The Early Development of the Middle English Lyric c.1150–1300

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Abstract

This PhD dissertation maps out the first one hundred and fifty years of the Middle English lyric. The history of the lyric stretches from ancient Greece to the modern day. However, the origins of the Middle English lyric do not lie in this long tradition. I find that instead the Middle English lyric emerges at first from a wide variety of other genres and only half a century after it is first written down are there signs of its joining the main cross-linguistic body of the lyric genre. Rosemary Woolf and others have identified substantial stylistic change in the lyric in the fourteenth century, but heretofore unanalysed developments in form, use and context occur before then (1968). For example, the rise of the Middle English lyric anthology in the second half of the thirteenth century fostered new kinds of internal and external connections and lengthened the written lyric. A numerical analysis of lyric lengths in anthologies, in prose and in margins reveals three different length brackets: embeddable, memorisable and long. This thesis exposes the mechanisms by which the sometimes haphazard cross-contamination of genres, forms, contexts, topics and agendas generate ethically significant innovations in the Middle English lyrics. I chart the interactions between: the character of the genre which sets up the potential for some types of innovation more than others; the multiplicity of innovation at the level of individual poems; the cultural pulls that appear to select which innovations become popular; and the unintended and highly significant flashes of change which appear to circumvent the longer process of amalgamating low-level innovations.

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To my family, friends, and partner I would like to say thank you for your companionship during these years.

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

that mi lef askes wit sare weping,

ne mai ic hire werne for nane kinnes thing.

[That my love asks with sore weeping,

I may not deny her for any kind of reason.[1]]

This poem would now be called a Middle English lyric. It is found embedded in a sermon in a thirteenth-century manuscript.[2] The lyric is semantically dense by means of its references to everyday life and romance literature and by means of the religious significance attributed to it by the sermon in which it is embedded. As I show in this thesis, in being framed as the words of God, it is an invitation to think on the similarities and differences between the systems of morality appropriate to God and people. It is a particularly accessible invitation to theologise. It can exist because in the twelfth century the reading practices of various genres were combined and attached to the emerging Middle English lyric.[3] Many of these reading practices were retained in the thirteenth century even as the lyric changed significantly. The evidence suggests – though can never completely confirm – that the lyric's association with proverbs led to the development of allegorical lyrics. This, combined with the lyric's connection with romance, formed the ground work for brief devotional-romantic allegorical lyrics – a sub-genre I identify. The retained reading practices – including attention to detail, memorisation and prolonged consideration – worked over the brief devotional-romantic allegory to make this lyric a place for theological enquiry.

These answers to the questions 'what is this?' and 'how is it possible that this exists?' depend on and feed back into a broader understanding of the nature and history of the Middle English lyric. This project aims to ask these questions of many individual lyrics and then use the findings to answer the same questions, where possible, for the genre as a whole in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As has been recognised, the Middle English lyric is at once extremely varied and extremely mobile.[4] Characterising the nature, genesis and development of the Middle English lyric is, then, only possible in a limited range of ways and areas. Those ways and areas have nonetheless

[1] Durham, Durham University Library MS Cosin V.ii.8, f. 58r/a. Translations mine unless otherwise stated.

[2] "Durham University Library MS. Cosin V.ii.8", Catalogue of Durham University Library Cosin MS. V.ii.8, based on description by A. I. Doyle and A. J. Piper, accessed August 16, 2022, http://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/view?docId=ark/32150_s2kp78gg36j.xml.

[3] These findings are from the first and second chapters of this thesis.

[4] Christiania Whitehead, "Middle English Religious Lyrics," in *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 96.

included, in this study, understanding whence the Middle English lyric first emerged based on close attention to more of the earliest poems than have yet been considered together. I find the genre then underwent multiple changes; it has also been possible to offer new understandings of the mechanisms by which the genre changed and to provide genre theory with a new evidence-based model for how genres might remain distinct. Concerning the nature of the Middle English lyric, I identify certain sub-genres, one of which provides us with new knowledge about how theologising was done in very short Middle English texts of the thirteenth century. Close attention to manuscript location has enabled the identification of thirteenth-century conventions on how many lines different types of lyrics could have. Close attention to early individual poems has facilitated a newly precise mapping out of the Middle English lyric's connections to other languages and genres across time and across its sub-genres. In these findings, this study provides a sustained attempt to understand the mechanisms of the Middle English lyric's beginning in the twelfth century and development in the thirteenth century; it does so from close attention to the clues left in lyrics and in their manuscript contexts. It also fills in many of the blanks and blurs concerning the shape and character of the genre, the nature of its connections with other genres, and what it was capable of doing.

Establishing a Corpus: Now and through Time

There are several difficulties involved in thinking about the Middle English lyric as a genre. The term 'lyric' was not used at the time of their production. The Middle English lyrics are often are found without a generic tag and there is little consistency in the instances where a descriptor is used.[5] Strong formal uniformity might nonetheless encourage a confident identification of members of the genre. However, whilst there are some groups of poems that are formally very similar, there is also great variety in the poetry of the period. Many poems have also been lost.[6] Despite this, as detailed below, the idea of the 'Middle English lyric' has arisen in later anthologies and been analysed in scholarship.

The invention of the idea of the 'Middle English lyric' occurred largely through the work of eighteenth and nineteenth-century critics and then early twentieth-century anthologies. Thomas Percy's 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* uses the adjective 'lyric' to mean short 'elegant'

[5] Even where a generic tag is used, it is not necessarily a clear indicator of a systematic genre: Alfred Hiatt, "Genre Without System," in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 277–94.
[6] Wilson's admirable attempt to get a sense of lost material is useful but can only take us so far in imagining what we no longer have. R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1952).

poems.[7] Bernhard ten Brink in the 1880s uses 'lyrical' frequently, including to describe brief Middle English poems centred on feeling.[8] The focus on the Middle English lyric as a genre which conveys feeling correlates with the Romantic and specifically Hegelian interpretation of the Aristotelian idea that poetic speech comes in three types: authorial, figural and mixed.[9] From the late Renaissance these modes were associated with lyric, drama and epic. Hegel then associated lyric, epic and drama with – respectively – the subjective, objective and the objectification of subjectivities. In his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, presented mainly in the 1820s and published in the 1830s, Hegel says:

> Lyric […] can take as its sole form and final aim the self-expression of the subjective life. […] And the expression of that life will lean especially towards music.[10]

The idea that the lyric takes the expression of subjective life as its primary contents is likely to have influenced the selections of Middle English lyrics made in the subsequent Middle English lyric anthologies.

Between 1910 and 1921 various anthologies of medieval poetry were published that used the word 'lyric' explicitly in their title. Frank Allen Patterson's selection of poems is based on a then contemporary definition of the lyric given in Palgrave's Golden Treasury: 'Lyrical has been here held essentially to imply that each Poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation.' [11] E. K. Chambers and F. Sidgwick do not give a definition of the lyric but choose poems based on their 'literary qualities'. [12] Such bases for selection together with the far greater numbers of extant lyrics from later periods means that the twelfth and earlier thirteenth-century lyric received little and often skewed representation. Carleton Brown's excellent 1932 anthology of thirteenth-century Middle English poems includes about ten of the approximately thirty four extant lyrics from the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century.[13] This is the most of any anthology. Whilst the main group of lyrics (the liturgy-related musical lyrics) from the twelfth-century are anthologised on

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[7] Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), 1: x.
[8] Bernhard ten Brink, *Early English Literature (To Wiclif)*, trans. Horace M. Kennedy (New York: Henry Holt, 1889), 205–11.
[9] For a concise history of these three types see: John Frow, *Genre*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 60–66.
[10] Georg Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 2: 1037–38.
[11] Frank Allen Patterson, ed., *The Middle English Penitential Lyric: A Study and Collection of Early Religious Verse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), 1.
[12] E. K. Chambers and F. Sidgwick, eds., *Early English Lyrics: Amorous, Divine, Moral & Trivial* (London: A. H. Bullen, 1907), ix.
[13] Carleton Brown, ed., *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), xi–xii, 1–8, 10–18, 113 (hereafter cited as Brown).

a semi-regular basis, the other two groups (sermon lyrics and history lyrics) are not: this leads to a skewed picture of the period. Robert D. Stevick's 1964 edition arranges the poems chronologically with the aim of 'illustrating its development and principal features from the earliest period'.[14] However it includes only one poem from the manuscripts of the twelfth century – a liturgy-related musical lyric – and four from those of the first half of the thirteenth century.[15] R. T. Davies 1963 edition is also in roughly chronological order and includes only one poem from twelfth-century manuscripts – another liturgy-related musical lyric – and three poems from those of the first half of the thirteenth century.[16]

Not only is this period left out, then, but editors of anthologies – in choosing on the grounds of 'literary qualities' or personal liking – rarely present an accurate picture of the proportion of different types of extant lyrics. For instance, in her 2019 anthology, Anne Klinck does not attempt to make her selection at all representative of the proportions of different types of lyric.[17] The anthologies in particular of the 1960s and 1970s have been accused of being unhelpfully based on new critical ideas of what is valuable in poetry and consequentially neglecting most of the Middle English lyrics.[18] Anthologies and critics such as the 1974 Norton Critical Edition, *Middle English Lyrics*, and the scholarship of Peter Dronke in particular have been suggested to prioritise poems that are short and intricately wrought.[19] This is perhaps not an entirely fair appraisal of the Norton edition which – whilst a long way from representative – broadens out the category of the Middle English lyric by including some poems are not about subjective feeling or that are not obviously intricate.[20]

The trend at present is often to include any short poem within the genre. Indicative is the purposefully open title of the 2018 critical work *Middle English Lyrics: New Readings of Short Poems*.[21] However, one of the most recent anthologies of Middle English lyrics, Klink's aforementioned 2019 anthology, is more discerning in what it presents as a lyric. Klinck believes that the word 'lyric' contains for the modern reader baggage that is useful to the understanding of

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[14] Robert David Stevick, ed., *One Hundred Middle English Lyrics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), xiii.
[15] Stevick, 3–7.
[16] Reginald Thorne Davies, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology (*London: Faber, 1963), 51–54.
[17] Anne L. Klinck, ed., *The Voices of Medieval English Lyric: An Anthology of Poems ca 1150–1530* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).
[18] Ardis Butterfield, "Why Medieval Lyric?," *ELH* 82, no.2 (2015): 325.
[19] Butterfield, "Why Medieval Lyric?," 325, 340n15.
[20] Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L. Hoffman, eds., *Middle English Lyrics: Authoritative Texts, Critical and Historical Backgrounds, Perspectives on Six Poems* (New York: Norton, 1974). See, for example, 'Thirty Days' on page 109.
[21] Julia Boffey and Christiania Whitehead, eds., *Middle English Lyrics: New Readings of Short Poems* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2018).

Middle English lyrics. It is this baggage, presumably, that leads her to not allow 'dull' poems to be lyrics and to discount poems where 'doctrinaire or didactic function dominates'.

I have not wanted to rely on the selection of Middle English lyrics found in the post-medieval anthologies when conducting this study. As this overview has suggested, the anthologies' selection is too unrepresentative and too partial to give a good idea of the shape of the extant material. Instead, I have wanted to start my analysis of the Middle English lyric with as comprehensive a set of texts as possible. To do this, I have used the Digital Index of Middle English Verse (DIMEV). DIMEV is an online collection of the first and last two lines of all surviving Middle English verse from c. 1200 to c. 1550. It covers about 6989 poems. It does not attempt to make distinctions between what is a lyric and what is not. It therefore allows me to consider poetry which corresponds to subsequent ideas of what a lyric should be and that which does not. As a result, some of the poems I explore are heavily anthologised and often analysed as lyrics; most are rarely or never anthologised and have received minimal attention.

There are four primary drawbacks to using DIMEV. Firstly, it is limited to verse. Thus far scholars have presumed that the lyric is a versified form and to a great extent I have followed in that assumption. However, I have included in my analysis texts that are not included in DIMEV but that I have reason to believe are generically related to the Middle English lyric, such as a rhymed proverb on the benefits of silence.[22] The second issue is the start date. To counteract this I have scoured other forms of published scholarship to find the earliest texts.

The third issue is that some poems have been completely lost: my comments about the shape of the genre are about the surviving portion of it only. Whilst my focus has been on the written element of the tradition, I have also taken into account the oral nature of some of the associated genres and the oral practices that fed into the production and consumption of the lyrics and the stability of lyric texts.[23] Butterfield considers a written lyric to be a moment in the unending

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[22] E. Stengel, "Die Beiden Sammlungen Altfranzösischer Sprichwörter in Der Oxforder Handschrift Rawlinson C 641," *Zeitschrift Für Französische Sprache Und Literatur* 21 (1899): 3.

[23] Particularly helpful for thinking about orality and lyric production and consumption has been: Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Other important studies of orality and its cross-over with writing include: Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982). A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack, eds., *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). Mark Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition: Oral Poetics and Literate Culture in Medieval England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004). Mark Chinca and Christopher Young, eds., *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction and Its Consequences in Honour of D. H. Green* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). Else Mundal and Jonas Wellendorf, eds., *Oral Art Forms and Their Passage into Writing* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2008). Ranković, Slavica, Leidulg Melve, and Else Mundal,

mouvance of that poem.[24] In my second chapter I make arguments based on the co-circulation of different versions of the same lyric. However, the written version being like a snapshot of the moving whole does not appear to be a reason to distrust the study of it: the written version still exists, was chosen by a scribe and encountered in that form by readers.

The fourth issue is that DIMEV rarely gives a date for the poems or the manuscripts that they come from. Dating poems is notoriously difficult. The language may be updated or purposefully archaic. Dating manuscripts is generally more successful. The hand of often multiple scribes can be taken into consideration along with any internal evidence. I have searched the scholarship and found dates for almost all the manuscripts that DIMEV lists as containing Middle English verse. I have only considered marginalia in hands that have already been dated or that are the same as the main manuscript. This has allowed me to establish the first corpus of Middle English poems that both aims to consider almost all of the known, extant poems and gives a rough date for when the poem was written down. On this basis, I am firstly able to think about the extant lyrics in a way that is less mediated by later critical ideas of what the lyric was and secondly the dating allows me to think about changes in the written record of the genre.

Palaeographic dating can rarely provide more precision than a twenty five or fifty year window. I have consequently separated into three time brackets the poems supplied by DIMEV and found from other sources. The earliest bracket consists of the first extant poems in Middle English. Where exactly the cut off should be between the first poems and those that came after can hardly be very precise. I have chosen the turn of the twelfth century – conceived loosely – for the following reasons. Firstly, many of the earliest poems – especially those in sermons – came from about 1200. Secondly, those that may have been written down slightly earlier – the songs associated with the liturgy – form a coherent group dissimilar from that which followed them. My second bracket is roughly from 1200 to 1250. This group is sandwiched between the first poems and the lyric anthologies. Its poems are no longer the first of the genre – they are all subsequent things – but the Middle English lyric is yet to be anthologised at this stage. The Middle English lyric starts to be anthologised from about 1255. As shall be argued, anthologisation marks a major change in the written lyric. The reason that my second time bracket does not go to 1255 exactly is that the datings do not support such precision: most of the poems in this section are from manuscripts dated to

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eds., *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations, and Their Implications* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). Karl Reichl, *Medieval Oral Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

[24] Ardis Butterfield, "The Construction of Textual Form: Cross-lingual Citation in some Medieval Lyrics," in *Citation, Intertextuality and Memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance,* ed. Yolanda Plumley, Giuliano Di Bacco and Stefano Jossa (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2011), 41–57.

'C.13a'. The final time bracket concerns the anthologies of the second half of the thirteenth century. Unlike the preceding two brackets I do not consider every poem in this period. This is because my analysis is specifically focused on anthologisation. My stopping point is roughly 1300: this gives a large enough range of anthologies to consider anthologisation's general effects as it began.

Whilst DIMEV attempts to be exhaustive, I cannot claim to have considered every single extant Middle English poem from these periods. In finding dates for the several thousand manuscripts listed in DIMEV, I have sometimes had to rely on datings from scattered and unsatisfactory sources such as catalogues and asides in articles. Sometimes a dating did not exist, was inaccessible or was too vague to securely place the manuscript or marginalia in my period. Consequentially, there will undoubtedly be some poems that are missing and some wrongly included. The large number of poems covered means that in spite of this the corpus presented can be representative of the extant material.

The benefit of dating the manuscripts in DIMEV is that I can talk about changes in the written record of the Middle English lyric. It is commonly accepted that the only discernible change in Middle English lyric occurred towards the end of the fourteenth century.[25] I can show that there are multiple very significant changes in the extant Middle English lyric before the fourteenth century.

This corpus of Middle English poetry is my basis for thinking about what the Middle English lyric might be. Critical approaches to thinking about what texts should be considered a Middle English lyric have varied widely. Some critics ignore the question of what should be counted as a lyric, presumably leaving that work to the modern anthologies.[26] Early critics sometimes brought current definitions of the lyric to their understanding of the Middle English lyrics, though that has now mostly fallen out of fashion.[27] There is a recent trend instead to acknowledge the difficulty of having a criteria for inclusion in the lyric without offering a solution.[28] Dronke considers his material too variable for definition but uses French and German medieval collections of lyrics to establish his corpus; this is less possible for the early Middle English lyrics because they do not appear in

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[25] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), v. Thomas G. Duncan, introduction to *Companion*, ed. Duncan, xxv.
[26] S. A. Weber, *Theology and Poetry in the Middle English Lyric* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969).
[27] Patterson, *Penitential Lyric*, 1–2. William Elford Rogers, *Image and Abstraction: Six Middle English Religious Lyrics* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1972), 21.
[28] A. C . Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 175–181. Duncan, introduction, xx–xxv. Boffey and Whitehead, *New Readings*, 1, 10–11.

exclusively lyric anthologies.[29] In contrast to Dronke, Raymond Oliver thinks there is no difficulty in identifying the lyric corpus because the lyrics are all so obviously similar.[30] In the 1960s, critics generalised more about the character of the genre, though often those characterisations were mainly concerned with one dimension of the lyrics: for S. Manning the lyrics should be understood as songs, for Rosemary Woolf as meditational.[31] Other critics do not attempt to talk much about the genre as a whole or have a representative corpus, but instead focus on individual lyrics.[32]

I have wanted to talk about the genre as a whole, but not rely on the anthologies, modern definitions of the lyric, or single trait definitions. I consider (though have not had space to always mention) all of the poems, but have found that in some periods there is a more unified group which I call 'lyrics'. The members of this group – the lyrics – separate themselves off from Middle English poetry more generally by being similar to each other and not to the other poems. In the twelfth century, there are new and close-knit groups of lyrics that are very different from the other poems in this period: the term 'lyric' therefore means something different to the term 'poem' in this period. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the diversity of the poems and the lack of clear groupings means that the lyric can be little distinguished from the general body of poems. In the anthologies of the second half of the thirteenth century, there is much more long poetry – such as saint's lives – which are distinct from the lyric. The lyric – though now much broader in itself – thus becomes more distinguished from poetry again.

A Model of Genre that is Appropriate to the Middle English Lyric

The lyrics did not have a specific generic name in the medieval period, they are very closely associated with a number of other genres and they vary considerably in form and content across time. [33] This study of the Middle English lyric has given rise to a certain modelling of genre that can make it a useful concept despite these challenges. The model below is not supposed to be an

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[29] Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric (*London: Hutchinson University Library, 1968), 10.
[30] Raymond Oliver, *Poems without Names: The English Lyric, 1200–1500* (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), 3.
[31] S. Manning, *Wisdom and Number: Toward a Critical Appraisal of the Middle English Religious Lyric* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), vii–x. Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, 1, 3–4.
[32] Edmund Reiss, *The Art of the Middle English Lyric: Essays in Criticism* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1972). Rogers, *Image and Abstraction*.
[33] The lack of name does not, of course, mean that the genre does not exist, as has been observed many times and summarised in: Marion Turner, ed., *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Chichester: Wiley, 2013), 209–10.

exhaustive theory of genre. It is there to allow me to think about the Middle English lyric as a whole. It is therefore mostly about how we relate individual texts to the larger idea of the genre.

This model of genre involves a lot of elements from genre theory and current ideas about medieval genre in particular. For example, it presumes the reader is important to the perception of genre in a text (Jauss, Chaganti, Butterfield) and that genre is involved in the way a text is used (Jameson, Nelson & Gayk). It also presumes that genres can mix and change (Hiatt, Fowler, Daniel) and that their mixing can have political or social consequences (Pugh).[34] However, I have found this overall model more practically useful for establishing and conceptualising my corpus than Seeta Chaganti's 'dancing ghost' or Alfred Hiatt's 'ungenre', less unfeasibly fixed on the thoughts of the reader than Hans Robert Jauss's 'horizons of expectations', and – as Fowler's development of Wittgenstein encourages – closer to the dynamics of use and production than Ludwig Wittgenstein's otherwise useful taxonomic 'family resemblance' (or the even more definite list of features K. S. Whetter calls for).[35]

Rather than starting by thinking about a genre, it has been necessary to begin by thinking about all texts. From there two questions emerge: how are poems positioned within the array of texts, and what are the consequences of that positioning. Recently, genre studies has been using theories from cognitive science to think about the way texts are categorised.[36] Two main theories have emerged as particularly useful: exemplar theory and prototype theory. Exemplar theory holds that a new stimulus is compared to a person's memory of a lot of previously experienced and categorised things. The new stimulus is then placed in the same category as the things to which it bears closest resemblance. Prototype theory holds that each category has a specific instance which

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[34] Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). Seeta Chaganti, "Dance in a Haunted Space: Genre, Form, and the Middle English Carol," *Exemplaria* 27, no. 1–2 (2015): 145–46. Ardis Butterfield, "Medieval Genres and Modern Genre Theory," *Paragraph* 13, no.2 (1990): 184–201. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), 106–7. Ingrid Nelson and Shannon Gayk, "Introduction: Genre as Form-of-Life," *Exemplaria* 27, no. 1–2 (2015): 3–17. Also particularly in Eleanor Johnson's essay in this volume: Eleanor Johnson, "Horrific Visions of the Host: A Meditation on Genre," Exemplaria 27, no. 1–2 (2015): 150–166. Hiatt, "Genre Without System". Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes (*Oxford: University Press, 1982), 1170–212. Drew Daniel, "Redistributing the Sensible: Genre Theory after Rancière," *Exemplaria* 31, no. 2 (2019): 136. Tison Pugh, *Queering Medieval Genres* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 13–14.

[35] Chaganti, "Dance". Hiatt, "Genre Without System". Jauss, *Reception.* Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe. 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 32. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 40–44. K. S. Whetter, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 19–23, 30.

[36] Michael Sinding, "Framing Monsters: Multiple and Mixed Genres, Cognitive Category Theory, and Gravity's Rainbow," *Poetics Today* 31, n. 3 (2010): 465–505. Yin Liu, "Middle English Romance as Prototype Genre," *The Chaucer Review* 40, n. 4 (2006): 335–53. John J. Collins, "The Genre Apocalypse Reconsidered," *Zeitschrift Für Antikes Christentum* 20, n. 1 (2016): 21–40.

represents that category. This can be an actual instance of that category or an amalgamation of the traits which are perceived to be most central to the category. When used together, these theories are useful for explaining how a text could be categorised as part of a genre. It also explains how a text could participate as an oddity in one genre and have strong affiliations with other genres.[37]

A distinctive group is established when a reader creates for that group a prototype. For instance, Marian lyrics are a sub-genre in part because for a knowledgeable reader it is easy to imagine what kind of thing a Marian lyric is. That thing is separable from and more specific than how the Middle English lyric is imagined more generally. The centrality of subgenres can be seen in how similar the prototype of the sub-genre is to the proto-type of the macro-genre.

The consequence of a text being positioned within an array of texts is that it is influenced by the exemplars and prototypes. Jauss is helpful as a starting point; he suggests that a genre creates a 'horizon of expectations' for readers when encountering new texts.[38] This works better for the lyric if this idea of a genre creating a horizon of expectations is expanded out to all of the exemplars and prototypes that come to mind. Each provide different and at times competing expectations. Furthermore, it is not just expectations that are provided. It is also ways of interacting with and interpreting texts. Of the directions a text could make one think, there may be traditions suggesting that certain topics should be dwelt on more than others. Each individual text is an exemplar that carries with it the expectations and reading practices of all the genres and texts to which it is related. Each individual text is therefore influenced by the most relevant prototypes, by similar texts, and by the generic baggage of those similar texts.

The intensity with which different exemplars and prototypes influence the reading of a text will vary. More similar texts and prototypes will inform readings with a greater intensity. Extra-textual generic clues such as titles, layout on the page, or circumstances of reception will also increase the intensity of influence of some exemplars and reduce that of others. The genre of a text will be aligned with the prototype and exemplars that are most similar and influence a reading most strongly. Other traditions can also have influence but generally less intensely.

[37] Jane Beal has argued for a fourteenth-century text's purposeful occupation of multiple genres: Jane Beal, *The Signifying Power of Pearl: Medieval Literary and Cultural Contexts for the Transformation of Genre* (London: Routledge, 2016).
[38] Jauss, *Reception*, 28.

It is not just the intensity of influence which informs a text's primary generic affiliations. It is also the type of influence. For example, influences can be broad or specific. A lyric on death might be broadly influenced by other lyrics. By broadly influenced, I mean influenced in a broad variety of ways: by expectations concerning a wide variety of formal features, by interpretive practices, by conventions on what to focus on. A reading of a lyric on death might be influenced narrowly by other texts on death: the influence is narrow because it would only pertain to the subject matter. Texts and prototypes within a poem's genre are likely to have a broad influence and texts from other genres are more likely to have a narrow one.

This model of genre can be used and elaborated on to think about the ways in which genres relate to each other. The prototype for the devotional lyric has itself certain similarities with the prototype for the proverb. This proximity allows specific lyrics to start by adopting proverb characteristics and inhabiting both genres, only to later break out of the logic of the proverb into the logic of the lyric. Proximity is thus one way in which a genre can comment upon itself and other genres. Single texts can also form a bridge between two genres. For example, a poem might operate as both a lyric and a sermon: it would carry the expectations and reading practices of both genres. A purely lyrical poem that in some way evoked the sermon-lyric would then be influenced – if weakly – by the sermon-expectations attendant on the sermon-lyric.

As has been so frequently pointed out, individual texts often go beyond the conventions of their genre.[39] By being identifiable as part of a genre but going beyond its parameters a text changes that genre.[40] This allows me to think about what individual lyrics brought to the genre and how an individual lyric can change what a genre is. If later lyrics use the genre as a blueprint, a lyric also thus changes the possibilities attendant on the production of new lyrics.[41]

This way of thinking about genre has meant that, in line with much contemporary theory, I have seen texts' participation in the lyric genre not as a binary but instead as on a multidimensional

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[39] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," trans. Avital Ronell, *Critical Enquiry* 7 no. 1 (1980): 59. Garin Dowd, "Introduction: Genre Matters in Theory and Criticism,' in *Genre Matters*, ed. Garin Dowd, Lesley Stevenson and Jeremy Strong (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2006), 15.

[40] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 44–45.

[41] William D. Paden, introduction to *Medieval Lyric: Genres in Historical Context*, ed. William D. Paden (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2000), 3.

continuum.[42] Texts can be closer or further from the prototype or bear more or less similarity to the majority of other poems.

The lyric prototype and the shape of the body of exempla changed over time. There are some features, however, that remained relatively consistent across the period here considered. Verse, rhyme and brevity feature strongly in the lyric prototype even as it morphs across this period and indeed these formal traits have an almost unanimous presence not just in those exempla that are close to the lyric prototype but also in those much further off on the lyric to non-lyric multidimensional spectrum. There are also reading practices that appear to have been important aspects of the prototypical lyric. These are harder to observe and hence their prevalence less certain. However, they appear to include careful reading, adding material from elsewhere into one's understanding of a lyric, attending to the detail of a lyric, and memorisation. There are other features that – whilst not so nearly universally present – also are in so significant a portion of the exempla as to become secondary components of the lyric prototype. Lyrics that lack, for instance, rhyme or brevity may have closer ties to the genre due to having these secondary traits. These traits are less stable across the period but include the use of the first person perspective, the consideration of religious or moral matters and having a didactic purpose.

All of the prototypical lyric characteristics change slightly over time as the body of exempla changes and different characteristics become less and more common. In particular, whilst still brief compared to other poetic genres of the period, the average later thirteenth-century lyric is significant longer than that of the twelfth or first half of the thirteenth century. However, even as new elements occur or the popularity of features shift, much is retained. New-fangled lyrics – whilst perhaps initially peripheral – are linked in with the main body of the lyrics via a continuum of similar texts that are linked to other similar texts right to the most common types of lyric. New features coexist in lyrics with very established lyric features. The result is that in this period the changes do not constitute a break in the genre even when they happen relatively quickly.

The way of thinking about genre outlined in this section offers certain opportunities in understanding specific types of Middle English lyric. For example, it has allowed extracts and songs to be thought about as lyrics. I have treated extracts like lyrics in themselves. This is because they appear to have circulated independently. Often it is not possible to tell what is an extract and what was always a complete lyric. This may be in part due to a lack of evidence, but the overwhelming

[42] Hiatt, "Genre Without System". Melissa Valiska Gregory, "Genre," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 46, no. 3–4 (2018): 715–19.

lack of interest in acknowledging extracts to be extracts suggests a comfortableness with them circulating as their own texts. They are a whole which may or may not be also felt to be part of a larger work, depending on whether a person knows the longer poem. Sung lyrics have a relationship with musical genres that other Middle English lyrics cannot have to the same degree. This does not prevent them from also being part of the Middle English lyric. Genres are constantly comingling in individual texts. Where music exists, the other genres that the music is related to can be taken into account. However, where the music is lost or where there is no evidence about whether a lyric has music or not, it is still possible to analyse it as a lyric with the ever present proviso that there are likely to be some connections lost to us.

Methodology

The methodologies concerning how to talk about the Middle English lyric, about emerging genres and about medieval genre are all productively fraught.[43] In her 2015 article, Ardis Butterfield argues that new critical ways of thinking about the lyric have led to a focus on only a small minority of the lyrics and an ignoring of manuscript contexts.[44] New historicism then signalled an end to serious interest in the lyrics.[45] Her solution is to trace lyrics through their different forms and manuscript contexts.[46] She also suggests that due to the genre's 'sprawling material state' and many of the individual lyrics being much too clichéd for a deep reading, a flat, descriptive reading that takes into account the whole field might be best.[47] Chris Scott, in his response to Butterfield, defends the close reading of lyrics, suggesting that Butterfield's approach would require complete mastery of the field and reduce the Middle English lyric to a database.[48]

My approach to thinking about the Middle English lyric and its development is informed by modern genre theory but attuned to the Middle English lyric and the material that survives with it. This means that it varies over the thesis as the type and quantity of surviving material varies. I agree with Scott that paying close attention to individual texts is worthwhile: this practice remains at the heart of my analyses. Furthermore, far from an un-analysable mass of cliché I have found that

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[43] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987). Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996). Nicholas Seager, *The Rise of the Novel (*Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 189. William D. Paden, ed., *Medieval Lyric: Genres in Historical Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Hiatt, "Genre Without System," 278–79. Butterfield, "Medieval Genres," 184–201.
[44] Ardis Butterfield, "Why Medieval Lyric?," 319–43.
[45] Butterfield, 325.
[46] Butterfield, 335–36.
[47] Butterfield, 328.
[48] Chris Scott, "Medieval Lyric: Another Direction," *The Critical Quarterly* 62.4 (2020): 88–90, 102.

thinking about what the lyrics do is very rewarding. However, I agree with Butterfield that a blinkered analysis of a small handful of lyrics selected due to later criteria cannot accurately reflect the corpus as a whole. I put individual lyrics in the context of the wider Middle English lyric genre and to a more limited extent in the context of the rest of the literary landscape. As with both of these critics and others, I often spend a long time with the manuscript contexts of lyrics.[49]

The Middle English lyrics can be difficult to talk about from a new historicist framework due to the lack of accompanying information. The presumption that broad historical facts are always hyper-relevant and the cherry-picking and twisting of poems so as to support a general historical argument are the unfortunate consequences of misapplied attempts at historicism.[50] However, there is a small group of twelfth-century lyrics that come with considerable information. My approach to these lyrics is thus more historical than would be appropriate for the rest of the thesis. This more historical approach allows me to consider, in line with much current genre theory, the political significance of these early lyrics.[51] Part of tracking the political significance of these texts will involve thinking – as practitioners of historical poetics do – about the histories of the forms these early lyrics combine.[52]

The majority of the Middle English lyrics, however, come with little historical information. Often there is little or no information about a lyric's author, scribe, reader or circumstances of use. I deal with this by putting the text at the heart of how I think about both readers and writers. I think about what actions the lyric offers to or provokes in the reader by combining the idea of affordances

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[49] Thinking about the lyrics in their manuscript and often prose contexts has been a burgeoning and productive practice. Butterfield, for example, looks for intra-textual clues and manuscript clues for reader response in: Butterfield, "Medieval Genres," 184–201. The contribution of the lyrics embedded in Chaucer's prose is considered by Emma Kate Charters Gorst in her PhD thesis: Emma Kate Charters Gorst, "Middle English Lyrics: Lyric Manuscripts 1200–1400 and Chaucer's Lyric," (PhD diss, University of Toronto, 2013). In her PhD, Felicitas Kohnen argues that our understanding of what lyrics are can be broadened by considering the embedded lyrics in their prose contexts: Felicitas Kohnen, " 'Textual' and 'Contextual Continuities': A New Approach to the Medieval Religious Lyric in England; A Study of Lyrics in Prose Texts," (PhD diss., University College London, 2004).

[50] Seth Lerer, "The Genre of the Grave and the Origins of the Middle English Lyrics," *Modern Language Quarterly* 58, n. 2 (1997): 127–61.

[51] John Snyder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay and the Theory of Genre* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1991), 211. John Frow, "'Reproducibles, Rubrics and Everything you Need': Genre Theory Today," *PMLA* 122, no.5 (2007): 1633. Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Nelson and Gayk, "Form-of-Life," 3–17.

[52] Ilya Kliger and Boris Maslov, eds., *Persistent Forms: Explorations in Historical Poetics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016). Yopie Prins, "'What is Historical Poetics?'," *Modern Language Quarterly* 77, n. 1 (2016): 13–40.

with genre-based reader response theories.[53] Following Caroline Levine, I understand a text's 'affordances' to mean the actions which are allowed or encouraged by the characteristics of a text.[54] I also make extensive use of the manuscript context. Manuscripts and prose contexts also often leave clues about what a reader is supposed to be getting from a lyric or else about the process of production and inscription. Much useful work has been done on how the embedding of lyrics and proverbs may affect their voice.[55] I am more interested in the hints it gives us and the direction it gave medieval readers about the purpose and use of a lyric specifically and the genre more broadly.

I also think about the opportunities that the literary landscape offers. If genres offer different blueprints for the creation of a text, I think about what possibilities are already in play, and by what accident or incentive new mixtures could be created.[56] 'Literary landscape' is a useful metaphor for the way the circulating literature is a world out of which new texts arise and which offers readers and writers resources. It is a metaphor that has been productively deepened with the idea of sedimentation. That is, that old forms of a genre are lost to view but are still part of its shape.[57] This is particularly clear in the first half of the thirteenth century where many of the generic connections of the twelfth-century Middle English lyric are lost to view but the reading practices that went with them are retained.

This text led approach leads me to see the lyrics and the literary landscape as having an agency of their own. In 'Art Objects', Jeanette Winterson argues that art acts in the world and upon people.[58] I am often interested in how lyrics, genres and the literary landscape as a whole act on readers and upon writers. This view of literary production must be somewhat partial: the literary

[53] Derrida, "The Law of Genre," 64–65. Jauss, *Reception*. Stanley Fish, "How to Recognise a Poem when You See One," in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 77–85.

[54] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 1–23.

[55] Ricardo Mathews has thought about lyric voice with regard to lyrics in romances and similar narratives. Thinking about earlier lyrics, I find a greater variety of surrounding prose useful – the sermon, the history, the saint's life – and think less about voice specifically and more about how the prose presents the lyric as a genre. Ricardo Matthews, "Song in Reverse: The Medieval Prosimetrum and Lyric Theory," *PMLA* 133, n. 2 (2018): 296–313. Bradbury thinks about how embedding proverbs may alter their voice: Nancy Mason Bradbury, "The Proverb as Embedded Microgenre in Chaucer and The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf," *Exemplaria* 27, n. 1–2 (2015): 55–72.

[56] E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 80–99, 144–48.

[57] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 9–10, 140–45. Matthew Giancarlo, "Mirror, Mirror: Princely Hermeneutics, Practical Constitutionalism, and the Genres of the English Fürstenspiegel," *Exemplaria* 27, n. 1–2 (2015): 38–41.

[58] Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery (*London: Vintage, 1996).

tradition has a large impact on what can be or is done but an individual's productions are also influenced by other factors.

What is the Middle English Lyric Like?

This study nuances some of the major ideas about the Middle English lyric and adds its own foci. It is more often monographs than articles that seek to characterise the Middle English lyric as a whole. A number of longer studies focus on just one type of lyric: for example, Woolf on the religious, Arthur Moore just on the secular, Siegfried Wenzel on sermon lyrics, and A. C. Spearing on the courtly lyric.[59] The monographs of the 1960s and 70s often found the presence of images particularly important to the Middle English lyric. Dronke suggest the lyric is at its best when presenting striking images and William Rogers suggests that the lyric ties a traditional image to a dogmatic truth, ideally to illuminate both.[60] I have generally found that the imagery in the lyrics is better thought about as a situation rather than as a static picture. For example, one could think of a pleading, weeping lover as an image, but the lyric does more if one thinks of it as a situation that one can imaginatively inhabit. I have also found that in the first half of the thirteenth century the images often make moral points or else their emotion is in service of a theological idea.

Manning ties together an interest in lyric images with another major way of characterising the lyrics: by their emotion. He suggests that lyrics can invest an image with emotion.[61] Patterson also sees the lyric as about emotion insofar as he thinks it is tied to mysticism and has mysticism's emotion and simplicity of theological idea.[62] Contrary to Patterson and other's arguments about the lyric's mundanity of topic, I have generally found them full of ideas.[63]

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[59] Woolf, *Religious Lyric.* Arthur Keister Moore, *The Secular Lyric in Middle English* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951). Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Siegfried Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons: 'Fasciculus Morum' and Its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1978). Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity*, 174–247. Secular lyrics generally have received more attention than is proportional to their smaller numbers. Criticism focusing mainly on secular lyrics includes Moore, Spearing and: Karl Reichl, "The Beginnings of the Middle English Secular Lyric: Texts, Music, Manuscript Context," in *The Genesis of Books: Studies in the Scribal Culture of Medieval England in Honour of A.N. Doane*, ed. Matthew T. Hussey and John D. Niles (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 195–244. John F. Plummer, "The Poetic Function of Conventional Language in the Middle English Lyric," *Studies in Philology* 72.4 (1975): 367–85.

[60] Dronke, *Medieval Lyric,* 63–70. Rogers, *Image and Abstraction*, 18.

[61] Manning, *Wisdom and Number*, 54.

[62] Patterson, *Penitential Lyric,* 3–5.

[63] Patterson, *Penitential Lyric, 26.* Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, 11.

The theological complexity of the lyric is the subject of some dispute. S. A. Weber finds them to be heavily influenced by liturgical time but not necessarily containing particularly innovative theological ideas.[64] Michael P. Kuczynski argues that some of the lyrics are written by clerics for clerics and hence can be and are theologically sophisticated.[65] He also argues that our mistaken belief that lyrics are short has led to their being considered non-discursive despite their 'high level of verbal implication and […] sheer length'.[66] I find that whilst many of the earliest lyrics do have a strong connection with the liturgy, by the first half of the thirteenth century the main seat of one sub-genres' theological complexity actually comes from elsewhere: their capacity to be simultaneously secular love lyrics and devotional lyrics. Furthermore, whilst it is not impossible that these lyrics were clerics talking to clerics, their accessibility means that they could also talk effectively to lay people. The second chapter in particular consequentially establishes that this lyric subgenre constitutes a previously unrecognised democratisation of vernacular theology, making it not just – as Nicholas Watson and others have implied – a feature of the fourteenth century but also of the thirteenth, not just the preserve of long texts but also of short ones, and not just something that texts were but something that people did with texts.[67] It has recently been recognised that literary medieval texts could be the site of serious thought of a variety of natures; their brevity and density of meaning means that in the Middle English lyric the serious consideration often happens as much in the thought processes the lyrics encourage as in the body of the lyrics themselves.[68]

Another main way that these monograph length studies seek to characterise the Middle English lyric is by its relationship with religious practice. Woolf describes the lyric as mediational, Weber sees it as heavily influenced by the liturgy and in particular by liturgical time schemes, and Douglas Gray thinks that its impulse is mainly devotional but also often aesthetic.[69] It is true that in the period I study the vast majority of the lyrics have a moral or Christian significance. However, the way that they do so varies. In the manuscripts of the twelfth century, the main body of lyrics have

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[64] Weber, *Theology and Poetry.*

[65] Michael P. Kuczynski, "Theological Sophistication and the Middle English Religious Lyric," *The Chaucer Review* 45, n. 3 (2011): 325–29.

[66] Kuczynski, "Theological Sophistication", 329.

[67] Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70, n. 4 (1995): 822–64. Vincent Gillespie, "Vernacular Theology," in Strohm, *Middle English*, 401–20. Cervone takes seriously the theological work does by medium and long poems of the second half of the fourteenth century. Cristina Maria Cervone, *Poetics of the Incarnation: Middle English Writing and the Leap of Love* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pages 2–3 in particular.

[68] Philip Knox, Jonathan Morton and Daniel Reeve, eds., *Medieval Thought Experiments* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018).

[69] Woolf, *Religious Lyric.* Weber, *Theology and Poetry.* Douglas Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 70–71.

strong links to the liturgy and function like devotional scripts. Readers are to recite them and make the words their own. Furthermore, as well as being devotional they also often include social or political ideas. In the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century, the lyrics are less scripts and more spaces in which to think about moral or theological ideas. In the second half of the thirteenth century, there are such a quantity and variety of lyrics that even broad and uncomprehensive generalisations such as these become less fruitful. However, a mixture of circumstances and lyric changes facilitated by the anthologies lead the anthologies to present the lyric genre as one large and malleable devotional exercise.

This study adds to these themes and also contributes new ideas. The larger number of early texts considered allows me to newly identify several early lyric sub-genres. This thesis is also more nuanced in terms of periodisation. Most of the studies referred to above characterised the Middle English lyric as one big block, or see a divide only in the fourteenth century.[70] This study is able to characterise the written lyric in three separate periods and show that it was very different in those periods. This has led to several refinements of earlier characterisations. For example, Woolf and Gray's suggestions that death poetry was a major subgenre holds true in the manuscripts of the second half of the thirteenth century but not of the first half of the thirteenth century.[71] It has also revealed the sequencing of the lyric's different associations with other genres. For example, the liturgy has a huge effect – as has been suggested – but specifically on one of the three strands of the genres at its beginning.[72]

The comprehensiveness of my approach has also allowed me to conduct a statistical analysis of the length of poems in different kinds of manuscript context. It has frequently been asserted that it is impossible to say just how short a lyric is.[73] However, I have been able to put forward three length brackets that reflect medieval practice. I have then studied the difference in overall effect between the shorter and longer brackets. This has enabled further contributions to the characterisation of the lyric, such as a consideration of how one interacts with the images differently in long and short poems.

My methodology has also allowed me to bring to our understanding of the Middle English lyric a lot of poems that have barely been considered before. For example, overviews of the very

[70] Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, v. Duncan, *introduction*, xxv. Oliver, *Poems without Names*. Weber, *Theology and Poetry*. Gray, *Themes and Images*, 59.
[71] Woolf, *Religious Lyric,* 19, 67–113. Gray, *Themes and Images*, 176.
[72] Weber, *Theology and Poetry.* Patterson, *Penitential Lyric*, 20. Gray, *Themes and Images*, 3–17.
[73] For example: Klinck, *Voices*, 9. Gray, *Themes and Images*, 59.

earliest lyrics occasionally include the liturgy-related musical lyrics but these studies of the lyric do not consider most of the sermon lyrics from this period. It has also pushed forward our knowledge of some of the more famous lyrics. For example, I am able to put 'The Ballad of Judas' in the context of a heretofore unappreciated earlier lyric subgenre and hence shed light on the generic history and changing significance of its ambiguous dialogue. In general my consideration of the genre as a whole has allowed me to situate individual lyrics within a generic context. This has often provided new insight into the way that they work.

How the Lyric Changed

This thesis also looks at how the Middle English lyric began and progressed. By 'progressed' or 'developed' I do not mean that the genre improved, or that its changes were linear or pre-determined. I refer only to changes undergone through time. Serious thought about how genres begin has recently been of interest to practitioners of historical poetics, though their answers have not concerned and are little relevant to the Middle English lyric.[74] Critics of the Middle English lyric have in places more lightly considered the question. Some have suggested that the beginning of the Middle English lyrics must at least in part have been facilitated by other genres.[75] However, no one has yet spent sufficient time with all of the very first Middle English lyrics.

This has led to partial or at times incorrect explanations. Sometimes this is to do with dates. For example, the general idea that French literature had a significant influence is correct, but more specifically this is evidenced in the thirteenth century and not in the twelfth.[76] Sometimes a single source or group is too strongly argued for as a single point of departure.[77] Another limitation pertains to critics' characterisations of the types of contribution other genres made. For example, Gray is right that Latin forms were important sources of imagery and an exclamatory style of prayer, but underestimates the importance of the reading conventions brought across from Latin liturgical genres.[78] My first chapter argues that the prose surrounding the earliest lyrics puts them in the context of other genres – including liturgical genres – to help the contemporary readers know how

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[74] For example, see Nina Braginskaya, "Innovation Disguised as Tradition: Commentary and the Genesis of Art Forms," in Klinger and Maslov, *Persistent Forms*, 172–208. Victoria Somoff, "Alexander Veselovsky's Historical Poetics vs. Cultural Poetics: Remembering the Future," in Klinger and Maslov, *Persistent Forms*, 65–89.

[75] Whitehead, "Middle English Religious Lyrics," 97.

[76] Patterson, *Penitential Lyric,* 20, 45. Plummer, "Conventional Language," 368, 370–71.

[77] Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, *'I Have a Yong Suster': Popular Song and the Middle English Lyric* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002). David Lyle Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric & Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1975).

[78] His focus is mainly on topological interpretation: Gray, *Themes and Images*, 6–9.

to interpret them. Stanley Fish argues strongly for (and perhaps over-emphasises) the importance of socially-produced reading conventions in how texts are interacted with and understood.[79] The prose contexts of the earliest Middle English lyrics allow them to draw on the reading conventions of older genres.

The most common issue, however, is that explanations of lyric origins are vague. They rely on a vague feeling of which texts were most similar to what the critic can call to mind as early-ish lyrics.[80] Instead, I have conducted a long analysis of each of the earliest Middle English lyrics. This has involved looking to their contexts, as well as their form and subject matter, for clues as to how they came about. From this, I have found three early types of Middle English lyric that each have different emphases in the genres they developed from. All of the lyrics in the largest group have generic links to the liturgy. Individual lyrics in that group have other generic links as well. A second, related group – which I call the 'history lyrics' – is, I argue, not actually a new type of lyric but a continuation of a trickling tradition. The final group, the 'sermon lyric', is unified more by where they are found – in sermons – and draws on a diverse range of pre-existing genres and thematic traditions.

As well as changing our understanding of how the first lyrics were produced and understood, the specificity of my account also contributes to our wider theoretical ideas about the beginning of genres. The idea that genres could emerge from other, older genres is established.[81] However, this thesis shows how this might work in more detail. For example, I come to the surprising conclusion that the first texts of a new genre might each emerge from different genres to each other, and yet still be connected and form the basis of a single genre. Combining forms is political in part because a culture can have already invested so much significance in the pre-existing genres. The status of those forms as well as their content and their conventional mode of interaction makes their combining a significant cultural act.[82] If different members of the new genre each combine a distinctive group of older genres, then their political significance can differ despite them being similar in form and

[79] Fish, "How to Recognise a Poem," 77–85.
[80] For example Vincent Gillespie intuitively but briefly suggests a similarity between Old English proverbs and Middle English moral and penitential lyrics. Close attention to early individual lyrics and their relationship with the proverb allows me to turn this casual observation into an evidenced and proportional part of how we understand the development of the lyric. Vincent Gillespie, "Moral and Penitential Lyrics," in Duncan, *Companion*, 69.
[81] Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 156. Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origins of Genres," in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 197. Frow, "'Reproducibles'," 150.
[82] Daniel, "Redistributing the Sensible," 129–40.

content. I stress the importance of the prose contexts in making the connection to certain genres explicit and thus directing or magnifying the political implications of each individual lyric.

Recently there has been little discussion of the how the Middle English lyric developed as a written genre. As I have said, it has heretofore been accepted that the only detectable change happened in the fourteenth century. In 1968 Rosemary Wolfe wrote:

> In terms of style and content, however, only one dividing line is discernible: it occurs in the last few decades of the fourteenth century.[83]

In 2005, the introduction to *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric* also offers the end of the fourteenth century as the only discernible watershed in the development of the Middle English lyric.[84] Little has been done to challenge this idea. Woolf is no doubt right that a change does occur at that time. However, as I show, the Middle English lyric as a genre undergoes significant change in the centuries before this. This higher resolution view of the series of changes in the Middle English lyric provides a new model for the way that genres can develop over time.

It is one thing to be able to describe the changes that occurred in the Middle English lyric in its first one hundred and fifty years. It is another thing to be able to say why or how those changes occurred. The lyrics of the thirteenth century are different from those of the twelfth century in that they come with much less explanatory prose. This means that beyond the evidence of the lyrics themselves and occasional manuscript clues, little is revealed about the specific concerns and intents of the author. Where there is not sufficient internal evidence – and there often isn't – it is difficult to situate changes in the lyric in larger societal shifts without having to presume that a wider societal issue must have been important to every poet and the motivating factor for every poem. Rather than looking at the larger reasons why change occurred, I have focused on the mechanics of innovation. I find evidence of the means by which lyrics change both in the lyrics themselves and on the manuscript page. Like Paul Binski, I am interested in how invention involves playing with conventions.[85] However, I am particularly interested in the playing with convention that is involved in combining conventions. I also focus on how lyric characteristics do different things in different contexts: this means that a change to one aspect of the lyric can have knock-on effects as the old

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[83] Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, v.
[84] Duncan, introduction, xxv.
[85] Paul Binski, "Medieval Invention and Its Potencies," *British Art Studies* 6 (2017), https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-06/pbinski.

characteristics function differently in the context of the new one. Rather than focusing on authorial intent, I think about how the literary landscape makes certain kinds of change possible. As Derrida and others have suggested, each text is at once part of a genre and more than the expectations attendant on or characteristics usual for that genre.[86] Each text thus pulls the genre in a different way.[87] Having thought about the mechanisms by which texts might exceed the current norms of their genre, I then consider as far as possible how that innovation moved the genre and the extent to which its additions became popular.

This thesis is composed of three large chapters each split into smaller parts. The first chapter is about the twelfth century and concerns the earliest Middle English lyrics. It covers the three types of lyrics in this period: the liturgy-related musical lyrics, sermon lyrics, and history lyrics. The second chapter concerns the lyrics found in manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century. It considers the reading practices that were retained from the twelfth century, and then analyses the mechanisms by which change occurred during the first half of the thirteenth century. It finally focuses in on one important type of lyric from this period. The third chapter is about the anthologies of lyrics that begin to appear for the first time in the second half of the thirteenth century. It starts by looking at the lengthening of written lyrics – a change facilitated by anthologisation – and considers the literary ramifications of this development. It then goes on to consider how anthologisation affected the internal structure of the lyric and the lyric's relationship with other genres.

[86] Derrida, "The Law of Genre," 59. Frow, "'Reproducibles'," 1633.
[87] Eliot, "Tradition," 44–45.

Chapter One: Twelfth-Century Middle English Lyrics

Introduction

Hundreds of Middle English lyrics survive from the thirteenth century. Indeed, by the latter half of the thirteenth century the Middle English lyric is a genre that knows itself and knows its Latin and Old French counterparts. The same cannot be said of the twelfth century. From here but a handful of Middle English lyrics survive. Those that do may be called 'lyric' more by virtue of their successors than their use of pre-established lyric conventions. Conventions are, however, used by these prototype lyrics. The lyrics take and combine afresh traditions from the liturgy, from prayer, from proverbs, from sermons and from popular songs. The result of this fusion is a set of lyric practices and characteristics (with lyric practices being the conventional methods by which people interpret a lyric and their ways of using it). These practices and characteristics are constitutive of the genre throughout the thirteenth century.

Current critical assessments of the twelfth century – such as those by Treharne, Faulkner and Harris – argue for twelfth-century interest in pre-conquest Old English literature.[1] Interactions with this older tradition are often characterised by the desire to make it accessible – either to the laity or to a more scholarly audience.[2] At the same time, the long span of interaction between the many languages of England – Latin, Anglo-Norman, Middle English, and possibly a form of Old Norse amongst others – has often been highlighted as leading to a cross-fertilisation of their literatures.[3] An emerging concern is that of the relationship between the preservation and use of Old English texts and the creation of new Middle English texts. Old English texts are frequently glossed and copied in the twelfth century; the current critical picture (as apparent in Conti) is that there is far more of this type of manuscript evidence for twelfth-century interaction with Old English texts than there is manuscript evidence for new writing in Middle English.[4] This chapter suggests that the

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[1] Elaine Treharne, "The Authority of English, 900–1150," in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare Lees (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 554–78. Mark Faulkner, "Archaism, Belatedness and Modernisation: 'Old' English in the Twelfth Century," *Review of English Studies* 63, n. 259 (2012): 179–203. Sara Harris, *The Linguistic Past in Twelfth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[2] Mark Faulkner, "Rewriting English Literary History 1042–1215," *Literature Compass* 9, n. 4 (2012): 278.

