Shaping the World:
The Geographies of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108

By

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Abstract

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Shaping the World: The Geographies of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108 takes a manuscript from late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century England as an entrance point for explorations of politics and cultural history. I read multiple scribes’ contributions to Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108 (Laud 108) as a dialogue among writers and readers. This previously unrecognized conversation, in Laud 108’s South English Legendary collection of saints’ lives and in the romances Havelok the Dane and King Horn, reveals thirteenth- and fourteenth-century conceptions of the geographical shape of the world. It also betrays the scribes’ consistent engagement with the process of creating Englishness. The Laud 108 texts define English identity against and in reference to imagined Jews and Muslims. They also contrast English people with the exotic, wondrous beings who occupy both the far and mythical east and the near, but still exotic, western lands of Scotland and Ireland.

Laud 108 appears in the aftermath of the Third Crusade, the 1237 Crusade of Richard of Cornwall and in the period surrounding the 1290 expulsion of the Jews from England. Memories of the civil wars of the 1130s and 1250s still trouble English stability, and the conflict between church and state that led to Thomas Becker’s 1170 death and subsequent canonization has not been forgotten. Laud 108 engages, sometimes openly, often obliquely, with twelfth- and thirteenth-century English unrest. Its saints’ lives and romances hide subtle, politically dangerous allusions to English politics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, including the civil wars of the 1130s and 1250s.

Chapter 1, Shaping the World: Laud 108 as a Map, argues that Laud 108 is itself a map, parallel to contemporaneous physical maps such as the Hereford Map, and that we can use geographical and cartographical theory to determine how Laud shapes and imagines the world. In this chapter, I explore the impact of Laud 108’s placement of England in the...
imagined map of the world. Chapter 2, *Thomas Becket’s Saracen Mother*, examines the Laud 108 *Life of Thomas Becket*, the longest, most elaborately decorated section and therefore most important part of the codex. The chapter connects the nameless heathen lands from which Thomas Becket’s legendary mother originates to the deeply and carefully constructed England where Thomas lives and dies. Chapter 3, ‘Time out of Mind’ and the Jews of the South English Legendary, looks at the Laud *South English Legendary* (SEL)’s investment in English historical memory and asks whether the constructed Jews in the SEL can mirror actual, historical Jews in England until their expulsion in 1290, around the time of the production of the codex. Chapter 4, *The Case of the Missing ‘Vita’: Shadows of History in Havelok the Dane*, extends the examination of English historical memory to the traumatic histories of civil war that may underlie *Havelok the Dane* and Part B of Laud 108. The final chapter, *The Wonders of the West: Displacing Marvels in Laud 108*, returns to the conception of Laud 108 as map, investigating the imagined peripheries of the world and studying the ways in which the margins of the world connect back to England. I close the project with a coda, *The Enemies are (Almost) Here: The Geographies of King Horn*, in which I examine the Saracens who invade an England-like space in *King Horn*. Using these invaders, I argue that the project of Laud 108 as a whole codex includes bringing societal threats near to, but not quite into, English narrative and England itself.
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Preface and Acknowledgments

In England, at the end of the thirteenth century, England’s sense of itself and its place in the world was in flux. Two centuries following the Norman Conquest, the multiple literary languages of England were changing in relative status. Latin remained most educated Christian writers’ primary choice for formal, theological, legal or didactic writing. However, Anglo-Norman (French) was the most established and common vernacular language for popular literature. Middle English appeared accompanying Anglo-Norman and sometimes Latin materials, in manuscripts such as the early thirteenth-century London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A.ix, but rarely in isolation. The economic and political aftermath of the Third Crusade at the end of the twelfth century, and the rumors circulating from later, more disastrous crusades, helped English Christians categorize themselves in opposition to the eastern Muslims whom the Crusaders fought. A series of civil wars, sometimes triggered by the untenable systems of royal and national finance, troubled England’s stability. Uneasy relations between the Christians and Jews of England, also often stressed by the same financial troubles that caused and resulted from the civil wars and Crusades, culminated in Edward I’s expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290.

1 Of course, Latin, Anglo-Norman and Middle English were not the only languages used in thirteenth-century England and the British Isles. In Wales, rich twelfth- through fifteenth-century Welsh-language literatures show close connection to the Anglo-Norman, Old French and Middle English script communities; for instance, a Middle Welsh form of the Chanson de Roland circulates in ten copies. Annalee C. Rejhon, ed., Cân Rolant: The Medieval Welsh Version of the Song of Roland, University of California Publications in Modern Philology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).


3 On the interconnection between English finance and civil war, examine J. R. Maddicott’s discussion of the mid-thirteenth-century Barons’ Wars in Simon de Montfort (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Chapter 4 below.

Since books mirror, respond to and recreate the worlds outside the books, one way to discover how thirteenth-century English readers and writers imagined their rapidly-changing world is to choose a book from that period and investigate the interior world it constructs. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 108 (Laud 108) responds to and recreates the political and literary tensions of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In the dissertation project as a whole, I read the codex Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Miscellaneous 108 (Laud 108) as a means of entrance into late thirteenth-century England’s construction of itself and the world around it.

Chapter 1, *Shaping the World*, builds the dissertation’s theoretical framework. Exploring medieval theories of mapping and of imagining space, I conceptualize the book-as-artifact as a type of map. The chapter includes a physical description of Laud 108 and connects the book’s design to the places listed in the book. The map in Laud 108, I argue, shapes a sacred geography of the known world. It marks out places that saints and heroes have, by their presence and by their actions, rendered holy, and imagines a world made up of these holy places.

The map that Laud 108 creates, its world-in-a-book, is not usable for travel, but rather for imaginative journeys and mental pilgrimages. The creation of this map or world-in-a-book is performative; it alters the world by depicting it. Laud 108 participates in the politically-weighted work of creating the world in its readers’ minds, therefore affecting their interpretations of politics, war and intercultural relations in the world outside of the book.

Chapter 2, *Thomas Becket's Saracen Mother*, uses a bizarre story in the Laud 108 *South English Legendary* (SEL) to explore the connections between geographical peripheries and centers in the Laud 108 map and to consider Laud 108’s constructions of an inaccessible, romanticized historical past. In this tale, Thomas Becket, the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1170), is the son of a Crusader who crosses out of the Christian lands and a formerly-Saracen (i.e., Muslim, as imagined in Christian narratives) princess who falls in love with him when he is abroad. This legend adds conventions of romance and *chanson de geste* to the story, known to every Christian in thirteenth-century England, of a major political and religious figure martyred within recent memory.

By attaching romance conventions to the life of Thomas Becket, the story of the Saracen princess alters readers’ previous constructions of Thomas. When it creates a Crusade-related genealogy for Thomas Becket, the narrative helps Thomas Becket model holy and redemptive heroism, and connects Thomas to the areas Laud 108 constructs as the peripheries of the world. Along with a series of journeys through Europe that Thomas takes during his lifetime, the non-Christian mother and Crusader father help Laud 108 imagine

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Thomas as a cosmopolitan figure, a representative of the entire Catholic world. Oddly, the generic and location shifts in the Life of Thomas Becket help create Thomas as an especially Anglo-Saxon figure, by erasing some of his historical Anglo-Norman identity. As such, Laud 108 turns its hero-saint Thomas Becket into a model of English (as opposed to Norman/French) language and natively English culture.

Chapters 3 and 4 take up the question of why Laud 108’s visible references to historical events end at Thomas Becket’s death in 1170. According to late thirteenth-century English law, Richard I’s 1289 accession marks the end of “time out of mind” and the official beginning of recorded history. With a single exception, the Life of St. Edmund the Confessor, Laud 108’s historiography ends in the reign of King Henry II. The book never openly alludes to post-1170 historical events such as the formulation of the Magna Carta, the Third Crusade, the Barons’ Wars, and the troubled Christian–Jewish relations leading up to the 1290 expulsion of the Jews in England. Instead, Laud 108 obliquely reflects these events and the cultural fear, grief and anger around them. The book distances problematic events, situating them in faraway places and times, as it distances geographical peripheries.

Chapter 3, “Time out of Mind” and the Jews of the South English Legendary, searches Laud 108 for evidence of the late thirteenth-century English crisis in Jewish–Christian relations. When the Laud 108 SEL portrays Jews, it avoids mention of the difficult historical events in which they participated, from the 1190 York massacre to the 1290 expulsion of the Jews from England. Nevertheless, as businessmen, moneylenders and townspeople, the SEL Jews do play economic roles similar to those of actual Jews in thirteenth-century England. Their stories, almost always resolved with conversions rather than exiles or murders, provide conversion as an alternate solution to expulsion for the problem of medieval English Jewry. That solution must be implicit rather than explicit because recent history is too raw and too painful to translate directly into saints’ lives and romances.

Chapter 4, The Case of the Missing ‘Vita’: Shadows of History in Havelok the Dane and King Horn, asks why a later Laud 108 scribe (Scribe 3), adding a booklet to the preexisting compilation, chooses not to follow up on the earlier collection of saints’ lives. Scribe 3 could extend the visible references to historical events into the recent past, adding vernacular lives of late twelfth- and early-thirteenth century English saints and never-canonicalized folk saints. Scribe 2’s dialect suggests an East Anglian origin, and thirteenth-century East Anglia provides multiple saints who could appear here. Almost all of them, however, are implicated in anti-Jewish discourses, in civil wars, or in other moments of English societal crisis. Instead of engaging openly with these issues, Scribe 2 switches genres, inserting romances, or medieval adventure stories, into Laud 108.

By choosing not to tell the stories of these saints, the second scribe doesn’t erase the troubling historical narratives from the reading community’s lived past. Rather, the scribe encodes them in two romances, Havelok the Dane and King Horn. While avoiding the fear
and guilt surrounding East Anglian tales of child saints murdered by Jews and narratives in which Christian saints protect Jews, Scribe 2 uses typically anti-Jewish language to code the non-Christian invaders in *King Horn*. The scribe replaces the actual, recent civil war in which one folk saint, Simon de Montfort, led rebel groups, with the more distanced, imagined, romanticized civil wars in *Havelok the Dane*. The use of romance instead of saint’s life permits the scribe, and the book as a whole, to cope with cultural crises without handling them directly. The book’s distancing project contributes to Laud 108’s construction of the world.

The fifth and final chapter, *The Wonders of the West: Displacing Marvels in Laud 108*, studies the marvels and monsters of Laud 108. While maps such as the Hereford map place marvels and monsters in the far western and southern edges in the world, Laud 108, I argue, does not. The most powerful marvels that appear in Laud’s Asia and Africa are rarely native to these spaces. Rather, they are interlopers brought by Christian evangelists in order to colonize the eastern and southern peripheries of the world. By contrast, another set of wonders and marvels, which we might expect to occupy the farthest, most easterly and southerly borderlands of the known world, belongs not to England itself but to the British Isles and the seas surrounding them. England, the familiar home of local and memorable saints and heroes such as Thomas Becket and Simon de Montfort, thus becomes adjacent to otherworld zones. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the *Life of Thomas Becket* links Crusade histories and Orientalist exotic spaces to the historicized England we see in the Constitutions of Clarendon. Similarly, the *Short Life of Brigid, St. Patrick’s Purgatory*, the *Life of Saint Brendan* and the *Life of Saint Michael* situate the strangest wonders within reach of England. The near, and yet exotic, spaces of Ireland and Scotland become places where English scribes and readers can locate the strange, troubling and fascinating.

In the coda, *The Enemies are (Almost) Here: The Geographies of King Horn*, I tie the dissertation together through the romance *King Horn*, which follows *Havelok the Dane*. *Horn* takes place in a series of western islands that are invaded by Saracens. These western islands, like Ireland and Scotland in Chapter 5, are near to England, but none of them are precisely England itself. When ships full of Saracens conquer the island of Sodenne and force its inhabitants to convert from Christianity to paganism, we see a Muslim invasion in a location where no Muslim invasion should occur. *King Horn* represents Laud 108’s anxieties about interfaith conflict and Crusade while distancing that fear to a place that is near England, but not England itself. By manipulating the geography of the west, and narrating a nonexistent war, Laud 108 displays thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England’s fear of monstrous and non-Christian threats but simultaneously rendering the threats unthreatening to England itself.

In the years I have been working on this project, I have been given more help than I could ever return. I could not have begun the project without training in manuscript studies. At
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There is a kind of love called maintenance,
   ... which upholds
The permanently rickety elaborate
Structures of living; which is Atlas.

- U. A. Fanthorpe

Andrea Lankin
Berkeley
July 21, 2011
Chapter 1

Shaping the World: Laud 108 As Map

Part 1: Laud 108 as a Book

I will begin this project by describing Laud 108, and the construction of the SEL within Laud 108. Laud 108 is an entity in itself, a coherent work worthy of investigation in its own right. Without an examination of the book itself, we cannot develop arguments about how the book functions. Therefore a brief description of Laud 108 and its known and determinable history follows. Laud 108 is a collection of primarily Middle English saints’ lives, lives of Christ, didactic works and romances. Marginalia and rubrics in Latin and Anglo-Norman, as well as occasional code-switching within the main texts of the book, confirm that the scribes possessed some degree of multilingual literacy, and suggest that the scribes may have anticipated some multilingually literate readers. Four scribes (one of

5 A full formal description of Laud 108 appears in the Appendix.


The MS has also been described in the following works: Manfred Görlach, The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary, n.s. 6, Leeds Texts and Monographs (Leeds: University of Leeds School of English, 1974), Gisela Guddat-Figge, Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances, ed. Helmut Gneuss and Wolfgang Weiβ, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Englischen Philologie (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag München, 1976), Rosamund Allen, ed., King Horn: An Edition Based on Cambridge University Library, MS Gg 427(2) (New York: Garl`and, 1984), Carl Horstmann, ed., The Early South English Legendary or Lives of Saints, EETS o.s. 87, (London: Trübner, 1886) and Horstmann, ed., Leben Jesu, ein Fragment, und Kindheit Jesu (Münster: Druck und Verlag von Friedrich Regensberg, 1873).

whom helped number the textual entries), along with one other enumerator, a group of three flourishers, and other marginal notators and glossators, produced the codex over a period of a hundred years or so. Most of the material was present by the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

The lives of Christ and saints’ lives on ff. 1-198 are an early and unusually-organized form of a collection to which scholars have given the name the South English Legendary (or SEL). One scribe (Scribe 1, or in A.S.G. Edwards’ description, Scribe A) wrote all of these texts, as well as two didactic poems following them, the Sayings of Saint Bernard and the Visio Pauli. Scribe A’s handwriting, a gothic book-hand (gothica littera textualis semiquadrata formata) of the late thirteenth century, is consistent throughout the section. The section is acephalous, beginning in the middle of a fragmentary Life of Jesus; numeration on each recto page suggests that the Life of Jesus was originally Entry 8 in the codex and that the first seven entries are entirely lost. Most texts in this section are ruled in plummet, and laid out in single columns. The two exceptions are the Childhood of Jesus and the last page of the Life of Saint Lucy (f. 60v). The Childhood of Jesus appears in double columns, while the last page of Saint Lucy is not only in double columns, but in prose, and the text uses all available space on the page. Following the SEL, Scribe 1 wrote two didactic texts, the Visio Pauli and the Disputation of Body and Soul, in ff. 198r-200v.

On ff. 200v–203, the blank pages at the end of the gathering following Saint Bernard and the Visio Pauli, Scribe 2 (Scribe B, according to Edwards) has added another didactic text, the Disputation of Body and Soul. Scribe 2’s hand is also a gothic book-hand, no later than the first quarter of the fourteenth century, but slightly less neat than Scribe 1’s hand, with lines of uneven height.

Ff. 1-203 comprise Part A of the codex. Part B, ff. 204-238, includes the work of Scribe 3 (or Scribe C) and Scribe 4 (or Scribe D). Scribe 3, using a gothica littera textualis semiquadrata formata hand recognizably different from the work of Scribes 1 and 2, wrote two romances.

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7 The Laud 108 South English Legendary sanctorale material has been edited by Carl Horstmann, ed., ESEL; Horstmann edited the Laud temporale in Leben Jesu, ein Fragment, und Kindheit Jesu and in Althandische Legenden: Kindheit Jesu, Geburt Jesu, Barlaam und Josaphat, St. Patrik’s Fegefeuer (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1875). Horstmann’s editorial methods have not dated well. The Early English Society, a group including Scott Kleinman, Dorothy Kim, Sharon Goetz, Marisa Libbon and me, is now re-editing all of the Laud 108 materials as a digital edition. Since this edition is still in its early stages, I have used Horstmann’s work as my base text for this project, consulting the manuscript for comparison when appropriate.


Havelok the Dane and King Horn, in double columns. Debate continues on the dating of Scribe 3’s work; I believe that Scribe 3, too, writes no later than the first quarter of the fourteenth century, and possibly earlier.\(^\text{10}\) Scribe 4, in an informal, late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century Anglicana hand, adds three saints’ lives and the poem Somer Soneday to unlined pages at the end of the codex.\(^\text{11}\) These texts, along with a final flyleaf including short fifteenth-century verses and provenance information, make up the book we now recognize as Laud 108. This bare description I have offered of the contents of the manuscript does not tell us who wrote the book, why it was written, or what order the texts were written in and why.

One crucial signal of the codex’s production history is the textual numbering. Two scribes have numbered all of the extant texts except those in the final flyleaf. The first enumerator, writing in the top margin of recto pages and sometimes in the right or left margins of other pages, used a reddish crayon to number and name the texts. The crayon has faded badly, and the trimming at the top of the codex sometimes removes the textual numbering altogether, so it is not always possible to follow the crayon enumerator’s work. The crayon numbering is especially difficult to see on the black-and-white microfilm; studies of the textual numeration must be performed on the manuscript itself. The crayon numeration identifies the Life of Christ, the first extant text, as entry 8. The crayon enumerator has numbered all of the South English Legendary texts, although he lists the consecutive Lives of Julian the Confessor and Julian the Hospitaller under the same number, entry 38, and he numbers the Life of Saint Michael as two separate texts, 45 and 46.\(^\text{12}\) The crayon enumerator has also numbered the Sayings of Saint Bernard and the Visio Pauli, as entries 68 and 69. No sign of crayon numbering is visible on the Disputation of Body and Soul. Crayon numeration is rarely present on Havelok the Dane and King Horn, and on some folios in Part B, scraped vellum in the top margins suggests that a later scribe has erased the crayon numeration. However, on folio 228r, in King Horn, the crayon enumerator has identified the poem as

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\(^{10}\) Havelok the Dane has been admirably edited in G. V. Smithers, ed., Havelok (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). Skeat and Sisam’s edition, The Lay of Havelok the Dane (1915), remains useful. The most recent scholarly edition of King Horn, edited by Rosamund Allen, uses the base text Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg 4.27 (2). A full diplomatic text of King Horn as it appears in Laud 108 faces the Cambridge MS text and the London, British Library, MS Harley 2253 text in Joseph Hall, King Horn: A Middle English Romance, Edited from the Manuscripts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).


\(^{12}\) I have chosen the male pronoun to describe the crayon enumerator for convenience. The anonymous scribes, flourishes, enumerators and other participants in the production of Laud 108 have left no demonstrations of their names, ages or sexes.
entry 71. The crayon enumerator has not numbered Scribe 4's contributions to the codex, *Blaise, Alexius, Cecilia* and *Somer Soneday*. The crayon enumerator, therefore, witnesses a period in the manuscript's history after the addition of *Havelok* and *Horn* but before Scribe 4’s work.

The second enumerator, writing in ink and numbering all of the texts from the beginning of the codex through *Somer Soneday*, is Scribe 4. We know this because the sepia of the ink numeration is exactly the same color as the texts of *Blaise, Alexius, Cecilia* and *Somer Soneday*. Scribe 4’s numeration, while faded, has survived better than his predecessor’s crayon numeration. It seems possible that Scribe 4 renumbered the texts in order to replace the disappearing crayon with legible ink. Throughout the *SEL temporale* and *sanctorale* sections, and in the *Sayings of Saint Bernard* and the *Visio Pauli*, Scribe 4’s numeration agrees with the crayon numeration. This evidence suggests either that the lost seven entries at the front of the book were still present when Scribe 4 was working, or that Scribe 4 simply chose to agree with the crayon numerator’s work. After *Visio Pauli*, the two numeration systems no longer agree. Scribe 4 numbers the *Disputation of Body and Soul* as entry 70, *Havelok the Dane* as entry 71, and *King Horn* as entry 72. On folio 228r, at the end of *King Horn*, the ink numeration reads 72 while the crayon numeration reads 71.\(^\text{13}\)

Because the crayon enumerator has not numbered the *Disputation of Body and Soul*, and because the crayon enumerator numbers *Horn* as 71 rather than 72, the *Disputation* must not have been present in the manuscript at the time of the crayon numbering. The *Disputation* was added after the romances *Havelok* and *Horn* were assembled into the codex, probably written onto the blank pages at the end of the fourth booklet, but before Scribe 4 added the last texts.\(^\text{14}\)

This order of writing, which has not been noticed by prior scholars, has major implications for the dating of Scribe 3 and for the assembly of *Laud 108* as a whole. Paleographers examining the *Laud* scripts agree that Scribe 2’s hand belongs to the end of the thirteenth century, while tending to date Scribe 3’s hand to the first quarter of the fourteenth century.\(^\text{15}\) Dating particular handwriting solely through paleographical evidence is surprisingly difficult, and individual scholars select dates based on their own research preoccupations as

\(^{13}\) See Liszka’s brief comments on the manuscript numeration in “Laud 108 and the Early History,” 76.

\(^{14}\) For further information on the booklets of *Laud 108*, see below.

\(^{15}\) For instance, A. S. G. Edwards writes that the *Disputation* “is copied in a … late thirteenth-century Textura hand,” while the *Havelok-Horn* scribe is “another Textura hand, probably early fourteenth-century.” Edwards, “Contents, Construction and Circulation,” 26. On varying dates which scholars have offered for the *SEL* and *Havelok-Horn* portions of the manuscript, see Thomas Liszka, "Talk in the Camps: On the Dating of the *South English Legendary, Havelok the Dane,* and *King Horn* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108," in *Texts and Contexts*, ed., Bell and Couch.
well as on particular handwriting features. The evidence for Scribe 3 as early fourteenth-century figure rests not on letterforms, but on a reference in *Havelok* to a Lincoln parliament, possibly connected to an actual Lincoln parliament in 1301. If we accept that *Havelok* and *King Horn* must have been written in the years following 1301, Scribe 2 must also belong to the early fourteenth century. But, because Scribe 2’s hand is later than Scribe 3’s hand, and because it contains late thirteenth-century features, we can deduce that both Scribes 2 and 3 were working near the very beginning of the fourteenth century. Scribes 1, 2 and 3 were working over a forty-year period at maximum (i.e., 1280–1320, or thereabouts), but I think that period may have been as short as fifteen years or less (i.e., 1295–1310).

The evidence for the production of Part B very soon after Part A rests both on the crayon enumerator’s work and on the pen-flourishings in the codex. Two competing theories exist regarding the flourisher or flourishers who ornamented the capital letters in the SEL, *Havelok* and *Horn*. Liszka, citing a never-completed study by Sonia Patterson, concludes that three different flourishers decorated the capitals with red and blue lines, and Murray Evans, reexamining the flourishing, concurs; Edwards, however, suggests that only one flourisher worked on these sections. Even so, all critics agree that one flourisher decorated ff. 1–10, 56–160 and 204–226 – that, in fact, a flourisher working in most or all of Part A of Laud 108 also provided ornamentation for *Havelok* and *Horn*. The flourisher or flourishers did not ornament the *Disputation of Body and Soul*. Before the flourisher(s) stepped in, there would have been blank spaces in place of multiple-line initial capitals in the *Life of Thomas Becket* and elsewhere in the codex. The book would not have appeared complete until the addition of flourishings and enumeration. Andrew Taylor argues that the flourishing that crosses from booklet to booklet proves that Parts A and B of Laud 108 were assembled in the same place, near the same time, probably in order to be gathered into a single book. My discovery that the same enumerator worked on Parts A and B before the addition of the *Disputation* substantiates this argument.

The enumeration and flourishings, together, show that even if Scribe 1 did not anticipate the addition of *Havelok* and *Horn* to the codex Scribe 3 wrote *Havelok* and *Horn* specifically to add them to the preexisting SEL collection. They also show that the codex would have looked incomplete until *Havelok* and *Horn* were added and the flourisher(s) filled the blank

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16 See Liszka, “Talk in the Camps,” for the applicability of this principle to studies of Laud 108.


19 Taylor, “‘Her Y Spelle,’” 77.
spaces left for ornamented capitals in both booklet groups. This circumstantial evidence suggests to me that *Havelok* and *Horn* were written very early in the fourteenth century, perhaps in the first decade of the century, soon after the production of Part A.

Furthermore, Laud 108 remained a work in progress for some time after the booklet containing *Havelok* and *Horn* was added to the codex. Scribe 2 wrote the *Disputation* into blank pages within the book ca. 1305. Near the end of the fourteenth century, Scribe 4 continued the process of editing Laud 108 by writing in the last texts and renumbering the entire codex. The book did not achieve a fixed state until after Scribe 4’s intervention.

The organization of the *SEL* within the codex is fraught, and betrays signs of editing and rethinking after the writing process. Pamela Robinson first noted, in an analysis refined and corrected by Thomas Liszka, that Laud 108 was produced in a series of booklets later assembled into a complete codex. The booklets in Part A may have circulated separately before the book’s assembly into one codex. The booklets, according to Liszka’s judgment, with which I concur, are divided as follows:

Booklet 1 (ff. 1r–10v), the first surviving booklet, made up of a single gathering, contains the acephalous *Life of Jesus*. This booklet may originally have been much larger, potentially containing not only the remainder of the *Life of Jesus* but also the missing entries 1–7 in the codex’s numeration system. The missing entries were very probably other Biblical retellings, contributing to a *temporale* collection (i.e., a collection of Biblical narratives) associated with the Laud 108 *sanctorale* (collection of saints’ lives).

Booklet 2 (ff. 11r–22r), also made up of a single gathering, contains the *Enfaunce Ihesu*, or *Childhood of Jesus*. Booklet 3 (ff. 23r–55v, 3 gatherings), the first extant section of the South English Legendary *sanctorale*, contains fourteen lives, beginning with the *Holy Cross* and ending with *Saint Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*. Booklet 4 (ff. 56r–203v), which contains twelve gatherings, contains the remainder of the *South English Legendary* and the extra didactic works, the *Sayings of Saint Bernard* and the *Visio Pauli*. All of the first four

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21 Oliver Pickering argues that *temporale* and *sanctorale* materials, that is, Biblical retellings and saints’ lives, tend to travel together as part of hagiographical collections, especially in extant collections of the *SEL*. The editing history of the *SEL*, in which the EETS *SEL* editions accessible to scholars exclude *temporale* materials, obscures the inherent connection between *temporale* and *sanctorale*. Oliver S. Pickering, “The *Temporale* Narratives of the *South English Legendary*,” *Anglia* 91, no. 4 (1973).

booklets, except the portion containing the Disputation of Body and Soul, are written by Scribe 1. The Disputation of Body and Soul, as I have explained above, was added to this booklet after Part A and Part B were assembled together. Part B contains a single booklet, Booklet 5 (ff. 204r–226v), the work of the third and fourth scribes, including Havelok, Horn, the later saints' lives and Somer Soneday.

Both Görlach and Liszka suggest that these booklets may be out of order, reassembled, according to Liszka's argument, by Scribe 1 in a process of textual rewriting and reorientation. The compilation process, as I will show, changes the SEL’s conception of time.

The Laud 108 SEL, unlike other extant SEL manuscripts, is not fully organized around a calendrical system. Sarah Breckenridge shows that the calendrical organization in the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 145 and London, British Library, MS Harley 2277 variants of the SEL operates as a computus, a sort of calendar that calculates the date of Easter and determines liturgical time. Most sanctorale sections of the SEL manuscripts other than Laud 108 maintain this computus structure.

The Laud SEL, by contrast, is composed of several sections or fragments that at one point were organized chronologically by saint's day but have since then been reshuffled. Small groups of five or six vitae within the codex, including the group that begins with Holy Cross (entry 10, according to the Laud 108 enumerators) and continues through Saint Oswald (entry 16), are organized according to their close or consecutive saints’ days. The Holy Cross – Oswald group’s vitae begin in May, with the Invention of the Holy Cross (May 3) and the story of St. Quiriac (May 4), both part of the Holy Cross text, and continue through June and July, concluding in August with Saint Oswald, whose day is August 5. After the Life of Thomas Becket, a significantly longer and more detailed text than any other part of the book, and an anchor that grounds the book, the SEL almost starts over again. It restarts itself with a text identified by Horstmann and later scholars as a prologue, and then follows with a series of lives connected to dates in January through March.

Liszka, reading the calendrical fragments against the booklet divisions in Part A of Laud 108, concludes that the scribe of the SEL temporale and sanctorale originally intended a calendrical cycle but, in the compilation process, intentionally rearranged the booklets in a new,

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23 Görlach, Textual Tradition, 89.

Thus the Laud *sanctorale*, as it stands, no longer illustrates sacred time in the calendar of the saints. All saints, and all times, become mingled together.

The questions of who produced Laud 108, and who owned it before the book’s first named owner in the fifteenth century, remains open. Andrew Taylor has most recently offered the possibility that an Oxford bookshop may have assembled the book (as it appeared before Scribe 4’s interventions) for a wealthy East Anglian patron. Scribe 1’s Oxfordshire dialect, and the style of the flourishings on the manuscript, both suggest Oxford origin, while the presence of *Havelok the Dane*, written in a Norfolk dialect by Scribe 3, connects Laud 108 to the history and people of Norfolk and Lincolnshire. East Anglia and Oxford are not so far apart, and Oxford is in the archdiocese of Lincoln. Taylor’s suggestion is conjectural, supported only by circumstantial evidence, but no better evidence supports any other possible production history.

Even if Taylor is correct and Laud 108 was commissioned from a bookshop by a patron, the patron and the scribes may still have been associated with clerical or monastic life. As Taylor has explained, London, British Library, MS Harley 978, which may also have been written in a bookshop, belonged to William of Winchester, a Reading Abbey monk; readers within monasteries could own personal books. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton has shown that scribes writing twelfth- through fourteenth-century vernacular commercial books were often clerks in minor orders, educated, underemployed, and in need of money. Laud 108 could potentially occupy the indeterminate space between secular ownership and clerical ownership.

Until recently, scholars such as Manfred Görlach saw Laud 108 as a witness to the lost original forms of its texts; the Laud *SEL*, in Görlach’s methodology, is most useful as it helps researchers reconstruct the first and most authentic *South English Legendary*. However, the tradition of written hagiography, and, to a lesser extent, medieval romance, consists of a

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27 Taylor, “‘Her Y Spelle,’” 79.


30 Görlach, *Textual Tradition*. 
long sequence of translations and reworkings. Reconstructed originary texts conceal the actual, extant texts that scribes wrote and humans read. Laud 108’s scribes and compilers participate actively in the translation and transmission process. The codex that they have assembled is a “whole book,” as Kimberly Bell and Julie Nelson Couch have argued. It is a coherent anthology that in itself reveals late thirteenth- and early-fourteenth century English perceptions of the world. The rest of this chapter, and the dissertation as a whole, will explore those perceptions, using Laud 108 as the textual field in which to explore the imagined world. I will begin, in this chapter, by investigating the Laud SEL’s treatment of space and geography.

Part 2: The Laud *South English Legendary* as Map of the World

The Laud SEL, like the symbolic medieval world maps called *mappae mundi*, imagines the geography of the world; in fact, it creates its own implicit map of the world. The SEL map (again, like medieval visual maps), lacking information about distances and relative locations, cannot be used as an actual travel guide, but it can be used to help the audiences of the book imagine themselves on mental pilgrimage routes through a sacred world.

Before explaining how Laud 108 operates like a *mappa mundi*, I will demonstrate how *mappae mundi* function. A *mappa mundi*, literally “a cloth of the world,” is a type of medieval world map that does not aim to replicate the precise physical shape and dimensions of the world. A traveler following an actual pilgrimage route could not use a *mappa mundi* as a guide for the journey. Rather, this type of map constructs a schematic model of the world, an array of symbols that shape and represent the divinely inspired logic of the world. As Harley and Woodward, editors of the influential *History of Cartography*, write, “Maps are graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events in the human world,” and the particular concepts and processes that

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32 For another consideration of the *South English Legendary* as a *mappa mundi*, see Sarah Breckenridge, “Mapping Identity.” Breckenridge uses the D'Evelyn and Mill edition of the *South English Legendary* as her primary text.

33 “Mappa” means “cloth” in Latin; our English cognate “map” descends from the term *mappa mundi*. 
mappae mundi aim to describe are not simply representations of the shape of the earth. The simplest form of the map, the T-O map, draws a circular world and places Jerusalem at its center, where the three continents meet. Asia is the large (and, often, untracked) space at the top half of the circle, and Europe and Africa are the two quarters of the circle at the bottom of the map. The cross shape of the T-O map marks the presence of the divine in the mortal world; the picture's sanctity is written into the image.

Among the most elaborate, and most famous, of medieval maps is the Hereford Map, a large (5’2” x 4’4” feet) vellum map of the world probably produced in England ca. 1290-1300, exactly contemporaneously with Part A of Laud 108. Although the map takes its title from its present location, in Hereford Cathedral on the borderlands of Wales where the map may have resided since its creation, a legend on the map identifies the map’s maker as Richard of Holdingham and Sleaford in Lincolnshire. Holdingham is less than seventy miles from Norfolk, to which the Laud Havelok’s dialect has been localized. Scribe 3, the Havelok scribe, may have come from Norfolk, or may have been an Oxford scribe copying an East Anglian text. In either case, we can still consider the Hereford Map and Laud 108 not only as precise contemporaries but also as near neighbors, growing out of closely related literary, artistic and political climates.

While the Hereford map vaguely conforms to a T-O model, and does organize the world roughly into three continents, it doesn’t have the easily interpretable simplicity of the plain, nearly unmarked T-O maps found in the Isidore of Seville manuscript tradition. Rather, the Hereford Map provides textual captions and images to fill the world and describe its lands. The world as the Hereford map projects it (to use a term by David Leshock, who argues that the Hereford map not only describes the world, but actively creates real


37 See Angus McIntosh, “The Language of the Extant Versions of Havelok the Dane,” Medium Ævum 45 (1976), Smithers, ed., Havelok, and Taylor, “‘Her Y Spelle,’” 79–82.

38 For a contrary reading of the Hereford map, in which it is argued that the Hereford map is actually a reasonable mathematical approximation of the shape of the world, see W. R. Tobler, “Medieval Distortions: The Projections of Ancient Maps,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers 56, no. 2 (1966).
geographical identities through that description) is peopled with signs and wonders. An image of Christ on the cross rises above the city of Jerusalem, which is drawn at the exact center of the map. The very top of the map, the far eastern border, has a circled Garden of Eden including newly clothed Adam and Eve being exiled from the garden. Allegorical figures from bestiaries, including the pelican who gives blood for her chicks as a model for Christ’s sacrifice, appear elsewhere in the map, as do monsters such as manticores from India and cynocephali in the barbarian peripheries of Europe. The Tower of Babel is here, as are lands where Alexander travels. Each individual image is accompanied by a small caption, naming the place and perhaps providing its story: Eden is marked by the text paradis[i] porte, “the gates of paradise”, and the caption Expulsio Ade et Eva, “the expulsion of Adam and Eve.”

The design of the Hereford Map, with its text oriented in multiple directions, makes it possible for a viewer to begin reading its verbally- and visually-expressed stories at any point. There is no start or endpoint, although Jerusalem, at the center of the circle, and Eden, at its precise top, are two focal points. The map is thus a nonlinearly organized collection of narratives.

In other words, the Hereford map does not simply portray the whole world as imagined in the present moment. It also inserts critical events from times other than the present, drawing Adam and Eve directly onto a map that also conveys information about the world as viewed at other points in time. Evelyn Edson uses this phenomenon and similar evidence to support a claim that among the generic requirements of mappae mundi is a mingling of information about time and space. The moment of Adam’s departure from Eden, and the moment of the Crucifixion, are as crucial to the project of imagining the world as (or, in fact, more crucial than) recent events that have altered the geopolitical situation. Jerusalem, in the Hereford Map, contains the Crucifixion, but there is no visual marker of the transfers of political control over Jerusalem from Muslim to Christian and back during the much more recent Crusades. The absence of such markers suggest conscious avoidance of the political


40 Westrem, The Hereford Map, 166 entry 389.

41 Ibid., 64–70.

42 Ibid., 48–49 entry 95; 186–87 entry 57; 86–89 entry 442.

43 Ibid., 37 entries 70–1.

ramifications of Jerusalem’s ownership in the late thirteenth century. The details that the Hereford map chooses to depict are part of a sacred narrative revisiting and reifying moments so holy that they surpass temporality. The details that the map elides help the Hereford map create its sacred map in opposition to potential political maps.

While modern scholars use the term *mappa mundi* primarily to refer to the specific style of schematic map I've just discussed, and medieval (13th–14th century) thinkers used it to refer to multiple types of visual world map (including styles such as portolan charts, designed for travel guides), medieval writers also used the term to refer to textual depictions of the world. Higden’s *Polychronicon*, a fourteenth-century history, begins with a written description of the world that the text itself refers to as a *mappa mundi*: “In primo tamen hujus operis libro… mappa mundi describitur.” When John Trevisa translates this passage into late fourteenth-century English, he glosses the term *mappa mundi* as a physical, painted object: “Neþeles in þe firste book of þis werk… mappa mundi is purtrayed and i–peyn, þat is þe cloþe þat þe schap of þe worlde wide is i–peynted ynne.” But the painted cloth of the world is metaphorical. Higden’s Latin map and Trevisa’s corresponding English map consist of words on vellum, without the painted illustrations of the (also vellum) Hereford Map. Here is a portion of the textual *mappa mundi* as given by Trevisa:

\[
\text{Pe roundenesse of þe world aboute is þre hundred siþes and fiftene siþes and an hondred þowsand paas. Pe lengþe of þe erþe þat men woneþ ynne from þe est to þe west, þat is from Ynde to Hercules is pilers in þe see Gaditan is eyȝti siþes and fyue siþes an hundred þre score and eyȝtene mile. But þe wey from oon ende to þat oþer is wel lasse by water þan by londe.}
\]

[The circumference of the world is four hundred fifty million paces. The section of the earth in which men dwell, from the east to the west, that is, from India to the Pillars of Hercules in the Gaditan sea (i.e., the Straits of

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47 “Nevertheless, in the first book of this work, the *mappa mundi* is described and painted; that is, the cloth on which the shape of the world is painted.” Ibid., Vol. 1, 27.

48 Ibid., Vol. 1, 45.
Gibraltar?) is forty thousand, seventy eight miles. But the way from one end to the other is much shorter by water than by land.] 49

Trevisa and Higden create a textual *mappa mundi* by describing physical spaces within the world and the distances between these spaces. As problematic as Higden and Trevisa’s suggested distances are – for instance, without a standard definition of *paas* or *passus*, the number “four hundred fifty million paces” is meaningless – they at least attempt to replicate the structure, shape and size of the world in words.

The *Polychronicon* projects the geography and cosmology of the world in far more precise and organized detail than Laud 108 ever does: for instance, it divides the world by sections into Asia, Europe and Africa, thus copying, verbally, the tripartite structure we see visually in the T-O map. 50 Higden turns his attention towards geographical and cartographical concerns including matters of distances between places, size of the earth, names of rivers, populations of the continents, and types and behaviors of inhabitants. The *Polychronicon*’s map is thus, as we will see, quite different from Laud 108’s. Higden's use of the term *mappa mundi* is not sufficient evidence that Laud 108 projects itself as a *mappa mundi*.

We turn now to the question of how the Laud *South English Legendary* imagines space. As a hagiographical collection, the *SEL* follows a series of saints as they progress through their lives towards their eventual goal, heaven. In so progressing, the saints pass through, and the text describes, much of the known world. This travel through the world creates its own implicit map. The map is not drawn out in an obvious way, but it is present; the book mentions and describes geographical places and the connections between them, and the reader gradually accumulates a set of places, even a world, operating under a set of symbolic rules. Any book this large, extending through this many places, would automatically create the same kind of implicit map. My project is to investigating the manner, to paraphrase Benedict Anderson, in which the map is imagined. 51 What does the Laud *SEL* world map look like, and why?

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49 The numbers in this passage are difficult. *Siþ* is a multiplier; the number of paces around the world should be 300 × 15 × 100,000, or 450,000,000, and Higden’s Latin text, “trecenties quindecies centena millia passuum,” tallies with this number. However, the number of miles from India to the Pillars of Hercules in Trevisa, which could either be calculated \( (80 \times 5 \times [100 + 60 + 18]) = 71,200 \) or \( (80 \times 5 \times 100) + 60 + 18 = 40,078 \), does not equal the Latin reading, “octies quinquies centena septuaginta octo” or \( 8 \times 5 \times 100) + 78 = 4,078 \). I have chosen the solution 40,078 because it requires fewer changes from the Latin reading. In any case, numbers in medieval texts become corrupt easily, and the 1865 Rolls edition may not reliably record variations from manuscript to manuscript and text to text.

50 Ibid., Vol. 1, 46.

Other scholars have previously noted the SEL’s geographical preoccupations. C. S. Lewis, exploring medieval perceptions of the shape of the world in *The Discarded Image*, repeatedly cites D’Evelyn and Mill’s text of the SEL as an example of an unlearned but common set of conceptions of the world and the universe that contains it. Lewis himself is most interested in medieval ideas of the shape of the universe: the physical location of the heavens, for instance. Sarah Breckenridge, in a 2008 Kalamazoo paper and forthcoming article “Mapping Identity in the South English Legendary”, reads the D’Evelyn–Mill SEL as both a textual T–O map centering on Worcestershire and a form of the computus calendar system.\(^{52}\) I will modify Lewis’s and Breckenridge’s positions by exploring the two centers of the Laud 108 SEL map, Jerusalem and England.

