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'Doctryne and studie': Female Learning and Religious Debate in Capgrave's *Life of St Katharine*

Sarah James

In his article studying the effects of Archbishop Thomas Arundel's Constitutions on the production of vernacular theology, Nicholas Watson examines a range of religious writings in English in order to support his contention that fifteenth-century examples of this tradition were theologically conservative and intellectually limited.[1] Although he explores a variety of texts from different genres, he refers only very briefly to hagiography, and then only to exclude it from consideration as 'somewhat marginal':

> For writers of English theological works whose names we know—apart from Pecock, hagiographic poets such as Capgrave, Bokenham, and Lydgate (who are somewhat marginal to my discussion here), and, of course, Margery Kempe—we have to wait until the early sixteenth century.[2]

Watson gives no real indication of the reasons for this casual dismissal; however, he does note that his article will emphasize 'the more intellectually challenging texts', suggesting that his decision arises from a value judgement based on the perceived lack of complexity or intellectual worth of saints' lives.[3] If this is the case, he is certainly not alone in his opinion, at least as far as Capgrave's work is concerned; in his study of the author, M. C. Seymour unapologetically condemns both the *Life of St Katharine* and the *Life of St Norbert*:

> He translated a Latin *vita* (of uncertain pedigree) and produced a scholarly life of miracles neatly ordered and suitable for piously uncritical literates. Neither life has anything to

> recommend it to another audience and neither rises above the general mediocrity of the genre.[4]

Seymour's assumption that the hagiographic genre is blighted by 'general mediocrity' predisposes him to condemn Capgrave's endeavours in this area; the parenthetical sneer at the 'uncertain pedigree' of Capgrave's source material suggests that hagiography can have little to offer to 'serious' scholarship. I wish to argue otherwise, at least in the case of Capgrave's *St Katharine*, suggesting that it is a work of considerable theological subtlety and intellectual sophistication. In particular, I shall argue that Capgrave uses this work to undertake a sensitive and meticulous exploration of the disputed theological ground between orthodox Christianity and Lollardy.

John Capgrave's *Life of St Katharine of Alexandria*, composed in the mid-1440s, is extant in four manuscripts, none of which, unusually, can be directly associated with the author himself, although all are East Anglian.[5] Also unusual for Capgrave is the lack of a specific dedicatee; he simply says that he has written the work in order 'that more openly it shalle / Be knowe a-bovte of woman and of man' (Prologue, 45-6). Given the text's length and complexity, it seems likely that it was intended for a relatively prosperous and well-educated readership, perhaps including women whose own standard of education might make them especially interested in the saint. The English gild returns of 1391 reveal that there was a Gild of St Katharine in Lynn at that date, and that membership was open to both men and women; the ordinances provide for 'foure dayes of spekyngges tokedere for here comune profyte' every year.[6] Assuming that the gild was still in existence in the 1440s, it is at least possible that Capgrave's *Katharine* was produced for the gild or one of its members, and it may even have been intended for reading during these four days. Even if we cannot be certain of this, it is clear that East Anglia in the middle decades of the fifteenth century had a wealthy, educated and sophisticated population; such an audience might well have found the *Katherine* to its taste.[7]

This poem of 8624 lines is arranged in rhyme royal stanzas, and is divided into a Prologue and five books. Unlike earlier versions of the Katharine legend, Capgrave's poem gives extensive coverage to the saint's childhood, education and mystical marriage, before providing a lengthy account of her *passio*. Such attention to the *vita* is, as Katherine Lewis suggests, a particular characteristic of fifteenth-century versions of the legend, and Capgrave's alterations to and elaborations of some aspects of the earlier form of the legend are, in the context

of contemporary religious tensions, highly suggestive.[8] Perhaps the most striking of these is Katharine's learnedness, and it is to this that I first turn.