[3] Elizabeth Tyler, Thomas O'Donnell and Matthew Townend, "European Literature and Eleventh-Century England," in *European Literature and Eleventh-Century England*, ed. Clare Lees (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), 607–36.

[4] Aidan Conti, "The Circulation of the Old English Homily in the Twelfth Century: New Evidence from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343," in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J Kleist (Brepols: Turnhout, 2007), 367.

combination of an interest in Old English literature, the desire to make Old English accessible, and the influence of literature in other languages actually formed fertile ground for the development of new Middle English texts. The tension between these different concerns actually pulled new genres, and specifically the Middle English lyric, into shape.

The rise of written Middle English in the twelfth century is interesting insofar as it is a reassertion of vernacular writing in English. Whilst writing remained a relatively elite activity, writing in Middle English in this period would have been far more accessible to the ear than writing in Old English. A country which had known and to some extent lost a written vernacular, gained another related one. Under the influence of Marxist theory, scholars such as Christopher Cannon have wanted to see the beginning of written vernaculars as unconnected to Latin, or – as with Antonio Gramsci – as a symptom of the importance of the people to the elites.[5] The emergence of written English has also been presented by Sheldon Pollock as political manoeuvrings on the part of the elites.[6] For more conservative reasons Ernst Robert Curtius has wanted to see the rise of the vernacular as purely inspired by Latin learning.[7] The lyrics considered in this chapter are amongst the earliest texts in Middle English, but they are not the only texts in Middle English in this period. This chapter looks, then, at the rise of written Middle English as it presents itself in one new genre. In considering a few first texts in detail it will give a narrower but more nuanced idea of why the vernacular was written down. It will show that the duality of elites and the populace is insufficient to explain the lyric's origin. It will also tie the choice of language and the decision to write – the axes of a written vernacular – closely to the monastic endorsement of the mixing of genres.

Genres have been described as powerful ideological forces that make violent incursions into history or influence what appears to be common sense.[8] Part of what I am doing is examining the cultural changes enacted by the recombination of features and the forming of a new genre in the English language. Literary and historical pressures interact and influence each other. The competing concerns outlined above produced lyrics that do not simply fit into one genre. They incorporate the long history and many of the practices of the genres they are posited between, yet in recombining

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[5] Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings,* ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. William Boelhower (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 168.

[6] Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 444–45.

[7] Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 383–88. Curtius' investment in a pan-European culture also informs his approach.

[8] John Snyder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay, and the Theory of* Genre (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 17. Daniel, "Redistributing the Sensible," 129–40.

these features they forge something new. In many of the twelfth-century lyrics I consider in this chapter, the textual preservation conveys an acute awareness of generic indeterminacy of the lyrics and the genres they draw on. In the twelfth-century, decisions about genre and language use were perhaps more openly understood to be political and ideological. The position of a lyric in relation to the contemporary interest in Old English, the desire for accessibility and the influence of other languages is a political statement; the lyrics' navigation of linguistic and generic norms are openly political and social actions. Thus, not only do these lyrics arise from the combination of recently identified twelfth-century concerns, but they also make statements about them.

Where Old English ends and Middle English begins is a fraught question. Whilst this study is interested in the Middle English lyric as opposed to the Old English lyric, happily there is no need to create an artificial dividing line. In the twelfth century, there is a surprisingly coherent group of short lyrics found embedded in prose. There is no such group in the eleventh century and the group of twelfth-century lyrics are too dissimilar from any sub-section of Old English poetry to appear to be of the same genre. This is not to say that the new twelfth-century genre was without roots in earlier texts and traditions. Indeed, this chapter finds that the new group is largely composed of older traditions and has links to Old English poetry. The diachronic as well as the synchronic relations of the Middle English lyric are treated at length. However, because this group is distinctive, its beginning – and hence the beginning of the *Middle English* lyric – is independent of any need to define Old English against Middle English poetry.

The twelfth-century Middle English lyrics appear in one primary group and two smaller groups. The first, largest and most original group is devotional and strongly associated with song and the divine office. It includes an antiphon for Thomas Becket, the songs of Saint Godric, and the song of Cnut. I call these texts 'lyrics' and – following their prose introductions – 'songs'. I also call them 'musical lyrics' or 'liturgical lyrics' to distinguish them from the other groups. The lyrics of the second, related group are unified by their presence in sermons: these lyrics are also short and devotional but are not necessarily affiliated with song or the liturgy. This group includes: an address of the soul to the body in 'De Sancto Andrea', number CCIX of the Trinity Homilies; a couplet in Vespasian Homily II; and a quatrain at the start of a sermon in Worcester, Worcester Cathedral Library MS Q.29. The third group consists of short historical verse sometimes found in historical prose. It includes a two line lyric starting 'Ynguar and Vbbe' which is found on the initial pages of a manuscript containing Bede's *Historia Anglorum* and a lyric on Saint Kenelm on the same folio but also often included in his saint's life. Like the main group, these lyrics include people's names, but

they are not associated with song or the liturgy. The chapter begins with the musical lyrics associated with the divine office before moving on to the sermon lyrics and then the history lyrics.

There are a few Middle English poems from the twelfth century that are not sufficiently similar to lyrics to be considered of the same genre. Many of these I do consider as part of my analysis of the lyrics because they form an important part of the literary context. For example, there was a long tradition of poems about death: I draw on non-lyrical poems from this tradition in my analysis of a lyric that concerns death. There are other Middle English poems from this period that bear little relation to the lyrics and hence have not been included. One of those is 'Instructions for Christians'. This poem is roughly 264 lines long and contains Christian ideas about how to live.[9] Another is the charm 'Against a Wen'; this poem was added to a tenth-century manuscript in the mid twelfth century.[10] It bears little similarity with its contemporary Middle English lyrics. There are several old English charms from earlier centuries and this appears to be the latest. There was then a hiatus in the recording of Middle English verse charms: there are none in the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century and only one in the anthologies of the second half of that century.[11] Therefore, whilst the analysis of lyrics and charms may well prove fruitful, especially in later periods, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. The 'Poema Morale' is not a lyric in the twelfth century but in the latter half of the thirteenth century it becomes very closely associated with the lyrics. It is consequentially considered in the third chapter.

When considered at all, the texts I cover are usually considered in isolation. Studies that think about some of these poems together are often on a single manuscript or single author. For example, there are some fine single author studies of Saint Godric's songs – including those by Helen Deeming, Monica Otter, Heather Blurton and Margaret Coombe.[12] More general studies of the start of Middle English literature in this period mention a few or none of the lyrics here considered. Seth Lerer in his article 'The Genre of the Grave and the Origins of the Middle English lyric' treats 'The

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[9] Susan Grinna Youngs, "A New Edition of 'Instructions for Christians': C.U.L MS Ii. 1. 33" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1995).

[10] Eric Weiskott, "A Metrical Duck-Rabbit in the Old English Charm Against a Wen," *Notes and Queries* 66, n. 3 (2019): 348. Elliott V. K. Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 128.

[11] Alan S. C. Ross, "The Middle English Names of a Hare," *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* 3 (1932–35): 347–77.

[12] Helen Deeming, "The Songs of St Godric: A Neglected Context," *Music and Letters* 86, n. 2 (2005): 169–85. Monica Otter, "Godric of Finchale's Canora Modulatio: The Auditory and Visionary Worlds of a Twelfth-Century Hermit," *Haskins Society Journal 24* (2013): 127–44. Heather Blurton, "The Songs of Godric of Finchale: Vernacular Liturgy and Literary History," *New Medieval Literatures* 18 (2018): 75–104. Margaret Coombe, "What a Performance: The Songs of St Godric of Finchale," in *Saints of North-East England, 600–1500*, ed. Margaret Coombe, Anne Mouron and Christiania Whitehead (Turnhout; Brepols, 2017), 219–42.

Grave' poem and the Worcester fragment 'The Soul's Address to the Body' extensively, but gives only four sentences to but one of Godric's three songs and does not consider the antiphon for Thomas Becket or Cnut's song.[13] Christopher Cannon's *The Grounds of English Literature* does not consider any of the lyrics central to this chapter.[14] Thomas Hahn's chapter 'Early Middle English' mentions Saint Godric and Thomas Becket's songs twice, Cnut's song once and the Worcester Fragment 'Sanctus Beda' at length; it does not mention any of the history lyrics or the lyrics in sermons.[15] The antiphon for Thomas Becket has received little critical attention even in isolation. The result of this critical landscape is that the common features, actions and concerns of these songs have not been much considered and hence no composite picture has been created. This chapter will consider each one of the poems both individually and as a group. Thinking about these lyrics as a family allows the generic relationship between them to become clear. The evidence does remain patchy and the picture is necessarily partial but together these poems still have much to say about the production of Middle English lyrics at the end of the twelfth century and set the scene for the thirteenth-century lyrics that follow.

The prose contexts in which the lyrics are embedded do a lot of work to set up what the lyric is and how to use it. They are often specifically written to introduce the lyric and hence give valuable insights into contemporary understandings of the poems. Nicolette Zeeman has shown how vernacular texts can include literary theory expressed figuratively.[16] In the musical lyrics, it is the prose narratives that appear to use the story of the lyric's creation to convey really extensive literary theories that are, however, peculiar to the individual lyric. Taken together, though, they provide an impression of the origins and workings of this type of lyric. To take advantage of this, I have quoted the prose contexts at length and analysed them in detail. To understand how these lyrics are situated in the literary, political and cultural landscape, they must be analysed in depth and compared with examples from the genres they draw on. Each lyric is hence considered first independently and then in light of the wider emerging themes and connections. Despite the limited number of lyrics, a large amount of material is consequentially covered. This methodology generates new readings of each individual text. For example, I explore Cnut's lyric's connections to proverbs and situational saga verse and I uncover the connections between Godric's song for Saint Nicholas

[13] Lerer, "Grave," 127–61.
[14] Cannon, *Grounds*.
[15] Thomas Hahn, "Early Middle English," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 61–91.
[16] Nicolette Zeeman, "Imaginative Theory," in Strohm, *Middle English*, 222–40.

and the popular grave trope. Together the connections between these individual findings build up to a new understanding of the nature and origins of the Middle English lyric.

Prelude: The Oral Tradition

The first Middle English lyrics to survive are undoubtedly not the first Middle English songs to have been orally performed. A long tradition of singing songs in English can be partially reconstructed from the smattering of tales contained in histories. These vernacular songs that appear as part of the lyric's generic precedent can also be hard to name. They have sometimes been called 'popular song', as by Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou and Karl Reichl.[17] Whilst this term effectively suggests that they were sung by a wide variety of people and were enjoyed, it has the demerit of giving rise to romantic notions of an oral literature created and enjoyed by the common people without reference to texts created by cultural elites. As examples will suggest, this later notion is unlikely to be true. Generally merely using 'song' or 'Middle English song' will suffice but where the distinction is necessary I use 'popular song' with this explicit disavowal of its romantic connotations.

One of the most revealing stores containing a fragment of a Middle English song can be found in Gerald of Wales' *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, a manual for clerics written c.1200.

> Exemplum de sacerdote, qui in Anglia Wigorniæ finibus his nostris diebus interjectam quandam cantilenæ particulam, ad quam sæpius redire consueverant, quam refectoriam seu refractoriam vocant, ex reliquiis cogitationum, et quoniam ex abundantia cordis os loqui solet, quia tota id nocte in choreis circiter ecclesiam ductis audierat, mane ad missam sacerdotalibus inductus, et ad aram stans insignitus, pro salutatione ad populum, scilicet, 'Dominus vobiscum,' eandem Anglica lingua coram omnibus alta voce modulando pronuntiavit in hunc modum: '*Swete lammam dhin are*.' Cujus hæc dicti mens esse potest: 'Dulcis amica, tuam poscit amator opem.'[18]

> [There was an instance of a priest who, in the region of Worcester, England in these our days heard a certain interposed portion of a song, to which they had been accustomed to return to many times, which they call renewing or refrain. Because the mouth is accustomed to speak from the remnants of thoughts and out of the abundance of the heart, (and) because

[17] Boklund-Lagopoulou, *Yong Suster*. Reichl, "Beginnings," 232, 242.
[18] *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, vol. 2, *Gemma Ecclesiastica* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Roberts, 1862), 120.

he had heard it all night during the dance near the church, in the morning at mass – having been clothed in priestly vestments and signed – standing at the altar, instead of the greeting to the people 'The Lord be with you', he proclaimed in a loud signing voice the same English words in the presence of all in this way: 'Sweet lover, your mercy'. The meanings of these words is: 'Dear sweetheart, your lover begs your favour'.[19]]

Singing and dancing in the vicinity of churches seems to have been a pan-European and long lasting practice. William of Malmesbury writes that in the year 1013 he was told a story about a group of men and woman in Saxony dancing and singing profane songs in church-yard. They disrupt the mass and are therefore cursed by the priest to dance continuously for a year.[20] The carole – a song with a refrain – is thought to have been a popular form to which people danced. Even allowing for exaggeration, a whole night hearing this single refrain implies that songs could be very long. The length suggests that extra verses may have been improvised, whilst the repetition of 'Swete lemman dhin are' shows that the refrain was short and remained constant.

The few words that survive of this song indicate that it was amorous and in the form of a direct address. The action of this line, 'Sweet lover, your mercy', is to attempt to define the addressee and then petition them. As shall be seen later concerning devotional English and Latin songs, the defining of the addressee was a common practice that seems to have been shared across amorous and devotional, and Latin and English song. Whilst in the thirteenth century 'Sweet lemman dhin are' would have been a very normal way in which to address Christ in a devotional lyric, the scandal of the Bishop at these words being sung by the priest, and the Bishop's subsequent banning of the song suggest that this was amorous in a secular sense. The priest cursing the singers in Saxony similarly suggests that it was not devotional material they were singing. In both stories the amorous songs are in conflict with the liturgy. They are not meant to be in the holy space of the church, yet still they enter and replace the liturgy with amorous vernacular songs.

It seems, however, that not all singing and dancing in the church yard was considered sacrilegious. In the following passage from Gerald of Wales' *Itinerarium Cambriae* people are celebrating the feast of St Almedda at a church named for her with a dance: 'Videas enim hic

[19] Translation mine; for a translation of the whole text, see: Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Jewel of the Church: A Translation of "Gemma Ecclesiastica"*, trans. John J Hagen (Brill: Luguni Batavorum, 1979).

[20] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, trans. and ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1:182–83. The occurrence of a story regarding song in Saxony in an English writer's history is probably more a testament to the spread achieved by miracle stories in this period than to the exchange of singing practices. However, the fact both stories included singing secular songs in graveyard does suggest shared practices.

homines seu puellas, […] nunc in chorea quæ circa cœmiterium cum cantilena circumfertur,'[21] [You may see men or girls, […] now in the dance, which is led round the churchyard with a song[22]]. It is not clear whether or not they are singing in Latin or a vernacular as they dance in the graveyard. Gerald also does not say whether the songs are secular or devotional but – in his lack of censure and his making no distinction between the dancers in the graveyard and the people in the church – he appears to think the songs appropriate for celebrating a feast day in a graveyard whilst others are worshipping in the church.[23] Gerald's description of the different professions of the singers suggests that it was the laity who knew these songs by heart.[24] This would mean dancing songs that were acceptable parts of religious celebrations were circulating orally amongst the laity.

This passage also provides evidence that people sang whilst at work. It describes the enactment of labour wrongly done on feast days:

> Videas hunc aratro manus aptare, illum quasi stimulo boves excitare; et utrumque, quasi laborem mitigando, solitas barbaræ modulationis voces efferre.[25]
>
> [You may see one man putting his hand to the plough, another, as it were, goading the oxen with a stick, and both uttering notes of the unsual vernacular song, to soften the labour.]

Gerald represents vernacular song as able to distract one from work. Again his vernacular song has in the past invaded the holy time of feast days and now appears ludicrous in the holy space of the churchyard.

In the literary imagination at least, as evidenced by the anecdotes of Gerald, secular songs were seen to invade holy space and time. This trend is reversed in a story written by William of Malmesbury, a monk and historian writing in the first half of the twelfth century. William writes about Aldhelm, a seventh-century abbot and then bishop. The time gap involved and the lack of corroborating evidence make the veracity of the story highly questionable. It is probably a better indication of twelfth-century thought than seventh-century practice. William writes that Aldhelm considered himself a master of the forms and metres of classical Latin poetry in addition to writing

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[21] *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, vol. 6, *Itinerariun Kambriæ et Descripto Kambriæ* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Roberts, 1868), 32.
[22] Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Itinerary of Archbishop Baldwin through Wales*, trans. Sir Richard Colt Hoare (London: Dent and Sons, 1961), 29.
[23] *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. Dimock, 6:32.
[24] *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. Dimock, 6:32.
[25] *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera*, ed. Dimock, 6:32.

and reciting English songs. Paul Remley has argued that 'formal and stylistic evidence internal to Aldhelm's Latin verse confirms his familiarity with techniques of Old English versification.'[26] Therefore whilst this story may not true, it does seem likely that English verse written by Aldhelm and hence influenced by Latin poetry will have been in circulation in seventh-century England. The story itself is useful in providing valuable information as the how twelfth-century writers thought about the interaction between and secular and devotional verse, the composition of devotional songs in English and also about their Old English literary heritage (a topic suggested above to have been of particular interest to twelfth-century monastic organisations).

> Populum eo tempore semibarbarum, parum diuinis sermonibus intentum, statim cantatis missis domos cursitare solitum. Ideo sanctum uirum, super pontem qui rura et urbem continuat, abeuntibus se opposuisse obicem, quasi artem cantitandi professum. Eo plusquam semel facto, plebis fauorem et concursum emeritum. Hoc commento sensim inter ludicra uerbis scripturarum insertis, ciues ad sanitatem reduxisse; qui si seuere et cum excommunicatione agendum putasset, profecto profecisset nichil.
>
> [The people of his day were more or less barbarians, who paid little heed to the word of God, and were prone to run off home immediately after the singing of the mass. So the holy man took his stand on the bridge that links the city and county and barred their way, playing the part of the professional minstrel. After he had done this more than once, the common people were won over and flocked to listen to him. Exploiting this device, he gradually started to smuggle words from the Scriptures into the less serious matter, and so brought the inhabitants round to sound sentiments. If he had thought fit to deal in stern words and excommunication, he would assuredly have achieved nothing.[27]]

Aldhelm was a highly revered religious figure. William is happy to propagate the idea that this respected figure acted in such a way: this implies William was in favour of devotional English song, of interchange between secular and devotional verse, and of preachers using song as a way of capturing audiences. William describing the audience as 'semibarbarum' (probably meaning half-civilised or more or less without Latin) and 'plebis' (meaning common people or the laity) does not

[26] Paul Remley, "Aldhelm as Old English Poet," in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 101.

[27] Text and translation: William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: The History of the English Bishops*, trans. and ed. Michael Winterbottom, vol. 1, *Text and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 506–7.

suggest a group with universally excellent Latin.[28] Aldhelm's audience must have understood some part of what he was saying if they were brought round to sound sentiment. Therefore these songs are presented as either bilingual or containing translations of the Scriptures. As such William is also approving the incorporation of the holy text into popular song.

As well as passing the ethical criteria for inclusion, it may also have had to pass the plausibility criteria: hence, songs of this sort and this genesis probably sounded plausible in the twelfth century. In this story, devotional vernacular songs are popular in terms of their intended audience but composed by church authorities. Aldhelm supposedly slowly introduced Scripture into his secular songs. As with the graveyard singers, this suggests a certain amount of improvisation. It appears that improvisation was not surprising from those playing the part of professional minstrel in the twelfth century. William uses the part of the professional minstrel to help describe what Aldhelm is doing; it seems he thought that the minstrel itself was an occurrence with which his readers would have been familiar. This implies professional mistrals were active and singing – and perhaps partially improvising – popular English songs in the early twelfth century.

According to William, Alfred the Great wrote that one of Aldhelm's songs was still very popular in his own period, the ninth century.[29] There is no evidence for this, but William was aware of Alfred's romanticised reputation as a translator of Latin into standardised Old English and as a symbol of the height of Old English achievement.[30] William thus links a revered religious leader and a romanticised secular leader to thoroughly embed the idea of devotional English song into an exalted Old English past.

The way texts circulating in the twelfth century present the past use of songs is indicative of twelfth-century reception of the longer song tradition: it is in the context of this reception that new twelfth-century songs were written. Ælfric of Eynsham was a tenth-century monk; his homilies were widely read and copied in the twelfth century. In the following story, a priest responds to his current situation in a song.

> Þa sceat Đeodolus sona to ðam papan, unforht on ðam fyre, faegnigende mid dange, 'Drihten, Tu afandodest us on Tisum fyre, and nis on us gemett ænig unrihtwisnys.'

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[28] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, s.v. "barbarous," "plebs," "semibarbarus," accessed 25 February 2023, https://logeion.uchicago.edu/.
[29] William, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum,* 507.
[30] Remley argues William's assertion may be based on a lost text: Remley, "Aldhelm," 94–100.

[Then Theodulus instantly darted to the pope fearless into the fire, rejoicing with the song, 'Lord thou has tried us in this fire, and there is not found in us any unrighteousness.'[31]]

The part of the song quoted is a translation of psalm 17.3. In this episode the general meaning of a passage from scripture is taken into a present situation and made to refer specifically to the speaker's experience in the fire. Any twelfth-century preacher who used this homily thus will have encouraged his audience to take on passages from scripture as their own words and applicable to instances in their own lives. In these stories, the singing – though it sometimes starts as light entertainment – by the end of the narrative is having powerful effects on and purposes for people.

1.1 Liturgy-Related Musical Lyrics

An Antiphon for Thomas Becket

A handful of twelfth-century lyrics are found embedded in Latin prose narratives. Every one of those narratives places the Middle English lyric against the backdrop of the sung portions of the Latin divine office, and hence invite interpretation through the lens of liturgical conventions. Yet they are also English verse, and signal themselves as to be understood as twelfth-century people would have learnt to understand the popular English songs described above. Thus they were productively situated between genres.

In twelfth-century England the liturgy generally consisted of ten different services spread throughout an elongated day.[32] These services included a range of readings, prayers and the singing of psalms. The psalms were the most frequently sung part of the Bible: it was common in the earlier middle ages to sing all of the psalms every week.[33] Antiphons were often sung alternately with the psalms; whilst the psalms were sung simply, antiphons were freely composed. The words of the antiphons were often taken from within the psalm being sung or from a scriptural source relevant to that particular service.[34] The liturgy was delivered primarily in Latin. However, there are many

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[31] Text and translation: Ælfric, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Ælfric*, trans. Benjamin Thorpe (London: Ælfric Society, 1844), 2: 312–13.
[32] John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 45–47.
[33] Harper, 70
[34] Harper, 70–72, 78.

surviving sermons in English and some evidence that at least in the time of Bede (c.672-735) English material may have been sung alongside the more standard Latin.[35]

The surviving Middle English lyric that has the strongest links to the divine office is actually called an antiphon. It is recorded in a life of Thomas Becket, written by William of Canterbury from c.1172.[36] Thomas Becket was the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 to 1170 when he was famously murdered in the cathedral itself. William of Canterbury was a deacon who served under Becket; after Becket's death he compiled materials and wrote a *vita* – a life – of Becket. The *vita* was a popular genre used as part of the devotion of established saints and also as a way of advocating sainthood and drumming up popularity for the recently deceased. As was conventional, William's *Vita* includes a lengthy section of Becket's posthumous miracles. It is in this section we find the following passage:

> Manet quidam Reginaldus nomine, villa Wreteham, vicesimo milliario a civitate Norwico. Nomen habet sacerdotis, et ut dicitur sacerdotis implet officium. Qui vidit visionem, et ecce quasi peregre proficiscens divertit in capellam divinum auditurus servitium. Invenitque monachos albis indutos, stantes ante chorum, qui jam completa nocturna synaxi sanctorum commemorationibus insistebant; quibus completis innuit unus ex fratribus manu sua, stans a meridie, ei qui stabat ad aquilonem, de facienda memoria martyris Thomæ. Quo signum non intelligente, dicit viva voce quod sancto martyri decantaretur antiphona. Respondit, non eam authenticam esse; nondum enim ex apostolica auctoritate catalogo martyrum martyr ascriptus erat. 'Saltem,' ait, 'Anglice decantetur.' Tunc suavi et indicibili melodia hymnum martyris attollunt. Procumbens autem clericus in oratione, cœlesti reficiebatur hymnodia. Qua decantata, frater qui fratrem compellaverat abducit eum seorsum, et dicit ei, 'Audisti, frater, antiphonam? vade, dicito eam fratri qui præest fratribus infirmis ecclesiæ Christi Cantuariæ.' 'Nondum,' inquit, 'domine, scio eam.' 'Dico,' ait, 'tibi,' et usque ter eam repetiit. Clericus itaque post trinam repetitionem, quod dormiens audierat, vigilans memoriter tenuit, præter clansulam quæ spectabat ad passionem martyris. Est autem antiphona hujusmodi —
>
> Hali Thomas of hevenriche,

[35] Bruce Holsinger, "The Parable of Caedmon's 'Hymn': Liturgical Invention and Literary Tradition," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106, n. 2 (2007): 149–75.

[36] James Craigie Robertson, ed., *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: Longman, 1875), 1:xxx.

Alle postles eve[n]liche,

Dhe martyrs dhe understande

Deyhuamliche on here hande.

Selcuth dede ure Drichtin

Dhat he dhi wetter wente to wyn.

Dhu ert help in Engelande,

Ure stefne understande.

Thu hert froure imang mankynne,

Help us nu of ure senne.

Potest autem Latine sic exprimi; 'Sancte Thoma, civis cœlestis, par omnibus apostolis, martyres excipiunt te suis in manibus quotidie. Salvator noster mirum fecit, qui tuam aquam in vinum vertit. Tu es juvamen Angliæ; voces nostras attende. Tu es solamen in humano genere; a peccatis nostris nos averte, evo væ.'[37]

[A certain Reginald by name, abides in the village of Wretham, twenty miles from the city of Norwich. He has the title of priest and it is said that he fulfils the duty of a priest. He saw a vision, and – behold – as if travelling on a pilgrimage, he turned into a chapel to hear divine service. And he found monks clothed in white standing before the choir who, with the nocturne just now being completed, were beginning the commemoration of the saints. When this was finished, the brother who stood on the south signed with his hand to the one who stood on the north, to make a memorial to the Martyr Thomas. The other not understanding, he said with audible voice that an antiphon should be sung for the holy martyr. The other replied that it was not authentic, for the martyr had not been written in the catalogue of martyrs by the Pope. 'At least' he said, 'let it be sung in English.' Then they raised aloft a hymn of the martyr with a sweet and indescribable melody. As the priest knelt in prayer, the hymn was again given by the heavenly host. After it was sung, the brother who had compelled the other brother led him [Reginald] aside from the rest, and said to him, 'You have heard, brother, our antiphon. Go and tell it to him who is in charge of the frail brothers of Christ Church of Canterbury.' 'Not yet' he said, 'do I know it, Lord.' 'I will say it to you' he replied, and he repeated it up to three times. The clerk, therefore, after the triple

[37] Robertson, *History of Thomas Becket*, 1:150–51.

repetition which he head whilst sleeping, held it carefully in his memory, in spite of the secrecy which was attached to the passion of the martyr. Now the antiphon is of this sort:

Holy Thomas of the kingdom of heaven,
Equal to all the apostles,
The martyrs receive you
Daily in their hands.
Our Lord did a marvel
When he changed your water to wine.
You are a help in England,
Hear our voices.
You are a comforter among mankind
Help us now out of our sins.

Moreover, it is able to be expressed in Latin as follows: Saint Thomas, citizen of heaven, equal to all apostles, the martyrs receive you in their hands daily. Our saviour did the extraordinary, who turned your water into wine. You are a help to England; pay close attention to our voices. You are a source of comfort to human kind; turn us away from our sins. Evo vae.[38]]

Both the heavenly choir and the narrator explicitly call this an antiphon (*antiphonam*). Such clear signalling tells the reader that they should understand and use this lyric as they would an antiphon. At the end of the Latin translation of the English lyric are the words 'Evo vae'. As Bruce Holsinger has written, 'Evo vae' is a nonsense phrase used at the end of antiphons to 'make clear the reciting tone and differentia or melodic cadence of the succeeding psalm or canticle'.[39] Whilst in the *Vita* 'Evo vae' occurs at the end of the Latin paraphrase, in the thirteenth-century manuscript Oxford, Jesus College MS 29(II) the phrase also occurs at the end of the English antiphon.[40] Holsinger, writing about this antiphon, takes this as evidence that the English was sung in a liturgical context. By the same logic one could argue that the Latin translation was also sung in a liturgical context. This suggests that in the case of this particular antiphon the acceptance of the English text into formal liturgical practice was unstable: sometimes the English was used and at other times the Latin was used. In the

[38] Translation mine consulting: Paul Alonzo Brown, "The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1930), 132.
[39] Bruce Holsinger, "Liturgy," in Strohm, *Middle English*, 304–5.
[40] Bruce Holsinger, "Liturgy," in Strohm, *Middle English*, 305.

spectrum of early Middle English lyrics this text is presented as the one closest to the liturgy and, as we shall see, draws many of the characteristics of the liturgy into English poetry. However, its language, the surrounding narrative and its probable use signal that it is not a standard antiphon.

The story explicitly highlights the English antiphon as different from the norm. It tells us that the antiphon is in English not because celestial monks sing in English, but because they thought singing in English was a way round the fact one was not supposed to officially honour someone as a saint until the Pope had ratified their sainthood. The reference to Becket's water being turned into wine may refer to the story recorded by Arnold of Lubeck, in which Becket's blessing turns the Pope's water into wine three times, with Pope ordering the second and third goblets of water to be brought out of disbelief.[41] This is the only one of Becket's miracles that the lyric explicitly mentions: for those that understood the reference, it confirms Becket's being chosen by God in the face of papal doubt, and offers reassurance that the Pope will come to believe in Becket's sainthood. The process of getting somebody canonised was often long and expensive: in England it was not uncommon for saints that were local to modestly funded ecclesiastical institutions never to be official canonised, and yet still be honoured as a saint in that area.[42] Becket, however, was by no means a minor local saint (he gained an international following) and for him the canonisation process was unusually fast. If the sole purpose of this narrative was to show that heaven considered Becket a saint, then it could simply have been a vision of a Latin antiphon for him. The protest and use of English does more: it evokes the local piety of those communities venerating saints who they could not afford to have canonised. It ratifies that form of piety. It may perhaps also evoke the idea of lay devotional songs, such as it was thought Aldhelm wrote to make the lay person pious. (Whether or not such poems existed, the idea of them clearly existed.) By making English the language of this form of piety it posits devotion in English as less exalted than Latin but nevertheless true devotion to real martyrs without the need for political and financial manoeuvrings. In short, the narrative, by distinguishing between the two, forces the English to be read as something different from a standard Latin antiphon. The distinction characterises specifically English devotional poetry.

The narrative appears to sanction English practice as opposed to popish protocol. Looking inside the antiphon, the line 'Dhu ert help in Engelande' also seems to have political possibilities. Becket himself had a good relationship with Rome. Instead he was famous for defending the rights of the church against secular authorities. Strengthening the power of the church was no doubt seen

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41 For this story, see: John Morris, *The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: Burns and Oates, 1885), 2:490–91.

42 Andrew Brown, *Church and Society in England, 1000–1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 71–74.

by many contemporary monks to be good for the country. This reference in an antiphon to a saint helping England was not unprecedented. The following antiphon is included in a tenth-century rhyming office for Saint Cuthbert:

Oriens sol iustitiae	dignatus est illustrare
Per ministros lucis suae	cunctos fines orbis terrae
Ipsi laus qui dedit Anglis	lucernam suae salutis
Cuthbertum bonum doctorem	ac pro huius intercessorem

[The rising sun of justice	deigned to illuminate
though the ministers of His light	all the boundaries of the earth
Praise to Him who gave the English	the lamp of His salvation,
Cuthbert the good doctor,	and (praise to Him) for his intercession.[43]]

This was based primarily on Bede's poetic *Vita Sancti Cuthberti.* It seems that at the time of writing these words meant primarily that Cuthbert had brought holy understanding of God to England to the benefit of her people. However, as Susan Ridyard points out, by the twelfth century, the body of Saint Cuthbert had frequently proved its merits in protecting the rights of Durham from imposing secular rulers, including of the Norman variety.[44] It is possible, then, that these words were reinterpreted in the twelfth century as celebrating the piety of the Old English church in opposition to Norman secular rule; the Becket antiphon echoes and strengthens this idea.

Later Latin antiphons for Becket also imply that – despite Becket being of Noman parentage – the significance of his death was aligned with those in opposition not just to secular encroachment on the church but specifically to Norman rule.[45] The following antiphon from the Office for the Feast Day of Saint Thomas Becket invokes Merlin's prophecy that the son was to kill the father in the mother's womb.

Patrem nati perimunt
in sinu materno,

[43] Text and translation: Karmen Lenz, "Liturgical Readings of the Cathedral Office for Saint Cuthbert," *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe* 12 (2009), §8.
[44] Susan Ridyard, '"Condigna Veneratio: Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons," *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 9 (1986), 196–97.
[45] Frank Barlow, "Becket, Thomas [St Thomas of Canterbury, Thomas of London] (1120?–1170)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press 2004; online ed., 2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27201.

Rubet matris facies
Sanguine paterno.

[The children slay the father
In the maternal bosom,
The face of the mother reddens
With paternal blood.[46]]

The king was seen to be the son killing father Becket in the womb of the church – the mother. Thus, as A. G. Rigg points out, Becket was popularly seen to fulfil this cryptic prophesy of Merlin.[47] Merlin is presented by Geoffrey of Monmouth to be an ancient Breton sorcerer. There is critical dispute over the political leanings of Geoffrey of Monmouth, in whose *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1136) the *Prophesies of Merlin* are found. Jennifer Farrell argues that Geoffrey wrote for a Norman audience and through the *Prophesies* was trying to persuade them that if they had too much internal conflict over succession then they could lose England and Normandy.[48] However, as Jean Blacker notes, the *Prophesies of Merlin* were identified as explicitly anti-Norman in the middle of the twelfth century.[49] The civil war occasioned by the succession crisis had largely passed by the time of Henry II ascension at the end of 1154. The prophesies were now seen to predict the fall of Norman rule in a way Jean Blacker argues was not welcome to the Norman ear. Thus it is possible that in representing Becket as a fulfilment of Merlin's prophesies, both this antiphon and popular tradition ally Becket with pre-conquest, anti-Norman literature. Sara Harris describes how the twelfth-century monks of Christ Church Canterbury were aware of their institution's long and prestigious history of Old English devotion and were actively keeping that tradition alive.[50] Becket's Middle English antiphon and its story may therefore be in advocacy of Old English literature and piety and in opposition to Norman and Papal interference.

Within Becket's Middle English antiphon itself there are gestures to Old English poetics. Every line has some form of alliteration. There are also a remarkably large number of Old English

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[46] Text and translation: John Provenance Slocum, *Liturgies in Honour of Thomas Becket* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 138.
[47] A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 77.
[48] Jennifer Farrell, "History, Prophecy and the Arthur of the Normans: The Question of Audience and Motivation behind Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae," *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 37 (2014), 111–12.
[49] Jean Blacker, "Where Wace Feared to Tread: Latin Commentaries on Merlin's Prophecies in the Reign of Henry II," *Arthuriana* 6, no. 1 (1996): 36–52.
[50] Harris, *Linguistic Past,* 79.

words, including: ‘Seluth’, ‘stephne’, ‘froure’ and ‘mon-kunne’. Many of these words can be found in prestigious Old English texts such as Ælfric’s homilies or *Genesis*, the OE Bede, or Alfred’s translation of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*.[51] In this way, the lyric participates in and hence sustains the Old English tradition. Married with the Old English words and alliteration is the influence of Latin antiphons. The Latin antiphon for Cuthbert above has an aabb rhyme scheme with 8 syllables per line; the English Becket antiphon also references this tradition. Thus the form of the Middle English Becket antiphon can be seen to be echoing its political implications in marrying Old English and liturgical poetics.

In Becket’s antiphon one can see the political motivations of the early Middle English song together with its duel roots in both the liturgy and Old English devotional literature. The early Middle English lyrics at once being part of a liturgical and an alternative tradition is common throughout the extant examples. However, it is not always Old English literature that liturgical forms are combined with. The lyrics of Saint Godric are similar to the Becket antiphon in that they are situated in the space of the liturgy. However, they are different in so far as they signal themselves to be part of a more contemporary vernacular tradition.

Godric of Finchale: Burgwen’s Song

St Godric of Finchale was a twelfth-century hermit.[52] He lived in the woods near Durham Cathedral. Unlike Reginaldus of Wretham, who received the vision of Becket’s antiphon, Godric was neither a priest nor formally attached to a religious institution. However, the monks of Durham took an interest in him, selecting which of his many visitors would be granted access to him, performing mass for him and tending to his sickness in his old age. His life and visions are recorded by Reginald of Durham, a monk who attended to Godric in his later years. Reginald represents Godric as occupying a liminal space between a lay person and those in orders. Godric came to be a hermit later in life after being a tradesman and travelling extensively. The extent of Godric’s Latin is unclear: it is presented as a miracle that he could understand a Latin conversation and illuminate Latin scripture.[53] It is made explicit, however, that in preparation for being a hermit Godric had learnt the

[51] *Bosworth Toller’s Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, s.v. “seld-cúþ”, “stefn”, “FRÓFOR”, “mann-cynn,” accessed 27 August 2022, https://bosworthtoller.com/.
[52] For a brief overview of Godric’s life see: Margaret Coombe, introduction to *The Life and Miracles of Saint Godric, Hermit of Finchale*, by Reginald of Durham, ed. and trans. Margaret Coombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2022), xix–xxiv.
[53] Reginald of Durham, *The Life and Miracles of Saint Godric, Hermit of Finchale*, trans. and ed. Margaret Coombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2022), 314–15.

psalms in Latin.[54] It is also made explicit that Reginald feels that whilst Godric is less than a monk, he is also more exalted because God gives him so many visions and miracles.[55] One of those visions is of his dead sister: Godric was very concerned about the posthumous fate of his sister and in reassurance receives a vision of her. As Reginald describes, she is accompanied by two angels and rather than speaking directly to Godric, she sings to him:

> Nocte igitur quadam, dum uiri Dei oculos sompnus grauaret, et pro fatigatione nimia sub ictu pene uidentis oculi dormitaret, precedente Sancta Maria, ecce, duo uiri amicti uestibus albis coram illo oratorium Beate Marie ingrediuntur et, spiritum sororis illius inter se deferentes, supra altaris crepidinem consistere uidebantur. Quod ille diligentius intuens, animam sororis sue statim agnouit, et exsultans spiritu tam iocunde uisioni diligenter intendit. Mox illa in medio altaris consistens, uocem dulcimode extulit, et sonoro melodie cantu talia decantauit,
>
> 'Sancta Maria super scamni sedile me deduxit, ne super terram istam nudo pede calcarem uel contingerem.'
>
> Que tamen omnia uerbis Anglicis edidit, quorum schema tali ordine decurrit,
>
> 'Crist and Seinte Marie, sio on scamel me iledde, thæt ic on this hi-herthe ne sculde uuit mine bare fot itreide.'
>
> Cuius dulcedinis melo auidius intendit quia auribus illius uocis ipsius modulatio suauissime infusa pertonuit.
>
> Tunc duo uiri illi, qui et spiritus angelici, uno eorum ad dexteram altaris consistente, altero uero illorum ad sinistram preeminente, uoces suauissimas altissime efferunt, et canora modulatione talia sepius repetendo dixerunt, 'Kyrie ect. Christe ect.'
>
> Qui utrique libellos pre manibus habuere, qui modici esse uidebantur quorum operimenta exteriora quasi de rubricatis pellibus fuissent, splendidissime emicuere.
>
> Canentes igitur talia manu plaudebant, et iubilantes Domino in uocibus exsultationis, palmas alternis motibus iactitabant, et quasi librorum suorum folia alterutrim dispergebant. Illa itaque predicto cantico dulciflue precinente, et uerba eadem premissa semper seriatim enunciante, mox ut illa conticuit uox angelica subsequenter intonuit, 'Kirie etc. Christe etc.'
>
> Eratque sororis illius canticum quasi textus finis et principii, et uox spirituum beatorum quasi pro regressu ipsius cantici. Denique dum diutissime talibus sollemnioribus preconiis

[54] Reginald, *Saint Godric*, 112–15.
[55] Reginald, *Saint Godric*, 34–41, 216–17.

disseruissent, et spiritum dilecti Deo uiri uisione iocundissima refouissent, sursum in era conscenderunt nec quo diuerterint, ulla certa uestigia reliquerunt. […][56]

[So one night, when sleep weighed heavily on the eyes of the man of God and he fell asleep due to very great fatigue, under the painful eyes of the man who could barely see, look! Two men dressed in white robes came to him in the oratory of the Blessed Mary and, carrying his sister's spirit between them, seemed to halt above the edge of the later. He, watching this intently, immediately recognised his sister's soul and, exhulting in his spirit, he looked intently at such a vision of joy. Then she, standing in the middle of the altar, at once lifted her voice sweetly and, with a melodious sound, sang this song,

'Saint Mary led (me) upon the seat of a chair, so that I did not tread or touch upon this earth with (my) bare foot.'

However, she performed it all with words in English which ran like this:

'Christ and Saint Mary, conveyed me thus on a stool, so that I should not tread upon this earth with my bare foot.'

He listened eagerly to this song of sweetness because to his ears the tone of her voice resounded, very pleasently poured out.

Then those two men, who were also angelic spirits, one of them standing to the right of the altar and the other prominent at the left, raised their extremely sweet voices to the Most High and said, frequently repeating these things in tuneful song, 'Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison.'

Each had small books in his hands, whose exterior coverings were of red skin which appeared to be quite ordinary and to shine very brightly.

While singing these things they clapped their hands and, rejoicing to the Lord in voices full of exaltation, they stretched out the psalms of their hands, taking turns to move, and acted as if they were passing the pages of their book to each other. So, in this way, she sang the above-mentioned song very sweetly, always annunciating the words in the same order, and as soon as she was silent the angelic voice sang, 'Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison.'

His sister's song was like a complete and principal text and the voice of the blessed spirits were like a response to her song. They continued those solomn songs for a long time and

[56] Reginald, *Saint Godric*, 256, 258.

nourished the spirit of the beloved man of God with a very happy vision, then they ascended on high in the air leaving no traces of where they came from.[57]]

This episode incorporates practices both from the liturgy and from popularly sung vernacular song. The song alternates between multiple voices singing the 'Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison' and Burgwen singing her stanza. Blurton has pointed out that the angels are singing part of the mass and also that performing the liturgy was imagined to be singing along with heaven's choirs.[58] The alternating between one voice and multiple voices singing songs from different sources evokes the way that antiphons and psalms were used. However, it may also be similar to the group performance of popular songs. The story about the group singing in the graveyard suggested a format whereby the group sang a refrain and then stanzas were partially improvised. It would be easier for an individual to improvise in real time; therefore there was probably alternation between the group singing the refrain and individuals improvising stanzas. Burgwen's stanza is situational, and thus is presented as being improvised in the way that conversation is improvised. In the graveyard song the refrain is short – 'Swete lammam dhin are' – and was repeated multiple times. As such it bears resemblance to how 'Kyrie Eleison' is used both in this episode and in the Mass. The similarity between this episode and the vernacular graveyard singing does not discredit claims concerning the similarity of this episode to the liturgy. Instead it suggests that vernacular singing and elements of the liturgy may have had much in common in terms of structure and performance practices and that this episode may be referencing both traditions.

The music also suggests that two different traditions are being combined in this song. The music for Godric's song survives in three manuscripts from the end of the twelfth century, c.1200 and the early thirteenth century.[59] Frank Harrison has noted that whilst the Kyrie may be 'actual plainsong tunes', Burgwen's song is more likely to have a non-liturgical origin.[60] In fact, he notes that the tune has much in common with a ballad about events of the mid-seventeenth century but with a tune perhaps much older.[61] The likelihood is that here liturgical and non-liturgical music were combined to make a single song. Mary herself appears to be endorsing this union; Reginald of Durham, the monk who wrote about the episode, was happy for the mixing of liturgical and popular to be celestially sanctioned. Many of the earliest Middle English lyrics draw both on the liturgy and

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[57] The translations of the Middle English and the Latin song are mine. Otherwise from: Reginald, *Saint Godric,* 257, 259.
[58] Blurton, "Songs of Godric," 100–1.
[59] E. J. Dobson and F. Ll. Harrison, *Medieval English Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 295 (hereafter cited as MES).
[60] MES, 75–76, 295.
[61] MES, 76.

on another form that the populace generally has more control over. Whilst people were invited to hear the liturgy, few were allowed to alter it. Many more could probably partake in the composing and amending of part-improvised popular song. Closed and open forms are thus drawn on together in this and other Middle English lyrics.

Whilst monks wrote down the early lyrics, they are presented as proceeding from people who were more ambiguously positioned. Burgwen and Godric occupy a liminal space between the monastic life and the laity. Whilst the person who received the vision of Becket's song was a priest, this does not necessarily mean that he had the level of education of some of the monks at Canterbury Christ Church. Whilst the writers do appear to be culturally elite, they present the generators or vessels of this new vernacular genre as positioned between themselves and the populace at large.

Situational and Authenticating Verse

The narrative makes clear that Burgwen's words describe what is happening to her at that time. She is telling Godric about her present state through song. This is different to Becket's antiphon: that song is not part of the dialogue, in any one person's voice, or in response to the specific current situation. In the field of Old Norse Sagas, Diana Whaley's terms 'situational verse' and 'authenticating verse' have been found useful.[62] Whaley uses 'situational verse' to mean verse presented by its prose context as composed in response to an event in the narrative by a character; 'authenticating verse' is used for verse not composed by a character but nevertheless relevant to the scene and by a respected poet. Authenticating verse is clearly imported from outside the narrative whereas situational verse is portrayed as proceeding from within the narrative. Burgwen's verse is situational in Whaley's sense. Becket's verse is close to but not exactly authenticating; it does proceed from inside the narrative. Instead it is as if a character inside the narrative was using an authenticating verse; we may call it an internally authenticating verse.

Whilst situational and authenticating verse are useful terms for considering how a poem relates to its narrative, they do not describe how universally applicable any one poem is. The

[62] Diana Whaley, "Skalds and Situational Verses in *Heimskringla*," in *Snorri Sturluson: Kolloquium anlässlich der 750. Wiederkehr seines Todestages*, ed. Alios Wolf (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1993): 245–66. Margaret Clunies Ross has acknowledged the use of the distinction provided that one understands it to be a second order distinction concerning the use of the verse, acknowledges the similarities, and does not imagine either to be more factual. Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 78–80.

breadth of people by which a poem's first person could be inhabited and the range of situations to which a poem could relate have implications for how that poem is used. People's modes of interrogating and living alongside a poem may differ depending on whether it appears to relate only to one specific situation or whether it has, or may be interpreted as having, a more general import and speaker. Burgwen's song is specifically about her being carried over the earth by heavenly figures in her celestial unshod state. As such, her words should be hard for another person to take on and hard to apply to other situations. Yet the devotional discourse that Burgwen's song is part of can be very metaphorical. This means that lines that refer literally to specific parts of the narrative, when taken out of context can metaphorically refer to universals. For example, walking barefoot may in a devotional context be reminiscent of pilgrims walking barefoot to Rome. The mutilation their feet endured even as their spiritual contact with earthly things may have lessened is then in pleasing antithesis to the saved having their feet protected by Mary herself even as they take a closer interest in earthly things. Themes of feminine purity are also invoked; Christ and Mary keep one above and apart from the world so that the least part of one should be unstained by its evils. The movement forward instigated by Mary and Christ even as one stands still may even be reminiscent of an anchorhold: these enclosed religious were physically stationary but spiritual climbers. Interpreted in these ways, the poem becomes a space for thinking about more general ideas of purity, seclusion of body and elevation of mind, and different kinds of progression. The first person of the poem becomes potentially open to those who avoid the taint of the world through devotion.

In being situational and yet potentially communal, Burgwen's song may have much in common with 'Swete lammam dhin are'. Whilst this line and its Latin paraphrase give little to go on, they are suggestive of situational verse. It sounds like somebody addressing their lover in a situation where they hope to gain 'their favours'. However, unlike Burgwen's song, it probably never had a narrative context; a narrative context is just implied. When sung by a group it is removed from any implied context and is made general. As such the implicit trajectory of a popular song is similar to the implicit trajectory of Burgwen's song – it is just presented from opposite ends of the trajectory.

This aspect of Burgwen's song may also have much in common with the psalms. For example the very popular penitential psalm 101 contains the following passage:

> Quia defecerunt sicut fumus dies mei, et ossa mea sicut cremium aruerunt. Percussus sum ut foenum, et aruit cor meum, quia oblitus sum comedere panem meum.

> [For my days are vanished like smoke: and my bones are grown dry like fuel for the fire. I am smitten as grass, and my heart is withered: because I forgot to eat my bread.[63]]

This could literally be the words of a poor and hungry person as is suggested in the Bible. He could physically be old and infirm and perhaps senile. However – whilst that narrative context remains in the background – the words are also metaphorically applicable to and hence open to use by Christians who are spiritually unwell.[64] The church has many complex ways of understanding the layers of meaning in the Bible generally and in the psalms in particular. The situational yet universal potential of both psalms and popular song are simultaneously referenced in Burgwen's song; indeed they are brought to occupy the same poetic space. This means that when the element that is similar to the psalms signals to the reader to understand the song as they would a psalm, the reader cannot help but simultaneously give the popular song the same treatment. Thus the complex theories about layers of meaning and voice that were common in ecclesiastical understandings of the psalms are incorporated into secular song. The way that the lyric and its narrative encourage certain modes of engagement is thus in itself a statement about the value of literature that was accessible, widely known and perhaps improvised by non-elites. It encourages readers to put the same type of effort into understanding popular vernacular material as biblical material. The lyric thus makes a case for its own importance and its own worthiness to have time and effort put into understanding it; in doing so, it may make that case for popular song in general.

Godric of Finchale: Mary's Song

The psalms, the liturgy and prayer overlapped in twelfth-century monastic practice. A different balance of the three is drawn on and combined with references to lay devotion in another Middle English song received by Godric in a vision and recorded by Reginald of Durham:

> Deinde canticum quoddam nouum illi edocuit, quod et ipsa misericordie mater coram eo, quasi coram puero discente, precinebat, et harmonico cantu illud eum musico modulamine cantare docebat. Quod ille sepius subsequenter post eam cecinit, et ipsius melodie canticum cunctis diebus uite sue retinuit. Textus uero uerborum, quibus canticum illud componitur, uerbis Anglice lingue contexitur. Que omnia rythmico tenore contexuntur, et melo cantici

[63] Text and translation: Pslams 101:4–5 (Vulgate and Douay-Rheims).

[64] Annie Sutherland, "Performing the Penitential Psalms in the Middle Ages," in *Aspects of the Performative in Medieval Culture*, ed. Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 17–18.

quosdam sonos musicos audientibus imitari uidentur. Quorum textus uerborum describitur hoc modo:

'Sainte Marie uirgine,
Moder Iesu Christes Nazarene,
on-fo, scild, help þin Godric,
on-fang, bring, eȝthlech ƿið þe in Godes riche.'

Que dum omnia sepius perquirendo seriem uerborum, et replicando discrimina uocum firmissime retinuisset, precepit ei ut quotiens doloribus fatigatus esset, siue temptatione uel tedio exsuperari timuisset, huius cantici dulcedine se delinire atque solari meminisset. 'Amodo,' inquiens, 'dum me hoc oraculo inuocaceris, statim me tibi auxiliatricem propitiam obtinebis.'

[Then she taught him a new song, which the mother of mercy herself sang to him as if teaching a pupil, and she taught him to sing it harmoniously with musical modulation. He subsequently sang it after her many times, and he remembered the melody of the song all the days of his life. Now the text of the words of which that song is composed is made up of words in the English language. They are all rhythmically interwoven in a rhythmic tune, and with the tune of the song they indeed seem to those listening to represent musical sounds. The text of these words can be written in this way:

Saint Mary Virgin
Mother of Jesus Christ the Nazarene
Receive, shield, help your Godric
Received, bring [him] nobly with you into God's kingdom.[65]

When he had repeated the order of the words many times, and had, by repetition, committed the vocal parts very firmly to memory, she told him that whenever he had been worn out by grief or feared that he would be overcome by temptation or tedium, he should remember to calm and comfort himself with this sweet song. 'From now on,' she said 'when

[65] Helen Deeming shows another, proabably separate, poem sometimes follows this verse. Harrison suggests it was a later addition by an institutional cleric. Deeming, "Songs of St Godric," 180, 183. MES, 295.

you call upon me with this prayer, you will immediately reach me, as a gracious helper to you.'[66]]

Godric prayed ten times a day at the same liturgical hours as the monks. He did so by means of a miraculous bell, which would ring at the right time. As a result Godric is presented as existing outside of monastic society but being given heavenly aid to achieve its heights of worship. Godric is unable to perform a full office so he uses a mixture of psalms and songs. In this too Godric received heavenly aid. In this episode Mary comes to Godric and teaches him a song to sing for her as part of his make-shift liturgy. Heather Blurton has argued that the lyric should be considered part of Godric's vernacular liturgy.[67] As with Becket's antiphon, this song takes a similar form to the rhymed, accented verse was the preserve of new liturgical verse in the twelfth century.[68] The narrative makes it clear, then, that Mary sanctions and wishes to facilitate lay persons emulating the devotional practices of monks without the confinement of a rule or having taken holy orders. As a text it encourages its readers to use the song in this way. The lyric's being written in English increases its capacity to do so.