Like the T–O map, the map implicit in Laud 108 provides very little specific information about the actual shape of the world. Matters of perspective, and relative distances, are no part of the Laud world. There are only two exceptions, one of which, a description of England appearing in the *Life of Saint Kenelm*, I will discuss below. In the other text that discusses distances, the cosmological treatise embedded in the *Life of Saint Michael*, the distances are impossible to follow. The distance between heaven and earth is very great, explains the narrator:

\[
\text{for þe man þat miȝte go} \\
\text{euereche daye fourty mile : and ȝeot sumdel mo,} \\
\text{He ne scholde nouȝt to þe hexte heouene : þat ȝe alday i–seoth,} \\
\text{comen in eiȝte þousend ȝer : þere ase þe steorrene beoth…}^{53}
\]

[For a man who might travel forty miles and a little more every day could not arrive at the highest heaven, that you see every day, where the stars are, for eight thousand years.]

This eight-thousand-year journey, at forty miles a day, would situate the highest heaven more than a hundred million miles away from the Earth, unimaginably distant. As a piece of geographical data, it is useless for travel.

On a more earthly level, Laud 108 hardly ever provides distances. If a reader wishes to know the length of the road between Jerusalem and Damascus, on which Saul is traveling at the moment of his conversion in the *Life of Saint Paul*, Laud 108 is not going to answer the question. The *Life of St. Christopher* does not suggest an actual route from the land of the

\(^{52}\) Sarah Breckenridge, “Mapping Identity in the South English Legendary,” in *43rd International Medieval Congress* (Kalamazoo, MI: 2008) and “Mapping Identity” (forthcoming.)

\(^{53}\) *Life of Michael*, in Horstmann, *ESEL*, lines 489–492. Throughout the rest of the dissertation, I will identify texts in Horstmann, *ESEL* by individual name and line number only.
giants to the Christian world. The map in Laud 108 is conceptual, creating a space through which readers may mentally, but not physically, travel.

Laud 108 is, nevertheless, deeply interested in space. Geographical preoccupations must appear in a hagiographical-romance writing collection, on the most basic level, because saints are always marked according to the places in which they live. We distinguish saints from other saints by their toponyms: for instance, Mary of Egypt is distinguishable from Mary Magdalene because of her origin in Egypt.\textsuperscript{54} Proper name X of place Y is, of course, a common medieval naming convention, and perhaps the convention that has come down to us as critics most clearly. We speak of Gerald of Wales (rather than Gerald de Barri) and Geoffrey of Monmouth (rather than Geoffrey Arthur). Yet this choice to identify saints by their locales is important. Saints’ cults form around the places where they lived and died, and the locations associated with the saints gain status and financial rewards because of their connections to sanctity. For instance, Thomas Becket of Canterbury, identified as Thomas of Canterbury throughout his \textit{vita} in Laud 108, later inspires Chaucer’s pilgrims to associate themselves with his holy memory through their journey to Canterbury.\textsuperscript{55}

Locations matter, then, as places that are connected to saints’ holiness. Which places appear, then, in Laud 108, and how are they arranged? On a first reading of the Laud SEL, no organization of space is immediately apparent. Where the \textit{Polychronicon} divides the world into continents, Laud 108 never suggests such a division. Where the Hereford Map situates narratives according to the places in which they occur, the organizational principle of the SEL is not the \textit{places} in which the saints live, but the saints themselves. The partial, incomplete organization of saints’ lives chronologically by saints’ day means that the individual lands within the book show up in no particularly obvious order.

A list of the places in the first few texts of the codex displays the texts’ apparent lack of clear geographical order. The book begins with three texts closely tied to the Holy Land and to Jerusalem. The fragmentary \textit{Life of Jesus}, the first text in Laud 108, takes place in the Holy Land; many events within it occur in Jerusalem, and one encounter takes place in Bethany, which, we are told, is a day’s travel from the river Jordan.\textsuperscript{56} The \textit{Childhood of Jesus} presumably also takes place in the Holy Land, but rarely names the place. Perhaps place names are unnecessary, as the \textit{Childhood} builds on the geography already present in the \textit{Life}

\textsuperscript{54} Of course, distinctions between saints with the same names are not always clear; Mary of Egypt and Mary Magdalene are also frequently conflated with each other.

\textsuperscript{55} For further discussion of Thomas Becket, see Chapter 2 below.

\textsuperscript{56} Horstmann, ed., \textit{Leben Jesu} page 31 line 56. “Hit bifel þat Lazar þe kniȝt: In grete siknesse lai / In is castel bi side Betanie… Ane daies Jorneie it was : fram þe watere of Jordan.” (It happened that Lazarus the knight lay in great sickness in his castle near Bethany… it was one day’s journey from the water of Jordan.) Ibid., page 58 lines 679-681.
of Jesus. Only the repeated emphasis that Jesus lives among the Jews, and a brief description of the child Jesus studying the Hebrew alphabet (besides the audience's familiarity with the story), locates the *Childhood of Jesus* in the Holy Land before the text finally mentions Jesus's travel to Nazareth in line 875. The Holy Land is again central to the *Holy Cross* life, the first *sanctorale* text, which then opens outward into Rome, Persia, Constantinople and Sicily.

After *Holy Cross*, we leave Jerusalem for England and, more specifically, Glastonbury, in the *Life of Dunstan*, as well as Rome, England and Canterbury, in the *Life of Augustine of Canterbury*. The *Life of Saint Barnabas the Apostle* returns to Jerusalem, with a stop in Cyprus; the *Life of Saint John the Baptist* takes place in Damascus and Arabia as well as the Holy Land, and the *Life of James the Apostle* passes from the Holy Land into western Europe.

The geographies in the first lives of the *SEL*, and throughout the *SEL*, seem to lack a pattern. They move into and out of the Holy Land and through the rest of the known, Christian world. Saints' lives and miracles occur in the towns, abbeys, bishoprics and dioceses of Anglo-Saxon England, in Alexandria and Scythia, Scotland and Ireland, India and Ethiopia. There is no obvious sign of the most obvious feature of the Hereford map, its tripartite structure. Europe appears frequently, and Jerusalem more or less constantly, but Asia and Africa only rarely.

When Asia and Africa do appear, they resemble one another closely. Non-Christian lands share the same features, not only geographical features (which hardly appear at all), but more prominently, the same kind of wicked inhabitants, regardless of their location. When Bartholomew fights false gods and converts heathens in India, his work seems very similar to

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57 In a fascinating passage worthy of further investigation, a very young Jesus startles his teacher with his knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet, asking,

*TELLEZ ME NOUPE IN LUYTE STOUNDE,*
*3WI WAS AELEPH FIRST BI FOUNDE:*  
*OF ALLE LETTERS HE IS PE FURSTE,*  
*AND BETH PE AT ORUR IS PE NEKTE,*  
*GIMMEL PE NERIDDE IS OF ALLE,*  
*DELETH PE FEORPE LETTER IS CALLE.*

[Tell me now, quickly, why was Aleph placed first? Of all letters, he is the first, and Beth, that other one, is next; Gimel is the third of all, and Daleth is called the fourth letter.] *Kindheit Jesu* [*The Childhood of Jesus*], in Horstmann, ed., *Altenglische Legenden*, page 28 lines 800-804.

58 *Holy Cross* lines 24, 319, 397, 527.

59 *Life of Dunstan* lines 1, 22; *Life of Augustine of Canterbury* lines 1, 3, 68.

60 *Life of Barnabas* lines 19, 42; *Life of John the Baptist* lines 28, 45, 65; *Life of James the Apostle*.
Matthew's work fighting pagan magicians in Ethiopia. In fact, neither India nor Ethiopia looks particularly different from heathen Spain when St. James preaches there; in almost all cases, pagan lands blend together in opposition to Christian lands, and the only real borderline space is Jerusalem. 61

Nevertheless, patterns do exist in the Laud 108 SEL map’s treatment of space. For instance, individual saints’ lives work along the model of the linear itinerary map. The SEL sets up a sacred geography of the world, in which readers can mentally travel alongside the saints of the sanctorale. Each saint’s life provides a route map through the world, parallel not to circular maps such as the Hereford Map but to linear itinerary maps. The thirteenth-century English monk and chronicler Matthew Paris includes such a sequence of itinerary maps in his holograph codex Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 26, ff. 1r–4r (ca. 1240–1253). 62

Daniel Connolly has argued that Matthew’s itinerary maps offer a primarily linear conception of space through which readers can imagine travel: London to France to Italy to Jerusalem. According to Connolly, Matthew Paris drew his itinerary maps for the entertainment and education of cloistered monks, who naturally could not engage in pilgrimages themselves. Rather, Connolly writes, the itinerary maps, and indeed many a medieval devotional image, made available the means to imagine such a journey to so holy a place. That is, to perform a spiritual or what I call an ‘imagined pilgrimage’ to the Holy City. 63

If Laud 108’s original readers were cloistered like William of Winchester, owner of Harley 978, they would not be able to travel at all. 64 If they were wealthy lay owners, they might, at best, have been able to go on pilgrimages or on crusades in their own right, albeit at very high cost. Textual, imagined pilgrimages both replace actual pilgrimages that readers cannot afford to take, and supplement rare actual pilgrimages with cheaper and easier mental pilgrimages that provide nonetheless provide substantial spiritual rewards.

The Laud 108 Life of Saint Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins provides an example of the mental pilgrimage. In a necessarily meditative act, the creators and readers of the book follow Princess Ursula and her eleven thousand virgin attendants as they travel from Brittany so that Ursula may marry a pagan English prince. The audience watches as, instead of arriving

61 On the portrayal of Asia and Africa in Laud 108, see Chapter 5, “The Wonders of the West.”


63 Ibid., 28.

64 Taylor, Textual Situations, 110–21.
in England as planned, the maidens are blown off-course in a ship to Cologne and led by an angel to Basel, from which city they walk “a-fote” to Rome. At every stop, Ursula’s party attracts more future martyrs (including Ursula’s fiancé, now converted to Christianity, along with the pope and several bishops). Thus the audience imagines these cities as touched by the holy memory of Ursula and her companions, and imagines its members passing through the sanctified spaces.

Readers can only imagine the last port of call of Ursula and her companions, which is heaven, rather than experience it directly and immediately. When two wicked heathen princes (one of whom bears the geographical name Affrican) disguise themselves as the rulers of Cologne and murder the entire traveling party, readers are expected to visualize the martyrs’ death and burial within Cologne. The final lines of the Life of Ursula, which closely resemble the final lines of almost all of the vitae in the collection, direct the audience of the work to think about the saints’ arrival in heaven, and pray that in their memory the audience may also reach heaven. Thus the text inscribes the readers as followers of the saints, who must necessarily continue along the saints’ journeys. Heaven, as we have learned from the Life of Michael, is unthinkably distant. Even so, it is the ultimate destination of any journey within a saint’s life, not only for the saint but for the people involved in retelling and reading the saint’s story and Laud 108 as a whole work. Because, in the Life of Ursula, heaven is the last stop on a pilgrimage route that passes through Brittany, Cologne, Basle and Rome, all of the earthly places listed gain close links to heaven. Imagining Cologne, and the murder of Ursula and her maidens within Cologne, is a short step away from imagining heaven and praying for one’s own acceptance there in the martyrs’ memory. In this way, all of the places where Ursula and her maidens go are rendered holy. The readers of the book may follow the saints from word to word in the text, thus traveling mentally from place to place and participating actively in Ursula’s pilgrimage.

Each individual vita in the Laud 108 SEL marks off holy spaces, upon which the text’s audiences can then visualize and meditate, and which the audiences can mentally visit. A larger pattern exists in the collection of saints’ lives. Certain especially holy places recur frequently in the book. These recurring places form multiple centers or focus points, such as Jerusalem and Eden in the Hereford Map. Like hubs in a modern airplane map, the central focus points link outward to the rest of the world.

65 Life of Saint Ursula lines 73-81.
66 Ibid., line 101.
67 The passage reads, “God us g[r]unti, zif is wille is : þat we moten i-winne / Þe heȝe Ioye of heouene : þare alle þis Maydenes beoth inne, / Ne þat we neuere þarof ne missen for none sorie sunne” Ibid., lines 177-180. (Now may God grant to us, if it is his will, that we may achieve the high joy of heaven, within which are all of these maidens, [and may he grant that] we don’t miss [heaven] because of any distressing sin.)
The first place we read about in the Laud 108 SEL, as it is presently assembled, is the Holy Land. More precisely, in Holy Cross, the first temporale text, we read about Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the center of any T-O map because of its place in the Christological narrative. As I noted above, the Cross grows out of the walled city of Jerusalem. Christ, hanging from the Cross in the otherwise blank space above Jerusalem, hovers over Jerusalem and over the whole world map.\textsuperscript{68} More than either of the two temporale texts preceding it in Laud 108, Holy Cross, like the image of Christ on the Hereford Map, establishes the centrality of Jerusalem to the Laud 108 map through its focus on the production and impact of the Crucifixion.

Jerusalem, as Holy Cross displays it, is at once the center of the world, the boundary between the Christian and pagan halves of the world, the troubled space in which Jews and Christians uneasily coexist, and the hub that connects much of the known world to itself. The Laud 108 Holy Cross has an unusual structure, conflating the Invention of the Cross, the Life of Saint Quiriac and the Exaltation of the Cross, which appear as separate texts in other manuscripts of the SEL.\textsuperscript{69} This structure permits the narrative to move in time and space, always returning to Jerusalem and to the instant of the Crucifixion, and therefore linking all other spaces and times to that originary moment.

Holy Cross begins as St. Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine, travels to Jerusalem in search of the True Cross. She finds there a community of Jews. Judas, the oldest and wisest of the Jews, knows where the Cross is because he is distant kin to St. Stephen. Judas is paradoxically both unwilling to reveal the secret because of his Judaism, and willing to reveal the secret because of his crypto-Christianity. Helen must torture him before he reveals it.\textsuperscript{70} Thus Jerusalem is both the home of the most precious of Christian relics and the home of obstinate Jews wishing to prevent Christians from reaching those relics.

But Jerusalem, and the Cross within Jerusalem, is also the link between the beginning of time, the moment of Crucifixion, and the present. After Helen and Judas (now baptized and renamed Quiriac) recover the Cross, the narrative switches suddenly back to Eden, and “þe Appel-treo þat ore furste fader : þane Appel of nam” (the apple tree from which our first father took the apple.)\textsuperscript{71} The three saplings grown from the seeds of the Tree of Knowledge,

\textsuperscript{68} Westrem, The Hereford Map, Section 6 entry 387.

\textsuperscript{69} Görlach identifies the individual parts which together make up Laud Holy Cross, but which appear separately in other manuscripts, as Holy Cross: The Early History and the Invention, as Quiriac and as The Exaltation of the Cross. Görlach, Textual Tradition, 164–6, 190.

\textsuperscript{70} Holy Cross lines 1–134. A more detailed reading of Judas as Jew appears in Chapter 3, “‘Time out of Mind’ and the Jews of the South English Legendary.”

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., line 139.
brought to Jerusalem by King David, become a single tree, cut down by King Solomon. The wood stays in Jerusalem until Jews find it and build the Cross out of it. The wood’s elaborate history, which *Holy Cross* provides, anchors the Cross’s narrative in Jerusalem and ties Jerusalem to Eden. After describing the Crucifixion and the fall of Jerusalem to Titus and Vespasian, the story moves forward in time again, to Emperor Constantine’s vision of the Cross and subsequent conversion. This vision triggers St. Helen’s journey to Jerusalem, and thus brings the narrative back to the “present.” The Cross’s miracles, taking place in the indefinite time following Quiriac, carry the story of the Cross into Laud’s readers’ recent past. The Cross itself is the center both of the Laud 108 world map and of the Laud 108 sacred calendar, and Jerusalem, as the home of the Cross, is a larger circle surrounding the Cross. The Cross, and Jerusalem around it, bridge the gap between past and present.

With the help of the Cross, Jerusalem extends outward into the rest of the world. When the fragments of the Cross are split up after Helen and Judas/Quiriac discover them, the text follows the fragments, and other models of the Cross, as they work miracles in Persia, Constantinople, Rome and Sicily. In Persia, a wicked king takes a piece of the Cross and proclaims himself divine, thus earning his own destruction. In Sicily, a Jew beats a model of the Cross and causes it to bleed. Although Jerusalem is the starting point, the place where the stories of Christ and of the Cross begin, the sign of the cross connects Jerusalem to the rest of the world. Jerusalem performs the function in Laud 108 that it does in the Hereford Map: it is the center of the world.

But Jerusalem is not the only center of the world in Laud 108. The second *sanctorale* text in Laud 108, the *Life of Saint Dunstan*, begins not in the Holy Land but in England. Dunstan is the first of the ten English saints (or seventeen saints connected to England) in Laud 108. *Enguelonde* is the home of Dunstan and his sacred miracles. England is also the home of Wulfstan, who witnesses the battle between Harold, “riȝhtest eyr”, and the usurping “willame Bastard,” who conquers England in 1066 “þorūȝ strencþe and trichérie.” The *Life*

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72 Constantine’s vision of the Cross before the Battle of Milvian Bridge is best known in legend for inspiring the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity. *Holy Cross* does not linger on the conversion of the empire.


74 Ibid., lines 397–455.

75 Ibid., lines 547–572. A more extensive reading of this episode appears in Chapter 3.

76 “Rightest heir”; “William the Bastard” (i.e., William the Conqueror); “through strength and treachery.” *Life of Wulfstan* lines 61,3–4.
of Kenelm, as Sarah Breckenridge has noted, actually contains the only textual map in the *South English Legendary*, a map of England.\(^77\)

For Enguelond was guod and long: and sum-del brod al-so. A-bouten eiȝte hondret mile: Engelond long is Fra[m]\(^78\) þe South into þe North: and to houndret brod i-wis Fram þe Est into þe West: al-so þare-inne beoth Manie wateres guode i-nowe: þat men al dai i-sooth. bote þreo wateres principales: of alle ne beoth, i-wis: Þat .on. is homber, þat oþur seuerne: and temes þe þridde is. To þe North-se hombur geth: þat is on of þe beste, And Temese into þe est-se: and seuerne into þe weste.\(^79\)

[For England was good and long, and somewhat wide also. England is about eight hundred miles long from the south to the north, and two hundred broad from the east to the west. Also, there are many good enough waters in it, which men see every day. But of all there are only three principal waters: the one is the Humber, the second the Severn, and the third the Thames. The Humber, which is one of the best, goes to the North Sea, and the Thames into the east sea, and the Severn into the west.]

The spatial depiction of England in the *Life of Kenelm* is unmatched anywhere else in Laud 108. Only here do we have a fully mapped space, including distances, rivers and seas. The dimensions of this map point backwards to Bede’s influential description of England:

BRITAIN, an island in the ocean, formerly called Albion, is situated between the north and west, facing, though at a considerable distance, the coasts of Germany, France, and Spain, which form the greatest part of Europe. It extends 800 miles in length towards the north, and is 200 miles in breadth, except where several promontories extend further in breadth, by which its compass is made to be 3675 miles.\(^80\)

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\(^78\) MS: fran. Horstmann emends to “fram”; I have kept his emendation here because Horstmann’s reading both makes sense and can be accounted for as minim error.

\(^79\) *Life of Kenelm* lines 9–18.

Incorporating Bede’s description of England into the *Life of Saint Kenelm*, the SEL maps England more fully than any other space within the world. England is, for Laud 108 SEL, a home space, especially sacred. Julie Nelson Couch, Kimberly Bell, Renee Hamelinck and Anne Booth Thompson have all recently written on the central importance of Englishness to Laud 108 and to the SEL tradition.\(^\text{81}\) The SEL, and Laud 108, participate in building and imagining England, and setting England in the larger world, at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century.

The Laud 108 SEL, like the Hereford Map, creates a map and imagines a world. The rest of the dissertation will explore how the imagined maps of Laud 108 connect to the physical world that produces Laud 108. How do places that Laud 108 imagines as far, exotic and blank eastern lands connect to the intensely realized geographies of England, and why? When Laud 108 describes representatives from two cultures or religions meeting, how do these meetings occur and what ramifications do the meetings have, both on the codex itself and, potentially, on the world outside the codex? What can we learn about England and its world from the Laud 108 map?

Chapter 2

Thomas Becket’s Saracen Mother

In Chapter 1, I have shown that Laud 108 imagines England as a crucial center point or hub in its diagram of the world, and that the manuscript surrounds this carefully-imaged and detailed space with vaguely-depicted, romanticized peripheries. The existence and construction of the peripheries help to define the central spaces in the Laud 108 world map. Chapter 2 continues this argument by demonstrating that the Laud South English Legendary links one particular, quintessentially English, saint to the imagined edges of the world. Laud 108, as the earliest extant version of the South English Legendary, either directly translates the legend of Thomas Becket’s mother into English or, more probably, participates in the process of transmitting the newly translated legend. By providing Thomas with a Crusader father and a heathen-born mother from the furthest reaches of the manuscript’s imagined east, the book ties Canterbury and England to eastern territories encountered through Crusade and reimagines Englishness in post-Conquest England. In order to build this connection, the Laud Life of Thomas Becket manipulates the genre conventions of romance, chanson de geste and history writing.

Introduction: The Historical Saint And His Imagined Parents

The Laud 108 Life of Thomas Becket begins twice, with two separate Anglo-Norman rubrics and two separate Middle English passages claiming Thomas Becket (ca. 1118–1170) as a particularly English figure. The Middle English couplet opening the first introduction announces,

Wolle þe nouþe i-heore þis englische tale : þat is here i-write
Of seint Thomas of Caunterburi : al-hou he was bi-ȝite.82

[You will now hear this English tale, which is written here, about Saint Thomas of Canterbury and how he was begotten.]

82 Because the pronoun “þe” follows the verb form “wolle,” Horstmann punctuates this sentence as a question, meaning “Will you now hear this English tale that is written here about St. Thomas of Canterbury and how he was begotten?” I prefer to read the sentence as a declarative that transposes the pronoun and verb for emphasis. Thomas Becker lines 1–2.
The rubric written in red ink to the right of this couplet provides a sort of gloss for it, but omits the emphasis on the story’s Englishness:

Ici poez oyer coment seint Thomas de Kaunt[er]bures nasqui. e de quev manere gent de pere e de Mere.  

[Here you may hear how Saint Thomas of Canterbury was born, and from what manner of people his father and mother came.]

The second beginning of the *Life of Thomas Becket* pairs another French rubric with an English-language opener that also frames Thomas’s story as particularly English:

ENgelond, wel glad þov beo : for þou miȝt wel eþe  
And al-so holi churche : for one Mannes deþe...  

[England, you should be very glad, for you, and holy church, should be well comforted for one man’s death.]

Thomas’s story is an English tale, and England herself should rejoice at Thomas’s death and victorious martyrdom. The French rubric beside this claim for English ownership of Thomas Becket does not emphasize the story’s Englishness, however. “Hic Isci Comence la vie seint Thomas Erceueske de Kaunterbury” (Here begins the life of Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury) names Thomas’s home as Canterbury, but does not add further information on Thomas’s English origins. Instead, it signals a second beginning of the *Life of Thomas Becket*, separating out the earlier material as a prologue differentiated from the actual body of Thomas’s life.

In providing the Life of Thomas Becket with not one, but two Anglo-Norman rubrics, the Laud 108 scribes mark the *Life* as particularly important and central to the codex’s project; rubrics are rare in Laud 108, and no other text in the manuscript actually has more than one. In placing the French passages beside the doubled English introductions, and in placing repeated emphasis on the Englishness of Thomas’s life and death, Laud 108 also signals a concern with English linguistic nationalism and with creating Thomas as a particularly English (i.e., Anglo-Saxon) as well as Anglo-Norman saint.

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83 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc 108, f. 61r; it appears on the margins of lines 1–7.

84 *Thomas Becket* lines 203–204.

85 Laud 108, f. 63r.
This concern is especially peculiar, since the story of Thomas’s conception in the first introduction to the Laud *Life of Thomas Becket* sets Thomas up as a son of a foreign woman. In this startling and entirely fictional story, Thomas is the son of an emir’s daughter from the lands of the heathens (*heþenesse*, in the Middle English) who supported, courted, and, after converting to Christianity, married her father’s Christian prisoner, a Crusader named Gilbert Becket. Imagining Thomas Becket as an Anglo-Saxon saint like Laud 108’s saints Kenelm, Dunstan and Wulfstan is an understandable and even likely project for Laud 108. Thomas, the sometime friend and eventual enemy to Henry II Plantagenet, the Archbishop of Canterbury famously murdered in his own cathedral, the saint to whose grave Chaucer sends the *Canterbury Tales* pilgrims, is the most quintessentially English of saints. But why, in that case, should the Laud scribes provide Thomas Becket with a mother who is the very antithesis of Englishness?

The historical Thomas Becket never had an eastern princess as a mother. We know this because Thomas is unusual for the volume and quality of surviving documentary evidence about his life. His activities in the most exalted political circles of twelfth-century England and Europe were highly visible and intricately recorded. Thomas’s lightning–quick elevation to sainthood, hardly three years after his death, came rapidly enough that the historical documents connected with him were raised to near-relic status. The sheer quantity of preserved materials connected with Thomas makes the existence of counterfactual legends about his birth particularly surprising.

This chapter aims to discover why Laud 108 includes the legend of Thomas Becket’s parents, and what the story of Thomas’s Saracen princess mother and Crusader father has to

86 *Thomas Becket*, line 5.

87 See Chapter 1.


Robert Mills provides a reading of the Laud *Life of Thomas Becket*, with emphasis on the prologue and its connection to Thomas’s identity as English, in “Early SEL and Difference,” 208–212. Mills’s work, which was published after I had nearly completed this project, covers many of the same themes which interest me. Lawrence Warner has argued that Langland may have been referencing the legend of Thomas Becket’s mother in the *Piers Plowman* B-text Passus 15, and Emily Steiner has extended this argument into a discussion of *Piers Plowman*’s reuse of earlier Middle English historiographical work. Lawrence Warner, “Becket and the Hopping Bishops,” *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 17 (2003) and Emily Steiner, “Radical Historiography: Langland, Trevisa and the *Polychronicon*,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 27 (2005).
add to the mythos of Thomas Becket of Canterbury. In the process of explaining the presence of the story in Thomas’s life and in Laud 108 as a whole, the chapter examines the Life’s differing portrayals of Thomas’s mother’s home and Thomas’s own England and Europe. The chapter reads Thomas’s mother against other variants of the Saracen princess motif and explores the motif’s connection with medieval genre theory in order to recognize its function within the saint’s life. Ultimately, Thomas Becket and his heathen mother are lenses through which I study the nature of Englishness as portrayed in Laud 108 at the close of the thirteenth century.

Despite the story’s unbelievability, the tale that Thomas’s father was a Crusader and his mother the daughter of Gilbert’s captor is common in thirteenth-century and post-thirteenth-century popular retellings of Thomas’s life. The legend first appears in Latin and Anglo-Norman some decades before the 1280–1300 production of the Laud SEL. London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C.xii (Cotton Vitellius C.xii), contains a tale of Thomas Becket’s parents interpolated into one of the codex’s several Latin lives of Thomas Becket. Cotton Vitellius C.xii is difficult to date. The manuscript is a miscellany assembled by multiple hands over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and severe damage in the Ashburnham House fire of 1731 has obscured much of the codicological evidence. Because the Cotton Vitellius C.xii scribe who wrote the lives of Thomas Becket also wrote a life of St. Edmund Rich, Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1240), the Becket materials in the codex must also come from the middle or third quarter of the thirteenth century. London, British Library, MS Harley 978 (Harley 978), a trilingual codex produced after 1264, contains a variant of the same Latin passage interpolated into Cotton Vitellius C.xii, followed by a truncated Anglo-Norman version of the story of Thomas Becket’s parents. These two manuscripts, both of which are associated with thirteenth-century English monastic libraries, use the figure of Thomas Becket and the story of his parents to construct a model of English holiness. However, neither Cotton Vitellius C.xii nor Harley 978 builds Thomas Becket as an English speaker or a representative of Anglo-Saxon culture.

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89 On the impact of the Ashburnham House fire on the Cotton MSS, see Andrew Prescott, “‘Their Present Miserable State of Cremation’: The Restoration of the Cotton Library,” in Sir Robert Cotton as Collector: Essays on an Early Stuart Courtier and His Legacy, ed. C. J. Wright (London: British Library Publications, 1997). Prescott describes the eighteenth-century book restoration methods which preserved Cotton Vitellius C.xii and much of the library, but complicated the work of codicologists studying the books. For instance, as I discovered when studying the codex, the vellum pages of Cotton Vitellius C.xii have been set within modern paper sheets and rebound. It is certain that at least one folio from another MS was bound in with the codex erroneously, and the remaining pages may be out of their original order.

90 Cotton Vitellius C.xii contains a martyrology listing deaths at St. Augustine’s monastery in Canterbury, while Harley 978 belonged to the Benedictine abbey of Reading and may have been commissioned by William of Winchester, recalcitrant monk of Reading. On the provenance of Harley 978, see Taylor, Textual Situations, 83–136. Taylor dates the MS by citing A. J. Ellis’s argument that the absence of any
An early fourteenth-century variant of the tale of Thomas Becket’s parents, in London, British Library, Royal MS. 2 B. VII (the Queen Mary Psalter), demonstrates that the story circulates widely, probably orally, in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England. The Queen Mary Psalter places pictorial sequences, primarily saints’ lives and miracle stories, in the margins of its standard Latin psalter text. One of these sequences, the Psalter’s life of Thomas Becket, begins with the baptism of Thomas’s mother and continues through Thomas’s life and his eventual murder. Because the images bear no apparent connection to the words on each page, viewers must decode the images using their own knowledge of the stories. Without frequent transmission of the tale that Thomas Becket’s mother was a convert, the manuscript’s marginal image of a woman in a baptismal font, preceding a series of other images from Thomas’s life, would not have been comprehensible in the absence of textual cues naming Thomas or his family.

From Harley 978, Cotton Vitellius C.xii and the Queen Mary Psalter we learn that the story of Thomas Becket’s parents starts to emerge in Latin and Anglo-Norman about ninety years after Thomas Becket’s murder in 1170, and is widespread by the early fourteenth century. The balance of the evidence suggests that the Laud 108 scribes must have acquired the narrative of Becket’s Saracen mother, if not from earlier and lost manuscripts of the South English Legendary, then from the folkloric and literary milieu of thirteenth-century England. The South English Legendary, either in its Laud redaction or in prior, lost variants, is the first known work to describe Thomas’s fictionalized parents in English.

Despite its multiple appearances in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century documents, the tale of Thomas’s parents has no basis in fact. The historical record identifies Thomas’s parents as bourgeois Anglo-Normans. They are so normal, in fact, that one medieval biographer finds their normality worthy of note, calling Thomas “the illustrious offspring of ordinary

mention of Simon de Montfort’s death in the MS means it was produced before 1265; this argument from absence does not entirely convince me.

91 The image of Thomas Becket’s mother in the baptismal font appears on f. 289r of the manuscript. Color versions of this image and the other images in the Queen Mary Psalter can be found in George Warner, ed., Queen Mary’s Psalter: Miniatures and Drawings by an English Artist of the 14th Century (London: British Museum, 1912), where the princess appears on plate 283. However, as Warner’s edition prints the marginal images alone, without the full psalter pages, scholars unable to work with the codex itself should use Warner’s edition in tandem with the black-and-white microfilm of the manuscript.

For recent work on the Queen Mary Psalter, see the text and references in Anne Rudloff Stanton, The Queen Mary Psalter: A Study of Affect and Audience (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2001). Stanton analyzes the Thomas Becket sequence of images on 142, 46.
parents.” The ahistorical legend varies depending on the text; unless marked, I base the following summary on the Middle English variant in Laud 108.

Gilbert Becket is a London burgess who travels east into the Holy Land to fight on Crusade. The people he encounters there are described in Laud 108 only as the inhabitants of heþenesse, the heathen land, although most other variants of the narrative refer to them as Saracens, and two very late versions, one extant and one lost, call them Jews. The heathen emir captures and imprisons Gilbert, but because Gilbert is so well-behaved and quiet, the emir allows him to serve at his table. The emir’s daughter falls in love with Gilbert and visits him secretly in prison, asking him about Christianity and promising to convert and to marry him. Gilbert, fearing that the princess will betray him, secretly escapes to England without taking leave of the princess. The strong-willed princess responds by joining a ship full of pilgrims and following Gilbert, even though she doesn’t speak Gilbert’s language. Guided by God, the princess arrives safely in London at last.

Gilbert, startled by the girl’s arrival, goes to the assembled bishops of England to ask for advice. The bishops say that if the princess is willing to convert to Christianity, Gilbert must marry her. Thus Thomas Becket’s holy birth is incited (or, perhaps, conceived) by the English church. She chooses to convert, changing her name to Alisaundre. Gilbert and Alisaundre marry and consummate the marriage exactly once. In the morning, Gilbert chooses to return to Crusade instead of staying home with his wife. With Alisaundre’s consent, he departs to fight for several years, leaving her with his servant as a translator. After educating her young son, Thomas Becket, in Christianity, Alisaundre dies and disappears from the narrative.

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92 Lat. “parentum mediocrum proles illustris.” Durham Dean and Chapter Library MS B. IV. 41 f. 42rb lines 5–7. *Mediocris* may also be translated as “middle-class”.

93 See below for a discussion of the use and meaning of the term “Saracen.”


95 *Life of Thomas Becket* lines 10–16.

96 In the late Middle English text which constructs the princess as Jewish, the princess keeps repeating the only words of Gilbert’s language that she knows as she sails towards England: “Gilbert gilbert beket beket, and meri londoun.” Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson poet. 225, transcribed in Brown, *Development*, 262 l. 104.
The Laud 108 scribe repeatedly marks Thomas Becket as the most important saint within the book. Thomas’s Life, at 2478 lines, is longer than any other text in Laud 108 except Havelok the Dane. Its multiple rubrics and marginal notes (numbering individual laws in the Life’s recreation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, for instance) demonstrate the scribe’s deep involvement and interest in Thomas’s legendary. Not all vernacular lives of Thomas Becket, nor even all SEL redactions, contain the story of Thomas Becket’s Crusader father and princess mother. What function, I propose to ask, does the story play in Laud 108’s Life of Thomas Becket?

Part 1: The Geographies of the Life of Thomas Becket

The first part of the answer to the question emerges from the Laud Thomas’s geographies. The Laud Life of Thomas Becket links two regions of the world: the vaguely-imagined, exotic Orient that is Alisaundre’s homeland, and the precisely delineated England and Europe through which the adult Thomas moves. These spaces connect through Thomas’s parentage and Thomas’s body.

The country to which Gilbert Becket travels has no apparent name. Rather, it is identified by two terms, both of which carry ambiguity. Thomas’s “Moder was of heþenesse,” while his father is “of londone;” the parallel phrasing describing Gilbert and Alisaundre in lines 3 and 4 of the Life of Thomas Becket suggests that heþenesse is a location and the counterpart of London. However, heþenesse, the text’s term for Thomas’s mother’s place of origin, need not be a place at all; according to the Middle English Dictionary it can mean either "territory inhabited or ruled by pagans” or “the state or condition of being pagan.”

The words “pagan” and “heathen,” as used by Christians, can include the category Muslim, and heþens are nearly synonymous with Saracens, or Muslims as they appear in medieval Christian imagination. Although the terms have closely related meanings, however, it is

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97 Murray Evans reads the signs that mark Thomas Becket as especially important in Laud 108 in “Very Like a Whale,” 59–60.


important to note that the word “Saracen,” extant elsewhere in Laud 108, does not appear in the *Life of Thomas Becket*. In two of Laud 108’s uses of the word “Saracen,” Mary Magdalene encounters “[a] riche prince of sarazins,” a worshiper of Mahun and his companion Teruagaunt, in pagan Marseille, while “sarazines kene” invade Suddene in *King Horn*.100 Both of these encounters between Christians and Saracens occur in spaces where historical Muslims do not belong, and both display Saracens as idol-worshipping pagans. Suddene, while not locatable in itself, is a western kingdom within reach (via sea journey) of Ireland, and Marseille, of course, is in France.101 The imagined Saracens worship multiple gods, including Mahun, whose name is a distortion of Muhammad; thus they fall into the category that John Tolan describes as “Saracens as pagans.”102

Meanwhile, although Alisaundre is an example of the trope of the “Saracen princess,” she is never referred to by the word Saracen in Laud 108.103 The absence of the term Saracen in the *Thomas Becket* prologue is yet another demonstration of the vague construction of Alisaundre’s identity, home and people. As diluted as the meaning of “Saracen” is in Laud 108, it still retains too much meaning for the text to apply it to Alisaundre and her father. Neither obviously Muslim nor named as Saracen, these two characters show no obvious connections to Muslim theology or customs. *Heffennesse*, the term that does describe the

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103 See below for a discussion of this trope and Laud 108’s use of it.
Amiral’s realm in place of any form of the word Saracen, is merely an umbrella term for places and states of alterity.

The second name of Alisaundre’s home, holie lond, generally refers to Palestine, and the MED entry for holi cites line 8 of the Laud 108 Thomas Becket as an example of that subdefinition. The context of the phrase supports this definition:

Gilebert him bi-þouȝte : þe Croiz for-to fo
In-þo þe holi lond : his penance þe bet to do.104

[Gilbert decided to take the Cross, to do his penance properly in the Holy Land.]

The Holy Land, or Palestine, is of course the place where Crusaders go to take the Cross and earn their penance by fighting Muslims. However, the text does not name any geopolitical features, nor any battles in which Gilbert fought, and there is no proof that the land is within any standardized border of Palestine.

Not only are the names of the princess’s homeland ambiguous, the details of the land are equally ambiguous. The prison where Gilbert is chained is a stock prison, containing only conventional prison elements including multiple chained slaves. It belongs to an emir (Amiral) who is a nameless stock character.105 All we learn about the language of this land is that it is not a language of England. The princess can only find her way to England by repeatedly naming London “in her langage,” and when she reaches it at last she “ne couþe speke…bote a best þat a-strayed were” ([cannot] speak, except in the manner of a lost animal).106 The nameless land, with its similarly unidentified language, religion, and ruler, is a space whose only feature is its exoticism and its difference from England. Like her homeland, the princess of this land, not even named until her conversion, is a trope rather than a character. The text sets a four-word description of Thomas’s mother (is Moder was of heþenesse) next to Thomas’s much more specifically delineated father, who is identified by name, by location of origin and by class:

Of londone is fader was : A bor[g]eys hende and fre,
Gilbert Bekat was is name : þe bok tellez me.107

104 Life of Thomas Becket lines 7–8.
105 Ibid., lines 8, 10, 17–18.
106 Ibid., lines 62, 65.
107 MS: bordeys; Horstmann suggests the correction borgeys, burgess or townsman. Life of Thomas Becket lines 3–4.
[His father was from London, a noble and free townsperson; Gilbert Becket was his name, the book tells me.]

By creating contrasts between the more vividly imagined Gilbert and the blank figure of the princess, the narrative constructs an Orient considered solely for its opposition to the Occident.

The distinction between Orient and Occident, and the contrast between the exotic but otherwise vague Orient and the intensely-realized Occident, is of course Orientalism, to use Edward Saïd’s extremely influential term. Kathleen Biddick and Suzanne Conklin Akbari have both reconsidered Saïd’s model and examined its applicability to the Middle Ages. Biddick argues that Saïd’s definition and analysis of Orientalism simplifies the progression from medieval to modern, and that Saïd relies unnecessarily on a narrative in which medieval European treatments of the east, the forerunners of true Orientalism, develop gradually into the complete modern form of Orientalism. Akbari notes that medieval European worldviews often set up a trinary division between Asia, Africa and Europe rather than a binary division between east and west. While Akbari’s trinary model of the medieval world also exists in Laud 108, as I will argue in chapter 5, it appears in tandem with the binary model that positions the exotic Orient as the opposite of the known Occident. In the Laud 108 *Life of Thomas Becket*, which does not discuss Africa, and which sets up a distinction between east and west, we see Orientalism in a form that both Saïd and Biddick can recognize.

If geography is vague and unspecific in the prologue to the *Life of Thomas Becket*, time is even vaguer. Although the date of Thomas’s parents’ meeting necessarily precedes Thomas’s birth ca. 1118, the story provides no other dating cues. Because the prologue never describes the size, importance or political impact of the crusading army that Gilbert presumably joins, the crusade itself cannot be used to establish the date. Other temporal markers present in historical treatments of Crusade narrative but absent from the *Thomas Becket* prologue include the name of the current king of England, and, even more basic, the actual year. The meeting of Thomas’s parents occurs out of time, in a barely-constructed place. Because Thomas, as a historical figure, is so well-known, the temporal unspecificity of Gilbert and

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108 Saïd, *Orientalism*.


110 Suzanne Conklin Akbari, “From Due East to True North: Orientalism and Orientation,” in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *New Middle Ages Series* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001). See also Cawsey’s response to Akbari in “Disorienting Orientalism.” For further discussion of the trinary division of the *mappa mundi*, and the interplay between medieval conceptions of the east, the west and the north, see Chapter 5 of this project.
Alisaundre’s first encounter is especially surprising. The readers and the scribe of the *Life of Thomas Becket* know approximately when Thomas was born, but even so, the *Life* does not attempt to fit Thomas’s parents’ meeting into historical time. The missing dating cues in the prologue to the *Life of Thomas Becket* help emphasize the fantastic ahistoricality of the narrative.