The Problem of the Learned Woman in Fifteenth-Century England

The amount of textual space which Capgrave devotes to describing Katharine's education is significant, since it is her comprehensive scholarship which enables the saint to assume the controversial role of female teacher and preacher, both within her own household and in the pagan court of Maxentius. Katharine's erudition is not Capgrave's own invention, of course, but his is certainly the most extensive account of her education in the seven liberal arts.[9] The success of her education is put to the test when, in Book 1, three hundred and ten scholars are summoned to Alexandria to question her, an examination she passes with ease.[10] Such extraordinary intellectual precocity is, of course, a commonplace of hagiographic convention: St Eugenia, for example, 'omnibus liberalibus artibus et litteris erat perfecta' (was accomplished in all the liberal arts and letters), while many saints are described as displaying extreme devotion even as infants.[11] However, in Capgrave's version this youthful display of intellect is not merely a conventional flourish, but establishes a scholarly stature which remains central to his representation of Katharine throughout the text.

After the death of her father Katharine is again tested, this time by the great men of the realm as they try to persuade her to marry, and it is at this point that her commitment to scholarship is first clearly expressed. The Speaker of the Parliament petitions her in the name of the whole realm to marry, a request which is accompanied by the injunction 'Ye must now leue your stody and your bookes' (2, l. 125). He has, perhaps unwittingly, struck directly at the heart of the matter: marriage is incompatible with the pursuit of serious studies.[12] Katharine is well aware of this: 'Now must I leue my stody and myn desyre,/ My modir, my kyn, my peple if I wil plese' (1, ll. 184-5). Indeed it is not just the marital relationship which is jeopardized by scholarship: all familial ties, as well as the relationship between a prince and his people, are under threat. Katharine's commitment to learning requires that she reject the roles assigned to her by virtue of her gender and birth: the roles of wife, kinswoman and ruler, or consort of a ruler. This is precisely the effect identified by Labalme in her discussion of female learning from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century:

> Many learned women eschewed marriage, with its burdens of childbearing and household management. This was to defy normality, to interrupt, horizontally, that system of marital and dynastic connection so crucial to the power structure of past societies, and vertically, the continuity of the clan.[13]

Katharine's refusal to take a husband results in the breaking up of the parliament, the disappointed lords leaving her to the studies to which she is devoted:

> Thus wyth woo, meche care and grutchynge
> Thei parte a-sondre, iche man to his hom
> Thei goo or ryde or sayle as here lykynge;
> ffor wyth the queen wroth thei are iche oon.
> She is now left for hem to dwelle allon;
> She may stody, reede, reherce and write. (2, ll. 1485-90)

In spite of this early commitment to study, when Katharine is called to debate with the pagan philosophers after her conversion to Christianity, she dramatically rejects her classical learning:

> I haue lefte alle myn auctoris olde,
> I fond noo frute in hem but eloquens; [. . .]
> Be-helde ye, maistres, alle these mennes werkes
> haue I stodyed and lerned ful besyly;
> Thei were red me of ful sotil clerkes,
> There lyue noon better at this day, hardyly:
> And in these bookes noon other thyng fond I
> But vanyte or thyng that shal not leste.
> (4, ll. 1324-5, 1345-50)

This rejection notwithstanding, Katharine continues to employ the fruits of her study in the ensuing contest: her study of rhetoric and dialectic allows her to meet and defeat her adversaries in debate, while her knowledge of astronomy, for example, informs her arguments about the planets as mere created bodies. The comparison between Katharine and the *Golden Legend's* presentation of the learned female saint Eugenia, who also rejects classical learning in favour of Christian truth, is instructive:

> Philosophorum sillogismos scrupuloso studio transegimus, aristotelica argumenta et Platonis ideas et Socratis monita; et breuiter quicquid cantat poeta, quicquid orator et quicquid philosophus excogitat hac sententia excluduntur. Dominam me uerbis usurpata potestas, sororem uero sapientia fecit; simus ergo fratres et Christum sequamur. [14]
> [We worked our way with meticulous attention through the philosophers' syllogisms, Aristotle's arguments and Plato's ideas, the precepts of Socrates, and, to be brief, whatever the poets sang, whatever the orators or the philosophers thought; but all that is wiped out by this one sentence. A usurped authority has used words to make me your mistress, but wisdom makes me your sister. Let us then be brothers, and follow Christ!]