Furthermore, the music's relationship with monastic plainsong gives a sense of the laity's need for such prayers and their effectiveness. The tune of the lyric is very unusual in plainsong.[69] The pitch raises sharply on each word in 'on-fo, schild, help' with help being the stand-out highest note of the verse.[70] The sharpness of the rise in pitch is unusual in plainsong.[71] The words increase in desperation from the hopeful 'receive' to the attacked 'shield' to the most basic cry 'help'. The unusually sharp rise in pitch together with the rising desperation of the words together suggest that the desperation with which help is asked surpasses monastic decorum. [72] The high note that starts 'help' is followed by two gently and evenly descending notes. The measured descent is opposite to the sharp rise both in direction and gradient. The sharp rise had just been associated with a

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[66] Text and translation: Durham, *Saint Godric,* 214–17.
[67] Blurton, "Songs of Godric," 94–100.
[68] Blurton, "Songs of Godric," 86.
[69] MES, 295.
[70] MES, 228.
[71] MES, 75.
[72] The extent to which music can be thought to be representative in medieval music is disputed. John Stevens in particular argues that it should not be seen as expressive: John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050 – 1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 292–307. However, critics have since persuasively explored and argued for ways that medieval music augments the meanings of the words it accompanies. See: Leo Treitler, *With Voice and Pen: Coming to Know Medieval Song and How it was Made* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 435–481. Ardis Butterfield, "The Language of Medieval Music: Two Thirteenth-Century Motets," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 2, n. 1 (1993), 1–16. In Mary's song the music works over the possible semantic meanings of the words and informs their reception.

desperate supplication for help; the musical opposite suggests the semantically opposite interpretation of 'help', which is the calm reception of help. This is then mirrored by the three notes given to the 'God' in 'Godric', except the latter starts on the last note of the earlier. This musical pairing makes the 'God' in Godric feel like an extension of Mary's calming help. The combination of words and music thus suggests that whilst the laity may need to plead more desperately than the professional religious, their goodness is an extension of their pleading: through prayers such as these the laity are given aid and made good. The song goes beyond the norms of official monastic musical culture to convey this idea and to provide a vernacular prayer that can be used in a lay liturgy. So as to fulfil the need the song suggests is there, the liturgy is allowed to morph, taking on unusual musical forms and the vernacular.

The lyric may pass into the realm of orally transmitted vernacular poetry and thus reach a wider audience then the Latin hymns. In such a realm it also has more power to influence the vernacular oral poetic tradition described earlier. From the thirteenth century, there is the rise of the book of hours, and lay devotion mimicking clerical practices in earnest.[73] Godric's *Vita* sits at the start of this tradition as an early and imperfect supporter of lay emulation of monastic devotion. The incorporation of serious liturgical reading practices into Middle English verse is thus suggested to have been with a specific aim: to help the laity mimic monastic devotion.

Prayer

Whilst Godric used this song as part of his liturgy, Mary also encourages him to use it as a prayer. She tells him that when he sings it for her, she will come to his spiritual aid. Mary thus endorses vernacular, scripted prayer-poems.

Sermons can give excellent evidence for the manner in which memorised prayers were supposed to be used by the laity. The 'Pater Noster' is a sermon in verse.[74] It was probably written down at about the end of the twelfth century and hence may give us an insight into practice contemporary with Godric's songs.[75] It methodically quotes a line from the Lord's Prayer, translates that line, and then explains how the line is to be understood. As such it provides practical advice

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[73] Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People and their Prayers 1240–1570* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 8–11.

[74] Richard Morris, trans. and ed*., Old English Homilies and Homiletic Treatises of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, EETS OS 29, 34 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 54–71.

[75] Margaret Laing, *Catalogue of Sources for a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), 111.

about how to understand and use a pre-scripted prayer. The first immediately apparent aspect of its method is to bring a large amount of Christian common knowledge to every line. For example 'Pater noster qui es in celis' gives rise to the idea that being God's child matters little if we fall to the constant wiles of the devil.[76] It then moves to a partial listing of the Ten Commandments and ends with the idea that being God's children, we have the power to obey them if we would. In this way, the meaning of the line is filled out and extended by the reader bringing their own knowledge to it. Furthermore, a mere statement of description becomes an instruction. 'Pater noster' becomes an injunction to follow the laws of God and to resist the devil. What the poem means and how one should make it true of oneself are bound up in the same exegesis: they are not considered separate. As Godric's song from Mary suggests, Middle English songs signalled themselves as to be understood and used with these practices. If this is how people were habitually taught to understand how they should react to prescripted prayers and songs, how much should we be reading into every line of each of the Middle English lyrics? The first line states that God is our father, yet the elaboration shows all the work that people must do to make this statement completely true. A lot of the liturgy-affiliated lyrics include proper names belonging to saints or biblical figures. This gives some insight into how seriously people were supposed to take phrases such as 'þin Godric' or the idea that Christ and Mary 'iledde' one. The relation must be earned. In these early lyrics, then, to say a prayer properly requires effort in the form of actions to make its contents properly true of oneself.

This poem also suggest that inscribed in the Lord's Prayer is the necessity to be in a particular mental state when it is spoken. One has to have released feelings of envy and wrath in order to be able to say effectively 'Et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris' [And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors]:[77]

> to gode solf we us wreið;
> hwenne we þos word seggeð.
> hwenne we habbeð nið and onde;
> to eni monne þet is on londe.
>
> [To God ourselves we accuse,
> If we these words say,
> When we have envy and wrath

[76] Morris, *Homiletic Treatises*, 54–57.

[77] Morris, *Homiletic Treatises*, 65. Translation: Matthew 6:12 (Douay-Rheims).

Against any man that is on land.[78]]

Mental preparation is needed to say this prayer effectively. This part of the prayer is unusual in that God's reaction to each speaking of it is suggested to be dependant on the mental state of the speaker. The Latin lines and their English rendition presumes that one forgives: if this is not true then in this case it is immediate emotional work that is required for the poem to be truly and effectively spoken.

Exact Memorisation

In both the Becket and the Mary narratives, the song is sung repeatedly, so that it may be remembered exactly. This implies that they were to be preserved exactly and not subject to adaptation. This distances them from popular songs, or at least the partially improvised form of popular song described above. Monica Otter points out that Mary teaches Godric in the same way that children entering a monastery were taught and Blurton suggests there is a direct reference to the psalms.[79] These lyrics ask to be treated like the psalms and other monastic verse in signalling that they should not be changed.

In the analysis of holy texts, every word was deemed to be important and worth ruminating on. The *Glossa Ordinaria* – composed between c.1080 and c.1130 and extremely popular – singles out particular words in the psalms and glosses them.[80] The importance put on each word by the requirement of exact memorisation indicates that this type of interaction was also encouraged for the Middle English songs.

The prose surrounding the early lyrics with celestial origins suggest that they are communal in the way that the Bible or much of the liturgy was. People and angels sung the same text together and changed themselves to fit it. This is a different model of communality to the later lyrics: the later lyrics were communal insofar as they were unattributed and possibly open to communal emendation.

Looking at the long trajectory of the lyric, it seems that very early lyrics needed the backing of important creators to be written down. From these creators, from the liturgical and biblical links

[78] Text and translation: Morris, *Homiletic Treatises*, 64–65.
[79] Otter, "Canora Modulatio," 138. Blurton, "Songs of Godric," 96.
[80] Marcia L. Colish, "Psalterium Scholasticorum: Peter Lombard and the Emergence of Scholastic Psalms Exegesis," *Speculum* 67, n. 3 (1992), 531–48.

and also from being written down, some of the practices and some of the status associated with scripture attached themselves to the lyric.

Godric of Finchale: Saint Nicholas' Song

To fully appreciate the last of Godric's lyrics is it important to understand the thematic tradition in which it stands. It stands in the long and varied tradition of texts on death and more specifically of texts on the grave. Whilst the longer, free-standing death poems and the prose accounts are too dissimilar from the new body of Middle English lyrics to really have functioned as part of the genre in this period, they are linked and hence provide close literary context for the few Middle English lyrics on death.

Speech from an unpleasant grave warning the living about the transience of life and the horrors of the grave was a popular death theme in Old English, Latin and later Middle English works.[81] The twelfth-century poem most focused on the grave itself is 'The Grave'; this poem, along with Aelfric's Old English sermons and Saint's Lives, is found in Oxford Bodleian Library MS Bodley 343.[82] It describes the grave as a horrible house:

> Ne bið no þin hus healice itinbred,
> Hit bið unheh and lah þonne þu list þerinne;
> Đe helewaȝes beoð laȝe, sidwaȝes unheȝe,
> Þe rof bið ibyld þire broste ful neh.
> Swa ðu scealt on mold wunien ful calde,
> Dimme & deorcæ þet den fulæt on honde,
> Dureleas is þæt hus & dearc hit is wiðinnen
> Đær þu bist feste bidytt, & dæð hefd þa cæȝe.
> Laðlic is þæt eorð hus & grim inne to wunien,
> Đer ðu scealt wunine & wurmes þe to deleð.
> Đus ðu bist ileȝd & ladæst þine fronden;
> Nefst ðu nenne freond þe þe wylle faren to.

[81] Joseph Hall, *Selections from Early Middle English 1130–1250*, vol. 2, *Part 2: Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 232–33. John Conlee, ed., *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology* (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1991), 3.
[82] Aiden Conti and Orietta Da Rold, "Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343," in *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220*, ed. Orietta Da Rold, Takako Kato, Mary Swan and Elaine Treharne (University of Leicester, 2010), https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.Ox.Bodl.343.htm. Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, 3.

Ðæt efre wule lokien hu þe þæt hus þe likie.

> [This house (for you) is not constructed upward, it is flat and low when you lie within it; the endwalls are low, the sidewalls not tall, the roof is built quite near your breast. Thus you shall dwell, quite cold in the earth, in dimness and darkness: that den soon decays. Doorless in that house and dark within, there you are securely confined and Death possesses the key. Horrible is that earth house and gloomy to reside in, there you shall dwell, and worms (shall) devour you. Thus you are laid away, and (thus) you leave your friends; never will a friend seek you out, who will journey to you, who will ever inquire how you like that house.[83]]

Much of this unpleasant grave imagery is traditional. The tenth-century but lastingly popular Vercelli Homily IX contains the concept of the grave as a horrible house.[84] The idea of one's flesh being food for worms is present in one of Wulfstan's homilies, the poem 'The Soul's Address to the Body', and the poems found in 'De Sancto Andrea' which is sermon number XXIX of the Trinity Homilies.[85] As found in 'The Transience of Earthy Delights' (a sermon in the same manuscript as 'The Grave'), the grave was in this tradition a place to beneficially fill one with fear, revulsion and humility.[86]

It is in light of this grave motif that I would like to return to the final of Saint Godric's songs. Godric has a vision of Saint Nicholas and then joins in with the angels who are singing to Nicholas. The English song appears in a later manuscript containing a French translation of Reginald's life of Godric as well as a Latin version of Godric's life by Galfridius. In the former it is put with the episode where Godric has this vision of Nicholas, in the latter it is on a separate leaf. Alexandra Barratt has

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83 Text and translation: Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, pp. 5–6, lines 7–19. The translation of lines 14–15 are mine as not translated in Conlee. Some critics have argued that 'The Grave' is actually part of another Worcester Fragment known as 'The Soul's Address to the Body'. The consensus at present, however, is that this is not sufficient evidence to claim they are of the same poem. Louise Dudley was an early proponent of the view that they are not part of the same poem. Louise Dudley, "The Grave," *Modern Philology* 11, n. 3 (1914): 429–42.

84 Victoria Whitworth, *Dying and Death in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 48–52.

85 Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 141. Douglas Moffat*, ed., The Soul's Address to the Body: The Worcester Fragments* (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues, 1987), p. 69 fragment C lines 38–50. Richard Morris, ed., *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century: From the Unique MS. B.14.52 in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, EETS OS 53 (London: Trübner, 1873), 172–85.

86 Susan Irvine, ed., *Old English Homilies from MS. Bodley 343*, EETS OS 302 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 197–202: 197–98.

argued that the French text may be closer to Reginald's original than the nearest extant Latin text.[87] The lyric runs thus:

> Sainte Nicholas, Godes druð,
> Tymbre us faiere scoone hus.
> At þi burðe, at þi bare,
> Sainte Nicholas, bring us wel þare[88]
>
> [Saint Nicholas, God's beloved,
> Build us a fair, beautiful house;
> By your birth, by your bier,
> Saint Nicholas, bring us successfully there.]

The word 'hus' here has caused some critical consternation: Joseph Hall points out that it does not rhyme and has little to do with the legends of Saint Nicholas. He suggested that 'hus' may actually be a corruption of 'huð' meaning harbour.[89] If 'tymbre' is taken to mean prepare, then the line would read 'Prepare for us a fair, beautiful harbour'. This would indeed be more in accord with Godric's past as a seafaring trader and Saint Nicholas' maritime miracles.[90] On a devotional level, the line asks that Saint Nicholas bring us to a safe resting place: potentially death and heaven. Yet one does not need to change the word to achieve this devotional reading. In 'The Soul's Address to the Body', 'The Grave' and Vercelli Homily IX, 'hus' was used as a metaphor for the grave.[91] Douglas Moffat has even argued that the rooves of graves were often timbered like a small house.[92] As is exemplified by homilies and poems on the horror of the grave, the idea of a beautiful grave in this literary context is quite shocking. Whilst 'hus' as 'grave' may not be the only meaning, the proximity of 'bare' meaning 'bier' (a movable stand on which a corpse is placed before burial) means the possible illusion is unlikely to have gone unnoticed. 'Bare' and 'thare' also rhyme, which sonically strengthens the suggestions that the place they are being brought to is the bier. Reginald relates that after seeing this vision Godric lamented that he was forced to live so long. Godric is presented, then, as a man to

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87 Alexandra Barratt, "The Lyrics of St Godric: A New Manuscript," *Notes and Queries* 32, n. 4 (1985): 439–445.
88 Reginald, *Godric*, 350n584.
89 Hall, *Selections*, 2:245.
90 Reginald, *Godric*, 56–63.
91 Moffat, *Worcester Fragments*, p. 66 fragment B line 40, p. 68 fragment C line 29, p. 73 fragment E line 8. Conlee, *Debate Poetry, 4*–6, lines 7, 13, 19. Whitworth, *Death*, 48–52.
92 Douglas Moffat, "The Grave in Early Middle English Verse: Metaphor and Archaeology," *Florilegium* 6 (1984): 96–102.

whom the grave may well have appeared beautiful. The grave is definitely presented as a place he longed to be brought to.

This positive depiction – 'faire scone' – of the grave and longing for it is very much in contrast to the motif outlined thus far. As in 'The Grave', birth is mentioned in this poem.[93] However, it is Nicholas' birth and it is through this birth that a good death is to be achieved. The move from birth to bier implicitly indicates the whole life; the implication is that it is a whole life from birth to death that can bring us to a beautiful tomb. 'The Soul's Address to the Body' and 'The Transience of Earthy Delights' suggest a bad life ends in a horrible grave; this suggests it takes a whole and wondrous life to make a good grave.[94]

On one level this quatrain seems quite standard. A saint is asked to build the speaker a good dwelling and take them there. For this reason its achievements as poetry have been somewhat dismissed or overlooked.[95] However, the surprise and power it gains from overturning a common motif in such a short space surely makes it a work of high literary achievement. Again and again the horror of the grave is completely inevitable; suddenly, in four lines, the grave is completely transformed. A person – with help from the saints – may have a beautiful, longed for tomb. The lyric does not need to say what sort of good life was necessary for this type of grave: people already knew. It is the possibility and the shock of the longing attitude implicit in the lyric that lends it its effectiveness as didactic material.

The lyric on Saint Nicholas participates in a motif with particular imagery, attitudes and morals attached to it. This motif connects sections of different texts irrespective of their genre. A broad knowledge of the motif in general sits in comparison with one's interaction with a single instance. Like a genre then, these motifs inspire a set of assumptions and recollections which can then be manipulated. This is perhaps a particularly powerful asset to the lyric, which despite its brevity can densely allude to motifs and gain a hyper significance for each of its artistic choices by existing in comparison – and here in strong contrast – with a norm.

It is clear from the two manuscripts that this lyric circulated both in the context of Godric's life and as an addendum to it. The latter suggests it may well have also circulated separately. The song may appear to signify quite differently in and out of the context of Godric's life. In the context

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[93] Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, p. 4, lines 1–2.
[94] Moffat, *Worcester Fragments*. Irvine, *Homilies*, 197–98.
[95] J. B. Trend, "The First English Songs," *Music & Letters* 9, n. 2 (1928): 128.

of Godric's life, a very high bar is set for a good death. Godric's life is presented as being at the extreme end of devotional practice.[96] Furthermore, he is presented as having sought in life many of the supposed horrors of the tomb. Reginald reports that Godric suffered many temptations and to fight these temptations brutally mutilated his flesh with hairshirts, wore an iron hauberk even whilst sleeping, and allowed worms to eat his flesh.[97] He has already sought to leave behind all his friends and live in the most modest accommodation possible.[98] His life thus gives the lie to the supposed horrors of the grave: they are presented as only what one should embrace in search of heaven.

Separated from the context of Godric's life, the extremes that Godric went to so as to secure a good death do not sit so intimidatingly behind these words. The supplication could be adopted by anybody. The agency also appears to rest more with Saint Nicholas. However, the lyric still necessitates the speaker to acknowledge the possibility of a beautiful, sought-after grave. Thus whilst it appears that that speaker has little to do as the passive receptor of Saint Nicholas' benevolence, actually adjusting one's perspective so as to truly accept the possibility of and long for a beautiful grave may require a considerable amount of work on the part of the speaker. Part of the devotional work encouraged by the lyric may then be getting into character. As we saw instructed in the Pater Noster sermon, one makes an effort to be the better person required to truly speak the poem. The implication is that when one has managed this, Saint Nicholas will manage the rest. Situating the work of the performer in their thoughts and emotions rather than in their actions is again an early part of the movement that argues that the laity may be saved through their pious emotions in spite of the necessity of their worldly actions.[99] As with all of Godric's songs, the simplicity and brevity of this song allow it to be easily memorised. This means that it could easily have passed into oral transmission and have been widely used. Thus through a combination of its semantics, its form and its associated practices this lyric both makes that argument and makes the means to reach such a salvation widely available.

Taken together, the lyrics included in *The Life of St Godric* present remarkable variety. Whilst the oeuvre is small, it represents a significant literary achievement and the basis for a varied literary tradition.

[96] Reginald, *Godric*, 142–62.
[97] Reginald, *Godric*, 144–47.
[98] Reginald, *Godric*, 126–27.
[99] Laura Ashe, *1000–1350: Conquest and Transformation*, The Oxford English Literary History, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 135–36.

When thinking about vernacular popular song, Gramsci considers them to be adopted (from elite production) by the people because it conforms to their way of thinking and feeling.[100] Gramsci does not allow for any change on the part of the populace or change in populace/intellectual dynamics, based on the circulation of vernacular songs. Yet lyrics such as Godric's offer a combination of popular and elite forms that in itself can act as an accessible form of education. Saint Nicholas' song is designed to change popular and elite thought on death and intervene in a longstanding tradition that spans elite and popular texts. Mary's song brings together popular song and the liturgy in a way that conditions the relationship between them. Rather than Gramsci's picture of a populace accepting vernacular songs produced by the elites because they conform to their views, we see here a collaboration between vernacular and elite forms, both of which get altered in the course of that collaboration, and which produce something that in part conforms to but also challenges every sort of listener.

Cædmon's Hymn

A high number of manuscripts containing Bede's (d.735) *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* circulated in the twelfth century.[101] This text includes the story of Cædmon, a cowherd who receives a vision and composes a devotional song in English. He goes on to compose Middle English songs on biblical history for the local abbess. [102] Whilst there is no direct link between Cædmon and the songs of Becket or Godric, the similarity in situation is unlikely to have gone unnoticed. Cædmon's story provides sanctioned precedent for devotional song in English. Bruce Holsinger has argued that part of the point of belabouring Cædmon's story was to provide justification for the appearance of Old English songs in the liturgy performed at Whitby Abbey.[103] As to the reception of the lyrics themselves, the connection to Cædmon posits them as part of a long history of divinely inspired English devotional verse. The Middle English lyrics exist in comparison to this famous forbear. Cædmon's song, as presented in Bede's Latin, describes God as the keeper of mankind and suggests 'we' should praise him. [104] It describes rather than addresses God and makes no supplication for help: it does not establish direct intercourse between the speaker and God. This is different to the songs of Becket and St Nicholas; in those lyrics the saints are directly addressed and asked for specific help. It also differs from Burgwen's song, where the first person singular is used, and Mary's song, in which the name of the supplicant is included. As a consequence of contrasting

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[100] Gramsci, *Cultural Writings*, 195.
[101] Charles H. Beeson, "The Manuscripts of Bede," *Classical Philology* 42, n. 2 (1947): 75.
[102] *Baedae Opera Historica,* trans. J. E. King (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 2:140–51.
[103] Holsinger, "Caedmon's 'Hymn'," 156.
[104] *Baedae Opera Historica,* 142–45.

these Middle English lyrics with Cædmon's song, contemporary recipients may then have been particularly aware of the features of address and supplication, and of the bringing out of a more direct relationship that occurs in both the Becket and the Godric songs.

Cnut's Song

Thus far all of the Middle English poetry discussed has been explicitly devotional. It has taken its conventions from ancient and contemporary English practice along with liturgical forms. The final liturgical twelfth-century Middle English lyric found in a Latin prose narrative combines historical and devotional themes. The *Liber Eliensis* is the Latin prose narrative in question. The *Liber Eliensis* maps out the history of the abbey of Ely from its being founded in 673 to the latter part of the twelfth century, when work on the history was completed. Whilst in this period the extent of literary exchange is hard to quantify, this lyric has much in common with the situational verse in Old Norse and Irish sagas.[105] It seems that in this lyric, liturgical traditions may be combined with a prosimetrum form of communal and narrative memory keeping.

At the time of writing Ely abbey was not in the best political position; it was connected with the resistance against William the Conqueror and had suffered ever since. The following passage describes the extent to which Cnut honoured the abbey. It may well be a covert reminder of the abbey's importance and how it should be treated.[106]

> Qua difficultate ad suam festivitatem rex Canutus in Ely pervenit et, de longe audiens monachos, cantilenam composuit.
>
> Quodam igitur tempore cum idem rex Canutus ad Ely navigio tenderet, comitante illum regina sua Emma et optimatibus regni, volens illic iuxta morem purificationem sancte Marie sollempniter agere, quando abbates Ely suo ordine incipientes ministerium in regis curia habere solent, et dum terre approximarent, rex in medio virorum erigens se, nautis innuit ad portum pusillum ocius tendere et tardius navem ineundo protrahere iubet; ipse oculos in altum contra ecclesiam, que haut prope eminet, in ipso rupis vertice sitam, vocem undique

[105] Compare Cnut's song with, for example, the following Old Norse and Irish situtational verses: Maighréad Ní Conmidhe Dobs, "La guerre entre Fergus et Conchobar," *Revue Celtique* 40 (1923): 412. Richard Irvine Best and M. A. O'Brien, eds., *The Book of Leinster, formerly Lebar na Núachongbála* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967), 5:1119. Snorra Sturlusonar, *Heimskringla: Konungasögur*, ed. Páll Eggert Ólason, 3 vols. (Reykjavik: Menntamálaráđ og þjóđvinaféla, 1946-48), 1:79, 134–36, 2:40–41, 69–70, 3:18.
[106] Eleanor Catherine Parker, "Anglo-Scandinavian Literature and the Post-Conquest Period" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2012), 36–37.

dulcedinis resonare sensit et erectis auribus quo magis accedit amplius melodiam haurire cepit: percepit namque hoc esse monachos in cenobio psallentes et clare divinas horas modulantes: ceteros qui aderant in navibus per circuitum ad se venire et secum iubilando canere exortabatur; ipsemet ore proprio iocunditatem cordis exprimens, cantilenam his verbis Anglice composuit dicens, cuius exordium sic continetur:

'Merie sungen ðe muneches binnen Ely
ða Cnut ching reu ðer by.
Roweþ cnites noer the lant
and here we þes muneches sæng.'

Quod latine sonat: 'Dulce cantaverunt monachi in Ely, dum Canutus rex navigaret prope ibi. Nunc milites navigate propius ad terram et simul audiamus monacorum armoniam', et cetera que sequuntur, que usque hodie in choris publice cantantur et in proverbiis memorantur. Hoc rex agitans, non quievit cum venerabili collegio pie ac dulciter concinere, donec perveniret ad terram. Et quando cum processione, ut mos est principem aut celsiorem personam, a fratribus digne susceptus in ecclesia duceretur, mox bona a predecessoribus suis Anglorum regibus ecclesie collata suo privilegio et auctoritate ad perpetuam munivit firmitatem et desuper altare maius, ubi corpus sacre virginis ac sponse Christi Æðeldreðe pausat in sepulcro, in faciem ecclesie coram universis iura loci perpetuo libera esse sancivit.[107]

[With what difficulty King Cnut arrived at Ely for its festival and, hearing the monks from afar, composed a song.

So then, on one occasion, this same King Cnut was making his way to Ely by boat, accompanied by Emma, his queen, and the nobles of the kingdom, desiring to celebrate solemnly there, in accordance with custom, the Purification of St Mary, starting from which date the abbots of Ely are accustomed to hold, in their turn, their position of service in the royal court. When they were approaching the land, the king rose up in the middle of his men and directed the boatmen to make for the little port at full speed, and then ordered them to pull the boat forward more slowly as it came in. He <raised> his eyes towards the church which stood out at a distance, situated as it was at the top of a rocky eminence; he heard

[107] E. O. Blake, ed., *Liber Eliensis* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962), 153–54.

the sound of sweet music echoing on all sides, and, with ears alert, began to drink in the melody more fully the closer he approached. For he realised that it was the monks singing psalms in the monastery and chanting clearly the Divine Hours. He urged the others who were present in the boats to come round about him and sing, joining him in jubilation. Expressing with his own mouth his joyfulness of heart, he composed aloud a song in English the beginning of which runs as follows:

Merrily sang the monks in Ely
When King Cnut rowed close by.
Row, knights, nearer the land
And let us hear the monk's song.

This is how it sounds in Latin: 'The monks sang sweetly in Ely, when King Cnut rowed near there. Now knights, row closer to the land and together let's hear the music of the monks.' This and the remaining parts that follow are up to this day sung publicly by choirs and remembered in proverbs.

The king, while tossing this around {in his mind}, did not rest from singing piously and decorously in concert with the venerable confraternity, until he reached land. And when, greeted fittingly by the brothers, he was led in procession into the church – as is customary treatment for a member of the royal house or a particularly exalted personage – he thereupon confirmed by his charter and authority, in perpetual stability, the possessions granted to the church by the kings of the English preceding him. And upon the high altar, where the body of Æthelthryth, the holy virgin and betrothed of Christ, rests in her tomb, facing the church before everyone, he solemnly decreed that the rights of the place were free in perpetuity.[108]]

As many critics have agreed, the veracity of the story immediately around the song is seriously doubtful. For instance, Janet Fairweather points out that singing in the monastery cannot be heard from the coast.[109] Eleanor Parker suggests Cnut bursting into song is implausible.[110] Most critics seem relatively convinced that the given poem could be older in origin but shows twelfth-century

[108] Janet Fairweather, trans., *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh Century to the Twelfth* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), 181–83. The translations of the Middle English poem and its Latin version are mine.
[109] Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, 182n385.
[110] Parker, *Anglo-Scandinavian Literature*, 28.

linguistic developments.[111] Parker suggests that it may have been an official poem used to flatteringly record Cnut's pious visit to Ely. She suggests that the later narrative was created to fit the pre-existing song.[112] Given both the implausibility of the story and how well it seems to encase the narrative, this seems entirely likely. What the story does do for the song is situate it within a network of genres and political agendas which encourage and support certain interpretations of the song.

The story magnifies the lyric's reference to rowing. Both this and Saint Nicholas' song have connections to rowing. Saint Nicholas famously saved sailors and Godric undertook many voyages as a younger man.[113] The fact that two of the limited number of early Middle English lyrics are connected to rowing hints at the possibility that rowing songs were also a genre that contributed to the Middle English lyric.[114] Cnut's song in particular explicitly calls upon the knights to row, which may well bring to mind rowing songs, even if in other ways this lyric is not particularly similar to them. The rowing songs helping the knights to progress physically mirrors the singing of the monks helping them to bring the country forward spiritually. It is a useful comparison for visualising the happy effect of the monks' labour. Together they show how songs can bring people into unison and effect positive action. The divine office is allied with other forms that act or are aimed at precipitating action, such as prayer and rowing songs, in the creation of the Middle English lyric.

The Middle English song is said to be still in circulation: 'in choris publice cantantur et in proverbiis memorantur'. Louise Pound has disputed Professor Gummere's translation of 'in choris publice cantantur' as 'People in their dances', suggesting that the classical meaning of 'chorus' as choral dance had faded by this point to just meaning people singing.[115] To the modern understanding, Janet Fairweather's translation as 'choirs' sounds very ecclesiastical. It is nevertheless justified, perhaps, by the several instances in the *Liber Eliensis* where 'chorus' is used for the signing of monks or signing in a cloister.[116] 'Publice' may suggest it was sung publically by a monastic choir. However, when referring to vernacular speech 'publice' also frequently meant

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[111] Harris, *Linguistic Past,* 66–67; Parker, *Anglo-Scandinavian Literature*, 26.
[112] Parker, *Anglo-Scandinavian Literature*, 27, 39.
[113] Reginald, *Godric*, xx.
[114] Rowing songs are attested to in Norse culture by: Richard Perkins, "Rowing Chants and the Origins of Dróttkvæðr Háttr," *Saga-Book* 21 (1982): 155–221.
[115] Louise Pound, "King Cnut's Song and Ballad Origins," *Modern Language Notes* 34, n. 3 (1919): 162–65.
[116] See: Thomas of Ely, *Liber Eliensis, ad Fidem Codicum Variorum*, ed. D. J. Stewart, vol. 1 (London: Impensis Societatis, 1848), 54, 232, 261, 272.

‘spoken or understood by the whole community’.[117] As such the pluralisation of choirs may refer to its being sung both by monastic and lay groups of singers.

The phrase ‘in proverbiis memorantur’ is also intriguing. Parts of the song are supposedly still being remembered in multiple proverbs. ‘Memoro’ can mean to ‘bring to remembrance’ but it can also mean ‘to recount’, ‘to speak about’ or ‘to speak’.[118] Therefore this phrase could mean either that the song was spoken about in proverbs or that it was actually delivered in proverbs. ‘Proverbiis’ is plural suggesting it was not that there was just one proverb commemorating the existence of the song. Instead the writer seems to be claiming that the different parts of the song were either summarised in proverb form or were spoken in proverb form.

Proverbs: The Literary Context

In the *Liber Eliensis*, as well as in other twelfth-century history writing, the word ‘proverb’ is often used to denote a pithy sentence containing an instruction or insight. For example, the following line occurs in the *Liber Eliensis*: ‘Audierat fortasse illud proverbium, “Deum placate qui sanctos suos honorat.”’[119] [Perhaps he had heard that proverb, “You all must appease God, who honours his saints.”] This short generalisation stylistically has much in common from the following line from William of Marmesbury: ‘Itaque pueritam ad spem regni litteris muniebat, subinde, patre quoque audiente, iactitare prouerbium solitus “rex illiteratus asinus coronatus”’. [In this way while still a youth he equipped himself by education to realise his royal hopes, and used even in his father’s hearing to play with the proverb “a king unlettered is a donkey crowned.”[120]] These examples give a picture of the twelfth-century meaning of ‘proverbium’ that bears little resemblance to the Middle English stanza included in the story.

The above examples of proverbs are all in Latin. There are, however, plenty of Old English sentences that are proverbial. Some have much in common with the Latin proverbs above. For example the Durham proverbs, written down in the eleventh century, include: ‘Beforan his freonde biddeþ se þe his wædle mæneþ’.[121] [He who laments his poverty should seek help from his friends.] Like the proverb in the *Liber Eliensis*, this is a specific instruction about how to live well. However,

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[117] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, s.v. “Publicus,” accessed 30 January 2018, http://logeion.uchicago.edu/publicus.
[118] *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, s.v. “Memoro,” accessed 30 January 2018, https://logeion.uchicago.edu/memoro.
[119] Thomas, *Liber Eliensis*, 191.
[120] Text and translation: William, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 1: 710–11.
[121] Olof Arngart, “The Durham Proverbs,” *Speculum* 56, n. 2 (1981), 291.

alongside this tradition of literal proverbs there is another stand of proverbs that are more opaque. 'Maxims I' – a poem from the tenth-century Exeter book – contains the following lines: 'Beam sceal on eorðan / leafum liþan, leomu gnornian'.[122] [A tree on the earth must lose its leaves; the branches mourn.] The personification of the branches signals that this more than a simple fact about the seasons. It could possibly be about the loss of children from the family tree. As such, its wisdom may operate metaphorically.

The Proverbs of Alfred is a long poem most probably written in the twelfth century.[123] It presents itself – probably fictitiously – as recording the words of King Alfred addressing a council.[124] Christopher Cannon has argued that each stanza may be seen as an exposition of a proverb followed by a proof.[125] In this regard, he suggests, they have much in common with the ways schoolchildren were taught to understand Latin proverbs. Some of the stanzas and the proverbs they contain look more similar to Cnut's song above. For instance:

> Þus seyþ Alured:
> 'Strong hit is to rowe
> a-yeyn þe see þat floweþ;
> so hit is to swynke
> a-yeyn vnylimpe.
> Þe mon þe on his youhþe
> [yeorne] swo swinkeþ,
> and worldes weole her iwinþ,
> þat he may on elde
> idelnesse holde,
> and ek myd his worldes weole
> God iqueme er he quele;
> youþe and al þat he haueþ idrowe
> is þenne wel bi-towe.'[126]

> [Thus said Alfred:

[122] George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, eds., *The Exeter Book* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 157, lines 25–26.
[123] O. Arngart, introduction to *The Proverbs of Alfred* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1955), 2:55–57.
[124] *The Proverbs of Alfred*, ed. Walter Skeat (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), 2–7.
[125] Christopher Cannon, "Proverbs and the Wisdom of Literature: *The Proverbs of Alfred* and Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*," *Textual Practice* 24, n. 3 (2010), 417.
[126] *Proverbs of Alfred*, ed. Skeat, pp. 16,18, lines 144–58.

It is strenuous to row
Against the sea that floods;
Likewise, it is to toil
Against misfortune.
The person that in their youth
Enthusiastically toils in such a way
And obtains worldly wealth,
So that he may on maturity
Embrace inactivity,
And also with his worldly wealth
Please God before he dies;
Youth and all that he has obtained
Is then well spent.]

The first two lines appear to be the proverb. This is due to their position in the stanza and the attempt in the rest of the stanza to explain them. The benefits of rowing against the tide is metaphorically understood to suggest the benefits of working to counteract misfortune. This broad idea is then explained through an instance: young men working hard in their youth will do better when they are old. The relationship between the first two lines and the third and fourth lines is metaphoric. The relationship between the third and fourth lines and the rest of the poem is metonymic. As such the model of proverbs presented here is of a concrete occurrence that should be decoded using metaphoric and metonymic reasoning.

Cnut's Song and Proverbs

Bearing in mind the characteristics found in Old English, Middle English and Latin proverbs, it is easier to understand how Cnut's song could be said as a proverb. In the first two lines, given again below, the monks sing merrily at the approach of Cnut:

Merie sungen ðe muneches binnen Ely
ða Cnut ching reu ðer by.

[Merrily sang the monks in Ely
When King Cnut rowed close by.]

This may metonymically suggest the broader idea that the ecclesiastical world is better off when on good terms with the secular authorities. The surrounding narrative strongly conveys this message, and it is no doubt one that would have been keenly felt by the monks of Ely as they struggled in the twelfth century. The final two lines of the stanza adopt the declamatory style of many proverbs:

> Roweþ cnites noer the lant
> and here we þes muneches sæng.
>
> [Row, knights, nearer the land
> And let us hear the monk's song.]

The knights are exhorted to row closer to the land so that they can hear the monks sing. Metaphorically this time these words may advise the traveling and perhaps conflict striven soul to stay as close as possible to the stability of Christianity and the choirs of the heavenly kingdom. As with the rowing in the proverb of Alfred quoted above, the more physical and specific may be interpreted to signify general spiritual advice. These lines may also be interpreted as mirroring the first two lines by advising secular leaders to stay safe by listening to the monks. In the English twelfth-century tradition, one of the attributes Cnut was famous for was giving exceptionally generously to the church. Cnut had used his flamboyant Christianity and extensive donations to the church to stabilise his reign over a conquered country and win popularity.[127] By giving these words to Cnut, the writer draws out this second meaning and supports it by putting the idea in the mouth of an authority on staying close to the church and God, and invoking an instance of the success of such measures. Thus, as individual lines both of these sentences have enough similarities with the modes of sense-making invoked by the proverb that they can be read proverbially, even if the song as a whole does not read like a standard proverb.

Whilst Cnut's song has enough in common with proverbs that it may be used like one, there are still differences. Cnut's song more clearly describes a specific temporal situation than most proverbs: like Burgwen's song it is situational verse. The narrative also clearly links Cnut's song to the sung divine office. Cnut is inspired by the singing of the monks and actually sings his song along with their singing. Christian exegesis has a formal understanding of the Bible whereby any passage could seem to refer to a specific historical situation – as on one level Cnut's song does – and yet should also be read allegorically, morally and analogically (as pertaining to the afterlife). This practice of

[127] Timothy Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 77–106. Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis: History of the English*, trans. Ian Short (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 254–59.

taking a specific situation and gaining more general knowledge from it bears comparison with the general move enacted upon the metaphorical proverb above. Cnut's song appears to be situated at the intersections of these practices both by the narrative, which explicitly refers to both the divine office and proverbs, and also in the nature of the poem itself. As such, it performs a similar manoeuvre to that which Burgwen's song performed on the liturgy and popular song.

In the context of monastic song, it would generally be a saint or biblical figure who lends credibility to an idea through the events in their life. The song for Thomas or Saint Godric suggest how this might be translated into English. The fact that the monks of Ely permit an uncanonised secular king to take this place is perhaps an enactment of willingness to take the advice of the first two lines and be happy with the friendly proximity of secular rule. The poem concedes that instruction may be taken from secular leaders (albeit here secular leaders that listen avidly to the monks themselves) even in the monastic context of a song sung in the choir. For its transcribers in Ely and other monastic singers the lyric enacts its own exhortations.

This song functions at the intersection between genres that preserve secular and Christian wisdom. As such it is in fact a partial enactment of the collaboration between secular and divine power that it calls for. It achieves this in an accessible format – simple English song which it seems was sung by the whole community. It seems the semantic aims may thus have been achieved in the use of the song as well as in the form itself.

A Whole of Many Parts

The narrative suggests that the song may have been broken down into single sentences and remembered in this fragmentary format. Lyric theory has, at times, seen the lyric as an organic whole.[128] In that model, every part is interrelated. The reciting of this lyric in fragments indicates that this model does not well represent twelfth-century use (or presentation of use) of this poem.

There is undoubtedly an idea in Old English as well as Old Norse poetry that a poem could be a collections of parts. For example, 'Maxims I' is a collection of maxims and even 'The Wanderer' at times seems to collect relevant gnomic ideas.[129] In Latin too there is evidence that poems could be seen as collections. Anselm of Canterbury (1039-1109) famously wrote prayers to Christ that

[128] Scott Brewster, *Lyric* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 37.
[129] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 134–37, 156–63.

focused emotively on the passion.[130] In his introduction to his prayers he says they should be read slowly and that they were in stanzas so that you could dip into them and stop wherever you wanted. As such he sees his poem as a collection of separable affective passages. Cnut's lyric is like these examples in that it too is structured so that it could be – and apparently was – used in parts. It is instructive – and more so as perhaps surprising – that a poem as short as four lines could inherit this poetics of separable collection.

The two parts of the Cnut lyric function on their own as almost proverbs, as demonstrated above, but as a unit they also conform surprisingly well to the idea that a lyric poem should contain just one thought. The thought is that the secular authorities and the clergy do best when in cooperation with each other. Like 'The Wanderer' or Anselm's prayers, we have here a collection that as a whole points to a rounder, a fuller idea.

Cnut and Old Norse Poetry

The use of situational poetry in a prose narrative is similar to the Old Norse or Old Irish use of situational verses. Both Old Irish and Old Norse prose narratives included poems said by characters in reaction to specific circumstances. It is possible that – perhaps inspired by Cnut's literary tastes – the writer was drawing on the generic norms of Old Norse sagas. Like Cnut's lyric, Old Norse skaldic poetry frequently switches fluidly between tenses and narrative and vocative address.[131] As Mathew Townend had shown, Cnut was a major patron of Old Norse verse.[132] To the modern scholar it seems suspiciously fitting that Cnut should be given a situational verse in a manner so reminiscent of the poets and occasionally kings of Old Norse sagas. It is less clear that this would have occurred to the twelfth-century monks of Ely. In the English historical sources on Cnut there is little or no mention of his patronising Old Norse poetry.[133] The first extant Norse sagas are not put in writing until slightly after the Cnut verse.[134] Old Irish prosimetrum is extant from the twelfth century, but as with the Old Norse, proving cultural exchange – and specifically cultural exchange that would have reached the monks of Ely – is difficult. Ely was well within the Danelaw

[130] *S. Anselmi, Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi: Opera Omnia*, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, vol. 3, *Continens Orationes sive Meditationes necnon Epistolarum Librum Primum* (Edinburg: Thomas Nelson, 1938), 3.
[131] Parker, "Anglo-Scandinavian Literature," 28–9.
[132] Matthew Townend, "Contextualizing the Knútsdrápur: Skaldic Praise-Poetry at the Court of Cnut," *Anglo-Saxon England* 30 (2001), 145–79.
[133] Eleanor Parker, "Merry Sang the Monks: Cnut's Poetry and the *Liber Eliensis*," *Scandinavica* 57, n. 1 (2018): 15–16.
[134] Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 143.

and hence historically subject to much Danish influence. (The Danelaw was an area of England established towards the end of the ninth century as belonging to the Danes. A lot of Danes immigrated to this area, and it maintained distinctive laws and characteristics even after the Norman Conquest.) It is clear also that England traded significantly with both the Vikings and the Irish and cases have been made for literary exchange in later and earlier periods.[135] It is thus possible at least that Old Norse or perhaps Old Irish literary traditions also fed into this lyric.

The lyrics of Becket, Godric and Cnut all exist in contexts that make their being situated between genres unusually explicit. This need to be explicit and explore the generic possibilities implies that the forms were not well-established. The level of exploration given suggests a new or unusual thing that needs to be explored. The prose context may also be a way of assisting readers with an unfamiliar form of the poetry. If part of what comprises a genre is a set of reading methods, then a text without genre leaves the reader with little clue as to how to interact with it. By situating the lyric within other genres, the prose tells the reader which of their techniques of understanding and use they should apply to the poetry. It helps the reader know what to do with a new literary form. Later on, similar forms and effects are given without effort or explanation. This strongly indicates that these lyrics' specific forms of generic intersectionality were unusual at the time, and the resultant forms slowly became normalised in the thirteenth-century lyrics.

The writers of the narratives containing all of the lyrics considered thus far had a vested financial interest in those lyrics being successful. Becket and Godric's song were useful for encouraging tourism and canonization, and Cnut's is useful for asserting the rights of Ely. Whether for these financial reasons or other more literary or devotional reasons, they invest these short English songs with the reading practices of more established and more exalted genres. The result is that at the very start of the Middle English lyric as a written genre, it is buttressed by the conventions and practices associated with more established genres.

Summary

Curtius' idea that Latin learning significantly fed into much of the written vernacular literature is true of the first extant written Middle English lyrics.[136] They draw on Latin and vernacular genres.

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[135] Dean Loganbill, "The Medieval Mind in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*", Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association 26, no. 4 (1972), 119–126. W. Ann Trindade, "The Man with Two Wives – Marie de France and an Important Irish Analogue," *Romance Philology* 27, n. 4 (1974), 466–78.

[136] Curtius, *European Literature*, 383–88.

However I also agree with Pollock that simply saying Latin learning fed into the creation of written vernacular literature does not explain why vernacular literature was written down. As Pollock argues, the recording of the vernacular was not inevitable.[137] Pollock's examples suggest that the reasons vernaculars might start to be written down are political attempts at nation building or exposure to another culture that already had a written vernacular literature.[138] Neither of these perfectly fit the Middle English lyric. England has already been exposed to the writing down of Old English, so new contact with written vernaculars seems an unlikely stimulus. Neither do the first lyrics appear to be an attempt at nation building. Whilst to some extent they are all the product of local monks taking care of the interests of their institution, the choice to use English and to write down the produced English with the Latin needs explaining.

The choice appears to be a product of two factors. First is the desire to create effects beyond the capabilities of the genres at their disposal. The second is the willingness to mingle forms. In some ways the sung portions of the divine office consist of relatively pure forms.[139] Whilst local variation occurred and new saints might occasion changes, there was much that was more difficult to change. It was said in a certain place by certain qualified people. Latin was the standard language of the liturgy. Much of the music and words were preordained. The early Middle English lyric on the other hand is all about mixing. The lyric brings many different genres together in different combinations. Latinate and vernacular genres mingle freely. Forms that were relatively shut down in how and by whom they can be used are mingled with more open genres. The actual writing down was by elites, but they bring others into the creative space. Godric and Burgwen the hermit, the potentially local priest and a king are modeled as content creators who collaborate with monks and celestial figures to create the new songs. In this way, the monks sanction a genre that is strongly affiliated to the divine office but a complete departure from its pure and closed nature. They appear to have sanctioned the mingled form and venacular language because it promoted aims that were not in the liturgy's competency. By virtue of their mixed forms and vernacular language the Becket song can have God sanctioning the cult and the rights of the English monks, Godric's songs can encourage and contribute to a lay liturgy and Cnut's song can champion good relations between kings and monks and particularly visualise the importance of the work of the latter. The lyric's

[137] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 445–47.
[138] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 437–67.
[139] Recently the focus has been on the greater amount of variability that was previously acknowledged. Despite this, the divine office was still significantly set. See: John Harper, "Contexts for the Late Medeival Pontifical of Anain, Bishop of Bangor: Issues of the 'Local' and the 'More-Than-Local'," in *Music and Liturgy in Medieval Britain and Ireland*, ed. Ann Buckley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 18–23. John Caldwell, "Insular Uses Other than that of Salisbury," in Buckley, *Music and Liturgy*, 50–82.

special capabilities then mean its gets written down because it is valuable to those capable of writing and it is as often as not aimed at those likely to have the money and reading capacities to come across them in written format. The sphere of influence the texts were aimed at was not necessarily the populace as defined in opposition to the elites. The creation of the lyric does not support dualities between elites and the populace that can at times be found in Gramsci and Pollock's thought. [140] The duality is undermined by its reaching out to kings, anchoresses, devout lay people and pilgrims and at least supposedly proceeding from a king and the visions of a hermit and priest. The use of writing to communicate is supported by the fact that despite being in the vernacular, the lyric still has strong links with Latin genres that are habitually written down: the desire to create special effects meant that vernacular oral genres and Latin written genres were mixed and allowed to form a written vernacular genre.

The Becket lyric and all of Godric's songs have heavenly origins. This is all but one of the musical lyrics. Pollock writes that across countries, divine permission was often a way of dealing with anxieties about the written vernacular:

> It is wholly in keeping with the historical character of a vernacular culture, which must define itself and make good its claim to speak at all, let alone to speak the truth, that its authorization should sometimes be ascribed to a transcendent power. And such divine ascriptions are perhaps the best indicator of the anxiety provoked by the act of seeking vernacular literariness within the power shadow of a cosmopolitan formation.[141]

Pollock suggests this is part of what is going on in the Cædmon story – an idea which is in harmony with Bruce Holsinger's idea that the Cædmon story was used to justify the vernacular parts of the Durham liturgical service.[142] The reasons for the first liturgical Middle English lyrics receiving divine sanction are more complex; it is not the language alone that is the issue. In both the cases of Thomas Becket and Godric, the Middle English lyrics are part of potentially contentious actions: to name but two of these actions, the Becket lyric has political significance and the Godric lyrics advocate for a vernacular liturgy. Contentious institutional aims appear to be part of the reason that the lyrics get written down. The controversial aims also made these lyrics particularly in want of divine support. However, the contentious institutional aims are embodied in the lyrics; that is, they are embodied in the language of the lyrics and in their generic allegencies. In these early written lyrics their language

[140] Gramsci, *Cultural Writings*, 195. Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 445.
[141] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 452–53.
[142] Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 453–54. Holsinger, "Caedmon's 'Hymn'," 156.

and form is tied up with the contentious aims of the text and both together get divine sanction. Cnut's song, which promotes the institutional aims of the monks of Ely, gets royal sanction. What Pollock in this passage does not mention is that heavenly permission does not only justify the use of the vernacular – it seriously commends it. The Middle English lyric as it first appears in writing is habitually entangled with aims that are helped by divine (or royal) support. That entanglement means that the written lyrics themselves – their language, genre and their being written – receive divine support.

Being affiliated with a mixture of genres has consequences for what the lyric can do. The lyrics have the ability to make social, theological and political statements with their formal choices. Due to the fact that they combine conventions from different genres, each formal choice becomes a choice between or an action upon the traditions and ideas attendant on those genres. The lyrics repeatedly show the ability to enact in their performers the aims they put forth through semantics and their play with genres. These texts imply that thinking is moral action and, through interweaving the practices associated with different genres, they become the performance scripts for the moral actions they recommend.

1.2 Lyrics in Sermons

The amount of interpretive apparatus provided by the prose contexts of the liturgical lyrics is suggestive of their novelty. These lyrics drew on a mixture of different genres to create a new genre that was to be interpreted in a new way. The liturgical lyrics are the most novel type of poetry that emerges in the twelfth century. However, there are other, somewhat similar, groups of lyrics circulating in this period. Three lyrics are found in sermons written down at the very end of the twelfth century. The first is a speech from the soul to the dead body and is found in 'De Sancto Andrea', number XXIX of the Trinity Homilies. Its manuscript, Cambridge UK, Trinity College MS B.14.52 (335), is usually dated to the very end of the twelfth century.[143] The second is related to a sermon's biblical thema (the biblical quotation that a sermon is, at least supposedly, based on) and is found in the now lost London, British Library MS Cotton Otho A. xiii and Worcester, Cathedral Library MS Q.29, both dated from around the turn of the twelfth century.[144] The final lyric is a couplet on

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[143] Claudio Cataldi, "Trinity Homily XXIX De Sancto Andrea between Tradition and Innovation," *Anglia* 135, n. 4 (2017): 642.

[144] Stephen Pelle, "Newly Recovered English Homilies from Cotton Otho A.XIII," *The Review of English Studies* 65, n. 269 (2014): 201–202. E. G. Stanley, "An Inedited Nativity Sermon from Worcester," *English and Germanic Studies* 7 (1961): 58.

day and night found in Vespasian Homily II in London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A. XXII, dated to 1200 or a little earlier.[145]

Sermons

These lyrics are similar insofar as all of them have a close relationship with the sermons that they are part of. The situations in which they were deployed varied and hence so did the detail of their intended effect. The sermon collections that survive from this period show a mixture of influences.[146] Old English sermons get copied and their stylistic features reproduced.[147] Newer and often continental sermons styles are also found, including preceding by division as in the scholastic sermon.[148] Although the lack of surviving material makes it hard to be sure, it appears that the insular sermons may have been undergoing substantial change in this period.[149] However, consistencies in use, content and sometimes in style will most probably have encouraged readers and listeners to draw on their experience of sermons generally when encountering innovations. Lyrics are thus found embedded in sermons at a moment when the genre appears to be undergoing change but nevertheless has maintained its continuity as a genre. It is possible that this atmosphere in the sermons was particularly conducive to the addition of poetry. The writing was open enough to allow for new practices to be introduced but also stable enough that the sermons tradition could lend its interpretive systems to the new form it included.

Sermons in this period were often – following Ælfric of Eynsham – rhythmic and alliterative. In these sermons, prose and poetry operate more as a continuum that can be fluidly moved across. There is consequentially an ambiguity as to the extent to which the verse was seen as something different that has been incorporated into the sermon, as opposed to a – slightly – formally distinct part of the sermon. Nonetheless verse is a stylistic feature that makes certain sections distinct and perhaps elicits a slightly different kind of attention. Two of the three lyrics are translations and

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[145] Mary Swan, "Preaching Past the Conquest: Lambeth Palace 487 and Cotton Vespasian A. XXII," in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. Aaron J. Kleist (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007) 414.
[146] Bella Millett has show this to be true of the sermons in London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A. XXII and Cambridge UK, Trinity College MS B.14.52 (335). Bella Millett, "Change and Continuity: The English Sermon Before 1250," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English,* ed. Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 228–30, 232–33.
[147] Millett, "Change and Continuity," 226.
[148] Millett, "Change and Continuity," 232–33.
[149] Millett, "Change and Continuity," 230–34.

elaborations on Latin material that was either definitely or at least most probably inserted into the sermon from elsewhere. Whilst a translation may be an integral part of the sermon, it also attaches itself to how one understands the Latin extract and hence may circulate separately from the sermon as an attachment to the Latin quotation. Whilst all ideas in the sermon *may* be extracted, the translation thus has a particular mechanism by which to do so. Verse translations, then, may differentiate themselves from the body of the sermon through their style and the pronounced origin of their semantic content; they may in these ways signal themselves to readers to be extractable parts of the sermons that might usefully circulate as independent objects. The songs from my previous section were signalled as coming from outside the prose. They were different, added-in works that the reader may well wish to take out of the prose context again. In the sermons it is unclear the extent to which the lyrics were seen as separate material. However, it seems likely that if not seen as extracts, they were signalled to be extractable and suitable for becoming independent objects.