By contrast, during Thomas Becket’s narrated life within England and Europe, the fantastic imaginary is supplemented, although not entirely substituted, with a mode of mimesis that represents space as real and reachable, and time as able to be marked and remembered. Laud 108 names the places in which important events of Thomas’s life occur, and describes them with enough frequency and variety to provide verisimilitude. For instance, when Thomas and King Henry enter into open conflict, the Laud *Life of Thomas Becket* names and details every place where the two men meet.

The text supplies the distances Thomas travels and even locates the inns at which Thomas eats. Thomas first negotiates with King Henry “at is manere at wodestoke” (at his manor at Woodstock.) After a disastrous meeting with King Henry in Northampton, Thomas pauses to have dinner with the poor at “an In, at seint Andreues” (an inn at St. Andrew’s) before fleeing England. With the help of a friar of the monastic community of Sempringham, Thomas travels northward, “fiue and twenti mile…to þe toune of graham” and, the next day, “fiue and tuenti Mile al-so / to þe toun of lincolne.” By providing the mileage, the text creates a complete itinerary of Thomas’s journey. In Europe, too, almost every place Thomas visits is identified: Thomas hides at the abbey of Saint Bertin in Flanders, slips secretly into France with the permission of King Louis VII, addresses the Pope in Rome, and takes refuge in Pontigny. The text thus constructs both England and Europe as known and knowable spaces, parts of the world familiar not only to Thomas but to Laud 108’s scribes and readers.

*The Life of Thomas Becket* supplies specific dates as well as specific places in this portion of the text. We learn not only the location of the council of Northampton, but the date: “þe neste þoresdaie … bi-fore seint lucus day,” or the Thursday before St. Luke’s Day. This date is close, but not quite correct. The council of Northampton occurred on October 6–12,
1164, and Thomas first addressed the king on Wednesday, October 7, more than a week before St. Luke’s Day (Sunday, October 18, 1164). The correctness of the dating matters less than the authoritative tone with which the Laud *Thomas Becket* presents the date; by specifying a date, the passage claims apparent authority and precision. Soon afterwards, another dating error appears; the manuscript explains that Thomas leaves the king’s court at Northampton on the Tuesday of St. Luke’s Day and arrives in Lincoln on Wednesday. This timeline, omitting Thomas’s night at Graham, does not tally with the text’s prior data. Instead, it helps to create an environment that oversupplies specific information about Thomas’s journey. This embarrassment of riches contributes to the portrayal of England and Europe as aggressively described and redescribed, a familiar world without the mystery that marks Thomas’s mother’s homeland.

Alisaundre’s and Thomas’s varying worlds are, in Mikhail Bakhtin’s terms, chronotopes, modes of imagining space and time together. Different literary genres manipulate different chronotopes. To investigate why the Laud *Life of Thomas Becket* joins the chronotope of the nameless, timeless and exotic Eastern land to the chronotope of the constantly named and dated Western world, I will now examine the way *Thomas Becket* moves between medieval genres.

**Part 2: Medieval Genre Theory and the *Life of Thomas Becket***

The process of identifying genre in the multilingual literary traditions of medieval England is complex. The traditional form-based definition of ‘romance’ is of a vernacular verse work in octosyllabic couplets, centered on a single hero. As such, it is separate from the *chanson de geste*, a vernacular (usually French) narrative of war and crusade, describing the doings of an ensemble cast rather than a single hero, and written in a different verse form called the *laisse*. That formal distinction is connected to the difference in content, and, perhaps, attitude, between the *chanson de geste* and the romance. Because the romance follows a single hero’s doings and the *chanson de geste* examines a larger group of warriors, argues Sarah Kay, the

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117 *Thomas Becket* lines 1117, 1121–2.

chanson de geste can openly examine the political issues of a whole world. The romance, instead, conceals political/historical problems in what Kay calls romance’s “politics of evasion, which seeks to sanitize or disguise the rifts in the social and symbolic order.”

The distinction between the romance and the chanson de geste, although never particularly clear in England, blurs by the thirteenth-century, especially when works that began in Anglo-Norman as clear chansons de geste or romances get translated and modified in ways that make romances resemble chansons de geste and chansons de geste resemble romances. Usually, though, the difference between these two genres and the third genre of the saint’s life (or hagiographical narrative) is clear. The saint’s life may appear in Latin or the vernacular, in any prose or verse form, and it sets up a human model, a saint, for the reader to imitate and venerate. Readers can imagine hagiography as an essentially didactic genre, while the romances and chansons de geste exist (at least apparently) for purposes of entertainment. However, that distinction is a severe oversimplification, especially outside of the official, authoritative, Latin-language saints’ lives. The Laud 108 SEL and the other versions of the story of Becket’s mother belong to a huge, non-authoritative tradition of saints’ lives. These texts get passed along in manuscripts alongside texts that are clearly meant to be entertaining, and they themselves display humor and other cues of entertainment. Perhaps it should not be surprising that these lives of Becket build on the romance genre, not only on its motifs but on its underlying principles and its methods of relating to the other.

A fourth genre relevant to the Life of Thomas Becket is historiography or history writing. Hayden White has influentially categorized the narrative strategies of medieval history writing, distinguishing between the list format of the annal and the narrativizing mode of the chronicle, which reimagines the events that the annal might list as a coherent, formal story. The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, closely related to the SEL tradition in its form and its dialect and containing passages (including some passages about Thomas Becket) that overlap with the SEL, is formally a chronicle in Hayden White’s sense. The Laud 108 SEL Life of Thomas, as a text that assembles and narrativizes the events of Thomas’s life and situates him in the world of twelfth-century England and Europe, also acts as a chronicle in White’s sense. White demonstrates that no single mode of narrativity can ever remain a neutral recording of factual information, devoid of interpretative bias.

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119 Sarah Kay, Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance, 6.


122 White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality.”
extends this demonstration, showing that all historical texts create and modify the worlds that they describe at the same time as they reflect them:

[T]exts both mirror and generate social realities, are constituted by and constitute the social and discursive formations which they may sustain, resist, contest or seek to transform…  

Spiegel’s analysis applies as easily to texts that do not purport to represent historical truth as texts that do. Romances, *chansons de geste* and saints’ lives, even when they do not attempt to claim the impossible mantle of objective recordings of the truth, may represent, imagine and reconstruct the past. Romances, *chansons de geste* and saints’ lives may perform similar representational strategies as texts that are more obviously narrative histories.

Romances and *chanson de geste* do not often claim to record objective truth (as histories sometimes do). Saints’ lives, especially those popular lives that have not been authorized by the Church, including the lives in the *SEL* and the *Legenda Aurea*, move easily between historical representation and fantastic entertainment. However, the three genres, romance, *chanson de geste* and hagiography, all engage with and present different, if linked, models of the history and shape of the world. They present, in fact, different chronotopes. In the chronotope of romance, although Bakhtin refers to the genre as “the adventure-novel of ordeal,” geographical features serve as interesting backgrounds for the adventures of the hero and heroine, and geographical distances form ways of separating the hero and heroine, but the political boundaries of the countries through which the heroine and hero travel are not important to the narrative. The chronotope of romance conflates varying spaces and cultures in order to focus on the heroine and hero’s journeys. Meanwhile, the years in which the romance takes place are unrecorded and unrecordable, and time only passes within the romance in order to give the events within the narrative a chance to happen. For example, in the *Laud King Horn*, a paradigmatic example of Bakhtin’s adventure-novel of ordeal, seven years pass between one meeting between Horn and Rimenild and the next, but neither Horn nor Rimenild seems to have aged in the interim. This model matches the chronotope of Thomas Becket’s mother’s world. Romances such as *King Horn* and the story of Thomas Becket’s parents are, if not placeless and timeless, only loosely anchored in known space and time. Because of their loose connection to the known, mappable world

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and the known timelines of history, romances can help to smooth over and render vague the precise, troubling “rifts...in the social order” of which Sarah Kay writes.\footnote{Kay, \textit{Chansons de Geste in the Age of Romance}, 6.}

By contrast, I argue, the chronotope of the narrative chronicle imagines space and time with some degree of mimetic rigor. Events happen in particular years, during the reigns of particular kings, in particular locations associated with particular rulers, landowners or monastic foundations, located in known and recognizable kingdoms. These markers of specificity create verisimilitude, and, as I have claimed in chapter 1, they participate in the creation of the reader’s mental map of the known world and timeline of world history. The \textit{chanson de geste} creates a chronotope that is easier to localize in time and space than the romance, but more problematic than most historiography. That is, much of the Oxford text of the \textit{Chanson de Roland} takes place at the Roncevaux pass, on the road to St. James of Compostela, during the reign of Charlemagne, while Muslim rulers are beginning to lose control of the Iberian peninsula. Despite these apparently precise temporal and spatial cues, \textit{Roland}, whose Digby 23 MS appears in England in the mid-twelfth century, builds its fictionalized Muslims more on rumors filtering east from the First and Second Crusades than on historical records from Iberia in the Carolingian period.\footnote{The several French texts of the \textit{Chanson de Roland} have recently and wonderfully been edited by Ian Short, Joseph Duggan, Annalee Rejhon, William Kibler and others in Joseph Duggan, general ed., \textit{La Chanson de Roland – the Song of Roland: The French Corpus}, 3 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).} \textit{Roland} and other \textit{chansons de geste} move easily between the mimed authenticity of historiography and the imagined vagueness of romance.

The \textit{Life of Thomas Becket} participates in all of these modes, establishing and engaging with methods of mimesis that imagine the world in varying levels of romanticized abstraction and historiographical naturalism.\footnote{Emily Steiner argues that later in medieval English literature, William Langland reuses the \textit{South English Legendary}, perhaps including the \textit{Life of Thomas Becket}, alongside Higden’s \textit{Polychronicon} in order specifically to combine the historiographical and hagiographical modes and to create an ecclesiastical model of English history: Steiner, “Radical Historiography,” 202, 9–10.} Alisaundre and Gilbert’s story, in \textit{Thomas Becket’s} prologue, helps the life to cross between chronotopes.

Thomas Becket’s mother does not fit into the historical or hagiographical mode at all. Rather, she is a motif of romance and \textit{chanson de geste}. The motif of the Saracen princess, a (usually) Muslim noblewoman who falls in love with a Christian man and follows him from her home, is quite common in medieval romance and \textit{chanson de geste} traditions, but appears nowhere else in hagiography. Of the fifty analogues to the legend of Becket’s mother

\footnote{The several French texts of the \textit{Chanson de Roland} have recently and wonderfully been edited by Ian Short, Joseph Duggan, Annalee Rejhon, William Kibler and others in Joseph Duggan, general ed., \textit{La Chanson de Roland – the Song of Roland: The French Corpus}, 3 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).}
identified by Paul Alonso Brown in 1930, forty-four are romances or *chansons de geste*, while none are saints’ lives.\(^{128}\)

The motif of the Saracen princess opening the *Life of Thomas Becket*, an unusual incursion of the romance chronotope into hagiography, sets Thomas Becket’s life apart from the other Laud 108 saints’ lives. Most typical *South English Legendary* saints’ lives begin with visions or miracles that prefigure the unborn saints’ holiness, or with apparently neutral accounts of the saints’ parents’ social classes. For example, in the introduction to the *Life of Dunstan*, the candles of a certain church burn out and relight themselves in the presence of Dunstan’s pregnant mother.\(^{129}\) This miracle signals Dunstan’s future power and sanctity, and the holy life he will bring to England, but does not provide a love plot. Furthermore, *Dunstan’s* introduction, unlike the story of Thomas’s parents, holds together as a coherent tale if separated from the saint’s actual life. Meanwhile, the *Life of Katherine of Alexandria*, lacking prenatal miracles, introduces Katherine as the daughter of a king and queen, “boðe of þe olde lawe,” i.e., either pagan or Jewish.\(^{130}\) This opening move contextualizes the saint in a family and social class status, but, like *Dunstan’s* introduction, doesn’t build a narrative around the parents.

Only one other life besides Thomas’s begins with a motif, genuinely tied to the romance tradition, that situates its saint in a world of adventure and love. That narrative, the *Life of Clement*, begins when Clement’s pagan mother is forced into exile and suffering, and Clement’s family’s separations permit Clement’s ascension to sanctity.\(^{131}\) Unlike lives of Thomas Becket, which add hagiographical and romance materials to recent, accessible historical materials, the Clement tradition grows from a late antique Greek romance, the *Clementine Recognitions*, and is only later connected to the early historical pope Clement.\(^{132}\) In other words, *Clement* is an outlier not because it, like *Thomas Becket*, pulls in romance material late in its development, but because it is originally romance material later drawn into hagiography. Also, unlike *Thomas Becket*, *Clement* is signaled as a relatively insignificant text in Laud 108. *Clement* is 552 lines long, as opposed to Thomas’s enormous 2478 lines. It lacks the complex and frequent marginalia, as well as the multilingual rubrics, that mark

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\(^{129}\) *Life of Dunstan* lines 2–20.

\(^{130}\) *Katherine* lines 1–2.

\(^{131}\) For further information on Clement’s mother, see Andrea Lankin, “Shipwrecked, Before Constance: Women and the Sea in Thirteenth-Century English Literature.” I argued that the story of Clement’s mother, like the *Life of Mary Magdalene* is one of several *South English Legendary* precursors to the Constance motif found in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale*.

Thomas Becket as one of the most central texts, if not the central text itself, within the codex Laud 108.

The introductions to Dunstan, Katherine, and other typical SEL saints’ lives cue hagiographical narratives focused on the figures’ connections to sanctity and prefigure their eventual ascensions to holy sainthood. The introduction to Thomas Becket, however, is an outlier, connecting Thomas Becket not to recognizable hagiographical features such as miracle-working and eventual martyrdom, but to a marriage plot coming out of romance and chanson de geste. What does the motif do, and how does it function when attached to the Life of Thomas Becket?

A brief exploration of how the Saracen princess motif functions in romance and chanson de geste will help to explain what happens when the motif becomes incorporated into hagiography in the Life of Thomas Becket. Two of the chanson de geste and romance analogues to Thomas Becket’s mother, Nubie, in the late twelfth-century Old French Prise de Cordres et de Seville and Josiane in the originally Anglo-Norman, but frequently translated and rewritten romance Boeve de Hamtoun, demonstrate the usual functions of the Saracen princess motif. During a war in Iberia between Franks and Saracens (the traditional setting for a chanson de geste), Nubie, daughter of the Saracen ruler of Cordoba, schemes, with the help of drugs, kidnapping and murder, to free a Christian she loves from her father’s prison, eventually converting and marrying the Christian.133 Josiane, another Saracen princess, falls in love with Boeve, a Christian young man at her father’s court, and converts to Christianity for his sake. The common elements of the Saracen princess narratives, present in these two variants and elsewhere, always include the princess’s display of physical purity (recognizable primarily through the fairness and beauty of her body), her status as the sexually powerful figure who demonstrates her agency by courting the man she loves, and her conversion to Christianity.

While Laud 108 does not describe Alisaundre physically, at least one visual image of Thomas Becket’s mother depicts her as a white, European-style beauty whose foreignness is not marked on her body. The Life of Thomas Becket sequence of images in the margins of the Queen Mary Psalter displays the princess in the baptismal font, totally naked and entirely pale. Nothing about the picture except the font itself, the sign of the princess’s necessary baptism, marks the princess as non-European. Sadly, the sequence only begins with the princess’s arrival in England, so we don’t know what she would have looked like when she came west, or whether she looks different from her father the emir. Jacqueline de Weever has written on the arbitrary assignment of conventional European depictions of beauty to Saracen princesses in her book *Sheba’s Daughters*. Even when the Saracen men and wicked women around them are depicted as black and monstrous, those women who are love interests of Christian men, who will eventually convert to Christianity, always appear white, European and conventionally beautiful. This tendency, in de Weever’s argument, “hide[s] the woman’s foreignness and her Saraceness” to render the marriage between Christian and former Saracen safe and legal in an age where intermarriage is forbidden. At the same time, it highlights the dangerous desirability of the Saracen woman.

As de Weever’s reading cues us to expect, Becket’s mother’s foreignness, in the Queen Mary Psalter picture, is erased from her body. Similarly, at the moment of her conversion in Laud 108, Alisaundre loses much of her exotic strangeness, becoming unthreatening and desexualized as the chaste wife who accepts her husband’s departure. Not all of the indicators of foreignness disappear, however. Alisaundre’s new name alludes to Alexander, the most famous of travelers in the East, and her incomprehension of the languages of England reminds Gilbert that she is not competent to live in England without the company of a translator.

Laud 108 does erase Thomas’s mother’s body and downplays her desirability, unlike the Queen Mary Psalter’s deliberately titillating nude image of Thomas’s mother in the baptismal bath. While Alisaundre, like Josiane, chooses, courts and wins her love, Gilbert is never shown to be tempted by her foreignness. He constantly rejects her and runs from her, and when forced – by the bishops of England! – to wed her, he does his marital duty by her only once in order to conceive a child.

This variant on the Saracen princess motif adds plausible deniability to the sexuality of the story, thus matching other Laud 108 lives that deny sexuality in the same passages in which they emphasize sexuality. For instance, in the *Life of Saint Agnes*, one of several stories of tortured virgin martyrs in the Laud SEL, Agnes preaches Christianity and refuses sex while

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standing naked within a brothel. Although a miraculous light conceals Agnes’s body from the lecherous gaze of the brothel patrons, the readers of the Life must find themselves imagining that body. But Agnes’s insistence on maintaining her virginity, and the brilliant light that shields her nakedness, both help justify the sexual undertones of the Life of Saint Agnes. Similarly, when we learn that Gilbert and Alisaundre have exactly one sexual encounter, and that that encounter is necessary for the conception of St. Thomas Becket, the dangerous sexuality inherent in the Saracen princess motif and in Alisaundre’s pursuing of Gilbert becomes muted. When her sexuality loses some of its danger, her heathen menace becomes less menacing.

While the prologue of the Life of Thomas Becket, in its vagueness and its exoticism, invokes the chronotope of romance and ties it to hagiography, the body of Thomas Becket, with its specific geographies of Europe and its careful dating of Thomas’s actions, builds the chronotope of historiography into the saint’s life. In fact, when passages from other recensions of the SEL Thomas Becket appear in Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle, they transform into chronicle history. Thomas, portrayed in lines 9603–9617 of Robert’s Chronicle as the young king Henry’s guardian, becomes for the Chronicle an important political actor in the reigns of Henry II and Henry the Young King:

\[
\text{Pe king him made is chaunceler · at is wille it nout nas ·}
\]
\[
\text{To him þe king truste mest · ne þer nas non so hey ·}
\]

135 Life of Saint Agnes lines 51–6.


137 Manfred Görlach and Oliver Pickering have explored the evidence connecting Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle to the South English Legendary. Görlach argues, following nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars Horstmann, Ellmer and Thiemke, that the Chronicle quotes from and paraphrases the SEL. Görlach specifically claims that Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle accesses what he refers to as the “A” redaction of the SEL, a redaction which is the ancestor of all of the extant manuscripts except Laud 108 and its close relative W1, a booklet in Winchester 33. Manfred Görlach, Studies in Middle English Saints’ Legends (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1998), 48–55. Pickering, following Görlach’s stemmatic work, has suggested that some of the writing in the ‘A’ redaction comes from a particular anonymous but stylistically recognizable poet he calls the ‘outspoken poet.’ In his 2001 Medium Ævum article, Pickering claims that the ‘outspoken poet’ is in fact the same person as Robert of Gloucester. Oliver S. Pickering, “The Outspoken South English Legendary Poet,” in Late-Medieval Religious Texts and Their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle, ed. Alastair J. Minnis, York Manuscripts Conferences: Proceedings Series (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994); Pickering, “South English Legendary Style in Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle,” Medium Ævum 70, no. 1 (2001). If Görlach and Pickering are correct, then Robert of Gloucester has had no influence on the Laud 108 recension of the SEL, nor has the Laud recension influenced Robert. Even so, the presence of a work of chronicle history closely linked, in form, style and limited content, with the SEL tradition demonstrates that the stylistic modes of the SEL are relevant for and useful in medieval historiography.
The king made him (i.e., Thomas) his chancellor. It was not at (Thomas’s) will. The king trusted him most. There was no one so high, who so much knew (Henry’s) secrets, nor was so near to him. He (Henry II) trusted him so much that he put Henry, his eldest son and his heir, in (Thomas’s) guardianship.

Here, in Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle*, Thomas Becket is a major figure insofar as he participates in the reigns of the two Henries. In the closely related passage in the Laud *Life of Thomas Becket*, however, the two Henries are subordinate figures within Thomas’s biography:

But the king found him (Thomas) so stable, and such a good counselor, that he would not declare any other chancellor for anything. He did not trust any man so much, nor was there anyone so high to whom he told his secrets, nor was so near to him. He cast his heart on him so much that he put his eldest son Sir Henry, who was also his (Henry II’s) heir, in his (Thomas’s) guardianship.

The longer list of praises that the *SEL* supplies for Thomas keeps the emphasis on Thomas himself rather than on the king and prince whom Thomas serves. Furthermore, the context of the two passages helps to display their different emphases. In the *Chronicle*, Thomas appears during a section organized around the reign of King Henry, while the *Life of Thomas Becket* is organized around Thomas himself. But in both Laud 108 and the *Chronicle*, the passages contribute to larger narratives about Thomas’s participation in English political culture and English identity.

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139 *Life of Thomas Becket* lines 263–268.
The Laud 108 *Life of Thomas Becket* approaches historiography in the portions of the text that Robert of Gloucester’s *Chronicle* borrows, but it explicitly performs historiography on its own account when it retells the Constitutions of Clarendon. The Constitutions are both an 1164 debate between Henry II and Thomas, in his position as Archbishop of Canterbury, about the respective privileges of church law and state law, and the set of laws that Henry established as a result of the debate. When the *Life of Thomas* describes them, it actually recreates them as a legal document. The scribe lays the Constitutions out on a manuscript page and marks them with marginal identifiers (*prima lex, alia lex, tertia lex*) that claim the Middle English verse lines that repeat the laws as legal materials in themselves, validated and authorized by the Latinity of the marginalia.

Of course, in rewriting the Constitutions of Clarendon, the *Life* not only recreates law but also alters it. The Middle English text organizes the provisions of the Constitutions according to Thomas’s approval or disapproval of each one. For example, the provision listed in the *Life of Thomas* as *prima lex* is the sixteenth law in Staunton’s edition of the Constitutions, and it appears first because Thomas approves it:

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Prima lex. ¶ Pe lawes þat ichulle nouþe telle : he g[ra]unted wel fawe :
‘3if a bonde–man hath ane sone : þat to clergie beo i–drawe,
Ne schal nouȝt with–oute is louerdes leue : noȝwere i–crouned beo,
For þev–Man ne mai nouȝt beon i–maket : a–ȝen is louerdes wille freo.’
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[First law. The law, which I shall now tell you about, he (i.e., Thomas) granted very willingly. “If a bondman (i.e., tenant, vassal, serf) has a son who is drawn to the clergy, he will not be tonsured without his lord’s leave, because a serf may not be made free against his lord’s will.”]

The corresponding law is the 16th and last provision in the surviving Latin text of the *Constitutions*; in Latin, the provision is identified, not as approved by Thomas of Canterbury, but as tolerated by the Pope. In other words, the Middle English performance of the Constitutions of Clarendon imagines Thomas Becket, and not Pope Alexander, as the central representative of the Church, and he reorders and rebuilds the laws around Thomas’s participation in the legal process.

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141 Laud 108 fol. 67a.

142 *Life of Thomas Becket* lines 555–558. Horstmann corrects “Ne” in l.557 to “he.” I have removed this unnecessary emendation.

143 Provision 16 in the *Constitutions of Clarendon* ed. Staunton, 96.
Laud 108 is not itself a legal text, of course, and no one would ever use it to mediate church-state interactions. Nevertheless, the passage that recreates Thomas and Henry’s debate mimes legal reality. The laws of England become part of Laud 108’s imagined England, thus helping the text perform a more believable and English-language England. This fully-explored, familiar England, with its vernacular laws, is all the more striking beside the imagined east that the *Life of Thomas Becket* borrows from the romance and the *chanson de geste*.

### Part 3: Thomas Becket as Romance Hero

Although the physicality of geographical references in Thomas’s journey from England, and the repetition and recreation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, help to create a historiographical mode, romance and historiography are not mutually exclusive. After Thomas sails into Flanders, a Flemish man recognizes the disguised saint in a motif that strongly invokes the genre of romance. Thomas garbs himself as a friar, calling himself Friar Christian, “[f]or he nolde nouȝt lie : þat cristian he was” (because he would not lie, and he was Christian).\(^{144}\) However, when Thomas stays at a good man’s house, and sits at the bottom of the table as if he had the lowest status of all, the owner of the house notices him. A catalogue of Thomas’s features, as the owner of the house sees them, follows. Thomas is “milde…and mest corteis and hende” (gracious … and most courteous and noble).\(^ {145}\) He nobly shares his food with the people around him, and eats very little himself. These features might mark any saint as well as any hero, but the descriptions of Thomas’s physical beauty clearly resemble standard depictions of heroes of romance:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{[H]is limes al-so he bi-heold : hou faire heo weren and freo,} \\
\text{pe hondene faire and longe fingres : fairoyre ne miȝten none beo;} \\
\text{his face was brod and long al-so : his fore-heued large i-nouȝ;} \\
\text{And euere mest bi-fore alle oþere : is heorte to him drouȝ.}\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{[He (i.e., the owner) also beheld his (Thomas’s) limbs. How fair and} \\
\text{handsome they were, the fair hands and long fingers; none might ever be} \\
\text{fairer. His face was broad and long also, and his forehead large enough, and} \\
\text{ever, most before all others, (the owner’s) heart drew towards (Thomas).}\end{align*}\]

\(^{144}\) *Life of Thomas Becket* line 1171.

\(^{145}\) Ibid., line 1178.

\(^{146}\) Ibid., line 1181–4.
These conventional physical attributes, especially the fair, long-fingered hands and the large forehead, signal aristocratic birth as well as heroic status. When the owner of the house reads Friar Christian’s behavior and body and recognizes him as the exiled Archbishop of Canterbury, he identifies Thomas as an exiled hero analogous to the later Laud booklet’s displaced romance heroes, Havelok and Horn.\footnote{As I argue in Chapter 4, Havelok is himself a Crusader-figure, as well as a hero and encoded saint. See also Bell, “Resituating Romance.”}

Thomas Becket can model standard romance-hero tropes in this scene because he does have aristocratic birth, that is, because his mother is a converted princess. Given romance ancestry, Thomas can invoke modes of behavior appropriate to princely heroes as well as saints and known historical figures. In this way, the Laud *Life of Thomas* shares a shape with Chrétien’s *Cligés*, which frames Cligés’s own story with the ocean-spanning love of Cligés’s parents, the Greek prince Alexander and the British lady Soredamors.\footnote{Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William Kibler, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 1991).}

Thomas carries these markers of romance alongside markers of Crusade history. Although Thomas’s mother is a foreign princess, his father is a Crusader, so the story of Thomas’s Crusader father connects Thomas to Crusade narratives’ models of holy and redemptive heroism.\footnote{This Crusade imagery may be fruitfully compared with the imagery of holy and redemptive heroism in Crusade sermon-writers like Jacques de Vitry. See Cristoph T. Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). In Chapter 4, I discuss Laud 108’s Crusade imagery further.} Gilbert Becket metaphorically signs his son with the Cross, and this symbolism follows Thomas throughout his life. When Thomas, abandoned by his allies, has nothing but his episcopal garments to defend him, the text describes those garments as the weapons of a Knight of Christ, i.e., a Crusader.

\begin{verbatim}
Þo seint thomas hadde is masse i-songue : his chesible he gan of weue;
Alle is oþur uestimenz : on him he let bi-leue—
Oþur Armure nadde he non : for holi church to fiȝte;
A-boue he caste is cope : þat bi-feol to is riȝte.
He tok godes flechs and is blod : with him swiȝe stilleliche,
Ane Creoyz he nam in is hond : and wende forth baldeliche.
Þe uestimenz was is Armure : ase bi-feol to swuche ane kniȝte ;
Þe fourme of þe creoiz was is baner : for holi churche to fiȝte.
\end{verbatim}
Forth wende þis guode kniȝte : among alle is fon –
Swete Jesus beo is help : oþur frend nadde he non.\(^{150}\)

[When Saint Thomas had sung his mass, he began to clothe (himself) with his chasuble. He set his belief in all of his other vestments. He had no other armor with which to fight for Holy Church. Above it he cast his cope, which was rightfully his. He took God's flesh and blood (i.e., the Eucharist) with him very quietly. He took a cross in his hand and went forth fearlessly. The vestments were his armor, as befitted such a knight. The form of the cross was his banner, with which to fight for holy church. This good knight went forth among all his foes. May sweet Jesus be his help, because he had no other friend.]

The imagery of saints as fighting heroes, armored and ready to fight for Christendom, opens the Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 145 South English Legendary recension edited by D'Evelyn and Mills. The prologue, entitled Banna Sanctorum, or Proclamations of the Saints, sets up an extended conceit of God's armies. Following trumpeters and archers, representing the prophets and patriarchs who precede Christ, and Christ himself as commander accompanied by his banner-carrier, St. John the Baptist, come the “kniȝtes of þe rereward” (knights of the rear guard.)\(^{151}\) These, of course, are the saints, who fight and die in “hardi batailles,” fierce battles; their feats of glory are retold in the saints’ lives themselves.\(^{152}\)

This introduction does not appear in the Laud recension, however. In the Laud SEL, Thomas is the only saint constructed as a knight. When he takes on episcopal garments as the armor of a knight in battle, Thomas accepts a role not given to the rest of the Laud saints. Perhaps one reason Thomas does so involves the very nature of his garments. As the armor of a hero of romance or a knight fighting on Crusade in God’s name, the chasuble, the cope and the cross are less problematic than they could be as the accoutrements of a wealthy archbishop.

One of the features of Thomas's life that makes him atypical among saints in the SEL is the very great detail in which his doings are recorded. As a major political figure, well-known across Europe, Thomas leaves very clear memories about just what he did in his lifetime. Because Thomas is sainted so soon after his martyrdom, and he acquires legendary status immediately, certain parts of his life cannot be forgotten. Some of his actions, including, for example, borrowing five hundred pounds from Henry II and refusing to repay the king, or

\(^{150}\) Thomas Becket lines 951–960.

\(^{151}\) Banna Sanctorum in D'Evelyn and Mill, The South English Legendary, line 53.

\(^{152}\) Ibid., line 62.
wearing extremely elaborate and expensive episcopal garments, clash with the usual depictions of saints as humble, simple people, indifferent to wealth and others’ perceptions. Instead of compensating by removing Thomas’s debt to Henry and ignoring his fine clothing altogether (although the SEL provides Thomas with a hairshirt under his finery, marking him as secretly humble), the Laud Life of Thomas compensates by making Thomas, not only a saint, but a hero of romance and a knight of Crusade. The passage above ties Thomas’s clothing to his Crusade conception, mitigating his vanity and emphasizing his heroism. Thomas’s romance hero identity helps to write over and erase the problems in his historically recorded behaviors. In other words, by connecting Thomas to romance models of behavior, the Laud SEL makes Thomas less of a typically-constructed saint. The text’s play with genre conventions is part of the way in which Laud 108 engages with the problem of recent, and therefore markedly-recorded, sainthood.

Part 4: Englishness and the Saracen Princess

The romance elements in Thomas Becket’s conception and in his adult life, I have argued, help the Life of Thomas Becket to downplay difficult elements of the historical record surrounding him. But why does the story of Thomas Becket’s parents link Thomas to an imagined Orient, and why does that Orient appear directly beside a vivid and recognizable England?

By joining the generic Saracen princess Alisaundre and the Crusader Gilbert to Thomas’s identity, and by naming every town and abbey that shelters Thomas, from England to Flanders, the Life of Thomas reorients Thomas Becket of Canterbury, making him a transnational, rather than local, saint. Thomas is a cosmopolitan world traveler, tied to Alisaundre’s nameless home, and also to London, Canterbury in England and St. Bertin and Pontigny on the Continent. The density of Thomas’s links to multiple European spaces might be expected, given his continent-spanning cult.  

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153 For instance, as soon as he converts to Christianity, Saint Barnabas sells his land and abandons “al his world guod,” all the possessions of this world. Life of Saint Barnabas lines 7–9.

154 Kay Brainerd Slocum tracks the European expansion of Thomas Becket’s cult, especially into lands (including Castile, Sicily and Hungary) into which Henry II’s daughters and daughters-in-law married, and into regions occupied by Thomas’s supporters in the Cistercian order, in “The Development of the Cult of Becket.” Kay Brainerd Slocum, Liturgies in Honor of Thomas Becket (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 98–126.
However, Thomas’s geographical identity in the Laud SEL has less to do with his continental cult than his construction within England. The text’s shifts in genre, from romance to historiography, and shifts in location, from Alisaundre’s vague and pagan East to the sharply-delineated geographies of England and the parts of Europe where Thomas travels in his exile, are the ways in which the Laud Life of Thomas paradoxically creates Thomas Becket as a cosmopolitan but Anglo-Saxon figure.

That is, the genre and location shifts make Thomas less Anglo-Norman than he would be otherwise. Alisaundre, heathen princess, replaces Matilda, bourgeois Anglo-Norman Londoner, as Thomas’s mother. Thomas Becket, son of a convert, linked to the pagan east of romance, is set apart from Henry II, Plantagenet king. Thomas can represent Anglo-Saxon identity, while Henry is the archetypal Anglo-Norman, precisely because Thomas is no longer precisely Anglo-Norman himself. The Life of Thomas Becket blurs the distinction between Christian and non-Christian in order to emphasize the distinction between Francophone and Anglophone cultures in England.

The Laud 108 Life of Thomas Becket participates in a mode of English nationalistic heroism that can also be found in the Laud 108 Lives of Wulfstan, Dunstan and Kenelm (among others) and, elsewhere, in lives of Simon de Montfort.155 By doing so, it also participates in a construct of national identity that sets Englishness against Anglo-Normanness. This construct of English identity is artificial -- Simon and Thomas are both biologically of Norman descent -- but even so, it performs a literary role. The first line of the prologue identifies the conception of Thomas Becket as an “englische tale.”156 Thomas’s story is English insofar as it is both written in the English language and English in the early nationalist sense.

As the twelfth-century son of bourgeois Londoners Gilbert and Matilda Becket, the historical Thomas Becket would have spoken French. In Laud 108, however, he almost always speaks English. This choice of language, in a primarily Middle English document, is not as self-evident as it might seem. In the Laud SEL tradition, men of high rank, whether they are Norman or hailing from other geographical regions, consistently address their friends (or enemies) with French terms of endearment, unless they carry particularly English identities. For example, a Romano-British magistrate addresses Saint Alban as “Bel ami” (fair


156 Thomas Becket line 1.
friend) and the Devil and St. James call each other “beau frere” (fair brother) and “bel ami”.\footnote{Alban line 33, \textit{James} lines 334, 354.} But Odo, who is archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglocentric \textit{Life of Dunstan} and therefore English, addresses an interlocutor as “mine leue frend” (my dear friend.)\footnote{Dunstan line 83.}

Within the \textit{Life of Thomas Becket}, King Henry and his lords choose French terms of address.\footnote{Robert Mills has also noticed the use of French terms of address in the Laud 108 \textit{SEL} as markers of villainy and alterity; he concludes, as I do, that the code-switching reveals anti-Norman sentiment and aids the anglicization of Thomas Becket. Mills, “Early \textit{SEL} and Difference,” 207–8.} The king calls his bishops “Beav seignours” (fair lords) and calls Thomas “beav sire” and “bel ami.”\footnote{\textit{Thomas Becket} lines 443, 469, 816.} But when Thomas responds to knights and bishops who criticize his behaviors, he addresses them as “leoue breþren” (dear brothers.)\footnote{Ibid., lines 509, 921.} Thomas thus claims for himself the same Anglo-Saxon identity possessed by his predecessor Archbishop Odo. Thomas only selects the French term of address “bev frere” when speaking to his assassin Reginald Fitzurse.\footnote{Ibid., lines 1993, 2005, 2016.} In that conversation, Thomas chooses Reginald’s own language, thereby marking Reginald as an Anglo-Norman unlike himself.

In the Laud 108 \textit{Life of Thomas Becket}, the first of Thomas’s lives to appear in English rather than in Latin or French, Thomas is the representative of a natively English culture. As he faces Norman assassins, he speaks for the common English people. The Laud \textit{Thomas Becket} could not create this English figure, from “þis englische tale,” without changing the identity of Thomas’s parents. Gilbert and Alisaundre are not the Anglo-Norman bourgeois parents of the historical Thomas, but rather figures of a romance world who cease to be Norman as they become Crusader and Saracen. The text does not create as strong an opposition between English identity and Saracen identity as it does between Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman identity. Laud 108 translates the preexisting narrative of Thomas’s mother, the Saracen princess, into English in order to create a Middle English vernacular literary climate.
Chapter 3

“Time out of Mind” and the Jews of the South English Legendary

In 1275 and afterwards, English law defined “time out of mind,” the time beyond living memory and thus inadmissible in legal claims, as any time before September 1189. Although its production begins around 1280, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108 ignores almost everything that occurs after Thomas Becket’s death in 1170. Exactly one saint’s life in Laud 108, the Life of Edmund the Confessor (that is, the life of St. Edmund Rich of Abingdon, archbishop of Canterbury, 1175–1240), crosses into the thirteenth century. Even the Life of Edmund constantly refers to the past without fully engaging the political issues of the present. Henry II, who died in 1189, appears in the book as St. Thomas Becket’s friend, king and enemy. His son Richard I, whose coronation, on September 3, 1189, marks the official beginning of legal memory, remains unnamed in Laud 108, and Richard’s successors do not appear at all.

At the instant of Richard’s coronation, according to late twelfth-century historian Richard of Devizes, anti-Jewish riots began spreading through England:

On that same coronation day … they began in the city of London to immolate the Jews to their father, the Devil. It took them so long to celebrate this mystery that the holocaust was barely completed on the second day. The other towns and cities of the country emulated the faith of the Londoners, and with equal devotion they dispatched their bloodsuckers bloodily to hell. To some degree, but not everywhere the same, this storm against the incorrigible people raged throughout the kingdom.

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164 See Chapter 4 for a reading of the Life of Edmund the Confessor and the ways in which it records and remembers England’s recent past.

165 Lat. *holocaustum*: burnt offering, sacrifice. Richard of Devizes is the only pre–1942 writer who chooses the term to refer to the murder of Jews; the use of “Holocaust,” in WWII and afterwards, to mean Nazi genocide, is unrelated to Richard’s usage.

166 Lat. “Eodem coronationis die … inceptum est in ciuitate Londonie immolare Iudeos patri suo diabo. Tantaque fuit huius celebris mora misterii ut uix altera die complesti potuerit holocaustum. Emulate sunt alie ciuitates regionis et urbes fidem Londoniensium et pari deuotione suos sanguisugas cum sanguine transmiserunt ad inferos. Aliquid sed inequaliter ea tempestate contra perditos patratum est ubique per
With this graphic sacrificial imagery, Richard of Devizes claims the anti-Jewish massacres as marvels surrounding King Richard’s accession, tying Jewish-Christian conflict directly into Richard’s kingship.

These riots, along with Richard’s entire reign, do not appear in Laud 108. Their absence is peculiar. As chapter 2 of this dissertation shows, Laud 108 is intimately engaged in the process of imagining and writing English history. The extended *Life of Thomas Becket*, twelfth-century archbishop and martyr, in the *South English Legendary* (or SEL) collection of saints’ lives and Biblical retellings in the first booklet of Laud 108, invokes Thomas’s political and legal impact on England at length. Thomas Becket even cites actual law, listing the laws governing church-state interaction that resulted from Thomas’s conflict with King Henry II of England. The one thirteenth-century *vita* in Laud 108, the *Life of Edmund the Confessor*, however, never chooses to write or rewrite political and legal materials, and hardly engages with thirteenth-century historicity at all.

English historical events between 1170 and 1300 could have been depicted in Laud 108 through retellings of other thirteenth-century saints’ lives besides the *Life of Edmund*. In the years between Thomas’s death and the late thirteenth-century first booklet of Laud 108, various English writers and thinkers proposed new potential saints, some of whom developed informal or folk cults unsupported or incompletely supported by clerical leadership. These would-be saints included the intellectual bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln (1168–1253), the Carthusian monk and bishop Hugh of Lincoln (d. 1200), who was actually canonized, two legendary children supposedly martyred by Jews, William of Norwich and another Hugh of Lincoln, and the rebellious baron Simon de Montfort.

Unlike St. Edmund the Confessor, each one of these missing saints and folk saints is personally connected in some way with significant cultural conflicts of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. Between 1163 and 1165, when he was killed in battle, Simon de Montfort led a revolt against the king of England; the support of his ecclesiastical ally, Robert Grosseteste, was later claimed as justification for Simon’s proposed canonization. Both Simon de Montfort and Robert Grosseteste participated in English anti-Judaism; when Simon expelled the Jews from Leicester, Grosseteste provided scriptural support for this mini-expulsion. The stories of both William of Norwich and “Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln”, children supposedly tortured and martyred by Jews, emerged from anti-Jewish movements.

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167 For a full paleographical and codicological description of Laud 108, along with an explanation and justification of my methodology in approaching Laud 108, see Chapter 1 and the Appendix.

in England, and English writers mobilized these narratives to extend anti-Judaism for political and economic reasons.