Although expressed in more general terms, Eugenia's rejection of pagan authorities is similar to Katharine's own. The difference, however, becomes clear as the legend unfolds; from this point of rejection onwards, Eugenia ceases to give any sign of her previous learning. Her early learnedness has no lasting part to play in her legend, and there is no sense in which scholarly concerns influence her later behaviour. By contrast, Katharine's learning permeates her entire life, before and after her conversion. Her rejection of classical authorities in favour of Christianity does not signal an end of her studiousness, but instead a development of it, as she moves from contemplation of the mysteries of philosophy to those of the Christian God. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, it is her scholarship which places her in the powerful position of preacher to, and converter of, numerous pagan opponents, most of whom are men.

In the context of fifteenth-century England, Katharine's scholarly credentials, and specifically her role as a female teacher or preacher of Christian doctrine, are problematic. The Lollard emphasis on the reading of Scripture in the vernacular raised the possibility that those outside the circle of Latinate clerics could study, and potentially teach, religious doctrine. This naturally included not merely lower-class men, but also women of all social classes. Thus any woman displaying knowledge beyond a bare minimum was likely to come under suspicion of heresy.[15] Contemporary poets were quick to draw such conclusions: the orthodox *Friar Daw's Reply* (*c.* 1419-20) to the Lollard tract *Jack Upland*

makes the point, with the added emphasis that such female learning is incompatible with matrimonial happiness:

> Who marriþ more matrimony, ȝe or þe freris?
> Wiþ wrenchis & wiles wynnen mennes wyues
> And maken hem scolers of þe newe scole.[16]

Hoccleve, too, inveighed against learned women in his anti-Lollard poem of 1415 addressed to Sir John Oldcastle:

> Somme wommen eek, thogh hir wit be thynne,
> Wole argumentes make in holy writ.
> Lewed calates, sittith down and spynne
> And kakele of sumwhat elles, for your wit
> Is al to feeble to despute of it.[17]

The fifteenth-century mystic Margery Kempe was a frequent quoter of Scripture and accordingly found herself accused of Lollardy on several occasions, while in the 1428 heresy trial of Margery Baxter at Norwich, we find the following testimony:

> Dixit eciam ista iurata quod dicta Margeria rogavit istam iuratam quod ipsa et prefata Johanna, famula sua, venirent secrete in cameram dicte Margerie noctanter et ibidem ipsa audiret maritum suum legere legem Christi eisdem, que lex fuit scripta in uno libro quem dictus maritus solebat legere eidem Margerie noctanter, et dixit quod maritus suus est optimus doctor Christianitatis.[18]
> [Also this witness said that the said Margery proposed to this witness that she herself and the aforesaid Johanna, her servant, came secretly to the chamber of the said Margery nightly, and in that same place heard her husband read the law of Christ to them, which law was written in a book which her said husband was accustomed to read to the said Margery nightly, and said that her husband is the best teacher of Christianity.]

While it is not claimed that Margery read this book herself, nevertheless her access to its contents, albeit mediated by her husband, enabled her to debate

matters of doctrine with her neighbour Johanna Clyfland, who subsequently testified against her. Thus Johanna tells of one occasion when Margery debated doctrine with her 'sedens et suens cum ista iurata in camera eiusdem iuxta camenum' (sitting and sewing with this witness in the chamber of the same, near the fire-place).[19]