Aside from certain similarities in these lyrics, a possible coherence to these uses of poetry in sermons is suggested by the fact that two of these sermon collections are linked together by shared texts and the third in its use of Old English and post-conquest material.[150] The Otho and the Trinity homilies were both written in the Midlands and contain some of the same sermons.[151] The Vespasian Homilies were most probably written in Rochester and do not have the same textual connections. However two of the four homilies are adaptations of Ælfric's works, and the sermon in which the lyric is embedded draws on more recent material including from Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux. It has thus been seen as mixing Old English and newer material in a similar way to the Lambeth homilies.[152] The Lambeth homilies were also from Worcester and have texts in common with the Otho and Trinity Homilies. Thus whilst there is no textual link, the Vespasian lyric is found in sermons from a similar literary climate.

Trinity Homily XXIX

The lyric in Trinity Homily XXIX is distinctive insofar as it comes from a popular and long-standing genre. That genre is comprised of addresses of the soul to the body after death. There are several long poetic treatments of this theme, including the Old English 'Soul and Body' and the Middle

[150] Mark Faulkner and Stephen Pelle, "Worcester, Cathedral Library, Q. 29, fols. 133–7: An Early Middle English Sermon and Its Context," *Mediaeval Studies* 75 (2013), 147–50.
[151] Pelle, "Homilies," 200–2.
[152] Millett, "Change and Continuity," 228–30.

English Worcester fragment 'The Soul's Address to the Body'.[153] There are also several Latin and Old English homilies where the soul addresses the body in, often alliterative, prose.[154] The Trinity lyric combines the sermon and poetic versions insofar as it is relatively brief and in a sermon but it is also versified. Whilst this lyric does participate strongly in a pre-existing tradition, it is also new in being a body and soul poem in a sermon. The long tradition that this lyric is part of provides much of its interpretive framework. Nonetheless, the sermon that surrounds it does contribute to what and how it means. It does so on a semantic level, but it is on the interpretation of the lyric's form that the sermon has a particularly large effect.

The Middle English appears in a section on the bitterness of death that includes both Latin and Middle English poetry:

> Gief þe licame was rih[t]wis on þisse liue, wo beð þe sowle þanne hie him shal
> forleten and rewliche biginneð, and þus to him seið:
> *'Heu dilecta michi caro, quod te ponere cogor!*
> Awi leof ware þu me! Nu ich shal þe forleten;
> þu ware me lastful on alle þo þe ich wolde.
> We ware onmode Godes wille to done.
> Hwu shal ich oflonged wiðute þe libben!'
> And gief þe licame bed euel, loð is heo þe sowle,
> and hire þuncheð lang þat hie o[n] hi(m) bileueð,
> and hie þencheð fastliche þar offe to witen:
> hit þinche[ð] hire let, for hire is loð þar-inne.
> Ðane biginneð hie rewliche, and to þe licame swilche wordes seið:
> *'Heu michi cur olidum fueram tibi uincta cadauer!*
> Aweilewei þu fule hold þat ich auere was to þe iteied!
> Longe habbe ich on þe wuned swo wo is me þe hwile!
> For al þat me was leof, hit was þe loð;
> þu ware a sele gief ich was wroð;

[153] Douglas Moffat, trans. and ed., *The Old English Soul and Body* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1990). Moffat*, Worcester Fragments*.

[154] For example, this is not the case in the following sermons: *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm Zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, ed. Arthur Napier (Berlin: Weidmann, 1883), 134–43. Bruno Assmann, ed., *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben* (Kassel: G.H. Wigand, 1889), 158–73. Anna Maria Luiselli Fadda, ed., *Nuove Omelie Anglosassoni Della Rinascenza Benedettina* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1977), 139–57, 158‑73. D. G. Scragg, ed., *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, EETS OS 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 90–104: 95.

to gode þu ware slau and let,

and to euele spac and hwat.

Al þat good het, þe þuht[e] andsete,

þat forbod[e] þe þuhte swete.

Iuele wurmes mote þe chewe;

swo we þe be þat tu me [ne] rewe;

for þine gulte ishal nu to pine,

rotie mote þu to time!'

Ðus wareð þe sowle þe licame, for þat hit haueð þar after ierned.[155]

[If the body was righteous in this life, sorrowful is the soul when it has to leave it, and sadly begins to speak, and thus addresses it: *'Alas, oh body, beloved by me, that I am compelled to lay you down!* Alas, you were dear to me! Now I must leave you; you were obedient to me in everything I wished. We were unanimous in doing God's will. How shall I live, filled with longing, without you?' And if the body was evil, it is loathsome to the soul; it seems that it dwelled in it for too long, and it strongly thinks about escaping out of it: it seems a hindrance, because it loathes being enclosed in it. Then it begins sadly and says these words to the body: *'Alas, oh corpse, rank to me, because I have been bound to you.* Alas, you foul corpse, that I ever was tied to you! I dwelled in you for long, and woe is me the while! For all that was dear to me, was loathsome for you: you were joyful if I was angry; you were slow and late to do good and quick and eager towards evil. All that God commanded seemed odious to you, and what is forbidden seemed sweet to you. May evil worms chew you; so cursed be you, as you had no pity for me. I shall now go towards pain for your guilt: May you rot forever!' Thus, the soul curses the body because of everything it has deserved in the afterlife.[156]]

This passage showcases how sermons could make poetry and prose a continuum and operate in many places on that continuum in quick succession. As Bella Millett has pointed out, prior to 'Heu michi cur olidum', the Middle English is alliterative and rhythmical in a manner that draws on Old English homilies.[157] Both of the Latin lines are in dactylic hexameter, as Stephen Pelle has

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[155] The full sermon is found in: Morris, *Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, 172–185. This layout and text is taken from: Cataldi, "Trinity Homily XXIX," 648. I have adopted this layout because it helpfully emphasises the poetic elements of a text for which the prose/poetry dichotomy is insufficient and that dichotomy's modern typographical manifestation in either lineated or unlineated text may mask interesting features.

[156] Cataldi, "Trinity Homily XXIX," 649. The translation of the Latin in italics is mine.

[157] Cataldi, "Trinity Homily XXIX," 647.

observed.[158] The Middle English version of the damned soul's speech is more on the poetic end of the continuum than the earlier Middle English: its first two lines are in long alliterative lines and the next ten are in rhyming couplets. Rather than a clean split between alliteration and rhyme, there is a period of cross over. In the first two lines of the rhyming section, 'leof' alliterates with 'loð' and 'ware' with 'wroð'. The 'þe' of the third line refers to the 'fule hold' of the first line. After the damned soul's address, the sermon continues in prose. Having the damned soul's address in verse in a sermon is an innovation in the body and soul tradition; that innovation is situated in a particularly dynamic formal space.

The sermon context makes the decision to use rhyme more significant. The start of the Middle English version of the damned soul's speech is alliterative and sounds like a more regular, poetical version of the speech of the good person's soul to the body. This links the two, as might be expected by one familiar with the Old English examples, where both the good and bad soul's address is given in prose.[159] In the context of the sermon where it is alliterative poetry that is approached, the subsequent rhyme is very distinctive. By being uniquely matched with the description of a bound soul, the rhyme is allowed to feel like fetters or an unpleasant lingering. The ability to make specific formal features feel like important decisions requires formal context; it is something that longer body and soul poems achieve and that the sermon context gives this shorter poem. For example in the long poem, 'The Soul's Address to the Body', there is a single substantial rhyming section which Moffat has suggested may be the emotional climax of the poem.[160] Because the Trinity lyric starts with alliteration, the feel that the rhyme is a considered choice is preserved outside the alliterative context of the sermon, even though the lyric alone is too short to make the rhyme feel unusual.

The sermon context collaborates with the body and soul tradition to stress the fact that the speeches of both the saved and damned souls are given but only the damned soul's speech is fully versified. The sermon, in allowing for prosimetrum, has the formal capacity for this. However, this combination appears to have been unusual in the earlier body and soul tradition.[161] It is hard to reconstruct exactly what it was about the damned soul's speech that made it more appropriate for poetry. The reason might be didactic: that the dire recriminations were thought to be a more

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[158] Stephen Pelle, "Embedded Latin Verses in Trinity Homily XXIX," *Notes and Queries* 60, n. 4 (2013), 491–92.

[159] The texts framed by the Last Judgment and those in which the soul periodically visits its body share the two address structure. Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 90–104. Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien*, 158–73. Moffat, *Soul and Body*. Luiselli Fadda, *Nuove* Omelie, 139–57, 158–73.

[160] Moffat, *Worcester Fragments*, 47–48.

[161] For example, this is not the case in the following sermons: Wulfstan, *Homilien*, 134–143. Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien*, 158–73. Luiselli Fadda, *Nuove* Omelie, 139–57, 158–73. Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 90–104.

effective extract in preventing auditors from sinning. It could also be aesthetic: in the context of the focus on rhyme, the constriction and frustration of the soul appear more aptly emphasised by rhyme then the unhappy freedom of the saved soul.

The body and soul tradition may also be collaborating with the sermon to make this particular use of rhyme into a dissatisfied questioning of the power dynamics between the soul and body. The earlier Exeter Book includes a Riddle (43) that invites thought about the power distribution between the soul and body. In the riddle, the body is the brother but also the servant of the soul.[162] The contrast between this Riddle and the powerlessness of the soul in the Exeter Book's version of 'Soul and Body' makes the manuscript itself a place for thought about the power dynamic.[163] With the versification, the Trinity sermon gives more emotion to the damned soul and makes it more likely to be memorised and thought long upon. The infelicity of the situation whereby the soul is damned though the actions of the body, which apparently the soul has no control over, is clearer and more perturbing in the speech of the damned soul compared to that of the saved soul. The sermon's emphasis on the damned soul by means of its prosimetrum and body and soul literature's tradition of questioning the power relations, makes the damned soul's poem read almost like a cry, not just against evil, but of dissatisfaction with the composition of humans.

The Otho/Worcester Lyric

The Otho/Worcester lyric stands at the start of the sermon and in relation to the sermon as a whole. I quote the part of the Otho version that we have and the start of the Worcester version more fully.

> Apparuit benignitas ⁊ humanitas, etc.
>
> Iwrn us was gesputeled þurh pitegie ⁊ erendrache.
>
> þat God polde man becume al for ure sache.[164]

> Apparuit benignitas et humanitas etc.
> Ʒare hit was isuteled þurh pise and erndrake.
> þet god wold mon bicumen. al for ure sake.
> nu it is soþed to dei he is iboren.
> If iboren nere þis worlde were forlore.

[162] Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 204.
[163] Moffat, *Soul and Body*, 48-60.
[164] Pelle, "Homilies from Cotton Otho A.XIII," 204.

þer fore þe louerd seinte paul seiþ Ine þe halie pistel. þet me redde todei biforen heou. þet þe soþfestnesse. and þe mancunnesse of ure drictin nes nawicht isuteled þurh werkes of richtuuisnesse þet vue heueden idon. ne þurch vuerkes of gode erningge. ach þurch his milde vuille he us alesede.[165]

[Goodness and kindness appeared, etc.
Long ago it was revealed through prophets and messengers
That God would become man entirely for our sake.
Now it is proved, today he is born.
If [he] was not born, this world would be lost.
Therefore the Lord Saint Paul said in the holy letter, that I read today before you: that the righteousness and humanity of our Lord was in no way revealed through works of justice that we have done, nor through works of good deserving, but through his mild will he saved us.]

Most of the Otho version was lost in a fire; the beginning was recorded before the fire. The Worcester version is the last sermon found in a quire of otherwise Latin sermons.[166] Mark Faulkner and Stephen Pelle have given an insight into the creative process which generated the sermon as a whole. They show it to be based on a Latin nativity sermon by Geoffrey Babion, who was archbishop of Bordeaux and died in 1158.[167] At times it also takes material from Babion's other sermons. It also reorganises and repurposes Babion's material so as to present a clearer salvation narrative. It is in this creative atmosphere – working with examples but also freely departing from them – that the innovation that was adding in a poem occurred. Babion's nativity sermon takes the same passage from the Bible as its thema and apart from the lyric, the Worcester sermon begins in a very similar way. It gives the Latin biblical quote, offers an English translation as is in keeping with its being an English sermon, then quotes the first lines of Babion's sermon before proceeding somewhat differently.[168] Clearly the addition of the lyric was thought useful in adapting the sermon. It may be that the reworking of an original in a different language and perhaps for a different purpose already puts an author in the spirit of innovation. It may do so by encouraging thought about how elements

[165] Stanely, "Nativity Sermon," 61.
[166] Faulkner and Pelle, "Sermon," 165–66.
[167] Faulkner and Pelle, "Sermon," 152–58. *PL* 171.390–94.
[168] Faulkner and Pelle, "Sermon," 155.

of the sermon could be changed for the better and an attentiveness to the specificity of one's of own audience and language.

Unlike the Trinity lyric, the Otho/Worcester lyric is not part of a long pre-existing tradition and instead draws on the thema for its generic framework. The Otho/Worcester lyric comes directly after the thema at the start of the sermon. The reader is encouraged to use the lyric like a thema by this proximity and by the similarities between the two. The thema is distinct from the rest of the sermon in being a biblical quotation and, nominally at least, being the inspiration of the sermon. The lyric is distinct in being poetry and also gives itself to being read in relation to the sermon as a whole. Despite this, neither receive immediate explanation in the sermon, beyond the translation of the thema.

Reading back into the Otho/Worcester lyric the content of the sermon may have been a practice encouraged by these similarities with the thema and the pre-existing practice of thinking about sermons as in some way elucidating a thema. Whilst this sermon in particular does not maintain a particularly strong focus on its thema, other sermons spend a lot of time unpacking the many possible meanings and moral significances of the thema. The fact that this sermon does relate to the lyric, and the ideas in the sermon can fruitfully be read into the lyric, advertises the possibility and the benefits of thinking of this lyric as very porous, in a similar way to the thema. There are several ways in which the sermon can productively be read back into the lyric. The sermon provides detail to the allusions in the lyrics. For example, the lyric alludes to messengers and David and Balaam are described as messengers foretelling God becoming a man.[169] The star above Bethlehem and the angel announcing the birth to the shepherds are also described as, perhaps less expected, foretellers of the birth.[170] Another way the sermon can seep into the meaning of the lyric is by providing theological weight to its assertions. The sermon adds theological weight to the lyric's idea that if Jesus had not been born then the world would have been damned. It does so by describing how it had to be Jesus rather than the Father, the Holy Spirit or an angel that redeemed mankind.[171] This extends the assertion in the last line of the lyric to mean that Jesus being born was the only possible way that humanity could have been saved.

A third way that this sermon feeds back into the Otho/Worcester lyric is by taking the lyric's sense of the great measure of time before the coming of Jesus and amplifying it. The first two lines

[169] Stanely, "Nativity Sermon," 64.
[170] Stanely, "Nativity Sermon," 63.
[171] Stanely, "Nativity Sermon," 63.

of the lyric are composed of one long sentence: they feel leisurely and distant. The third line is two short sentences with an emphasis on the present. The contrast makes the wait for the coming of Jesus feel long. Whilst the sermon is for Christmas day, it too puts the birth of Jesus in the long context of salvation history. It includes the creation, the fall of the angels, the fall of man, the genealogy of Mary as well as the events surrounding the birth.[172] The sermon thus makes the lyric's sense of the long wait between mankind's knowing that Jesus would come and his finally appearing, appear to be just an indicative portion of the much longer wait from creation to the birth of Jesus. The thema, the psalm and the prayer are thus all genres from which the early lyric took reading practices which involved – in slightly different ways – supplementing the words of the text with external material.

The Otho/Worcester lyric is not only augmented by the rest of the sermon but also reflects back on the matter of the sermon. The second line of the lyric starts 'that God would man …'. Most of the possible and anticipated conclusions to this phrase involve an action that God in his power would do to mankind. The sentence structure allow these to be possibilities until the word 'bicumen' is reached. Rather than expressing God's power over humans it describes his joining with them. The play of expectations occasioned by the syntax reinforces how radical it was of God to become one of his creations. Thus experiencing the sermon through the lens of the lyric may make it a more wondrous narrative. The lyric thus asserts itself as not just a passive receiver of extra material but also a way of reframing or re-experiencing that material.

The Otho/Worcester lyric in particular also collaborates with this sermon so as to make a point about religious education. We know from its source that this sermon was adapted to contain a more coherent salvation narrative: the lyric draws attention to the importance of that narrative. The lyric stands in contrast to the thema in that the thema provides the impetus for the theology in the sermon whereas the lyric relates to the biblical narrative that the sermon has been adapted to better tell. Together they set out the dual purposes of the sermon: to have the readers know the biblical history and understand the theology. The unusual addition of the lyric makes this dual purpose clearer and hence is a form of argument for the importance of narrative in sermons. The theology then fills out and adds depth to our understanding of the narrative, when it explains why Jesus had to be born. The Otho/Worcester lyric thus suggests that one role of theology is to help people more fully understand biblical events. There is also an implicit pastoral argument that this

[172] Stanely, "Nativity Sermon," 61–65.

relationship between theology and biblical narrative might be appropriate for the less learned audience for which this sermon appears to have been adapted and the lyric created.[173]

The Vespasian Lyric

Another sermon lyric is found on ff. 56v-58r of London, British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A. xxii. This manuscript includes four English sermons known as the Vespasian Homilies. One of them starts with a parable about a king who invites his friends and enemies to a banquet. It explains that the king signifies God who is King, Creator, Father and Lord. It then compares God to a mother:

> Múȝe we ahct clepeien hine moder wene we. ȝíe muȝe we. hwat deð si moder hire bearn. formes hi hit cheteð and blissið be þe lichte. and seþe hi dieð under hire árme oðer his hafed heleð to don him slepe. and reste. Þis deð all ȝíure drihte.
>
> he blisseð hus mid dȝéies licht.
> h[e] sweueð hus mid þiestre nicht.[174]
>
> [Can we call him 'mother' at all, we wonder? Yes, we can! What does the mother do for her child? First she cheers and delights it with the light, and then she cradles it in her arm or covers its head to let it sleep and rest. Our Lord does all this:[175]
>
> He gladdens us with the daylight;
> he puts us to sleep with the dark night.]

This lyric is less distinct from the sermon than the Trinity and Worcester lyrics. It is not signalled as somebody else's speech or introduced, it is not at the start or end and it is not a translation of an extract. In meaning it fits in with the prose perfectly. Despite this, it is distinctive from the first line. The metre is sufficiently regular that one does not need to wait for the rhyme on 'nicht' to appreciate that there has been a change to verse. In the context of a mother putting a child to sleep, the sudden change to verse may suggest a lullaby. Lullabies are referenced by Middle English lyrics in the fourteenth century and there are but scattered suggestions of singing to children in insular text in the centuries before; the idea that this was a common practice evoked by this sermon can

[173] Faulkner and Pelle, "Sermon," 158.
[174] Morris, *Homiletic Treatises*, 233.
[175] Millett, "Change and Continuity," 229n40. Translation of poem mine.

therefore only be a hypothesis.[176] If it were the case, then this lyric may ask to be used as a lullaby. No music is given but the verse form is perhaps simple enough that the words could be slotted into other music; this is a better documented practice.[177] The lyric's reference to sleeping makes it topical for a lullaby. It may be that the sermon is offering a more devotional replacement for listeners' secular lullabies. The lyric suggests that the day and night are both proof of God's benevolence. It thus makes the immediate situation of the reciter – daytime or night-time – a reason for gratitude.

The introduction to the comparison between God and mothers implies that one might imagine the comparison to be shocking or unsuitable. The preacher then allays this imagined audience reaction. He sanctions it first with this comparison and then with a quotation from the Bible. This drama and then justification may make the episode more memorable but also set the tone for a ground-breaking comparison. In the midst of this supposed controversy the lyric in its form is comfortably repetitive. The structure of the two lines is similar with 'He [verbs] us with...' The position of the last two words is swapped; this avoids monotony but the words are still expected as opposites. 'Night' as a rhyme for 'light' is hardly surprising due both the sematic link and the context of the description of the mother's actions. On the other hand, the way that the lyric compares God with a mother may be more unusual. Caroline Walker Bynum has shown that Jesus was compared with mothers relatively frequently in this period.[178] She suggests that comparisons were made based on women providing milk for babies and Jesus provided us with his blood, mothers being loving and nurturing in the way that God is imagined to be loving, and mothers giving birth in pain like Jesus on the cross. However, the loving God – associated with affective piety – or the giving of flesh are not the grounds on which this sermon makes the connection. The mother does implicitly care for her child in cheering it and putting it to sleep. However, especially with the putting of the child to sleep, it is the manipulation of the physical environment so as to permit a desired effect that is similar in a mother and God. Mothers are compared to God in his creation of the world at the start of Genesis, and both mothers' and God's motive are suggested to be care for mankind. Lullabies have been thought of as women's work songs: if this is meant to be used as a lullaby, then the comparison with women's work that it takes with it from the sermon means that it

[176] Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, "Popular Song and the Middle English Lyric," in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 564. *Canu Aneirin*, ed. I. Williams (Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1938), 44. Luria and Hoffman, *Middle English Lyrics*, 194–196. Theodore Silverstein, ed., *Medieval English Lyrics* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), 107–9.

[177] For examples, see: MES, 111, 143–144.

[178] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982), 110–69.

glorifies women's work as a God-like transforming of the physical environment for the betterment of those under her care.[179]

The lyric requires a memory of the sermon to make this comparison. Circulating totally independently it would still be a lovely and simple lyric, well written for encouraging love and gratitude towards God. However, the sermon's comparison may attach itself to the poem and circulate with it orally as a received interpretation. It is clear that in this instance the business of the sermon was to record (or perhaps originally write) a lyric and then, in the surrounding prose, to lay upon it significance.

Summary

All of the sermon lyrics appear to have a generic affiliation in addition to the sermon. The sermon itself seems not to have spontaneously generated lyrics, but other genres were incorporated into and combined with sermons to create the sermon lyric. Change within the sermon genre – the mixing of old and new styles – and the adapting of source material may have been a good environment for this incorporation to occur. None of the lyrics occupies an undistinguished part of the sermon. The Otho/Worcester lyric is at the start, the Lullaby is at a moment that is built up to be contentious. The place of the Trinity lyric is less marked but creates for itself a moment of emotional intensity. Whilst they seem to come at important moments in the sermon, how the lyrics relate to the sermon varies. The Otho/Worcester lyric relates to the whole sermon whereas the other two lyrics relate to a specific section.

The way in which the sermon lyrics make social, political or theological statements is somewhat different to the lyrics analysed in the last section. In general the musical lyrics combine different genres and the way that they combine them is an argumentative statement. The prose surrounding those lyric serves to explain to the reader what the lyric is, and help them understand how to read it, which genres it combines, and the ideas at stake in the combining. The sermon lyrics combine only the patterns of use of one other genre and the sermon. The way they make statements tends to be in their relationship with the sermon. The sermon does not just explain but is an equal co-creator of the ideas. For example, the Vespasian lyric needs the comparison given in the sermon to make its statement about the work of mothers. The Otho/Worcester lyric collaborates with its sermon to make a case for the importance of biblical narrative in pastoral teaching. The

[179] Lindsay Turner, "Lullaby & Labor: Alice Notley and the Work of Poetry," *Contemporary Women's Writing* 12, n. 3 (2018): 289–305.

Trinity lyric is the most independent from its sermon in having its ideas mostly within itself. However, the contrasting treatments of the speeches of the saved and damned souls serves to sanction the questioning that the latter incites. Whilst the sermon settings are important for much of the meaning co-created with the lyrics, once created it is far from impossible that that meaning could not circulate with the lyrics; the lyrics may act as a cipher for meanings that are attached to them but that they do not fully contain.

1.3 History Lyrics

Introduction

Cambridge UK, Pembroke College MS 82 contains a copy of Bede's *Historia Anglorum*. In a twelfth-century hand on the initial pages of a manuscript are two short lyrics on Saint Kenelm and on Lothbrok's sons.[180] This is the earliest recorded incidence of these two lyrics. The Lothbrok lyric is accompanied by a short piece of Latin prose describing the deaths of two of Lothbrok's sons. The lyric on Kenelm is unaccompanied except for a Latin version of the poem which has been added in a later thirteenth-century hand. Both of these poems are subsequently copied as notes to history prose and Kenelm is later embedded within his saint's life. The Kenelm lyric appearing in this early instance without a prose context is unusual for Middle English poems of this brevity in this period. A possible reason for this may be that these lyrics participate in a long tradition of history poems. For example, a very short English poem is found embedded in in William of Malmesbury's *Pontificum Anglorum*.[181] The practice of embedding poems in historical narratives can also be seen in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles. Many of those poems were considerably longer then the two poems listed above, but there are also several shorter poems. For example, the entry for 1075 includes two short sections of verse on a wedding and the entry for 1104 includes a couplet about King Henry's actions

[180] Montague Rhodes James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Pembroke College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 70.
[181] William, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum,* 384.

antagonising God.[182] An understanding of how to use these earlier poems may have informed the reception of the later poems and thus explains why they do not need to be affiliated with other genres.

History lyrics are similar enough to the main body of Middle English lyrics that they are likely to have influenced the expectations with which each other were written and read. By the thirteenth century, history lyrics are a distinct and less popular sub-genre of the Middle English lyrics. In the twelfth century, however, they appear to be part of a longer tradition that is organically converging with a stronger new genre. This section looks at history lyrics at the time when the Middle English lyric as a genre was beginning, in part so as to understand what they might have added and taken at this very early stage. It will, however, think about the history lyrics from the end of the twelfth century with reference to the earlier history poems, so as to understand what they might be inheriting and how trends might be changing.

The Lothbrok Lyric

The history lyrics contemporary with the liturgical lyrics stand in a small but – in the first half of the twelfth century – diverse tradition of historical poems embedded in prose. One part of that tradition can be seen in the following passage from the year 1104 in the Peterborough manuscript of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle:

> Nis eaðe to asecgenne þises landes earmða, þe hit to þysan timan dreogende wæs, þurh mistlice ⁊ mænigfealdlice unriht ⁊ gyld þæ næfre ne geswican ne ne ateorodon; ⁊ æfre ealswa se cyng for, ful hergung þurh his hired uppon his wreccea folc wæs ⁊ þæronmang foroft bæneta ⁊ manslihtas.
>
> eall þis waes God   mid to gremienne
> ⁊ þas arme leode   mid to tregienne.[183]
>
> [Nor is it easy speaking about the miseries of this land which it was suffering at this time through various injustices and manifold taxes that never stopped or let up. And ever as the

[182] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, ed. Susan Irvine, vol. 7, *MS. E* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 91, 113.
[183] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Irvine, 113.

king went about, there was full harrying by his court upon his exiled people, and with it frequent burnings and slaughters of men.

All this was to God troubling
And to the miserable people trying.[184]]

This history poem is quite different from that found in William of Malmesbury's *Pontificum Anglorum*. This poem is found in the main text of Oxford, Magdalen College MS Lat. 172, which was William's autograph copy and was written around 1125.[185]

> Libertas animi eius in uno uerbo enituit preclare, quod Anglice apponam, quia Latina uerba non sicut Anglica concinnitati respondent. Vrsus erat uicecomes Wigorniae a rege constitutus, qui in ipsis pene faucibus monachorum castellum construxit, adeo ut fossatum cimiterii partem decideret. Querela ad archiepiscopum, qui tutor esset episcopatus, delata est. Ille cum uidisset Vrsum, his uerbis adorsus est: 'Hattest þu Urs, haue þu Godes kurs', eleganter in his uerbis sed dure nominum eufoniae alludens.
>
> 'Vocaris' inquit 'Vrsus, habeas Dei maledictionem et' (quod Anglice non apposui) 'meam et omnium consecratorum capitum, nisi castellum hinc amoueris. Et scias profecto quod progenies tua non diu de terra sancte Mariae hereditabitur.' Dixit ille implenda, quae nos uidemus impleta.
>
> [His independence of mind showed up splendidly in one remark, which I shall record in English because Latin cannot reproduce the neat play on words. Urse, who had been made sheriff of Worcester by the king, built a castle almost down the monks' throats, in such a way that the ditch cut across part of the graveyard. Complaint was made to the archbishop as guardian of the see. When he saw Urse, he confronted him with: 'Hattest þu Urs, haue þu Godes kurs.' This was an elegant though harsh play on the sound of the words, which mean 'You are called Urse, may you have God's curse'—and, what I did not add in English, 'both mine and that of all consecrated persons, unless you move the castle away from here. And

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[184] Brian T O'Camb, "The Familiar Wisdom of Treasured Friends and the Landscape of Conquest in *The Proverbs of Alfred*," in *Remembering the Medieval Present: Generative Uses of England's Pre-Conquest Past, 10th to 15th Centuries*, ed. Jay Paul Gates and Brian O'Camb (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 225–26.

[185] Michael Winterbottom, introduction to *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: The History of the English Bishops*, by William of Malmesbury, trans. and ed. Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xi–xii.

you may be sure that your heirs will not hold of the lands of St Mary for long.' What he foretold we see fulfilled.[186]]

As we shall see, the Saint Kenelm and Lothbrok lyrics represent a move away from the Chronicle style of poem and towards the Urs poem.

The Lothbrok lyric appears on an initial page of notes with a small amount of prose:

Ynguar and Vbbe Beorn was þe þridde
Loþebrokes sunes loþe weren criste.[187]

Vbba apud Vbbelaue in eboracensi colonia post multas cedes xpistianorum deo uolente interfectus est. Beorn postquam ecclesiam de scapeia destruxisset et uirgines sanctas inibi uiolasset.[…][188]

[Inguar and Hubba, Beorn was the third of Christ's enemies, the sons of Lothbroc.

Hubba was by God's will slain at Ubbaslawe in Yorkshire, after much slaughter of Christians. After Beorn destroyed the church of Sheppey, and outraged the pious virgins in that place […] [189]]

(The prose goes on to explain that by God's vengence Beorn was swallowed alive by the ground.)

The lyric includes the name of Lothbrok's sons and includes the idea that they were at odds with Christ. It does, therefore, include some knowledge about the island's past and is thus quite different to the sermon lyrics which focus exclusively on devotional material. The lyric does not, however, narrate any events. That is left to the prose context, which describes the actions and then the retributive deaths of two of the sons. One might suspect that orally the stories could circulate as loose appendages to the names in the lyric. However, there is some evidence that this lyric circulated with these exact prose words. The lyric and almost exactly the same prose can be found in

[186] Text and translation: William, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum,* 384-85.
[187] Wilson, *Lost Literature,* 43.
[188] James, *Pembroke College*, 71.
[189] Translation mine, consulting: Lord Fracis Harvey, ed., *Corolla Sancti Eadmundi: The Garland of Saint Edmund, King and Martyr* (London: John Mueeay, 1907), 165.

a note in the margins of London, British Library MS Arundel 69, an early thirteenth-century manuscript of Roger of Howden's *Chronica Magistri*.[190] It has been appended to a relevant section of this chronicle. This suggests that, in written form at least, the lyric at times circulated with this exact portion of prose. The coupling of poetry with prose is often seen in longer prose pieces; here is evidence that it also occurred with much shorter prose pieces that circulated in margins. Together with the prose it forms a cautionary tale about God's vengeance on evil doers. However, it is the prose that brings this cautionary tale rather than the lyric; the lyric is a vessel to provoke these stories.

The Lothbrok lyric is similar to the Chronicle poem insofar as it proclaims a heavenly dislike of the action of historical individual(s). However, the Lothbrok lyric is of more historical interest and has less emotive weight than the Chronicle poem. The Chronicle prose is exclaiming about the recent misery of the kingdom. The purpose of the poem is to partake in this outpouring of emotion, rather than to help one remember what happened. Whilst the Lothbrok is describing quite sensational events, it is doing so a long time after they supposedly occurred. At this point the legend was perhaps more exciting as a story and the lyric relates to that story and its narrative interest, rather than being a general lament. Part of the Chronicle poem being of a more exclamatory purpose and the Lothbrok lyric being more historical is their divergent use of proper names. The Chronicle poem does not include any names; when detached from the prose context it would be unclear exactly what it refers to. The Chronicle poem could thus be repurposed for a variety of difficult people in authority. The Lothbrok lyric could not be repurposed: it relates to a specific historical situation.

Both the Lothbrok and the Urs poem include proper names and both of them pun on those proper names. In the line 'Loþebrokes sunes • Loþe weren criste', the word 'Loþebrokes' morphs into 'Loþe'. The poor reputation of this man is made out to be suitably referenced in his name. The change in metre for this clause encourages one to linger over this word play and its significance for Lothbrok. Taken separately 'Loþe brok' could mean 'hateful sin'. Lothbrok's sons are thus of a family with hateful sin: again this feeds nicely into the picture painted of them in the prose. William is also impressed by the brilliance with which Archbishop Ealdred played on words when he linked 'Urs' with 'kurs'. Both the Urs poem and the Lothbrok poem are connected with Latin prose: it appears that one reason history writing in Latin might include some English is if there is word play that cannot be reproduced in Latin.

[190] *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868), 1:39.

The Kenelm Lyric

In contrast to the Lothbrok lyric, the Kenelm lyric is situational and not accompanied by any prose. In being situational verse, the Kenelm lyric bears some comparison to the 'Urs' poem. Whilst word play is less apparent in the Kenelm lyric, it is highly sonically patterned:

> In clench qu becche under ane þorne.
> liet kenelm kinebern heued bereued[191]
>
> [In Clench, cow valley, under a thorn
> Lies Kenelm, royal child, bereft of his head]

By the end of the twelfth century the cult of Saint Kenelm was well developed.[192] This lyric at once serves as a reminder of some of the key plot points in the saint's life and also is part of the story itself. According to his *Vita*, Kenelm's sister was jealous of his power so had his servant murder him. A seven year old Kenelm was aware of this and, after planting his miraculously sprouting ash staff in the ground, he rejects the grave dug by his murderer and they move to a valley appointed by God. Kenelm is decapitated and buried under a thorn tree. A cow guards over the spot where Kenelm is buried and produced a miraculous amount of milk from grazing there. The threats of the murdering sister prevent the English from looking for Kenelm. However, a dove gives a note written in gold to the Pope whilst he is performing mass. The note contains the poem above. The Pope gets Englishmen in his court to translate it and then has Kenelm found, given a proper burial and venerated. The lyric, in a very short space, manages to refer to the cow, the thorn tree, Kenelm's situation as a very young king, and the fact of his having been murdered. By referring to him as deprived of his head it is clear that he did not die of natural means, but the lyric still feels like description rather than narrative. At the most basic level, then, the Kenelm lyric is like the Lothbrok lyric in being an aide memoire for a popular saint's life.

The Pembroke version is not accompanied by prose that asserts that it is the exact words of the note. However, it perfectly matches the meaning of the Latin note given in the contemporary

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191 James, *Pembroke College*, 71.

192 Rosalind C Love, introduction to *Three Eleventh-century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: "Vita S. Birini", "Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi", and "Vita S. Rumwoldi"*, trans. and ed. Rosalind C. Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), cxiii– cxvii.

Latin life (*Vita et Miracula Sancti Kenelmi*) and that life also makes clear that the lyric was in English. A dove delivers the note and it is interpreted for the Pope by the present English people:

> […] que niueam menbranam aureis litteris anglice inscriptam blando rostro ferens super altare beati Petri deposuit, […] Ab his recitatur sacra epistola cuius interpretatio est ista: 'In Clento uacce ualli Kenelmus regius natus iacet sub spino capite truncatus.’
>
> […] and it carried in its gentle beak a snow-white parchment inscribed with golden letters in English, which it put down on the altar of St Peter, […] By them the holy letter is read out, and its interpretation is as follows: 'In Clent Cow-valley, Kenelm king's son lies under a thorn-bush deprived of his head.'[193]]

This may be enough for readers to see the Pembroke version and consider it to be the exact words of the note. Furthermore, there are thirteenth-century versions of the saint’s life that give slightly reorganised versions of the poem as implicitly the exact words of the note.[194] The intense sonic patterning conveys the idea that formal features mattered in heavenly writing.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is written in English. This meant that if poetry was wanted – in the instance above perhaps for an emotional outburst – then English poetry was in keeping with the rest of text. In Latin prose, the use of English poetry appears to need more justification. The justification of the Lothbrok lyric is that the English provides word play that cannot be reproduced in Latin. In the Kenelm lyric it appears that the English was preserved – and at times incorporated in a Latin narrative – because it was the exact words of God.[195]

The late twelfth-century history lyrics brought their long and changing tradition to the nascent Middle English lyric genre. This Kenelm history lyric has particularly close connections with the musical lyrics. The context ties it to Thomas Becket’s antiphon. In both lyrics God is specifically mandating a use of English. In the Kenelm story, God chooses to deliver to the Pope a message in English, despite the fact that the Pope could not speak English. The story itself may serve as a model for good relations between the Pope and the country: the Pope should rebuke and help right the

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[193] Text and translation: Rosalind C Love, trans., and ed., *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: “Vita S. Birini”, “Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi”, and “Vita S. Rumwoldi”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 64–67.

[194] *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani: Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Laurd (London: Longman, 1872), 1:373. Love, *Saints' Lives*, 49, 66nn f–l.

[195] *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani: Chronica Majora*, 1:373. Love, *Saints' Lives*, 49, 66.

country's failings but to do so he must have knowledge of and take advice from citizens from that country. The content of the lyric is less explicit about its thinking on the position of Latin, the Pope, the English language and a place's religious sovereignty than the Thomas Becket lyric. However, the lyric situates itself within what may well be a memorised story. The use of proper nouns and the popularity of the story may mean that it took its narrative frame with it when separated from its prose. It may thus carry with it ideas about English and Anglo-Papal relations. Similarities with Cnut's lyric include their both containing the names of kings and places, and their both being from within a historical narrative. The key difference is that Cnut's song was associated with song, and indeed the prose surrounding Cnut's lyric associates the lyric with a variety of genres. It appears that the inheritance of the history poem tradition and the greater popularity of the narrative meant that Kenelm's lyric did not need prose to explain what it was or what to do with it.

Summary

On one hand the history lyrics do not seem to require the same prose interpretation that the other lyrics have enjoyed. On the other hand both lyrics have very well developed reasons why they – as opposed to a Latin version – should be recorded. It appears that there was already a tradition of history poems so their genre needed little explanation, but history poems in Latin prose had to justify their existence with clever verbal play and often by being situational. This requirement, and quite possibly the different context, takes the history poems from the end of the twelfth century away from the poetic tradition in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Their word play and sonic patterning appear to be important to their being seen as valuable. The Lothbrok lyric is a late follower in the tradition of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle poems in that it describes events rather than purports to be part of them. Moving into the thirteenth century, history lyrics become more exclusively situational and justify the necessity of their being in English in a variety of ways.

Conclusion

There is a marked difference between the prose that surrounds the sermon and history lyrics and the prose that surrounds the musical lyrics associated with the liturgy. The prose of the latter does lots to explain the musical lyrics' genre. The context around Thomas' lyric explains that it is an antiphon, Burgwen's song includes details about how to sing it, Mary's lyric says that it is a prayer that was taught like a psalm, and Cnut's lyric mentions the monks singing, rowing, choirs and proverbs. Of the sermon lyrics, in two there is the implication – though not explicit stating – that they may be related to nursery rhymes and themas. The Trinity lyric, which is part of a longer

tradition in English poetry, received no explanation. The history lyrics are also part of a long-standing genre and they receive no explanation in their accompanying prose. It would seem that the more a poem is part of one long-standing tradition, the less it needed to be explained in its prose context. The musical lyrics are accompanied by a lot of information about the genres they are attached to; this strongly suggests that they were novel objects and, unlike the history lyrics, readers needed support in understanding and interpreting them. The prose signals to the reader that the lyrics should be interpreted with the practices attendant on the stated genres. Part of what constitutes a genre is the practices of interpretation attached to it. It is these interpretative practices that make any single text understandable. However, how is one to understand the first text in a genre when there has not yet been a chance to develop interpretive practices for that genre? The prose of the earliest Middle English lyrics shows that using the interpretative practices attached to other genres is one way around this problem. New reading practices are forged for the Middle English lyric out of a combination of practices attendant on pre-existing genres.

Judging by the level of guiding work that the prose does and the extent to which they mix different traditions, the musical lyrics are the most novel group as well as the largest. The musical lyrics, whilst not exactly the same as the sermon or the history lyrics, have much in common. The musical lyrics and the sermons lyrics are both short, embedded in prose, and devotional. The history lyrics are also short and they are similar to the musical lyrics in that they also include a lot of proper nouns. Both groups appear to use the cultural capital of proper nouns to anchor themselves in a place and/or person. In their brevity, proper nouns allow the lyrics to tap into people's pre-existing knowledge and use it as a basis for the lyrics' own actions. Obvious similarities in content and form tend to encourage people to categorise texts together, allowing expectations and reading practices to be shared between the groups. The history lyrics bring as a smaller sidelight to the greater new genre a longer standing tradition. Altogether, these early lyrics are somewhat similar in characteristics but extraordinarily eclectic in generic roots; nonetheless, it is from this group that the Middle English lyric grew, freely mixing the characteristics of the three different twelfth-century lyric sub-genres.

The prevailing scholarly narrative holds that in the twelfth century we see continued clerical respect for Old English through the copying and annotation of pre-conquest texts. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, it offers little insight into the creation of new literary texts in English in this century. Christopher Cannon has written about new twelfth-century Middle English texts. His book implies that these twelfth-century Middle English texts were especially creative because they did not

have generic precedent.[196] The freedom of being cut off from precedent meant they could be completely new. Thomas Hahn also stresses the rootlessness of early Middle English; he paints a picture of Middle English texts as being predominantly cut off from other written texts and hence volatile in an exciting and valuable way.[197] This critical conviction of a spontaneously generated, independently original twelfth-century Middle English corpus does not fit well with the poems here discussed. These lyrics clearly situate themselves within longstanding genres. Rather than being completely new, they take on a multitude of pre-existing conventions. And instead of being unconnected, it is often their multiple generic ties that leads them to be so ground-breaking. It is their combination of conventions rather than their lack of conventions that makes them so innovative.

[196] Cannon, *Grounds*.
[197] Hahn, "Early Middle English," 61–91.

Chapter Two: The Middle English Lyric c.1200–1250

Introduction: The Mechanisms and Movements of Change

The Middle English lyric of the first half of the thirteenth century is very different to its twelfth-century counterpart. The lyrics found in the manuscripts of this period are distinctive from their twelfth-century counterparts in that they are no longer the first extant poems. They are all subsequent poems and hence their development from the first flourishing can be considered. The first half of the thirteenth century is also distinctive from the second half of the thirteenth century because in that later period lyrics are anthologised as independent poems in the main body of manuscript pages. As shall be shown in the next chapter, this signals an attitude to the lyric that is not evinced in the first half of the century. The characteristics of the lyrics of the first half of the thirteenth century are also distinct from those of the two bordering periods. With the exception of the history lyric, the clear distinction between types of lyric seen in the twelfth century dissolves. The contexts in which the Middle English lyrics are found signal an increasing confidence that they would be successfully interacted with and valued by readers and listeners. This confidence suggests that lyrics and 'lyric thinking' was becoming more familiar: people were expected to know what to do with the genre. With this change comes a shift in the way that the lyrics relate to other genres. The relationship moved from one of partial dependence for interpretive strategies as well as characteristics, to one whereby many different forms of generic connection led to new lyric characteristics. The first half of the thirteenth century thus deserves, but has not yet received, distinctive characterisation in scholarship. This chapter has two aims: firstly to understand the mechanisms by which the lyric genre developed and secondly to gain a sense of the genre as a whole and its key achievements in this period.

The cultural context in which the Middle English lyric developed was one of increased attention to the laity's engagement with Christianity.[1] The Fourth Lateran Council (of 1215) demanded a greater focus on the spiritual wellbeing of laypeople, and required that they confess and take communion at least once a year.[2] Additionally, the Order of Preachers and the Friars Minor both arrived in England and started an ambitious program of teaching. As Andrew Reeves has

[1] Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker, introduction to *Texts and Tradition of Medieval Pastoral Care*, ed. Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), 2–3.
[2] H. J. Schroeder, trans., and ed., *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1937), 236–96.

outlined, both Franciscans and Dominicans were preaching in England by 1224.[3] The Middle English lyric appears to have developed in a way that broadly follows this cultural situation. It was mainly devotional and many of its poems encourage thought on moral or theological subjects. One might claim that the lyric developed as it did in order to fill the growing need for devotional material that was accessible to the laity.

One argument along these lines is that of David Jeffrey, who has suggested that the Franciscans' interest in preaching was the primary cause of the rise of the Middle English lyric.[4] This large claim has been challenged and moderated by a variety of scholars, partly because Jeffrey sometimes claims poems are written by Franciscans without sufficient evidence.[5] However, the positive influence of the Franciscans on the popularity of the Middle English lyric as the century progresses is generally accepted and the Franciscans' influence may perhaps also be partly responsible for the devotional direction in which the lyric developed.

This kind of argument may well be useful for explaining why the lyric tended towards being devotional. However, I am unsatisfied with it as a method for explaining *how* the lyric changed, and why it became that *specific* type of devotional poem. This high-level, history-led story – based on outcomes and a very broad understanding of societal needs and group motives – whilst in some ways accurate, can blind us to the importance of chance, of atypical individuals, and of chaotic generic mingling in the development of the genre. My approach to finding out how the Middle English lyric changed has been to start with the clues left in the poems and their manuscript contexts. Focusing on the minute detail of individual lyrics allows me to see: the impactful individuality of the production process; where multiple or secondary factors were involved in individual instances of change; where a relationship with another genre takes many slightly different forms; how many paths can lead to the same result; and how individual action and accident all contribute to the features this genre encompasses. Rather than trying to make broad statements about what society wanted at the time and presuming the lyric was somehow changed by those

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[3] Andrew Reeves, *Religious Education in Thirteenth-Century England: The Creed and Articles of Faith* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 90.

[4] Jeffrey, *Franciscan Spirituality*.

[5] John Hurt Fisher, review of *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, by David L. Jeffrey, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 75, n. 4 (1976): 588–89. Edward Wilson, review of *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, by David L. Jeffrey, *Review of English Studies* 28, n. 111 (1977): 318–21. Julia Boffey, "Middle English Lyrics and Manuscripts," in Duncan, *Companion*, 7–8. Whitehead, "Middle English Religious Lyrics," 96.

impulses, my approach takes note of the method by which novel poems were produced by individual poets who may or may not have been thinking about larger societal agendas.

This text-first approach lends itself to changes that leave some kind of explanation of themselves. I have found that those are often the changes occasioned by contact with another text or genre. These other genres leave subtle and sometimes very obvious traces and hence how they added to the Middle English lyric may be tentatively mapped. There are of course other ways that change occurs. This methodology focuses on the importance of small-scale interactions with other texts and genres. Originally can be hard to achieve; one way that original lyrics were created is through the messy bringing together of disparate texts. Alastair Fowler, in his seminal work on genre theory, suggests that 'modulation' – the partial mixing of genres – 'is so frequent that we might expect it progressively to loosen the genres altogether, mingling them into a single literary amalgam'.[6] He notes that this has not happened and briefly posits some possible reasons: discrete genres lead to better literary effects and because people's tastes change. This study of the lyric both details ways modulation might occur and provides a new model for how genres might maintain their distinct identities despite extensive mixing. It does so by showing some ways in which the Middle English lyric changes through its relationship with other genres and by mapping out how at times those changes converge to create a new and distinctive lyric subgenre.

At the level of the individual lyric, the relationships with other genres are various and lead to changes in the Middle English lyric that are very specific to that individual interaction. At this level the lyric would appear to be being pulled in many different directions by a variety of texts adding different capabilities. However, zooming out and comparing the capabilities gained shows that whilst there are some additions that remain individual, others keep cropping up. For example, there are multiple different mechanisms by which the lyric gains a greater capacity for allegory in this period. Zooming out yet again and looking at how the different gained and retained capabilities were combined to create certain effects shows yet more confluence. Attributes as diverse as secular love as a topic, the use of allegory, and close attention to detail, all combine to make a subsection of the lyrics an accessible space for thought about moral and theological ideas.

It appears that there is a mild degree of confluence both in the formal features gained from relations with other genres and in how lyrics combine gained features; that is, disparate and sometimes seemingly random individual elements tend gently in the same direction. One reason for

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[6] Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 191.

this at the level of the type of features gained may well be a broader interest – in part exegesis related – in this period in allegory.[7] The reason the lyric tended towards using its capacities to think about Christian issues may also be due to the wider cultural movement towards a greater lay involvement in religion in the thirteenth century. However, whilst these broader cultural phenomena may provide the gentle pull that creates this confluence, they do not decide on the manner in which the lyric moved in that direction.

Three factors are particularly important in determining the manner in which the lyric answered larger cultural pulls: the pre-existing traditions still attached to the lyric; the chaotic changes that arise from its external relations; and internal, sometimes inadvertent, innovations. The Middle English lyric does often end up with different types of allegory as an added capability, but it is incredibly brief allegory. As such, it operates very differently to the longer allegorical texts circulating in this period.[8] Allegory in the Middle English lyric develops into something especially vague, giving the reader unusual freedom to determine exactly what is being referred to and how to understand the relationship between the two elements involved. The Middle English lyric does also end up encouraging its readers to consider Christian issues. However, as a result of its particular kind of allegory and/or its unique combination of other characteristics, it particularly encourages the comparing of heavenly and earthly relations by means of attention to a few specific signposting words or formal features. In doing so, it provides an accessible and adaptable way of thinking about God that is perhaps more than usually influenced by minute and sometimes accidental wording choices and changes. In this way, we see how the combination of chaotic mixing of genres at the level of individual lyrics together with very general demands on poetry led to a genre that was indeed various but nonetheless contained a cutting edge of lyrics that took both allegory and the consideration of Christian ideas into new realms.

Whilst the first aim of this chapter is to understand the mechanisms by which the lyric changed, the second is to understand what the lyric changed into. Whilst it was a dispersed and varied genre in this period, the latter third of this chapter shows that an important new central trait of the lyric was the ability to encourage its readers to engage in theological enquiry. This enquiry

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[7] Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 191–193. Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 1.

[8] For example, compare to: 'Sawles Warde' in Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *Medieval English Prose for Women: Selections from the Katherine Group and Ancrene Wisse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 86–109. Alain de Lille, "De planctu Naturae," ed. Nikolaus M. Häring, *Studi Medievali*, 3nd ser., vol. 19 (1978): 797–879. The Lover Knight episode in: Bella Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 402, with Variants from other Manuscripts*, EETS OS 325 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 146–51.

generally started from a simple and accessible place. How far the reader thought with the lyric and how much of their own ideas they contributed to the lyric's theological meaning was dependent on the reader in question. It seems that generically prescribed reading practices encouraged this type of interaction, but the knowledge threshold for starting an interaction was low. In this way, the lyrics made very accessible a fairly autonomous enquiry into complex theological ideas.

The study of 'vernacular theology' has drawn attention to the way in which Middle English literary texts can think in complex and innovative ways about theological questions.[9] It has brought attention to the way that theologically complex questions were often considered in narrative Middle English poetry. In his seminal essay, Nicholas Watson argued that after Arundel's Constitutions of 1409, Middle English literature dared not be so innovative, and that with his constitutions Arundel took seriously enough to implicitly forbid Middle English texts such as: *Pearl*, *Cleanness*, *Patience*, *The Scale of Perfection*, *The Holy Book Gratia Dei*, *The Chastizing of God's Children*, *Book to a Mother*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *Pore Caitif*, *Dives and Pauper*, and *Piers Plowman*.[10] Whilst the scholarly focus has often been on fourteenth-century texts, this chapter shows that theological consideration in the vernacular was also popular in the thirteenth century.[11]

As the above list of texts suggests, vernacular theology has often been thought to reside in longer narrative poems and prose. However, the Middle English lyric constitutes a very short form that can nevertheless promote theological thought. The lyric's characteristics and in particular its brevity affect the kind of vernacular theology it promotes. Rather than containing ideas, the lyric often provokes its readers to generate and consider them. Considering the lyric in terms of vernacular theology thus allows us to think not just about vernacular theology as something that texts contained but also about theologizing in the vernacular as something people did with texts. As we shall see, the Middle English lyric encouraged in its readers two main kinds of enquiry. One was based on comparing the ways of God with the ways of people. The other was based on comparing and deciding between two slightly but significantly different theological ideas.

Another effect of the brevity and hence mobility of the lyric was the possible breadth and size of its audience. Watson suggests that before 1350, works written in Middle English were considered to have a relatively narrow audience; the significance of writing theological texts in

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[9] Gillespie, "Vernacular Theology".
[10] Watson, "Vernacular Theology," 822–64.
[11] Watson, "Vernacular Theology," 822–64. Gillespie, 'Vernacular Theology'. Cervone, *Poetics of the Incarnation*.

Middle English changed after this period due to their being understood to be reaching a wider audience.[12] This may well be true for the longer texts that he considers. However, the Middle English lyric is an example of a short theological text that could achieve wide circulation amongst the educated and uneducated alike in the early thirteenth century. The lyric was well adapted for a wide audience, because its theology was reader-led and therefore each lyric's level of difficulty was intrinsically customisable.

This chapter will start with a brief overview of what the lyrics from the first half of the thirteenth century looked like, where they were found, and how they differed from the twelfth-century lyrics. The comprehensiveness and specificity of my corpus allows me to make broad comparisons between periods that have heretofore been impossible. I will then discuss the history lyrics. The history lyrics form their own minute subgenre and the way they change from the twelfth century and operate in this period is different to the devotional lyrics. Furthermore, unlike the devotional lyrics, few clues are left as to the mechanisms of their development; consequentially my analysis is more results-orientated. For these reasons, they are treated separately in this section. Moving into the main body of the chapter, the next two sections are about the way that the devotional lyric developed. The first looks at which reading practices are retained from the twelfth century and shows that a change is actually constituted by retaining reading practices but not obviously retaining the generic relations that instigated them. The second of these sections is on how the devotional lyric gained capabilities from its relations with other texts and genres. Some of the new capabilities are gained in multiple ways and are popular and important to the genre; others remain rare and cause little ongoing change. The chapter then looks at how these continuities of reading practice and added capabilities created a new type of Middle English lyric. This admirable new type of lyric encouraged its readers towards thinking, sometimes remarkably freely, about complex theological ideas. Whilst this type of lyric is a product of its long development, the final part of this chapter shows how theologising is also occasionally encouraged by accident, as an unexpected by-product of a characteristic used for some other purpose. It shows how generic achievement can be a result of sudden accident as well as long-standing generic evolution.

