century accounts—women impinge upon the margins of civilization. And, as Guinevere makes all too clear, women rarely operate safely within the center of masculine space, creating fissures and dividing, sowing discord instead of harmony.

Malory's multidimensional critique of feminine rule through Morgan—from her corruption of medicinal salves and enchantments to her unbridled lust and manipulation of Excalibur and alignment with the people of the North—in many ways mirrors and refigures contemporary fifteenth-century Yorkist critiques of Margaret of Anjou's queenship. Somewhat ironically, Malory's Morgan has lasted throughout the centuries and become a somewhat sympathetic character that students respond positively to in class. Recent television iterations of medieval Arthuriana—BBC One's recently ended series, *Merlin* (2008-2012), and STARZ's short-lived *Camelot* (2011)—present viewers with an oppressed Morgan shackled by strict medieval gender codes. In both series, Morgan, played by Katie McGrath (*Merlin*) and Eva Green (*Camelot*) respectively, has a legitimate claim to Uther's throne and even acts in many cases as an ally to the young Arthur. Malory's Morgan, however, is not intended to be sympathetic. Nor, I have argued, is she intended to be an emblem. Rather, Malory's subtle shifts in Morgan's character align her more with feminine misrule, formulated through his emphasis on her education and sorcery through increasingly natural means and her tenuous relationship with Arthur's sword.

For Malory, it seems, when queens come into contact with objects of masculine power like Excalibur, those objects are irrevocably queered. While Margaret lead the Lancastrian army, Malory experienced firsthand the tragic disruptive consequences that could result when women seized power. Morgan demonstrates that in every act of feminine subservience, women make a choice. Women can just as easily create poisons as medicines, and they can drug and seduce just as easily as they can remain faithful. Thus, Morgan reveals through endless perversions and inversions of objects like unguents, the king's cloak, and Excalibur, that by every act of seeming obeisance, the women of

Camelot create order and preserve the Round Table, much as the scabbard protects the sword. From the moment Morgan comes into contact with Excalibur in the counterfeit sword episode, the sword becomes less important and tragically vulnerable. Like Mary, who inverts the gendered semiotics of the Incarnation in her spiritual insemination of the boy singer's body with a lily, Malory's Morgan inverts the hierarchy of sword over scabbard, revealing the true power women wield in the romance. Malory's episodes of feminine misrule evince and anxiety over queenly power in the Morte, an anxiety reflected remarkably similarly in chronicled accounts of Margaret's bid for power. Like Morgan, the constructed Margaret of Yorkist propaganda allegedly poisons instead of heals, creates fissures rather than mends, and seduces knights rather than preserving the kingly line.

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