**Abstract**

It is often assumed that medieval laypeople did not understand or follow the Latin church services they routinely attended. This thesis re-examines the role of the laity in medieval devotions and argues that careful attention to manuscripts reveals multi-layered levels of understanding and approaches to doctrine and the liturgy across lay and religious communities. It investigates the inter-relationship of literary text and its placement within the material manuscript, closely considering the ways in which word and image inform and illuminate each other. It focuses on elements of the *mise-en-page* of medieval manuscripts infrequently examined in detail, and it embraces the trilingual nature of devotion in medieval England, moving across English, Latin, and French. It examines in close detail the relations between Latin text, glosses, illustrations, decorative framing, and vernacular supplements on the pages of selected religious anthologies and private devotional books for lay and clerical use. Sometimes these devotions take the form of Passion prayers adapted from the liturgy, such as the understudied vernacular translations of the early fourteenth-century hymn to the cross, *Patris Sapiencia,* and Anglo-Norman and English Mass Prayers. This thesis demonstrates that the placement of these prayers in medieval books reveals that they were intended actively to be read by the laity as they followed the vernacular alongside the Latin of medieval services. Other devotions take the form of lyric verse for private use. Placing these devotions in their proper contexts in laypeople’s medieval books reveals their theological depth, especially regarding lay understanding of and response to the doctrine of the atonement.

After an introduction to various forms of lay participation, the thesis first studies two devotional books in their local context. It then gathers together and studies the manuscript corpora of various genres of prayers on the Passion, before moving towards the conclusion that there is a great deal more evidence for active lay engagement in the mass than previously thought. Appendices include transcriptions of vernacular versions of the Hours of the Cross and lyrical Passion prayers in English and Anglo-Norman, as well as the order of service for a reconstructed mass from medieval manuscripts by the author, and performed at the Church of All Saints North Street, York, in 2009 and 2010.

Swylke prayere þan þou take, As the likes best forto make. Many men prayes sere, Ilke man prayes on his manere. (*The Lay Folks Mass Book,* 38, lines 227-30)

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**List of Abbreviations**

AN Anglo-Norman

*ANL* Dean, Ruth J, and Maureen Boulton. *Anglo-Norman literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, *Occasional Publications Series (Anglo-Norman Text Society); 3*. London: Anglo-Norman Texts Society, 1999

BL London, British Library

Bodl. Oxford, Bodleian Library

CUL Cambridge, Cambridge University Library

CUP Cambridge University Press

D-R Douay-Rheims Bible

EETS Early English Text Society ES Extra Series OS Original Series SS Supplementary Series

GUL Glasgow, Glasgow University Library

*Horae Eboracenses Horae Eboracenses: the Prymer or Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the use of the illustrious church of York, with other devotions as they were used by the lay-folk in the Northern Province in the XVth and XVIth centuries*, Ed. Christopher Wordsworth. Surtees Society*;* 132. Durham: Andrews, and Co., 1920

*IMEV* Carleton Brown, and Rossell Hope Robbins*. The Index of Middle English Verse.* NY: Columbia University Press, 1943.

*LFC The Lay Folks' Catechism, or The English and Latin Versions of Archbishop Thoresby's Instruction for the People*. Eds. Thomas Frederick Simmons, and Henry Edward Nolloth. EETS, OS 118. London: Truebner, 1901

*LFMB The Lay Folks Mass Book, or the Manner of Hearing Mass with Rubrics and Devotions for the People in Four Texts and Offices in English According to the Use of York*. Ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons. EETS, OS 71. London: Truebner, 1879

*LFPB The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book, with Several Facsimiles*. Ed. Henry Littlehales. EETS, OS 109. London: Truebner, 1895

ME Middle English

*MED Middle English Dictionary*

*NIMEV* Boffey, Julia, A. S. G. Edwards, and British Library. *A New Index of Middle English Verse*. London: BL, 2005

NJ New Jersey

NY New York

*OED Oxford English Dictionary*

OUP Oxford University Press

PUP Princeton University Press

*RLXIVC Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*. Ed. Carleton Brown. Oxford: OUP, 1924

*RLXVC Religious lyrics of the XVth Century*. Ed. Carleton Brown. Oxford: OUP, 1939

*SC* *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*; Ed. R. W. Hunt. Oxford 1895- 1953, 7 Vols in 8. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895-1953, repr. 1980

Surtees Society Publications of the Surtees Society

TEAMS The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages

YML York, York Minster Library

**Acknowledgements**

Many people have been inspirational on my Ph.D journey. My two greatest guides have been Professor Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, whom I can never thank enough for her constant care and attention, humour and friendship; and Dr. Tim Ayers, who likewise led me through unchartered territories of art history with patience, humour and diligence, and taught me much along the way. Thanks are also due to Dr. Jane Hawkes for her valuable input as my internal examiner in the early stages; and also to Dr. Jeremy Goldberg for generously sharing some of his considerable knowledge regarding local history.

I wish to thank the British Archaeological Association for granting me the Ochs Fellowship Award to help me during the writing up of my thesis in 2010-11, and the University of York for granting me the 2010-2011Humanites Research Doctoral Fellowship Award, which again has helped me complete my research. I am grateful for the All Saints North Street Fellowship Fund, given in conjunction with the University of York for the reconstruction of a medieval mass. I thoroughly enjoyed working on the project alongside the vicar, Revd. Dr. Andrew Horsman and the wardens, Dr. Robert Richards and David Titchener. I also wish to thank the Centre for Medieval Studies for their generous assistance in awarding me a bursary during my studies, and for funding my conference and research trips through the Elisabeth Salter Fund. Thanks are also due to friends who have given me financial assistance; I am deeply appreciative – without your generosity the process would have been so much harder. I would also like to thank Dr. Chloe Morgan for her painstaking proof reading, and Ph.D friends, Windy, Beth, Kate and Els for support and friendship.