[12] Watson, "Vernacular Theology," 837–39.

Changes between the Lyrics of the Twelfth Century and the First Half of the Thirteenth Century: A Birds-Eye View

More lyrics are found in the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century than are attributed to the twelfth century. The numbers go from approximately ten to slightly over thirty. Given this small quantity of primary data, conclusions must always be tentative. Acknowledging this, it appears that it became more common for lyrics to be written down. In this period, however, the increase in numbers is not accompanied by more clearly defined types of lyric. Instead, the lyrics from the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century are more miscellaneous that those of the twelfth century. With the exception of the history lyric, the categories apparent in the twelfth century are no longer applicable. The history lyric became more like the Urs poem than the Lothbrok poem: situational, embedded and in historical prose. The main body of the thirteenth-century lyrics are predominantly short and devotional, though this is a much broader and more eclectic group and includes some romantic and longer poems. Whereas the main group of twelfth-century lyrics professes to have been written down because of its inclusion in a narrated historical situation, most thirteenth-century lyrics are assigned to no person in particular and appear to be included primarily for their didactic value.

The characteristics of the twelfth-century liturgical lyrics are spread irregularly though the main body of the thirteenth-century lyrics. None of the lyrics in manuscripts from the first half of the thirteenth century are explicitly linked to the sung office. Three lyrics survive with music and a few more are described as being sung in the surrounding prose. However, these lyrics do not form a coherent group in terms of content or type of music. One is the complaint of a prisoner and a contrafactum of a French musical lai which is itself based on a Latin planctus.[13] Another is a warning about death and an entreaty to live well with music similar to church chant and trouvere song.[14] The final sung lyric appears as part of what appears to be a leaf from a trouvere song book.[15] The first person speaker that was so characteristic of the musical lyrics associated with the divine office from the twelfth century is now employed consistently in history lyrics but only intermittently in the devotional lyrics. The main body of the thirteenth-century lyrics is closest to the twelfth-century sermon lyrics insofar as they are in a mixture of first, second and third persons, are not situational, are only occasionally related to music, are generally moral or devotional in content and do not include proper nouns. However, as they are in more contexts than simply sermons and often their

[13] Brown, 10–13.
[14] Brown, 15–16.
[15] 'Mirie it is', Brown, 14.

meaning is independent of their contexts, they cannot be considered a direct continuation of this category. It is clear that firmer subgroups did not coalesce linearly over time. As this chapter will show, characteristics from the twelfth-century groups mingle in this period and further innovations are made that take individual lyrics in different directions. The greater quantity of lyrics is accompanied by a greater variety of situations in which lyrics were recorded; most prose contexts were didactic and they include sermons, as well as a saint's life, a guide for anchoresses (religious recluses), and a moral fable.[16] This expansion of prose contexts feeds into the lyric's greater variety and indicates the growing extent to which different writers considered Middle English poetry a useful compliment to prose in achieving their didactic and literary aims.

The prose surrounding the thirteenth-century lyrics does not often position the lyrics between genres. In fact, the prose often does very little interpretive work. This speaks of a new confidence; readers were expected to know what to do with the lyrics without being told to use the reading practices attendant on other genres. The thirteenth-century lyrics are not justified as words from visions or kings. Instead, where they are introduced, it is often only with the recommendation that you will have heard the poem or that it is said or sung. The anxiety surrounding the writing down of the lyrics decreased. Approximately half of lyrics found in the first half of the thirteenth century are embedded in prose. However, there are far more lyrics found independently to prose in this period than in the twelfth century. This includes both marginalia and occasionally lyrics found in the main body of the text. The marginalia is often slightly longer than the embedded prose. The lyrics in the main body of the text and not embedded in prose have clear reasons for being there. Those reasons include musical notation, length, being collected with other proverbs, and being a colophon.

2.1 History Lyrics

The history lyrics develop differently to the main body of devotional lyrics and so are treated separately here. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the history lyric does not experience the same kind of growth in the number of recorded poems as does the devotional lyric. In fact, only two history lyrics are extant from this period. One lyric starts 'Schort red' and is found in Roger of

[16] Durham University Library MS Cosin V.ii.8, f. 58ra. Tadao Kubouchi and Keiko Ikegami, eds., *The "Ancrene Wisse": A Four-Manuscript Parallel Text* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2003), 428–29. Frances May Mack, ed., *Seinte Marherete: The Meiden ant Martyr; Re-Edited from MS. Bodley 34, Oxford, and MS. Royal 17.A.xxvii, British Museum*, EETS OS 193 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934; repr., 1958), 34. Andrew Breeze, "New Texts of Index of Middle English Verse 3513," *Medium Ævum* 61, n. 2 (1992): 285.

Wendover's *Flores Historiarum*, which was written some time before Roger's death in 1236.[17] The other is drinking lyric from Gerald of Wales' *Speculum Ecclesiae*, which was written c.1220 and found in a manuscript from before 1225.[18] These two lyrics continue the distinctive history lyric subgenre but unlike the devotional lyric it is a narrower, rather than more diverse, group. Unfortunately, the extant lyrics give little clue as to the mechanics of their development. Instead the movement of this subgenre must be tracked in a more results-orientated way. This section will track how it took forward certain twelfth-century characteristics, gained new ones, and achieved new heights in its representation of events.

Both of the history lyrics in this period are situational and direct speech. This is also the case with four, slightly later, history lyrics from the earlier part of Matthew Paris's *Historia Anglorum*. (This part of the *Historia Anglorum* was partially based on *Flores Historiarum* and was written between 1250 and 1255.) They form a group which are, in being situational and direct speech, closer to the earlier Urs poem than either the Kenelm or the Lothbrok lyrics. However, they differ from all three of those poems in that often they do not mention important individuals' names. Instead, they are voiced by an unnamed person or group of people who were involved in an important historical event. For example, in *Flores Historiarum,* the following short lyric is listed as the rousing signal spoken before a group of discontented locals killed Bishop Walchere of Durham in 1075:

Schort red, god red,
slea ye the bischop.[19]

[Short advice, good advice,
Slay you the bishop.]

The move to situational and direct speech is a narrowing down of the genre into one of the twelfth-century possibilities but the lack of proper nouns is a distinct change.

The history lyrics of this period do an excellent job of very succinctly importing the, quite possibly imagined, atmosphere and attitudes of the participants. In this they surpass the achievements of the

[17] Rogeri de Wendover, *Chronica, sive, Flores Historiarum*, ed. Henricus O. Coxe (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1841) 2:18. David Corner, "Wendover, Roger of (*d.* 1236)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press 2004; online ed., 2004), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29040.
[18] Laing, *Catalogue*, 81.
[19] Rogeri, *Flores Historiarum*, 18.

twelfth century. 'Schort red, god red,/ slea ye the bischop' in its rhythmic monosyllables and alliteration has a punchiness to it that suggests emphatic, rousing and not reasoning speech. The drinking lyric in *Speculum Ecclesiae* goes one step further in managing to simultaneously give a sense of the atmosphere amongst the original speakers and the later communal retrospective repose to those historical personages and events. The drinking lyric – and it is yet to be analysed as a poem rather than as a historical source – creates a sense of strong social cohesion within its imagined drinking scene.[20] It appears during a description of the drinking toasts of the Cistercians:

> ipsos nimia absentia afflictos esse putantes, talem provocationen ad bene potandum, Anglico more, necnon et Anglice, tanquam *Wesseil* proponentes audivit:
>
> 'Loke nu frere,
> Hu strong is ordre here.'
>
> Et responsionem hanc quasi loco *drincheil*:
>
> 'Ihe, la ful amis
> Swide strong ordre is dhis,'
>
> cum capitis quoque non seria quidem sed tanquam irrisoria concussione. Quod et Latinis verbis sic exponi potest: 'Vide frater quia fortis est hic ordo nimis;' et responsio: 'Vere intolerabilis est hic ordo frater, et importabilis.'[21]
>
> [Believing themselves to be victimised by too much abstinence, they proposed, by way of *wesseil* the following toast to encourage good drinking – in English fashion and indeed in the English language:
>
> Look now brother,
> How strong the order is here

[20] For examples of this poem being read historically, see: R. M. Wilson, "English and French in England, 1100–1300," *History* 28, n. 107 (1943): 47. Ad Putter, "Multilingualism in England and Wales, C. 1200: The Testimony of Gerald of Wales," in *Medieval Multilingualism*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz and Keith Busby (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 96–98.

[21] *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, vol. 4, *Speculum Ecclesiae* (London: Longman, 1873), 209–10.

And the response in the place of *drincheil*:

Alas, very amiss
This order is excessively strict.

During which you grasp each person, not seriously indeed but – as it were – with mocking extortion. In Latin this could be interpreted as follows: 'See, brother, how very strong this order is'. And the response, 'Truly this order is intolerable, brother, and unbearable.'[22]]

Deictic terms such as 'here' and 'dhis' create the aurora of a poem meant only for those present in its intended ritual context. The implicit speakers are talking specifically about their order and this poem represents a variant of a well-known toast that supposedly has been created by and for the sole use of this in-group. There is evidence that the Cistercians were resented by other orders because they had a reputation for considering other monastic orders to be too relaxed.[23] The Cistercian's perceived disparaging of others, combined with their greed and perhaps a degradation in the severity of their own living style, led to their being much criticised at the end of the twelfth century.[24] The proud exclusivity associated with the Cistercians is conveyed here by the atmosphere of social exclusivity suggested by the lyric. Furthermore, the first couplet dwells on how the Cistercians are a particularly strong order, implicitly in comparison with others. Thus, this initial couplet cleverly sums up stereotypes about the Cistercians in such a way that it is close to what could have been their words – at least, close enough to have persuaded modern critics that this account could be factual – and yet could also be voiced as a lampoon.[25]

The word play also helps the lyric to suggest exclusivity and simultaneously voice a horrified commentary. 'Strong' can mean – as in the Latin – 'resolute' or 'hard to bear', but it can also mean 'virtuous' or 'bad' depending on context. As such the word starts as self-congratulation and then becomes a bemoaning of exactly what was originally a point of pride. An auditor of this lyric that knows French may hear 'ordre' not only as a Middle English word but also for its dual Anglo-French

[22] For most of the Latin translation, see: Putter, "Multilingualism," 96–97. The translation of the Middle English and the Latin untranslated by Putter is mine.
[23] David Knowles, "Cistercians and Cluniac: The Controversy between St Bernard and Peter the Venerable," in *The Historian and Character: And Other Essays by David Knowles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 56–58.
[24] Brian Golding, "Gerald of Wales and the Cistercians," *Reading Medieval Studies* 21 (1995): 5–9.
[25] Putter, "Multilingualism," 96–98.

meanings. ‘Ordre’ could mean ‘monastic order’ but could also mean ‘filth’.[26] The last couplet could thus read: ‘Alas very amiss/ this filth is extremely bad.’ This secondary meaning characterises both the monks’ horror at their strictness and an outsider’s horror at their depravity. That is, of course, for an audience sufficiently familiar with Anglo-Norman to understand the word play. Thus cross-over between the English and French and double meanings are used to create humorous word play that establishes an in-crowd of those who understand it and allows two opposing ideas to be said simultaneously.

The drinking lyric successfully conjures up a sense of the exclusivity and pride that the Cistercians supposedly have, whilst simultaneously forming an external commentary on the order. It allows the reciter to both inhabit that situation and to judge it. In this way, both an inhabiting and a commenting on a historical event is simultaneously achieved, which is a remarkably multidimensional and appealing mode of historical thought for such short poems.

In both lyrics from this period, the double change of register in the move from Latin prose to Middle English verse may have signalled to the reader a changed mode of interaction with the described history in the main text: the lyrics move from a distanced appreciation of the events of the past and into a portal where the past speaks to them more directly.

Insofar as we can tell from the small corpus of texts, the history lyric of the first half of the thirteenth century was narrower in scope than its twelfth-century counterpart. Now it was just situational direct speech; this was a continuation of the ‘Urs’ poem with the amendment that now the poems were more representative of groups than individuals. However, within this narrower scope they extended the success of the type of history lyric they brought forward. These lyrics are atmospheric and capable of representing multiple viewpoints. This chapter will now move on to the parallel development of the devotional lyric. Continuities are an important part of the development of a genre, and I shall find in the next section that continuities in reading practice actually constitute a change when the original stimulators of those reading practices have disappeared.

2.2 Retaining Twelfth-Century Ways of Interacting with Lyrics

Many of the reading practices attached to the Middle English lyric in the twelfth century persist in the first half of the thirteenth century. By ‘reading practices’ I mean the ways of interacting with

[26] Middle English Compendium, s.v. “ordūr(e,” accessed 31 August 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED30846.

lyrics that were customarily attached to the genre. These may include aural and oral modes of interaction and cover both the mechanisms of interaction and the overall aims. To denote this idea I shall use the terms 'reading practices' or 'reading customs', 'modes of interaction' and 'use'. In the twelfth century, certain types of interaction were often suggested to the reader by the lyric's explicit connection with other genres. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the lyric's connection to other genres such as psalms and themas is often not explicit. However, even as these generic links become more part of the history of the lyric than its visible present, the reading practices that the lyric gained from those genres still remain. This section will consider five main ways of interacting with the lyric: memorisation, careful reading, treating it as authoritative, imbuing it with extra material, and using it as a devotional script. The first four of these are maintained and sometimes adapted to be better suited to the lyric. Devotional scripts – the overall use of the main group of lyrics from the twelfth century – become less common but persist in a very changed format.

Memorisation and Slow Reading

As we have seen, the lyrics of Godric are generically linked to psalms: from the psalms they take reading practices including exact memorisation and detailed analysis. The instructions accompanying a lyric found in *Ancrene Wisse* show that these practices are retained in the first half of the thirteenth century. They were retained despite the generic link to psalms no longer being explicit. *Ancrene Wisse* is a guide for anchoresses; these were woman who were enclosed in small buildings often found on the side of churches. It was written in the later 1220s.[27] The earliest extant copy is a manuscript written in the early 1230s: London, British Library MS Cotton Cleopatra C.vi.[28] The prose surrounding the lyric instructs the reader to think on the poem at length:

> Hali meditaciuns beoð biclupped in a uers . ꝥ wes ȝeare itacht ow .
> Mors tua . mors domini . Nota culpe gaudia celi .
> Iudicii terror figantur mente fideli
> ꝥ is
> þenh ofte wið sar of þine sunnen .
> þench ofte of helle wa. of heoueriches wunne .

[27] Bella Millett, introduction to *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for Anchoresses: A Translation*, trans. Bella Millett (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009), xi.
[28] Millett, introduction to *Ancrene Wisse*, xxxviii. Malcolm Parkes in private communication to Millett in 2002. Millett, introduction to *Ancrene Wisse*, xiii.

þench of þin aȝene deað . of godes deð on rode .
þe grimme dom of domesdei nim ofte in heorte .
þench hu fals is þe world . hwich beoð hire meden.
þench hwat þu aȝest god . for hise goddeden .
euch an of þeose wordes walde a long hwile habben . for to beon i opened . ach ȝef ich hiȝe forward abide ȝe þe lengere .[29]

[There is a summary of pious meditations in a rhyme that you were taught some time ago:
Your death, the death of God, sin's stain, heaven's joys,
The terror of judgement, should be fixed in the mind of the faithful person.
That is:
Think often with contrition of your sins
Think often of the misery of hell, of the joy of heaven
Think of your own death, of God's death on the cross,
The harsh judgement of Judgement Day consider often in your heart,
Think how false the world is, what sort are her rewards,
Think what you owe God, for his good deeds.
Each one of these sayings would need a long time to be expounded; but if I hurry forward, you should dwell on them all the longer.[30]]

The introductory lines suggest that the author knows his primary readers – three noble women he was familiar with – have already memorised either the Latin, the English, or both poems. The English poem is also found in an English life of Saint Margaret and a few folios later in the same section of *Ancrene Wisse* the author makes explicit mention of this version of *Seinte Marherete*: 'nabbe ȝe þis alswa of ruffin the deouel beliales broðer in ouwer engise boc of seinte margarete'.[31] [Don't you have a similar story about Ruffin the devil, Belial's brother, in your English book about St Margaret?[32]] It appears, then, most likely that the primary readers were expected to have already memorised the English poem from their copy of *Seinte Marherete*. The injunction in *Ancrene Wisse* to linger over 'each one of these words' is made only in relation to this poem; this suggests that it was thought particularly appropriate to the lyric. However, the fact that the readers needed telling

[29] Kubouchi and Ikegami,*"Ancrene Wisse*," 428–29. Manuscript lines breaks have been discarded in favour of modern lineation.
[30] Translation mine consulting: Bella Millett, trans., *Ancrene Wisse: Guide for Anchoresses: A Translation* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009), 91.
[31] Kubouchi and Ikegami,*"Ancrene Wisse*," 435. Mack, *Marherete*, 34.
[32] Millett, *Guide for Anchroesses,* 93.

to do this may suggest that the practice could not be taken completely for granted. No link is made between this poem and psalms; memorisation and slow reading were now reading practices attached to Middle English lyrics in themselves.

The passage in *Ancrene Wisse* also indicates that there was an expansion in the features to which slow reading paid attention. Burgwen's song was similar to psalms in that long attention was to be given in considering the situational and the universal possibilities attendant on the lyric's voice and meaning. This mode of interpretation is less rewarded by the *Ancrene Wisse* lyric; what makes this poem stand out from the prose is its compression of ideas and the way that the alternations of rhyme and non-rhyme, syntactic changes and higher and lower densities of alliteration play over the semantic meaning so as to provide a commentary on and dramatization of it. It appears that in this period close attention to ordering and prosody was also encouraged; the practice of paying close attention had expanded to specific poetic features found more readily in Middle English poetry than the psalms. In the *Ancrene Wisse* lyric the compression in which each subject is treated allows the progression of subjects and their changing formal treatment to be an experienced part of a slow reading. The progression of subjects in each line is as follows:

1. sin,
2. heaven and hell,
3. your death and Christ's death,
4. doomsday,
5. the false world,
6. what you owe God.

The play of rhyme across the lyric makes the subject progressions into something of a drama. Lines 1 and 2 are linked by rhyme as well as causation. 3 is linked to 2 insofar as they both have a parallel, two-part structure, and 3 is linked to both 1 and 2 in the way it begins. Thus far, there have been aesthetically pleasing and reassuring links between the lines. However, line 4 is cut off from the rest. It does not rhyme properly with 3, it does not have a two part structure and it starts differently and has a different syntax. Formally speaking, the reader has been led to have certain expectations which are then suddenly disappointed and what will come next formally is thrown into doubt. Whilst semantically doomsday is well linked in with the others, formally it is cut off and the reader is left shocked and unsure of what will come next. In this way the features of versification enact the uncertainty and the loneliness that will be felt on doomsday. They make one feel the unexpectedness of doomsday, even as the semantic meaning replicates how well-known and

logically conceived doomsday was. After this strange climax, the last two lines then change from causational to contrasting links so as to offer one an alternative. That is, between enjoying this fickle life and its wages, which the proceeding poem has reminded us is death and hell, or repaying the good works of God and being rewarded with heaven. There is a reassuring return to rhyme which suggests that having this choice is actually comforting compared to it being too late on doomsday. The lyric rewards the practice of slow reading in the way its formal features bring alive the dense compression of big ideas. As shall be shown in the final section of this chapter, this practice was important for variations between versions of a lyric being seen as theologically provocative.

Authority

In the later twelfth century, one of the sermon lyrics – 'Ʒare hit was isuteled' – had generic affiliations with the thema and the liturgical lyrics had links with the divine office. These relationships implicitly gave the lyric a certain authority. Many of the twelfth-century lyrics also derived authority from being the words of biblical figures, angels, saints, or kings. In the thirteenth century, the generic links with the thema and the divine office were generally no longer explicit and the lyrics are very rarely spoken by exalted figures. Despite this, there is evidence that the lyric continues to be an authoritative genre. One of the most explicit pieces of evidence for the authority of early thirteenth-century Middle English lyrics is a lyric called 'Eueriche Freman'. It is found in an early thirteenth-century manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.22 (SC15408). This manuscript contains a variety of Christian texts including sermons, an oration by Saint Bernard (the famous abbot of Clairvaux), a Latin song, a tract of Pope Innocent III, and miscellaneous extracts from the church fathers. In the latter is found the following:

> Eueriche freman hach to ben hende,
> for to be Large of þat him crist sende;
> þan it es al ydon that cume to þen ende,
> na haues naman of þis werld bot gnedeliche his Lenge.[33]
>
> [Every freeman has to be courteous,
> In order to be liberal with what Christ sends him;
> Then when it is all done that comes to an end,

[33] Brown, 113.

No, no one owns any of this world except scarcely his length.]

The surrounding Latin prose includes extracts from Augustine, Cassiodorus, Bede and Seneca.[34] Seneca was acknowledged in this period to be a non-Christian but was thought to have been a particularly virtuous one. His presence suggests that whilst the list is predominantly church fathers, it was occasionally expanded to include other authoritative and morally informative authors. Carlton Brown suggests, without offering evidence, that the Middle English is not connected with the Latin extracts that surround it.[35] On the contrary, the fact that the lyric is found with the Latin extracts without any sign that it is out of place suggests that the lyric was written down here because it was either seen as in a similar category to the Latin extracts or was thought to be destined for a similar use. The lyric being placed in a somewhat eclectic mixture of morally authoritative material suggests that the lyric itself was still seen as authoritative and morally useful. Again, it is a sign of the growing maturity of the Middle English lyric that its authority was sufficiently established as to not rely on either an exalted speaker or explained generic links.

Porousness

The twelfth-century lyrics situated in the sermon and affiliated with the thema also presented the benefits of treating a lyric as porous. (By porous, I mean that other ideas were attached to relevant parts of the poem and augmented the poem's meaning.) The meaning of Latin themas were explained and augmented by the longer sermon. The thema-affiliated 'Ʒare hit was isuteled' was shown to be porous insofar as it also benefited from material in the main body of the sermon being read into the lyric. There are suggestions that this practice too was maintained in the early thirteenth century. The prose surrounding the *Ancrene Wisse* lyric, 'þench ofte', provokes the adding of material quite explicitly in speaking of needing to 'open' each word. There is the suggestion here that the reader should bring much of their own knowledge to each word. 'Everiche Freeman' differs from 'Ʒare hit was isuteled' and 'þench ofte' in that the benefits of adding other material to one's understanding of the lyric is not modelled or instructed but is instead provoked by conceptual gaps. The sonic links, including the mono-rhyme, pull together a set of ideas that are not connected in a conceptually obvious way. The link between needing to be generous and only having one's length in the grave is implicit: a person cannot keep their worldly possessions in death. However, it does not explain why once should not selfishly spend it. Instead one is asked to draw into the little poem reasons gained from other Christian learning. The twelfth-century thema-affiliated lyric was also

[34] See: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.22 (SC 15408), 297–99.
[35] Brown, 211.

filled out particularly by the ideas in the sermon it fronted. The lyric of the thirteenth century takes forward the practice of adding material but the material to be added is not supplied. In this way, the practice that first came from the thema morphed in the thirteenth-century lyrics so as to become far more reader-led.

Devout Scripts

The mode of interaction started in 'Ʒare hit was isuteled' and developed in 'Eueriche freman' becomes dominant in the first half of the thirteenth century. This is a morphing away from twelfth-century modes of interaction where lyric poetry often functioned as a devotional script. The use of the lyric in the later period is less in its genuine performance and more in the moral and theological work that goes into ruminating with it. This change goes hand in hand with there being fewer lyrics that are direct addresses of biblical figures and more that are statements about the world. Despite this, the late twelfth-century practice of using Middle English lyrics as devotional scripts did persist in somewhat altered formats.

The Wooing Group are one form of this practice's persistence. Found in London, British Library MS Cotton Titus D.xviii and London, British Library MS Cotton Nero A.xiv, they consist of five poems. All of them are addressed to either Christ or Mary and they do so in terms that are often intensely loving and adoring.[36] It is a devotional achievement to be able to say honestly to Mary: '…al min heorte blod to ðe ich offrie./ Þu ert mire soule liht. and mine heorte blisse' […all my heart's blood I offer thee. / You are my heart's joy, and my soul's light].[37] Formally, they are significantly different to lyrics both of the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century. All of the Wooing Group poems are between 431 and 138 lines long. All but 'On god ureisun of ure lefdi' are also written in an alliterative style that sits somewhere between poetry and prose.[38] 'On god ureisun of ure lefdi' is in couplets and announces itself to be a lay and hence lays claims to a generic link with the Old French genre.[39] The change in form came with some changes in use. The function of 'Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd', for example, also includes facilitating an emotive journey through an imagined biblical scene. This additional use is in part permitted by the poem's extended length. The space between

[36] Catherine Innes-Parker, trans. and ed., *The Wooing of Our Lord and The Wooing Group Prayers* (Toronto: Broadview, 2015).
[37] 'On god uresun of ure ledfdi', text and translation: Innes-Parker, *Wooing*, pp. 152–53, lines 4–5.
[38] This has been a matter of some debate: Catherine Innes-Parker, introduction to *Wooing of Our Lord and The Wooing Group Prayers*, translated and edited by Catherine Innes-Parker (Toronto: Broadview, 2015), 23–28.
[39] Innes-Parker, *Wooing*, pp. 152–61: p. 160, line 168.

poetry and prose facilitates the extreme lingering over individual words and phrases, such as at the start of ‘Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd’:

> Nu mi derewurðe druð,
> mi luue,
> mi lif,
> mi leof,
> mi luue leuest,
> mi heorte haliwej
>
> [Now, my dearworthy darling,
> my love,
> my life,
> my beloved,
> my dearest love.
> my heart’s healing balm[40]]

These texts are thus one distinctive road which the continuation of devout scripts took. Devout performance scripts returned in fuller force and a more standard lyric form in the anthologies of the second half of the thirteenth century. However, in their earlier thirteenth-century hiatus, the use was still valued and was fulfilled by a very different form of poem.

Summary

The lyric reading practices of memorisation, slow reading, authority, porousness and devout scripts continued from the twelfth century to the thirteenth. However, the status of those reading practices changed. Whereas before they were the product of, and prompted by, explicit generic relations, now they are integral parts of the lyric. Some of these modes of interaction mutated as the generic link faded. Slow reading now also took account of specifically lyric features such as compression of ideas and prosody. The practice of adding material to the lyric became more reader-led. It is curious that whilst many of the practices that attended on the twelfth-century lyrics were retained, one of their main overall functions was, for a while, largely lost. The Wooing Group show how a use can persist, somewhat altered, in very different form.

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[40] Text and translation: Innes-Parker, *Wooing*, p. 82–3, lines 25–30.

2.3 Gaining Capabilities

Whilst there were many continuities between the lyrics of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth centuries, there were also many developments. The final section of this chapter presents an important new type of lyric and analyses what it can do. This section looks at how the lyric gained new characteristics, many of which were integral to that new type of lyric but also many that were only important later or were present but not mainstream in the genre. This section starts by considering how the lyric gained capabilities through encounters with individual texts, and then goes on to explore how capabilities were gained through its evolving, long-term relationship with proverbs. Finally, it considers what the lyric gained through fresh associations with new genres. In discussing allegory – one of the key capabilities the lyric gained – it will occasionally be useful to use I. A. Richard's terminology: 'tenor' for the primary idea and 'vehicle' for the story used to illustrate that idea.[41]

Gaining Capabilities from Individual Texts

There are instances where it appears that innovations in Middle English lyrics arose from the connections between one Middle English lyric and a single other text. This tends to happen where the Middle English lyric is a translation of a text in another language. However, the process is generally more than just translation. In both of the examples from this period there is added complication to the translation process: one poem is a contrafactum and the other is a translation of an extract from a longer composition. It appears that it was the difficulties and opportunities presented by these more extended creative journeys that led to new features in the Middle English lyric.

One example of this is a Middle English contrafactum. To create a contrafactum is to translate a song from one language into another language whilst maintaining the same music and hence a very similar number of syllables per line. 'The Prisoner's Prayer', a Middle English contrafactum, is found in London, Corporation of London Records Office, Guildhall MS Liber de Antiquis Legibus. This manuscript contains a song with words in both Anglo-Norman and Middle English. Laing suggests that the Middle English was written during the second quarter of the thirteenth century and the Anglo-Norman appears to have been written down at the same time.[42] The Anglo-Norman is written directly under the music and each word is aligned with its note. The

[41] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 96.
[42] Laing, *Catalogue*, 108.

Middle English is below the Anglo-Norman and the Middle English words are not written so as to be spatially aligned with their notes or with the Anglo-Norman words.[43] For this and reasons of rhyme and naturalness, Dobson concludes that the English is a contrafactum of the French.[44] The French song itself uses the music and many of the metrical forms of a Latin 'planctus'. The result is a Middle English song with a variety of metrical forms. Thomas Duncan has well enumerated some of the difficulties in scanning Middle English poetry.[45] It can be difficult to tell which syllables are to be voiced and which are stressed. However, music can be of great assistance; Dobson has described the variety of metrical forms in 'The Prisoner's Prayer'. He describes the third stanza as having the following number of syllables per line: 346246 346346. The first is different with 887 887 and the second different again with 7777 7777.[46] To have a single poem include such a variety of verse forms does not appear to be common in this early period of Middle English poetry, though this must always be understood with the caveat that many poems may be missing stanzas. It appears that the process of producing a contrafactum led to the expansion of the type of verse forms the Middle English lyric took. This addition to Middle English lyric versification was not made for its own sake, but as a by-product of wanting an English version of a French song which itself used the music of a Latin song. In this way, the additions to the Middle English lyric from its association with other forms were not always purposeful artistic choices: they may have come about as a secondary consequence of other aims.

The English version follows the meaning of the French song and in doing so brings a new subject matter to the Middle English lyric. The French and English songs are a prayer for help from one unfairly cast into prison. This topic is neither devotional nor historical and is thus a departure from the topics covered by the extant lyrics of the twelfth century. When the lament of a prisoner is translated into English is comes into closer relation with the topics often covered by English lyrics; in this case a prisoner's prayer is drawn into comparison with the tradition of body and soul poems. Some of the poem's lines, including the first four below, could be voiced by a soul imprisoned in the flesh and desperate to be free:[47]

Iesu crist, sod god sod man,
louerd, thu rew vpon me!
of prisun thar ich in am

[43] MES, 111.
[44] MES, 111.
[45] Thomas G. Duncan, "Middle English Lyrics: Metre and Editorial Practice," in Duncan, *Companion*, 19–38.
[46] MES, 112.
[47] Michel-André Bossy, "Medieval Debates of Body and Soul," *Comparative Literature* 28, n. 2 (1976): 144–63.

bring me vt and makye fre.
Ich and mine feren sume—
god wot ich ne lyghe noct—
for othre habbet mis-nome,
ben in thys prisun ibroct.[48]

[Jesus Christ, true God, true man
Lord, have pity on me!
From the prison I am in,
Bring me out and make me free.
I and some of my companions –
God knows I do not lie –
Because others have done wrong
Have been brought into this prison.]

The reference to wicked men and 'companions' reduces the strength of the link to this literary field of reference. In an imperfect way, then, the lyric's primary meaning is about a human prisoner, and there is a somewhat intermittent secondary field of reference concerning the soul. Bringing these two fields together and into dialogue constitutes, in the extant Middle English lyrics, a new literary device with which to think about the plight of the soul. That device consists of a single speech being (in this case intermittently) simultaneously the voice of two distinct entities referring to different but related situations. This new device is a product of a poem being translated into another language and that other language not previously containing that topic but having a strong tradition of addressing another slightly related topic.

Translating texts that are themselves extractions from prose is another multi-faceted process which added capabilities to the Middle English lyric in the first half of the thirteenth century. The Middle English lyric 'Nu hider. nu bring.' is found in the margins of a section containing moral sentences from the four fathers of the church in MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 26.[49] It was discovered by Emily Dolmans, who provides a copy of it in her 2014 article in *Notes and Queries*.[50] Otherwise it has attracted little attention. Dolmans argues that 'Nu hider. nu bring.' is a secular

[48] Brown, 11.
[49] Emily Dolmans, "'Hunting For Souls': A Newly Discovered Middle English Lyric," *Notes and Queries* 61, n. 2 (2014), 185–87.
[50] Dolmans, "'Hunting'," 185–87.

poem and was created independently from the Latin which it appears below. In contrast to Dolmans, I shall argue that the Middle English lyric purposefully functions in both secular and devotional spheres and that it is a loose translation of the preceding Latin text.

'Nu hider. nu bring.' (given below) is situated in the margins beneath a Latin text in the same hand and bears the introduction 'Anglice'.[51] The page that both of these marginal additions are on contains references to hell. The Latin marginalia is a reworking of an extract from a sermon on conversion by Bernard of Clairvaux, where he compares devils carrying human souls to hell with human hunters. As Anne Rooney sets out, the idea of devils as hunters was popular and is found in a variety of Latin and English prose contexts.[52] The theme of Bernard's sermon Psalm 90:3: 'For he hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters: and from the sharp word.'[53] Bernard's sermon runs thus:

> *A verbo*, inquit *aspero*. Quod est hoc verbum, nisi illud insatiabilis gehennæ: Affer, affer, percute, dilacera, cito interfice, velociter spolia detrahe? Quod est verbum asperum, nisi: *Tollatur impius, ne videat gloriam DEI*? Quomodo exultant venatores capta bestia, & clamant: Tolle, tolle, infige verubus, infer prunis, & male bullientibus impone lebetibus?[54]
>
> [Did he not say, 'From the sharp word'? And what is this word if not that of insatiable hell: 'Bring them along, bring them along, cut them down, tear them to bits, kill them off quickly, hasten to drag away the spoils.' What else is this, if not a sharp word: 'Let the wicked be carried off so that he may not see the majesty of the Lord'? Is this not how hunters gloat over a captured beast, crying out and saying, 'Away with it, away with it! Poke in the spit, bring along the coals and dump it into boiling cauldron'?[55]]

The Latin marginalia in Hatton 26 is:

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51 Dolmans, "'Hunting'," 185–87.
52 Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Boydell Press, 1993), 24–34.
53 Pslam 90:3 (Douay-Rheims).
54 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Panis Animæ, Panis Vitæ, & Intellectus; Seu Meditationes Sacræ: Pars Prima* (Waldsassen: Daniel Carol Witz, 1730), 268.
55 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons on Conversion*, trans. Marie-Bernard Said (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 131.

> 'Affer affer. percute. dilada. cito. predare. velociter spolia. detrahe. infige uerubus. infer prunis. et male bullientibus. impone lebetibus.'[56]
>
> ['Bring them along, bring them along, cut them down, tear them to bits, despoil them, hasten to drag away the spoils. Poke in the spit, bring along the coals and dump it into boiling cauldron.[57]]

Dolmans considers this to be an inaccurate version of the sermon and perhaps copied from memory. However, this claim that the differences are accidental overlooks the creative reworking that has gone into Hatton extract. The Hatton version combines two specific parts of Bernard's sermon. The first section is announced to be the words of 'insatiable hell' and hence presumably the words of the devils. The writer of the Hatton extract has chosen to combine the words of the devils with a later section, the words of human hunters. This merger is done in an active and aesthetically sensitive fashion. The extract leaves out the words 'tolle, tolle' from the start of the hunter's cry to create a stronger narrative from capture to cooking. Leaving out these words also creates a move from shorter instructions to slightly longer clauses. As well as making a longer but still aesthetically and thematically unified poem, the collapsing of the two speeches implicitly strengthens Bernard's comparison between devils and human hunters. Furthermore, Bernard makes many comparisons: the Hatton extract is a result of an active choice to just combine the devils and human hunters. However, whilst a knowledge of the Latin original makes it clear that this text is referencing both devils and human hunters, the extract in itself does not make the duel reference so obvious. Understanding the Hatton version to mean both relies either on a knowledge of the original or a linking of the text to the devils-as-hunters trope.

The Middle English translation takes forward the thematic and aesthetic features actively chosen by the author of the Latin hunting extract but goes further in innovating so as to preserve the comparison made in the original prose:

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[56] Dolmans, "'Hunting'," 187.
[57] With the exception of 'despoil them', from: Bernard, Sermons, 131.

Nu hider. nu bring.	[Now here. Now bring.
nu to drau þat fule þing.	Now destroy that foul thing.
nu slo. nu flo.	Now a blackthorn. Now an arrow.
nu do hire alle wo.	Now do her all sorrow.
Spite hire also a brede.	Use a spit to roast her.
ant werp hire on þe glede.	And throw her on the fire.
vrom fair be{þ} guide	Guided from fair wood*
. . . to chetel wal{tri}de.	. . . to a rolling shuttle.
vrom pi{c}e to pice	From a pick to a piece
þat ic scal neure fine.	That I shall never finish.
long is ai.	Eternity is long.
. . . . . . en . . . h . . . . . . erh . . . ure {fr}o	. . . .]
(Dolman's transcription and translation)[58]	* Dolmans give an alternative translation: 'Guided from a fair beginning'.

[Now draw, now bring
Now drag/lure that filthy thing
Now kill, now rip off the skin,
Now do to her all misery.
Now fix on the spit in the manner of roast meat,
And hurl her in the coals
Guide from fair . . .
To a cauldron . . .
From . . . to spike
That I shall never end
Forever is long.]
(My translation)

Dolman's notes the similarity in the theme and also the mention of the spit for cooking. However, she concludes that due to the rhyme scheme and rhythm it is not a translation but an independent poem. However, when considered in more detail, the extent of the similarities between the Latin and the English, coupled with the fact that they appear in the same margin, makes their having been written independently seem unlikely. A re-translation of some of the ambiguous Middle English makes clear that the semantic similarities may be greater than Dolmans originally thought. The third

[58] Dolmans, "'Hunting'," 186.

line, instead of being about arrows and unrelated to the original becomes very similar to it in meaning. A translation that includes coals and then a caldron follows the second part of the Latin much more closely. Furthermore, the immediacy of the present imperatives in the Latin in mimicked by the repeated use of ‘nu’. Both start with short clauses which enhance the sense of urgency and mimic the shortness of breath and directness of hunters. Without a prose context, both successfully mimic a hunting scene in their prosody. The Middle English lyric also has a higher concentration of shorter clauses at the start and then longer phases in the second half. In this way, it mimics the aesthetic decisions of the author of the Latin extract.

The Middle English also goes one step further than the Latin extract in signalling within its own borders that it is referring to human and devil hunters. Lines such as ‘nu do hire alle wo’ seem appropriately vindictive for devils but less so for a favourable representation of human hunters. The final line’s reference to eternity also suggests hell: animals does not spend forever on the spike and so from a hunting perspective the line makes less sense. However, as a taunt from the devil that the human soul will spend a long eternity on a spit, this makes complete sense. Some of the alternative translations given above such as ‘lure’ and Dolman’s ‘guided from a fair beginning’ manage to maintain the possibility that it is human hunters but strongly suggests devil hunters. In maintaining both possibilities, the lyric fulfils the aim of the original Latin sermon in making more available to the imagination the way that the devils hunted souls. The comparison between human and devil hunters is achieved in the Latin extract more through the act of combining two texts then as a semantic quality of the finished product. The Middle English achieves the comparison within itself with no need for a referent. In doing so, it is the next step and fuller achievement of the aim started with the Latin hunting extract and had the potential to perpetuate its ideas beyond the more limited range of people who knew its origins or heard it explained. The Middle English lyric does not, therefore, just gain characteristics from translating a Latin original, but also from its own innovative efforts to make what is an extract fulfil all of the functions of the original embedded and explained section whilst still functioning as a poem.

The hunting lyric creates multiple speakers more completely and possibly more purposefully than ‘The Prisoner’s Prayer’. In the hunting lyric, the human and devilish hunters are given roughly equal weight, though the moral implications are more on the devil’s side. In ‘The Prisoner’s Prayer’, the prisoner is very much the central voice with that of the soul fading in and out as a secondary possibility. These affects are obtained through very different process, though both include translation and an extra element. One innovation is realised through the addition of a new topic to the Middle English lyric’s canon of themes and hence is the result of the imported element acting

differently in the new environment. The other addition is through an effort to replicate more succinctly and dramatically a dynamic found in another text.

Gaining Capabilities from Long Standing Generic Relations

The Middle English lyric's long standing generic relations with the proverb also informed its development. As suggested in chapter one, the twelfth-century prose surrounding Cnut's song signals that it should be thought of in relation to proverbs. The link with proverbs tells the reader to think about the song metaphorically so as to find more universal meanings. As shall be shown, in the first half of the thirteenth century this connection developed so that the cues for this kind of metaphorical reading were now internal rather than external.

There is significant evidence that in the first half of the thirteenth century the Middle English proverb was more established as a distinctive genre than the Middle English lyric. *The Proverbs of Alfred* was most probably composed at the end of the twelfth century and *The Proverbs of Hendyng* were produced at the start of the second half of the thirteenth century.[59] These purposefully crafted and popular anthologies suggest that there was a strong sense of what constituted a Middle English proverb. *The Proverbs of Alfred* market the proverb as an ancient English genre, and Susan Deskis has traced some overlap between Old and Middle English proverbs.[60] The connection between the lyric and the proverb meant that the lyric could draw on the proverb's well-known generic traditions.

In the early thirteenth century, the lyric and the proverb still overlapped. This is made apparent in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.641, which contains a c.1200 collection of proverbs in Middle English, Latin and Old French:

> Si stille suge fret þere grunniende mete
> Sus taciturna vorat, dum garrula voce laborat.
> Sus dape fraudatur clamosa, tacens saciatur.
> On dai bringd þet al ier ne mai
> Quod donare mora nequit annua, dat brevis hora.

[59] O. Arngart, *The Proverbs of Alfred* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1955), 2:55–62. John Edwin Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 377.
[60] Susan E. Deskis, *Alliterative Proverbs in Medieval England: Language Choice and Literary Meaning* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), 19–61.

Anno cura datur, tamen una dies operatur.[61]

The silent pig devours the grunting pig's food.
The quiet sow eats greedily, while the noisy one labours with her voice.
The loud sow is cheated of her feast, the silent one is sated.
One day brings that which all year cannot.
What the space of a year cannot give, a short hour gives.
Concern is given to a year, nonetheless one day performs it.[62]

The length of the Middle English lyrics, or extracts of poems that function independently, is often little more than the single couplet. Though presented as one line and slightly shorter, the pig proverb also functions as a couplet.[63] Furthermore, in a move characteristic of poetry, the rhyme is used to compliment the meaning. In 'Si stille suge fret' and 'Sus taciturna', the rhyme nicely balances the two clauses, mirroring the comparison being made. In 'On dai bringd', the rhyme makes 'On dai' very short and abrupt compared to the longer string of words before 'mai'. This effectively enacts the shortness of the day compared to a year of waiting. The overlapping of proverb and poetry is also apparent in the *The Owl and the Nightingale*. This poem explicitly introduces its proverbs so as to fence them off from the rest of the poem.[64] This at once suggests that it was in the interests of the poem to present the proverb as an extract and different, but also suggests that there was an awareness that without such signals the proverbs may not be distinguishable. In terms of rhyme and metre they are indistinct. They are in even lined couplets, so would retain this poetic feature even if extracted. The proverb, then, could overlap with the form of poetry and, in their mutual brevity, whole text to whole text with lyrics.

The overlap between the lyric and the proverb meant that the lyrics could approach, retract from or expand upon being a proverb. Using and playing with the expectations that went with proverb-like statements led to new lyric features. For example, the early thirteenth-century manuscript Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 100 contains a lyric that is sufficiently proverbial that it summons up the idea of the proverb form and then exists in relation to that:

[61] Edition with my minor changes: Stengel, "Altfranzösischer Sprichwörter," 3.
[62] Translation of Latin by: Richard Dance, "Getting a Word In: Contact, Etymology and English Vocabulary in the Twelfth Century," *Journal of the British Academy* 2 (2014): 154n2, 156n10. English translation mine.
[63] Rhyme is not unique in the proverbs presented. For instance, the two lines above rhyme 'bona' and 'dona' and 'blanda' and 'danda'.
[64] John Edwin Wells, ed., *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Boston: Heath, 1907), pp. 10–13 lines 98–100, pp. 22–25 lines 244-50, pp. 58–59 lines 685–86.

Quo sabet longe ligge in sinne
nu is tyme þat e blinne
zanne is to late
zanne the wlf, etc.[65]

Whoever has lain long in sin,
Now is the time to cease.
Then is too late.
Then the wolf [is at the gate].

This quatrain has the universality reminiscent of the proverb. The first couplet neatly balances two ideas in one of the proverb's characteristic 'this, then this' structures. The editorial addition to the last line is generally accepted; the addition is based on the proverbial idea of 'keeping the wolf from the gate'.[66] As such it mimics a proverb in the first two lines and then adapts another one in the second two. Being proverb-like may increase the lyric's effectiveness by extending the circumstances in which it signals that it could be used to include the times one would normally use a proverb. The last line may have not been fully written down because it was thought too well known to be necessary to write down. However, the not writing down of the last part of the line may also be part of a scribal or authorial control of reception. The reader is reminded that they know it, that this is well-known material and are encouraged into complicity with the sentiment by being asked to co-author the end.

As well as benefiting from the proverb's characteristics, this lyric combines two proverb-like statements in such a way as to comment on their capabilities and highlight its own. For instance, the extended length of the lyric means that the initial rhyme does not fully contain an idea: the idea is broken beyond as 'nu' is contrasted with 'zanne'. Furthermore, there are not two things being contrasted: there starts with the past being contrasted with 'now', and then 'now' is contrasted to a

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[65] Siegfried Wenzel, "Unrecorded Middle-English Verses," *Anglia* 92 (1974): 77. Translation from: Antonia Gransden, *A History of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds, 1257–1301: Simon of Luton and John of Northwold* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), 275.

[66] This proverb is not attested to before 1543, where it appears in the Hardyng Chronicle: 'By whiche he maye the wolf were frome the gate.' This was three hundred years after 'Quo sabet longe'. Somewhat closer in time however – only fifty to one hundred years later – the following proverb is found in 'Lither lok sermon': 'Ak god itot thane is to late, Thanne is te carte ate gate.' Whiting lists two other texts also from c.1300 that use 'bere' and 'wayne' instead of 'carte'. This suggests the word if not the meaning varied. The concurrence of these two instances of a similar proverb together with the rhyme and part of line provided here may be enough to justify the editorial addition. Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1968), 70, 656.

future ‘then’. This three breaks out from a traditionally balanced proverbial two, depriving it of the appearance of being a totalising binary, as proverbs often allow dualities to be. The binary is broken out of to emphasise that there is another option and that option is damnation. The length also allows for the repetition of ‘zanne’, which forcefully identifies, voices and undercuts the mentality that would promise to cease ‘then’ not ‘now’ and then explains the consequences of such an attitude. These features are more powerful for being a break with proverb norms. In such a way, this lyric uses proverbial features but also uses the backdrop of the proverb to emphasise its message and its own potential to move beyond the proverb’s confines – both in terms of stylistic confines and confines in the types of thought they can express. This lyric also plays with proverbs so that what starts as a general statement becomes a conversation with an imagined person. Rather than purely scripting good words it starts with a moral statement and then – using the break created by the feel that the first proverb is finished – anticipates and undermines unhelpful reactions.

This lyric’s outdoing of the proverb through its greater length coincides with its developing its metaphors more than is typical in proverbs. The lyric is didactic but the second proverb expresses its didacticism through a metaphor. At the start the lyric refers to those lying in sin. The later (presumed) reference to the gate suggests metonymically a house, turning the ‘lying’ from being a purely conceptual idea for waiting in sin to being a metaphor comparing slothfully or lustfully lying in bed when the wolf is coming to waiting in sin for the devil. The second proverb’s metaphor is extended, then, into the tentative suggestion of two parallel, lyric-wide, narratives. One of the most significant capabilities the lyric gained from its relationship with proverbs was to present the reader with mini allegories: here the lyric combines two proverb-like statements in such a way as to actualise the hints of metaphor in the first by combining it with the imagery of the second and thereby just about making a very short allegory.

This is not the only instance of an early allegorical Middle English lyric that has a close relationship with the proverb. Cambridge UK, Corpus Christi College MS 481 contains the *Liber Parabolarum* by Odo of Cheriton. Odo was born c.1180-90 and died in 1246/7. Before becoming a preacher and writer of sermons he studied at the University of Paris.[67] One of his parables contains an allegorical Middle English lyric that itself includes a proverb. Another version of the lyric’s

[67] Bella Millett, “The Songs of Entertainers and the Song of the Angels: Vernacular Lyric Fragments in Odo of Cheriton's *Sermones de Festis*,” *Medium Ævum* 64, n. 1 (1995): 18.

proverbial last line is found along with Latin versions as an addition to Serlo of Wilton's proverb collection in a fourteenth-century manuscript.[68]

> Þah þu þe wolf hore hodi to preste,
> Sete him to boke and psalmes him leren,
> aure bieþ his geres to þe wode ward.[69]
>
> [Though you ordain the filthy wolf as a priest,
> Teach him to read and teach him psalms,
> Ever be his eyes in the wood's direction.]

This lyric is a miniature version of the parable around it. The parable tells the same story of a wolf trying and failing to be a monk and then gives two morals: that monks are often gluttonous gastronomes like wolves and that people do not change.[70] The poem's similarity with the beast fable suggests that the lyric should also be interpreted as an allegory for the impossibility of changing a person's nature. The lyric's internal proverb is also customarily interpreted figuratively to mean people's minds turn towards their desires. The signals to read the lyric allegorically are thus twofold and clear without the need for internal explication or the prose context. The poem's combining of the two genres results in the modification of both. The beast fable is more concise and less explicit. The allegorical aspects of the proverb are much expanded: the wood as the place of desire is now contrasted to the orderly, self-denying monastery and the eyes belong to a base-natured wolf. Beast fable is an entirely new addition in the lyric genre. The combination of beast fable and proverb allows the lyric to newly gain the capacity for this type of allegory; that is, an allegory whereby the vehicle is obviously fantastical but there is a clear (though implicit) and more serious tenor that is maintained throughout the fantastical narrative. This very new type of lyric, then, appears to have been possible because it combined some of the traits of two genres – one freshly and the other long related to the lyric – and in the context of each other those traits could function in new and lyric-compatible ways.

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[68] A. C. Friend, "The Proverbs of Serlo of Wilton," *Mediaeval Studies* 16 (1954): 215.

[69] Breeze, "New Texts," 285.

[70] See Cambridge UK, Corpus Christi College MS 481, pp. 488–89, available online: "Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 481: Miscellaneous Moral, Penitential and Theological Treatises, Exempla and Verses," Parker Library on the Web: Manuscripts in the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, accessed 31 August 2022, https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/bt590jk0961.

The inclusion of a proverb also served as the underpinning of allegory that is less obvious in its didactic meaning than 'Quo sabet longe ligge in sinne' and 'Þah þu þe wolf hore hodi to preste'. The inclusion of the proverb in this way supports lyrics that in their effects depart significantly from the proverb's aims. The earliest witness of this is the lyric in the version of *Ancrene Wisse* found in London, British library MS Cotton Cleopatra C.vi. This lyric actually starts with the same proverb that 'Þah þu þe wolf hore hodi to preste' ended with:

Heo hit for ʒeueð him for he spekeð swa feire. & speokeð oðer hwet **.**
Ach eauer is þe echʒe
to þe wode leʒe
& þe halte bucke
climbeð þer uppe .
twa & þreo
hu feole beoð þeo.
þreo halpenes makeð a peni a men.
& eauer is þe heorte to þ arre speche ʒet hwenne he is forðe. ha went in hire þocht ofte swiche wordes. hwenne ha schulde oðer hwet ʒeornliche ʒemen He eft secheð his point for to breoke Forewart . & swereð he mot nede**. & swa ich habbe a nede ernde dun in þe tun þach hit reine arewen ich habbe a nede erende .** & þer waxeð þe wa. se lengere se wurse **. lokede blind hors . & wude monnes echʒe orn al ut.** For nan freonchipe nis se muchel as is fals frentchipe.[71]

[She forgives him for it because he talks so persuasively and they speak of other things.
But the eye is always
To the woodland glade,
And the lame he-goat
Climbs up there,
Two times and three,
How many are they?
Three halfpennies make a penny. Amen.
And ever is the heart recalling the earlier speech. Even when he has gone, she often turns over such words in her mind, when she should be concentrating on something else. Later he

[71] Kubouchi and Ikegami,*"Ancrene Wisse*," 174–75. Manuscript lines breaks have been discarded in favour of modern lineation.

looks for his moment to break the promise, swears he cannot help it. **And so I have a pressing errand, down in the town, though it rain arrows, I have a pressing errand.** And so the damage gets steadily worse. **A blind horse looked, and a woodman's eyes popped right out.** Because no enmity is as grave as false friendship.[72]]

The bold type is what has been considered by Millett, Brown, Dobson and others to be separable from the prose text and possibly extracts of one or multiple songs or proverbs.[73] In the passage before the lyric, the author describes a situation in which a man declares his love to the anchoress, and then apologises, promises never to speak of his feelings and asks for forgiveness. She forgives him and they talk of other things. The proverb then signals that during their talking – and despite apparently good intentions – their minds always wander back to their sinful desires. In the initial proverb, the metaphor whereby the woodland represents the place of one's desires is useful because it allows the proverb to suggest a wide variety of possible desires. In the standalone proverb, the woodland is not explored as a metaphor and visualising the wood is not necessary to understand the meaning. However, in the lyric the idea of the woodland becomes more important to imagine because in the second line we have a goat in that woodland. Like in 'Quo sabet longe ligge in sinne' and 'Þah þu þe wolf hore hodi to preste', the extending of the proverb increases that attention paid to its metaphor's vehicle.