The lives of these saints and would-be or folk saints are not the only narratives missing from Laud 108. Although the codex’s Life of Thomas Becket, like the lives of SS. Dunstan, Augustine of Canterbury, Oswald, Edward the Elder, Wulfstan, Edmund King and Martyr and Kenelm, invokes the historical mode, very few post-1170 historical events are ever explicitly retold in Laud 108. As I argue in Chapter 4, Havelok the Dane and the Life of St. Dominic subtly allude to the Magna Carta, the Third Crusade, the Barons’ Wars and the 1290 expulsion of the Jews from England, but Laud 108 never names these events openly. Meanwhile, the only Laud 108 saint’s life emerging from thirteenth-century English history, the Life of Edmund the Confessor (Edmund Rich, Archbishop of Canterbury ca. 1175–1240), explicitly and consistently replicates materials in earlier saints’ lives in order to incorporate Edmund’s problematic recent life into known models of sanctity. Half Thomas Becket, half an Anglo-Saxon saintly king, Laud 108’s Edmund hardly seems to be a thirteenth-century historical figure at all. The thirteenth century is almost entirely absent from Laud 108. What would the thirteenth century look like if it were actually narrated in Laud 108?

The riots of Richard’s coronation, including one particularly bloody massacre at York, signaled the beginning of the thirteenth century as a hundred years of Christian-Jewish conflict in England. Accusations that Jews committed ritual child murder, first raised in Norwich in 1144, continued in the thirteenth century. Each claim of blood libel gained strength and plausibility through references to the claims before. Meanwhile, while economic interactions between Jews and Christians served vital needs of the English economy, they also raised tensions between Jews and Christians. For example, Richard

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Malebisse, one of the Christian leaders in the York riots, was heavily indebted to Jewish moneylenders.\textsuperscript{171}

Not only did Christians physically attack Jews, they also began to exile Jews from English towns. The first of these smaller expulsions occurred, like the York massacre, in 1190. The abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, home of the blood libel cult of folk saint Robert de Bury (d. 1181), requested and received permission from King Richard to banish the Jews from his town.\textsuperscript{172} Thirty-one years later, Simon de Montfort, better known for fomenting civil war (and, in the process, killing Jews) in the 1260s, expelled all of the Jewish inhabitants from his domain of Leicester. Simon’s aunt, Margaret de Quincy, Countess of Winchester, sheltered the Leicester Jews, either in Winchester or in her own lands in the outskirts of Leicester. Our evidence for Simon’s expulsion of the Jews and Margaret’s offering the Jews shelter comes from one letter that Robert Grosseteste, then archdeacon of Leicester, later bishop of Lincoln and friend and ally to Simon de Montfort, addresses to Margaret. In the letter, he criticizes Margaret for choosing to shelter the Leicester Jews in her own territory and sermonizes to her on the role of Jews in a Christian world. We have no evidence that Margaret retracts her wish to give Leicester’s Jews refuge after this letter, so it is almost certain that the Leicester Jews did settle in Winchester in 1231.\textsuperscript{173}

1240 to 1260 saw a series of tallages, or taxes, designed to squeeze almost all of the wealth from the Jews of England; tallages continued to be issued until 1278.\textsuperscript{174} In the 1270s, the English government found reasons (including, in some cases, refusal to pay tallage, and, in other cases, accusations of coin clipping and debasing the monetary supply) to imprison a great many English Jews.\textsuperscript{175} In another pre-1290 lesser expulsion, King Edward I’s mother Eleanor of Provence expelled all of the Jews from her dower towns in 1275.\textsuperscript{176} The hundred

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[176] Eleanor’s biographer Margaret Howell argues that Eleanor may have chosen to expel the Jews due to the influence of anti-Jewish friars in Eleanor’s dower town of Cambridge. Margaret Howell, \textit{Eleanor of}
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
years of anti-Jewish rhetoric, economic policy and violence culminated in 1290’s expulsion of the Jews from England.\textsuperscript{177}

The 1290 expulsion (like many previous Christian behaviors towards Jews in medieval England) rested on practical financial concerns. By expelling the Jews, King Edward I could both seize the goods that the Jews of England left behind them, and use the social capital engendered through the expulsion to request a grant of taxation from his parliament.\textsuperscript{178} Because of the thirteenth-century tallages, England’s Jews, although frequently accused in anti-Jewish diatribe of possessing great wealth immorally taken from Christians through usury, or moneylending at interest, were by this time relatively impoverished. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many English Jews did serve necessary economic functions as moneylenders in England, and capital that they provided permitted, for instance, Christian soldiers to go on Crusade.\textsuperscript{179} But, due to the tallages, this capital disappeared rapidly, and the remnant Edward acquired of the Jews’ possessions is unlikely to have been very large. The financial gains Edward made through the expulsion were not limited to the Jews’ own possessions, however. When Parliament, approving the expulsion, permitted the king a new tax, Edward benefitted substantially from the expulsion.\textsuperscript{180}


\footnote{\textsuperscript{178} J. A. Watt, “The English Episcopate, the State and the Jews: The Evidence of the Thirteenth Century Conciliar Decrees,” in \textit{Thirteenth Century England II: Proceedings of the Newcastle Upon Tyne Conference 1987}, ed. P. R. Coss and S. D. Lloyd (Wolfeboro, NH: Boydell Press, 1987), 142–43. In medieval England, the Jews were “the king’s serfs,” directly subject to the king’s power and, supposedly, guarded by the king’s protection.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{179} Also, specific taxes levied on English Jews helped pay for Crusades; Christopher Tyerman argues that these tallages, after 1190, served as “protection money” to prevent further massacres. Christopher Tyerman, \textit{England and the Crusades: 1095–1588} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 192.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{180} Howell, \textit{Eleanor of Provence}, 299–300.}
The motive Edward himself claimed to support his expulsion was the Jews’ continuation of usury (under a legal fiction) after he had outlawed it in 1275. The criticism of usury was one of the main features of written attacks against the Jews in the thirteenth century. In the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the Church as a whole severely restricted (but did not ban entirely) Jewish moneylending, in order to protect Christians from the “cruel oppression” of “immoderate interest” imposed by the Jews. Robert Grosseteste justified Simon de Montfort’s expulsion of the Jews from the earldom of Leicester as a move to prevent the oppression of Leicester’s Christians by Jewish usury. Edward forbade Jewish moneylending at interest in England in 1275.

Meanwhile, massacres and expulsions were not the only results of anti-Jewish discourse in thirteenth-century England. Another way of removing Jews from England, conversion, was actively encouraged in England beginning in 1232, when Henry III established a Domus Conversorum, or House for Converts, and arranged to provide financial support and religious education to its inhabitants, while supporting converts outside of the house in other ways. In the years of the most intensive taxation on Jews, the number of converts was especially high; the former Jews used conversion as an opportunity to escape taxation and other financial and cultural demands placed on them.

The traditional narratives of Jewish-Christian encounter in medieval England ignore another set of narratives involving English Christian-Jewish accommodation, conversation, and, perhaps, collaboration. Underlying the reports left by disapproving clergy are histories of economic rapprochement present in, for example, the Countess of Winchester’s support of Leicester Jewry and Queen Eleanor of Castile’s financial transactions. In the 1170s and 1180s, Eleanor of Castile bolstered her inadequate dower income by purchasing foreclosed lands from Jewish moneylenders. The Jewish lenders were legally forbidden to own land, so in order to receive returns on their investments from the collateral on defaulted loans, they

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181 Robert Chazan has edited and translated Edward I’s decree of expulsion in Church, State and Jew in the Middle Ages (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1980), 319.


183 Lankin, Prelate, Lady, Jew.


had to sell the foreclosed lands, usually to magnates and royals. John Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury, censures Eleanor for entering into the forbidden economics of usury alongside Jews, but Pecham’s condemnation does not stop Eleanor from working with Jews for her own, and the Jews’, benefit.

Part A of Laud 108, the booklet group containing the SEL temporale and sanctorale, emerged between 1280 and 1300, at the end of the century in which the status of Jews in England was in crisis, and in which encounters between Jews and Christians in England were matters of great public anxiety to English Christians. The anti-Jewish riots, blood libel narratives, coin-clipping accusations and the lead-up to the eventual expulsion must have been known to the Laud 108 producers. Laud 108 contains several stories of Jews interacting with Christians, but none of these explicitly retell thirteenth-century events. How may we connect the Jews inside the text with the Jews in the world outside Laud 108?

The massacres, expulsions and blood libel narratives of thirteenth-century Jewish-Christian relations in England are not visibly present in the Laud South English Legendary. This chapter explores the hidden political implications of the narratives of Jewish-Christian encounter that are in the Laud SEL. I find, in the SEL, an implicit story of Jewish and Christian rapprochement in the Laud SEL, a secret history of thirteenth-century England that might have been familiar to Eleanor of Castile and Margaret of Winchester. As I will argue more directly in Chapter 4, Laud 108 meaningfully elides and conceals the political circumstances surrounding its production. While political and cultural movements occur around it, the codex reflects these movements, but distances them from the book; it smoothes out the complications of its historical moment, acknowledging cultural traumas only to encode them and hide the terror, anger and guilt associated with them. The Jewish-Christian encounters written into the Laud SEL hide histories of violence, replacing them with narratives of Jewish conversion to Christianity and of economic alliance between Christians and Jews.

For the study of imagined literary Jews, Jeremy Cohen’s construct of the “hermeneutical Jew” is instructive. Jeremy Cohen has established a binary distinction between actual, historical Jews living in medieval Christian Europe and “hermeneutical” Jews whom medieval Christian theology constructs for its own needs. For example, in Augustine of Hippo’s formulation of the doctrine of witness, the doctrine requires Jews to act as witnesses to the truth of Christianity and as foils to which Christians may compare themselves. Augustine’s Jewish witness, who must retain the exact features of pre-Christian Judaism to

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serve as the old religion superseded by the new Christianity, is not a historical Jew but a hermeneutical Jew.\textsuperscript{187}

The historical-hermeneutical distinction, while useful, does not explain all features of medieval literary Jews imagined by Christians. All historical evidence remaining from the Middle Ages is, to some degree, constructed narrative; even supposedly neutral legal documents can use the terminology or visual iconography of anti-Jewish discourse.\textsuperscript{188} Conversely, primarily hermeneutical texts can and do actively connect to the historical problems of the moments in which they appear.

The Jews of the Laud 108 SEL are hermeneutical insofar as they are constructed through literary discourse, and as the text never claims to represent mimetically the historical Jews of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. The first booklet of Laud 108 imagines Jews and Jewish communities that are geographically and temporally distant from the book’s moment of production. Despite their distancing, these Jews are also in some sense historical; they emerge from the cultural demands of late thirteenth-century England. Their portrayals serve medieval English Christian culture’s need to categorize, explain and map the Jews within the world. Because the Laud SEL never imagines the Jews of the Laud 108 as inhabitants of England, and never connects them explicitly to historical events within England, the book need not fully engage with the problems of thirteenth-century Jewish-Christian relations.

Many of these Jewish-Christian interactions would have been known to the scribes and producers of Laud 108. Oxford, the manuscript’s likely place of origin, included a significant and relatively wealthy Jewish community until 1290.\textsuperscript{189} The Jews of Oxford were linked by close marriage and trade networks to the Jewish community of Winchester, where the Jews


\textsuperscript{188} One English tallage roll, or record of taxation, from 1233 includes a drawing of prominent Norwich Jews surrounded by devils and other anti-Jewish iconography. The existence of this illustration, which invokes anti-Jewish portrayals of hermeneutical Jews, problematizes the apparent neutrality and historicity of the tallage roll. A color image of the drawing decorates the dust jacket of Patricia Skinner, ed., \textit{Jews in Medieval Britain} (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer Press, 2003). A black-and-white copy of the drawing, with discussion of its context, appears in Bale, \textit{The Jew in the Medieval Book}, 2-5. See also Debra Higgs Strickland, \textit{Saracens, Demons and Jews}.

\textsuperscript{189} See chapter 1 for the evidence connecting Laud 108 to Oxford.
of Leicester probably found shelter after Simon de Montfort expelled them. The financial, political and cultural impacts of Jewish-Christian relations in England, therefore, could be known to the Oxford scribe who wrote the Laud South English Legendary. What kinds of English historical Christian-Jewish encounters are reflected in the collection’s portrayals of Jews?

The Laud 108 SEL never mentions the most traumatic events of thirteenth-century English Christian-Jewish relations. It ignores these events as a conscious project, not because the book’s scribe or the producers of its lost sources don’t know about these events. The absences of the 1190 York massacre, the mid thirteenth-century tallages on the Jewish community, the 1278-1279 coin-clipping accusations against the Jews, and so forth, must be meaningful, because the book does otherwise reflect knowledge of Jews’ cultural, social and economic places within England. Jews associated with the SEL’s lives of St. Nicholas and St. Theophilus serve as moneylenders and business agents, and possess the material signs of English Jewish businessmen. Their stories demonstrate the book’s familiarity with English Jewish financiers, and, while they treat moneylending as uncomfortable and morally ambiguous, acknowledge the economic necessities of lending and of Jewish moneylenders.

Two of the episodes including Jewish businessmen are miracles appended to the Laud 108 Life of St. Nicholas of Patras. The Life of Nicholas, like most of the saints’ lives in the SEL, begins with narratives of the saint’s birth, life and death, and follows this narrative with a series of miracles attesting the saint’s power and his intercession in human lives. In most cases, these miracles connect to particular features of the saint’s life. The young Nicholas, heir to a fortune, gives all of his possessions away to the poor. For this reason, Nicholas becomes associated with earning money, seeking money and giving charity, and many of the miracle stories attached to his life, in the Laud SEL and in other lives of Nicholas, involve financial transactions. Perhaps by extension from financial transactions (and, perhaps, by way of stereotypes of the money-grubbing Jew), Nicholas also becomes a sort of patron saint of Jewish businessmen, interceding on behalf of Jews who seek his aid. Only Christian narratives ever depict Jews seeking help from St. Nicholas. Jewish doctrine forbids

\[190\] See the discussion of the expulsion of the Jews of Winchester above. In a particularly notable marital and business alliance between Winchester and Oxford, the wealthiest Jewish woman in England, the moneylender Licoricia of Winchester, was married to another Jewish moneylender, David of Oxford, before David’s death in 1244 permitted her to inherit his wealth and add it to her inheritance from her first husband and her father. For more information on this fascinating figure (eventually murdered in a 1277 robbery) and the families and networks to which she belonged, see Suzanne Bartlet and Patricia Skinner, Licoricia of Winchester: Marriage, Motherhood and Murder in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community (Ilford, UK: Vallentine Mitchell & Co., 2009), as well as H. P. Stokes, “A Jewish Family in Oxford in the 13th Century,” Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England (1924) and R. B. Dobson, “A Minority within a Minority: The Jewesses of Thirteenth-Century England,” in Minorities and Barbarians in Medieval Life and Thought, ed. Susan J. Ridyard and Robert G. Benson (Sewanee: University of the South Press, 1996).
praying to saintly intercessors, although Ephraim Shoham-Steiner has demonstrated that medieval Jewish writers were worried about the possibility of Jews heretically praying to saints.  

In the first miracle following Nicholas’s life, a Christian man goes to a Jew “for-to borewi gold of him : to is muchele neode” (in order to borrow gold from him, in his [i.e., the Christian’s] great need.) Because the Christian has no collateral to place against the loan, he brings the Jew to the altar of St. Nicholas’s Church and swears, on God and on St. Nicholas, to repay the loan. The Jew, “for seint Nicholas loue” (for Saint Nicholas’s love,) agrees to the non-standard terms of this transaction. When the day comes to repay the loan, however, the luþere (wicked) Christian, in a conscious plan to betray the Jew, lies and says that he has already paid it. The Jew brings the Christian to court, where the Christian plays a trick on the Jew. He takes a hollow staff and fills it with the gold he owes the Jew, and upon entering the court, the Christian gives the staff to the Jew to hold. He then swears on a book (presumably the Bible), that the money is now in the Jew’s possession.

Pis luþere man with is fals oth : swiþe wel i-leued was,
And þe oþur, for he was a giv, noþþing i-leued was.  

[This wicked man with his false oath was very well believed, and the other, because he was a Jew, was not believed at all.]

The Jew responds by calling on the Christian’s borouȝ (guarantor or co-signer), St. Nicholas, to repay the debt on the Christian’s behalf. Nicholas causes the Christian to be run over by a cart on the way home from the court. The cart also breaks the staff open, leaving the gold scattered over the road.  

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192 *Life of Nicholas* lines 326-327.

193 Ibid., line 332.

194 Ibid., lines 350-351.

195 Ibid., line 353.

196 To fill the lacuna where a page has been removed from the MS (one of several missing pages in Laud 108), Horstmann supplies readings from another SEL manuscript, London, British Library, MS Harley 2277. While the text before and after the missing page matches up to the material Horstmann has chosen to fill it, Harley 2277 is an inappropriate choice of replacement text. According to Görlach’s stemma of the SEL manuscripts, the Harley MS is distant from the Laud recension. Görlach, *Textual Tradition.*
At this stage of the story, in yet another kind of textual absence, a folio of Laud 108 is missing. The lost folio swallows the remainder of the tale. In the interstices, the Harley MS of the SEL has the Jew thanking Nicholas, but begging one more sign before converting to Christianity. The Jew asks God and St. Nicholas to return the Christian’s life; Nicholas obliges. The Jew “bileovede on ihesu crist : & god man euereft was” (believed in Jesus Christ and was ever after a good man.)\(^{197}\) The import of the miracle as a whole changes depending on the presence or absence of lines 361-373. If the moneylender remains Jewish at the close of the tale, he is a permanent example of a good Jew, rather than a man who crosses the borders of religion to become a good Christian. If the moneylender converts, he becomes a witness of Christian truth. Given the emphasis on conversion elsewhere in Laud 108, it seems likely that, in Laud 108 as well as in Harley 2277, the episode would have concluded with the Jew’s conversion.

The story of the Christian borrower and the Jewish moneylender reverses typical Christian literary tropes of justice and injustice in usury. Instead of a wicked Jew, in Robert Grosseteste’s words, unmercifully oppressing Christians with usury, the tale provides a wicked Christian borrower plotting to steal from an honest Jewish moneylender.\(^{198}\) The Jew provides a necessary service as a lender, giving the Christian gold when the Christian requires it. He even provides merciful loan terms, accepting St. Nicholas as a guarantor rather than requiring a security deposit. Although the bailiffs of the court immediately believe the Christian’s version of the story because he is Christian, and assume that the Jew is the liar, readers of the tale know that the opposite is true. This once, Laud 108 encourages its readers to trust a Jew over a Christian, and to approve of his financial transactions. The text, then, demonstrates an otherwise ill-attested belief in thirteenth-century England that Jewish usury is not necessarily morally wrong per se. It reveals a hidden lay-culture acceptance of the financial needs for lending money.

We are not told where or when the borrower and the lender meet. The episode takes place “at one tyme,” in the indefinite past; all we know about its location is that there is a church of St. Nicholas, and a court where the Jew can appeal to bailiffs and win his money back. The mechanics of the loan, with its terminology of deposit and guarantor, and the existence

\(^{197}\) *Life of Nicholas* lines 369–370. Horstmann continues the numeration despite switching MSS.

\(^{198}\) Grosseteste justifies Simon de Montfort’s expulsion of the Jews from Leicester as a means of preventing them from “unmercifully oppress[ing] the Christians in the same [municipality] with further usury” (ne Christianos in eodem … amplius usuris immisericorditer opprimerent): Robert Grosseteste, *Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae*, vol. 25, Rolls Series (London: Longman, 1861; reprint, New York: Kraus, 1965), 33. The translation is mine. Similar wording appears in Canon 67 of the Fourth Lateran Council, a 1215 church law regulating, among other issues, Jewish–Christian interaction. For the text of the canon, see Schroeder and Rothwell, eds., *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation, and Commentary.*
of a court perhaps resembling England’s Exchequer of the Jews, make it possible to read the episode as a thirteenth-century English encounter. The story does acknowledge historical realities of Jewish-Christian economic contact within England, but its placement in indefinite space and time distances the tale, allowing readers, if they wish, to ignore its import as a narrative of Jewish-Christian accommodation.

A second miracle involving a Jewish businessman and St. Nicholas continues the theme of Jewish integration into Christian culture. It acknowledges Jews as businessmen and, while raising and mocking stereotypes of Jewish, miserly behavior, at least does not suggest anti-Jewish violence. The beginning of the tale is lost in the lacuna, but because the section missing is the background that explains the tale, rather than the epilogue, the story’s contents are implied by the extant section of text. The readings that Horstmann provides from Harley 2277 merely bolster the suggested contents.

The second miracle occurs as follows: a Jew makes an icon of Saint Nicholas, and requests from that image a *quid pro quo*. In return for the Jew’s love of the saint, the icon should “do me some god… and wite mi god” (do me [i.e., the Jew] some good, and guard my goods) on the Jew’s upcoming journey. Slippage between the identical Middle English words for “good,” “goods” and “God” becomes evident in the Harley MS opening of the miracle, and continues into the section present in Laud 108. In some sense, in this Jew’s worldview, his own good is synonymous with his possessions. The Jew’s relationship with the saint is purely a business deal, at least from the Jew’s side. In fact, the Jew practically employs the icon to protect his goods, and when thieves “to-breken þe giwes hous” (break into the Jew’s house), the Jew considers that the *ymage* (image or icon) has failed the duty for which the Jew hired it.

> “Ich bi-tok þe to witene al mi guod : þat god lente me” (I hired you to guard all the goods that God lent me), the Jew complains. This, the only explicit mention of God in the Jew’s speech, if it is, indeed, a mention of God, and not another reference to goods, reveals that for the Jew, not only Nicholas but God himself exist only in order to provide for the Jew’s good(s), or, more specifically, his financial well-being. The passage recalls a moment in the Laud SEL life of St. Quiriac, formerly the Jew Judas, in which Quiriac claims that, as a Jew,

199 Maura Nolan suggests that when the story of Nicholas and the Jewish moneylender defies readers’ preconceived notions of stories about wicked Jewish businessmen, the story, like the *Thomas Becket* prologue, betrays the Laud SEL’s willingness to transcend genre conventions. I will investigate the genre conventions of stories of Jewish businessmen further when revising this project into a book.

200 *Nicholas* lines 442-443.

201 Ibid., line 449.

202 Ibid., line 454.
he “in god ne bi-liefde nouȝt” (did not believe in God.)\textsuperscript{203} If a Jew does believe in God in the SEL, the belief is purely mercenary.

The tonal irony of this miracle reads as an extension and exaggeration of humor also present, to a lesser extent, in the tale of the moneylender and the Christian. While the moneylender asks politely for Nicholas to return the money he guaranteed, the victim of theft actually beats the image of Nicholas with a whip so hard that pieces fall off of it, while commanding the icon to return the Jew’s possessions.\textsuperscript{204}

The image of Nicholas, as a failed servant, must be punished for its misconduct; thus, the Jew beats it with a whip, so hard that pieces fall off of it, while commanding the icon to return the Jew’s possessions. Readers are invited to laugh at the foolish Jew, whipping a wooden statue, but they soon find themselves laughing at the saint himself. The wounds transfer from the icon to Saint Nicholas, who goes, “al for-wounder and to-drawe” (all wounded and dragged,) to frighten the thieves into returning the Jew’s possessions.\textsuperscript{205}

The scene in which Nicholas confronts the thieves is an exercise in ironic anticlimax. The saint comes to the thieves, covered in blood and clearly unable to protect himself from a whipping, and threatens them with the earthly punishment of hanging instead of the more spiritual one of damnation. The thieves, terrified by the sight of the bloody saint, quickly bring the goods back to the Jew. Both thieves and Jew renounce their evil deeds; the thieves become honest and the Jew converts to Christianity. The tale, having successfully mocked Jew, thieves and Nicholas himself, arrives at a happy ending. No serious accusation of usurious oppression appears in this tale. The Jew’s monetary greed, and his violence against the icon, is not even as reprehensible as the theft. While this Jew is not as pure of soul as the honest moneylender in the previous miracle, he is not evil. He is no traitor or Judas-figure, he does not murder children and he is not involved with devils. The Jews who follow Saint Nicholas, although their Judaism is problematic from the beginning, are decent (if occasionally ridiculous) men even before they turn to Christianity. Their business relationships with Christians, while not necessarily virtuous, are not enormously sinful.

By contrast, in the Laud 108 Life of Theophilus, a Jewish agent, playing the traditional Jewish role of usurer, helps Theophilus to regain his wealth through the wickedest possible loan

\textsuperscript{203} Holy Cross line 369. See further discussions of Quiriac below. For a reading of the geographies of Holy Cross, see Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{204} The manuscript describes the icon as a “seli treo,” or foolish wood; the Jew speaks to the icon, rather than to the saint himself, in Nicholas, line 463. The description of the icon as tree echoes the Cross, identified in Holy Cross line 503 as a “swete treo.” Perhaps one of the targets of the miracle’s mockery is the anthropomorphism in miracles of the Cross.

\textsuperscript{205} Nicholas line 465.
terms. In Laud 108’s variant of a common story, Theophilus suddenly becomes impoverished when his bishop, angry due to a political squabble, deprives Theophilus both of his “mester,” his office or position, and his “guod,” or possessions. The impoverished and shamed Theophilus goes to a Jew to seek money – but instead of asking for a standard loan, he asks for an introduction to the Devil, who can surely make him wealthy. The Jew of the story, who knows exactly where to find the Devil, agrees to be the agent who negotiates the exchange of the Devil’s money for Theophilus’s soul. He advises Theophilus on how to behave in the Devil’s presence: “Ne make no signe of þe creoyz : ne þeron þench riȝt nouȝt” (Do not make the sign of the cross, nor should you think about it at all.) He then introduces Theophilus to the Devil and explains why Theophilus has come, again serving as a businessman, and, in twenty-first century business jargon, helping Theophilus to expand his network of contacts.

Soon afterwards, the Jew is found guilty of tricherie (treachery) and burnt to death, not because of his connection to Theophilus but for some other nameless crime. Theophilus realizes “þat þe Deuel, with ȝwam þe giv was : to þulke deþe him brouȝte” (that the Devil, with whom the Jew was, brought him to this death). Theophilus prays for forty days and forty nights that the Virgin Mary spare him from the Jew’s fate, and at last Mary rescues the charter in which Theophilus signed his soul away, thus saving Theophilus for heaven.

Joshua Trachtenberg has influentially argued that the figures of Jew, Devil and usurer can be collapsed into one another in medieval Christian writings; certainly, they can in this text. The Jew is effectively a usurer, providing Theophilus with the means to acquire money at an extortionate interest rate; that method involves a deal with the Devil. Connections between Jew and Devil are so well-known that when Theophilus desires to seek the Devil, he immediately asks a Jewish neighbor.

The place in hell in which Theophilus’s contract is locked evokes an arca, a chest that, in thirteenth-century English custom, would protect records of debts Christians owed to Jews, so that the Christians could not, like the false Christian in the miracle of St. Nicholas,

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206 Theophilus line 9.

207 Ibid., line 29.

208 Ibid., line 88.

disavow their oaths. Mary aids Theophilus in negating his contract; thus Theophilus acts almost exactly as the borrower of the Nicholas miracle, setting aside the debt he owes to his moneylender. The Life of Theophilus presents the story in a different moral light, however, making the primary lender the “Maister of alle quede” (master of all evil), and permitting the perfect Mary to achieve the trick (here, a stolen contract) that cancels the primary oath.

The Life of Theophilus, unlike the first part of Holy Cross and the Life of Saint Nicholas, constructs Jews who are automatically evil and aligned with the Devil, and whose usury is unquestionably part of grave sin and treason. Although Theophilus depicts Jewish wickedness, it never once references any punishment for Jews more wide-ranging than the execution of a single man. If any texts of the SEL were to invoke the 1290 expulsion of the Jews from England, or even any expulsion of Jews from any territory, this would have been the vita in which to do so. Expulsion rhetoric is curiously lacking from the Laud MS’s treatment of Jews at the end of the thirteenth century.

One further absence in the Laud 108 Theophilus is worth mentioning: this text, unlike the variants of the Life of Theophilus in other manuscripts of the SEL, stands alone, without associated miracles of the Virgin Mary. One of the miracles often connected with Theophilus, in SEL manuscripts and other hagiographical or Marian miracle collections, describes a Jewish child who goes to church and consumes a communion wafer, experiencing a vision, as he does so, of Jesus and his mother Mary. When the boy returns home and tells his father about his visit to church, his father punishes him by throwing him in an oven. Mary intervenes, protecting the boy from the flames. The townspeople throw the boy’s father into the fire in place of the boy, and all of the other Jews of the town convert to Christianity in wonder at the miracle.

Although, as we shall see, Laud 108 includes a series of accusations that Jews commit violence on Christians and on Christian symbols, the Christian anti-Jewish violence of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England is missing from the book. The fate of the Jewish father in the miracle of the boy and the Host, burnt to death as punishment for attempting to kill his proto-Christian son, mirrors English massacres of Jews in which the rioters justify

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210 On archae, the mechanisms for keeping their documents safe and free from forgery, and the burning of one archae during the 1190 York massacre, see Clanchy, From Memory to Written Record, 165–66. More detail on the locations and uses of archae can be found in Mundill, England’s Jewish Solution.

211 Theophilus, line 33.

their actions through claims of Jewish ritual murder. Because the miracle tale is missing, the Laud *Theophilus* elides references to anti-Jewish massacre.

While Laud 108 contains no anti-Jewish massacres, it retells one anti-Jewish rumor that thirteenth century English Christians used to justify those massacres. In two miracles appended to the Laud 108 *Holy Cross* life, Jews attack crosses or crucifixes. Their modes of violence resemble those performed in thirteenth-century English blood libel narratives and in one 1268 historiographical document. The resemblance seems more likely to emerge from a common narrative ancestry than from any direct SEL invocation of blood libel tale. Perhaps the most interesting model of connection between the SEL and previous narratives of Jewish violence performed on Christians and on Christian symbols is an intertextual dialogue over time. The SEL knows of the previous narratives and answers them implicitly, but does not need to retell them in order to reply to them.

Both in the SEL and in the *Life of William of Norwich*, Jews attack figures of Christ, as represented respectively in crucifixes and in the body of William. During these attacks, the crucifix and the boy, standing in for Christ, suffer in his place.

Thomas of Monmouth, William of Norwich’s hagiographer, represents the moment of William’s death with specific imagery taken from representations of Christ’s Passion. After a graphic (very nearly pornographic) scene in which the Jews of Norwich tie the boy William up, the Jews stab William’s head “with countless thorn points” (infinitis illud spinarum punctionibus.)

This torture resembles the crown of thorns given to Jesus. The Jews of the story then tie William to a cross and stab him in the left side, exactly repeating the process of the crucifixion. Thomas means to leave his readers with no doubt that the Jews are reenacting Christ’s death, and that William is a type of Christ. In providing William with such a dramatic and Christlike martyrdom, Thomas helps to glorify the boy whose cult he is advertising. At the same time, he provides a justification that later English Christians can and do use to explain their anti-Jewish violence; York in 1190 is not really very far from Norwich in 1144.

As William of Norwich, crucified by Jews, stands in for Christ in the *Life of William*, crucifixes tormented by Jews represent Christ in the Laud 108 *Holy Cross*. In one miracle

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213 The way Thomas describes the Jews tying up William is particularly interesting. Thomas uses the word *teseillum* to describe an instrument of torture, which, by context, seems to be a sort of gag. The word is a hapax legomenon, obviously not of Latin origin. Thomas’s translators have interpreted it as a cognate of “teazle,” but this word is not fully satisfactory. Jennifer Miller has suggested, in personal discussion, that the word may actually be a distortion of Heb. *tefillin*, a set of leather straps that Jewish men wrap about their arms and head in prayer. I find this argument particularly convincing because of the likelihood that either the scribe of the extant copy of the *Life of William* or the Life’s modern editors misread the letter *f* as a tall *s* (ſ). Jessop and James, eds., *William of Norwich*, 20–21. I quote Jessop and James’s translation.
associated with *Holy Cross*, a Jew in Constantinople, finding himself alone in a church, decides to “to don þe rode schame” (do shame to the cross/crucifix.) 214 He attacks the *rode* in the *þrote* with a sword. This throat could either be the throat of the model of Christ that hangs on the crucifix, or it could be an anthropomorphized body part of the cross. In any case, the cross or the icon of Christ begins to bleed on the Jew. 215 Readers used to the symbolic logic of saints’ lives have no difficulty recognizing that the Jew of Constantinople replaces the Jews torturing Christ, and that the cross or the image of Christ, like William of Norwich, is in itself a figure of Christ, miming the Passion through its suffering.

As the tale continues, the Jew tries to hide the *rode*, but a Christian discovers the bloody Jew and accuses him of committing murder. Of course, in the tale’s logic, the Jew has committed a form of murder; he is a symbolic Christ-killer. The Jew first denies the charge, and then admits to his crime of crucifix-stabbing. Eventually, the Jew, having witnessed the miracle of the bleeding cross and therefore been convinced of the truth of Christianity, converts and leads a “guod lijf” (good life) as a “cristine man.” 216 Although he has perpetrated violence on a Christlike symbol, the Jew is not without reach of Christian redemption; he plays the Augustinian role of Jew-as-witness and resolves the conflict of the tale through conversion rather than through violent death.

By locating this legend in Constantinople, at the edge of the Christian world, Laud 108 distances the story’s reenactment of the Passion, rendering it safely far from England and English Jewish-Christian relations. While the tale might remind English Christian readers of fears they experience at home, the reminder is soothingly indirect. Because of this story’s distance, it need not, like the *Life of William*, help to inspire a massacre.

In another, similar miracle immediately following this one, an entire community of Jews associated with a synagogue reenact Christ’s passion upon the body of a cross:

Þo þe rode was þare i-founde : alle þe giwes as nome
And ladden as forth to heore Synagogue : ase huy ladden ore louerd to dome;
And also ase huy ore louerd beoten : þe rode huy beoten faste,
And spatten on hure and boffatteden al-so : and ofte a-doun hire casten ;

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214 *Holy Cross* lines 520, 4. The exact wording of the Middle English in *Holy Cross* line 520 is “þe lond of costantyne þe noble” (the land of Constantine the noble.) Presumably a back-formation from and interpretation of *Constantinopolis* (Κωνσταντινούπολις), this name for Constantinople invokes the Emperor Constantine even more pointedly than the city’s actual name does. Since the legend that opens *Holy Cross* in Laud 108 involves Constantine’s mother Helena’s search for the True Cross, the text’s choice of name for the city seems particularly appropriate.

215 *Holy Cross* lines 524–525.

216 Ibid., line 546.
At þe riȝt side huy smitten a spere : ful deope in atþe laste :
Þat blod sprong out with grete strem. : þo weren þe schrewes a-gaste. 217

[When the cross was found there, all the Jews took it and led it forth to their synagogue as they had led our Lord to death; and also as they had beaten our Lord they beat the cross soundly, and spat on it and buffeted it too, and often threw it down; at the right side they stabbed a spear full deeply in at last, so that blood sprung out in a great stream. Then the wicked ones were aghast.]

The series of explicit parallels to the Passion of Christ makes this crime (and, by extension, the earlier cross-torture) an especially strong recreation of the Jews’ killing of Christ. The Jews of this text are deicides, and, like the Jews of Norwich as drawn by Thomas of Monmouth, they repeat their deicide whenever possible. When the cross or crucifix begins to bleed upon them, though, they decide to use the blood to test the truth of Christianity. Sure enough, when rubbed upon sick Jews, the Cross’s blood cures illnesses instantly; the Jews learn from this “þat heore lawe nas riȝt nouȝt : þat ne bi-liefden nouȝt on þe rode” (that their law, which did not believe in the cross, was not right at all.) 218 In an act of witness, these Jews convert to Christianity en masse, thus witnessing the truth of Christianity as a community and bringing the world closer to the Second Coming. Once they convert, no one punishes the former Jews for their crimes against the cross; they cease to be unbelievers and thus need not be chastised for sins of unbelief.

The idea of Jews tormenting a cross is extant not only in the literatures of thirteenth century England but in the history writings of the period. 219 The Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III, a set of medieval English administrative records, attest a 1268 event in which “an Oxford Jew violently attacked an ecclesiastical procession…trampling on the processional cross and spitting on it.” 220 Actual Jews, not only hermeneutical Jews, seem concerned about the sign of the cross; Christian anxiety about cross mutilation may be based in factual events, or literary anxieties about cross mutilation may be reflected in the presence of this accusation.

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217 Ibid., lines 551–6.

218 Holy Cross, lines 563–564. The blood from the crosses in both legends is at least a precious relic of a holy object, if not the explicitly Eucharistic blood of Christ himself in the figure of the cross that represents his death. Miri Rubin has studied the connections of Jews to the Eucharist in Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

219 Of course, as I explain in Chapter 2, the borderlines between history writing and literature are not necessarily clear in the medieval period. Is the Life of William of Norwich literature or history? Thomas of Monmouth repeatedly makes claims for the truth and authenticity of his narrative, even though we as twenty-first century readers find his blood libel tale entirely unbelievable.

Even mention in the *Close Rolls* does not guarantee that the mutilation was actually committed; it does, however, suggest that the accusation was made seriously, and that Christians of thirteenth century England genuinely expected and feared Jewish cross desecrations.\(^{221}\)

The two categories of threatening Jews in Laud 108 and other thirteenth-century English Christian literary representations of Jews, Jews as oppressive moneylenders and Jews as Christ-killers, raise the need for some form of resolution of the threat. In England, in 1290, Edward I resolved the perceived Jewish threats by expelling the Jews from the kingdom. Laud 108 never suggests expulsion as an available option, however. Instead, the codex tacitly offers Jewish conversion as a means of Jewish-Christian integration.

The archetypal Laud 108 Jewish convert is Judas, son of Symeon, who first appears as a problematic figure on the borderline between Judaism and Christianity. The man who knows the location of the True Cross in the Laud 108 *Holy Cross*, Judas is both a Jew and a Christian, a traitor and a martyr. As a stiff-necked, stubborn Jew who refuses to acknowledge Christ’s divinity despite his own descent from the family of St. Stephen, Judas embodies the problem of the recalcitrant Jew. When, after duress and torture, Judas converts and changes his name to Quiriac, he is no longer troublesome to Christian discourse. He disappears into a conventionalized saintly martyr narrative, blending into Christian culture as easily as if he had never been Jewish at all. Conversion replaces the stiff-necked Jew with the conforming Christian, removing all of the threats offered by the existence of non-believers.

Paradoxically, Laud 108 reads Judas’s Judaism as exemplary because of his family’s links to Christianity. According to Augustine’s doctrine of witness, Jews must remain stubborn deniers of Christianity until they at last concede its truth. Judas models this stubborn denial because he has reason to know the truth of Christianity. He inherits the knowledge of the True Cross’s location from his father Symeon, who in turn received it from his own father Zachee, the brother of the Christian martyr Stephen. Judas, retelling the story before the Jewish assembly, claims the family heritage of Christianity, quoting Zachee’s assertion that Stephen “wel deore a-bouȝte” the “blisse of heuene” (dearly bought the bliss of heaven).\(^{222}\) At the same time, by quoting his father, who in turn quoted his grandfather, Judas twice distances that heritage from himself. Through his dual belief in Christianity and rejection of Christianity, Judas shows himself the stubbornest of stubborn Jews.

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\(^{221}\) It is also possible, or even likely, that the 1268 accusation of cross desecration was a trumped-up claim made for the accuser’s financial gain. Even if it was, the choice of accusation suggests that someone believed that English Jews might desecrate crosses.

\(^{222}\) *Holy Cross* line 38.
When St. Helen, mother of Constantine, demands information on the Cross, Judas refuses to answer; he resists Helen’s pressure to reveal the Cross for a full week of starvation and imprisonment before capitulating. The suffering Judas undergoes at this point, although not nearly as extreme as the tortures of SEL martyrs such as Alban, Lawrence, Katherine or Agatha, harks back to the motif of saints being tortured in order that they might renounce their faith. Judas, like Alban, is “liet wel faste binde” (bound very tightly) in the course of coercion; Katherine, too, is “bounden” to a “piler faste”. The similarity between Judas in Helen’s prison and the martyr-saints ends there, as Helen does not resort to whips, wheels, gridirons or wild horses to compel Judas’s speech. Furthermore, Judas does eventually give in to the demands upon him, while the saint-martyrs are famous for remaining steadfast in the face of pain. The differences between Judas and Katherine or Lawrence help draw out the liminal space in which Judas resides. If Judas had thought of himself as a Christian, he should have told Helen the location of the Cross immediately.

When Judas brings Helen to the reputed site of the True Cross, he fills the Augustinian role of Jew as witness to the divinity of Christ:

\[
\text{Þo he to þe place com : a-doun he sat a-kneo :}
\]

“Louerd,” heo seide, “ȝif it is soth : þat þou man and god beo
And þat þou of Marie were i-bore : siend us þine grace,
Som tokningue, þat we finde mowe : þe rode in þis place.”

[When he came to that place, he knelt. “Lord,” he said, “if it is true that you are man and god and you were born to Mary, send us your grace, some sign that we might find the cross in this place.”]

By asking for, and receiving, a miracle that proves that Christ is “man and god,” born of Mary, and then by accepting the miracle’s authenticity, Judas supports Christianity as a witness to its truth.

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224 Horstmann corrects this pronoun to “he”, assuming that “heo” can only be a feminine pronoun and that the subject of the verb must be Judas. I agree that the speaker of lines 59–62 in *Holy Cross* is Judas, as line 63 reads, “A-non so Iudas þis bone hadde : to ore louerd i-bede” (As soon as Judas had made this request to our lord.) On a contextual level, one cannot imagine Helen questioning the humanity-divinity of the Godhead. As this is not the only place in Laud 108 where “heo” appears to be a masculine pronoun, Horstmann is hypercorrecting; “heo” can be either masculine or feminine in the Laud SEL dialect.