Learned women in fifteenth-century England were not necessarily condemned to be viewed as heretics, however; an intriguing counter-example is presented by the case of the noblewoman Eleanor Hull, who produced a translation from Old French of a commentary on the penitential psalms some time before the middle of the century. A manuscript colophon explicitly credits her with authorship: 'Here endeth the vij psalmus the wheche Dame Alyanore Hulle transelated out of Frensche in-to Englesche'.[20] Hull's noble status may have legitimized her learning in a fashion impossible for women of more modest social origins; both her father and husband were intimately associated with the Lancastrian regime, and Hull herself had been an attendant of Joan of Navarre, the widow of Henry IV.[21] As the daughter of a king, Katharine's learning, like Hull's, may be authorized by her noble status, yet it remains the case that her scholarly credentials could be regarded as ambiguous. It is all the more curious that it is only in fifteenth-century texts that her education is so heavily emphasized, and, given that among these Capgrave's coverage of her education is by far the most comprehensive, this surely demands some explanation. He cannot have been ignorant of the issue; friars of all orders found themselves involved in the prosecution of heretics, being called as expert theological witnesses to examine alleged Lollards.[22] I have found no evidence to suggest that Capgrave himself ever appeared as a witness at a heresy trial, although his scholarly reputation demonstrates that he was qualified to do so. There is also no evidence that he was resident at Lynn when the heresy trials, including that of Margery Baxter, took place in Norwich, between September 1428 and March 1431, but he can hardly have been unaware of them, if only from some later date.[23] Thus it seems certain that Capgrave would have recognized the perceived links between female scholarship and heresy; why then would he go to so much trouble to expand upon the traditional version of Katharine's life, to include this controversial representation?

As a highly educated Augustinian friar, Capgrave clearly felt a particular affinity with a saint so closely associated with scholarship, as he makes clear in the Prologue to Book III:[24]

> Be-cause þou wer so lerned & swech a clerk,
> Clerkes must loue þe, reson for-sothe it is!
> Who wyll oute lerne, trost to me, I-wys,
> he dothe mech þe bettyr if he trost in þis may.
> þus I be-leue, & haue do many a day. (3, ll. 38-42)

Yet he can hardly have been unaware of the potential implications of his choice; that he was not is, I believe, revealed by a moment in the Prologue, when Capgrave discusses the relationship between Katharine and St Athanasius:

> There was a clerke with þis same kataryne,
> Whos name we clepe in latyn Athanas;
> he tavghte hir the revles, as he covde dyuyne,
> Of god of heuene, of ioye and of gras,
> And she hym also, for be hir he was
> I-turned on-to cryst and on-to oure feyth;
> he was hir ledere, as the story seyth. (Prologue, ll. 127-33)

This is a very curious stanza, which manages to obscure rather than explain the association between the two saints. The initial statement that Athanasius taught Katharine appears quite clear, although the phrase 'as he covde dyuyne' may suggest the teacher was not entirely confident about the information he was imparting. Nevertheless, he is presented as Katharine's instructor in faith. However, Capgrave immediately undercuts this assertion, explaining that the reverse situation is the case; Katharine is now the teacher, while Athanasius is the student being converted to Christ and Christianity. Thus both are presented as teacher, and both as student. It may be that we can resolve this apparent paradox by differentiating Athanasius, teaching about God in heaven, from Katharine, who concentrates upon Christ: each might then be teaching a specific area of faith to the other, Athanasius concentrating on the Old Testament and Katharine on the New. Yet if Athanasius also teaches Katharine about 'ioye' and 'gras', this surely moves beyond the Old Testament law of the just God in heaven, towards the New Testament grace of Christ. Both, then, teach the same thing to each other, and so the position remains confused. This confusion, I suggest, betrays Capgrave's anxiety in explaining Katharine's teaching role. It is significant that the syntax in this stanza does not juxtapose Katharine with the act of teaching at all: instead, the reader is required to supply the verb to make sense of 'And she hym also',

carrying it forward from an earlier clause, where Athanasius *is* directly connected with teaching. Capgrave concludes by taking pains to note that Athanasius was Katharine's 'ledere', although he does not elaborate on what this might mean,[25] and then completes the fudging of the issue with a lame 'as the story seyth'. In this single stanza, using a combination of ambiguous diction and strained syntax, Capgrave succeeds in partially obscuring his contentious subject-matter; yet the very process of obfuscation draws attention to the controversy he seeks to suppress, and reveals his anxieties about it. However, such anxieties do not prevent him from attempting to negotiate a path through the difficulties, albeit inconclusively; this willingness to engage with problematic material belies Watson's claim for the marginality of saints' lives to his discussion of fifteenth-century vernacular theology.