The proverb in the *Ancrene Wisse* sets up the conditions for ambiguous allegory by signalling to the audience that they are entering a metaphorical place and by grounding both the vehicles and tenors of that place in its own, easily understood, meaning. This is different to the former two proverb-poems where extending the proverb's metaphor made the meanings more specific, like in conversation. The immediately subsequent lines fit into the allegorical woodland when the understanding of the Bible promoted by *Ancrene Wisse* is brought to mind. In *Ancrene Wisse*, goats are understood to represent 'the desires of the flesh, which stink like goats in the presence of the Lord'.[74] The Song of Songs 1.7 is interpreted as meaning that the lady who forgets her honourable status may be tempted to follow the goats.[75] The third to fifth lines can thus be interpreted as the desires of the flesh repeatedly going to where the heart sinfully longs to be. The final line, however, is more challenging to interpret. In the context of the lyric as a whole it still asks to be understood

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[72] The bold translation is mine, consulting Robert Hasenfratz's translation. The non-bold translation is mine, consulting Bella Millett's translation. Robert Hasenfratz, ed., *Ancrene Wisse* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 435. Millett, *Guide for Anchroesses,* 38.
[73] Brown, xi. Millett, *Guide for Anchroesses,* 192.
[74] Millett, *Guide for Anchroesses,* 40.
[75] Millett, *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, 40.

metaphorically and as a continuation of the narrative. However, it has broken with the metaphor started in the proverb and hence is more obscure. The lyric is putting the reader in the interesting position of trying to understand the metaphorical significance of a phrase with little guidance. This calls on the ingenuity in a way quite different to the familiar proverb.

Like a proverb the lyric does not receive explanation. The proverb is supposed to be self-evident, whereas allegory in Ancrene Wisse is generally explained.[76] Having just a small amount of the length of longer allegory but also the proverb's lack of need for explanation, here produces an object similar to neither of them in the openness of its meanings. This is an instance where the changed literary situation of borrowed forms greatly changes the effects those forms can have.

Unclear allegory is useful here because it can make sexual sins repulsive without having to be explicit about what they are.[77] Despite the ambiguity, the idea of a lame goat mounting still makes the woodland less alluring. The last line suggests perhaps alarmingly unknown but – in the bad accounting – wrong or devaluing sins.

The other, shorter inserted passages – in bold above – do not begin with a proverb but do have an analogous relationship with the prose directly before them. The extent to which they do not integrate with the surrounding text has been overstated.[78] The first additional bold section analogously expresses the danger and the compulsion of the lover who must speak. The analogous relationship between the poetry and prose is established by means of a more general allegorical interpretation of the poetry whereby it signifies the need to have one's thoughts leave the safety of one's mind (the house that is implicitly being left) and enter in the form of words or actions a dangerous communal space (the town). Unexplained proximity to potentially analogous prose – as opposed to any internal signal – thus appears to be yet another way that the Middle English lyric ended up being interpreted allegorically.

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[76] For example: Millett, *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, 146–51.

[77] There are other instances in *Ancrene Wisse* where the speaker wishes to warn against a sin but dare not fully describe that sin for fear of polluting the reader's mind. Millett, *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, 78–79.

[78] E. J. Dobson, ed., *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Edited from B. M. Cotton MS. Cleopatra C.*VI, EETS OS 267 (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 77n5. Hasenfratz, *Ancrene Wisse*, 434.

Gaining Characteristics from New Generic Relations

As well as gaining characteristics from the relationship between individual texts and from the lyric's longstanding and evolving relationship with the proverb, the Middle English lyric also appears to have gained new characteristics in this period through new relationships with emerging genres. Karl Reichl has pointed out that there are actually very few Anglo-French poems extant from the first half of the thirteenth century.[79] Despite this, in the earlier part of the thirteenth century there are three Middle English lyrics that show signs of affiliation with the Anglo-Norman lyric: 'The Prisoner's Prayer', 'Mirie it is', and 'Ic am witles, ful iwis'. The manuscripts of the former two connect them with French song and Reichl has suggested that the French loan words and the courtly ideas of a 'lafdi thet is pris' in a 'bure' mean that 'Ic am witles, ful iwis' has Anglo-French affiliations.[80] This lyric is found written in pencil in the margins of London, British Library: Royal 8 D.XIII in a hand of c.1200:[81]

> Ic am witles, ful iwis,
> of worldles blisse nabbe ic nout,
> for a lafdi thet is pris
> of alle thet in bure goth.
>
> Sethen furst the heo was his,
> iloken in castel wal of stan,
> nes ic hol ne blithe iwis,
> ne thriviinde mon.
>
> Lifth moni non bildes me
> abiden and blithe for to bee -
> ned efter mi death me longgeth;
> I mai siggen wel bi me
> herde thet wo hongeth[82]

[79] Reichl, "Beginnings," 195–244.
[80] Reichl, "Beginnings," 195–244.
[81] Brown, xii.
[82] This poem is written in pencil, making it difficult to transcribe. This has led to differing transcriptions. This reading is by: Peter Dronke, "On the Continuity of Medieval English Love-Lyric," in *England and the Continental Renaissance: Essays in Honour of J.B. Trapp*, ed. Edward Chaney and Peter Mack (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), 8.

[I am without sense, very certainly,
I enjoy none of the world's bliss
For a lady that is the best
Of all who walk in a bower.

Since first that she was his,
Locked in a castle wall of stone,
I have certainly been neither healthy nor happy
Nor a thriving man.

Many alive failed to encourage me
To wait and to be happy,
Of necessity after my death I long,
I may say legitimately concerning myself
That woe hangs painfully.]

In an attempt to make the poem fit his understanding of the historical period, Seth Lerer has argued that this is a lament for an England in the hands of the Normans.[83] However, the clearest meaning of this ambiguous lyric is that of a love lament for an unobtainable lady. This is the first extant Middle English lyric to take romantic love as its topic. In contrast to the Middle English lyric, many of the early French vernacular lyrics are on secular love. This lyric's connection to French literature – seen in French loan words and courtly ideas – is early evidence that romantic love as a topic may perhaps have entered the Middle English lyric tradition as a product of a connection between the Middle English lyric and the French literary tradition.

The introduction of romantic love as a topic brings with it a new kind of ambiguity. The ambiguity in this lyric in particular has been noticed by critics. Peter Dronke, for instance, links this poem to the Old English Elegies such as 'Wulf and Eadwacer' and 'The Husband's Message' in that it is a love lament that hints at a narrative but does not fully explain it.[84] Dronke also distinguishes the Old English Elegies from thirteenth-century French love laments: in the latter, he writes, the lovers are separated in an almost abstract way, rather than by concrete but mysterious circumstances.[85] However, the level of concrete unexplained circumstances and narrative mystery in 'Ic am witles, ful

[83] Lerer, "Grave," 127.
[84] Dronke, "Love Lyric," 7–9, 13–17.
[85] Dronke, "Love Lyric," 15.

iwis' falls far short of that found in the Anglo-Saxon poems to which Dronke refers. 'Wulf and Eadwacer', for example, includes varies murderous peoples, an island, two male names with ambiguous relations to the speaker, and possibly a child. 'Ic am witles, ful iwis' includes only a lady locked in tower. Far from being ambiguous, this narrative situation may actually serve to position 'Ic am witles, ful iwis' securely within a literary field of reference. The *Lais* of Marie de France include examples of seemingly inaccessible fair ladies locked behind walls by their husbands.[86] The Anglo-Norman *Lais* are found in a manuscript from the third quarter of the thirteenth century but may have been circulating in the English court in the 1170s.[87] It is possible that the fair lady locked in a castle to the misery of her lover was a common enough trope that this lyric sits within a stock narrative situation that was generally understood. In this poem the lady is not named: this adds to the sense that the poem is dealing with a stock character and situation rather than one specific situation that is to be puzzled out. This is very different from the purposeful riddling of the Anglo-Saxon poems and suggests, especially in absence of any other evidence for an continuity between Anglo-Saxon and Middle English love lyrics, that the 'mystery' involved in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetry may not be similar enough to establish a continuity between them.

The ambiguity in 'Ic am witles, ful iwis' may instead be more structurally similar to Middle English lyrics used for devotional purposes. If 'Ic am witles, ful iwis' does indeed place itself within the broad framework of romance narrative, then it relates to this literary sphere of reference in a manner comparable to how the penitential lyric draws on the stock situation of the sinner. In the latter, one can imaginatively detail the general references to past sins, but the narrative situation is not a mystery. However, romantic lyrics do not function exactly like their devotional counterparts. Devotional lyrics draw on the Bible and saints' lives for their literary field of references. They often include a named individual – such as Mary, Jesus, or a saint – from that literary field. This romantic lyric, on the other hand, draws on a stock situation that is much vaguer and various then, say, a biblical figure's life. This secular romantic lyric requires the reader to do more imaginative work constructing its narrative backdrop. The hints given by the detail of the lyric may as a result have more influence in the type of narrative backdrop constructed.

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[86] See 'Yonec' and 'Guigemar' in *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1999), 43–55, 86–93.

[87] Sharon Kinoshita and Peggy McCracken, *Marie De France: A Critical Companion* (Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2012), 1, 3–4.

Summary

The Middle English lyric gained capabilities through relationships with individual texts, new interactions with a genre with which it had long been somewhat connected, and through new generic connections. From a detailed look at individual lyrics, some larger trends emerge. Through many various means, different forms of allegory becomes a much more prominent component of the Middle English lyric. The number of different roads that lead to a much greater and more prolonged use of double meanings suggest that there was an appetite for more allegorical poetry in this period.

As noted above, Alastair Fowler questions how genres stayed separate despite so much generic mixing. The repeated gaining of a particular capability and then that capability becoming popular within the genre is one answer. Another element of the answer concerns those features that did not become immediately popular. It seems that generic mixing could produce new features for a genre that were not taken up. Every individual change in direction need not inform the larger and slower movements of the mass.

We now move from looking predominantly at how the lyric changed to looking at what it was in this period. To do so, we turn to the one of the key achievements of these developments and the continuities of certain reading practices previously detailed: a type of devotional Middle English lyric that encourages the reader to engage with and produce theological ideas.

2.4 Vernacular Theology and a New Type of Lyric

Vernacular Theology and Devotional/Romantic Allegorical Lyric

The capabilities that the lyric gained during the first half of the thirteenth century combined with those that were retained from the twelfth century together permitted a new type of Middle English lyric to emerge. The lyrics from this period are various; easy, comprehensive groupings do not emerge. There is, however, a loose group of lyrics that have the following features. Firstly, they heavily reward close and prolonged attention – a practice carried over from the twelfth century. Secondly, they combine secular romance, a new topic, with devotional themes by means of the type of allegory seen in the hunting poem. That is, where one speech in its entirety could refer to two or more different situations. The following section will show how the combination of these characteristics creates lyrics that encourage the reader to engage with vernacular theology. This

type of poem – whilst far from all-encompassing – is a prominent achievement of the lyric in this period. This section first considers two examples of this type of lyric and then, finally, goes on to analyse how two different chance-driven processes had similar effects but through very different means.

One lyric that holds devotional and romantic interpretations in parrellel throughout is found on a flyleaf of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson G.22 (SC 14755). That flyleaf contains a single Middle English song and two Old French songs. It was probably written c.1225 and was added into a twelfth-century Latin psalter.[88] Karl Reichl has convincingly argued that the flyleaf probably comes from a longer chansonnier, that is, from a manuscript containing mostly French songs.[89] The flyleaf's layout is like that of trouvere and troubadour manuscripts. Reichl also remarks that this would have been one of the earliest extant chansonniers.[90] The French poems are on romantic topics, and like other French-affiliated Middle English lyrics, the English song is romantic:[91]

⟨M⟩Irie it is while sumer ilast
ƿið fugheles song,
oc nu necheð ƿindes blast
and ƿ⟨e⟩der strong.
Ej! ej! ƿhat þis nicht ⟨is⟩ long,
and ich ƿid ƿel michel wrong
soregh and murne and ⟨fast⟩.[92]

[Merry it is while summer lasts
With birds' song
But now wind's blast draws near
And severe weather.
Oh! Oh! How this night is long,
And I with very much wrong
Sorrow and mourn and [fast].]

88 Reichl, "Beginnings," 214.
89 Reichl, "Beginnings," 217–18.
90 Reichl, "Beginnings," 220.
91 Reichl, "Beginnings," 217.
92 Brown, 14. 'Fast' is an editorial addition that has been generally accepted.

In the context of the French love songs, the Middle English song appears to be amorous. As Reichl has pointed out, it bears many of the standard characteristics of love sickness: the comparison with a change in the season, the long night, the wronged lover and the sorrowing and lack of appetite.[93] Like 'Ic am witles, ful iwis', these clues point to a wider literary field in which to interpret the monologue. However, out of the French manuscript context this lyric could also pass as a lament of a sinner that had done wrong in the summer of their days and now as the winter of life draws near is penitent and fasting.[94] The ambiguity in the penultimate line as to whether the singer had wrong done to them or done wrong themselves maintains these duel possibilities. In addition to this, it could also be seen as part of the small subgenre of nature related songs such as the later 'Sing Cuckoo nu'.[95] It describes the joys of summer and the cold wind of winter. John Plummer has convincingly argued that the poetic merits of conventional language should be taken seriously. More specifically, he suggests that – particularly in French and French-affiliated lyrics – conventional language draws attention less to a referent and more to poetic artistry.[96] Here, the conventional use of the seasons appears instead to allow more cognitive room for considering the import of the seasons' tangle of allusions. That is, there is more cognitive room than if the allusions were novel and much effort was required in working out what they reference.

These three fields of reference are intertwined by their allegorical relations with each other. The seasons are the literal reference for the first four lines and the fifth is also concerned with the physical environment. Summer is a metaphor for both the sinful joys of youth and time spent happily with the beloved. The two tenors for summer at this stage may overlap; rather than being allegorically related they are literally related. In third and fourth lines, winter is a metaphor for regretful and less pleasant old age and also separation from a beloved. Both regret the summer from winter's less pleasant time, but whereas the devotional would wish the summer never happened, the romantic longs for it to be summer again. There is, then, a divergence in how the multiple spheres of reference in this lyric line up. The discrepancy between the two sides of the allegory invites further thought and the lyric – being brief, allegorical and its two primary meanings both being approached through a third vehicle – is very open to interpretation.

Both the romantic and the devotional aspects of the lyric are open to further interpretation. As a romantic lyric in English but found with French songs, this lyric straddles the English and French

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[93] Reichl, "Beginnings," 211.
[94] As in 'Poema Morale': Morris, *Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, 220–32.
[95] MES, 121, 241.
[96] Plummer, "Conventional Language," 367–85.

romantic traditions. As Helen Cooper has observed, Medieval English romances tended to contain much more faithful love then its sometimes adulterous counterpart written in France.[97] In light of the French tradition, the wind and severe weather could then be interpreted as the wrath of the jealous husband – a stock character. When thought about in an English tradition, this lyric might suggest disappointed courtship of a non-adulterous nature. A third option is thinking about a characteristically French situation from the perspective of the English tradition: an adulterous love looked back on with moral regret. Only repentance for an adulterous love affair creates an emotion that is appropriate to repentance for one's sinful, if pleasant youth. The other romantic interpretations create a longing feeling which colludes with the genuinely more pleasant nature of the summer to somewhat undermine the sincerity of the sinner's repentance. Rather than 'ilast' scathingly suggesting the fleeting nature of earthly pleasures, it sounds like more of a lament of their transitory nature. The emotion of the lyric is a wishing that things could be different, but the reader has a moral decision to make in choosing their romantic scenario as a repentant or longing kind of wishing that things could be different. In the twelfth-century the Middle English lyric gave readers devotional scripts; here the reader is given the option as to whether they are willing to limit and make their romantic interpretations subservient to the needs of the devotional aspect of the lyric so as to create the more pious emotion in the religious realm. The lyric offers more an opportunity to make an ethical decision than a script to aspire to saying genuinely.

Further interpretation is also possible in the devotional realm of the lyric. Additional thought in this area leads more to theological reflection than moral choices. The third and fourth lines may also be interpreted as the terrified sinner fearing the coming of hell and then the final three lines move forward in time again to being in the long dark and torment of hell. This alternate understanding of the last lines is suggested by hell often being characterised as a dark place lacking God's light and the possibility that 'long' is an understatement for eternity. The feeling of longing that comes from the changing of the seasons and the most obvious romantic interpretation of the lyric does very different work if the devotional meaning is understood in this way.

The idea that a key torment in hell was separation from the vision of God was held by Aquinas, Abelard and many of the scholastics.[98] The pining of a lover for their absent beloved is analogous with, and gives a small hint of, the horror of the damned missing the vision of God.

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[97] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 307.
[98] Harm J. M. J. Goris, "Thomas Aquinas on Christ's Descent into Hell," in *The Apostles' Creed 'He Descended into Hell'*, ed. Marcel Sarot and Archibald L. H. M. van Wieringen (Boston: Brill, 2018), 93–114: 95–97.

Popular accounts of hell often focus on its physical torments. The idea of hell as absence from God in some form was common among theologians but is not thought to have been popular.[99] This lyric's allegory does an excellent job of making the reader feel the less visual pain of losing what one loves. It makes a scholastic understanding of hell available to the emotions and losing the vision of God obvious as a form of torture to those without theological training. The allegory provokes thought about how one knows God on earth: the ways in which a lover must be known before they can be missed is productively compared with the ways God is known on earth before being missed in hell. The first few lines of the allegory tempt the question: 'In what way does a sinner's early years on earth constitute a knowing of God and to what extent is that comparable with the way that a person's time with their beloved, or experience of summer, constitutes a knowing?' The allegory, the detailed thought and the introduction of romance as a lyric theme, together permit the lyric to be a space for making moral decisions; it is also a space where the reader encounters advanced theological ideas in an accessible format and can ponder serious theological questions.

The mode of thought associated with this type of Middle English lyric is to take as a starting premise a simple allegory and then to consider it at such length, with such additions of one's personal knowledge and with a level of interpretive freedom as to take one to a much more theologically complex place. Our second example acts in this way, and hints that these properties may have been actively valued by medieval sermons writers. When considering why these lyrics were valued, it is useful to think about why they were included in terms of what they add to their surroundings. The Middle English couplet in question is found in an unedited Latin sermon on f. 58ra of Durham, Durham University Library MS Cosin V.ii.8, from c.1250. The manuscript contains the sermons of Odo, Peter of Rheims and other unidentified authors. The lyric is found in a sermon about prayer by an unknown author:

> Nutriamus cum per aquas scilicet stilarum lacrimarum de corde puro et vere contrito cum impetu manantium sic enim hana orando largiter fleuit at ideo quod postulauit accipere promouit similis petrus amare fleuit et deus statim eum respexit. Similiter et maria magdalene et ut breviter dicam. Nemo ad eum aliquando cum lacrimis accessit, qui non quod postulavit ab eo acceperit sicut dicit leo papa. de eo enim dici potest cantus ille anglicus that mi lef askes wit sare weping, ne mai ic hire werne for nane kinnes thing.

[99] Goris, "Hell," 97.

> [May we be nourished together certainly through the water of tear drops flowing with violent emotion from a pure and truly penitent heart. For thus Hannah wept abundantly whilst praying and therefore brought it to pass (that she) obtained that which she prayed for. Similarly, Peter wept bitterly and immediately God looked after him. And likewise Mary Magdalene, as I will briefly explain. No one approached him with tears at any time (and) by which means received not from him what he prayed for, just as Pope Leo said. Indeed, the following English song can be said about that:
> That my love asks with sore weeping,
> I may not deny her for any kind of reason.[100]]

The couplet joins the preceding examples in suggesting the efficacy of weeping when making a request. However, if the prose already had covered this point, what does having it again – and less explicitly – in the lyric add to the efficacy of the sermon as a whole? Siegfried Wenzel has suggested that this couplet is from a 'seemingly secular song' and is 'used to illustrate the truth that God will not refuse to listen to insistent prayer'.[101] Wenzel is careful about asserting that the poem is definitely from a secular song; there is no evidence either way. However, it may be enough that the words are sufficiently open that they could be said by a person about their lover. The possibility of their being used in a secular context – even if they were not – is an important part of their characteristics and is one aspect that differentiate the lyric from the preceding biblical examples. In the lyric, an allegorical and imaginative bridge is created between God and a human lover: they share words.

The lyric also differs from the prose in its conventional generic reading practices. As we saw in 'þench ofte', lyrics were habitually memorised and close attention was paid to their exact wording. This meant that the multiple shades of meaning in this couplet's word choice could affect people's long term thinking about it. 'Sare' can also mean wicked and sinful.[102] 'Werne' can have connotations of moral fortitude.[103] Therefore the idea of a conceding and soft hearted lover could be replaced by a lover with a sinful partner whose wicked weeping leads to a fall from moral rectitude. In this light, the phrase 'for nane kinnes thing' becomes more concerning. Figuratively the husband

[100] Transcription and translation mine with the generous comments of Dr Christine Williamson, University of York. Durham, Durham University Library MS Cosin V.ii.8, f. 58ra.
[101] Wenzel, *Preachers*, 222.
[102] Middle English Compendium, s.v. "sōr(e," accessed 31 August 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED41634.
[103] Middle English Compendium, s.v. "wernen," accessed 31 August 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED52299.

of the church, these connotations might lead one to imagine Jesus as a weak husband unable to refuse his evil wife. The part of this idea that suggests the extreme extent of Christ's mercy is often presented in other texts as amazing if not particularly perplexing.[104]

What this lyric's use of allegory adds is a direct focus on how the level of mercy shown by Christ might be repulsive and immoral in a human lover. Specific words such as 'sare' and 'werne' ask the reader to think about how Christ is merciful in a way that may be beyond what human society or even morality will permit. Theologically complex as this may be, it is far from the only example in which Middle English literature thinks hard about the gap between human and divine morality. The vivid descriptions in *Cleanness*, God learning patience in *Patience*, and Walter's treatment of Griselda in *The Clerk's Tale*, are all later examples of Middle English literature that problematise the relationship between what is right for God and what is right for mankind.[105] Intentionally or not, the Middle English lyric brings this kind of theological sophistication into the sermon. Furthermore, it does so in what is perhaps the most accessible – both in terms of language and in its grounds in everyday life – two lines in the whole sermon. It is the openness of the situation the lyric speaks from together with the word choice that allows it to function in this way.

This lyric builds a bridge between God and man by having them feel the same way and speak the same words. This alone would create space to think in. However, it then goes further and breaks down that similarity in such a way as to create, in a mere two line poem of simple English, a complex theological question. Wenzel suggests that this poem is merely 'used to illustrate the truth that God will not refuse to listen to insistent prayer' and has refused to call lines such as these poetry. He calls them 'verses' as a deliberate step down from what he considers real poetry.[106] Yet, far from being merely illustrative, these two lines manage to inspire a combination of simple emotional feeling and complex theological thought by means of a form accessible to those who cannot read and do not own books. Rather than being not good enough for poetry, they are instead fine ambassadors for what poetry can achieve.

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[104] Woodburn Ross, ed., *Middle English Sermons*, EETS OS 209 (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 160–62. Millett, *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition*, 153.

[105] J. J. Anderson, ed., *Cleanness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977). Geoffrey Chaucer*, Clerk's Tale*, ed. Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923). On God's learning patience in *Patience,* compare, for example, God's impatience towards Jonah and anger towards the Ninevites in lines 64–72 to his patient clemency towards the Ninevites and considered education of Jonah in lines 489–523: J. J. Anderson, ed., *Patience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), pp. 33, 47–48, lines 64–72, 489–523.

[106] Wenzel, *Fasciculus Morum*, 121–22.

This lyric is more subtle and less articulated than the Latin. The preacher does not attempt to deal with the problem the lyric holds. The sermon and lyric together allow the listener to do the thinking. They are made to understand and then presented with a problem but without any answers.

Middle English lyrics have often been categorised as 'romantic', 'moral' or 'devotional'.[107] The present analysis, however, suggests that an individual lyric is often not one of those things. Instead, it is purposefully left open so that readers and writers can understand it in each of these different contexts. These categories are a function of the purposes to which the lyrics were put and the literary fields to which they were attached, rather than a specific property of the lyric itself. What is a property of the lyric is the way and the extent to which it signals and lends itself to different traditions and the number of those traditions to which it can be purposed. An analysis of these lyrics thus suggests that critical attempts to work out if a poem was amorous or devotional can actually constitute a failure to recognise the complexity and subtlety of the Middle English lyrics of this period.

Vernacular Theology and Chance

Multiple Versions

This chapter has outlined the processes through which Middle English lyric had in its repertoire the characteristics necessary to produce a type of poem that could make vernacular theology accessible. The processes that resulted in theologically provocative lyrics including the gaining of characteristics from other texts and genres as well as the maintaining of characteristics from the twelfth century. However, in the following lyric, it is most probably by accident that the reader is invited to consider theological questions. Furthermore, the following lyric does not at all resemble the kind of devotional/romantic allegorical lyric just described. These views of progress – the random work of an instant and the long evolution of a genre – worked in tandem in the case of the lyric. However, the long standing generic practice of concentrating on exact wording and formal features was fundamental to the profits of chance constituting an encouragement to theologise in the following lyric.

Intentional and unintentional effects of translation and rhyme incite established and new ways of understanding the Ten Commandments in the following Middle English versified translation

[107] Chambers and Sidgwick, *Early English* Lyrics, ii. Duncan, Companion, v. Silverstein, *Lyrics*, vii. Klinck, *Voices*, vii–xi.

of the Decalogue. This text is copied in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 26 (SC 4061). This currently unedited lyric is found in a part of Hatton 26 that is from c.1234 and that contains various devotional notes. The lyric has been added within the lined space at the bottom of the page at a slightly later date, though most likely before 1250. Directly after it is a Middle English lyric version of 'The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit'. Both of these texts have Middle English frames. Both frames begin with 'Leue men þis beoþ', suggesting that this was a standard start and also that these texts may have been intended to be used separately. The Ten Commandments run thus:

Leue men þis beoþ þe þen heste þat of philg hilg of hus holden owe pꝫe feste.
þat-þe god-almihtten moysi, biteite vpe þere dune of synai .
(1) Ine god one bileue þu pel.
(2) þu ne lete his nome neure in idel.
(3) þin restynk-dai held haluinde .
(4) ⁊ purþe þine heldren ⁊ þu sꝫcald lif finde.
(5) lecherie þu sꝫcalt fle,
(6) þu ne sꝫcald monsclaitre beo.
(7) þu ne sꝫcalt neure noþing stele,
(8) ne false pitnesse aꝫhan nomen bere.
(9) ne ꝫhirne þine nehste pif,
(10) ne no-þing þat to him bi-liþ.
pho-þat nule þes hasten holde,
In-to pine he sꝫcal phonne he nolde.[108]
(Numbering and lineation mine.)

[Beloved men, these are ten things that each of us keeps, as we pledge:
That the God almighty granted to Moses up there (on) the Mount of Sini.
In one God believe you well.
You never mistreat his name in vain.
Keep your resting day holy.
And value your parent, and you shall find life.
Lechery you shall flee.

[108] Transcript found at: *An Electronic Version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, s.v. "Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 26, fol. 211r: Ten Commandments and Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, " M. Benskin, M. Laing, V. Karaiskos and K. Williamson, accessed 31 August 2022, www.lel.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme2/tagged_data/hat26tct.html.

You shall not be a manslayer.

You shall never steal anything

Nor bear false witness against any man

Nor desire your neighbour's wife

Nor any thing that belongs to him.

Whoever will not hold these commands,

In to pain he shall (go) when he would (rather) not.]

The main reason for writing the Ten Commandments in Middle English is presumably comprehensibility. However, the author appears to have recognised that a translation cannot help but also be a commentary on the original, and has included translation choices that help to gloss the original. For instance, subtle changes have been made to make the commandments more appropriate for current thought about sin. The fifth commandment has changed from 'Non moechaberis' ('Thou shalt not commit adultery') to 'lecherie þu sȝcalt fle'.[109] 'Lecherie' is a reasonably broad term that can include adultery but also can mean lust or sex for pleasure within marriage.[110] This breadth reflects both the rhetoric associated with the deadly sin as well as Jesus' words: 'Ego autem dico vobis: quia omnis qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendum eam, jam moechatus est eam in corde suo'. (But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.)'[111] There is also a change in phrasing. The Vulgate prohibits an action. The Middle English suggests fleeing from an animated version of the concept. Early thirteenth-century morality held that to feel lust was a minor sin; it was only a problem if the rational mind consented to it.[112] The implicit metaphor in the Middle English allows lechery to be in some way present as long as the person is attempting to avoid it. Thus, with remarkable brevity, it manages to morph the commandment from a complete ban to a more permissive stance that permits lechery as an evil in the mind as long as the rational part of the mind flees from it.

In the thirteenth century, the Ten Commandments were an increasingly popular aid to confession; there is evidence of lay people being expected to have memorised them, and they were

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[109] Exodus 20:14 (Vulgate and Douay-Rheims)

[110] Middle English Compendium, s.v. "lecherī(e," accessed 31 August 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED24931.

[111] Matthew 5:28 (Vulgate and Douay-Rheims)

[112] On thinking about sin as not so bad, but consenting to sin bad: John Shinners and Willian J. Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University Of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 181.

also the subject of sermons.[113] As a result of this, the Ten Commandments may have been sufficiently famous in different forms that the slight alterations made by this translator would not have gone unnoticed. The Middle English version is – to use Seeta Chaganti's term – 'haunted' by the other forms available.[114] Sermons, and specifically the scholastic sermon which was growing in popularity in this period, frequently demonstrate how every textual detail of the Bible was scrutinised for meaning. [115] The simultaneous importance of textual detail and the, at least to some, apparent changes in the text create a thinking space. It asks the readers to think about which version is better; to do so they must consider the theological implications of small differences and then ask themselves which theological idea they believe is more correct. This particular example – where a well-known text is translated into memorisable poetry – arises from circumstances and inhabits a new form particularly likely to create this kind of thinking space. Following Peter Lombard's inclusion of the Ten Commandments in his *Four Books of Sentences*, the Ten Commandments became an important object of study within the schools.[116] In palpably glossing the translation, the author has invited lay readers into the schools' debate.

Many of the Middle English lyrics may also have incited analytical thought by means of one version being compared to another memorised version. This is because they were short enough to memorise word for word and the exact wording was an object of close attention. Texts that are memorised by narrative can create thinking space through being different versions of the story; texts that are memorised word for word can create thinking space through even the slightest variations in wording. Variations in wording may be an accident of oral and written transmission; this does not necessarily stop the differences being thought about. There is significant evidence firstly that multiple versions of lyrics circulated in the same circles and secondly that the mutability of the lyric in this period did not lessen its authority or its claims to the close attention of the reader. As Carleton Brown has observed of 'Eueriche freman': 'The lines are written in ink over plummet writing in a coarser hand which seems to be an earlier draft of the same text.'[117] Whether this is a consequence of multiple versions being in circulation or the scribe making changes, the authority of the lyric was allowed to visibly coexist with its mutability. The version of 'þench ofte' in *Ancrene*

[113] Youri Desplenter, ed., *The Ten Commandments in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 1–2, 153. Andrew Reeves, *Religious Education in Thirteenth-Century England* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 50–51. Catherine Rider, "Lay Religion and Pastoral Care in Thirteenth Century England: The Evidence of a Group of Short Confession Manuals," *Journal of Medieval History* 36, n. 4 (2010): 331, 333. Andrew Reeves, "Teaching Confession in Thirteenth-Century England: Priests and Laity," in *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*, ed. Greg Peters and C. Colt Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 273–75.

[114] Chaganti, "Dance," 129–49.

[115] P.H. Tibber, "The Origins of the Scholastic Sermon, c. 1130 – c. 1210," (PhD diss., Oxford University, 1983).

[116] Desplenter, *Commandments*, 15–17.

[117] Brown, 211.

Wisse varies in many respects from that found in *Seinte Marherete*.[118] The author may have been choosing a different and preferred version or may have himself amended the *Seinte Maragarete* version. The mutability of the lyrics does not affect the practice of memorising or of paying particular attention to exact wording, and instead may be symptom of it.

The multiple versions of the same lyric found in Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13 show how different versions can encourage theological enquiry in a somewhat similar way to the Ten Commandments lyric.[119] The lyric in question is an extract from the 'Poema Morale' where poaching (the vehicle) it is used to illustrate the idea that life's pleasures are not worth damnation (the tenor):[120]

1. Swithe Swete is swines bredre	[Very sweet is swine's meat
so is of ƿilde dere	So is that of wild deer
Al to dure þe Brede	All too dear the meat
he buth þe þift midt his sowere (f. 46v)	He buys the theft with his neck.]
2. Sƿines brede is Spiþe Spete	[Swine's meat is very sweet
so is of ƿilde dure	So is that of the wild deer
al to dure he it a bihþ	All too dear he buys it
Þe ȝifh þer fore is Spere[121] (f. 93r)	That gives in exchange his neck.]

In the version that includes the word 'þift' (f. 46v), the person is giving their (eternal) life for breaking the law. In the version that does not include the word 'þift' (f. 93r), the meat is being directly exchanged for their (eternal) life. In choosing between versions, the reader must decide whether people earn damnation by disobeying the laws of God – however trivial the disobedience – or whether damnation is earned by specific evil deeds. The vehicle concerning poaching makes this question particularly theologically acute. During this period, the Norman aristocracy's harsh poaching laws were not always well received.[122] In the lyric without the word 'þift', the idea that it is

[118] Compare the version above with that found in: Mack, *Marherete*, 34.
[119] Due to the constraints occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to consult Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13. Whilst I had access to editions of the lyrics, their place on the page and the texts that accompanied them were often unclear. If I had been able to consult to manuscript, this manuscript and its poems would have been treated in more depth in the second and third chapters of this thesis.
[120] Extraction form a longer poem is another way that the lyric gained allegory in this period.
[121] Betty Hill, "A Couplet from the Conduct of Life in Maidstone MS A 13," *Notes and Queries* 50 (2003): 377.
[122] Emma Griffin, *Blood Sport: Hunting in Britain since 1066* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 19–20, 25–28, 36–38.

too dear a purchase may be interpreted as just as much a comment on the severity of poaching laws as on the foolishness of the poacher. On the level of the tenor, this asks whether eternal torture is a fair exchange for earthly pleasure. The 'þift' version sidesteps having to balance the crime and punishment by suggesting that it is the transgression of law itself – not the degree of the sin – that should equate to damnation. The two versions ask one to choose between these two models of earning damnation and hint at the theological challenges of choosing the model found in the lyric on f. 93r. In this way, knowing multiple versions of the same lyric – be the change accidental or purposeful – can facilitate an analytical comparison of theological ideas in a way that asks the reader to choose which theological model they prefer.

Secondary Affordances

Whilst the multiple affordances of translation seem to have been purposefully embraced in the Ten Commandments poem, it is possible that only one of the multiple affordances of rhyme may have been originally desired. The main purpose of introducing rhyme and measure may have been to help with memorisation.[123] However, rhyme has more affordances then simply to make words more memorable. The use of couplets links together two commandments. The groupings of the commandments was a matter of interest among the schools. Generally it was thought that the first three were on the first stone and the second seven were on the second stone.[124] Following Augustine, the reasoning was that the primary instructions of the New Testament was to love God and thy neighbour. The first stone contained the law concerning loving God and the second stone the law concerning loving thy neighbour. The Old and New Testaments were thus integrated. However, the rhyme scheme in the Middle English lyric links the third and fourth stanza. In doing so it does not emphasis an Augustinian break. Instead the rhyme scheme deteriorates through commandments five to eight. This may have been due to unintended changes made over time – unpurposed but nevertheless affecting the interpretation of this rendition. However, lyric generic convention led readers to be attentive to the rhyme scheme's commentary on the semantic meaning, as we saw in 'þench ofte'. The rhyme scheme links up the third and fourth commandments and then a gap is created after the fourth commandment by the – potentially accidental – deterioration of the rhyme scheme; the result is that the lyric reorganises the groupings of the commandments.

[123] Reeves, "Confession," 273–74.
[124] Desplenter, *Commandments*, 19–20.

As is suggested by Simon of Hinton's mid-thirteenth-century commentary, amongst others, the fourth commandment was thought to mean not only one's biological parents, but also 'any person who has ever played a positive role in your life'.[125] Simon sees it as the commandment which covers doing good; the others cover how not to sin against God or man. The rhyme scheme in the Middle English lyric links this commandment to the preceding commandments concerning God. God the father is generally referred to as 'feder' in Middle English rather than 'heldren'.[126] However, the action of the rhyme is to bring this line into the section on God and hence populate 'heldren' with 'feder', making this line both about the heavenly father and about earthly individuals. Whilst honouring God is a long way from a heretical idea, this is a significant reinterpretation of this commandment. It is born of a formal feature that was valued probably for enhancing memorability, but also had the affordance of linking ideas together. In this way, lyrics may go beyond their primary purpose by means of the secondary effects of their characteristics.

Progress here is a consequence of characteristics having multiple affordances. A characteristic may be employed for one affordance but its having another affordance has important effects on what the lyric does. This phenomena allows for a chaotic mode of invention and change.

This reinterpretation of one of the Ten Commandments does not produce a new idea about God and yet it is significant: lyric thinking could prompt a reinterpretation of the Bible. The Ten Commandments could be thought about in a similar way to the great theologians of the day and different conclusions could be come to as a result of lyric reading practices and an aspect of the prosody that was probably intended to fulfil quite a different purpose. This makes lyric thinking a powerful and potentially alarming tool.

Conclusion

The early thirteenth-century lyric kept many of the reading practices that it gained from its association with other genres in the twelfth-century. However, those generic associations were no longer made explicit: they were more frequently a sedimented part of the lyric landscape than on the surface.[127] Reading practices that used to be conferred on the lyric by its associated genres were, in the first half of the thirteenth century, now attached directly to the lyric. Some of the twelfth-

[125] Desplenter, *Commandments,* 21.
[126] Middle English Compendium, s.v. "eldre" accessed 31 August 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED13216. Middle English Compendium, s.v. "fădder" accessed 31 August 2022, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED15113.
[127] Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 9–10, 140–45. Giancarlo, "Fürstenspiegel," 38–41.

century reading practices had at this point morphed slightly so as to be more specialised in yielding fruitful interactions with lyric poetry in particular; these adaptations included the features to which attention was paid during slow reading and the freedom with which one added material to the porous lyrics.

Innovation in the Middle English lyric often occurred through the lyric's relationship with other genres. The kinds of relationship varied. Individual lyrics often related to a text from another genre by means of translation coupled with one or more additional processes. Those additional processes include excerpting and the creation of a contrafactum. The lyric capabilities that this kind of relationship produced include: new topics, new rhyme schemes and new extended double meanings. A different kind of relationship existed between the lyric and the proverb. Certain lyrics included proverbs and proverb like statements. The lyrics incorporated the norms of the proverb and then undermined them, surpassed them or used them as the grounds for other lyric activity. The lyric's relationship with the proverbs allowed it to: have a more conversational tone; encourage agreement; and to conduct brief allegories. Specifically concerning allegory, the security of the traditions associated with the embedded proverb ameliorated the uncertainty in the new things the surrounding lyric text was doing. A third kind of relationship existed between the Middle English lyric and French romantic poetry: between these two forms there appears to have been a straightforward and purposeful transfer of romance as a topic.

With the exception of romance literature, the lyric's relationships with other genres rarely resulted in the direct transfer of a feature to the lyric from the other genre. Characteristics were not simply copied over. This is in part due to the complexity of the relationships between the lyric and the other genres and texts. The lyric's relationship with the proverb was not one of straight emulation. Even when a lyric was translating a text from another genre, the other simultaneous processes meant that the attributes of the original text were morphed and added to in the final lyric product. Another reason that characteristics could not be simply copied from genre to genre is that the effect of a given characteristic varies depending on its context. The affordances of a transferred characteristic are differently activated by the new lyric context and hence the overall effect of that characteristic changes. Some of the capabilities gained by the lyric appear to be the result of a poet's purposeful efforts. At other times they appear to be accidental by-products of the complexity of the lyric's relationships with other genres or of the changed affordances of transferred characteristics. A new characteristic is itself a change in the lyric. A new characteristic can, however, occasion further changes in its lyric by altering the context in which pre-existing lyric features work. Old lyric features had different effects in the context of new lyric features: as seen the Ten Commandments poem, the result can be a very pioneering text. The complexity of the lyric's relationship with other genres,

together with new and old features functioning differently in the context of each other, made the changes undergone by the lyric genre more haphazard.

This process of change produced some characteristics that were immediately very important to the genre and others that were only later or were never popular. Slow reading and adding material to the lyric were retained as reading processes in this period. Allegory and to a lesser extent romance became more integral parts of the lyric genre. Combined, these characteristics and reading practices produced poems that compared devotional and romantic themes through unexplained allegory. They thus encouraged readers to think about theological ideas. The brevity of the allegory and the freedom with which material could be added made these lyrics a thinking space where the reader had much agency.

There is, however, a foil to this narrative of development where many chance and purposed developments come together to make a new and excellent type of lyric. A similar effect – the invitation to theologise – is also generated by an unintended affordance of a characteristic used for other purposes. It could also be occasioned by the slight alterations people made to the poems. These are haphazard and developmentally fast modes of encouraging theological thought. They do, however, rest on the longer established practices of slow reading and treating poems as porous. Lyric triumphs, then, could occur as the result of many process or suddenly as the result of one fortuitous change acting within the fertile lyric tradition.

This chapter finds that whilst the cultural environment may have exerted a mild general pull in a certain direction, individual changes are far more varied in direction, amplitude and motivation. It is in the minutiae – the practicalities of writing – that circumstances arise which make a poem more than just the absolute intention of the author. The process of writing includes accident and compromise. The literary landscape as it is and has been presses the author with challenges, possibilities and the secondary consequences of their choices. At the level of the genre as a whole, in terms of what becomes popular, there does appear to be a societal pull in favour of poems useful for lay devotion. However, the Middle English lyric overshoots the purely devotional, and thus belies models of generic development that accentuate demand. It overshoots the simply devotional by encouraging thought on theological subjects. It not only makes those subjects accessible but gives readers a tool with which to adapt them. The lyric is thus a medium in which the reader has peculiar intellectual freedom. These over-shootings are at least somewhat a consequence of the accumulation of the more chaotic and literary-landscape-led minutiae. They are a consequence of the unwieldy raw materials for development provided by low-level change. A genre is a tool for thought, a medium with which to understand the world. The importance of haphazard and literary-

landscape-led change means that the development of the lyric genre is only partly a result of human intention, and thus only partially informed by the historical landscape. This is one way that literature can lead, or run ahead of, a society. The pressures, potential and complex reactions of the literary landscape can lead to the production of texts that are different to or beyond the current compass of a society.

Chapter Three: The Anthologies c.1250–1300

Introduction

Shortly after the middle of the thirteenth century, the Middle English lyric begins to be written down in the centre of manuscript pages without any surrounding prose. The lyrics are anthologised together as well as alongside a variety of other texts. With this change in transmission, the written lyric genre undergoes a host of other alterations: its connection with French and Latin lyrics becomes more widespread; it becomes internally competitive; and the Middle English lyric also grows significantly in length.

No longer required to fit into a margin or be but a brief interlude in prose, the written Middle English lyric expanded in length. Modern definitions of the Middle English lyric often include the word 'short' but tend to be very vague about how many lines a 'short' poem can have.[1] Lyric brevity also remains remarkably under-theorised. Indicatively, one excellent study is called *Middle English Lyrics: New Readings of Short Poems*, but barely discusses lyric length.[2] The first part of this chapter addresses the vagueness surrounding exactly what counts as short by identifying medieval conventions concerning lengths of poems. I then begin work on exactly what the different lengths meant for the lyric and find that the repercussions of its being longer were transformative. The types of meditation the lyric encouraged changed. Its formal features gained different potentialities and significances. It became affiliated with new, longer genres and the lyric's sub-genres consequentially changed. Characteristics quintessential to the shorter lyric of former periods were carried over into the new longer lyrics. However, the effects of those characteristics were changed. The same topics and formal features had different potentialities when appearing in longer as opposed to shorter poems.

Being placed next to each other on the manuscript page also has ramifications for the internal structure of the Middle English lyric. The sometimes haphazard placing of poems together encourages comparisons which change the way poems are read by putting particular focus on certain features and encouraging the formation of groups based on those features. The most frequently written down poems encourage a conceptualisation of the lyric whereby all individual poems may be sewn together to create an extended devotional journey. They thus characterise the

[1] Silverstein, *Lyrics*, 4–5.
[2] Boffey and Whitehead, *New Readings*.

sections where anthologies appositely put lyrics together as a piece of one greater whole the lyric genre could make up.

Anthologisation also effects the external connections of the lyrics. The final section of this chapter uses a combination of the ideas of T.S. Eliot and Hans Robert Jauss to create a way of thinking about genre that is particularly useful for the Middle English lyric in this period.[3] It facilitates an understanding of the way the lyric overlapped with other genres and the knock-on consequences of different types of generic connection. The anthologies frequently place Latin, Old French and Middle English lyrics together on the page in such a way as to exhibit their similarities and to present the benefits of thinking of them as one genre. Whilst this occurred to a small extent in the first half of the thirteenth century, the much larger scale merging of generic expectations has consequences for what the lyric can do and how it is read. The lengthening of the Middle English lyric also allowed new connections with longer poems. I consider a few kinds of generic intersection and the kinds of impact it has on the lyric genre more widely. This chapter shows the myriad knock-on effects that anthologisation can have on a genre. Fairly little attention has been given to what anthologisation does to texts and genres. This examination of one instance of anthologisation having a substantial impact will, I hope, show that this line of enquiry can be fruitful.

This chapter starts with the impact of anthologisation on the individual lyrics, focusing particularly on how the extended length of the anthologised lyrics presents a very different idea of the Middle English lyric to the earlier thirteenth-century manuscripts. It goes on to think about the change in the internal connections and structure of the lyric genre. The third and final section of this chapter considers the change in external connections that came with anthologisation.

Anthology Theory

Changes in how a genre is transmitted can be one instigator of a chain reaction of developments. This chapter as a whole thinks about how the anthologisation of the lyric in the second half of the thirteenth century facilitated a number of developments.

The terminology used to describe different types of manuscripts containing multiple texts is somewhat vexed. It often depends on the degree that the manuscript is thought to have been purposefully organised. The most commonly used term for manuscripts that are thought to have

[3] Eliot, “Tradition,” 44–45. Jauss, *Reception.*

been written haphazardly is 'miscellany'.[4] According to Derek Pearsall's schema, 'commonplace book' is best used for manuscripts which an individual made to satisfy personal but perhaps varied interests.[5] 'Anthology' is to be used when there is a clear overarching purpose.[6] The term 'anthology' is less commonly used than 'miscellany', partially because it denotes a level of control and intentionality that most critics think cannot be justified by the manuscripts they are looking at. It is perhaps unfortunate that our terminology is such that to refer to the variety of texts in a manuscript one must make such difficult – and often speculative – judgments about the process of compiling and the thoughts of the compiler.

In many studies we also find the assumption that a medieval anthology should be more than just a group of texts with the same purpose; for instance, it is often implied that each individual text should be placed next to another text to produce an intended effect.[7] This compiler-orientated approach and search for hyper-organisation has encouraged problematic readings. Derek Pearsall has criticised many manuscript studies for finding over-ingenious coherences in their keenness to find evidence of a controlling intellect in the choice and ordering of texts.[8] There is a general desire to expand the variety of models we have for different types of manuscript coherence or incoherence.[9] However, the attempts are still mostly scribe and purpose orientated.[10] These critical ideas surrounding the common terminologies are important because they lead scholars towards a compiler-orientated analysis and because they can also lead to important manuscript effects being ignored once the pressure surrounding the term 'anthologies' forces manuscripts to be categorised as 'miscellanies' and thought of as too random for analysis.

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[4] See, for example, the use of 'miscellany' across the following volume: Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu, eds., *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Published for The British Academy by Open University Press, 2015).

[5] Derek Pearsall, "The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters," in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 23–24.

[6] Pearsall, "Whole Book," 21.

[7] Susanna Fein, "Literary Scribes: The Harley Scribe and Robert Thornton as Case Studies," in Connolly and Radulescu, *Insular Books*, 61–80, p. 64.
Carter Revard, "Gilote et Johane: An Interlude in B.L. MS. Harley 2253," *Studies in Philology* 79, n. 2 (1982): 38.

[8] Pearsall, "Whole Book".

[9] Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, "Imagined Histories of the Book: Current Paradigms and Future Directions," in Kelly and Thompson, *Imagining the Book*, 1–16.
Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards, "Towards a Taxonomy of Middle English Manuscript Assemblages," in Connolly and Radulescu, *Insular Books*, 263–280. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, "Imagined Histories of the Book: Current Paradigms and Future Directions," in Kelly and Thompson, *Imagining the Book*, 1–16.

[10] In his own attempt at categorisation, Pearsall himself has suggested that 'anthology' should only be used for manuscripts with a single and clear overriding purpose: Pearsall, "Whole Book," 21.

It is not inevitable, however, that our approaches to manuscripts should either be so scribe-focused or require unity of purpose rather than, say, unity of subject or form. Many modern anthologies are much more straightforwardly defined by subject and form (e.g. war poetry, eco-poetry) than by purpose (e.g. to entertain? to educate?). Why have critics then demanded clear purposes from medieval anthologies? The Middle English section of London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.IX exclusively contains poems and, if one excludes *The Owl and the Nightingale* which is situated ambiguously at the start of the section, those poems are all loosely related to the theme of Christian life: it would thus qualify as a modern anthology. Calling it a 'miscellany' obscures the types of concord that are there.

The nearly exclusive critical focus on the intentions of the scribe, compiler, or occasionally commissioner is also limiting. That approach tries to think about what reasoning could lead to texts being combined in such a way or it tries to think about the circumstances that could have led to texts being more randomly put together. This chapter seeks to take an alternate and fruitful approach in using reader response theory to think about how manuscripts themselves present and inflect a reading of the texts they include.[11] I consider how the company in which texts were presented may have affected how readers understood those texts. This means that proximity between even the most randomly assorted texts is interesting in terms of what it does to each transcribed text. Furthermore, collections that have clear topical or formal links present their texts to the reader with certain emphases, suggesting certain interpretations. By thinking about how manuscript positioning affects the contexts in which individual texts function, one can analyse the manuscripts sensitively without having to speculate about the compiler's thoughts.

Whilst most of the terminology is focused on categorising the manuscript as a whole, it is also important to be able to describe segments within a manuscript. Local elements of organisation may occur. Sections with intended or unintended unities of form, subject or purpose may function like mini anthologies. Critics have often slipped into calling these sections 'anthologies' without explanation.[12] Texts presenting as part of a group – local or manuscript-wide – are read in light of that group. The connection is different if their neighbours appear to be completely unrelated.

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[11] Raluca Radulescu has drawn fruitfully upon reception studies as a way of analysing manuscripts: Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu, introduction to Connolly and Radulescu, *Insular Books*, 1–30.

[12] For example, John Frankis, "The Social Context of Vernacular Writing," in *Thirteenth Century England I: Proceedings of the Newcastle upon Tyne Conference 1985*, ed. Peter Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1986), 175–84.

Whilst there is a large amount of criticism on anthologies, and in particular medieval miscellanies, there is surprisingly little explicit theorisation about what being in an anthology does to a poem or a genre.[13] A poem is changed by the act of anthologisation, but how is it changed? My consideration of particular anthologies suggests several ways in which this question can be thought about further.

The Manuscripts

Several anthologies of Middle English lyrics survive from the second half of the thirteenth century. This chapter covers all of the manuscripts from this period which contain nine or more Middle English lyrics. Those manuscripts are: London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.IX; Oxford, Jesus College MS 29(II); Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 86; Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. I4.39 (323); London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 499.[14] I also briefly consider London, British Library MS Arundel 292, which contains six lyrics.[15] This coverage reveals the variety of anthologies and the differing insights they offer into Middle English lyrics. Cotton Caligula A IX and Jesus 29 comprise what emerges as the core characteristics of the anthologies: the poems appear on the main body of the page, the English lyrics are mostly grouped together and the content of the lyrics is primarily devotional. The other manuscripts covered diverge from these characteristics in one or occasionally

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[13] Criticism of modern anthologies has a large strand concerning whether they are ethical teaching tools. Paul Lauter argues that they can be a means of including in short syllabuses a greater diversity of writers but that it is hard not to discriminate against longer genres. Paul Lauter, “Taking Anthologies Seriously,” *Melus* 29, n. 3/4 (2004): 19–39.

[14] London, British Library MS Cotton Caligula A.IX: A facsimile of this manuscript can be found online: “Cotton MS Caligula A IX,” The British Library, Digitalised Manuscripts, accessed 31 August 2022, http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_caligula_a_ix_fs001r.
Oxford, Jesus College MS 29(II): There is no facsimile of this manuscript; the original was consulted. However, many of the Middle English poems can be found in the following volume: Richard Morris ed., *An Old English Miscellany Containing a Bestiary, Kentish Sermons, Proverbs of Alfred and Religious Poems of the Thirteenth Century*, EETS OS 49 (London: N. Trübner, 1872).
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 86: A facsimile of this manuscript has been printed: Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes*, Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 86*, EETS SS 16 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
Cambridge, Trinity College MS B. I4.39 (323): A facsimile of this manuscript can be found online: “B.14.39–40,” Trinity College, Cambridge, Wren Digital Library, accessed 31 August 2022, https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/manuscripts/uv/view.php?n=B.14.39-40&n=B.14.39-40#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&xywh=-3365%2C-276%2C10563%2C5486.
London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 499: Photographs of the manuscript pages on which many of the lyrics are written can be found online at: Luna, accessed 31 August 2022, https://images.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/luna/servlet/view/search?q==499%20LIMIT:LPLIBLPL~17~17&sort=creator,type,date,title. Transcriptions of the alliterative poems are provided in: Oliver S. Pickering, “Newly Discovered Secular Lyrics from Later Thirteenth-Century Cheshire,” *Review of English Studies* 43, n. 70 (1992): 157–80.