225 *Holy Cross* lines 59–62.
Judas, finder of the True Cross, is shadowed by Judas Iscariot, prototypical Jew-traitor, in the second Judas’s refusal to locate the Cross and his later capitulation to Helen. When Judas finds the cross for Helen, becomes Christian, and takes on the new name Quiriac, the Devil laments,

\[ \text{Þoruȝ A Iudas, þat was ȝwilene : Iesus to deþe ich brouȝte,} \]
\[ \text{And nou þoruȝ Iudas ouer-come ich am : and i-brouȝte to nouȝte.} \]

[Through one Judas, who was in the past, I brought Jesus to death, and now through Jesus I am overcome and brought to nought.]

The Devil’s speech links Judas Iscariot to the Devil, Judas/Quiriac to Judas Iscariot, and Judas/Quiriac’s conversion to the Devil’s defeat. Thus *Holy Cross* implicitly defines Jews as traitors and as tools of the Devil, and marks conversion from Judaism to Christianity as Jesus’s triumph over the Devil.

When Quiriac becomes Christian, he is wholly Christian, lacking any stigma of conversion. He refuses to worship *maumates* when wicked Emperor Julian commands him to do so. In punishment, Julian cuts off Quiriac’s right hand. Quiriac is pleased by the punishment; he says that Julian has taken the hand

\[ \text{þat me hath ofte to sunne idrawe,} \]
\[ \text{And ofte ich habbe þare-wit ì-writen : a-ȝein Iesu Cristes lawe,} \]
\[ \text{Þe ȝwyle ich was a luþer givȝ : and on god ne bi-liefde nouȝte.} \]

[that has often drawn me to sin; I often wrote with it against Jesus Christ’s law, when I was a wicked Jew and did not believe in God.]

Quiriac identifies his past self as wicked merely because of his Judaism and his unbelief in God (i.e., Christ). Quiriac changes after converting to Christianity and leaving behind his

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226 Ibid., lines 99–100.

227 *Holy Cross* line 362. *Maumets* are idols; the word is related to OF “mahomet” and demonstrates an assumption in Middle English that Muslims are effectively pagans. See Chapter 5 for a reading of Indian *maumets* in the *Life of Saint Bartholomew*, and Chapter 2 for the interplay between imagined Muslims and imagined pagans. In Laud Misc. 108, Jews as well as pagans can worship *maumates*; the *Childhood of Jesus*, the text preceding *Holy Cross*, shows young Jesus entering a “temple of giwes” and destroying it along with the *maumates* within it. *Kindheit Jesu*, in Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden* (1875), line 209. By describing Jews and Saracens as worshipping (theologically incorrectly, in both cases) the same idols, Laud 108 begins to collapse the two groups into the same category of religious alterity.

228 *Holy Cross*, lines 367–369.
identity as the Jew Judas. Even in the face of brutal torture from the Emperor, he remains steadfast. Quiriac is burned, his wounds are salted, he is boiled in oil, and hot lead is poured down his throat, but he does not recant. In fact, like martyr-saints Lucy and Agnes, Quiriac remains unharmed by almost every torment, until at last Julian kills him by the sword. Judas/Quiriac’s conversion is complete and final. He ceases to be a “luþer givȝ” (wicked Jew), becoming instead an exemplary Christian martyr and saint.

If the Laud 108 SEL creates any narrative regarding the Jews of thirteenth-century England, it makes two tacit suggestions. First, as we learn in the Nicholas miracles, economic rapprochement between Jews and Christians is possible, as long as the Jews eventually convert and thus become appropriate business allies for Christians. Second, as we learn from Judas/Quiriac’s story in Holy Cross, conversion renders Jews no longer threatening to Christian stability. Encouraging Jewish conversion and assimilation was a recognized movement in thirteenth-century England, and was the goal of Henry III’s Domus Conversorum.

However, Laud 108 never directly offers conversion as an option for the actual Jews of thirteenth-century England, because it never mentions the Jews of thirteenth-century England. The historical Jews, like almost all English historical figures from 1189 onward, are missing from Laud 108. The tension between the actual Jews of medieval English history and the hermeneutic, fictionalized Jews of medieval literature resembles the tension we saw in Chapter 2 between Thomas Becket, known historical figure, and Thomas Becket, imagined saint and romance figure. Laud 108 consistently replaces the historical with the fictionalized; however, the fictionalized narratives always contain echoes of the lost or hidden historical texts.

The Laud 108 SEL Jews, unlike the historical Jews of England, are at least partially constructed from theological narratives situating the Jew in Christian cosmology. Yet, as businessmen, moneylenders and townspeople, the SEL Jews do play economic roles similar to those of actual Jews in thirteenth century England. Their stories, almost always resolved with conversions rather than exiles or murders, provide conversion as an alternate solution to expulsion for the problem of medieval English Jewry. That solution must be implicit rather than explicit because recent history is too raw and too painful to translate directly into saints’ lives and romances.
Chapter 4

The Case of the Missing “Vita”: Shadows of History in Havelok the Dane

Introduction: The Havelok-Horn Booklet

The only (nearly) complete Middle English version of Havelok the Dane, which appears in the last booklet of Laud 108, following the SEL and two didactic poems, begins with a Latin rubric that has been severely damaged by manuscript trimming. The only recognizable words fully visible on the rubric read, “…elok qu… Rex Anglie / Et Denemarchie.” Looking at the fragments of ink left at the top of the page (see fig. 1), I agree with the scholarly consensus that the text probably started out “Incipit vita Hauelok quondam Rex Anglie et Denemarchie” (Here begins the life of Havelok, once king of England and Denmark.)229 Most recently, Kimberly Bell has used the reconstructed key word vita (which often means life in the sense of a saint’s life) from the folio’s fragmentary header to examine Havelok’s identity as quasi-saint within a codex full, in its earlier SEL section, of saintly narratives.230 As Bell writes,

Especially when understood within the framework of the royal vitae of Oswald, Eadmund, Edward, and Kenelm, Havelok the Dane can more appropriately be understood as a hagiographic romance: King Aþelwold of England functions as a holy ruler who prefigures the sanctity of the protagonist, while Havelok himself emerges as a Christ-like hero who shares more affinities with Christ and the saints than he does with other romance heroes. Havelok, in turn, exerts its own influence on the vitae by offering a more complete picture of royal sanctity.231

229 Smithers cites A.I. Doyle, Skeat-Sisam and Holthausen as previous scholars who reconstructed the rubric in this way. Smithers, ed., Havelok, 1.

230 Bell, “Resituating Romance.”

Like Bell, I am interested in the term *vita* as a sign of Havelok’s position in Laud 108, and as a marker of the poem’s ties to narratives of sanctity, royal and baronial identity and Englishness created by the codex as a whole. The part that interests me the most is that the word *vita* is not present in the extant rubric. This is a palpable absence, signaled by a bit of red ink left over after a late owner of Laud 108 cut away the edges of the page. We have enough of the sign left to, first, decode the word itself, and, second, interpret its relevance to *Havelok the Dane* as a poem and Laud 108 as a book.

The page trimming postdates the production of the section by hundreds of years. The excision of the word *vita* is thus accidental and unconnected with the *Havelok-Horn* booklet’s moment of production. Nevertheless its absence points metonymically to a pervasive problem in the surviving *Havelok* text. Using the lost words as a symbol for other losses and absences in the booklet, this chapter explores the palpable absences in the *Havelok-Horn* booklet and asks what we can learn from them.

In order to provide background for the problem, I will begin with a brief discussion of the manuscript’s evidence for *Havelok* and *Horn*’s production. Laud 108’s Scribe 3 adds the romances *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, as a new booklet, to the booklet group.
containing, at that point, the *South English Legendary* (SEL) *temporale* (i.e., collection of Biblical retellings) and *sanctorale* (i.e., collection of saints’ lives), the *Sayings of Saint Bernard* and the *Visio Pauli*. The SEL booklet may have been completed between 1280 and 1300, and the *Havelok/Horn* booklet was likely added between 1300 and 1320.

Angus McIntosh has used dialectal evidence from Laud 108’s *Havelok* and *Horn* to argue that the scribe of this section probably came from west Norfolk, near the borders of Lincolnshire and Ely. *Havelok’s* dialect is almost entirely Norfolk-based, with a few Lincolnshire elements. Meanwhile, *King Horn’s* dialect, while superficially more southern, betrays a wide enough set of dialectal markers that it lends little information about the scribe’s location of origin. Joseph Hall, whose argument, unlike McIntosh’s, relies primarily on *Horn*, claims that the Laud 108 text of *Horn* is copied from a southern exemplar, but the scribe’s own dialect is East Midlands.

Andrew Taylor, following McIntosh and Hall’s work and arguing that both Parts A and B of Laud 108 were produced in Oxford, suggests that Scribe 3 is a Norfolk scribe who has left home, “conscious that his dialect mark[s] him as something of an outsider and occasional figure of fun in Oxford.”

If the evidence for the scribe’s location of origin is more convincing in *Havelok* than in *Horn*, this is only to be expected. *Havelok* is a locationally grounded text. Much of the action of *Havelok* is firmly situated in Lincolnshire, both in Grimsby, the town that takes its name from Grim, and in Lincoln, where Havelok meets and marries the English princess Goldeborw. The tale is bound by its narrative to Grimsby and, as Thorlac Turville-Petre has

232 As discussed in Chapter 2, genre categories in early Middle English literature are notoriously unspecific, and the category “romance” is particularly vexed for medieval writers and present-day scholars. John Finlayson has questioned the reflexive application of the term “romance” to *Havelok* and *King Horn*, arguing that *Havelok*, especially, belongs to the genre of historiography rather than the genre of romance. I refer to both *Havelok* and *Horn* as romances in this chapter, using the word in its broadest sense as vernacular, and not apparently didactic or hagiographical, literature of entertainment, for convenience. The word distinguishes them from the SEL saints’ lives and from the didactic works that travel along with the SEL in the first booklet group. John Finlayson, “*King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane*: A Case of Mistaken Identities,” *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* n.s. 18 (1992).

See Chapter 1 and the Appendix for further discussion of Laud 108’s production history and the *Havelok–Horn* group’s place in that history.


234 McIntosh, “Language of the Extant Versions of *Havelok*,” 36.


236 Taylor, “Her Y Spelle,” 80.
demonstrated, to spaces of Danish assimilation within England. By contrast, *King Horn* is notably unmoored from recognizable geographies, setting its hero’s homeland in the mysterious and unmappable land of Suddene. Where the romances are tied to physical space, the spaces are in Norfolk and Lincolnshire.

Because neither *King Horn* nor (most probably) *Havelok* were originally composed for Laud 108, the dates of the poems’ composition must precede the production of the Laud romance booklet. G. V. Smithers argues that *Havelok* was composed between 1301 and 1310, and transcribed into Laud 108 not long after its composition. As evidence for this *terminus post quem*, Smithers argues that a particular council in *Havelok* may have been inspired by an actual parliament held in Lincoln in 1301. For the end date, Smithers points to a fifteenth-century manuscript of the Anglo-Norman *Petit Bruit*, which repeats several names otherwise unattested beyond the Middle English *Havelok*. The *Bruit* claims a composition date of 1310 (although its late transcription date means that the contents of the text may not have been static), and, according to Smithers’ argument, the ME *Havelok* must precede it. Scott Kleinman complicates the argument that either *Havelok* or the *Petit Bruit* must come first, arguing that all extant variants of the Havelok narrative form a “textual community” in which models of stemmatic lineage are less accurate than models of cross-textual conversation. In any case, Smithers’s start and end dates correspond with the available paleographical evidence.

The *terminus ante quem* for Part B, the *Havelok-Horn* booklet, must be the first quarter of the fourteenth century. As I have argued in Chapter 1, numeration evidence demonstrates that the booklet predates the addition of *The Disputation of Body and Soul* to the end of the SEL booklet group, and the *Disputation*’s handwriting cannot be later than s. xiv

Because Scribe 3 adds the two romances to an already-extant book to which he has access, he replies to and serves as an active reader of the earlier materials. *Havelok* and *Horn* respond to the preoccupations of the Laud SEL, and we can find these preoccupations in the two poems’ palpable absences.

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239 Ibid., xxvii–xxix.


241 See Chapter 1 and the Appendix.
The first absence, in a codex whose prior booklets retell Middle English lives of dozens of saints, is the lack of any authorized, canonized saint — or, even, any figure authorized by an unofficial and local cult. *Havelok the Dane* certainly accesses and reuses tropes of sanctity. As Bell has argued, Havelok, the boy tortured by wicked, Judas-like tormentors only to emerge, with radiant and miraculous light shining from his mouth, as the redeemer of a kingdom, performs the role of royal English saints such as the *SEL* Kenelm and Aþelwold.²⁴² Havelok’s reclamation of his rightful kingdom, Denmark, through his marriage to the disinherited princess Goldeborw, involves a level of marital (and sexual) diplomacy rare to royal saints’ lives, however. Havelok is not actually a saint.

What saints might have been present in the booklet if Scribe 3 had chosen to add them in place of *Havelok* and *King Horn*? As I have argued in Chapter 3, the *Laud SEL* almost never depicts saints who emerged after 1189, the year of King Henry II’s death and the official legal boundary of memory. Events preceding 1189 fell into the category of “time out of mind,” and were therefore inadmissible in legal claims.²⁴³ By selecting and vernacularizing the lives of saints who had been dead for a minimum of a hundred years by the moment of book production, the *Laud SEL* elides troubled recent histories and (with the single exception of Edmund the Confessor) avoids discussion of saints emerging from thirteenth-century crises. Scribe 3, adding a new booklet to the codex, could choose to update the *Laud hagiographical collection* by attaching the *vitae* of post-Conquest, or even post-1190, saints in the place of these poems. Scribe 3 would, in that case, have responded to the *SEL* saints’ lives of the first *Laud 108* booklets, especially the long and important post-Conquest *Life of Thomas Becket*, as well as the Anglo-Saxon saints Dunstan, Wulfstan and Edward.

Such added lives might resemble the *Laud* manuscript’s so-called *Life of Edmund the Confessor*. This *vita*, the only *Laud* *vita* emerging from “time in mind,” engages with the most recent historical material in *Laud 108*. It imagines the thirteenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Rich of Abingdon, as both a late Anglo-Saxon figure and a post-Conquest saint who relives Thomas Becket’s exile and martyrdom. The *Life*, like its immediate predecessors including Matthew Paris’s *Life of Edmund of Canterbury*, gives

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²⁴² Bell, “Resituating Romance.”

²⁴³ See Chapter 3. For information on the concept of “time out of mind,” see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 152.
Edmund the title Confessor. This title, of course, was also borne by such saintly Anglo-Saxon kings as Edward the Confessor, and it connects Edmund to these kings.

The SEL Life of Edmund also provides St. Edmund with visions of Thomas Becket, and explains Edmund’s death in Pontigny as the result of the archbishop’s flight from enemies to France, a flight modeled on Thomas Becket’s French exile. In other words, the Life of Edmund the Confessor takes a very late, very recent historical saint (Edmund died in 1240, and was canonized by 1246, forty to seventy years before the Laud manuscript’s production) and absorbs him into models of English sanctity extant earlier in the collection. As a successor to both the Laud SEL’s Anglo-Saxon saints and to Thomas Becket, who is constructed in the SEL as an English figure facing off against the Norman King Henry, Edmund participates in what Anne Thompson has called “the passionately anti-Norman tone” of the Laud SEL.

The Laud text, while supporting Edmund as a saint and praising him as a Crusade preacher and miracle worker, portrays him as a remarkably unpleasant person. On one occasion, when his landlady’s daughter climbs into his bed and attempts to seduce him, Edmund proves his chastity in an unusual manner. After pushing the girl out of bed, the text explains, Edmund

beot hire on þe nakede rug : þat wel-neiȝe heo a-wedde;
he ne sparede rug ne side noþur : are heo to grounde bledde –
A-quenche he miȝte hire fole wille : mid blode þat heo schedde!

[...beat her on the bare rug, so that she nearly went insane. He did not spare the rug, or (her) side either, before she bled to the ground. He would quench her foul will, with the blood that she shed!]

In another case, Edmund encounters the soul of a sinner, tormented by demons. Most saints, in Edmund’s place, would expel the demons and convince the soul to repent, but Edmund, deciding that the soul deserves his suffering, walks away without interfering. These legendary markers, coupled with more traditional saintly virtues like a passionate devotion

244 Matthew Paris’s Life of Edmund the Confessor has been edited in C. H. Lawrence, St. Edmund of Abingdon: A Study in Hagiography and History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

245 Thompson, Everyday Saints, 48. Thompson writes that later MSS of the SEL actually have to mute the extreme anti-Norman sentiments present in the Laud SEL’s Life of Wulfstan. On Thomas Becket as Anglo-Saxon figure, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation, Thompson, Everyday Saints, 49-51 and Mills, “Early SEL and Difference,” 209.

246 Edmund the Confessor lines 114-16.

247 Ibid., lines 193-208.
to Mary and saintly actions including healing disabled women with crosses, suggest ambivalent historical memories of Edmund's stint as archbishop.  

Anne Thompson suggests that Edmund’s presence and depiction in the SEL reflect the SEL’s sympathy with the baronial civil wars associated with Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester:

Although Edmund died well before the baronial uprising, he was in fact instrumental in resolving an earlier crisis which had arisen between the king and his barons in 1234… Edmund, unlike Thomas [Becket], never became an outright enemy of the king, but he nonetheless worked steadily to mend the breach between the king and his barons… These facts are not explicitly mentioned in the SEL, yet in associating Edmund with Thomas the poet appears to see him as likewise the champion of those opposed to the king.

In Thompson’s reading, Edmund’s presence suggests the SEL’s coded sympathy for Simon de Montfort’s rebellion. As we will see, the SEL and Laud 108 do elsewhere encode approval for Simon de Montfort. However, Edmund’s portrayal is not altogether positive, and Edmund’s relations with the barons were not always sympathetic. Edmund opposed the second marriage of Princess Eleanor of England to Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester. Ten years before this marriage, Eleanor, witnessed by Edmund, had sworn a vow of perpetual chastity, and Eleanor asked neither Edmund’s nor the Church’s permission to annul this oath. Rather, Simon and Eleanor married hurriedly while Edmund was traveling to Rome and unable to prevent the wedding. By using iconography from Anglo-Saxon kingly saints and from Thomas Becket, the Life of Edmund renders the problematic St. Edmund both explicable and categorizable in known taxonomies of sainthood.

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248 Not long before the incident involving the landlady’s daughter, the young Edmund vows marriage to a statue of Mary: “Þulke ymage he weddede with a ring : as a man dotþ is wif, / Clanliche to holden in spoushod : to hire al is lijf” (He married that image with a ring, as a man does his wife, in order to cleanly [i.e., chastely] keep marriage to her all of his life.) Edmund lines 93–94. The troth which Edmund pledges to Mary may explain the vehemence of his reaction to attempted seduction by a mortal woman. Edmund heals a woman’s crooked hand with his cross on lines 343–358.

Andrew Lynch reads the Laud Edmund’s treatment of its saint as gently and admiringly mocking: “St. Edmund’s career might seem on the surface quite removed from ordinary audience sympathies…. Yet the narrative humanizes its reaction to Edmund by humorously acknowledging the great difference between him and sinners of everyday life — unfaithful husbands…and sexually willful girls.” Andrew Lynch, “Genre, Bodies and Power in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: King Horn, Havelok, and the South English Legendary,” in Texts and Contexts, ed., Bell and Couch, 185.

249 Thompson, Everyday Saints, 52.

While St. Edmund shows up near the end of the Laud 108 South English Legendary and thus provides a precedent for vitae of post-Conquest saints (however problematic) in Laud 108, there are no such vitae in the booklet containing Havelok the Dane and King Horn. Even the saints’ lives that Scribe 4 adds to the booklet during or after the late fourteenth century don’t follow up on St. Edmund’s precedent.251 The Lives of SS. Blaise, Cecilia and Alexius, Scribe 4’s contributions to Laud 108’s hagiographical collection, are early Christian saints with no visible connections at all to troubled English histories. Scribe 3’s additions, unlike Scribe 4’s, at least contain remnants and fragments of particularly troubling saints and would-be saints. Havelok the Dane, as we will see, engages with English memory in ways that Blaise, Cecilia and Alexius do not.

Part 2: The Missing Ritual Murder in Havelok the Dane

The first set of fragments remaining in Havelok and traceable to one never-canonized folk saint of twelfth-century England is a group of women’s names. Havelok’s editor G. V. Smithers has observed that four of the six female names in Havelok the Dane – names not present in Havelok’s Anglo-Norman and Middle English analogues – also appear in Thomas of Monmouth’s late twelfth-century Latin vita of William of Norwich.252 Goldeborw, the wronged princess of Havelok, has a name more or less identical to the name of Goldburga in the Life of William. The family of Havelok’s loyal protector Grim include Grim’s wife Leue and his two daughters, Gunnild and Leuiue. Why does it matter that the names Leviva, Gunnilda, Leva and Goldeborw are previously attested in the Life of William? An investigation of East Anglian blood libel narratives will help to answer that question.

The Life of William of Norwich is the first known case of Jewish ritual murder (or blood libel) accusation, that is, the claim that Jews killed Christian children for religious reasons.253 As Gavin Langmuir has shown, the Life of William of Norwich does not rely on early medieval anti-Jewish narratives, and later blood libel accusations descend directly and indirectly from the Life of William.254 The first cult of a folk saint said to be killed by Jews,

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251 The paleographical features of Scribe 4’s hand suggest late fourteenth or fifteenth century production. Furthermore, the poem Somer Soneday, which Scribe 4 adds after the last saints’ lives, must be a response to and postdate Piers Plowman. For further discussion of Scribe 4’s dating, see Chapter 1 and the Appendix.

252 Smithers, ed., Havelok, lxx.

253 See Chapter 3 for a discussion of blood libel narrative and its relation to the Laud South English Legendary.

then, emerges in Norwich, Norfolk, East Anglia, circa 1150, and belongs to the same region that produces the Havelok narrative in the 1130s, and, circa 1300, the Havelok-Horn booklet of Laud 108. In 1255, another, more influential, blood libel accusation, the legend of “Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln” (not to be confused with St. Hugh of Lincoln, Carthusian and bishop of Lincoln), appears in East Anglia. The narratives of East Anglia blood libel are part of the literary climate that produces Havelok the Dane.

Thomas of Monmouth’s Life of William of Norwich, surviving in full in only one Latin manuscript, has little visible influence on the literatures of medieval England. The only contemporary English reference to William appears in the Peterborough Chronicle (a text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with post-1066 entries in early Middle English). Peterborough’s 1137 annal entry, which mentions William’s death, seems independent of Thomas’s Life. “Little Hugh” is more influential, penetrating to Chaucer and remaining well-known thereafter. Indeed, for Chaucer’s Prioress at the end of the fourteenth century, Hugh of Lincoln’s death “but a litel while ago” is recent enough to frame and justify the anti-Jewish Marian miracle of the Prioress’s tale. Both William and Hugh, thus, belong to the milieu and the recent past of the Havelok/Horn booklet, and if the booklet scribe had chosen to add extra saints’ lives to Laud 108, he might well have chosen one of these two boys.

The stories of William of Norwich in Thomas of Monmouth’s Life and in the Peterborough Chronicle set a narrative pattern that other ritual murder tales, including the story of Hugh of


For readings of ritual murder narratives that use the trope as insights into other cultural problems, see Dundes, The Blood Libel Legend, Rubin, Gentle Tales, Yuval, Two Nations in your Womb, and David Biale, Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).


Lincoln, follow. A young boy is kidnapped by Jews, and tortured and murdered in mysterious Jewish rituals that aim to recreate the Crucifixion. He becomes a miracle-working martyr and is acknowledged, at least by the writers who memorialize him and the communities who establish his shrine, as a folk saint. However, the boy’s cult receives only limited success. As Anthony Bale explains, citing evidence of low donation levels at ritual murder shrines, “[t]here is little evidence that any of these cults (except, perhaps, that at Lincoln) enjoyed ‘popular’ devotion.”

Thomas of Monmouth, presenting the earliest full vita of a ritually murdered boy, displays particular anxiety about the validity and popular recognition of his chosen saint. For instance, Thomas introduces Book II of William’s vita with a lengthy condemnation of the “abusive Philistines” (exprobantes allophilos) who criticize him for publicizing a not-yet-canonized saint. “It is presumptuous,” Thomas imagines these interlocutors saying, “to maintain so confidently that which the church universal does not accept and to account that holy which is not holy.” Thomas replies to this critique of unauthorized clerical recognition of folk sanctity with a defense of local cults. Almost all saints, he argues, are venerated in limited regions, and therefore it cannot be inappropriate to “celebrate...some [saints] whom the Church universal does not know and does not honour.” The paucity of references to William’s vita in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries suggest that William remains an unpopular and merely local saint, and that few devotees support Thomas of Monmouth’s bid to bring William legitimacy among local saints.

The structure of the Life of William displays Thomas’s anxiety about justifying William’s sanctity and displaying the authenticity of the blood libel narrative. Thomas begins the Life by recounting William’s birth, his early encounters with Jews, and his graphic torture and ritual murder on Passover of 1144. The great majority of the life, however, consists of lengthy and often repetitive witness reports. The witnesses come in two classes. The first group purports to verify, by their personal knowledge, that the boy was indeed tortured and killed by Jews. The second group of witnesses, including the recipients of miracles, attests to William’s sainthood and intercessory powers. The sheer density of authenticating material in the Life of William — six of the seven books in the vita consist almost entirely of miracle


260 “Presumptuosum nimis est quod uniuersalis ecclesia non recipit tam audacter suscipere et non sanctum pro sancto habere.” The adjective ‘sanctus’ can mean both ‘holy’ and ‘saintly,’ depending on the canonical or non-canonical status of the figure which the adjective describes. Ibid.

261 “…si quem uniuersaliter uel non nouit uel non recolit ecclesia digna ueneratione celebrant.” Ibid., II.1 page 60.
stories – suggests that Thomas uses these miracles in order to defend William’s status as saint. The series of miracles may help, not only to support William’s sanctity against disbelievers, and to authenticate his problematic cult, but to justify the anti-Jewish polemic that raises Jewish-Christian tensions in Norwich, triggering the murder of at least one prominent Jew not long after William’s death.262

All four of the figures in the Life of William whose names also appear in Havelok are witnesses to William’s death and ascension to sainthood. Leviva, in the Life of William of Norwich, is William’s aunt. She dreams, a few days before William’s death, that she is tortured by Jews, and she claims that dream as verification that William’s murderers are, indeed, Jewish. Leva, Goldeburga and Gunnilda witness William’s miracles. When Goldeburga and Leva become sick, and when Gunnilda’s daughter develops disabling gout, the women travel to William’s shrine and are promptly healed.263

By taking the names of these four witnesses from the Life of William of Norwich, and connecting them to nameless or otherwise-named characters in the earlier Havelok tradition, the Middle English Havelok the Dane may allude to the problem of authenticating the Life of William, while simultaneously avoiding the problem of retelling and resolving the Life’s problematic features. This combination of allusion and avoidance resembles the Laud SEL’s methods of handling recent Jewish-Christian conflicts, where the book repeatedly gestures towards remembered troubles while avoiding their full import.264 Grim’s wife Leue, in fact, performs the role of authenticator to Havelok’s sanctity. About to help her husband throw the boy into the sea, Leue sees the light emerging from the child’s mouth and asks Grim to interpret it:

“Jesu Crist!” wat dame Leue,
“Hwat is þat lith in vre cleue?
Ris up, Grim, and loke wat it menes!
Hwat is þe lith, as þou wenes?”

[Jesus Christ,” said dame Leue, “what is that light in our bedroom? Get up, Grim, and see what it means! What is that light, do you think?]
Leue thus convinces Grim to examine the boy Havelok and to read the signs written on his body. At her instigation, Grim finds not only Havelok’s glowing mouth but also the kynemark (king-mark) on the child’s shoulder, and interprets these signs to recognize “ure eir / þat shal [ben] louerd of Denemark” (our heir who will be lord of Denmark.) Leue triggers the recognition of Havelok’s identity, and therefore saves his life, as Grim and Leue swear immediate loyalty to Havelok, protecting him until he is old enough to protect himself. Leue, like the Life of William’s Leviva (and, to a lesser extent, its Leva), recognizes and authorizes the boy’s status as hero-saint.

Leue’s daughters Gunnild and Leuiue do not help to authorize Havelok. They appear only near the end of the poem, when Havelok offers them as brides to his chief allies (incidentally raising their social status from daughters of a wealthy peasant to countesses in the English aristocracy). Although the young women do not participate in Havelok’s recognition, the combination of their names with the name Leue helps link Havelok the Dane to the Life of William of Norwich.

The name Goldeborw is not only a direct reference to Goldeburga in the Life of William, but also an adaptation of Argentille, the name of the princess’s Anglo-Norman counterpart. Havelok the Dane replaces Argentille (silver) with Goldeborw (gold), and transforms a French name into a purely Anglo-Saxon one. Nevertheless, Goldeborw follows Havelok’s Leue and the Life of William’s Goldeburga by serving as a crucial witness to Havelok’s quasi-sanctity. Like Leue, Goldeborw observes the glowing light from Havelok’s mouth, “al so brith, al so shir, / So it were a blase of fir” (just as bright, just as clear, as if it were a blaze of fire.) Again like Leue, Goldeborw wonders aloud what the sign means, and how to read it alongside the cross marked on Havelok’s shoulder. In a scene reminiscent of the Annunciation, an angel’s disembodied voice interprets the signs for Goldeborw, telling her that Havelok is “kinges sone and kinges eyr” (king’s son and king’s heir), and that

\[266\] Ibid., lines 605, 07-8.

\[267\] Smithers, ed., Havelok, ll. 2851-928.


\[269\] Smithers, ed., Havelok, lines 1253-4.
Goldeborw herself will be “quen and leuedi” (queen and lady.) From the moment of Goldeborw’s discovery onward, Havelok and Goldeborw are allies, working together to reclaim their rightful kingdoms. Goldeborw’s act of witnessing Havelok’s identity creates this alliance, and permits the prince Havelok to gain his proper and public identity not (like William) as saint, but as king.

Coincidental similarities of names between the Life of William and Havelok are possible, although unlikely. The multitude of miracles in the Life of William of Norwich means that the Life of William is a particularly rich source for common East Anglian names, which the Havelok scribe could find in his own milieu. Nevertheless this set of names never appears together in any other source, and of the four names, only Gunnilda (a Scandinavian name) is particularly common. As I have shown, Leue’s and Goldeborw’s roles as witnesses correspond to the roles of Leviva, Leva, Gunnilda and Goldeburga in the Life of William of Norwich. Havelok the Dane uses these names to claim the Life of William of Norwich as a source text, a model of noncanonical sanctity and, perhaps, a subtle pointer of anti-Jewish violence in the years surrounding the 1290 expulsion of the Jews from England.

If Havelok does allude to the Life of William, therefore implicitly building the folk saint William of Norwich into the Lau 108 collection of saints’ lives, then Lau 108 is one of a very few vernacular hagiographical codices that invoke ritually murdered saints. Despite the Prioress’s reference to little Hugh of Lincoln, Hugh, William and the other boy saints are notably absent not only from Lau 108, but from the corpus of vernacular literatures of England. This lack of vernacular ritual murder narratives is another palpable absence worth investigating in thirteenth-century literature. Medieval English literatures, in fact, avoid serving as witnesses to the controversial blood libel tradition whenever possible. If Havelok does consciously include the names of witnesses from the Life of William, then it is the single pre-fourteenth-century English-language witness to the existence of Thomas of Monmouth’s Life of William of Norwich, as the Peterborough Chronicle entry is independent of Thomas’s life.

Only one extant thirteenth-century vernacular collection of saints’ lives openly retells a ritual murder narrative, and therefore serves as a model for Lau 108’s possible references to the Life of William of Norwich. The mid-century Anglo-Norman codex Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS français 902, henceforth BNF fr. 902, contains a unique verse life of the boy Hugh of Lincoln. The poem, which has been edited by Francisque Michel as Hugo de Lincolnia, is unusually rare. By contrast, of the nine other Anglo-Norman poems in BNF fr. 902, six are attested in eight or more manuscripts. One poem is attested in five

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270 Ibid., lines 1268, 75.

manuscripts, while the other two are attested in two manuscripts each. Especially among Anglo-Norman texts, which are much more common than Middle English materials in thirteenth-century England, the survival of only one text signifies relative unpopularity. (The unpopularity has continued; no scholar has yet attempted to supersede Michel’s insufficient edition.)

Although BNF fr. 902 makes no attempt to provide an exhaustive collection of saints, it is nevertheless a hagiographical manuscript and a direct predecessor of Laud 108. Although Michel, as a nineteenth-century romantic medievalist, misreads BNF Fr. 902’s *Hugh of Lincoln* as a ballad, and later scholars have followed his misreading, the poem is a verse saint’s life. It appears in a codex full of Anglo-Norman verse saints’ lives, tucked in after Bénédict’s *Life of Thomas Becket*, and traveling with a *Life of St. George* as well as Wace’s *Life of St. Nicholas*. Wace’s *Nicholas*, interestingly, includes variants of the same narratives of Jewish-Christian accommodation that appear in the Laud *SEL Life of Nicholas*.


This combination of attitudes must postdate 1255, because the date of Hugh’s death is recorded in other sources. Paleographical evidence suggests that BNF fr. 902 is a mid-to late century production, written after 1255 but before the first booklet of Laud 108. With the exception of Laud 108 itself, if Laud does indirectly recreate the *Life of William* through the naming of *Havelok*’s women, no other thirteenth-century codex besides BNF fr. 902 translates and transfers anti-Jewish ritual murder tales from Latin into the vernacular. The act of vernacularizing, in BNF fr. 902, is also a witness to Hugh of Lincoln’s authentic sainthood, and permits its audience to perform that witnessing in its own primary language. Other late thirteenth-century hagiographical codices avoid witnessing ritual murder narratives; therefore, they implicitly deny the sanctity of ritually murdered would-be saints.

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Even those manuscripts that do vernacularize ritual murder narratives provide textual ambiguities that undercut the manuscripts’ performances of witness and trouble the apparent authenticity of the stories that they present. Hugh’s soiled corpse in BNF fr. 902, “tant soillé / Del ordure del chambre privé” (as dirty as the filth from a privy), not only signals the Jews’ defilement of Hugh’s body, but also the problematic nature of Hugh’s sainthood.\textsuperscript{276} Traditionally, saints’ bodies should be pure and incorrupt, rather than stained with excrement. Even as BNF fr. 902 witnesses Hugh’s sainthood, it undermines his authenticity with bodily waste jokes.

Because of their relatively recent East Anglian origins, William and Hugh are just the sorts of troubling post-Conquest folk saints about whom Laud 108’s Scribe 3 is likely to know. Instead of retelling their \textit{vitae} in Middle English, and finding a way to absorb problematic tales of torture and murder by Jews into familiar and safe models of saintly martyrdom, Scribe 3 invokes them by incorporating the names of four minor characters from the \textit{Life of William} to the women of the Laud \textit{Havelok}, and making these women witnesses to Havelok’s near-sainthood. Especially in light of the rarity of ritual murder narratives in thirteenth-century vernacular literature, the repeated names are strongly suggestive. \textit{Havelok} subtly alludes to a genre that other contemporaneous texts carefully avoid. William of Norwich’s absence from the \textit{Havelok} booklet is a \textit{palpable} absence, expressing the scribe’s and the culture’s circa-1290 – that is, circa the expulsion of the Jews from England – fear of Jewish-Christian encounter and of incompletely-legitimized folk saints. Like BNF fr. 902, \textit{Havelok the Dane} alludes to the authenticity problem in East Anglian ritual murder narratives, without formally witnessing these lives. Like the \textit{South English Legendary} in Part A of Laud 108, \textit{Havelok} conceals recent troubles between Jews and Christians while at the same time alluding to them indirectly. The ghost of William of Norwich hides behind \textit{Havelok’s} Leue and Goldeborw, but \textit{Havelok} does not acknowledge his presence.

\textbf{Part 3: Empress Matilda, Simon de Montfort, and Encoded Civil War in \textit{Havelok the Dane}}

Putting aside ritual murder narratives, this chapter will now investigate another entirely noncanonical post-Conquest folk saint with a palpable absence in \textit{Havelok}. As Thorlac Turville-Petre has argued, the \textit{Havelok} story in all of its Anglo-Norman and Middle English recensions operates as a historical narrative.\textsuperscript{277} But, especially in its earliest recensions, the


\textsuperscript{277} Turville-Petre, \textit{England the Nation}. 

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Havelok legend functions as a variety of history writing that is distanced to the unprovable far past. Jennifer Miller points out that Gaimar, in his *Estoire des Engleis*, presents the story of Haveloc (as Gaimar spells the hero’s name) as the first post-Arthurian narrative, far away from any reachable time. The Middle English *Havelok* begins in *are-dawes*, days gone by, a once-upon-a-time introductory move that situates *Havelok*’s history at a comfortable distance from recent political troubles. Even so, the poem stages a set of political events, mostly associated with civil war, in such a manner as to recall some of these troubles.

Near the beginning of *Havelok*, the dying King Æpelwold of England begs his earls and barons to swear loyalty to his infant daughter. In the early twelfth century, Henry I of England compelled his lords to give their fealty after his death to his daughter, the Empress Matilda. Yet, when Henry died, a great many of these lords followed Henry’s nephew Stephen of Blois, leading to more than twenty years of anarchy. Æpelwold’s words requesting his men’s support for his daughter, and seeking a regent who would aid her, could be placed, with very little modification, in a hypothetical Middle English chronicle as Henry’s words on Matilda:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Bute nov ye sen þat I shal deye,} \\
&\text{Nou Ich wille you alle preye} \\
&\text{Of mi douther, þat shal be} \\
&\text{Yure leuedi after me,} \\
&\text{Wþe yemen hire so longe,} \\
&\text{Boþen hire and Engelonde,} \\
&\text{Til þat she [be] wman of helde,} \\
&\text{And þa[t] she mowe yemen and welde.}\end{align*}
\]

[But now that you see that I shall die, I will beg you all, regarding my daughter, who will be your lady after me. Who will guard her, both her and England, long enough that she becomes a woman of age, and can guard and rule (herself and England)?]

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279 Smithers, ed., *Havelok* line 27.

280 Ibid., lines 169–75. I have altered Smithers’s reading of line 175. Smithers supplies “[hir]” between “mowe” and “yemen”, so that the line may be translated, “she may guard and rule herself.” However, the verb “yemen” also appears in line 172, taking the objects “boþen hire and Engelonde” (“both her and England”). If we read the objects of the verb “yemen” in line 173 as the implicit objects of the verb in line 175, then the line means, “she may guard and rule [herself and England],” and provides Goldeborw with future royal power.
William of Malmesbury, one twelfth-century chronicler of medieval England, depicts King Henry’s lords swearing their oaths to Matilda. In William’s version, the king holds a council in which he requires all of the noblemen and ranking churchmen of England to follow Matilda after his death.

De qua re antea multum diuque deliberato consilio, tunc in eodem concilio omnes totius Angliae optimates, episcopos etiam et abbates, sacramento adegit et obstrinxit, ut, si ipse sine herede masculo decederet, Mathildam filiam suam quondam imperatricem incunctanter et sine ulla retractatione dominam reciperent. 281

[After deliberating long and deeply on this matter, (Henry I) then, at this same council, bound the nobles of all England, also the bishops and abbots, by the obligation of an oath that, if he himself died without a male heir, they would immediately and without hesitation accept his daughter Matilda, formerly empress, as their lady.]

The corresponding passage in Havelok stages a similar council, and gives King Aþelwold a speech modeled upon Henry’s request. Gaimar’s version of the story includes the regent (named Edelsi)’s betrayal of the princess (here named Argentille), but Edelsi swears no oath of loyalty to Argentille. 282 In the Lai d’Haveloc, Argentille’s father insists that Edelsi alone pledge his faith to Argentille. 283 The oath in the Lai binds the princess’s regent, but does not control the kingdom. The oath demanded from all the nobles in the kingdom is Havelok the Dane’s innovation. Only the Middle English Havelok models its princess’s betrayal on Matilda.

Why is Havelok demonstrating partisanship for Matilda? One document in which to look for an answer is the history most closely connected to the South English Legendary. The Chronicle attributed to Robert of Gloucester (a thirteenth-century figure about whom we know very little, not to be confused with Empress Matilda’s half-brother Robert of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry I) shares a dialect, a metrical form and several extended passages with the SEL. 284 In its exploration of the twelfth-century Anarchy, the

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282 Short, ed., trans., Estoire des Engleis, lines 55–104.


284 For information on the link between Robert and the SEL, see Chapter 2 above, where I read the connections between Robert’s Chronicle and the Life of Thomas Becket. See also Beatrice Daw Brown, “Robert
Chronicle identifies Stephen as the betrayer of his oath to Matilda: “He vorȝet al þe stronge oath þat he adde biuore / To þe emperesse & to henry hire þonge sonu isuore” (He entirely forgot the strong oath that he had previously sworn to the empress and to her young son.). Nevertheless, while referencing this oath, the Chronicle weakens its content. Here, Stephen swears not only to Matilda herself, but to her son, the future Henry II. The younger Henry is always Robert’s true king, whereas Matilda is merely Henry’s mother, a proud and haughty woman, unworthy of – and ineligible for – a throne. Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle does not value Matilda’s claim to the throne in her own right.

The link between the Chronicle and the SEL does not prove that the SEL writers, redactors and scribes of Laud 108 would take any particular side on the question of Anarchy politics. Nor does it prove that Havelok disagrees with some secret hidden anti-Matilda, pro-Henry agenda of the Laud SEL. In fact, Henry II appears in the Laud SEL as Thomas Becket’s antagonist, responsible for Thomas’s death. Rather, varied political agendas are all operating in conversation with each other.