[15] No facsimile is available, but the texts have been edited in: Hanneke Wirtjes, ed., *The Middle English Physiologus*, EETS OS 299 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 47–48.

two ways. Digby 86, for example, includes substantial amounts of secular material as well as devotional matter. Trinity 323 freely mixes Middle English, Latin and Old French poems. In Lambeth 499, the lyrics are mostly secular and written in the margins of the manuscript.

The languages of Trinity 323, Cotton Caligula A IX, Digby 86, Jesus 29 have been traced by Margaret Laing to Worcestershire, Herefordshire or Gloucestershire.[16] The language of Lambeth 499 is not far distant in Cheshire, Shropshire or Staffordshire.[17] Arundel 292 is the only outlier, with its language coming from West Norfolk.[18] The similarity of language location shown by all but one of these manuscripts is striking; the innovation that was anthologising Middle English poetry appears to have had an almost exclusive spring in this area.

Cotton Caligula A IX was written in the second half of the thirteenth century most probably in some form of religious institution.[19] The manuscript comes in two parts. The first contains Layamon's *Brut*. The second part is in a single hand and contains: two Anglo-French hagiographical poems, an Anglo-Norman prose chronicle, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, eight other Middle English poems, and finally an Anglo-French debate poem. The Middle English poems are all collected together but vary considerably in topic and length.

Jesus 29 has two parts which were written at separate times. The second part contains Middle English lyrics and is generally accepted to have been written in the second half of the thirteenth century.[20] The first twenty five texts in this manuscript are Middle English poems which are mostly on devotional matters.[21] There follows: English and then Latin prose, a section from

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[16] Laing, *Catalogue*, 34–37, 69–70, 129–30, 145–47. These counties all lie in the West Midlands. For thought on the manuscript production of the West Midlands, see: Wendy Scase ed., *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century (*Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

[17] Laing, *Catalogue*, 111–12.

[18] Laing, *Catalogue*, 67–68.

[19] N. R. Ker, *The Owl and the Nightingale: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Surviving Manuscripts*, EETS OS 251 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), ix. E. G. Stanley, review of *The Owl and the Nightingale: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Surviving Manuscripts*, by N. R. Ker, *Notes and Queries* 11, n. 5 (1964): 191. Neil Cartlidge, "The Composition and Social Context of Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29(II) and London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.IX," *Medium Aevum* 66, n. 2 (1997): 261–62.

[20] Anna Paues in correspondence with Mr. E. W. B. Nicholson: Anna C. Paues, "A Newly Discovered Manuscript of the Poema Morale," *Anglia* 30 (1907): 217–37. Laing, *Catalogue*, 145. Ker, *Owl*, ix. Cartlidge, "Composition," 261–62. Betty Hill, "The History of Jesus College, Oxford MS. 29," *Medium Aevum* 32, no. 3 (1963): 203–4. Betty Hill, "The Twelfth-Century 'Conduct of Life', Formerly the 'Poema Morale' or 'A Moral Ode'," *Leeds Studies in English* 9 (1977): 98.

[21] As in MS Cotton Caligua, the extent to which *The Owl and the Nightingale* can be considered part of the Christian theme is debatable. *The Proverbs of Alfred* clearly is concerned with the moral life.

Guillaume le Clerc's French Book of Tobit which contains a debate between the four daughters of God, a single Middle English poem, and finally four Anglo-Norman poems.

Cotton Caligula A IX contains many of the same poems as Jesus 29/2. They share the final three Anglo-Norman poems and all of the Middle English poems except 'Wit and Will'. Neil Cartlidge suggests that 'Wit and Will' was probably included on a now lost page in Jesus 29/2.[22] Cartlidge proposes the two manuscripts share a common exemplar.[23]

Digby 86 was written between 1281 and 1283 very probably by Richard de Grimhill II – a member of the lower gentry – or by one of his secular clerics, for use in his household.[24] It is the earliest anthology to contain a substantial number of secular Middle English poems. It contains various French, Latin and Middle English texts; useful lists can be found in the introduction to Tschann and Parkes' facsimile and also in Susan Fein's *Interpreting MS Digby 86*.[25] Marilyn Corrie has convincingly argued that three sections of the manuscript are organised by form: prose written out in long lines, short verse written out in double columns, and long line verse written out in single columns.[26] Both the second section and third section have exclusive bodies of French and then Middle English verse. In the English sections, the devotional poetry comes first and is followed by poetry on secular themes.

Trinity 323 has by far the most Middle English poems of the manuscripts from this period. It is one of the earliest anthologies – in probably being written between 1255 and 1260.[27] It has been variously suggested that it is a Dominican preaching book, partly for clerics and partly for preaching, or written by members of a mendicant convent or in a house of regular or secular canons.[28] John

[22] Cartlidge, "Composition," 250.
[23] Neil Cartlidge, "Imagining X: A Lost Early Vernacular Miscellany," in Kelly and Thompson, *Imagining the Book*, 31–44.
[24] Susanna Fein, *Interpreting MS Digby 86: A Trilingual Book from Thirteenth-Century Worcestershire* (York: York Medieval Press, 2019), 3.
[25] Tschann and Parkes, *Digby 86*, xii–xxxvi. Fein, *Digby 86*, xv–xviii.
[26] Marilyn Corrie, "The Compilation of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86," *Medium Ævum* 66, n. 2 (1997): 236–49.
[27] Brown, xx. Karl Reichl*, Religiöse Dichtung im Englischen Hochmittelalter: Untersuchung und Edition Der Handschrift B. 14. 39 Des Trinity College in Cambridge; Texte und Untersuchungen zur Englischen* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1973), 46–48 (hereafter cited as *Dichtung*).
[28] *Dichtung*, 49–58. Frankis, "Vernacular Writing," 182. John Scahill, "Trilingualism in Early Middle English Miscellanies: Languages and Literature," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003): 19.

Scahill suggests that the English translations were probably for the laity.[29] Trinity 323 contains mostly devotional material and moves fluidly between languages.

Arundel 292 may have been written at Norwich Cathedral Priory and estimates of its date range from the middle of the thirteenth century to c.1300.[30] The first quire contains all of its seven Middle English lyrics and *The Middle English Physiologus*. The rest of the quires contain French and English texts including animal fable, history, Latin romance and sermons. The English texts are basic devotional works including the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and 'Hail Mary'.

Lambeth 499 was written at Stanlaw Abbey and remained with the Cistercian monks when they moved to Whalley in Lancashire. Pickering suggests it was probably written in the 1270s, whereas Laing suggests the fourth quarter of the thirteenth century.[31] On f. 64v–68v, in the margins of a treatise by Augustine on the Trinity, there are eight Middle English lyrics. They are highly alliterative, elliptical and are on secular matters. In the margins of f. 69r is a poem supposedly copied from a vessel found in Shrewsbury Abbey and later in the main body of the text there is a version of 'Three Sorrowful Things'.[32]

There is one manuscript from the first half of the thirteenth century that contains nine Middle English poems. [33] That is Maidstone, Maidstone Museum MS A.13. The codex is primarily in Latin but it contains two French poems and nine Middle English poems. Some of the Middle English poems are in the main body of the text but many are in the margins or are embedded in longer texts. They are scattered throughout the manuscript, forming clusters of no more than three. Whilst this is the largest collection of Middle English lyrics found in a single manuscript in the first half of the thirteenth century, it is also quite different from the collections of Middle English verse found in the later anthologies.

Excepting Maidstone A.13, these are the manuscripts on which this chapter is based; I shall call them collectively 'the anthologies'.

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[29] Scahill, "Trilingualism," 19–21.

[30] Wirtjes, *Physiologus,* x–xi. Laing, *Catalogue*, 67. Scahill, "Trilingualism," 30.

[31] Pickering, "Lyrics," 160–61. Laing, *Catalogue*, 111–12.

[32] O. S. Pickering, "An Early Middle English Verse Inscription from Shrewsbury," *Anglia* 106 (1988): 411–14.

[33] Carleton Brown, "A Thirteenth-Century Manuscript at Maidstone," *The Modern Language Review* 21, n. 1 (1926): 1–12. *An Electronic Version of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, s.v. "Maidstone Museum A.13, Entry 1," M. Benskin, M. Laing, V. Karaiskos and K. Williamson, accessed 31 August 2022, http://archive.ling.ed.ac.uk/ihd/laeme2_scripts/search_cross_ref.php?fieldVal=Maidstone%20Museum%20A.13,%20entry%201.

3.1 The Individual Lyric

This section will think about how anthologisation facilitated change at the level of the individual lyric. In the anthologies, lyrics are found independently on the main body of the manuscript page; this is a change from earlier periods and brought with it the capacity for the writing down of a lot of longer poems. This section first conducts a numerical analysis of the change in line numbers and establishes medieval length categories. Whilst the lengthening of the lyric was a common effect of anthologisation on the form of individual poems, the knock-on effects of this lengthening were varied and depended more on the characteristics of the longer poem. The section then goes on to unearth and analyse the changes that accompany the elongation of lyrics.

Changes in Lyric Length

The makeup of the Middle English lyric as represented by the anthologies of Middle English lyrics from the second half of the thirteenth century is significantly different to the makeup found in the manuscripts of the first half of the century. Most strikingly, the lyrics in the anthologies are on average significantly longer. The longer lyrics contain formal features and patterns of thought not found in the earlier shorter lyrics. The shorter lyrics are frequently but not always reduced in variety in the anthologies, if not in other manuscript contexts. The overall picture of the Middle English lyric that emerges is more varied in formal features, means of expression, and the patterns of thought that are encouraged. The Middle English lyric was expanding the space it took up in the array of available devotional and secular literature.

In the first half of the thirteenth century, most Middle English lyrics are found embedded in prose or in the margins of manuscripts. In fact, only about eleven poems are found independently in the main body of a manuscript page. All but one of the marginal poems are thirteen lines or less. The longest embedded poem is six lines long.[34] The consistency with which embedded poems are six lines or less is indicative of a widely observed convention. By 'convention' I mean a practice occurring sufficiently commonly that, consciously or unconsciously, it is generally observed by writers. Therefore, whilst we do not have a medieval name for this length of poem, the term 'poems of an embeddable length' or more concisely 'embeddable poems' accurately reflect an evidenced

[34] This is not true of the twelfth century, where Saint Thomas' lyric and the soul to body sermon lyric are embedded and longer than six lines. This is probably because the convention was not yet established at that early phase. It may also be because Saint Thomas' lyric was largely the point of the story rather than one element not to be overweighed, and the soul to body sermon poem was so much part of the sermon that it little registered as a different object.

medieval practice. Unlike the embedded poem, 'marginal poems' as a category of length is more likely to be dictated by the happenstance of margin space rather than a collectively agreed maximum length. A broad sense of the length of poem that could be recorded in its entirety in this way may have arisen from knowledge of how much space was generally available in margins. However, as a category it may have been more applied by readers to poems they found in margins.[35] The 'marginal poem' tells us less than the 'embeddable poem' about the active artistic decisions that writers made. Whilst these two lengths were the norm for Middle English poetry from the first half of the thirteenth century, the same cannot be said for the poems found in the anthologies.

Poems in the anthologies from the second half of the thirteenth century were on average much longer than the poems found in the prose and margins of manuscripts from the first half of the thirteenth century.[36] Just over seventy percent of the anthologised poems have more than six lines. Just under sixty percent are longer than thirteen lines. Between the first half of the thirteenth century and the anthologies of the second half of the century, the percentage of poems over thirteen lines rises from roughly 15% to a little under 60%. As these numbers show, there is a massive shift from the majority of poems being thirteen lines or less to the majority of poems being longer than thirteen lines.

Most of the poems in the anthologies are longer than thirteen lines and some poems are well over one thousand lines. Evidence for medieval length categories within this wide range is sparse. However, our understanding of the importance of memorisation in medieval culture, coupled with the evidence provided by Thomas of Hales' 'Love Ron', discussed below, suggests that 'poems of a memorisable length' or 'memorisable poems' may have been a category observed by medieval practice. Mary Carruthers, in *The Book of Memory*, explains that memorisation was a widespread practice and considered part of the process of thinking about and inculcating a text. [37] Furthermore, she explains that it was a moral process: texts were ruminated on, memorised, acted on, and finally became part of one's habits. Carruthers writes: 'Character indeed results from one's experience, but that includes the experience of others, often epitomised in ethical commonplaces, and made one's own by constant recollection'.[38] Texts that were short enough that they could be

[35] Like London's 'Poems on the Underground', these poems may exist elsewhere but still participate in a group based on notable location.
[36] Excluding Maidstone, as arguably that manuscript does not function as an anthology.
[37] Carruthers, *Memory*, 11, 203.
[38] Carruthers, *Memory*, 222.

memorised from start to finish could be interacted with in this culturally significant way. Details such as exact word choice could inform their ethical import. They thus fall into a separate category of use.

The maximum length of a memorisable poem must vary from person to person. However, Thomas of Hales' 'Love Ron' gives a valuable insight into the kind of lengths poets considered their readers able to memorise. This lyric is found in Jesus 29 on ff. 187r-188v and is addressed to a 'puelle deo' or 'mayde Cristes'.[39] This phrasing has been recognised as ambiguous: the audience as well as the, perhaps fictional, addressee could be a nun, lay recluse, or pious laywoman.[40] The lyric describes the unpleasantness of earthly husbands, the value of virginity and how Jesus is the best lover, before finishing with these stanzas:

Þis rym, mayde, ich þe sende
open and wiþ-vte sel;
Bidde ic þat þu hit vntrende
& leorny bute bok vych del;
Her-of þat þu beo swiþe hende
& tech hit oþer maydenes wel.
Hwo-so cuþe hit to þan ende,
hit wolde him stonde muchel stel.

Hwenne þu sittest in longynge,
drauh þe forþ þis ilke wryt;
Mid swete stephne þu hit singe,
& do al so hit þe byt.
To þe he haueþ send one gretynge;
god al-myhti þe beo myd
& leue cumen to his brudþinge
heye in heouene þer he sit.

And yeue him god endynge,

[39] 'Incipit quidam cantus quem composuit frater Thomas de hales de ordine fratrum Minorum, ad instanciam cuiusdam puelle deo dicate.' Brown, 68.
[40] Susanna Greer Fein, ed., *Moral Love Songs and Laments* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), 39.

Þat haueth i-wryten þis ilke wryt. Amen.[41]

[This rhyme, maid, I send you
Open and without seal;
I request that you unroll it
And learn each part without the book
So that you may be very expert in it
And teach it effectively to other maidens.
Whosoever knows it to the end
It will afford them much help.

When you sit in longing
You should draw forth this same written work;
You should sing it with a sweet voice
And do all as it directs you.
To you he has sent one greeting;
God almighty be with you
And allow you to come to his bridal
High in heaven where he sits.

And give him a good ending
Who has written this same tract. Amen.]

The 'Luue-Ron' has been analysed for its metre, its reference to a 'roll', its displacing of secular, heterosexual love, its connection to the Franciscans, its representation of stones and its references to the annunciation.[42] However, scholars have so far overlooked the remarkable insight that these stanzas give into the way the poet wished his poem to be used. Indeed, it is one of the only explicit statements regarding the memorization of lyrics from this period. In the first given stanza, the poet asks the reader to memorise all of the poem and promises – in line with Carruthers' ideas on memorisation – that having memorised it 'will afford them much help'. Thomas also suggests that

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[41] Brown, p. 74, lines 193–210.

[42] Betty Hill, "The 'Luue-Ron' and Thomas De Hales," *The Modern Language Review* 59, n. 3 (1964): 321–30. Ian Bishop, "Lapidary Formulas as Topics of Invention -- From Thomas of Hales to Henryson," *The Review of English Studies* 37, n. 148 (1986): 469–77. Benito D'Angelo and Luke M. Ciampi, "English Franciscan Poetry Before Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?–1400)," *Franciscan Studies* 43, n. 21 (1983): 218–60. Bernard S. Levy, "The Annunciation in Thomas De Hales' 'Love Ron'," *Mediaevalia* 6 (1980): 123–34. Sarah M. Horrall, "Thomas of Hales, O.F.M.: His Life and Works," *Traditio* 42 (1986): 287–98. Hahn, "Early Middle English," 79–80.

the reader should teach the poem to other women: he wished it to circulate orally. Because the addressee is ambiguous, a broad variety of women, including pious lay women, are implicated in these instructions. Thomas thus appears to believe that these women are capable of memorising this 210 line poem. Clearly there was a substantial body of professional people with trained memories who memorised much longer texts as part of their vocations across the Middle Ages. For example, Ad Putter has argued, based on medieval accounts and evidence of memory slips, that some people could recite entire romances (which were sometimes thousands of lines long) from memory.[43] However, Thomas' 'Love Ron' provides significant and heretofore overlooked evidence for the lengths of poem that untrained but motivated minds could be expected to memorise. It suggests that at minimum anything up to 210 lines was considered a memorisable length of poem.

If true, this makes just over 80% of the poems included in the main anthologies of a memorisable length and hence open to the consequent types of use and transmission. However, a more complex picture can be drawn from these stanzas. The lyric mentions that the lady should sing the lyric to herself. This is the only extant copy of the lyric and the manuscript does not have accompanying music. Nonetheless, lost copies may have had music and it is more than possible that Thomas imagined his reader's singing these words. This may have made it easier to memorise than poems without music. Furthermore, Thomas repeatedly emphasises that one should memorise all of the lyric. This suggests that there may have been a practice of memorising extracts of poems, and this poem may have been in the length range of poems that were remembered in extracts rather than as a whole. The extracts from the 'Poema Morale' found in the margins of folios 46v and 39r of Maidstone A.13 and embedded in a Latin sermon on f. 127va of Durham University Library MS Cosin V.iii.2 are suggestive of this practice, though the 'Poema Morale' is significantly longer at 398 lines. Thomas' comments may also suggest that the 'Love Ron' was of a length that the reader may need prompting to memorise it 'to the end'. Whilst not sufficient to be conclusive, these are indications that this 210 line poem may have been towards the upper limit of what a non-professional might be expected to memorise. About 75% of the poems in the anthologies have just over 100 lines or less. The distribution of poems across length brackets is much sparser after 110 lines. Whilst again conclusions must be partially speculative, poems under 110 lines may have been more popular as more securely within the customarily memorisable range. Therefore, whilst the exact number of lines must be approximate and vary according to individuals' inclination and training, poems under

[43] Ad Putter, "Middle English Romances and the Oral Tradition," in Reichl, *Medieval Oral Literature*, 340–41, 347–49.

110 lines may have been considered 'easily memorisable' and poems up to and in the vicinity of 210 lines 'strenuously memorisable'.

Poems significantly over 210 lines I will simply refer to as 'long'. In not being memorisable, the long poems are significantly different to the prototypical lyric of the anthologies, which was memorisable. Some of the long poems still have features that link them to some extent to the lyric. For example, 'The Sawe of Seint Bede Prest' is 373 lines long but linked to the lyric by way of prayer-lyrics and sermon-lyrics.[44] The 'Poema Morale' is retrospectively tied more closely to the Middle English lyric by the anthologies' inclusion of group of sermon-like poems that stretch from those fairly similar in length to the 'Poema Morale' to increasingly shorter exhortations.[45] 'The Life of St Eustace' in Digby 86, on the other hand, has very little common with the lyrics.[46]

There are thus five main terms I shall use to discuss the length of the Middle English poems. They are all based on medieval practices. They are 'embeddable', 'marginal', 'easily memorisable', 'strenuously memorisable', and 'long'. However, in relation to the shorter poems the term 'embeddable' is most revealing and will take precedence. Occasionally I will use 'short' to mean thirteen lines or less. As the boundary between 'easily memorisable' and 'strenuously memorisable' is blurry and potentially more a difference in exertion than eventual use I shall often use 'memorisable' to cover both categories. The identification of these categories allows the mapping of their prevalence and how they changed across different times and contexts.

Changes in the Diversity of Embeddable Lyrics

The anthologies present a very different picture of the Middle English lyric to the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century. The anthologies present memorisable Middle English lyrics as central to the genre and also as having a greater diversity to their techniques than found in memorisable poems of the earlier thirteenth century manuscripts.

Embeddable lyrics not only make up a smaller proportion of the genre but are generally less various. Cotton Caligula A.IX has no poems of six lines or less. Arundel 292, Digby 86 and Jesus 29 all

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[44] Frederick James Furnivall, ed., *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript, Part II*, EETS OS 117 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901): 765–76.

[45] In Jesus 29 with the 'Poema Morale' those poems include the following. 'A lutel soth Sermun': Morris, *Miscellany*, 186–91. 'Hwi ne serue we crist and secheþ his sauht': Morris, *Miscellany*, 90–2. 'Sothe Luue': Morris, *Miscellany*, 141–44. 'An Orison of Our Lord': Morris, *Miscellany*, 139–41. 'Poema Morale': Morris, *Miscellany*, 58–71.

[46] Tschann and Parkes, *Digby 86*, ff. 122v–25v.

have a curiously narrow range of embeddable lyrics. Of the six embeddable lyrics in Arundel 292, three are very well known: 'Three Sorrowful Things' and 'In Manus Tuas' on f. 3v and 'Hail Mary' on f. 2v.[47] The other three slightly longer lyrics are also devotional commonplaces: 'The Crede' on f. 3r, 'The Pater Noster' on ff. 3r-3v, and a very popular one about death's warning on f. 3v.[48] Digby 86 has two lyrics of six lines or less: one is 'In Manus Tuas' on f. 206ra and the other is an extract from *The Proverbs of Alfred* on f. 143r.[49] Jesus 29 has three lyrics of six or less lines. One is 'Three Sorrowful Things' on f. 189 and two concern the book or scribe (ff. 143v, 155r).[50] This overview shows that the occurrence of embeddable lyrics – whilst common in the first half of the thirteenth century – is relatively rare in a significant portion of large anthologies from the second half of the thirteenth century. Those that do occur are of a limited variety, in being either very popular devotional staples, extracts from longer Middle English poems, or related to the manuscript itself. In these anthologies the embeddable lyric has moved from being the vast majority of Middle English lyric – the site of its breadth and genius – and become used for set and limited functions. Trinity 323 is the only anthology with an extensive range of numerous embeddable lyrics.

Lambeth 499 reimagines the embeddable Middle English lyric not by limiting its variety, but by actually recording a cohesive set of original and distinctive secular lyrics. Despite being written down in the margins of other texts, the series of four-line poems from folios 64v to 69r in Lambeth 499 actually mark the greatest innovation – in form and content – in the short lyric that occurred in the second half of the thirteenth century. An example will illustrate their uniqueness:

> faste ifunde fer on folde . frode fryth is feire fre .
> folk i finde fele ifonde . fayn to fiychte with is fo .
> fey i felles foddre fulles . þe fede mon is fus to fle .
> fondes forthes . fernes falles . ferkes forth on fote fro .
>
> [Firmly established over a wide area of ground, Frode Fryth is splendidly excellent.
> I find [there] well-supplied people, happy to fight against their (?) enemy.

47 Wirtjes, *Physiologus,* 48.
48 Wirtjes, *Physiologus,* 47–48.
49 Tschann and Parkes, *Digby 86*, f. 143r, f. 206ra.
50 DIMEV list another poem, 'Weole þu art a waried þing', as having four long lines but Brown presents it in eight lines. In the absence of manuscript evidence, I defer to Brown. Brown, 65. DIMEV, s.v. "Weal thou art a waried thing uneven canst thou deal: DIMEV 6182," accessed 31 August 2022, https://www.dimev.net/record.php?recID=6182#wit-6182. (Future references to DIMEV will be by DIMEV number.) Brown, 19. DIMEV 1896. Bruce Dickins and Richard M. Wilson, eds., *Early Middle English Texts* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1951), 50.

The fated person in the hills collects supplies of fodder; the feeble man is eager to flee.
He looks for paths, brings down ferns, hastens forth on foot, away.[51]]

Of the eight lyrics written in the margins of consecutive pages, Pickering – the only modern editor of these poems – understands seven of them to have four lines.[52] Their strong consistency in a highly unusual form and their being on consecutive pages suggest these lyrics form a coherent group.

Extended Length and Extended Possibilities

The anthologies include a wide variety of memorisable lyrics. Those lyrics cannot be just longer versions of the embeddable lyrics found in manuscripts from the first half of the century. The move from being embeddable to memorisable changes lyrics in a number of different ways.

Some formal features are possible in longer lyrics that are not possible in shorter lyrics. Embedded lyrics can only have rhyme schemes up to six end rhymes long. Longer lyrics can have more extended and intricate rhyme schemes. Rather than being the norm, simple rhyme schemes become a noticeable aesthetic choice. This is particularly true of the Marian lyrics of the anthologies. Of the nine Marian lyrics, six have rhyme schemes that are more complex than the average Middle English lyric.[53] In this sub-genre, the same set of rhymes tend to extend over more lines with the shortest being six lines and the longest twelve lines. A Marian lyric from f. 42v of Trinity 323 uses a simple rhyme scheme:

Leuedie, ic þonke þe
wid herte suiþe milde
þat gohid þat þu hauest idon me
wid þine suete childe.[54]

[Lady, I thank you
With a very humble heart

[51] Text and translation: Pickering, "Lyrics," 164.
[52] Pickering, "Lyrics," 157–80.
[53] For complex rhyme schemes, see: 'On hire is al mi lif ilong': Brown, 56–60. 'Seinte mari moder milde mater salutaris': Brown, 22–4. 'For on þat is so feir and brist': Brown, 24–7. 'Seinte marie leuedi brist': Brown, 27–29. 'On leome is in þis world ilist': Brown, 34–37. 'Nu þis fules singet hand maket hure blisse': Brown, 55. For simple rhyme schemes, see: 'Leuedie, ic þonke þe': Brown, 42. 'Leuedy for þare blisse': Brown, 65–67. 'Ful feir flour is þe lilie': Brown, 29–30.
[54] Brown, p. 42, lines 1–4.

For the good that you have done me

With your sweet child.]

The simplicity of this lyric's rhymes gain significance from a literary context where complex rhyme schemes are the norm. The unexpected rhyme choice corroborates with the simplicity of the starting address to create a tone that is unpretentious and humbly adoring. In doing so, the lyric characterises the common idea of a 'milde herte'. The ability to do so much through the rhyme scheme comes at the cost of its being easy for no significance to be attached to simple rhymes in memorisable Marian poetry. Extended length provided the lyric with a different set of options, rather than simply more opportunities.

The Same Characteristics Producing Different Effects in Memorisable and Embeddable Lyrics

Characteristics produce different effects depending on the other features they are surrounded by. This means that the characteristics of embeddable lyrics elicit different responses when in memorisable lyrics. This was one way in which the range of lyric effects was diversified. 'The Ballad of Judas', found in Trinity 323, is arguably the earliest extant Middle English ballad and has received much critical attention for its terse style and being primarily dialogue.[55] As Mary-Ann Stouck has suggested 'the reader has the sense of being told only part of a complex story'.[56] This lyric is a particularly unique result of a feature being transplanted and consequentially having new effects. The scholarly fascination with the uniqueness of this poem in this period is a tribute to this.[57] The lyric feature that is transplanted is short, ambiguous monologue. As we have seen, short lyrics from the first half of the century often use this feature to draw readers into imagining the situation of such speech.[58] 'that mi lef askes wit sare weping / ne mai ic hire werne for nane kinnes thing' is an example.[59] The ambiguity in this and similar lyrics also allows them to straddle the secular and divine and hence provoke interesting questions about the (dis)similarities between God and man. 'The Ballad of Judas' uses a lot of ambiguous, brief speech but to different effects. For example, in the

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[55] Paull Franklin Baum, "The English Ballad of Judas Iscariot," *PMLA* 31, n. 2 (1916):181–89. Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, "'Judas': The First English Ballad?," *Medium Ævum* 62, n. 1 (1993): 20–34.

[56] Mary-Ann Stouck, "A Reading of the Middle English 'Judas'," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 80, n. 2 (1981): 189. Donald Schueler also sees the text as riddling: Donald G. Schueler, "The Middle English *Judas*: An Interpretation," *PMLA* 91, n. 5 (1976): 841.

[57] Dronke, *Medieval Lyric*, 69. Schueler, "*Judas*," 841.

[58] For example: Dolmans, "'Hunting'," 185–87. Wenzel, *Preachers*, 222. Similar poems are also found in Trinity 323, see: Brown, 32. Wilson, *Lost Literature,* 181.

[59] Durham, Durham University Library MS Cosin V.ii.8, f. 58r.

following lines Judas declares that he will only sell Jesus for the thirty pieces of silver that he lost on his way to buy food for the Last Supper:

> ‘I nul sulle my Louerd for nones cunnes eiste,
> Bote hit be for þe þritti platen þat He me bitaiste.’
> ‘Wolte sulle þi Lord Crist for enes cunnes golde?’
> ‘Nay, bote hit be for þe platen þat He habben wolde.’
>
> [‘I will not sell my Lord for any sort of goods,
> Unless it is for the thirty pieces that He entrusted to me.’
> ‘Will you sell your Lord Christ for any sort of gold?’
> ‘No, unless it is for the pieces that He would have.’[60]]

These lines at once make it clear what Judas is willing to do but also leave it obscure as to why Judas has made this decision.[61] The repetition of Judas’ words – an innovation permitted by length – only increases the divide between our knowledge of his determination to take only thirty pieces of silver and our having to supply our own explanation as to why he has so determinedly decided this. In terms of lines, there is an opportunity for explanation that is markedly not taken up. Short, un-explanatory dialogue offers a kind of brevity which creates uncertainty for the reader about what is going on. In this way, the first couplet and the last line quoted here are similar to complete embeddable lyrics.

The practice of reading such forms across the secular and religious divide is an integral aspect of the lyric genre. These lines’ similarity with earlier lyrics means they too ask to be read in this way. To a certain extent ‘The Ballad of Judas’ rewards this reading practice. It has been argued that in this poem Jesus functions like a feudal lord.[62] These lines invite one to imagine that Judas is thinking about Jesus as a lord who will punish him for losing the money. However, whilst for the first of the above couplets alone that interpretation might prove compelling, the subsequent lines and indeed the wider context given in the lyric makes that interpretation unsatisfactory. It does not

[60] Text and translation: Schueler, “*Judas*,” p. 840, lines 21–24.
[61] Thomas D. Hill has argued that the plates are in fact large rings put by David on the tree that became the cross in a popular legendary history of the cross. The ballad is not explicit about this and even if this explanation is true, it does not explain why for Judas gold would not do as well for buying the last supper. The interaction remains mysterious at the level of human motivation. Thomas D. Hill, “The Middle English ‘Judas’ Ballad and the Price of Jesus: Ballad Tradition and the Legendary History of the Cross,” *English Studies* 89, n. 1 (2008): 1–11.
[62] Boklund-Lagopoulou, “English Ballad?,” 27.

explain Judas refusing to take more money. Though each individual speech is laconic, they form part of a longer lyric. The narrative context and the lyric's characterisation of the speaker limits the interpretive possibilities of any one speech. The interpretive limitations attendant on being part of a longer lyric are significantly more severe than those exerted by the prose on embedded lyrics.

In this way, whilst the laconic monologues in embeddable lyrics help the reader to use secular experience to theorise about the divine, the use of short unexplained speeches in a longer lyric following a specific figure highlights the frustrating inability of common experience to explain biblical events. In this lyric, the highlighting of common experience's incapacity to explain biblical action is a way of making well-known events appear strange and reigniting curiosity about the people and the import. The characteristics associated with brevity found in earlier embedded lyrics thus illicit new reader responses and create new poem-wide atmospheres when used in the context of a longer lyric. Not only do they create new effects, but they create effects so spectacularly novel that people consider 'The Ballad of Judas' to be the first of a new genre and find it enigmatically singular over six hundred years later.[63]

Different Uses and Movements of the Mind

Embeddable and memorisable lyrics have different potentialities not only at the level of formal features and effects but also in the types of reader interaction they encourage. This section will outline some of the ways of using lyrics that are encouraged by the increased length of lyrics.

The way in which embeddable and memorisable lyrics can most easily interact with real world situations differs. Mary Carruthers has suggested that moral poetry should be memorised, ruminated on and then deployed at moments of ethical need so that it becomes part of one's character.[64] Both embeddable and memorisable lyrics may do this and Thomas of Hales, in the stanzas quoted above, particularly asks his readers to use his poem thus. However, Carruthers also suggests one might deploy a text in a social situation as a way of signalling its moral applicability to the situation and asking the community to acknowledge the moral grounds for the speaker's action.[65] Memorisable and long poetry when recited start to finish – as Thomas asks users of the 'Love Ron' to do – may be more difficult to deploy in conversation. They are better recited to oneself; this appears to be what Thomas imagines with the phrase 'sittest in'. They may have an

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[63] Stouck, "'Judas'," 189. Schueler, "*Judas*," 841. Hill, "Price of Jesus," 1.
[64] Carruthers, *Memory*, 222–27.
[65] Carruthers, *Memory*, 222–27.

advantage over embeddable lyrics in this forum in that the time taken up saying the whole memorisable lyric may be enough to change a mind otherwise inclined and unlikely to repeat a shorter lyric. Embeddable lyrics or extracts of longer poems may, alternatively, be embedded in conversation in the way Carruthers has described.

As well as *when* they were used, *how* the lyrics were used – by which I here mean how the mind moves during their use – was partially contingent on length. The longer lyrics encouraged a change in how the reader goes through the poem. For example, as we saw with 'The Ballad of Judas', cryptic speech when elongated into a narrative changes from producing new theological ideas by inciting the comparison between the heavenly and earthly experiences, to producing a new awareness of the inadequacy of experience to explain biblical events. Rosemary Woolf has suggested that Middle English poetry was primarily meditational.[66] By this she means that it encouraged the reader to think on a particular event and have an emotional reaction to it. In particular, loving Jesus in his humanity through meditation on his life and fearing the torments of hell were each seen as first steps towards thinking on the Godhead and repenting of sin respectively; later they became devotional practices in their own right.[67] Not all lyrics are 'meditational' in this sense and even those that are tend to have intellectual as well as emotional outcomes. Nonetheless, Woolf's insight is important and applies to – though often does not totally explicate – many of the lyrics in the anthologies. The ways in which lyrics are meditational varies and is subject to changes in emphasis. A change in length brought with it a new form of meditation. This can be seen in some embeddable and memorisable lyrics on the crucifixion. The first of the lyrics below is found embedded in a long prose text called *Speculum Ecclesiæ* by Edmund Riche.[68] The second is a middle stanza from 'ON leome is in þis world ilist', found of ff. 32v-33r of Trinity 323. It is 120 lines long and hence cannot be quoted here in full.

Nou goth sonne under wode;	[Now goes the sun under the forest
Me rewes, Marie, þi faire rode.	I pity Mary your fair face (cross)
Nou goth sonne under tre;	Now goes the sun under the tree
Me rewes, Marie, þi sone and þe.[69]	I pity Mary your son and you.]

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[66] Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, 3–4 and throughout.
[67] Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, 21–27, 72–73.
[68] Cedric Edward Pickford and A. D. Wilshere, *Mirour De Seinte Eglyse: St. Edmund of Abingdon's "Speculum Ecclesiae"* (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1982), 66–69.
[69] Brown, 166.

Hasse he biheuld þe rode,	[As she beheld the cross,
þe modir þat was of miste	That was the mother of the Almighty,
& per I-sei al ablode	And there saw very bloody
Hir sone þat her wes briste,	Her son that here was broken,
Hisse tuo suete honden	His two sweet hands
Wid nailes al to-ronden,	With nails all torn,
Is fehit iþurlid bo,	Both his feet pieced,
Is suete softe side	His sweet soft side
I-þurlit depe & wyde—	Pierced deeply and wide
Wey, þat hire was wo![70]	Alas, that was misery to her.]

'ON leome is in þis world ilist', the longer lyric, provides the background to this part of Christ's life and describes separately and in detail more of the different stages of his torture and crucifixion. When it does get to the crucifixion it spends several stanzas recounting in detail who was there and Christ's bodily wounds. This contrasts with the first lyric which mentions only the cross, and Mary's presence and face. This shorter lyric draws heavily on the reader's pre-existing knowledge of the crucifixion and seeks to work the reader's thinking on the crucifixion into a typical evening scene of the sun setting on woods. It is allusive and transformative: the descending sun is the son of God, every tree becomes the cross, the crucifixion is now, and all the pain involved is summed up visually in one ruined face. This is a lyric that asks to be repeated over and over again so that the connection between its images can be fully explored and the images of the face and Christ on the cross can be seen and merged with the landscape in different ways.

When embedded – a feature of shorter lyrics – the connection between the prose and lyric can also reframe and transform the lyric in a way that also encourages a circular rumination between its possible meanings, and in some cases, imagined speakers. For example, as has been thoroughly explored by Ardis Butterfield and others, 'Nou goth' is put by its surrounding prose in the context not only of Mary's grief but also the voices and questionable beauty of Naomi and the woman of the Song of Songs.[71] These links each allow a recasting of the emphasis and meaning of the whole and hence encourage circulatory comparison between interpretations.

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[70] Brown, pp. 34–7: 36, lines 71–80.

[71] Butterfield, "Textual Form," 44–47. Ayoush Sarmada Lazikani, *Cultivating the Heart: Feeling and Emotion in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Religious Texts* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), 93–95. Kohnen, "Religious Lyric," 5–14.

The longer lyric does much more directing of one's eye to different parts of the scene and Christ's body. It also takes the reader on more of a narrative journey, building up to the main scene. Both lyrics ask the reader to do the visualisation but whilst the longer one can lead the reader through that visualisation, the shorter one lets the reader do the work and instead offers a potent reframing of the images. The stanza of the longer lyric above invites a lingering over the description which is different to the circular repeating that the shorter lyric gives itself to. The whole idea of the shorter lyric can be held in the mind at once. Conversely, what is moving about the longer lyric is not so much an abstracted idea of the innovation of the whole. Instead, it is the distress in the images, the way they are described, and the way they linearly mount up to an emotive peak. The rhymes are not couplets and the reader is propelled forward by the desire to hear each new sound completed by its pair. However, working against this forward propulsion, the lyric's constant references to seeing and beholding implicitly ask that the reader pause over and imagine each individual image. The reader is asked, then, to delay the gratification of hearing the rhymes completed and of reaching the emotional outburst, and instead to spend time feeling the horror of the events being described. While 'Nou goth sonne under wod' collapses all time together, this longer lyric askes the reader to painstakingly slow down time and linger in its most desperate moments, even as time is experienced as rushing towards a fulfilment. In this way, the style of meditation occasioned by the actions asked of the reader by the short and longer lyrics on the crucifixion is materially different.

Summary

Thinking about the Middle English lyric in terms of embeddable, marginal and memorisable poems allows us to see how much the written lyric changed over the course of the thirteenth century. This section has shown that between the first and second half of the thirteenth century the lyric went from being mostly thirteen lines or less and found embedded or in the margins, to having a large anthologised contingent which were mostly memorisable in length and were presented as the main text on the manuscript page. Understanding this change brings to light other consequent ways in which the written lyric developed. Poetic techniques associated with the earlier embeddable lyrics were used in memorisable lyrics and their effect partially transformed; new modes and practices surrounding meditation were developed; and more complex rhyme schemes became common. This section has shown how a change in one formal feature can have dramatic knock-on effects on reader responses, formal characteristics and even the subject matters handled by a genre. Developments can thus be precipitated by the far-reaching consequences of individual formal changes rather than necessarily being a product of a poet's purposeful innovating. The cascade of consequences means that genres may change in ways that a culture is not necessarily capable of planning. For example,

the lengthening of descriptions of the crucifixion caused perhaps unpremeditated new modes of reader interaction with the flow of time during the crucifixion and the potential for pain and pleasure in controlling the speed at which the crucifixion unfolded. Anthologisation and changes in lyric length meant that the lyric took up more dedicated space in manuscripts, more space in the diverse thirteenth-century literary landscape, and more space in people's minds as it contributed in increasingly varied ways to their ideas and experiences of religious and secular life.

3.2 The Genre's Internal Dynamics

By placing the poems together on the manuscript page, anthologies publicly situated Middle English lyrics in the context of each other. This is in contrast to the embedded or marginal lyrics of the first half of the thirteenth century, where the manuscripts give the surrounding prose as the lyrics' primary context. As I shall argue in this section, the lyrics appearing together on the same page encourages more sophisticated comparison. The combination of lyrics can – sometimes in a haphazard fashion – encourage a focus on specific features and encourage the formation of conceptual groups based on those features. Being together on the page and the resulting stronger internal connections combine with there simply being more lyrics, so as to create a newly excellent environment for the formation of strong lyric sub-genres. Finally I look at how the emergence of a few very popular poems complements the implications of anthologisation to encourage certain ways of interacting with the genre as a whole.

Comparison

Where two lyrics are placed together on the manuscript page, they invite comparison. This can occur between thematically or formally related texts. It can also occur between lyrics that are dissimilar and would be unlikely to be thought of in the context of each other if it wasn't for the physical proximity. For example 'The Ballad of Judas' is on a page facing 'Vuele men Goid þe scechen' in Trinity 323. The latter is a translation supposedly from Proverbs 28 but is actually not found in the Bible.[72] It reads:

> Vuele men Goid þe scechen
> So deit þe seke þene leche,
> So prisun of ransum to speken,

[72] *Dichtung*, 374.

Ant so pilegrim gredi after mete,
So vei þat ut of weiye ibouven,
Ant so vncouþe þene lettouve,
So werie reste, suincare hore mede.
Amende þe ar haue þe nede!
Of herþeliche þinc is lutel pris,
Annemit þe blisse off heuene ivis.[73]

[Evil men, they seek God
As the sick does the doctor
As a prisoner, to speak of ransom,
And as the pilgrim, hungry for food,
As one who swerves off the path, the path
And as the foreigner, a leader,
As the weary, rest, the labourer, their reward.
Amend yourself before you have need!
From earthly things is little benefit
Seize the bliss of heaven, indeed.]

The logic of the lyric is implied rather than explicit. The analogies take for granted that the state of sin is unwanted through their unremittingly grim situations. The sicker you are the more you seek a doctor. The more you are lost the more desperate to find the path. The 'so' thus implies that the more evil you are, by analogy, the more you should seek God because the more you need him. This message appears in the context of the story of Judas, who did an exceptionally evil deed but went to hell because afterwards he did not seek – and despaired of – God's forgiveness. 'The Ballad of Judas' casts Judas as not necessarily wanting to harm Jesus but being terrified of confessing his sin and so falling into ever greater error.

The lyrics enrich the meaning of each other. Judas should have sought Jesus after he lost the money and even more desperately once the betrayal occurred. The sinner should avoid being like Judas in running from Jesus and despairing when in sin. 'Judas' is cryptic and this moral context is helpful. The shorter lyric receives weight from the biblical precedent. In this way, the Middle English lyric genre develops internal thematic links through the juxtaposition that arises from

[73] *Dichtung*, 373–74.

anthologisation. Again, the links are clear yet not necessarily so obvious one would make the link without the manuscript proximity. Anthologisation thus also allows more complex thematic links to appear within the genre. Manuscript contexts where lyrics are not placed together encourage links to texts from other genres or to source material. Rather than the vast majority of its connections extending outwards to other genres – as was the case until the anthologies – anthologisation makes an increased percentage of the connections turn inwards to other lyrics within the genre. The genre develops more complex internal thematic nodes which, once established, can be added to.

By being copied alongside each other these lyrics start a nucleus of short Middle English lyrics on the importance of repentance. The addition of other lyrics on repentance – such as 'Penaunce is in herte reusinge' – creates a group.[74] That group is a new part of the internal structure of the genre and conditions the way the lyrics are read. The above example is a thematic connection, but the placing together of lyrics on a page in other instances encourages mainly formal points of comparisons, and hence form-based groupings.[75] Lyrics being copied together may be purposeful or accidental: either way the result is comparison and connection. Less thought out manuscript planning may haphazardly encourage the finding of less blatant links and then those links may form the start of unintended conceptual groups to which other lyrics may be added. In this sometimes intentional, sometimes haphazard way, the Middle English lyric as a genre may become more complex in how readers imagine it to be internally constructed.

Between poems that are formally and thematically different but written out next to each other there may be particularly sophisticated kinds of comparison in play. Between poems that are placed next to each other and are similar there may be another kind of comparison: competition. In both domestic and religious settings, readers of these manuscripts may have had to make decisions about which poem they are going to read out loud to those listening. Individuals may have had to decide which poems to memorise, or which to memorise first. These manuscripts give little sign that they were intended to be read from cover to cover, meaning the order of poems was probably little guide. The competition between neighbouring similar poems may have led them to be read in a more critical manner. An understanding of this competition on the part of the poets may also have encouraged innovation.

[74] Henry Axel Person, ed., *Cambridge Middle English Lyrics*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 26–27.
[75] For example on f. 47v of the Trinity 323. *Dichtung*, 444–45.

In Trinity 323 on f. 24v there are two Middle English lyrics which address the Virgin Mary. They are roughly similar in length, both memorisable, both address Mary in the first person with praise and petition and both incorporate small amounts of Latin. However, put in competition with each other their slightly differing devotional agendas become apparent. Choosing one then becomes an exercise not only in thinking more deeply about the lyrics' agendas but also about one's own. For example, the first lyric 'Seinte mari, moder milde', whilst including praise of Mary, is quick to describe the speaker's wild thoughts and to make a sinner's plea that she help them stop. The second lyric, 'For on þat is so feir ant brist' has a much higher percentage of straight praise for Mary and whilst it says in the first stanza 'i crie þe grace of þe' there are actually no other self-reproaches. It ends with the idea that Jesus has closed the pit of hell. In deciding which lyric to use, or use first or most, the reader thus has to decide whether they want a more confessional lyric that focuses on their sin or one that is more exclusively and hopefully about how wonderful Mary and Jesus are. A reader looking for an address to Mary would have to think harder about exactly what they want in terms of tone and expression of personal sin.

The competition between lyrics also allows similar formal or linguistic devices to be understood in a more nuanced fashion. It may also ask the reader to think more about the competencies and needs of any audiences for which they are selecting. For example, the two Marian lyrics both incorporate Latin phrases. The Trinity manuscript mixes English, Latin and French fairly indiscriminately, as noted earlier, suggesting a trilingual target reader. However, the audience that the reader is selecting the lyric for may be less competent. If Scahill is right and the English material is for monks to use when preaching to the laity, knowledge of Latin may be a concern.[76] Both of these lyrics stay competitive in being carefully crafted so that they are comprehensible to a person who has no knowledge of Latin. Someone considering reading the lyric for an audience with a mix of no Latin, basic Latin and full Latin will find, however, that the Latin functions slightly differently in the two lyrics. One of the two alternatives may be more suitable. In 'For on þat is so feir ant brist', the Latin is more often integrated into the sentence structure. Furthermore, sometimes with the Middle English and sometimes independently, it increases the power of the lyric by creating contrasts. The ending of the third stanza illustrates:

þat for us alle scedde is blod
in cruce;
bidde we moten come to him

[76] Scahill, "Trilingualism," 19–21.

in luce.[77]

[That for us all shed his blood
On the cross
Pray we might come to him
In light.]

The use of relatively common Latin may mean that people with only a casual knowledge of Latin are able to see the contrast between Christ's action and its benefits to us as presented exclusively by the Latin of the lyric. In contrast, the Latin of 'Seinte mari, moder milde' is often less integrated into the sentence structure of the Middle English. The first stanza runs:

Seinte mari, moder milde,
mater salutaris
feirest flour of eni felde,
uere nuncuparis,
þorou ihesu crist þou were wid childe;
þou bring me of my þoustes wilde
potente
þat maket me
to deþe tee
repente.[78]

[Saint Mary, mother mild,
Mother of salvation
Fairest flower of any field
You are called truly
Through Jesus Christ you were with child
You bring me from my wild thoughts
Powerful
That make me
Proceed to death

[77] Brown, pp. 24–25: p. 25, lines 24–27,
[78] Brown, pp. 22–24: p. 22, lines 1–10.

Suddenly.]

Unlike in 'For on þat is so feir ant brist', prepositions are not used to signal the integration of the Latin. Whilst it makes sense with the English, it is more of an augmenting interjection than a continuation. The scribe, who wrote both lyrics, appears to have compared the two lyrics and considered the Latin less integrated in 'Seinte mari, moder milde' compared to 'For on þat is so feir ant brist'. They have written the Latin of 'Seinte mari, moder milde' in red, whereas 'For on þat is so feir ant brist' is all written in black. (See figure 1) The scribe has identified and amplified the sense that 'For on þat is so feir ant brist' is all in one voice which swaps languages whereas 'Seinte mari, moder milde' has two voices, Latin and English. A preacher would have to decide whether, in the present instance, they would rather overwhelm the more Latinate listeners with a greater proportion of the lyric seemingly in two complimentary and inter-magnifying voices addressing Mary or whether it would be more beneficial to have the slightly more subdued approach of a generally single voice which dextrously draws out the significance of the sound of words in each language. In making the choice between these two competing lyrics, the reader is encouraged into an appreciation of how languages are used to create voice, tone and atmosphere. Again, it encourages a mature appreciation of the formal effects that the Middle English genre had at its disposal and how they could be differently deployed in individual lyrics.

Sub-Genres

The way in which manuscripts collect together similar lyrics is one form of evidence for subgenres. It would be hard to definitely prove the extent to which the groupings in anthologies were recordings of pre-existing sub-genres as opposed to being formative in presenting readers with new or more solidified ones: some mixture of both is likely to be the case. One example of a newly emerged subgenre is that of the Marian lyric. In the anthologies, memorisable Marian lyrics are more frequently found in clusters than individually. In Trinity 323 there is a cluster of three Marian lyrics from f. 24v-25rb and another cluster of two from f. 81v-82r.[79] Jesus 29 has a cluster of two Marian lyrics from f. 180v-181v.[80] As already discussed the Marian lyrics conventionally have complex rhyme schemes. The combination of the lyrics often being anthologised together, their similarity in subject matter and length, and the formal similarities in rhyme scheme all strongly suggest a well-established sub-genre.

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[79] *Dichtung*, 291–99, 468–75.

[80] Morris, *Miscellany*, 87–88, 159–63.

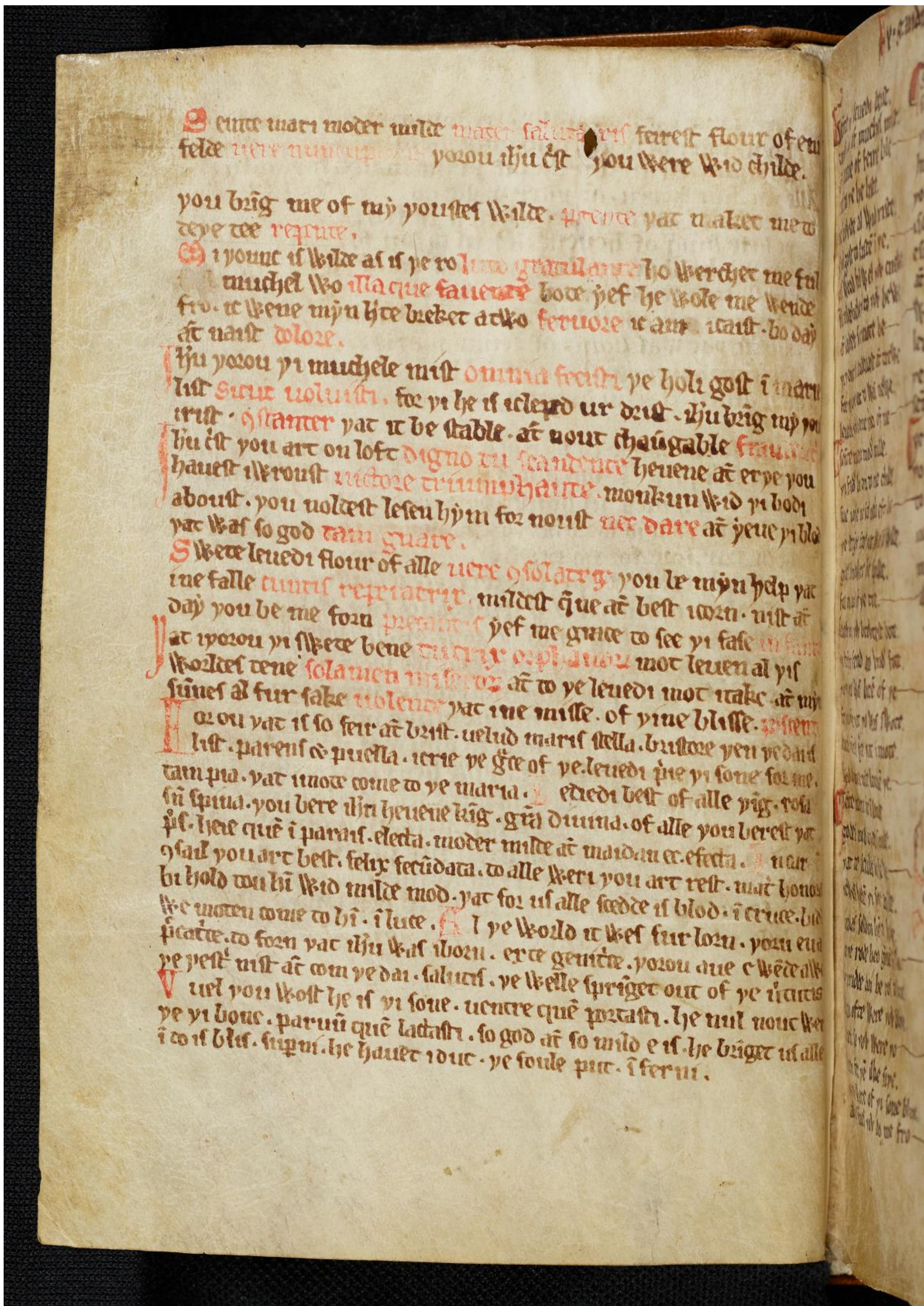

Figure 1: Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.39, f. 24v.

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The Middle English lyric has relatively clear if small subgenres in the twelfth century but grew more amorphous in the first half of the thirteenth century. In the second half of the thirteenth century, the lyrics are still various but subgenres emerge within that variety. This is partly a consequence of the stronger internal links described above: grouping with more complex internal links emerged from the larger number of various lyrics. Sub-genres provide individual works with a more structured literary context. A more structured literary context is one in which meaning can be created by adherence to, departure from, or the recombining of different pre-established norms concerning form, content, and interpretive practices. The simplicity of a Marian lyric's rhyme scheme is significant in the context of their generally having complex rhyme schemes. The different scenes in 'The Ballad of Judas' gain moral significance when the poem is understood as part of a sub-genre of repentance lyrics. Whilst there is still ground being newly broken, lyrics now had access to the affects based on established intra-generic norms.

Bestsellers

There is evidence that some Middle English poems were very popular – here meaning 'admired by many' – in the second half of the thirteenth century. These poems may well have formed a widely shared literary context for other poems by virtue of being both well-known and known to be well-known. This section will outline the way these bestsellers structured the lyric genre and argue that their influence collaborated with the useful groupings of lyrics in anthologies. Together the anthology groupings and the bestsellers presented the lyric genre as composed of parts that can be arranged and rearranged into different devotionally useful longer texts.

Whilst poems occurring in multiple manuscripts are a good sign of popularity, it can mean different things based on the manuscript involved. All of the poems found in Cotton Caligula A IX also occur in Jesus 29. Despite the two of them probably being based on a lost exemplar, the fact that the poems from that exemplar were copied out twice suggests their perceived worth. Poems that are found in manuscripts with no sign of a common exemplar or from different areas hint at a more widespread popularity. Some of the poems found in the anthologies became very popular in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Focusing, however, on those that were popular at the time of the anthologies reveals more about the literary landscape at that time. Seven poems from the anthologies are found in four or more manuscripts. The most frequently recorded poem was 'Three Sorrowful Things'.[81] This six-line lyric is found in seven manuscripts from the thirteenth century. The

[81] DIMEV 1157, 2707, 5902, 5905, 5906, 6341; Brown, 18–19.

'Poema Morale' is found in six manuscripts from the thirteenth century.[82] Five poems are found in four manuscripts from the thirteenth century. They are: 'Death's Wither Clench',[83] 'On Doomsday',[84] 'On Death',[85] 'An Orison to the Virgin Mary'[86] and *The Proverbs of Alfred*.[87] 'On Doomsday' and 'On Death' always appear together, consecutively and in the same order. These bestsellers are varied: they span different subject matters and are embeddable, memorisable and long.

The faint patterns in what types of poems are included in the variety of bestsellers provides insights into what could be popular. The list of bestsellers includes poems that were written much earlier than the first anthologies. The 'Poema Morale' appears in a manuscript from before c.1200 and *The Proverbs of Alfred* is also thought to have been written in the twelfth century.[88] It seems that age did not decrease a poem's chances of being widely copied. Five out of the seven poems are directly or indirectly concerned with death. This reflects the large proportion of the Middle English poetry in the anthologies that takes death in some form as its primary focus. Reflecting their prominence, Rosemary Woolf takes poems on death as one of the three categories she considers for poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[89] However, Woolf's analysis does not register the fact that death poetry only came to prominence in the second half of the thirteenth century; in the first half of the thirteenth century there are very few extant lyrics about death. Apart from 'Three Sorrowful Things', 'Death's Wither Clench' and the 'Poema Morale', only 'Quo sabet longe ligge in sinne' is focused on death. There is, then, a major shift in the subject of Middle English poetry between the first half and the second half of the thirteenth century.

The popularity of the bestsellers meant that they could affect the structure of the Middle English lyric as a genre. As I shall outline here, the long and memorisable bestsellers are found in extracts, combined together, and they occupy a literary space that is much overlapped by other poems on similar topics doing similar things. As I argue, this means that they model how Middle English lyrics may usefully be put together by readers in service of a larger devotional enterprise. Ardis Butterfield argues that poems were broken up and their parts recombined, perhaps changed a little, and reformed into new poems.[90] The anthologies and the best sellers suggest that this kind of

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[82] J. D. Sargan, "Scribal Readers: Reading in the Variants of 'Poema Morale'," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 120, n. 3 (2021): 384.
[83] DIMEV 3370; Brown, 15–16.
[84] DIMEV 6339; Brown, 42–6.
[85] DIMEV 5640; Brown, 46–54.
[86] DIMEV: 4270; Brown, 56–60.
[87] DIMEV 714; *Proverbs of Alfred*, ed. Skeat.
[88] Hill, "'Conduct of Life'," 97–144. Cannon, "Proverbs," 408.
[89] Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, vii.
[90] Butterfield, "Textual Form," 56–57.

process may occur on the much larger level of the genre as a whole. Not only were individual poems made by the putting together of parts of lyrics, but also a super-structure of poems might be created through the judicious putting together of poems.

The 'Poema Morale' circulated widely as a complete poem and had many counterparts. However, extracts of the 'Poema Morale' also circulated. For example – as has been analysed in chapter two – three different versions of the 'Swithe Swete is swines bredre' extract from the 'Poema Morale' are found in Maidstone A.13 and there is also a version in a Latin sermon in Durham, University Library MS Cosin V.iii.2.[91] All three Maidstone versions of this couplet are in different hands, suggesting a widely used extract. Another extract from the 'Poema Morale' is found in London, British Library MS Royal 7. C. IV, f. 106v and written in a hand of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.[92] The fact that extracts of the 'Poema Morale' circulated independently of the whole suggests that people were reading the full text and putting into written or oral circulation the parts of it that they found particularly useful. Despite being a long poem, the 'Poema Morale' could exert an influence over embeddable poems through its extracts. The same is true for *The Proverbs of Alfred*. A four line extract from *The Proverbs of Alfred* is found on f. 1434 of Digby 86. Whilst it is hard to be sure whether the poem or the extract came first, it is clear that long poems were being used in parts in addition to as wholes.

Not only were the bestsellers used in parts, but their parts often resembled shorter complete lyrics. For example, 'On Death' has a description of the grave and the dead body, the 'ubi sunt' trope, and a lament for sin, mostly as the soul addressing the body, before proceeding to a description of the devil and hell. The idea that when you are dead your friends and relatives will want your gold and give no money for your soul is found in the five line lyric 'Wenne þin eyen beit ihut' written on f. 28 of Trinity 323.[93] The change from earthly wealth and beauty to the smallness and decay of the death is found in 'When Turf is thy Tour' in Trinity 323.[94] The Anglo-Norman and Middle English poem 'The XI Pains of Hell', which is found in Digby 86 and Jesus 29, concentrates at great length on the pains of hell.[95] In 'NU þu vnseli bodi up-on bere list' from Trinity 323 the soul reproves the body for its excesses of worldly enjoyment.[96] In this way, the bestseller 'On Death'

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[91] Sargan, "Scribal Readers," 385. Hill, "Couplet," 377. The Durham version has not been edited but is found on f. 127va of Durham, Durham University Library Cosin V.iii.2 and appears in full in DIMEV, 5065.
[92] Sargan, "Scribal Readers," 385.
[93] Person, *Lyrics*, 21.
[94] Brown, 54.
[95] Morris, *Miscellany*, 145–55.
[96] Brown, 64.

combines and is segmented by a lot of subjects that other Middle English poems treat separately. 'An Orison to the Virgin Mary' does the same thing to a lesser extent. It combines praise of Mary with a devaluation of this world and a lamentation of past sins. The way in which several of the bestsellers combine topics treated individually in other Middle English poems may have encouraged readers to see those bestsellers as made up of different segments of material that could each stand alone.

As well as being composed of extractable parts, the poems 'On Doomsday' and 'On Death' present as two poems put together to make a longer whole. The result is not chronological, but clearly devotionally effective in that having the damned soul address the dead body is more potent when one has just read about doomsday and so has the terrors in store for the soul in mind. The anthologies also put lyrics together in a devotionally useful manner. The placing of 'The Ballad of Judas' and 'Yuele men goid þe siechen' is an example of this.

The bestsellers could on one hand be put together and on the other hand be broken down into useful extracts or distinct topics. In doing so, they suggest that the lyrics were wholes that could, on the one hand, be used in parts, and on the other be made parts of greater wholes. The latter is particularly important for how the genre is conceptualised. The bestsellers organised disparate content into a composite whole. 'On Death' is a compendium of topics for discrete poems where each topic is respected as an individual but also forms a greater whole. Other poems stood in relation to these well-known poems. This meant that a poem on the grimness of the grave becomes an independent topic for meditation but also part of a wider meditative enterprise. A reader might pair it with other poems dealing with other aspects of life after death to create their own meditative journey in the style of 'On Death'. In this way, the impact of this type of bestseller may have been to make individual Middle English meditational poems feel like episodes in the greater meditational enterprise that Middle English poetry facilitated.

The bestsellers thus confirm the sections where the anthologies put together complimentary lyrics as not just useful, but as part of the general enterprise of constructing the genre into a personalised devotional journey. The anthologies model the different ways this could be done but also – in their more haphazard sections – give, without comment, the reader the primary materials to make their own journeys.

Summary

Anthologisation meant that the Middle English lyric developed much more complex internal dynamics. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the manuscript context created many external connections with unlike genres for the Middle English lyric. In the second half of the thirteenth century, anthologisation placed Middle English lyrics in the vicinity of each other and thus encouraged readers to make connections between lyrics. The placing together of dissimilar texts may incite unexpected connections which put focus on specific features, leading to new ways of understanding texts and perhaps unintended ways of conceptualising the genre's internal structure. The material proximity of the lyrics also allows for competition: this encourages a more minute understanding of the nuances of theme, affect and the poetic techniques that create them. Furthermore, in this period the lyric genre is starting to manifest a more developed internal structure. There are sub-genres (like the Marian lyric discussed earlier) which individual lyrics can use as a pre-made imaginative backdrop or else work against the conventions of. There are bestsellers which arrange the generic landscape about themselves and in some cases create an idea of the potential unity of different poems in the service of extended meditation. When talking about the Middle English lyric, critics assume that the second half of the thirteenth century was its very start: Woolf writes of 'the plain inadequacy of a minor poet writing *without a firm literary tradition behind him*', whilst Ingrid Nelson imagines that as late as the fourteenth century individual lyrics were so unlinked by the genre as to not be able to use each other's triumphs.[97] In fact the origins of the written Middle English lyric lie in the second part of the twelfth century. By the end of the thirteenth century the lyric was a well-developed genre. It was self-referential, it had internal structure, and individual lyrics could draw on the expectations attendant on the lyric genre and sub-genres to create special effects. The Middle English lyric of the second half of the thirteenth century is not, then, the first buddings of Middle English poetry but instead a confident, established, well-developed genre.

3.3 The Genre's External Connections

The anthologies demonstrate that the Middle English lyric has complex and fruitful internal structures. The anthologies also show this well-developed genre to have new and different relationships with other genres and languages. In the twelfth century, the interpretation and use of

[97] Ingrid Nelson, *Lyric Tactics: Poetry, Genre, and Practice in Later Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2017), 12–14. Woolf, *Religious Lyric*, 9, emphasis mine.

Middle English lyrics were guided by their explicit association with other overlapping genres. In manuscripts from the first half of the thirteenth century, the lyric is often hosted by and thus interacts with different prose genres. The anthologies from the second half of the thirteenth century frequently show Middle English lyrics being regarded as of the same genre as the French and Latin lyrics with which they share manuscript space. This occurs occasionally in the first half of the thirteenth century (with 'The Prisoner's Prayer' and 'Mirie it is') but in the anthologies it is a much more regular occurrence and extends to a greater part of the genre. The first part of this section will explore the consequences for the Middle English lyric of this incorporation into a multi-lingual, pre-existing genre.

In the anthologies, there is a strong sense that the Middle English lyric is a genre with an internal structure and a history. It interacts with poems and prose in other languages and genres that have their own conventions, best sellers and histories. This section is particularly interested in the interaction between genres and consequentially between their traditions. Three genres – the English, French and Latin lyric – collapse together: there is evidence that lyrics in these different languages were seen to be part of the same category rather than entirely separate categories. This must have significant impact on: their traditions, the relationships between their traditions, and the relationship between individual texts and the three traditions.[98] The reception of Middle English lyrics is now much more influenced by French and Latin lyrics and the reading practices attendant on those genres. It is, however, not so simple as a complete collapsing together of traditions: they are presented as one genre and yet slight differences in the texts hold them apart. The tradition of French lyrics, then, contributes more strongly to the expectations attendant on a Middle English lyric than before, but not in the same way that it would contribute to a French lyric.

The anthologies show Middle English lyrics being closely associated with lyrics in other languages; they also show some Middle English lyrics being associated with other genres. The second part of this section will look at how the lengthening of the Middle English lyric facilitated new types of connections with long genres. It looks at the particular and various ways in which genres could relate to each other and the impact germane to a particular type of connection.

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[98] For thought on the importance of the surrounding literary tradition on an individual text and on how the significance of a text changes with an alteration to that tradition, see: Eliot, "Tradition," 44–45. Jauss, *Reception.*

English, French and Latin Lyrics

The anthologies present English, French and Latin lyrics as all part of the same genre through manuscript proximity, macaronic poems, and multilingual sequences. My thinking about the Middle English lyric's participation in macaronic poetry and sequences is particularly concerned with the opportunities a conflux of languages creates for inter-generic sharing and distinguishing.[99]

Manuscript Proximity

One way that Trinity 323 and Digby 86 suggest that English, French and Latin lyrics are of the same genre and of comparable status is by placing them next to each other in a way which highlights their similarities. For example on folio 163vb to folio 164v of Digby 86 there is an English and a Latin poem that both describe the inadequacy of this world.[100] They each have a title provided by the same scribe that wrote both poems. The titles are:

> Chaunçun del secle.[101]
> [Song of the world.]
> Hic demonstrat veritatem seculi isti.[102]
> [This demonstrates the truth of the world where you are.]

The titles reflect the pairing of the poems: they are both comments on the world. Whilst the rhyme schemes and stanza lengths are not exactly the same, they are similar. They are both of a memorisable length and hence can be used in a similar way. The anthologies are bringing together similar Middle English and Latin poetry on an equal footing in the manuscript and pointing out their similar topics and forms. They thus set up the conditions whereby readers can see the poems are of the same genre.

There are also instances in Trinity 323 where English, Latin and French poetry appear on neighbouring folios in a similar way to in Digby 86. For example ff. 81v–82r contain, consecutively,

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[99] This is an alternative approach to the generalising about the status of the languages and hence their role in macaronic poetry, and to the somewhat impotent assertions that English and other languages can have an equal and undistinguishable roles in macaronic poetry. Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290– 1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 202–203. Elizabeth Archibald, "Macaronic Poetry," in *A Companion to Medieval Poetry,* ed. Corinne Saunders (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 280–81.

[100] Fein, *Digby 86*, xvii.

[101] Fein, *Digby 86,* 166n16. In two other manuscripts the Middle English poem comes with music. MES, 137.

[102] Fein, *Digby 86,* 166n16.

two Middle English Marian lyrics of memorisable lengths and a similarly memorisable Latin poem on avarice and greed. None of the poems are presented as translations; they are anthologised together without hierarchical distinction. The latter two poems are written by the same scribe.[103] The section on ff. 27v – 28r appears to collect together material that could be embedded in sermons. Within this broader category there are cross-linguistic pockets of lyrics. For example, at the top of f. 28r, scribe D has entered two short poems on marital difficulties: the Middle English 'Say me, viit in þe brom' and the Latin poem 'Queritur Egestus':

> 'Say me, viit in þe brom,
> Teche me, wou I sule don
> Þat min hosebonde
> Me louien wolde!'
> 'Hold þine tunke stille –
> And hawe al þine wille!'[104]
>
> ['Tell me, wight in the bush
> Teach me what I should do
> So that my husband
> Will love me!'
> 'Hold your tongue still –
> And obtain all your desires.']
>
> Queritur Egestus quare sit confectus adulter?
> In promptu causa est: desidiosus erat.[105]
>
> [Aegisthus is asked why he became an adulterer?
> The manifest cause is: he was idle.[106]]

Both of these poems have secular themes but nonetheless could be used in a didactic Christian context: they form a cross-linguistic subgenre of lyric. On the previous page, scribe F has written out

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[103] *Dichtung*, 468–76.
[104] *Dichtung*, 315–17.
[105] *Dichtung*, 317–18. The Latin can be found in Alanus of Lille's twelfth century *Summa de Arte Praedicandi*; it was thus intended for preaching. *Dichtung*, 318
[106] David L d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157.

the consecutively didactic poems in French and English.[107] These examples illustrate scribal willingness to place similar English, French and Latin poetry together for a similar purpose.

Macaronic Lyrics

Another way that the Trinity manuscript presents Middle English and French lyrics as of the same genre is through macaronic poetry. Macaronic poetry brings the poetry of two languages into the same space on what can be an equal footing. The macaronic poetry in the anthologies tends to be of a memorisable length. The lyric 'I Hesu crist le fiz marie' is found on f. 24r of Trinity 323 and is in French and English.[108] The French and English stanzas alternate with the French coming first. Separately, both the French and English make effective lyrics. Together they also make a lyric that makes sense, if is somewhat unusual. The first line of the English stanzas often are fairly similar in meaning to the first line of the previous French stanza. In subsequent lines the subject matter is fairly similar but the sense is mostly different. This is exemplified in the last two stanzas:

> Mort de-sour la crois suffri
> marie e seint ion le ui
> e se ke penderent en conste de li
> le du laron
> le un li cria merci
> il out pardoun
> li autre aual cheit
> en pu par-fund
>
> Deet he þolede up-on þe tre,
> ant wnden boþen two ant þre,
> to saue þo þat hise ben
> ant hider ben comen.
> ihesu, þi blisse us bi-see
> for þi swete moder loue. AmeN [*sic*].[109]
>
> [He suffered death on the cross,

[107] *Dichtung*, 312.
[108] Brown, 20–22.
[109] Brown, pp. 20–22: p. 22, lines 19–24.

Mary and Saint John saw him
and those who hung by the side of him,
the thieves.
One of them cried ‘Mercy’,
he obtained forgiveness.
The other fell down
To greater depths.

He suffered death upon the tree,
And wounds both two and three,
To save those that are his
And hither are come,
Jesus, furnish us with your bliss
For your sweet mother’s love.]

The composition conjures and departs from the idea that the English is a translation.[110] The resultant object is productively both two lyrics and one macaronic lyric: the longer macaronic lyric makes sense but is more consistent than normal lyric ruminations on a theme in presenting almost every idea in two different ways. Conceived as separate lyrics, the Middle English and French stanzas are each recognisable as devotional poetry in their own languages. The Middle English content invites the set of expectations that go with Middle English poetry into the longer macaronic lyric. For example, the absence of any confession of sins or prayer for forgiveness is noticeable. It is noticeable not because all devotional Middle English lyrics do this, but it is common enough that its absence is experienced. The Middle English invites the reader to be ready for this trope: once the trope is in mind its absence is also experienced in the macaronic lyric and hence in the French. In this way, the expectations attendant on English are at least partially transferred to the French and vice versa.

[110] Its indeterminacy as translation or not is reflected in critical readings of this poem. Lazikani sees it as one poem whilst Marjorie Harrington treats it more as two poems, one of which is a translation of the other. Lazikani’s understanding leads her to think more about how the two languages build up a fuller picture together than the significance and consequences of their differences. Lazikani, *Heart,* 99–101. Marjorie Harrington comments that ‘the strictness of this translation is very inconsistent’. This is so much true that it seems productive to me to think of it less as either loose translation or macaronic poem and more as a playing with the methods and reading practices that accompany translation. Marjorie Harrington, “Bilingual Form: Paired Translations of Latin and Vernacular Poetry, C. 1250–1350,” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2017), 57–58.

The English and French come together to make up a lyric that is composed of the characteristics and expectations from both traditions and is similar in topic, form and purpose to both of those traditions. Thus this macaronic lyric emphasises the overlap between the generic traits of the English and French traditions and itself operates as a whole in that overlap.

The mirroring between the French and Middle English stanzas at once shows French and Middle English poetry doing the same thing and also emphasises where they are different. Conjuring the idea that the Middle English is a translation encourages comparison between the 'versions'. However, in the English going on to be its own poem and a distinct contribution to the greater whole, the divergence of the English feels less like a reaction to the French and more a product of the English lyric's separate traditions. For example, in the following lines the English is experienced as being of increased physicality because is it in the context of the generality of the French:

> *A un piler fu lie*
> *e pur nus peccheurs turmente*
> […]
> Ibounden e was to a piler
> ant al to-torn was is her.[111]
>
> [He was bound to a pillar
> And tormented for us sinners;
> […]
> He was bound to a pillar
> And his hair was completely ripped away.]

This moment of viscerality on the part of the English is in contrast with the preceding pair of stanzas where the French was the more sensual.

> *plus douz ke mel*
> *kaunt il est chaud*
> […]
> þou yef us alle god endeng

[111] Brown, pp. 20–22: p. 21, lines 13–14.

ant ti loue.[112]

[More sweet than honey
When it is hot.
[…]
You give us all a good ending
And your love.]

The French here is more sensual in its imagery. However, it is sensual through metaphor whereas the Middle English is visceral through metonymy. The contrast works to characterise French verse as more elaborately metaphorical and English verse as containing more literal visual detail. In this way, the bringing together of the two languages serves to characterise them both in contrast to each other. As a consequence of the comparison, the Middle English verse appears to contain more literal visual detail and less metaphorical imagery. Without the comparison, the lack of elaborately metaphorical imagery would not be so noticeable. In this way, the comparison means that each languages' lyrics are characterised in terms of what they are not as well as what they are. They each contribute to the expectations of the lyrics of the other language by creating a set of expectations about what the other is not. Readers may not accept this lyric's characterisation of the poetry of the different languages. Their rejection will nonetheless still be an understanding of one in relation to the other: for example, a reader might conclude that whilst it may not be present here, actually Middle English lyrics in general do contain metaphorical imagery like the French of this lyric. The languages still define groups that can be compared and hence are held somewhat apart even as their similarities and proximity bring them together. Thus, the traditions are brought together but they are not wholly combined.

This lyric presents the traditions as similar enough that it is the type of imagery used to add detail that distinguishes them. It brings them close but does not necessarily makes them exactly the same or eradicate a reader's knowledge of difference in their poetic traditions. If genre is understood to mean texts that are categorised together by readers, we must allow readers nuance enough that this lyric can present the French and English as the same in some ways and not in others. What is important, is seeing that how they are understood as the same has an effect on what they can do and be as pieces of art.

[112] Brown, pp. 20–22: p. 21, lines 9–10.

The Lyric Sequence

The linkage of lyric poetry across languages comes with the arrival of the cross-linguistic lyric sequence. A sequence is distinctive from other types of grouping in anthologies insofar as it suggests that the poems in question should be read in a specific order, that the ideas should progress in an at least partially linear fashion from one poem to the next, and that the poems together should make up a composite whole. The sequence is one of the ways in which scribes and readers viewing the lyrics as related, permitted lyric poetry across the three languages to function in new ways. Folios 200r to 200v of Digby 86 are taken up by three lyrics which together form a progression from earthly love to love of Jesus. There is no particular suggestion that they were composed as a sequence and the last poem is found separately.[113] However, read together on the page they act as a sequence; the sequence is a result of scribal agency if not scribal intention.

The first of these three lyrics is in Middle English and the latter two are in Old French. The Middle English lyric, ‘Loue is sofft’, is the most distinctive of the three. It describes love in a lot of short clauses. It is highly alliterative and has an *aaaa* rhyme scheme. The lyric squashes often completely opposing good and bad characterisations of love up against each other without comment. Despite the many epithets from both sides, prior to the last stanza neither side seems able to counteract the truth of the other. The clauses are too short and move on too swiftly for any kind of reasoning about how the good and bad might interact. The first and last stanzas run thus:

Loue is sofft, loue is swet, loue is goed sware.
Loue is muche tene, loue is muchel kare
Loue is blissene mest, loue is bot ȝare.
Loue is wondred and wo, wiþ for to fare.
[…]
Were loue also londdrei as he is furst kene,
Hit were þe wordlokste þing in werlde were, ich wene.
Hit is I-said in an song, soþ is I-sene,
Loue comseþ wiþ kare and hendeþ wiþ tene,
Mid lauedi, mid wiue, mid maide, mid quene.[114]

113 Samuel Bentley, ed., *Excerpta Historica: Or, Illustrations of English History* (London: S. Bentley, 1831), 405, 407–9.
114 Brown, pp. 107–8, lines 1–4, 24–28.

[Love is soft, love is sweet, love is friendly words,
Love is great regret, love is great sorrow,
Love is most happy, love is fully good,
Love is wretchedness, and woe to practise.
[…]
Were love as patient as it is first passionate
It were the most worthwhile thing in the world that might be, I believe.
It is said in a song, the truth is manifest,
Love commences with vexation and ends with grief,
With lady, with wife, with maid, with queen.]

As the first stanza exemplifies, the form and content serve to make love feel all engrossing, inescapable and yet unresolvable, by making the reader move back and forth over similar territories, caught within its contradictory nature. It is only in the very last stanza – given above and starting 'Were loue also londdrei' – that one side is allowed to interact with and counteract the other: the lyric concludes that if love were more long suffering it would be the best thing in the world, but as it is not it brings much grief.

The second of the lyrics in this sequence is the French lyric 'Couuard est'. In sense 'Couuard est' follows almost exactly from where the Middle English lyric 'Loue is sofft' left off. The first, second and last stanzas run thus:

> Couuard est ki amer ne ose vilein ki ne veut amer
> Saunz amour ne se repose le quer del houm ne le penser
> Mes folie est de amer chose ke ne puet duree aver
> Ens dechiet a chief de pose, pus n'I as ke solascer.
>
> Charnel amour est folie: ke veut amer sagement
> Eschue kar breve vie ne let durer longement
> Ja taunt la char n'ert flurie, ke a poreture ne descent
> Bref delit est lecherie, mes saunz fin dure li torment
>
> […]
>
> Jhesu nostre redemtioun vostre amour desir,

Pour quai ki n'eit perdiscion m'alme mes a wous puise venir
Tele conservatïun me dunez dekes al murir,
Hou n'i ad si ioie nun, e quant ke went a pleisir. Amen. [115]

[He is faint-hearted who does not love and base who does not wish to:
Without love there is no rest for the heart of men, nor peace of mind.
Yet folly it is to love something that cannot endure;
It flatters for awhile, but afterward crumbles away, unable to afford solace.

Fleshy love is such foolishness: he who wishes to love wisely
Should avoid it, for life's brevity grants it no permanence.
The body doesn't exist, however appealing, that will not descend to decay.
Lechery offers brief delight; hell's torments last forever.

[…]

Jesus our redemption, your love, desire
By means of which, that my soul may not be danmed, but come to you,
A proper way of life please grant me befor I die
Where there is naught but joy and all that comes with pleasure.[116]]

'Couuard est' starts in its first stanza with the need to love and yet the folly of loving that which is transitory. The second stanza of 'Couuard est' manoeuvres the kind of transient love in question to be that of lechery. This is a subtle step down from what the English lyric and the first stanza of 'Couuard est' implicitly imagine love to be and is not necessary for the next step in 'Couuard est'. That next step – conducted in the third and fourth stanzas of 'Couuard est' – is to suggest that one should love Jesus, who is the best and most steadfast lover. The final stanza of 'Couuard est', given above, addresses Jesus directly. It expresses desire for Jesus and for help to live correctly. The trajectory between 'Loue is sofft' and 'Couuard est' is despair at the wonderful and yet miserable tragedy that is earthly love and then a solution being offered in Jesus. Without 'Couuard est', 'Loue is sofft' would be a tragedy without solution or proposed action. 'Couuard est' without 'Loue is

[115] Tschann and Parkes, *Digby 86*, f. 200v, lines 1–8, 17–20.
[116] Translation taken, with minour emendations, from: David L. Jeffrey and Brian J. Levy, trans. and eds., *The Anglo-Norman Lyric: An Anthology* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1987), pp. 268–69, lines 1–8, 23–26.

sofft' would be quite commonplace. There are many lyrics of this sort. The limited and commonplace rejections of earthly love in 'Couuard est' are filled up by the more balanced and hence more painful view put forth in 'Loue is sofft'. They thus become more persuasive. Furthermore, coming to 'Couuard est' in a despair about earthly love makes its solution much more appealing.

The third lyric in this sequence is the Old French poem 'Beaus sire iesu crist'. This third lyric also takes up where the second lyric, 'Couuard est', left off. 'Beaus sire iesu crist' is a direct and impassioned address to Jesus. A much longer version of this poem was found on a thirteenth century roll in the tower of London. This suggests that somebody wanted a portable version.[117] The Digby version of 'Beaus sire iesu crist' is somewhat unorthodoxly cut off at the point where Jesus has been so humble as to take flesh for the sake of the speaker and mankind:

> Mout vous dei en amer vous me amastes auannt
> Qant vostre deite humilier voliez tannt
> Qe si cum vous fustes ⁊ estes tout puissant
> Houme deuenistes humeine char portannt.[118]
>
> [Much ought I to love thee, for thou didst exceedingly love me,
> When thou didst willingly humble thy Godhead so far,
> That here, though thou wert and art all-mighty,
> Thou didst become man, bearing human flesh.[119]]

After this final stanza the Digby version of 'Beaus sire iesu crist' adds but one extra line asking God's defence from sin. Most poems, including the longer version of this poem, would go on to talk about the crucifixion.[120] This makes stopping at the point of becoming human more powerful and focuses the reader on how shocking the incarnation is. In the context of the sequence's other two lyrics on love, the suggestion that the speaker ought to love Jesus for taking flesh takes on more meaning. It suggests that Jesus in becoming human made himself the perfect alternative to painful earthly love. The aim of 'Beaus sire iesu crist' is avowedly to make one turn one's love towards Jesus; the more

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117 Bentley, *Excerpta Historica*, 405.
118 Tschann and Parkes, *Digby 86*, f. 200v, lines 9–12.
119 Translation with minor emendations from: Bentley, *Excerpta Historica*, 407.
120 Bentley, *Excerpta Historica*, 407–9. See, for example: 'Louerd crist ich þe grete' in Morris, *Miscellany*, 186–91. 'Þu þad madist alle þinc' in Brown, 61.

implicit suggestion is that Jesus became human precisely so that he could be a perfect and complete object of human love.

The Middle English and French lyrics work better in the context of each other in the sequence. The first French lyric, ‘Couuard est’, is more persuasive for someone who has just experienced the English lyric’s despair. The second French lyric, ‘Beaus sire iesu crist’, has more interesting theological ideas about Christ taking flesh in the context of the first French lyric. This sequence differs from one longer English or macaronic lyric in how different the styles of the three separate parts are. The degree of change is greater than that generally found in long Middle English lyrics. It means that more can be done to differentiate the states of mind and the ideas that are moved through. They take one on a journey from torment, to despair, to hope, to love, to contemplation. The journey is composed of separate lyrics. This means that a poet could write it, but it can also be created by scribes or readers. It models the benefits of readerly or scribal creativity in creating cross linguistic lyric devotional journeys from separate lyrics. It is thus an invitation to and advocation for creativity, play, and devotional agency on the part of users of lyrics across languages.

It has already been suggested that the long bestsellers model for readers how shorter Middle English lyrics could be used together. This example models the benefits of a cross-linguistic sequence and some of those benefits are specific to its being cross-linguistic. Lyrics in a cross-linguistic sequence gain access to achievements of lyrics in other languages that draw on traits that are particular to that language. It may not become part of the set of expectations that can be played with, but it can become part of the achievements that are referenced and drawn on. For example, although the alliteration of the Middle English lyric may not be an expectation that is carried over to the French, the second French lyric nonetheless benefits from the force and claustrophobia that the alliteration adds to the English lyric. It does so because the more forceful and claustrophobic the first lyric’s characterisation of worldly love is, the more of a relief loving Christ is likely to appear to the reader. Another benefit is that the commingling of the Middle English lyric with the French and Latin lyrics also means that there are so many new combinations of lyrics that can be created. Writers, scribes and readers can create these new combinations to draw out and extend the formal implications, the thematic possibilities and the overall effectiveness of lyrics in all three languages.

The conceptual joining up of English, French and Latin lyric poetry means that a single lyric can cause much greater waves across three languages rather than merely in the lyrics of its own language. A lyric can also draw on the achievements of a greater range of lyrics; this increases the range of what it can do.

Relationships with other Genres

Since first being written down, the Middle English lyric has been associated with a changing variety of other genres. The anthologies putting the lyrics next to other genres was not novel, though the regularity of their being placed together as independent texts both occupying the main body of the page was new. Additionally, the lengthening of the lyric meant that its relationship with long texts changed. Different types of connection with longer genres were possible.

The extended length of the Middle English lyric meant that it could be connected to other genres by means of one text that is firmly part of both genres. Digby 86 and Trinity 323 include, on ff. 195v-197v and f. 29 respectively, a lyric starting 'In a thester study'.[121] This poem is 108 lines long and contains an overheard conversation between a dead body and its soul. The poem operates both as a Middle English lyric and a debate poem. Debate poetry in this period was an established multi-lingual genre, as John Conlee has said:

> By the thirteenth century vernacular debates had begun to appear alongside the Latin disputations, and the Latin and vernacular poems of this period share a set of conventions which suggest that debate poetry had come to be accepted, however tacitly, as a discrete literary genre.[122]

Digby 86 in particular presents 'In a thester study' as a debate poem. It does so by pairing it with the French debate poem 'The Strife between two Ladies'.[123] In this poem two ladies debate their different attitudes to marriage and infidelity. The pointed difference in subject matter serves to emphasise that what unites these two poems is their both being debates. 'In a thester study' also operates in the long Middle English lyric tradition of body and soul poems. The earliest Middle English body and soul poems are from the end of the twelfth century and they consist only of the soul upbraiding the body after death.[124] During the first half of the thirteenth century there is a hiatus in the recording of this kind of poem. During the second half of the thirteenth century, embeddable or memorisable lyrics where the soul addresses the body become more popular.[125] The expectations attendant on debate poems enter the Middle English body and soul tradition by means

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[121] Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, 11–17.
[122] Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, xv.
[123] E. Stegel, ed., *Codicem Manu Scriptum Digby 86 in Bibliotheca Bodleiana Asservatum* (Halle: Libraria Orphanotrophei, 1871), 84–93.
[124] Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, xxv.
[125] Examples include: 'Nou is mon hol & seint,' Brown, 31. 'Nu þu vnseli bodi up on bere list,' Brown, 64.

of ‘In a thester study’. In having both body and soul talk, this lyric alone makes the absence of the body talking back appear to be an active choice in current and retroactively in past lyrics.

Furthermore, body and soul poems being linked – through ‘In a thester study’ – to the debate tradition adds more than that single lyric can. In some debate poems – such as *The Owl and the Nightingale* – there is no clear winner. [126] This context makes the body’s giving a spirited reply seem possible. This possibility is not suggested by the weak replies – such as the following – of the body in ‘In a thester study’:

> Þo spac þe bodi so dimme to þe wrecche gost:
> ‘I vende mi worldes blisse me wolde euere i-last;
> Nes me no senne þat bindeþ me ful fast;
> Þe bondes þat ich am inne to erþe hoe wileþ me cast.’[127]
>
> [Then spoke the body so very faintly to the wretched soul:
> ‘I believed my worldly prosperity would last forever;
> I gave no thought to sins that bind me so fast;
> The bonds that I am in, they will cast me into the earth.’[128]]

The four way debate in the poem ‘God’s Four Daughters’, also included in Digby 86, may make remarkable the fact that it is always just the soul and the body, when medieval models of personhood often include more than two elements.[129] In this way, one lyric operating at the overlap between two generic traditions can form a bridge over which the expectations attendant on those two traditions can cross. Here is another mechanism by which genres change; the creation of an inter-generic poem can have a huge knock-on effect for how one of the sub-genres is understood.

‘In a thester study’ acts not only on current and future but also on past body and soul poems. It makes earlier one-way addresses of the soul to the body feel like debate poems where one party is silent. The impact of ‘In a thester study’ on earlier Middle English body and soul lyrics can still be seen: Conlee’s edition of medieval debate poems includes ‘The Grave’ and ‘Nou is mon hol

[126] John Edwin Wells, ed., *The Owl and the Nighingale* (Boston: Heath, 1907).
[127] Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, p. 12, lines 9–12.
[128] Translation mine consulting: Conlee, 12n11.
[129] Robert Grossete, *Le Chateau d'Amour*, ed. J. Murray (Paris: Champion, 1918), pp. 94–102, lines 204–468. Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 17–18. M. R. Godden, “Anglo-Saxons on the Mind,” in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 279.

and soint' despite them both including only one way addresses.[130] Part of the reason 'In a thester study' had such a big impact is that it participated in a popular and tightly collected Middle English subgenre and also in the wider sub-genre of poems on death. Its close connections with other lyrics means that it strongly affects their reception. In contrast, 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' (on 136vb-138rb of Digby 86) helps to tie the 1794 line poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* into Middle English lyric poetry by being a strenuously memorisable, 192 line, bird debate poem containing more of the topics found in the Middle English lyrics.[131] The strong ties between 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' and *The Owl and the Nightingale* mean that poems which have similarities with and hence are read in the context of 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' are also read in the context of *The Owl and the Nightingale* despite their being unlike. However, the similarities between 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' and most other Middle English lyrics are few and weak; this means the extent to which it – and the *The Owl and the Nightingale* along with it – influences the reception of other lyrics is mild. The bridge that 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' forms between *The Owl and the Nightingale* and other lyrics is not of much literary significance because, unlike 'In a thester study', this duo do not have a large body of very similar poems of which to slightly alter the literary context and hence the reception.

The increased length of the Middle English lyric, together with the greater amounts of Middle English poetry, generally now meant that the lyric could no more be distinguished from longer poems by length alone. Other types of Middle English poetry provide the borders for the more amorphous genre that is the Middle English lyric. Some of those genres – such as the sermon or the fabliaux – overlap with the lyric. These connections with other genres can give internal structure to the lyric – such as creating subgenres – but can also provide the lyric with borderlands. Others genres, such as saint's lives, have weaker links with the Middle English lyric. The more defined border they create characterises the Middle English lyric in terms of what it is not. For example, the clear and relatively consistent way in which *The South English Legendary* – found in late thirteenth-century manuscripts – gathers together Middle English versified saint's lives helps to make them a cohesive group.[132] It also separates them from other Middle English poetry. The border between these genres emphasises the fact that the lyric does not include prolonged narration of the events in an individual's life. This generic idea serves to highlight the fact that poems about saints, such as Thomas Becket's lyric in Jesus 29, do not narrate their whole life but instead are brief

[130] Conlee, *Debate Poetry*, 3–9.
[131] Brown, 101–7.
[132] Including Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 108. See: Kimberly K. Bell and Julie Nelson Couch, eds., *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: The Shaping of English Vernacular Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

addresses.[133] It also emphasises that where the lyric does narrate a scene from a person's life – such as in 'De Muliere Samaritana', 'Nu þis fules singet hand maket hure blisse', or 'The Ballad of Judas' – it is either just one scene dealt with in detail or a limited sequence of scenes dealt with briefly.[134] The exclusion of the saint's life and the romance from the lyric genre makes paying close attention to the significance of a single scene a particularly lyrical approach to narrative. In this way, the characteristics of the lyric are emphasised by contrast to the techniques engaged in by Middle English poetry in other genres.

Summary

In the anthologies of the thirteenth century, the Middle English, French and Latin lyric can operate in more varied and interesting ways due to their being read together. The lyrics of these languages being part of the same genre means that they are understood in the context of each other even when this is not prompted by manuscript layout. The anthologies also permitted the lengthening of the lyric which meant that the lyric could now overlap in new ways with long genres. This overlapping allowed different sub-genres of lyric to draw on the achievements and the expectations attached to other genres. Sub-genres informed by external connections then internally had relations with other strands within the Middle English lyric. The extent to which this occurred makes it part of what the lyric of the anthologies is. The result of this lyric characteristic is that it had at its disposal a fantastically intricate and diverse range of achievements and expectations which it could weave together to create new effects.

Conclusion

The Middle English lyric of the anthologies is in many ways radically different to the embedded or marginal lyric of the first half of the thirteenth century. It moves from being mostly of an embeddable length to being predominantly of a memorable length. This change allows it more complex rhyme schemes, more extended narrative development and to encourage different meditative practices. The lyric genre's internal relationships also change. The fact that lyrics are anthologised together means that they can more easily be compared and can compete. Competition encourages subtle assessments of competing lyric's affectivity, treatment of a subject and aesthetic merits. Subgenres and bestsellers emerge: the lyric genre gains internal structure with individual lyrics having varying relations with other lyrics in its sub-genre, in other subgenres and with the very

[133] Brown, 67.
[134] Morris, *Miscellany*, 84–86. Brown, 38–39, 55.

popular poems. In this way, the lyric has strong internal bonds and sets many of its generic expectations internally. The Middle English lyric of the anthologies is also presented as the same genre as Old French and Latin lyrics in a much more widespread way. It is partially defined against the French and Latin traditions but also can use their generic triumphs and take on their generic expectations.

The chain of knock-on events caused by anthologisation is at times very long. For example, the anthologies permitting a greater number of memorisable lyrics led to new relationships with longer genres which in turn had consequences for related shorter lyrics. Anthologisation facilitates desired changes in the lyrics such as more complex rhyme schemes, the use of narrative, and lyric sequences. However, anthologisation also comes with less intentional changes such as unexpected connections, points of focus and groupings, as well as connections with other genres that had far-reaching and ungovernable impacts, and lyric characteristics having different effects in the context of longer poems. Together the changes facilitated by anthologisation constituted a transformation of the genre.

Conclusion

The Middle English lyric changed substantially in the first one hundred and fifty years of its existence. In the twelfth century there were three sub-genres: the liturgical lyric, the sermon lyric, and the history lyric. At this stage many of the lyrics are explicitly based on differing combinations of other genres and traditions. Despite this they are a surprisingly coherent group. Family characteristics include the use of proper nouns, direct address, and brevity. They all operate on a sliding scale between the devotional and the historical.

The lyrics found in manuscripts from the first half of the thirteenth century differ from those of the twelfth century in quantity, confidence and characteristics. There are more lyrics and they no longer need to be explained by accompanying prose; at this point the Middle English lyric is an independent and flourishing genre. Many of the lyrics retain a sense of situation but lack proper nouns and the sense that the situation in question is historical rather than general. The history lyrics are more distinct from the larger mass of devotional lyrics.

In the anthologies of the second half of the thirteenth century the Middle English lyric is a genre that has a complex internal structure, that stands unembedded on the main body of the manuscript page, and that has strong and broad connections with French and Latin lyrics. Middle English lyrics in manuscripts from the first half of the thirteenth century show sporadic connections with Latin and French lyrics, but in the anthologies the connection is widespread. New sub-genres emerge: they include Marian lyrics, lyrics on death, and penance poems. This increasingly self-referential genre also exploded in popularity in this period; in the anthologies alone there are more than four times the number of Middle English lyrics than are found in the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century.

The lyrics in the anthologies are on average much longer than the lyrics in earlier thirteenth-century manuscripts. Lyrics appear to have been split into three main length categories based on where they were hosted: embeddable (in prose), marginal, and memorisable. These different lengths presented the lyrics with different possibilities, a selection of which were taken up.

The embeddable Middle English lyrics are dense with meaning by virtue of a changing variety of characteristics and conventional reading practices. In the twelfth century, they often include proper nouns that signify people or places that have a lot of cultural baggage, such as Saint Thomas, England, Mary, Cnut, Ely, Saint Kenelm, and Lothbrok. They sometimes play with traditions

of thought wherein a small rethinking is very significant: the Saint Nicholas lyric as well as the later and longer Ten Commandments lyric are examples of this. In the first half of the thirteenth century, a significant proportion of the lyrics – including the weeping lyric – use double meanings: this allows each idea to signify twice and sets up a dialogue between two sides of the allegory that can be highly productive in terms of meaning. There also appears to have been a culture of adding ideas into the lyric from elsewhere. Often signposts suggesting how one is to add meaning or interpret the poem are given in the smallest of ways: by the order of words, the rhyme scheme, or lexical choice. The brevity of the lyrics made being more explicit difficult and succinct signposts allow for denser meaning. The compression of many ideas into a small space and the provision of often microscopic hints to the reader about how to embark on generically encouraged, prolonged thought about a lyric sometimes resulted in productive ambiguity. Thus, the other characteristics and reading practices of the Middle English lyric in the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century worked with its brevity to create semantically dense but interpretatively open poems.

The extended length of the memorisable lyrics in the anthologies allows them to bring to the lyric genre: more complex rhyme schemes, as with the Marian lyrics; alternate stanzas in different languages, as with 'I Hesu crist le fiz marie'; and biblical narrative, as in the 'The Ballad of Judas'. The relationship of the Middle English lyric to the debate poem and to the sermon changed as the lyric became long enough for the connection to be whole text to whole text.

The majority of the Middle English lyrics were devotional but, as with length, the manner in which they were devotional varied between poems and over time. The Saint Nicholas lyric acted as a devotional script: the difficulty and the benefit came less from understanding it than saying it earnestly. Some lyrics, such as Cnut's situational liturgical lyric, required metaphorical interpretation before they could be used as devotional scripts. In more or less direct ways, then, one of the key offerings of the early lyrics in particular is a set of devotional words for people to make their own.

The Middle English lyric also could provide readers with an accessible space to think about theological matters. It achieved this in two different forms. The first way – as seen in 'Mirie it is' – was by comparing a theological concept with human romance. The reader's knowledge of the ways of man is compared with the ways of God in such a manner as to allow the reader to think productively and relatively freely about the nature, accuracy and extent of the comparison. The other way, as seen in 'Spines brede', was by juxtaposing two versions of a theological concept – either through the translation of a well-known text or by having two slightly different versions of a Middle English lyric – and asking the reader to consider which version they preferred. The first way is

more accessible in having human romance as the jumping off point. The second way relies on the lyric reading practice of paying attention to small details and might occur merely through the accident of changes during transmission or the almost inevitable changes that come with translation. In both – as discussed above – small features of the poem are allowed to act as relatively sparse instigators and signposts of the theological enquiry.

In contrast to the current critical consensus, the Middle English lyric changed a lot in its first one hundred and fifty years of existence. Happily some clues remain as to how it began and the mechanisms by which it changed. The genre started in three separate strands. One strand, the history lyric, was not new in the twelfth century, but was a continuation of a trickling tradition. The other two strands seem to have been without immediate precedent in the twelfth century. They came about by means of the mixing of other, pre-existing genres. Surprisingly given their similarity, no two lyrics are exactly the same mixture of pre-existing genres. All of the liturgical lyrics have a relationship with the divine office and song but are also variously linked to popular songs, proverbs, rowing songs, Old English poetry, Old Norse situational verse or else have particularly close relationships with antiphons, psalms or prayer. The sermon lyrics are supported by the sermon genre but also have links to the thema, nursery rhymes and the body and soul tradition. The link with body and soul tradition shows that, like pre-existing genres, a cross-generic tradition could help spawn this new genre. It is not only characteristics that the early lyrics take from their parent genres; it is also reading practices. The prose surrounding the liturgical lyrics in particular appears anxious to explain to the reader the generic frameworks through which to understand the text. The prose also makes explicit the political implications of the combining of genres involved in creating the earliest Middle English lyrics.

This is how the genre started. It then developed through a variety of mechanisms. Of those varying mechanisms, three have left traces I have been able to follow. Those three mechanisms of change are: firstly, interaction with other genres; secondly, lyric characteristics functioning differently due to changes in their immediate or wider literary contexts; thirdly, a change in the manuscript context of the lyrics.

The second mechanism functions at the level of the individual lyric and the genre as a whole. As seen in the individual lyric on the Ten Commandments, rhyme functions differently in the context of a list structure to how it functions in other lyric structures. More broadly, allegory functions differently when it moves from the proverb to the slightly longer context of the lyric. Attention to detail as a reading practice has different consequences when deployed on a single poem compared

to when deployed on multiple versions of the same poem. One change begets many others by changing the context in which its fellow characteristics or practices function.

The Middle English lyric's development of new characteristics through connections with other genres is not a matter of straightforward transfer. In general, inter-generic connections produced characteristics not seen before in either genre. This is in part a consequence of the variety and complexity in the types of inter-generic connection possible. The lyric may be combining genres or – as with the proverb – outdoing, commenting on or undermining the other genre. It may also be translating but also improving a text or – as with the hunting lyric – striving to capture the whole significance of an extract. These are the mechanisms by which individual texts were and did things that were not previously part of the genre, as far as the records can show.

The most major change in manuscript context that the Middle English lyric underwent was anthologisation. The anthologies presented a different picture of the lyric, impacted the nature and reception of the lyrics they included and hence changed the genre as a whole. The placing together of lyrics led to stronger and stranger connections and groupings. The placing of the Middle English lyric with French and Latin lyrics exhibited their similarity and advocated for their being considered the same genre. The copying of sequences of lyrics helped present the genre as many separate pieces that could be put together to create a longer devotional journey.

The different mechanisms of change do not always occasion the same kinds of movement on the part of the Middle English lyric. The changes occasioned by anthologisation appear to have happened in an immediate cascade of knock-on effects. Anthologisation permitted longer written lyrics which came with new possibilities and (as seen in 'The Ballad of Judas') changed the effects of old lyric characteristics. Scribes, purposefully or not, placed texts together and thus occasioned a rush of comparisons and hence reinterpretations and groupings. Not only are current and future lyrics affected but, as seen with debate poetry, pre-existing lyrics are reinterpreted in the light of the new intra- and inter-generic contexts that anthologisation precipitated.

In the manuscripts of the first half of the thirteenth century in particular, the lyric's interactions with other genres caused it to change in a very different manner. At the level of each individual interaction, the changes appear various and not always intended. Each alteration changes the context that pre-existing lyric features operate in and thus has a cascading impact. Each individual change would take the lyric in a different direction. However, there are some changes that occur again and again from different stimuli. Different types of allegory are developed from a

multitude of different kinds of interaction with various genres. Furthermore, some of the new characteristics become popular in the genre and some do not. For example a rhyme scheme and a meter that changes between stanzas occurs in 'The Prisoner's Prayer' but does not become popular in this period. Allegory, on the other hand, does become common. There is a conundrum in genre theory about how genres maintain any sort of distinctiveness despite generic mixing.[1] On the basis of the lyric evidence, I offer one model whereby at the level of each individual interaction it would seem like genres should disperse. However, at the aggregate levels there is more coherence. There is more coherence in the changes that interactions often result in and there is more coherence in which changes becomes popular. The coherence at these slightly higher levels is a big part of what allows the genre to maintain some degree of distinctiveness. It may well be societal factors that determine which characteristics keep recurring, which become popular, and how they are combined. However, there is a high degree of individuality, chance, pressures from the literary landscape and unintended consequences at the lowest level of change, and these low level changes are the raw materials with which societies generate new works. These less controlled raw materials have a strong impact on how and in what form a genre moves in a societally desired direction. For example, the lyrics that encourage theological enquiry in the first half of the thirteenth century do appear to follow a general public interest in lay devotion. However, they do so in a specific way that one would struggle to predict based solely on societal need. It is the haphazardness of change at the level of individual interactions that allows the genre as a whole to develop in unpredictable and unintentional ways.

The development of genres is more complex than just being the work of genius authors or else the product of societal needs or trends. It is also more complex than chaos or the momentum of the literary landscape. Instead it concerns all of these processes – and others – together. Ian Watt in his famous analysis of the rise of the novel calls 'genius' and 'accident' 'the dead ends of literary history' and turns instead to the philosophy and the historical context of the period. 'Accident', as I have argued, need not, however, be such a dead end of literary history. This study has attempted to redress our balance of attention between the different factors somewhat in favour of haphazard consequences and the way they interact with the potentialities in the literary landscape.[2]

[1] Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 191.
[2] Watt, *Novel*, 9.

It is said that genres are ways of understanding the world, forms of life, or creators of sense.[3] Instead, I consider the Middle English lyric genre an environment that could support an infinite but bounded range of somewhat related world views. In being composed of texts, the lyric of course encompasses all of those views. But what the lyric genre does for each of its texts is more to make the creation of those views possible. This capacity is a valuable and an important part of a culture. Genres have often been thought to fulfil certain societal needs. However, I cannot presume that it is always possible for a culture to just create the texts or genres it needs. Right now I can think of genres we as a culture desperately need but have not yet managed to make.[4] For this reason, I have been interested in the practical mechanisms through which it was possible for the Middle English lyric to begin and to change. It is exciting to think how our genres can run ahead of our capacities or our intentions, and useful to know how we might encourage them to do so.

[3] What genres, subgenres and texts do varies and is sometimes best described by one of these terms and at other times by another. Frow, "'Reproducibles'," 1626–34. Nelson and Gayk, "Form-of-Life," 3–17. Daniel, "Redistributing the Sensible," 129–40.

[4] A genre that is popular, accessible, and that helps us better feel our place in the natural environment may, for example, be instrumental in preventing man-made climate change.

Abbreviations

Brown	Brown, Carleton, ed. *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938.
EETS	Early English Text Society
Dichtung	Reichl, Karl. *Religiöse Dichtung im Englischen Hochmittelalter: Untersuchung und Edition Der Handschrift B. 14. 39 Des Trinity College in Cambridge; Texte und Untersuchungen zur Englischen*. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1973.
DIMEV	Digital Index of Middle English Verse. https://www.dimev.net/Search.php.
ES	Extra Series
MES	Dobson E. J., and F. Ll. Harrison. *Medieval English Songs*. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.
OS	Original Series
PL	*Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, edited by Jacques-Paul Migne.
SS	Second Series

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