While Matilda, already married and widowed when her father named her as his heir, did not require a guardian, she certainly needed baronial support to cement her claim after her father’s death. The lack of such support, and the repeated cycles of baronial flip-flopping that followed Henry I’s death and Stephen’s claim for the throne, created a lengthy civil war. Havelok alludes to that conflict, but does not replicate it fully and literally. Instead, Goldeborw’s sworn guardian and regent, Earl Godrich of Cornwall, attempts a coup by slyly twisting the terms of his oath to Goldeborw and her father. He has sworn “on þe bok” to marry the princess to “þe heste man þat michte liue, / þe beste, fayreste, þe strangest ok” (the highest, best, fairest and also strongest man alive). According to this promise, the power to rule would go to Goldeborw rather than her husband, although her husband would strengthen her. After the marriage, “þanne shulde he [i.e., Godrich] Engelond / Al bitechen into hire [i.e., Goldeborw’s] hond”; that is, Godrich should deliver all of England into Goldeborw’s hand. Godrich follows the promise’s letter by choosing an especially strong

of Gloucester’s Chronicle and the Life of St. Kenelm, “MLN 41, no. 1 (1926), Pickering, “South English Legendary Style” and Görlach, Middle English Saints’ Legends.


287 Smithers, ed., Havelok lines 200-1. Godrich’s swearing on the book (i.e., the Bible) interestingly authorizes and renders official his oath with the help of Christian scripture; when he breaks this oath and becomes, in the terms of the poem, a Judas-figure, Godrich is constructed as an especially vile traitor.

288 Ibid., lines 202-3.
and handsome kitchen knave for Goldeborw to marry, intending this low marriage to
disqualify the princess from rule. Unfortunately for the earl’s wicked plots, the penniless
kitchen knave is actually Havelok, the cruelly disinherited prince of Denmark, and the
marriage of Havelok and Goldeborw permits princess and prince to reclaim their rightful
thrones together.

The shape of the Havelok narrative places all blame on the lords and guardians, Godrich,
and, in the parallel story about Havelok’s disinheretance, Godard, false friend of Havelok’s
father King Birkabeyn of Denmark. Neither Godard nor Godrich appears to hold any
biological claim to the rule of Denmark or England. There is no analogue to Stephen of
Bloys, who traded on his royal birth as the grandson of King William as well as on his
gender to win followers for his bid to the English throne.

Havelok himself cannot represent Matilda’s husband Geoffrey of Anjou. Geoffrey, a count
rather than a king, never traveled to England to assist Matilda in regaining her patrimony.
William of Malmesbury barely mentions Matilda’s husband, although he does stipulate that
Matilda’s marriage to Geoffrey may have been the product of another broken promise. In
the Historia Novella, Roger, bishop of Salisbury, claims that his oath of loyalty to Matilda is
not binding “because [Roger] had sworn only on condition that the king should not give his
daughter in marriage to anyone outside the kingdom without consulting himself or the
other chief men.” William undercuts Roger’s claim with a dry suggestion that Roger is
rather too susceptible to alterations in the political climate, but, despite William’s skepticism,
the passage rewards comparison with the repeated broken oaths of Havelok’s antagonists. In
any case, Geoffrey is peripheral for chroniclers writing about Matilda, and he hardly serves
as an analogue for Havelok. If Goldeborw’s story fits into the civil wars of the 1130s,
Havelok’s does not.

Why not? If Matilda’s claim to the English throne interests the retellers of Havelok, why
should the story not simply recreate the Anarchy and supply the Matilda-figure with a
husband reminiscent of Geoffrey? By reconstructing Matilda’s conflict with Stephen,
Havelok points towards a more recent civil war. Here the chapter returns to the absent saints
encoded in Havelok. We now see the traces of one more folk saint: Simon de Montfort, Earl

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289 Incidentally, in another distant allusion to civil war, the name Birkabeyn is only found elsewhere as
the epithet of a successful Norwegian rebel leader from the late twelfth century. Ibid., 101 n. 342. I am grateful
to Molly Jacobs Bauer for directing me towards Sverri, the king who holds the epithet Birkebein.

290 On Matilda and Geoffrey’s marriage, see Marjorie Chibnall, The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort,
Queen Mother (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). Carol Pasternak suggested comparing Havelok to Geoffrey of Anjou
when I presented a form of this paper during Kalamazoo 2010.

291 “Eo enim pacto se iurasse, ne rex preter consilium suum et ceterorum procerum filiam cuiquam
nuptum daret extra regnum.” William of Malmesbury, Historia Novella, i.3.
of Leicester, born ca. 1208, married to King John’s daughter Eleanor in 1238, despite his status as a younger son and adventurer, and leader of the baronial reform and revolutionary movements until his death at the battle of Evesham in 1265.

After Evesham, Simon de Montfort develops a saintly, if illegal and unofficial, cult associated with the same populist forces that brought Thomas Becket to popular prominence. A late fourteenth-century collection of about 190 miracles attributed to Simon attests to his status as healer and miracle worker, especially between 1265 and 1280. The cult does extend into the aristocracy, as Robert de Vere, former rebel and Earl of Oxford, makes a pilgrimage to Evesham in Simon’s honor in the 1270s. While this cult is strongest in Simon’s own county of Leicestershire and in Worcester in the West Midlands, Claire Valente has examined its broader circulation in England. She traces about fifteen miracles to Oxfordshire, the probable source of the Laud South English Legendary booklets, and notes that “most of the devotees of Simon’s miracle cult were from the Midlands and East Anglia, the areas that had most strongly supported his revolt.”

Furthermore, there is a precedent within Laud 108 itself for encoding treasonous applause for Simon de Montfort in unexpected, unthreatening places. The SEL Life of Dominic devotes a long passage to complimenting Simon de Montfort’s father, also named Simon de Montfort (Simon IV of Montfort l’Amaury, 1160–1218), as a supporter of St. Dominic and a defender of Christian orthodoxy:

An Eorl þare was in þe londe þo : þat guod Man was i-nouȝ:  
Sire Symon de Mountfort : þat to alle guodnesse drouȝ,  
his fader þat was here a-slawe : a-mong us in Engelonde  
Aþe batayle of Euesham : þat longue worth onder-stonde.  
Þis guode knyȝt sire Symon: strong knyȝt was i-nouȝ  
And a-ȝein þis vuele cristine Men : to batayle al day he drouȝ.  


293 Maddicott, “Follower, Leader, Pilgrim, Saint.”


295 Life of Saint Dominic lines 39–44.
[There was an earl in that land who was a very good man, Sir Simon de Montfort who turned to all goodness. He was the father of the one who was slain here among us in England at the battle of Evesham, whose great worth is understood. This good knight Sir Simon was a very strong knight, and he always went to battle against evil Christian men.]

The antecedent of the phrase “pat longue worth onder-stonde,” in line 43, is unclear and could refer either to Simon IV de Montfort, Dominic’s friend and ally, or to the younger Simon, the Earl of Leicester and baronial leader. Thomas Heffernan has examined this passage’s political ramifications, arguing, “It seems more likely that this audience was interested in Simon of Evesham and his role in history than that of his father.” Heffernan continues, “The references are intentionally oblique and have a double meaning because expressions of praise for Simon de Montfort were not politically shrewd during the closing years of the Thirteenth Century.”

Meanwhile, even praise directed towards Simon IV de Montfort redounds upon his son. Building a heroic ancestry for Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, as for Thomas Becket, implicitly transforms the younger Simon into a hero.

In praising Simon IV de Montfort for his valiant fighting against heretics, the Dominic passage may allude to another similarity between father and son. Simon IV fought “þis vuele cristine Men” during the Albigensian Crusade, commanding papal forces against the Cathars at the 1209 siege of Carcassonne. During that battle, Simon IV killed not only “evil Christians,” but also Jews. Anthony Bale reads traces of the anti-Jewish and anti-heretical violence of Carcassonne in the Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 32 (Corpus 32) variant of the “Miracle of the Boy Singer,” the story later retold by Chaucer’s Prioress.

In Corpus 32, an early thirteenth-century manuscript produced no more than ten years after 1209, the boy singer killed by Jews lives in Carcassonne, in the land of the Albigenses. If, as Bale argues, the Corpus 32 exemplum reflects Simon IV’s victory (and the carnage that he caused) at the siege of Carcassonne, then the SEL reference to Simon IV as a Crusader fighting heretics may perform similar work. The younger Simon de Montfort, like his father,
massacres Jews in passing while battling other Christians.\textsuperscript{301} Anti-Jewish violence becomes, for father and son, a necessary and not unusual result of anti-Christian warfare. But the Montfort family’s anti-Jewish violence remains subtextual and unspoken in Laud 108.

The younger Simon de Montfort is thus concealed in the Laud \textit{Life of Dominic}. We will now see how he is also concealed in \textit{Havelok}. \textit{Havelok the Dane}, unlike its Anglo-Norman and Middle English analogues, begins with a dying English king.

\begin{verbatim}
It was a king bi are-dawes
Pat in is time were gode lawes
He dede maken an ful wel holden.
Hym louede yung, him louede holde—
Erl and barun, dreng and payn,          [payn Skeat: MS kayn
Knict, bondeman, and swain,
Wydues, maydnes, prestes and clerkes…\textsuperscript{302}

[There was a king in earlier days. In his time, there were good laws which he made and upheld full well. Young people and old people loved him. So did earls and barons, small landholders and thanes, knights, bondsmen and knights’ attendants, wives, maidens, priests and clerks…]
\end{verbatim}

\textit{Aþelwold} is distinguished by his justice and his people’s love for him. He created and maintained good laws, punished miscreants, protected widows and maidens, refused to accept bribes, and so forth. Because of his righteousness, King \textit{Aþelwold} was loved by people of all social classes: young and old, earl and baron, knight and bondsman, wife and maiden, priest and clerk. He authorized the unity of the nation from Dover to Rokesborw. The bygone days of \textit{Aþelwold}’s ideal rule, however, fall apart into a series of usurpments, betrayals and injustices, both in England and in Denmark. Godrich, Earl of Cornwall, the Judas-like traitor who abandons his oath to Goldeborw, also abandons all of the behaviors of righteous rule.

This breakdown of former civil order recalls the set of grievances that Simon’s reform movement and revolt attempted to redress.\textsuperscript{303} A collection of complaints from the 1258 Oxford parliament, inaccurately called the \textit{Petitio Baronum} (Petition of the Barons), repeatedly cites unjust legal acquisition of inherited property as a grievance that the

\textsuperscript{301} Maddicott, \textit{Simon de Montfort}, 268.

\textsuperscript{302} Smithers, ed., \textit{Havelok}, ll. 27-33.

\textsuperscript{303} For more information on the reform movement and the Provisions of Oxford and Westminster, see Chapters 4 and 5 of Maddicott, \textit{Simon de Montfort}. 
reformers wish to repair. In 1264, the reform party objects to unequal administration of royal justice, especially including favoritism to foreigners such as the French family members of King Henry III and of Queen Eleanor of Provence:

Again, although in the charter [i.e., Magna Carta] it is laid down that to no one shall the king sell, deny, or delay right of justice, and for some time this was observed, at length, after the arrival of certain aliens whom the king, scorning his native subjects, drew to his counsels, no justice could be obtained in the lord king’s court against these men or against certain courtiers, some of them native, no matter how gravely they had offended...

These complaints, and others including, in Maddicott’s summary, “Henry’s… exploitation of the Church, … the rapaciousness of his local officials, and the wasteful profanity of the Sicilian Business, a projected crusade against Christians at the expense of the Holy Land,” depict a corrupt government helmed by an incompetent king unconcerned with his responsibilities. The reform party directly and indirectly accuses Henry of betraying his responsibilities to the people and the kingdom.

In Havelok, Godrich’s betrayal of Goldeborw and Godard’s parallel betrayal of Birkebeyn stand for their denials of the rights of the entire English and Danish peoples. Godard is a “wike Judas” (wicked Judas) because immediately after all of the people of Denmark swear him a loyalty oath, he commits “a ful strong trechery, / A trayson and a felony” in murdering the royal children he has been set to guard. Perhaps this murder, committed by a Judas-figure upon innocent children, echoes the ritual murder narratives around William of Norwich and Hugh of Lincoln. But it also represents the ruler’s betrayal of his entire people when he fails in his duty to a few of the people. Godard’s Denmark and Godrich’s England display collapses of justice that can only be repaired by new, faithful and just leaders.

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305 “Item, cum in carta predicta contineatur quod rex nulli uenderet denegaret seu differret rectum aut iustum, et hoc per aliqua tempora fuisset obseruatum, tamen post aeduentum quorumdam alienigenarum quos rex spretis indigenis ad consilium attraxit contra eodem et quosdam curiales etiam indigenas quantumcumque grauiter delinquereunt...” Treharne and Sanders, ed. and trans., Documents, 271.

306 Maddicott, Simon de Montfort, 151-52.

307 “A very strong treachery, a treason and a felony.” Smithers, ed., Havelok, lines 425, 43-44.
Godrich and Godard, as Smithers argues, are linked to thirteenth-century political troubles through their names. The second syllables of each of their names, joined, produce the name Richard, and Godard’s title, Earl of Cornwall, is the title of Richard of Cornwall, brother to Henry III and to Simon’s wife Eleanor. During the years when Simon participated in English politics, Richard and Simon had a complicated relationship, moving through periods of alliance, mutual dislike and eventual betrayal. Most Montfortian literatures date from Simon’s rebellion and its aftermath, by which point Simon and Richard had become permanent enemies. Therefore, in poetry praising Simon de Montfort, Richard comes in for harsh criticism. One Montfortian poem mentioned by Smithers, appearing in London, British Library MS Harley 2253 (ca. 1340) rhymes “Richard” with “trichard” (traitor, deceiver) in every refrain. In the stanzas, the poem accuses Richard of having spent “all is tresour opon swyvyng” (all his treasure upon fucking) and repeatedly mocks him for using a windmill as a fortress. Godrich’s treatment in *Havelok* fits into the Richard-blaming pattern of Montfortian poetry.

After 1258, the reform movement that *Havelok* implicitly praises is always associated with Simon de Montfort. However, as Maddicott has persuasively argued, Simon de Montfort himself did not begin the reform movement, nor was he originally aligned with it. Simon came to particular prominence in the movement in 1258, for reasons of his own self-interest; he was using reform in order to win land and money promised to him by Henry III. Nevertheless, even Simon’s biographer agrees that, when Simon did lead the movement, he brought a “general tone of moral rectitude” to it, supplying “determination to provide justice in the localities, both against the agents of the king and, much more remarkably, against the barons themselves.” Of course, this tone of rectitude, to our eyes, clashes with Simon’s participation in anti-Jewish massacres, but (Christian) observers surrounding Simon did not openly use his anti-Jewish behavior to question his morality.

The popular literature around the barons’ wars praises Simon as a bringer of justice and a protector of the common people. Simon becomes a folk saint whose name and cult appears alongside Thomas Becket’s. London, British Library, MS Harley 978 groups literature in

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308 Ibid., 90 no. 178. Smithers’ footnote, broad and creative in scope and content, deserves to be an article in its own right.

309 Harley 2253 contains one of the Middle English *King Horn* texts, linking the manuscript to Laud 108’s romance booklet. The *Song against the King of Alemagne* appears in Thomas Wright and Peter Coss, ed., *Political Songs of England: From the Reign of John to That of Edward II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 69. The poem can also be found in manuscript form, without Wright’s editorial interventions, in N. R. Ker, ed., *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253 with an Introduction by N. R. Ker*, Early English Text Society (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).


311 Ibid., 166.
praise of Simon de Montfort with substantial Thomas Becket material, including two versions of the story of Becket’s Saracen mother. Harley 978’s *Song of Lewes* compares Simon de Montfort to Moses, rescuing the English who “almost deprived of all their liberties, nay, of their lives, had languished under hard rulers, like the people of Israel under Pharaoh, groaning under a tyrannical devastation.” It blesses Simon de Montfort as a new Mattathias, like the rebel leader in Maccabees who helps reclaim Judea from Hellenistic domination. The *Song of Lewes*’s depiction of Simon as the heroic rescuer of a people tormented by harsh and unjust rulers matches the structure of *Havelok the Dane*, in which Havelok and Goldeborw at last reclaim their lands and restore civil order together.

Simon de Montfort’s marriage to Eleanor of England provides his claim to lead the reform movement and to rule England for the barons while his revolt lasts. While the marriage is hasty and dubiously legal, given Eleanor’s oath of chastity, King Henry and the kingdom recognize it as raising Simon and his family to near-royal status. For Matthew Paris, Simon's marriage to Eleanor provides children who may very well be royal heirs. Paris describes the birth of Eleanor's first child, within a year of Simon and Eleanor's marriage:

In Advent of the same year... the eldest son of Simon de Montfort, by Eleanor his wife, was born at Kenilworth, to add to the strength and comfort of the kingdom; for it was feared that the king might be barren.

The reference to the king’s continued lack of heirs, placed alongside the mention of the birth of a son to the king's sister, means that Paris sees young Henry de Montfort in the line of succession at this point. In the absence of a worthy king, the strong man who marries the princess, as Havelok weds Goldeborw, may claim a right to the throne.

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312 I have discussed the story of Thomas Becket’s Saracen mother in Harley 978 in Chapter 2. See Taylor, *Textual Situations*, 110-21, for a lengthy exploration of Harley 978’s contents, provenance and investment in thirteenth-century English political history.


```plaintext
...peneque priuati
Cum vel libertatis, immo sua uita,
Sub duris principibus languerunt, ita
Vt israelitica plebs sub pharaone,
Gemens sub tirannica deuastione.
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Within the poem *Havelok*, despite the collapse of English order under Godrich’s corrupt rule, there is hope for the reestablishment of justice within England. Havelok, the apparent kitchen knave whom the traitor Godrich has forced Goldeborw to marry, is not the inappropriate match he seems at first. Marked by the golden sign of the Cross on his shoulder and the glowing light emerging from his mouth when he sleeps, Havelok is in fact the best possible king for England. He can use his strength and his marriage to the princess who is the rightful heir to the throne to reclaim England and restore it to its proper unity and justice.

Let us then return to the moment when Goldeborw, lying beside Havelok on their wedding night, observes the strange signs on her husband’s body: “On hise shuldre, of golde red, / She saw a swiþe noble croiz” (On his shoulder, she saw a very noble cross of pure gold). This birthmark only appears in the Middle English *Havelok the Dane*, and not in its twelfth-century precursors, Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis* and the Anglo-Norman *Lai d'Haveloc*. Why should the later text add an extra sign to a hero who already has beams of holy light shining out of his mouth? The angel who speaks to Goldeborw interprets the sign as a marker of Havelok’s royal birth and future kingship. Havelok, according to the angel, is

...kinges sone and kinges eyr—
Þat bikenneth þat croiz so fayr.
Jt bikenneth more – þat he shal
Denemark hauen and Englond al.316

[a king’s son and a king’s heir; that is what that beautiful cross means. It means, further, that he shall hold Denmark and all of England.]

Although the angel performs one act of interpretation in the text, he does not foreclose all analysis of the symbol written on Havelok’s body. The Cross is one of the most overwritten signs available, but among its other meanings, the Cross is the sign of the righteous Crusader. Havelok, literally a *crucesignatus* (one who is signed with the cross; implicitly, one who has vowed to go on Crusade), displays the marker of the Crusade on his body.

Simon de Montfort, during one of his periods of semi-alliance with his brother-in-law, takes up the Cross on Richard of Cornwall’s Crusade of 1240–1241.317 He does not, apparently, fight any battles during his trip to Syria, but he retains the identity of a crusader for the rest

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315 Smithers, ed., *Havelok* lines 1263–64.

316 Ibid., lines 1268–71.

317 The economics of thirteenth-century crusade are linked to the economics of Jewish-Christian relations in England; to finance his party’s journey east, Richard of Cornwall accepted a grant of taxation from the Jews. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 105.
of his life. Later, Simon reclaims the imagery of the righteous crusader for himself and his reform movement. Contemporary chroniclers describe Simon and his troops identifying themselves by wearing crosses on their clothing. Thus a symbol about invading elsewhere begins to stand for military righteousness at home.

Even though Simon de Montfort and the rebel movements take the cross as their symbol, we cannot merely read Havelok’s birthmark as a clear link to Simon’s revolt. Rishanger’s *De Bellis* identifies the crosses on Simon’s party as white crosses. Tyerman notes that a specifically white cross is an Angevin sign, which Simon appropriates from King Henry’s (and, I would add, from Simon’s wife Eleanor’s) family. In a reverse appropriation, Henry’s royalists counter the sign of the white cross by wearing red crosses on their own uniforms. Both sides in the civil war claim the cross, and, with it, the identity of defender of the Christian faith. Havelok’s “golde red” (literally, red gold, but idiomatically, pure gold) kingmark, neither white nor red, can connect him to Simon, but it can also tie him to the royalists. We can read Havelok’s birthmark, like many of *Havelok the Dane’s* links to folk saints, in multiple ways.

Is Havelok, who wins England through his marriage to a princess, an encoded Simon de Montfort? Simon de Montfort had a claim to lead Parliament and rule England that rested partially on his marriage to the princess Eleanor of England. After his death at Evesham, only thirty to fifty years before the production of Laud 108, Simon inspired the formation of a popular, if unsanctioned, saintly cult. I have argued that Saint Simon de Montfort’s life is the most important absent vita in *Havelok the Dane*, and that the *Havelok* scribe hides Simon in the character of Havelok himself.

But Havelok is also the true-born heir to Denmark, who, like King Henry III, reclaims his kingdom from a noble usurper. The cross on his body makes Havelok a Crusader, but on which side does he fight? Is he the leader who, through his marriage to a princess, reclaims justice for England from the wicked Earl of Cornwall? Or is he the king who wins back his own rightful territory from baronial traitors?

A scribe with baronial sympathies, in the years after Simon’s death, cannot openly praise Simon de Montfort without being accused of treachery. Writing a vernacular life of Simon de Montfort into Laud 108 would be extremely dangerous. Even the creation of an unambiguously Montfortian allegory would be risky. Instead, Scribe 3 writes a Havelok who suggestively resembles, but is not identical to, Simon de Montfort. Adding the cross,


319 Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, 146–147. The chronicles that depict Simon and his followers as *crucesignati* are the *Furness Chronicle*, the *Flores Historiarum* and William Rishanger’s *De Bellis*.

320 Ibid., 147–8.
not present in earlier *Havelok* recensions, to Havelok’s body simultaneously increases Havelok’s resemblance to Simon and increases his resemblance to King Henry, Simon’s enemy and brother-in-law. Thus Havelok’s cross birthmark makes readers more likely to recognize Havelok as an encoded Simon de Montfort, while protecting the manuscript’s producers by giving plausible deniability to the allegory.

Using the missing word *vita* trimmed from the upper margin of f. 201r, this chapter set out to ask why the *vitae* are missing from the *Havelok-Horn* booklet of the largely hagiographical manuscript Laud 108. Instead of openly adding vernacular lives of recent saints, I have argued, Scribe 3 conceals folk saints including Simon de Montfort and William of Norwich in *Havelok the Dane*. These saints emerge from difficult English histories, and their stories are too politically offensive to retell openly, especially in the vernacular. Nevertheless, by encoding them in *Havelok*, the Laud Scribe 3 witnesses both William and Simon, claiming them as saints and interposing the book Laud 108 into late thirteenth century English political debates.
Chapter 5
The Wonders of the West: Displacing Marvels in Laud 108

Introduction

The Hereford Map, which I have read in chapter 1 as a visual counterpart to Laud 108’s textual map, places a series of monstrous peoples and marvelous things on the eastern, southern and southwestern peripheries of the map, where the land meets the ocean that covers the rest of the world. “Pygmies, humans a cubit high,” live in the utter east, barely northwest of the Garden of Eden, while gigantes, giants, are just to the south of Eden, beside the drawing of Adam and Eve at the moment of expulsion from the Garden. India’s battle-elephants and multicolored parrots, situated at about one o’clock on the Hereford Map, may actually exist; nevertheless, on this English document, they operate as the marvelous creatures of rumor. Dragons live on the island of Taphana, on the map’s southeastern edge, while “all kinds of horrors, more than can be imagined,” mark the northeastern peripheries of Asia. Hyperboreans, griffins, satyrs and sphinxes all belong to the far edges of the Asian continent. Serpents, Blemmyes, sirenids and assorted monsters who have no names live on islands off the southern and southwestern coasts of Africa. Cynocephali live due north, at the point where Asia meets Europe. The Baltic Sea, off the German coast at about eight o’clock, houses the Seven Sleepers. In fact, the only edge of the Hereford Map that lacks monsters and marvels is the northwestern border, which includes the British Isles.

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321 Westrem, The Hereford Map, 33 no. 60, 41 no. 80, 37 no. 71. Lat. “pigmi · cubitales homines ·”. Westrem’s bolding indicates the word’s rubrication.

322 Lat. “Omnia horribilia plus quam potest.” These horrors include “intolerable cold, a constant blasting wind from the mountains…exceedingly savage people who eat human flesh and drink blood” (frigus intollerabile · omni tempore uentus acerimus a montibus…homines truculenti nimis · humanis carnibus uescentes · cruorem potantes). Ibid., 43 nos. 84–85; 69 no. 141.

323 Ibid., 67 nos. 138–9.

324 Ibid., 95 no. 202; 101 no. 211; 135 no. 301; 75–89 nos. 961–87.

325 Ibid., 187 no. 442.

326 Ibid., 221 no. 536.
Kathy Lavezzo, reading the Hereford Map against England’s portrayal of itself, writes,

The positing of places and peoples on the borders of a mappa mundi often signified their lack of the power, centrality, and prestige attributed to those persons inhabiting the center of the civilized world. The farther away a people lay from the center, the greater their perceived disenfranchisement from the Christian oikoumené.\(^{327}\)

Thus the monsters on the far shores of the ocean surrounding the world are excluded from zones of Christian power. As Lavezzo observes, even though the Hereford Map lacks British monsters, many of England’s medieval literatures imagine England as a space just as marginal and magical as the eastern coast of Asia or the southern coast of Africa. England becomes “a barbarous wasteland (akin to the rugged home of the Plinian races) or … a site of brutal disorder (like the primordially turgid world ocean)” but also “a holy wilderness (comparable to the early Christian monks’ arid retreats) or…a blessed isle (reminiscent of the Hesperides).”\(^{328}\)

In this chapter, I present a two-pronged argument about marvels in the Laud 108 South English Legendary. I argue that the most powerful marvels in Asia and Africa are rarely native to these spaces, but rather are interlopers brought by Christian evangelists in order to colonize the eastern and southern peripheries of the world. By contrast, another set of wonders and marvels, which we might expect to occupy the farthest, most easterly and southerly borderlands of the known world, belongs not to England itself but to the British Isles and the seas surrounding them. England, the familiar home of local and memorable saints and heroes such as Thomas Becket and Simon de Montfort, thus becomes adjacent to otherworld zones. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the Life of Thomas Becket links Crusade histories and Orientalist exotic spaces to the historicized England we see in the Constitutions of Clarendon. Similarly, the Short Life of Brigid, St. Patrick’s Purgatory, the Life of Saint Brendan and the Life of Saint Michael situate the strangest wonders within reach of England.\(^{329}\)

In order to develop this argument, I suggest the following working definitions of monsters and marvels. A wonder, or a marvel (I use the terms interchangeably), is a thing, being or occurrence that is surprising and unusual in the normal, natural world. Viewers of wonders,


\(^{328}\) Ibid., 20.

\(^{329}\) As I explain below, I refer to the Laud Life of Brigid as the Short Life of Brigid to distinguish it from a later and longer recension of Brigid’s vita (the Long Life of Brigid) also circulating in the South English Legendary tradition.
and people who hear or read about wonders, experience a combination of pleasure, delight and horror in the surprise elicited by the wonders. The term wonder also refers to the feelings caused by viewing marvels. Monsters are subtypes of marvels; they are creatures whose physical bodies fall outside the bounds of normal humanity, and whose appearances and behaviors startle normal humans. Humans respond to monsters with the same pleasure, delight and horror with which they respond to wonders. Miracles, startling occurrences that are clearly marked as creations of the divine, are also subtypes of marvels. Normal occurrences, and normal humans, are of course constructed in opposition to the marvels and monsters beyond the borderlines of normality. Without monsters, and without marvels, we would not know where any society locates the borders of the normal.  

The textual field in this chapter includes South English Legendary texts that take place on the eastern, southern and western peripheries of the Laud world map, and that describe groups of marvels rather than single marvels. I am therefore ignoring texts that include only one marvel, however marvelous. The Laud Life of Saint Edmund the King, for instance, where the decapitated king’s head cries out, contains only one marvel and is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The chapter title, which plays on the Old English marvel collection The Wonders of the East, sets up a division between eastern and western marvel. This division oversimplifies a more complex set of medieval spatial divisions. As Suzanne Akbari has argued, the east/west dichotomy is often a late imposition of our cultural divisions onto medieval thought. Rather, the T-O map’s tripartite division of the world into three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe, provides a more typical medieval model of geographical divisions.

Nevertheless, traces of the east-west dichotomy appear in medieval geographical writings. Gerald of Wales chooses, in his Topographia Hibernica, to write about Ireland as a place of marvel and wonder directly parallel to, and more interesting than, the Wonders of the East:

Just as the countries of the east are remarkable and distinguished for certain prodigies peculiar and native to themselves, so the boundaries of the West also are made remarkable by their own wonders of nature. For sometimes tired, as

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330 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen is one influential theorist working with monsters and monstrosity, especially in his first book, Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages (1999).

331 Life of Edmund the King, lines 79-84.


333 Akbari, “From Due East to True North.” See my discussion of this article in Chapter 2.
it were, of the true and the serious, she draws aside and goes away, and in these remote parts indulges herself in these secret and distant freaks.\

Gerald distinguishes between a distant east, which European Christians recognize as a space of marvels, and a west that, although near his Anglo-Norman readers, remains “remote” from the world’s center, Jerusalem. This western region, Gerald argues, contains as many “secret and distant freaks” as the eastern boundaries of the world do. Kathy Lavezzo explains Gerald’s use of Ireland here as a way to render England less peripheral by contextualizing it:

Gerald’s Irish books thus evince how English writers used the marginality of Ireland as a means of suppressing their own geographic isolation and urging their crucial place within the international Christian community. If not for Ireland, in other words, the marginality of the English would be absolute and hence insurmountable.

In Lavezzo’s reading, because of England’s location near the eastern edge of the known world, English (or, in Gerald’s case, Cambro-Norman) writers must mark England as a less peripheral and less marvelous space than Ireland.

Part 1: Colonizing the East with Marvels

To determine how and why Laud 108’s marvels come home to the British Isles from the eastern, northern and southern peripheries of the world, I will begin by reading the lives of saints who explore Asia and Africa and examining the marvels that they encounter and in which they participate. The Lives of Bartholomew, Thomas the Apostle, Matthew and Christopher follow three saints who travel east and south from Jerusalem to carry the gospel, as well as one saint who begins as a pagan in Canaan before traveling through nameless, unidentified spaces to reach his conversion. These four saints’ lives, as we might expect if we examine the Hereford map and textual depictions of the world, bring both their saints and


335 Lavezzo, Angels on the Edge of the World, 54.
their readers into lands of wonder. However, the marvels that the saints encounter in these regions are unimpressive, and the monsters are easily defeated.

The furthest places named in Laud 108, with the exception of the earthly paradise itself (whose location will trouble us later in this chapter), are India, where the apostles Bartholomew and Thomas carry the Gospel, and Ethiopia, where Matthew similarly evangelizes. The Lives of Bartholomew and Thomas the Apostle appear together in Laud 108, grouped with the lives of their fellow apostles Mark, Philip and James, while the Life of Matthew is much earlier in the codex. India and Ethiopia thus respectively represent the continents of Asia and Africa, and therefore the eastern and southern peripheries of the world. What do India and Africa look like, and how do their marvels appear?

If we have read treatments of India in wonder collections and Alexander romances, and seen India’s depiction on mappae mundi, we might expect Laud 108’s India to be full of naked philosophers, towered elephants and strange beasts. While fewer extant thirteenth-century literatures of England explore Ethiopia, when it does appear, it is also frequently a land of marvels.

One famous codex that contains two Old English wonder collections, the Wonders of the East, and the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle, imagines the eastern parts of the world as spaces given over to monstrosity and wonder. As Andy Orchard has noted, the Nowell Codex, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv (2), the tenth- or eleventh-century collection best known as the Beowulf manuscript, is consistently interested in tales about monsters. Besides Beowulf, the Wonders of the East and the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle, the Nowell Codex also includes an incomplete Passion of St. Christopher, which depicts the saint as a giant, and Judith, whose villainous king, although not a monster, is at least an arrogant drunkard.

Not only does the Nowell Codex concern itself with the existence of monsters, it considers the geographical locations of monsters. The Wonders of the East situates its two-headed serpents, ants the size of large dogs, and multicolored giants in both recognizable places including Babylon and Persia, and unrecognizable lands including Antimolina and Hascellentia. All of the known places, with the single peculiar exception of Gallia, are east

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336 Orchard, Pride and Prodigies, 1–27. Orchard supplies edited texts of both wonder collections, with translations, alongside editions of related Latin materials, in his appendices.


or south of the Mediterranean Sea. In the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle, the narrator Alexander writes to describe the wonders he finds in India: monsters, such as the sea-monsters (nicra) who attack the Greek army as it crosses the river, and marvels, such as a vineyard crafted of gold and jewels. Because the Nowell Codex sets the Wonders of the East and the Letter of Alexander together, it demonstrates a concern with the mysterious east, including India as well as other unreachable places, as the home of monster and marvel.

Much closer to the moment of Laud 108’s production, the proemium to Robert Grosseteste’s Hexaëmeron explores the geographies and wonders of the world, imagining India as a region of strange customs. Grosseteste, a theologian, lecturer and bishop as well as a close associate of Simon de Montfort, wrote in Anglo-Latin in the first half of the thirteenth century. As an Oxford-trained thinker and writer, sometime archdeacon of Leicester and eventual bishop of Lincoln, Grosseteste belonged to the same regions of England that produced Laud 108. His writings were accessible in the university and monastic climate of late thirteenth-century Oxford, and would therefore be sources the Laud SEL scribe and his predecessors could have used as they constructed the South English Legendary.

The Hexaëmeron, which considers the scientific design of the world, opens in some manuscripts with a commentary to one of Jerome’s letters. In this commentary, Grosseteste lists and explores the places to which the philosophers Pythagoras and Plato travel: Egypt, Spain, Gaul, the Caucasian mountains, Albania, Scythia and so forth. Grosseteste depicts India as the home of tamed, fighting elephants and of philosophers with hundred-fifty-year lifespans. These two wonders are not as fantastic as the kinds of marvels appearing in the Wonders of the East tradition and in the Letter of Alexander to Aristotle. The tamed elephants exist, although only rumors of them reach medieval England. The philosophers, or Bragmani, have no other markers of physical marvelousness or monstrosity besides their lifespans. Grosseteste devotes most of his treatment of the Bragmani to a description of the

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338 “A land called Ciconia, in Gallia” (Ciconia in gallia hatte þæt land) curiously follows Locotheo, a colony built next to the Nile river. No sign in the text suggests that the thread of the narrative has moved from North Africa to western Europe, and it seems possible that Gallia may not actually be functioning as Gaul here. Ibid., lines 190-193.


simplicity of their lives, and their lifespans seem to be natural results of this simplicity: “they live a hundred and fifty years because of the cleanliness and good constitution of the air.”

More interesting for our purposes than Grosseteste’s own treatment of India are the sources Grosseteste cites. As his authority for the tamed elephants and the men who tame them, Grosseteste cites the classical author Pliny. Grosseteste suggests that his source for this portrayal of the philosophers is “a Greek book,” the “letter of Dindimus to Alexander,” and the Alexander romance tradition includes multiple works that could have supplied this information. Grosseteste thus witnesses the transmission and readership of the Alexander romance tradition in thirteenth-century England. Grosseteste’s India, with only a few wonders, nevertheless suggests that constructions of India including multiple wonders, and more closely reminiscent of the *Wonders of the East* and *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, would have been available to the producers of the *SEL*.

Neither Grosseteste nor, probably, the Nowell Codex explicitly mentions Africa. However, the Hereford *mappa mundi* confirms that Ethiopia, like India, is a monstrous space very far from English writers and readers. Ethiopia, on the map, is immediately to the right of a city “full of dragons” (draconibus plena) and just across the Nile from the island of the one-footed Scinopodes. The map’s editor Scott Westrem explains that Ethiopia,

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342 C.F.J. Martin traces this passage to Pliny, *Natural Histories*, VI, xvii. Ibid., 21 no. 6.

343 C.F.J. Martin, Grosseteste’s modern editor, suggests Palladius, *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* and the Alexander romance tradition as possible forms of the “Greek book” accessible to Grosseteste. Ibid., 23, 23 no. 1.

344 I hope to add more extensive readings of the early Alexander romance tradition, along with early (pre-Laud 108) forms of the *Letter of Prester John*, as I revise this project into a book manuscript.

345 One possible reading of Entry 32 in *The Wonders of the East* suggests that it is referring to Ethiopia. The Old English text reads, “Þær mannkynn is þæt syndan sweartes hiwes on ansyne, þa man hateð silhearwan.” Orchard’s textual note suggests that the word *sigelwara* is present on the page as a gloss on *silhearwan*.

Orchard translates this passage, “There is another race of people there of black color to look at, who are called Ethiopians (*sigelwara*).” Orchard, *The Wonders of the East*, lines 202-203. *Sigelwara* literally means sun-men, and Bosworth–Toller translates the compound form *sigelwara* as “Ethiopians,” but Bosworth–Toller’s quotations do not fully convince me that *sigelwara* is a simple and regularly understood Old English gloss for “Ethiopians.”

For ancient and medieval geographers, ... was largely unknown territory south of Egypt: it is not always clearly defined as Asian or African....The more influential writers [about Ethiopia]...concentrated on the territory’s reputedly bizarre human populations and animal species.\(^{347}\)

The difficulty in locating Ethiopia in medieval geographical thought contributes to Ethiopia’s exoticism and likelihood of becoming a space of wonder.

Having established that India and Ethiopia, and Asia and Africa as continents, are likely to be portrayed by writers and geographers in England as wondrous spaces containing exotic monsters, I will now examine the treatments of wonder in India and Africa in Laud 108.

In the Laud SEL Life of Saint Bartholomew, the India to which the saint travels contains multiple wonders. Of all the wonders, Bartholomew himself, who is a foreigner in India, brings the most powerful marvels. Indian temples are occupied by talking idols who work wonders of healing. In a mishmash of pagan references, the idols are *maumets*, a word for pagan gods that is a cognate of the name of Muhammad, the founder of Islam.\(^{348}\) One of these idols – a male one! – is named Astaroth, perhaps after the Semitic goddess Ishtar or Ashtoreth.\(^{349}\) Bartholomew’s power as an emissary of Christ far outweighs Astaroth’s power as a “fals god,” so Bartholomew easily binds Astaroth in “strongue chaines al fuyrie” (strong, fiery chains) and silences Astaroth’s speech.\(^{350}\)

Berit, another talking *maumet*, when asked by his worshipers who Bartholomew is and how Bartholomew can control Astaroth’s power, praises Bartholomew’s beauty and expresses his fear of Bartholomew:

\[
[H]e is swiþe long of bodi : of ríȝt fair foureme and freo,
Opréȝt he geoth and euene i-novȝ : and swiþe ȝwijȝt is his bleo,
his her is broun and swiþe criþr : non ne mai criþpore beo....
\]

\(^{347}\) Ibid., no. 440, commentary. Westrem identifies Solinus as a particularly influential writer about Ethiopian monsters; when revising the dissertation into a book, I will investigate Solinus’s impact on the Laud construction of Ethiopia.

\(^{348}\) *Bartholomew* line 13. Robert Mills reads the same passage, exploring the ways in which the word *maumet* reveals Laud 108’s perspectives on Islam: “It is twisted enough that Mohammed gets represented in these texts as an idol, one among a number of ‘gods’; but the fact that aspects of Islamic faith are being projected, knowingly or otherwise, onto classical pagans perpetuates the belief that non-Christians lack internal variation, even across vastly different times and places.” Mills, “The Early SEL and Difference,” 214.

\(^{349}\) *Bartholomew* line 13. I have not yet found evidence, beyond this passage, that forms of Ishtar’s name circulated in the literary milieu of medieval England.

\(^{350}\) Ibid., lines 12, 42.
Hare-fore, ȝif he eou axeth ouȝt : ȝe ne mowen eo nouȝt skere.
Ake ȝif he him sewi so : þat ȝe ne mowe i-seo,
biddez him for his louverdes loue : þa he beo milde to me,
Pat he ne come nouȝt here neþ me : þat ich beo to grounde i-brouȝt
And i-tormented ase mi felawe is – for i-nelle misdon him nouȝt.\textsuperscript{351}

[He is very tall of body, of very fair and free form; he walks upright and quite evenly, and his complexion is very pale, his hair is brown and so curly that it couldn’t be any curlier…. Therefore, if he asks you anything, you should not blame yourself. But if he is visible, so that you can see him, ask him, for his love of his Lord, to be gentle to me, so that he doesn’t come near me and I am not brought to ground and tormented as my companion is, because I haven’t done him any harm.]

Berit, possessed by a devil and thus able to speak, is both a monster (insofar as he is a sentient, nonhuman creature) and a marvel (that is, a strange and magical thing). He is a sympathetic character, even a funny character, and we are cued to enjoy his marvelous speech. But for Berit and his followers, Bartholomew is the true marvel. The saint’s beauty, according to the idol, is irresistible, and his power is terrifying.\textsuperscript{352}

The real wonders in the \textit{Life of Bartholomew} are wonders that Christians perform as they colonize India. Bartholomew, as the saint who brings Christianity into India, easily overpowers India’s monstrous creatures. He expels the demons from the remaining idols by addressing a single threat to a single idol:

“Þou deuel,” he seide, “þat hast bi-traid : þus muche folk ech-on,
3if þou wolt þat I-ne make þe nouȝt : to þe putte of helle gon,
wiend out a-non mid þulke fourme : and brec hit al-to nouȝt!\textsuperscript{353}

[“You devil,” he said, “you have betrayed all of these people. If you do not want me to force you to go to the pit of hell, get out of that form (i.e., the idol) at once, and break it to pieces!”]

The demon inhabiting this idol, as terrified of Bartholomew as Berit was, obediently leaves the idol and breaks all the statues. The pagan Indians observing this exorcism convert to

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., lines 62-64, 72-76.

\textsuperscript{352} This passage demands a queer reading that explores the idol’s infatuation with the saint.

\textsuperscript{353} Ibid., lines 152-155.
Christianity at once, even before Bartholomew summons an angel to show them how wicked the devils are.

The demons, as the putative marvels of India who are outclassed by the much more marvelous Bartholomew, are lesser, reversed reflections of Bartholomew himself. Bartholomew is miraculously beautiful, pale of skin and upright of figure; Berit’s emphasis on the paleness of his skin implies that the people of India are dark-skinned and therefore startled by Bartholomew’s white-skinned beauty. Meanwhile, Bartholomew’s opposites, the hideously ugly demons, are especially dark. When the angel performs a miracle to display the ugliness of the exorcised demon’s true form, we see that the demon is “swarttore þane euere ani blouȝman” (darker than any black man), with burning red eyes, a fire-breathing mouth and a crooked nose and mouth. As Robert Mills writes in his reading of this passage, “Here somatic difference (swarthy skin, crooked features, burning eyes) combines with humoral theories of corporeal deficiency to produce a vision of evil that is all body and no spirit.” The demon’s wickedness is embodied in his ugliness as Bartholomew’s goodness is embodied in his beauty; for both figures, spiritual status is visible as physical race and color.

The angel whom Bartholomew summons, “so briȝt so sonne” (as bright as the sun), shares with Bartholomew an exquisite beauty that inspires wonder in all those who see them. He also shares with Bartholomew a tendency to colonize India with marvels and with cultural elements that come from elsewhere. At the moment of his arrival, the angel marks each of the four corners of the formerly idolatrous temple with the sign of the cross, explaining, “Þis temple i-chulle … clansi of eche fuylþe-hede” (I will cleanse this temple of all filth.) Marking a pagan temple, a home of indigenous Indian wonders, with the archetypal Christian sign, the angel erases the preexisting marvels and replaces them with Christian miracles. The subsequent mass conversions to Christianity that Bartholomew inspires only complete this process of Christian colonization of India.

In Laud 108, Bartholomew’s vita is paired with the Life of Thomas the Apostle, which follows immediately after it. Thomas, like Bartholomew, is an apostle who travels to India and is martyred there. But in Thomas’s Life, there are no indigenous Indian wonders at all. Rather, all of the wonders originate from Thomas himself, acting as a miracle-working missionary of Christ, or from angels working alongside Thomas to convert India. In fact, Thomas colonizes India with miracles that were not there to begin with.

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354 Ibid., line 176.
356 Bartholomew line 162.
357 Ibid., line 166.
Thomas announces his imperialist intentions directly. He travels to India ostensibly as the carpenter who will build a palace for Gondofre, king of India. The building he promises to raise is no mortal mansion, but rather the structure of Christianity himself:

“A carpenter,” quath seint Thomas: “ich am, quoynte and sleiȝh, paleys and bold ich can arere: swiþe noble and heïȝh, strong and liȝt and swiþe fair: with-outen and with-inne, Þat no man ne may it felle a-doun: with strencþe ne with ginne, Ne so strong wynd ne tempeste: þat greuie mouwe it ouȝt; So quoynte bold nas neuere on eorþe: to no prince i-wrouȝt.”

[“I am a carpenter,” said Saint Thomas, “clever and cunning. I can raise a very high and noble palace and edifice, strong and light and very fair, both inside and out, so that no one may knock it down, neither with strength nor with engines. Nor may any strong wind or tempest damage it at all. So clever (or: ingenious; or: magical) a building has never been built for any prince on earth.]”

The array of double meanings in Thomas’s speech is most visible in the repeated word *quoynte*, which may be glossed “wise, clever, prudent; ingenious” but also “crafty, wily; cunning, sly, deceitful” and “strange, unusual, remarkable…supernatural, magical.” Thomas is a wise and clever carpenter, but wily enough to conceal his evangelistic ambitions in the metaphors of carpentry. The edifice he will assemble is at once ingeniously designed, strange and new to the Indian king who has hired him, and full of supernatural, magical and miraculous glories. No such building has been, or will be, raised for any mortal prince. Thomas intends to build Christianity in India as a palace for the king of heaven. With these imperialist plans, Thomas brings the marvels of Christianity to India.

The marvels that Thomas brings, including multiple healings, one resurrection and a heavenly light, do not replace local Indian marvels; those marvels are not present in the *vita* to begin with. The *Life of Thomas* contains no elephants, no philosophers, no wizards, no talking idols and no sea-monsters. Rather, the miracles that Thomas works, and the miracles that angels work on Thomas's behalf, fill a void of wonder in India. The Indian people

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358 Gondofre is described simply as “þe king of Inde,” but he is not either of the two kings whom Bartholomew meets in India. Bartholomew and Thomas are exact contemporaries. Either there are multiple kings of different parts of India, or the text is not interested in continuity. (I incline to the second explanation.) All three kings are of course stock figures of hagiography. *Thomas the Apostle* line 20.

359 Ibid., lines 61–66.

360 *Middle English Dictionary*: Queint(e) (adj.)
(apart, of course, from the king himself and the idol-worshiping priests who eventually kill Thomas) are delighted by Thomas’s wonders. After an angel resurrects King Gondofre’s dead brother, sending him back to life with a message to free Thomas from prison, the people of India first respond by misreading Thomas as a god: “[F]olk honoured him ase a god: and wel þicke a-boute him drouȝ.” Thomas corrects the people, of course, and teaches them to worship Christ instead, but the fact remains that the people perceive a marvel, and respond to it with religious devotion.

Perhaps the most carefully-staged miracle in the Life of Thomas, the appearance of the heavenly light, displays the intensity of the Christian wonders that Thomas brings to India. Thomas assembles a crowd of sick men, beginning to pray for them, at which point a bright light appears, healing the people:

Do he hadde ore louerd þus i-bede : a-mong heom þare cam
So gret liȝht and cler schinynge : þat heore siȝht heom almost bi-nam;
¶ hit ouer-spradde first seint Thomas : ase he lai in is beden,
And þe sike Men alle, þat huy fullen a-doun : euerech in his stede,
And leiȝen þare al plat to grounde : þe mountaunce of half a tide,
Þe ȝwile þis grete liȝht i-laste : ech bi oþeres side.
A-non so þat liȝht i-passed was : þat ech miȝht oþur i-seo,
Ech-one huy a-risen up hole and sounde : holere ne miȝhte none men beo.
¶ Pare was Ioye and blisse i-nouȝ : þere ne miȝhte beo non more;
Huy honoureden seint Thomas ; and criden him milce and ore.
Pare turnden þo neiȝh a þousend men : and i-baptizede were,
with-oute children and wummen : þoruȝ is miracle þere.362

[When (Thomas) had thus prayed to our Lord, among them came such a great light and a clear shining that it almost took their sight from them. It spread first over Saint Thomas, as he lay in his prayers, and over the sick men, so that each of them fell down in his place, and lay there for the time of half a tide, as long as the light lasted, each one next to another. When the light passed, so that everyone might see each other, each one rose up whole and sound; no men could be healthier. There was so much joy and bliss that there couldn’t be any more. They honored Saint Thomas, and cried for his mercy and compassion. Nearly a thousand men converted and were baptized, not counting children and women, through this miracle.]

361 “People honored him as a god, and gathered thickly around him.” Thomas the Apostle line 222.

362 Ibid., lines 276–287.
The light is described as so intense that it knocks people over, and so magical that it heals them at once, fills them with joy, and brings them to Christianity. Even if there had been talking idols, enchanters or dragons in the Life of Thomas’s India, none of them could have matched the power and the numinosity of this divine light. With the help of Christ, Thomas uses wonders to convert India to Christianity; he colonizes India with the marvels that India previously lacked.

The final apostle in the group, Matthew, like his fellow apostles Thomas and Bartholomew, is far more powerful than the monsters he battles. Matthew travels to Ethiopia, in the single mention of an African space anywhere in Laud 108. While preaching in Ethiopia, Matthew encounters two wicked enchanters, Zaroen and Arphaxat. The enchanters summon two dragons “þat casten brumstone and fuyr” (who breathe fire and brimstone) to fight Matthew. But the battle between Matthew and the dragon is entirely anticlimactic:

\[\text{363 Matthew lines 310-36.}\]

Mathew’s presence, and his sign of the Cross, is all he needs to paralyze the dragons and drive them out of the land. The dragons may be monsters native to Africa, but their fire and brimstone fail to impress either Matthew or the tale’s audience. Matthew, as the colonizer bringing Christianity into Ethiopia, has power that far outmatches the indigenous enchanters and their local monsters.

Soon after he defeats the dragons and their enchanters, Matthew performs a greater wonder. The Ethiopian king’s son is dead, and Zaroen and Arphaxat try to resurrect him using the powers they have learned from the devil. But their magic cannot raise the child.

\[\text{363 Matthew lines 310-36.}\]
When Saint Matthew came there, he made his request to our Lord and raised that child from death to life at once. The child rose up and praised God, born to the Virgin Mary.

Again, Matthew’s powers act immediately; he only has to ask Jesus once in order to resurrect the child. The child, knowing to whom he owes his redemption, immediately responds by praising God. His father, the Ethiopian king, misidentifies the source of the redemption, and praises Matthew himself as a god. At this moment, before Matthew refuses to be worshipped, Matthew is temporarily one of the wonders of Ethiopia. Like Bartholomew and Thomas, Matthew colonizes the far peripheries of the world with wonders far outmatching the indigenous wonders.

One monster in Laud 108, instead of being defeated by Christians who colonize his home, loses his marvelous nature when he is absorbed into Christianity. The future St. Christopher begins his life as a Saracen giant:

Saint Christopher was a Saracen in the land of Canaan. There was no man so large anywhere during his day. He was twenty-four feet long, and quite big and wide. As such, if he weren’t so strong, it would have been awful!

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364 Horstmann corrects “heo” to “he.” I have retained the manuscript reading, as in the SEL scribe’s dialect, “he” and “heo” are interchangeable masculine or feminine third-person nominative pronouns. “Heo” is perhaps more frequent as a feminine pronoun, while “he” is more likely to be masculine, but many examples exist where the genders are reversed.

365 Ibid., lines 55-57.

366 For an extensive reading of St. Christopher, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages* (1999). Andy Orchard considers the acephalous Nowell Codex *Passion of Saint Christopher*, which identifies Christopher as a giant but not as a dog-headed creature, alongside a number of pre-Conquest Latin and Old English lives of Christopher which refer to Christopher as a cynocephalus. Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 12-17.

367 *Christopher* lines 1-4. The capitalization of “SEint” appears in the manuscript.
We learn about Christopher’s unprecedented size at once, and at the same time we learn that he is a Saracen, from Canaan, which is in or near the Holy Land. Christopher may be a giant, but he does not come from the edge of the map. Rather, he is a monster whose home is just beyond the Christian world.

Christopher’s status as giant, and as monster, connects to his role as servant of a series of kings. Such an enormous creature may only serve the most powerful ruler, the “hexte louerd ouer alle men” (the highest lord over all men).\footnote{Ibid., line 8.} To that end, Christopher enters the service of a powerful (but nameless) king, “þe hexte manne þat on eorþe was” (the highest man who was on earth).\footnote{Ibid., line 10.} Christopher soon learns, however, that the king is frightened of the devil, and therefore the devil must be more powerful than the king. He joins the devil’s service briefly, before discovering that the devil, in his turn, is frightened of Christ. Christopher goes seeking Christ, the true “hexte louerd,” and enters Christ’s service as a saint and martyr at last.

One reading of the Christopher narrative, then, in the context of Laud 108’s marvels and monsters, might be that the truest monstrosity and marvel belongs rightfully to Christianity, and participates in the creation and maintenance of the Christian world. Christopher follows his giant nature towards Christ. Although he first appears as a heathen monster who lives and works in the undifferentiated Saracen world we recognize from the story of Thomas Becket’s mother, Christopher becomes, like the apostles Thomas, Matthew and Bartholomew, a martyr-saint who carries Christianity into pagan regions.\footnote{See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the undifferentiated Saracen world from which Thomas Becket’s mother comes.}

However, in the instant of conversion, Christopher loses some of his monstrosity. Robert Mills writes that the Laud SEL St. Christopher

\begin{quote}
represents the kind of intimate alterity that combines monstrous embodiment with Christian spirit; aligned with other saintly superheroes in his imperviousness to torture…Christopher’s monstrous, corporeal distinctiveness is eventually overwritten by his subjection to the tortures that martyrs inevitably undergo.\footnote{Mills, “The Early SEL and Difference,” 219.}
\end{quote}

In other words, although Christopher begins as a monster, he ceases to be monstrous as soon as he completes his conversion. As a giant, the pagan Christopher is able to carry any passing
stranger over the river, until the infinitely heavy Christ child arrives. The Christ child is more marvelous than Christopher can ever be, and his power and capacity to elicit wonder quite literally outweighs Christopher’s.\textsuperscript{372} When Christopher carries the Christ child across the river, he simultaneously claims his identity as bearer of Christ and abandons his identity as giant. At the end of his \textit{vita}, Christopher, formerly a marvel of the Middle East (to use an anachronistic but appropriate geographical term), is only a saint like other saints, a typical and even monotonously archetypal martyr.

I have argued that the indigenous wonders of the pagan east and south, in the Laud \textit{SEL}, are subordinate to the wonders that Christian representatives bring to these regions. The eastern and southern peripheries of Laud 108’s map exist as lands to which the apostles carry the Gospel. Matthew, Thomas and Bartholomew travel from the Holy Land, the center of all European world maps, to the imagined edges of the world. With the knowledge of Christianity, and as enticements towards Christianity, the apostles bring marvels and miracles that outweigh and supersede the indigenous “wonders of the east.”

For the Laud 108 \textit{South English Legendary}, Ethiopia and India, rather than wondrous realms in their own rights, are realms that Christian saints colonize with the help of wonders. The giant Christopher’s original home of Canaan does not contain him for long, and when Christopher leaves Canaan and becomes God’s servant, he loses the monstrous form that marks him. Although the Hereford map and other maps of the world construct the Asian and African peripheries of the world as the primary spaces of marvel, Laud 108’s African and Asian marvels are anticlimactic. The dragons, talking idols and giants of the eastern and southern edges of the world are easily defeated by Christian colonizers who bring greater miracles and marvels with them from the Holy Land.

\textbf{Part Two: “Ovre londe” / “Irlonde” : western wonders and their unstable geographies}

The most marvelous regions in the Laud \textit{SEL} are not in Asia or Africa. Rather, they are in the west, much nearer to England itself, and accessible via the British Isles. In Scotland, we read, Saint Brigid can feed a large group of men with the milk of a single cow, and dry clothing with a miraculous beam of sunshine.\textsuperscript{373} In Ireland, a marvelous pit discovered by

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{372} Christ is the most marvelous of beings, and therefore more marvelous than the monstrous Christopher, while he is simultaneously the most exemplary of humans. I will examine this paradox in depth when I revise the project into a book.
\item\textsuperscript{373} St. Brigid of Kildare is an Irish, rather than Scottish, saint; see below for analysis of the Laud MS’s surprising choice to place Brigid in Scotland.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Saint Patrick leads into a den of torments marked by foul stinks, powerful winds and souls writhing under torture. From a starting point in Hybernia (Ireland), curiously glossed as “ovre londe” (our land), Saint Brendan and his monks sail out into the great ocean, where they encounter a whale disguised as an island, a group of fallen angels transformed into birds, and a volcano serving as a northern annex of hell.\textsuperscript{374} In the Life of Saint Michael, a miracle at the hill of Toumbe, most likely in Normandy just across the Channel from England, leads into a cosmological treatise describing the marvelous features of the wider universe.

The Short Life of Saint Brigid, the Lives of Brendan and Michael, and Saint Patrick's Purgatory use the geographies of the British Isles and the surrounding seas as entryways into the unreachable, wonder-filled edges of the world. England itself is not the home of marvel. However, its near neighbors in Ireland, Scotland and Normandy are wondrous spaces in themselves or starting points from which holy travelers can journey into marvelous otherworlds. The South English Legendary, with its Anglocentric perspective, conceptualizes Ireland and Scotland, and perhaps Normandy and Cornwall as well, as interchangeable spaces, notable for their access to marvel and their barbarity in contrast to England itself.\textsuperscript{375} I will use the phrase “Celtic fringe,” problematic as it is, to express the idea that for the Laud SEL scribe, the Celtic areas just outside of England are both similar to each other and peripheral to the central space of England.

While the greater marvels of evangelizing Christians overpower African and Asian marvel, the Celtic fringe (at least in the Laud 108 variant of the SEL) is always already Christian, and therefore the indigenous marvels are inherently Christian wonders. The Laud Short Life of Saint Brigid and Saint Patrick's Purgatory both elide the history of early Irish Christianity that usually surrounds the legends of St. Brigid of Kildare and St. Patrick of Ireland.\textsuperscript{376} Instead of marking the saints’ participation in the Christianization of Ireland, and showing how their miracles help to perform conversions, the two texts cut out the personal stories of their saints, leaving only wonder collections disconnected from evangelism.\textsuperscript{377} I will close-read the Short Life of Saint Brigid against a later SEL form of the saint’s life, the Long Life of

\textsuperscript{374} Brendan line 1.

\textsuperscript{375} For discussions of the South English Legendary’s Englishness, see my chapters 1 and 2, Julie Couch and Kimberly Bell’s articles in Texts and Contexts, ed., Bell and Couch, and Thompson, Everyday Saints.

\textsuperscript{376} One recent work examining the development of Brigid’s early cult and its connection to early Irish Christianity is Lisa M. Bitel, Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

\textsuperscript{377} I hope to provide further exploration of the historical development of Brigid and Patrick in later forms of this project.
Brigid, to see how the saint’s absent life story creates a wondrous and yet Christian Celtic fringe.

The Short Life of Saint Brigid in Laud 108 consists almost entirely of a list of the household marvels that Brigid performs. Brigid stocks her dairy with infinite quantities of cheese and butter, which she provides to any poor men. When Brigid must feed a bishop and all his followers, her cow produces enough milk to feed the entire party. On a day of torrential rains, Brigid finds a miraculous sunbeam to dry the clothes on her clothesline. When a beggar asks Brigid for salt, and the saint has none, “With hire blessingue heo turnede to salt : ane wel grete stone” (She [turns] a very large stone into salt with her blessing.) Brigid’s 58-line vita in the Short Life of Brigid concludes with an affirmation that Brigid performed other miracles as well as those listed in her vita, and a note that Brigid’s death-day is February 1. No other descriptions of Brigid’s life or history appear in the vita.

The shape of Brigid’s vita in Laud 108 differs substantially from the form of Brigid’s life present in later redactions of the South English Legendary, including Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 145 (CCCC 145), the base text for D’Evelyn and Mill’s edition of the South English Legendary. The CCCC 145 text, which I will call the Long Life of Brigid, witnesses a later redactor’s additions to the Short Life of Brigid found in Laud.

A brief summary of the added elements of Brigid’s narrative in the CCCC 145 recension will help us analyze the function of the short Life of Brigid in Laud 108. The CCCC 145 text begins with Brigid’s birth out of wedlock to a pagan lord and his servant, and her adoption by her stepfather, a pagan enchanter. Brigid becomes a Christian as a young girl, and the miracles that she performs convert her stepfather, among others, to Christianity. When Brigid’s biological father reclaims her, and wishes Brigid to marry a duke, Brigid prays to be

378 Short Life of Brigid line 48.

379 “Þeos miracles, and manie òpure, seinte Bride wurȝte” (Saint Brigid performed these miracles and many others). Ibid., line 55.

380 D’Evelyn and Mill, The South English Legendary.

381 Görlach identifies the differences between the Short Life of Brigid (as in Laud 108) and the longer life (as in CCCC 145) as markers of the changes made by the “A” redactor of the South English Legendary to the preexisting “Z” material. He argues that the “A” redactor, ancestor of almost all of the extant South English Legendary manuscripts except Laud 108, interpolates the story of Brigid’s family, childhood and life into the shorter, earlier “Z” text witnessed in Laud. The “A” redactor must have found and adapted materials regarding Brigid’s history into the longer life of Brigid, but Görlach cannot trace these sources with certainty. Görlach, Textual Tradition, 141-2.

Like the Short Life of Brigid, the Laud 108 St. Patrick’s Purgatory omits the story of St. Patrick himself; later redactors add it in other SEL manuscripts. The remaining narrative follows Owain’s descent into the Purgatory, thus keeping the wonders and erasing Patrick’s sainthood.
spared this marriage. God obligingly seizes one of Brigid’s eyes, so that the duke can find Brigid ugly and refuse to marry her. Brigid takes this physical change with good humor:

\[
\text{Ac seinte Bride leuer was · as it seiþ in þe gospelle}
\text{To heuene wende wiþ on eiȝe · þan wiþ tweie to helle.}^{382}
\]

[But Saint Brigid would rather, as it says in the gospel, go to heaven with one eye than to hell with two.]

Indeed, the disability helps Brigid achieve heaven, as it wins her father’s permission for her to enter a nunnery. Brigid performs her final marvels, turning stone into salt and breaking a silver cup into exact pieces, from the nunnery, and she dies there.

The *Long Life of Brigid*, unlike the *Short Life*, displays Ireland in the process of conversion. The marvels that Brigid performs in the longer life, including her miraculously self-replenishing dairy, help to Christianize the inhabitants of Ireland:

\[
\text{For þulke miracle hure steffader · louede Cristendom}
\text{And byluued ferst in Iesu Crist · and Cristen man bicom.}^{383}
\]

[Because of that miracle, her stepfather loved Christendom, and first believed in Jesus Christ, and became a Christian man.]

When Brigid performs miracles in the *Long Life*, she triggers a process of change. Her faith and her magical power overwrite the existing pagan religion and heathen magic already present in Ireland. It is notable in this context that Brigid’s stepfather, like Zaroen and Arphaxat in the Laud 108 *Life of St. Matthew*, is an *enchaunteor*.\(^{384}\) The *Long Life’s* Brigid, born in Ireland, is not an outsider bringing Christianity to a new land like the apostles Matthew, Bartholomew and Thomas. Brigid thus does not participate actively in a colonial project. Nevertheless, like Bartholomew and Matthew, Brigid overcomes the pre-existing local pagan marvels and replaces them with a new group of Christian wonders.

Brigid in the *Long Life* lives within a family structure and community. She performs her miracles in order to affect this community, converting her stepfather with one miracle and preventing her marriage with another. As such, this Brigid is imaginable as a person, a character with her own wishes, desires and choices. By contrast, in the Laud 108 *Short Life*,

\(^{382}\) *Long Life of Brigid* in D’Evelyn and Mill, *South English Legendary* vol. 1, p. 45 lines 239–240.

\(^{383}\) Ibid., page 43 lines 163–4.

\(^{384}\) Ibid., p. 41 line 105. Zaroes and Arphaxat are called *enchauntours* on *Matthew* line 71.
Brigid lacks background and personality. She is the faceless, identity-less performer of a series of wonders.

Like Brigid herself, Brigid’s homeland in the *Short Life* is entirely static, a stable farming economy. Brigid’s marvels contribute to the portrayal of the land as a pleasant farmland. They inspire wonder and amusement, but not the surprise engendered by the exotic; salt, milk and sunlight, however miraculously they may appear, belong within a recognizable, commonplace farming economy. Katja Ritari argues that in the earliest *Life of St. Brigid*, by Cogitosus, the household miracles that Brigid performs help her to model the exemplary Christian life for lay audiences. Every Irish person in the early Middle Ages would be familiar with shepherding and dairy farming, and everyone could follow Brigid’s generosity to the hungry poor. The familiarity of Brigid’s dairy, even in Laud 108, much later, helps make Brigid’s land a familiar space of everyday wonder.

But exactly where on the Laud map of the world is this familiar farming economy located? Saint Brigid (identified as Bride in the Middle English body of the text, and as Brigide in the Latin rubric) is easily recognizable as Brigid of Kildare. However, the opening couplet of the *Short Life of Brigid* identifies her as, not Irish, but Scottish:

Seinte Bride of heige men : In scotlond heo cam,
Of riche men and of gret power : In lawe of cristindom.

[Saint Brigid came from a noble family in Scotland, from rich men who were very powerful, in a Christian area.]

The displacement of Brigid from Ireland into Scotland is a peculiar error. As I noted in chapter 1, saints are most often and most specifically identified by their toponyms. Brigid of Kildare, or Brigid of Ireland, is a popular enough saint that scribes and audiences should remember her location. The *Long Life of Brigid* identifies the saint as Irish: “Sein Bride þat holi maide · of Irlonde was” (Saint Brigid, that holy virgin, was from Ireland). The replacement of “Irlonde” with “Scotlond” in the Laud 108 text may be an accidental scribal

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386 *Short Life of Brigid*, rubric and line 1.

387 Ibid., 1-2.

388 See Chapter 1.

error, an artifact of careless transcription, or a conscious resituation of an Irish saint in Scotland. But in any of these cases, the change shows that Brigid’s homeland is mutable and unstable for the Laud scribe.

Brigid, and her wonders, may move from one of England’s Celtic neighbors to another. The regions surrounding England are unsteady and unfixed in the wonder–tales. Thus also, Laud describes Saint Brendan as “of ovre londe,” of our land (presumably England), while other variants of the *SEL Life of Brendan* read “of Irlonde.” The Laud text knows that Brendan is Irish, as its rubric identifies Brendan as “Abbaús de Hybernia.” Nevertheless, the mutability of Brendan’s starting point, whether “ovre londe” or “Irlonde,” and the mutability of Brigid’s home space, whether Ireland or Scotland, are striking. They suggest that, in late thirteenth-century England during Laud 108’s production, tales of western wonder can be moved around the Celtic fringe. Ireland and Scotland are interchangeable in the *Short Life of Brigid* because, for the scribe, one Celtic space is the same as another. Both are territories of accessible wonder.

From the *Short Life of Brigid*, we have learned that the Laud 108 *SEL* constructs the Celtic peripheries just beyond England as spaces of household marvel. Brigid’s home, whether Irish or Scottish, is, for the writers and readers of Laud 108, a Christian zone that is simultaneously near home (geographically close to England) and familiar (containing features of everyday life such as dairy farms and clothes that require drying) on one hand, while outside of England and marvelous on the other.

The Celtic fringe is not only valuable as the home of ordinary, everyday Christian wonders. It is also, for Laud 108, the point of departure into otherworlds of wonder: a stepping-off point that, while easily reachable from England, is fantastic enough to lead a traveler out beyond the human world. In *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory*, the knight Owayn leaves his starting point, perhaps England, in order to travel to the devil-inhabited purgatory where he can

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purify his soul. The gate that connects the likely English starting point to purgatory is, of course, in Ireland. Meanwhile, in the *Life of Saint Brendan*, Brendan and his monks sail from a place that is simultaneously *overe londe* and *Irlongitude* into an untrackable ocean full of marvelous islands.

We are not told explicitly that Owayn begins his journey in England. The knight’s name, Owayn, suggests a Welsh origin. In the Laud SEL text, Owayn is not specifically listed as Welsh. His starting point, however, seems to be somewhere in the British Isles:

> Hit bi-fel bi þe kingus daiȝe steuene : þat novþe late was,  
Of a kniȝt, þat heȝte sire Ovwayn : a swiþe wonder cas.  

>[It happened in the days of King Stephen, which were not very long ago, to a knight who was named Sir Owayn: a very wondrous event.]

This reference point for Owayn’s journey is a marker of time, rather than place. Stephen was the king of England between 1135 and 1164, and the days of King Stephen would therefore be in the middle of the twelfth century. Nevertheless this marker is only meaningful within a presumed context of English history. Therefore it subtly situates Owayn inside England, and signals that Owayn must convey himself to Ireland, where, we have already been told, the purgatorial pit is located.  

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391 The SEL *St. Patrick’s Purgatory* is a reflex of a tradition which starts in the twelfth century and continues into the fifteenth century. All variants of the tradition follow Owayn or other figures as they descend into the pit of Purgatory. For a broad overview of the legend, its multiple redactions and the history of its development, see Michael Haren and Yolande de Pontfarcy, eds., *The Medieval Pilgrimage to St Patrick’s Purgatory: Lough Derg and the European Tradition* (Enniskillen: Clogher Historical Society, 1988). Marie de France wrote an Anglo-Norman form of the story, which has most recently been edited by Yolande de Pontfarcy in *Marie de France, L’espurgatoire Seint Patriz*, trans. Yolande de Pontfarcy (Louvain: Peeters, 1995). Karl Warnke edited Marie’s *Espurgatoire* in a facing-page text opposite one of its Latin predecessors, in *Das Buch vom Espurgatoire S. Patrice der Marie de France und seine Quelle* (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1938). Robert Easting has edited several Middle English variants of the *Patrick’s Purgatory* tradition, including the Auchinleck MS’s poem *Owayne Miles*, alongside a Latin *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* in *St. Patrick’s Purgatory*, EETS o.s. 298 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

392 *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory* lines 39–40.

393 Owein’s descent into Patrick’s Purgatory is first dated to the reign of English king Stephen in the earliest extant source, the *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* (ca. 1180–1190), written in Anglo-Latin by Henry of Sawtry. Easting, ed., *St. Patrick’s Purgatory*, 126, lxxiv. The *Tractatus* does not identify the knight’s nationality. Marie de France’s late twelfth-century *Espurgatoire de Seint Patriz* also dates the knight’s descent by the reign of King Stephen, but specifically identifies Owein as Irish: “El tens le rei Estefne dit, / si cum nus trovum en escrit, / qu’en Yrlande esteit uns prozdum – chevaliers fu, Oweins our nun.” (In the time of King Stephen, / As we find it written down, / There was a nobleman in Ireland, A knight, by the name of Owen…) Michael Curley, ed., trans., *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory: A Poem by Marie de France*, vol. 94, Medieval and
The pit full of saints, demons, dreadful torments and views of paradise is identified as an Irish space from the first line of the text: “SEint pateriḳ þoru godes grace : makede ane put in Irlonde.” The pit’s Irish space, and association with the Irish Saint Patrick, is important enough to mark off in the first line of Patrick’s Purgatory. However, although it matters that the purgatory is reachable through Ireland, we never learn its precise location within Ireland.

Very few texts of the St. Patrick’s Purgatory tradition specify the location of the pit. The site, Station Island in Lough Derg, Donegal, remains a pilgrimage site to this day, but the literary texts do not name it or offer directions to it. Gerald of Wales provides a relatively specific location for the Purgatory when he tells his readers that nine pits occupied by evil spirits can be found on an island in a lake in Ulster; however, Gerald does not connect these pits to Saint Patrick. The Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii merely identifies the space as “sanctum … in locum desertum,” a holy place in a deserted area.

Laud 108 follows its sources in placing Patrick’s Purgatory in Ireland without narrowing down the location of the pit any further. Neither St. Patrick’s Purgatory nor any other text within Laud 108 ever names individual counties, islands, cities or towns within Ireland. Thus Ireland, like Ethiopia, India, and Thomas Becket’s mother’s nameless home, and unlike England, is a formless place lacking any internal markers that differentiate one part of the country from another. Ireland’s formlessness explains its mutability and its confusion with other places in Brendan and Brigid. The formlessness also makes Ireland a rich space for marvel narratives. Ireland, despite its familiar domesticity (and its confusion with Scotland)
in the *Life of Brigid*, is mysterious enough to Laud 108’s English readers that it can contain mystery and marvel.

The marvels in Patrick’s purgatory are marvels that are in Ireland and yet not in Ireland; they are both infinitely distant and relatively close to readers and to the audience stand-in, Owayn. Arriving in Ireland, Owayn proceeds from a carefully-described Irish monastery into an otherworld where geography is meaningless. Although we are not told where in Ireland the monastery is, we are told where in the monastery complex the pit may be found:

> In þe churche-ȝerd is þat ilke putt : riȝt toward þe Est-side, riȝt est from þe heiȝe Auȝter : þat manie men ȝwylene souȝten wide.\(^{397}\)

[In the church-yard is that very pit, directly towards the east side, directly east from the high altar; many men sought widely for it.]

The precision of this detail, locating the pit with respect to the altar and the churchyard, renders the monastery accessible and visualizable, just as Brigid’s dairy helps make the Celtic fringe familiar to English readers. But once Owayn has entered the pit, there is no more recognizable geography. We, like Owayn, pass from the partially knowable Ireland into the alien dimension of the Purgatory.

Inside the pit, Owayn travels from one nameless field full of dead souls to another, each one distinguished from the previous location only by a vague description and by the torments or delights that the dead souls are respectively suffering or enjoying. Owayn first enters a space marked by no signifiers except darkness; it is “one holewe weie onder eorþe” (one hollow path under the earth), so dark that Owayn can’t see anything at all.\(^{398}\) Then Owayn goes boldly into “þe fairest feld þat miȝte beo,” the fairest possible field, which contains a fair hall full of holy people dressed in white. We learn nothing about the hall, and the field, and the souls in the field, except that they are beautiful; we can’t trace them, place them or envision them. We marvel at their beauty, but we cannot really imagine it.

The zones through which Owayn travels after he enters the pit do not belong to the known world, and hardly exist as places at all; they are specifically designed to elicit reactions from him and from us as audiences. The particular type of wonder we experience as Owayn moves into the homes of tormented sinners is a pleasurable horror. Owayn, and his audience, progress on a linear journey from the place of the shrieking damned souls to the frozen wasteland, and from there to the field where people are nailed to the ground and forced to gnaw on their own tongues. In “an oþur felde : wel ful of more wo,” a new set of

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\(^{397}\) *Patrick’s Purgatory* lines 11–12.

\(^{398}\) Ibid., line 96.
damned souls, also nailed to the ground, are nibbled by snakes. Owayn himself is tortured among them, before he frees himself from the demon torturers by uttering the name of Christ:

And þo he nolde in none manere : to grounde harde heo him caste
And tormenteden him ase þe oþere weren : and to þe eorþe naileden him faste.
Ake he criede a-non to ihesu crist : þo him smert so sore :
Pare nas non of þe schrewes þo : þat miȝten serui him so more.  

[And although he (i.e., Owayn) did not wish it in any way, they cast him to the hard ground and tortured him as the others were, and nailed him fast to the earth. But then he cried to Jesus Christ, when he hurt so badly; none of the devils could treat him in that way any more.]

We watch, in horrified excitement, as Owayn and the damned souls experience tortures that are simultaneously unimaginable, as we do not actually know what it feels like to be dropped in cauldrons of boiling lead, pitch and brimstone, and grotesquely imagined, as, once told about the cauldrons of boiling lead, we must visualize the souls boiling in it.

With delight to match our horror, we watch Owayn escape one trial after another by speaking Christ's name. We see Owayn cross a slippery suspension bridge over the smoking, stinking pit of the true Hell, and we see Owayn’s triumphant arrival at the Earthly Paradise, which is brightly lit, bestrewn with flowers, and occupied by saints crowned in gold, once he has crossed it. At last, Owayn has passed through all of the nameless areas in Purgatory and reached a space that can be named and identified:

It is eorþelich parays : þat Adam was Inne i-brouȝt
And þat he was Inne ymad : and sethþe for is mis-deede
he was i-cast out þar-of, and we also…

[It is the earthly paradise, into which Adam was brought and where he was made, and from which he was cast out because his misdeed afterwards, and so were we…]

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399 “Another field, full of more woe.” Ibid., line 220.

400 Ibid., lines 215–8.

401 The souls in boiling lead appear in lines 311–320 of St. Patrick’s Purgatory.

402 Ibid., lines 527–529.
The Earthly Paradise is not in Ireland at all. On the Hereford Map, it is drawn at the precise top of the map, the uttermost east.⁴⁰³ The Earthly Paradise is, in fact, a “wonder of the east” for medieval cartographers. Yet, the pilgrimage route Owayn takes to reach the Earthly Paradise begins in Ireland, on the far western edge of the known world. Owayn travels west from England to the reachable and yet marvelous land of Ireland. From Ireland he goes down into the nameless wonders of Purgatory, and his path through Purgatory is directionless. But here, near the end of the journey, he has achieved the ultimate east. Owayn has, in a way, gone all the way around the world.⁴⁰⁴ Inaccessible, easterly wonders are anchored in the western peripheries of the world.

In the Life of Saint Brendan, which follows immediately after Saint Patrick’s Purgatory and is paired with it in the Laud 108 SEL, the geographies of the west are again bound to the geographies of the otherworld.⁴⁰⁵ As I have explained above, Brendan’s starting point is vexed, moving between Hyber[nia] (the Latin name for Ireland) in the Laud rubric, ovre londe (our land) in the Laud first line, and Irlonde (Ireland) in other extant variants of the SEL. Especially when read against Brigid’s positioning in Scotland rather than Ireland, this spatial error suggests a slippage among spaces nearer home. This instability will be even more pronounced as Brendan and his sailors sail off into the unknown marvels of the otherworld. The instability of Brendan’s starting point prepares us for Brendan’s journey out into the trackless ocean, where wonders are altogether unmappable and even unreachable without divine intervention.

Brendan and his monks sail in search of the Promised Land, the same earthly paradise achieved a few folios previously by Owayn.⁴⁰⁶ But from the beginning of their voyage, the

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⁴⁰³ Westrem, Hereford Map, nos. 64–70. On Paradise’s location on medieval visual maps, see Alessandro Scafi, Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Maps that portray Paradise are not designed for use in travel, and their inclusion of the Earthly Paradise does not suggest that Eden can be reached by any ordinary mortal pilgrims. Rather, the maps are symbolic, iconographic maps which project ideas about the world. By placing the Earthly Paradise at the precise top of the map, they imagine the subsequent history of the world, after Adam and Eve’s departure from Eden, as a constant process of descent from a perfect age. They also provide an implicit route through which humans can return to paradisiacal perfection. The Earthly Paradise is still on the map, even though Adam has been expelled from it, so even now, perhaps, mortals may return to it.

⁴⁰⁴ In this context, it is interesting that Owayn’s eventual mortal destination is the Holy Land, where he tells everyone he meets of the wonders of the Earthly Paradise. The Holy Land, of course, is east of England but at the precise center of the world on medieval maps, as Eden is the precise east. St. Patrick’s Purgatory lines 658–668.

⁴⁰⁵ Barron and Burgess, eds., Brendan, collects multiple important Brendan texts, providing them in English translation, and, sometimes, in facing-page editions.

⁴⁰⁶ Owayn reaches the Earthly Paradise on f. 101v of Laud 108, while the Life of Saint Brendan begins on f. 104r.
monks’ choice of direction is problematic. The monk Beryn, who has previously sailed to the Earthly Paradise, tells Brendan that he and his companions “Astward euere kenden / In þe .se. of Occean : as ore louerd is grace us sende” (steered ever eastward in the sea of Ocean, as our Lord sent us his grace.)\(^{407}\) Sailing eastward from the far west to reach the Earthly Paradise at the uttermost east might seem a logical way to travel. Yet there is no uncharted sea east of Ireland and England. The North Sea, perhaps, might match the description, but it is more northerly than easterly. For further cues, we can turn to St Brendan’s description of the ocean:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nou is } & \text{ þe .se. of Occean : grettest and mest al-so :} \\
& \text{heo goth a-boute al þe world : and alle oþere cometh þer-per-to.}^{408} \\
\end{align*}
\]

[Now, the sea of Ocean is the greatest and also largest; it goes all around the world, and all others come into it.]

Ocean, here, is the proper name of the sea that surrounds all of the known land. On the flat projection of the Hereford Map or of a standard T-O map, Ocean is the circle of water surrounding the circular shape of the three continents Asia, Europe and Africa. Perhaps, then, the direction Beryn chooses could be visualized on a flat map as clockwise; Beryn sails around the inhabited world on the sea of Ocean, first north (through the North Sea), then east around Europe and Asia before arrival at the Earthly Paradise.

The flat map is only a projection, of course. The world, as the producers of Laud 108 know, is spherical rather than circular:\(^{409}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ase an Appel þe eorþe is round : so þat euere mo} \\
\text{half þe eorþe þe sonne bi-schineth : hov-so it euere go,} \\
\text{And Noon it is bi-nethen us : 3wane it is here mid-nißt;} \\
\text{Ase man may þe soþe i-seo : ho-so hauez guod In-sißt;} \\
\text{Ase 3if þov heolde ane clere candele : bi-side an Appel rißt,} \\
\text{Euene half þe Appel : heo wolde 3iuen hire lißt.}^{410}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{407}\) Life of Saint Brendan line 33.

\(^{408}\) Ibid., lines 17–18.

\(^{409}\) Rudolf Simek describes the long history of the spherical model of the world, beginning with its origins in Greek philosophy in the 4th century B. C. E., and demonstrates its frequent presence in medieval popular literatures, in Heaven and Earth in the Middle Ages: The Physical World before Columbus, trans. Angela Hall (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1996), 6–37.

\(^{410}\) Life of Saint Michael lines 407–412.
[The earth is round like an apple, so that the sun is always shining on half the earth, whatever is happening. It is noon beneath us when it is midnight here, as anyone who has good insight may see the truth: as if you hold a clear candle next to an apple, it would give its light to exactly half the apple.]

If the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa take up half the sphere of the earth, and the ocean occupies the other half of the sphere, the shortest path from Ireland, just north of the westernmost land, to the Earthly Paradise, the precise easternmost point, would be more or less due west, into the uncharted seas we now call the Atlantic Ocean. In the earliest recensions of the Saint Brendan tradition, including the Latin Navigatio Sancti Brendani (extant in tenth-century continental manuscripts, but possibly of earlier Irish origin), the monks do in fact sail westward. If Brendan sails west to reach the east, then, in a way, the wondrous west adjoins the wondrous east. The voyage from Ireland or England westward across the sea is as logical a trajectory towards the eastern realms of wonder as an eastward journey like “John Mandeville”'s reputed thirteenth-century overland route from England through Europe and the Holy Land into the realms of monsters.

But any attempt to map Brendan’s sea voyage, or determine which direction he sails — especially in the South English Legendary tradition — is doomed. W. R. J. Barron, editing the SEL Life of Saint Brendan, provides a revealing critical note on line 110:

110 uorþ est] A uorþ west; B est norþ; C est norþ; H est forþ. The reading of line 113 and the reference to the sunrise in 111 confirm the eastern direction of the voyage at this point.

Line 110, “As þe wynd hem drof, wel euene --- --- hor scip drouȝ” (As the wind drove them, their ship went [in some direction]), purports to describe the direction in which Brendan sails. Of the four manuscripts that Barron consults here, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 43 (A), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 779 (B), Cambridge, 

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411 Further research on the relationship between flat maps and the spherical planet in medieval geographical thought might help clarify Brendan’s route.


414 W. R. J. Barron, ed., The South English Legendary Version, in Barron and Burgess, eds., Brendan, 357.

415 Ibid., 28 line 110. I have removed the two words “uorþ est” (directly east) from Barron’s edition, and have translated the line myself instead of using Barron’s idiomatic translation.
Corpus Christi College Library, MS 145 (C) and London, British Library, MS Harley 2277 (H), only two agree on the direction, est norð (east and north). Laud 108’s reading is lost, as two folios of the Life of Saint Brendan are missing from the codex. Barron rejects the reading from his base text, A, as well as all other available manuscript readings. Instead, he emends the passage to support a directly eastward journey, in keeping with line 111’s suggestion that the ship travels “Euene aȝen þat þe sonne arist a Mydsummeres Day” (directly towards the sun’s rising on Midsummer’s Day).\footnote{Ibid., my translation.} The fact that line 111’s implied direction, due east, does not tally with any extant manuscript reading in line 110, suggests both textual corruption and, more interestingly, the essential unknowability of Brendan’s route. The South English Legendary tradition does not care which direction Brendan sails.

Late in the Laud SEL text of Brendan’s voyage, before he and his monks arrive at the Birds’ Paradise, the mouth of Hell or the Earthly Paradise, but after they leave other marvelous places such as the Island of Sheep, the monks return to the most unstable, unfixable space in the entire ocean. I say “return,” although, due to a particularly poignant moment of textual instability, we have not seen the monks’ original arrival at this place. That passage is lost in the lacuna between ff. 104v and 105r.\footnote{Horstmann supplies material from the Harley 2277 Life of St. Brendan to fill the gap, but given the mouvance visible in the SEL Life of Brendan tradition, we cannot expect the Harley 2277 text to be identical to the lost Laud text.} A reading of the passage where the monks return to the unstable space will help us consider the instability of the ocean and its wonders:

\begin{quote}
Þis holie men wenden forth : and ore louerdes grace nome,
Þat to þis grete fischse : þulke daye huy come,
Þat houede ase it were a lond. : heore caudron heo founden þere
Ase heo it bi-leften opon is rugge : in þat oþer ȝere.
Louerd crist, þat swch a best : scholde houi so stille
And soffri men op-on him gon : and don al heore wille!
\end{quote}

[The holy men went forth and received our Lord’s grace, so that they arrived at the great fish on that day, the one that floated as if it were a land. They found their cauldron there, just as they had left it upon his back during an earlier year. Lord Christ, that such a beast should float so still, and permit men to go on him, and do all their will!]

The island on which the monks have landed is no island. He is rather a fish or whale, so large and still that he resembles an island. Although he seems to be a still, unmoving beast,
whose back is stable enough to keep the monks’ cauldron balanced for years on end, the fish is capable of movement.

In the Ashmole SEL text, as printed by Barron, the monks first discover the unfixed nature of this “island” when they start a cooking fire on it:

Vor þo þis fur was þoruhot þe ile quakede anon
And wiþ gret eir hupte al up –þis monekes dradde echon…

[When this fire was fully hot, the island shook, and with great vigor hopped up. The monks were all frightened.]

This comic scene, in which the monks misread the living fish as a stable island, and have to be instructed about its true nature by the unsurprised Saint Brendan, is representative of Brendan’s entire journey. The island/fish stands for the chartless ocean through which Brendan and his sailors move. The creature is thus simultaneously a monster, a marvel, and an unmappable place, accessible through a journey from *oure londe* but only to be found if God wills it: a microcosm of all the issues in this chapter.

In the Ashmole 43 and Harley 2277 texts, and perhaps also in the lost Laud text, the first appearance of the fish signals Brendan’s passing from the comprehensible mortal world, not far from his familiar if somewhat magical starting point, into the otherworld. Direction has ceased to have meaning; an infernal volcano may be “wel feor in þe north,” but no fixed reference point tells us what the volcano is north of. After they leave the fish, Brendan’s men hardly ever see ordinary mortals again. They have crossed an invisible line into a part of the ocean occupied by marvelous beings, where it seems almost natural to find an island full of birds who are actually neutral, partially-fallen angels.

I want to linger for a moment on the naturalness of the ocean’s marvels. After meeting the fish, Brendan himself sees no need for wonder or fear. When his monks are terrified of a school of fishes who might destroy their ship, Brendan calms them:

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420 *Life of Saint Brendan* line 499.

421 The Island of the Birds, or the Birds’ Paradise, appears in lines 178–228 of Horstmann’s *Life of Saint Brendan*, in the section which Horstmann interpolates from Harley 2277 to fill the lacuna. The monks’ return to this island in lines 383–406 of *Saint Brendan*, which appears on ff. 105v–106r of Laud 108, proves that they must first have visited this island in the lost Laud 108 folios.
“Are you afraid?” said Saint Brendan. “Why are you frightened? You have been very happy on the back of the master of all fishes, and you have made fire on his back, and you do this every year!”

No fish should be able to frighten the voyagers now, Brendan declares. Even nearly getting caught in hell, which is here depicted as a demonic, smoke-spewing volcano, does not surprise St. Brendan. Observing the smoke and stench, and hearing the screams of tormented sinners, Brendan only mocks the devils who live there:

“What do you think,” said Brendan. “Is this a merry pass? We don’t want to come any closer to the edge of hell. The devils hoped so greatly; they’ve had some good luck. But praised be sweet Jesus Christ, they threw snake-eyes!”

The unfortunate demons, Brendan laughs, have lost a dice game. Brendan’s confidence at the hell-volcano is undercut by the next episode, when a monk leaps out of the ship and into hell, crying “Alas” for his wretched life all the way down. The monk himself is frightened, and the audience, watching his damnation, may feel wonder and terror. But for Brendan, the saintly leader of the group, the otherworldly wonders of the ocean need not be frightening.

When Brendan and his monks achieve the Earthly Paradise at last, with its nightless days, its trees heavy with ripe apples, and its river separating it from the true heaven, the monks are infinitely far from their familiar starting point. The long years of travel through the trackless ocean, as much as the ocean itself, distance them both from Ireland and England. Yet the return home (a return specifically to Yrlaunde, this time) is much shorter than the outward journey: “Wel sonere, ich wot, hom huy come : þan huy outward wende.”

Ireland is simultaneously incredibly distant from and quite close to the Earthly Paradise after all.

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422 Life of Saint Brendan, lines 452-454.
423 Ibid., lines 494-497.
424 “They came home much sooner, I think, than they went outward.” Ibid., line 728.
The connection of the routes through the unreachable otherworlds in the *Life of Saint Brendan* and *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory* to the routes’ entrance points in Ireland, however vaguely the text describes Ireland, serves to anchor the otherworlds in known reality. Audiences can link the unknown to the known in their minds, marking off the mysteries of Purgatory and the delights of Eden as, perhaps, outskirts of Ireland. Because the Celtic fringe is already a space of household wonder, as in the *Life of Saint Brigid*, it can become a gateway to greater wonder.

**Conclusion: Saint Michael and the gateways into wonder**

As gateways to wonder go, perhaps the most striking in Laud 108 appears in the *Life of Saint Michael*. This text opens with a set of wonders that Saint Michael performs, and battles that he fights, in trackable and accessible parts of Europe. But the location of each successive battle is more difficult to find. After Michael performs a miracle at the hill of Toumbe, which may or may not be located in the “Celtic fringe” but whose exact location is unspecified here, we leave the visible world entirely. Instead, we encounter the unseen worlds of medieval popular science. The *Life of Saint Michael* opens outwards into a cosmological, angelological and scientific treatise describing the ranks of angels and devils, the placement of Earth with respect to heaven, hell, and the other planets, the production of weather, and the development of the human from fetus to corpse.

The *Life of Michael* follows a saint who was never mortal at all, who has no home on earth and who, from the first line of his text, is identified as an archangel and messenger of God:

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SEynt MIȝhel þe Archaungel : and is felawes also,
hu beoth bi-tweone ore louerd and us : to schewi ȝwat we schulle do.425
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[Seint Michael, the Archangel, and his companions as well, are between our lord and us in order to show us what we should do.]

As an archangel, even more than the formerly-mortal saints, Michael is responsible for working wonders on earth on God’s behalf.

The *Life of Michael*’s first episode, a matter of a marvelous arrow that shoots its shooter back thanks to Michael's intervention, introduces the discourse of wonder and identifies wonder as the goal of the episode:

425 *Life of Saint Michael* lines 1–2.
He (the shooter) took a poisoned arrow, in very great wrath, and shot this foolish ox with very great strength. But this arrow turned right back towards the one who shot it, and smote him, as if it were a deep and great wound in the wretch. Now, that was a wondrous arrow, and a wondrous way it took! I have never learned how to shoot like that, nor has such an arrow been brought to me.

The boomerang arrow, returning to its shooter, is a marvel in itself and takes a marvelous trajectory. The narrator of the tale, in a rare SEL intrusion of the first-person pronoun, announces his surprise and admiration for the arrow and its journey, repeatedly using the term “wonder” to express these feelings. But the wonder of the arrow is neither a wonder of the east nor a wonder of the west. Rather, it occurs in Apulia, in Italy, near the center of what medieval Christians think of as civilized Europe. The miracle is firmly grounded in Italy, as the repentant shooter, Gargan, gives his name to the mountain, which becomes Monte Gargano, a sacred hill dedicated to Michael.

Even this place, Monte Gargano, however, is in its way a peripheral and endangered space. On the Adriatic coast, just off the Mediterranean, this Christian zone is threatened by invaders sailing from the Muslim east. Saint Michael protects the borders of the Christian zone and defeats the invading Saracens with a marvelous storm:

[f]or þare cam a gret deork cloude : and ouer-caste heom ech-on, And þe leitingue smot þere and þere : þe luþere men to grounde; Six hundret it a-slov of heom : in wel luytel stounde. Heore felawes flowen faste a-non : and ascapeðen onneþe : þare nas non þat ne was longue sijk : oþur deide in strongue deþe. þus seint Miȝheil sturede him þo : a-mong heom feor and ner.427

426 Ibid., lines 19–24.

427 Ibid., lines 56–61.
[So there came a great dark cloud, and overcast them all, and the lightning smote the wicked men to the ground, there and there. It killed six hundred of them in a very short time. Their fellows fled quickly and barely escaped; there was not one of them who was neither sick for a long time nor dead from violent death. Thus Saint Michael bestirred himself among them, far and near.]

Michael’s second wonder at Monte Gargano demonstrates that Michael maneuvers the natural world, using lightning as a terrifying force against his enemies. It also demonstrates that Michael, like the other wonder-workers of Laud 108, patrols boundary spaces. Even if Apulia is not located at the eastern or western edge of the known world, it does sit within reach of the boundary between Christian and Muslim lands.

Michael guards the boundaries between the sea and the land, and between the reachable world and the unreachable world. Another place sacred to Michael, the Hill of Toumbe, is located just at the edge of the sea:

\[
\text{IN } \text{he grete se of Occean : } \text{he hul of Toumbe is,}
\text{bat geth a-bouten al } \text{he world : In } \text{bat on ende, i-wis.}
\text{Al-a-boute } \text{he hulle geth } \text{he se. : and In } \text{he feste-daeie euere-mo}
\text{he se. with-drauth hire twies aday : } \text{bat ech man may druyȝe gон}
\text{Forto honouri ŕulke holie stude -- : and in non oþur tyme it nis}
\text{bat } \text{he .se. ne geth al-a-boute : bote on } \text{he feste-daie, i-wis.}^{428}
\]

[The Hill of Toumbe is in the great sea of Ocean, that goes all around the world, at that one end. The sea goes all around the hill, and always, on the feast day (of Saint Michael), the sea withdraws twice a day, so that every man may pass through, dry, to honor that holy place. There is no other time when the sea does not fully surround it, except on the feast day.]

This hill, then, is remarkable for its dual status as both island and peninsula, and for being the last strip of land jutting out into the world-encompassing ocean. Like Ireland, it is located on the periphery of the map, and connects the reachable land to the unreachable sea. We are not told exactly where this hill is; from the description given in Laud 108, it could be located at any point on the northwestern coastline connecting Europe to the Sea of Ocean. But we know, from other extant redactions of the Saint Michael tradition, where the Hill of Toumbe is.

\[^{428}\text{Ibid., lines 133–8.}\]
Toumbe is, in fact, Mont-Saint-Michel, located on the shore of Normandy facing the English Channel. Scholars of medieval English literatures know this hill best not for its association with Saint Michael, but for its association with King Arthur. As his first act as acknowledged king, in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britannie*, Arthur defeats a giant who has abducted and raped women at his lair on Mont-Saint-Michel. Arthur’s triumph there, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has influentially argued, sets up Arthur’s expansion of Britain into an empire. Arthur’s defeat of the giant serves the same purpose as Bartholomew’s defeat of the idols; it conquers the territory at the border of the world and absorbs it into the Christian empire. Arthur’s encounter with the giant marks Mont-Saint-Michel as a place just outside of Britain, close enough to be within reach and far enough to be barbaric and in need of conquest.

No sign exists that the producers of Laud 108 are aware of the Arthurian literary and chronicle history tradition. Nevertheless, the Hill of Toumbe, in the *Life of Michael*, like the Arthurian Mont-Saint-Michel, is near enough to England to be almost familiar, and far enough to be the mysterious haven of wonder. Toumbe is the last comprehensibly earthly place mentioned in the Laud *Life of Michael*, and the gateway leading outward into the unknown. Immediately after describing the hill, the narrative moves out into the geographies of heaven and hell, and the battle in which Michael drives “he maister-dragoun lucifer” and his companions out of heaven.

The wide and wild wonders of medieval cosmology follow. Michael himself drops out of the narrative, while we learn about how devils have sex with women, how fallen angels are called elves, how the planets are Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury and the moon, and how the highest heaven is eight thousand years’ travel from the earth. The wonders of the *Life of Saint Michael* remain inexplicable. But they are grounded by Michael’s miracle-

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429 Richard Johnson discusses the establishment and legend of Saint Michael’s sanctuary at Mont-Saint-Michel, and the hill’s alternate name Tomba, in *Saint Michael the Archangel in Medieval English Legend* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 41-5. Jennifer Miller suggests that there may be slippage between Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy and St. Michael’s Mount in Cornwall; both are shrines to Saint Michael, located on mountains at the edge of the water, and they face each other across the English Channel.


432 Gregory Sadlek considers the internal logic of the SEL Life of Saint Michael, arguing that the text is "made up of three heterogeneous juxtaposed sections...each having a connection to Michael in one of his roles." The cosmological section, he argues, displays “Michael’s role as provost of God’s power in nature.” Gregory M. Sadlek, “The Archangel and the Cosmos: The Inner Logic of the South English Legendary’s St. Michael,” *Studies in Philology* 85, no. 2 (1988): 191, 89.
working in Italy and in Toumbe, just outside of England, at the edge of the world we know.

In the *Life of Brendan*, *Patrick’s Purgatory* and the *Life of Michael*, the most distant, unreachable, marvelous places are paradoxically just outside of England, within the reach of English readers. These texts, and the *Short Life of Brigid*, use the Celtic fringe and the lands at the western edge of the ocean as ways into the foreign, the exotic and the incomprehensible. The wonders of the west, in the end, are far more exciting than the wonders of the east.
Coda

The Enemies are (Almost) Here: The Geographies of King Horn

The action of King Horn, the romance that follows Havelok the Dane in Part B of Laud 108, begins when “[s]chipes ‧xv‧ / Of sarazines kene” (fifteen ships of keen Saracens) reach the shore of a Christian kingdom.\textsuperscript{433} The Christian zone that the Saracens invade is, at first, described only as a place in the west. We learn of King Morye, father of the hero Horn, that “King he was bi westen / wel þat hise dayes lesten” (he was king in the west while his days lasted).\textsuperscript{434} Later we discover that this western land is named Sodenne, or, in the more commonly-read text in Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27 (2), Suddene.\textsuperscript{435}

The place-name Sodenne or Suddene is not attested outside the King Horn tradition. We can guess at its location only through its proximity to other spaces. Sodenne is not far, by sea, from a land called Westnesse, where the exiled prince Horn finds shelter.\textsuperscript{436} The name Westnesse (or Westernesse in the Cambridge MS) is also unattested outside of King Horn, but it at least has a meaning in Old and Middle English: a western headland, a headland in the west. Westnesse, in its turn, is a short sea journey from Hirelonde, Ireland, where Horn fights and defeats a pagan giant.\textsuperscript{437} Ireland, of course, is a known island west of England. In other words, King Horn takes place on a series of islands and shore towns and cities, in the northwestern ocean. If Sodenne is a neighbor, by sea, of two western zones, it is itself a western island. Sodenne is perhaps a settlement within England itself, or another unknown, unplaceable island sharing the western ocean with Ireland, England, and the islands that Brendan discovers in the Laud Life of Brendan.

\textsuperscript{433} Hall, ed., King Horn, O-text 4 lines 41-2. Here and in other quotations from Hall’s diplomatic edition, I maintain punctuation and mark expanded abbreviations with italics as Hall does, but I replace the tall s (ſ) with the round s. I provide a definition and discussion of the term “Saracen” and its use in Middle English literature in Chapter 2 above.

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., O-text 1 lines 5-6.

\textsuperscript{435} I will use the spelling “Sodenne” and other Laud King Horn spellings of characters’ names and places throughout this section, except where quoting from earlier scholars’ work, or when referring to known places like Ireland.


\textsuperscript{437} Ibid., O-text 42 line 785.
The western zone of Sodenne is threatened, and temporarily overcome, by an incursion of invading Saracens, who are, in medieval literature and history, primarily threats of the east. Western Saracens are not, of course, entirely unknown to Laud 108. Mary Magdalene finds a settlement of Saracens in Marseilles, and Saracens attack Sicily in the *Life of Saint Michael*. Both Marseilles and Sicily, however, are on Mediterranean shores and thus reachable by sea from Muslim lands in the East. The only Saracen in Laud 108 who actually manages to travel to England is Thomas Becket’s mother Alisaundre. What brings the Saracens of *Horn* to the northwestern island group that may or may not be the British Isles?

The question, “Where is Sodenne, and why do Saracens invade it?” has exercised critics of *King Horn* for over a hundred years. Diane Speed summarizes a group of popular arguments, published between 1901 and 1984, that agree that Sodenne is Anglo-Saxon England, and its invaders are not Muslims, but pagan Danes referred to as sarazines and paynimes. Indeed, Danish and Norse invaders, often pagan, did repeatedly attack England by sea, while no actual Muslims ever sailed north and east as far as the British Isles.

If the villains of *King Horn* are encoded Danes rather than Muslims, their presence in Laud 108 displays anxiety about Danish invasion existing alongside the history of English-Danish rapprochement that, as Thorlac Turville-Petre has claimed, is encoded in *Havelok the Dane*. Turville-Petre explains *Havelok* as a text that counters narratives of Viking violence with a positive story of Danish-English intermarriage: “The chronicles tell only of pagan bands raping and pillaging; *Havelok* presents a revisionist view of the Vikings, bringing justice, peace and social integration.” The Saracens of *King Horn*, if they do represent Danes, could widen Laud 108’s treatment of Danes to include narratives of pillage as well as narratives of marriage:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cherches he gommen felle} \\
\text{And folk he gomne quelle} \\
\text{De ne micte libbe} \\
\text{De fremde ne þe sibbe}
\end{align*}
\]

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438 See Chapter 2 for discussion of the Saracens in the Laud *Life of Mary Magdalene*, and Chapter 5 for a reading of the Saracen attacks in the *Life of Saint Michael*.


440 Thorlac Turville-Petre, “*Havelok* and the History of the Nation,” in *Readings in Middle English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 132. See also Turville-Petre’s expansion of this article in *England the Nation*. 
Bote he here ley forsoken  
And to her token. 441

[They (the Saracens) began to destroy churches and kill people. No one could live, neither stranger nor kin, unless he forsook his own law (i.e., religion; Christianity) and took up their (religion).]

Viking invaders are famous for pillaging and burning churches. Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle describes Vikings destroying churches during the reign of King Æthelred the Unready: “Dat luper folc of denemarch robbede & slowe uaste / Chirchen & abbeys barnde & adoun caste.” 442 The reading that Horn’s villains are encoded Vikings has evidence to support it.

Identifying the Saracens of King Horn as Danes invading England, as Speed notes, ignores the language the text uses to describe Horn’s Saracens. The leader of the invaders is an amyraud; this is an alternate spelling of amiral or emir, the title we recognize in Laud 108 as belonging to Gilbert Becket’s captor, Alisaundre’s father, the pagan king. 443 As I have shown in Chapter 2, Alisaundre and her father are tropes of romance and chanson de geste moved into hagiography. Speed argues that the Saracens of King Horn, rather than encoded memories of actual invaders of England, are borrowings from the chanson de geste genre. Horn’s Saracens demonstrate a trope crossing from the chanson de geste into the Middle English romance by way of Horn’s source, the Anglo-Norman Romance of Horn. They are, Speed claims, “essentially a literary phenomenon, based not on figures from real life, but on other literary phenomena.” 444 But, as I have shown throughout Shaping the World, literary ancestry (such as the Saracen princess motif’s ancestry in chanson de geste) does not preclude current political import. Transference of genre conventions happens alongside encoded political narrative.

To see what other political narratives, besides memories of Danish attack, might be encoded in King Horn, let us look at King Horn’s descriptions of its Saracen invaders. Coming from paynime, pagandom, the King Horn Saracens are “none londische meme, / Bot sarazines kenne” (not local men, but the tribe of the Saracens). 445 Their place of origin seems irrelevant

441 Hall, ed., King Horn, O-text 4 lines 65–70.


443 See Chapter 2.


445 Hall, ed., King Horn, O-text 36 lines 647–8.
to the poem; it only matters insofar as it is a place that is neither Sodenne, Westnesse nor Ireland. The invaders are outlanders; we know nothing else about their homeland. Thus, these pagans can resemble any group of interlopers in a Christian kingdom. We know almost as little about Saracen religion in King Horn as we do about Saracen places of origin. The Saracens of King Horn worship the devil, rather than the standard imagined Saracen gods, Mahun and Tervagaunt, whom the Saracens of Mary Magdalene worship: “Sarazines kende / … leuede on þe fende.” 446 “Lodlike and blake,” loathsome and black, the Saracens are marked by ugliness and monstrosity. 447 The leader of one band of Saracens is a geaunt, a giant. 448

In Laud 108, as I have shown in Chapter 5, ugly, non-Christian monsters such as the giant saint Christopher and the talking idols of India usually live in the east. Christian evangelists traveling east easily convert them, colonizing pagan kingdoms for Christianity. As monsters and giants coming into a Christian space to conquer and convert the Christians, the Saracens of King Horn reverse the journey of Saints Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas the Apostle. Here, the monsters are the colonizers and the Christians are the colonized who must take revenge on their oppressors. The space that they colonize is, not England itself, but an England-like place. Sodenne, like Brendan’s ovre londe and Brigid’s Scotland, is a western territory that is not England but is mysteriously near to England. Horn’s Saracens are threats coming in to an England-like space from outside.

In a way, the Saracens of Horn bring the Crusades home; instead of threatening Constantinople, they endanger an England-like place. Horn and his followers must then fight to reclaim that almost-England for Christianity. One prominent Crusader of thirteenth-century English history, Simon de Montfort, has already brought the Crusades home to England. When Simon and his troops wear the sign of the white cross in their rebellion, they imagine their rebellion as an English Crusade against the royalist enemies of God. As a nearly-English Crusader defending his homeland, perhaps Horn, like Havelok, is an encoded Simon de Montfort. 449

There remains one more potential encoded historical memory in King Horn. In worshiping the devil, the Saracens of Horn resemble not only the giant Christopher before his

446 “The people of the Saracens… believed in the Devil.” Ibid., O-text 78 lines 1420-1. The Saracen gods are named in the Life of Mary Magdalene line 205.

447 Hall., ed., King Horn, O-text 78 line 1360.

448 Ibid., O-Text 46 line 831.

449 In this context, Matthew Hearn’s argument that Fikenhild, the traitor in Horn’s camp, represents the breakdown in feudal loyalties on both sides of the Barons’ Wars becomes very interesting. Hearn, “Twins of Infidelity,” 83-5.
conversion, but also the Jewish agent in *Theophilus*.

With the exception of Alisaundre, a heathen who converts to Christianity and is thus a blessing, rather than a threat, to English Christianity, the Saracens of *Horn* are the only Saracens who come as far north and west as the British Isles in Laud 108. But Jews, before their 1290 expulsion from England, not long before the production of Part B of Laud 108, were already in the British Isles, and they did not always convert to Christianity. Perhaps the forced conversions that *Horn*’s Saracens attempt to impose on Sodenne reflect fear of Jews formerly present in England, as well as fear of Muslim and Danish invaders.

When they invade a northwestern land that resembles England but is not quite England itself, the Saracens of *King Horn* can represent all of the threats endangering tenth- through thirteenth-century English Christians. They can invoke the genre conventions of the *chanson de geste* and reference treatments of pagans, Muslims and Jews in the *South English Legendary* in part A of Laud 108. They can stand for Danes, Muslims, Jews and the treacherous royal armies all at the same time.

Laud 108, as I have argued throughout *Shaping the World*, imagines the geography of the world in order to situate England within the larger world and within its historical context. By placing an imaginary kingdom, Sodenne, in the British Isles in place of England, and by sending Saracen armies to invade Sodenne, the Laud *King Horn* creates a fictionalized space that nevertheless suffers dangers reminiscent of those suffered by the real England. In using Sodenne instead of England, *King Horn* follows the Laud *South English Legendary* and *Havelok the Dane* in distancing the cultural and religious conflicts of medieval England, rendering them less dangerous and more exciting, or even more wondrous, than the actual crises of thirteenth-century England.

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450 See chapter 3 above.
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Appendix: Codicological Description of Laud 108

Siglum. L in *South English Legendary*; O in *King Horn*.

Library and shelf number. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 108 (shelved as Arch. F. d. 21); Summary Catalogue 1486. Former shelfmark K 60 is written in a relatively modern hand on the front flyleaf. Former shelfmark C 73 is written in a different and relatively modern cursive hand in a box on the inside front binding; this number is also printed on a stamp pasted onto the inside front binding.

Previous descriptions. A. S. G. Edwards has published the most recent formal description of the Laud MS as “Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108: Contents, Construction, and Circulation” in Bell and Couch’s 2011 collection *The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108*. Edwards supplies a list of the contents of the manuscript and a careful description of the book’s layout and construction issues. In the same collection, Murray J. Evans has extensively described the manuscript’s flourishing, rubrication and ornamentation, concluding that the manuscript’s features display Laud 108 as “a whole book that also includes much apparent disorder.”

For an earlier scholarly treatment of the contents of the Laud MS, see *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues: II Laudian Manuscripts*, cols. 108–115. Carl Horstmann has, in Manfred Görlach’s words, “frequently, but not sufficiently described” the manuscript in his introductions to the *Early South English Legendary* and the *Leben Jesu*. Görlach himself has described it in detail in *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, providing, for instance, a full and reliable listing of the gathering divisions. Gisela Guddat-Figge described Laud 108 in the *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances*.


In their editions of *Havelok the Dane*, W.W. Skeat and, more recently, G.V. Smithers have described and transcribed material from the manuscript, as has Rosamund Allen in her introduction to *King Horn*, although Allen chooses Cambridge, CUL MS 4.27(2) as her base text.

Material. Vellum, medium quality, with paper flyleaves. The hair sides of the vellum are much darker than the flesh sides. There are a number of holes and cuts in the vellum that

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451 Evans, “‘Very Like a Whale,’” 65.
predate the production of the manuscript, as well as places where the vellum was torn and stitched. In several places, the stitches are missing, but holes remain in neat lines around the tears. The book is bound in a late, perhaps s. xix, brown leather binding, with rectangles of black embossed flourishings on the front. The outer brown leather is damaged, leaving the underlying material, either wood or cardboard, visible on the edges of the binding; the back of the book is scraped. The shelf numbers are printed on the spine in small letters in neat and surprisingly bright modern gold leaf. The tops and bottoms of pages have been trimmed at some point following the late fourteenth century.

**Date.** Ff. 1–200v, containing the *SEL temporale* and *sanctorale*, the *Sayings of Saint Bernard* and the *Visio Pauli*, date to s. xiiiex – xivem. Ff. 204–228r, containing *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, also date to s. xiiiex – xivin, although they most likely postdate the *SEL* section. *The Disputation of Body and Soul*, in ff. 200v–203v, which I argue (*contra* previous scholars) has been written after both the *SEL* and *Havelok–Horn* booklets, probably dates to s. xivin.452 The final booklet (ff. 228v–237v), containing additional saints’ lives and *Somer Soneday*, is probably s. xivex or later.453

**Foliation.** 239 numbered, plus 170B; 1–2 folios missing between ff. 1 and 2; triangular scrap numbered as 30* between ff. 30a and f. 31; 1 folio missing between ff. 104–105; 1 folio missing between ff. 114–115; 1 torn folio with fragments of 7 lines visible between ff. 167–168; whole folio missing between ff. 231–232. The codex is acephalous and one or more booklets may be missing at its front. These materials were present ca. 1300, when the crayon enumerator provided the first set of entry numbering, and may have been present in the late fourteenth century, when Scribe 4 numbered the entries in ink; they were lost by 1633, as the dated owner’s mark on f. 1r confirms that the first extant folio was the first folio at that time.

**Dimensions.** 230–240 x 135–160 mm, according to my measurements; A.S.G. Edwards gives a measurement of 240 x 175 mm.454 The pages have been trimmed after the production of the manuscript.

**Provenance.** Laud 108 came to the library in Archbishop William Laud’s collection; Laud owned it by 1633, according to the dated owner’s mark on f. 1r. That mark is in black, darker and significantly later than the text on the rest of the page. A fifteenth-century note

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452 See below, “Writing,” for the evidence to support *Body and Soul*’s later addition to the codex.

453 For the ongoing debate on dating the codex and its parts, see Liszka, “Talk in the Camps,” in *Texts and Contexts*, ed., Bell and Couch.

on f. 238, the back flyleaf of the codex, demonstrates that the book belonged to Henry Perveys, a draper of London.\footnote{Christina M. Fitzgerald considers the available evidence regarding Henry Perveys in “Miscellaneous Masculinities.”}

No earlier provenance information is available.

**Layout.** Most texts are laid out in single columns, ruled in plummet, and are 44 or 45 lines long. Writing begins under the top line. Ff. 11–22, *The Childhood of Jesus*, is written in double columns. *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, in Part B, are both written in double columns as well. F. 60v, the last page of the *Life of Saint Lucy* and the page preceding the *Life of Thomas Becket*, is written in double columns with the text, in prose, filling in all available space on the page.

**Writing.** Four main scribes have written in the body of the text. Scribe 1 (Scribe A, for Edwards) wrote ff. 1–200v, containing the *SEL temporale* and *sanctorale*, the *Sayings of Saint Bernard* and the *Visio Pauli*. This hand is a *gothica littera textualis semi quadrata* formata of the late thirteenth century. Scribe 3 (Scribe C, for Edwards) wrote ff. 204r–228r, containing *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, no more (and perhaps significantly less) than twenty years after Scribe 1’s work. Scribe 3’s hand is a different *gothica littera textualis semi quadrata* formata. Scribe 2 (Scribe B added *The Disputation of the Body and Soul* on ff. 201–203v in the last blank folios of the final booklet in Part A.\footnote{Görlach, *Textual Tradition*, 89.} Scribe 2’s hand is also a *gothica littera textualis semi quadrata*, s. xiii–s. xiv\textsuperscript{v}. It is still of the *formata* grade, but not quite as neat as Scribes 1 or 3. Scribe 4 (Scribe C), an informal late fourteenth–century hand writing unrulled lines of uneven height, added the *Lives of Saint Blaise, Saint Cecilia and Saint Alexis*, as well as *Somer Soneday*, on ff. 228v–237v. Scribe 4’s hand can best be described as *gothica littera cursiva anglicana media*.

Two enumerators have numbered and named entries in the codex, writing at the top of most recto pages and occasionally in the margins. The crayon enumerator has numbered most entries and provided entry titles in a fading pinkish crayon. The crayon enumerator’s work sometimes fades into illegibility. Later, Scribe 4 renumbers all entries in ink; he is identifiable as Scribe 4 because the sepia color of the faded ink is exactly the same color as the writing on ff. 228v–237v. Much numeration may have been lost due to manuscript trimming.

The crayon numeration is especially rare in the later portions of the codex. There is no visible crayon numeration at all on the *Disputation of Body and Soul*. The crayon numeration seems to have been frequently erased through scratching the vellum in much of Part B, the *Havelok* and *Horn* section, and is not present at all in Scribe 4’s portion of the codex. On f. 228r, in *King Horn*, both ink and crayon numeration are visible. The crayon on this folio
identifies *King Horn* as text 71, but the ink identifies *King Horn* as text 72.\textsuperscript{457} The erasure of the crayon numeration on *Havelok* suggests that the crayon and ink enumerators may not have agreed on the numbering of *Havelok*. I therefore conclude that the crayon enumerator records a time when the codex included the missing (possibly *temporale*) entries 1-7, the missing beginning of the *Life of Jesus*, and all of Scribe 1’s work plus *Havelok* and *Horn*, but did not include the *Disputation of Body and Soul*.\textsuperscript{458} Scribe 4’s numeration work records a time when the codex included all extant material, and may also have included the missing material at the front of the codex.

Beyond these scribes and enumerators, there are additional rubricators and marginal notators working throughout the codex, as well as several fifteenth-century hands on the final flyleaf. Görlich argues that many of the marginal comments in the *SEL* portion of the text are in Scribe 1’s hand.\textsuperscript{459} I concur, especially in sections where the marginal notes add supporting information to the body of the text, such as the marginal glosses numbering the Constitutions of Clarendon or identifying speakers in dialogues within the *Life of Thomas Becket*.

**Decoration.** Ornamented capitals in red and blue mark especially important pages in, and red curlicues and parahs appear throughout, parts A and B of the codex. Andrew Taylor cites the work of Linda Voigt and Sonia Patterson to suggest that three flourishers worked together on the *SEL sanctorale* and *temporale* and on *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, and claims this group of flourishers for evidence that Part A and Part B were produced in the same workshop.\textsuperscript{460} Evans concurs, but Edwards argues for only one flourisher throughout these sections. Scribe 4 has provided different, less formal flourished capitals in the final texts of

**Contents.** I follow Liszka’s booklet and quire numbering here; I have checked his suggestions against the manuscript and concur with his claims.\textsuperscript{461} For the textual numbering, I follow the ink enumerator.

\textsuperscript{457} Liszka, following Robinson, *Transmission of English Verse Texts*, 225-6, and Allen, *King Horn*, 9, has noticed the renumbering of *Havelok* and *Horn* by the second enumerator. Liszka, “Laud 108 and the Early History,” 33, 76. Neither Liszka nor any other critic of the manuscript has previously observed that the numeration changes mean that the *Disputation of Body and Soul* predates the addition of *Havelok* and *Horn* to the codex.

\textsuperscript{458} Edwards, Liszka, Robinson and all other scholars who have published work on Laud 108 argue that the *Disputation* is late thirteenth-century and precedes the writing of Part B.

\textsuperscript{459} Görlich, *Textual Tradition*, 249 no. 91.

\textsuperscript{460} Taylor, “Her Y Spelle;,” 77.

\textsuperscript{461} Liszka, “Laud 108 and the Early History.”
Booklet 1, Quire 1:

8. *Life of Jesus (acephalous)* from the *South English Ministry and Passion*\(^{462}\) [ff. 1r–10v]

Booklet 2, Quire 2:

9. *Childhood of Jesus* [ff. 11r–22r]

Booklet 3, Quires 3–5:

10. *Holy Cross* ff. 23r–29v
11. *Life of Saint Dunstan* [ff. 29v–30r]
13. *Life of Saint Barnabas* [ff. 31v–32v]
14. *Life of Saint John the Baptist* [ff. 32v–34r]
15. *Life of Saint James the Apostle* [ff. 34r–38r]
16. *Life of Saint Oswald* [f. 38v]
17. *Life of Saint Edward the King* [ff. 39r–41v]
18. *Life of Saint Francis* [ff. 41v–46v]
19. *Life of Saint Alban* [ff. 46v–47v]
20. *Life of Saint Wulfstan* [ff. 48r–50v]
21. *Life of Saint Matthew the Evangelist* [ff. 50v–52r]
22. *Life of Saint Leger* [ff. 52r–v]
23. *Life of Saint Faith* [ff. 52v–54r]
24. *Life of Saint Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins* [ff. 54r–55v]

Booklet 4, Quires 6–18

25. *Life of Saint Katherine* [ff. 56r–59r]
26. *Life of Saint Lucy* [ff. 59r–60v]
27. *Life of Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury* [ff. 61r–88r]
29. *Life of Saint Agnes* [ff. 89v–91r]
30. *Life of Saint Vincent the Martyr* [ff. 91r–93r]
31. *Life of Saint Paul* [ff. 93r–v]
32. *Short Life of Saint Brigid* [ff. 93v–94v]
33. *Life of Saint Agatha* [ff. 94v–96r]
34. *Life of Saint Scholastica* [ff. 96r–v]
35. *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory* [ff. 96v–103v]

\(^{462}\) Scribe 1 begins here.
36. Life of Saint Brendan [ff. 104r–110r]
37. Life of Saint Nicholas [ff. 111r–113v]
(unnumbered) Life of Saint Julian the Confessor [ff. 115v–116r]
38. Life of Saint Julian the Good Hospitaller [ff. 116r–117v]
39. Life of Saint Mary of Egypt [ff. 117v–121v]
40. Life of Saint Christopher [ff. 121v–124r]
41. Life of Saint Dominic [ff. 124r–v]
42. Life of Theophilus [ff. 128r–130r]
43. Life of Saint George [ff. 130r–131r]
44. Life of Saint Edmund the King [ff. 131r–132r]
45. Life of Saint Michael the Archangel [ff. 132r–? ; the dividing point between this text and the separately-numbered entry 46 is unclear]
46. Saint Michael, Part II [ff. 132r–? ; this section is a cosmological and scientific treatise]
47. Life of Saint Clement [ff. 141r–147r]
48. Life of Saint Laurence [ff. 147r–149r]
49. Life of Saint Kenelm [ff. 149r–153r]
50. Life of Saint Gregory [ff. 143r–154v]
51. Life of Saint Cuthbert [ff. 154v–155v]
52. Life of Saint Mark [ff. 155v–156r]
53. Lives of Saints Philip and Jacob [ff. 156r–v]
54. Life of Saint Jacob [James] [ff. 156v–157r]
55. Life of Saint Bartholomew [ff. 157v–160v]
56. Life of Saint Thomas the Apostle [ff. 161r–165v]
57. Life of Saint Matthew [Matthias] the Apostle [ff. 165v–166r]
58. Life of Saint Silvester [ff. 166r–167r]
59. Life of Saint Eustace [ff. 167r–169v]
60. Life of Saint John the Evangelist [ff. 169v–170bv]
61. All Hallows’ Day [ff. 174r–175r]
62. All Souls’ Day [ff. 175r–179r]
63. Life of Saint Edmund the Confessor [ff. 179v–185r]
64. Life of Saint Martin [ff. 185r–188r]
65. Life of Saint Leonard the Confessor [ff. 188r–190r]
66. Life of Saint Mary Magdalene [ff. 190r–197r]
67. Life of Saint Hippolytus [ff. 197r–198r]
68. The Sayings of St Bernard [ff. 198r–199r]
69. Visto Pauli [ff. 199r–200v]
70. Disputation of Body and Soul[463] [ff. 200v–203v]

[463] Scribe 2 begins here.
Booklet 5, Quires 19–23

71. *Havelok the Dane*[^64] [ff. 204r–219v]
72. *King Horn* [ff. 219v–226v]
73. *Life of Saint Blaise*[^65] [ff. 228v–230v]
74. *Life of Saint Cecilia* [ff. 232r–233v]
75. *Life of Saint Alexius* [ff. 233v–237r]
76. *Somer Soneday* [ff. 237r–v]

Brief writings, lacking numeration, on f. 238r–v

[^64]: Scribe 3 begins here.

[^65]: Scribe 4 begins here.