The Power of Debate

Whatever ambiguities arise from Katharine's well-emphasized learnedness, the extensive use of dialogue in Capgrave's text does offer the saint clear opportunities to display her rhetorical and intellectual powers. Her dispute with the philosophers in Book 4 is paralleled in the text's structure by Book 2, containing the discussions in the marriage parliament: taken together they account for over two-fifths of the poem. The allocation of such a significant proportion of the text to dialogue is striking, suggesting as it does a commitment at the structural level to the processes of argument, including listening to all sides to a dispute and seeking out the means by which resolution may be brought about. It may also be a self-conscious decision on the part of the author to imply a lack of direct narratorial involvement; by presenting arguments in this form, Capgrave is speaking in the persons of others, and hence, theoretically at least, relieving himself of personal responsibility for the views expressed.[26]

The use of debate as a device for exploring ideas was standard practice in medieval academic circles, and could be deployed with great subtlety, enabling difficult or contentious questions to be explored without any sense of final commitment to a particular polemical stance.[27] Furthermore, by offering controversial views through the mediation of a created *persona*, the author is protected from being too closely identified with those views, allowing him to remain (or appear to remain) uncommitted. This may help to explain Capgrave's strategy; by using the dialogue form he enjoys a high degree of freedom to

explore contentious and potentially dangerous questions. However, the issues debated by Katharine and the pagans are interestingly restricted; during her examinations by the emperor and the philosophers, Katharine is questioned on several points of faith, among them the Trinity, the virgin birth, Christ's dual nature and the Resurrection. While these doctrines are vigorously (if ultimately unsuccessfully) challenged by her pagan antagonists, contemporary readers would have found nothing controversial in the discussions. However, two subjects are raised which have the potential to be much more contentious: baptism and images.

The former can be dealt with quite briefly. When the pagan philosophers convert to Christianity they are condemned to be burned as heretics. They accept this willingly, but their leader, Aryot, begs for baptism before the sentence is carried out:

> In this world, as for me, I wil no more,
> But that we shulde be baptised or we deye:
> Than were we redy to walke th[at] goodly weye. (5, ll. 208-10)

Aryot continues his plea for more than forty lines in a lengthy assertion of the need for and power of baptism. Although no one is available to perform the ceremony before the philosophers are executed, Katharine teaches them the doctrine of baptism by blood, and they die duly comforted. Katharine herself has already undergone this sacrament; during her visit to the Heavenly City in Book 3, Christ orders that she be baptized by her priest, Adrian, and explicitly rehearses the orthodox position on baptism:

> Myn aungellis wyll I noght occupye wyth þis dede,
> It longyth to mankynd, wyth-outen drede:
> And ȝet þowȝ we myght of our hye power
> Graunte on-to aungellis þis specialtee
> þat þei schuld baptiȝe men in erde here,
> ȝet wyll we noght þat þei occupyed schuld bee
> Wyth swych-maner offyce as to humanyte
> longyth, & schal longe, as for most ryght. (3, ll. 1056-63)

There is no room here for Lollard objections to baptism, and thus a potentially contentious issue is rendered harmless. On the subject of images, however, Capgrave does employ genuine debate in order to present a much more complex series of views, which I shall examine in the following section.

The Images Controversy

During her first examination by Maxentius, Katharine roundly condemns the pagan idols in the temple:

> These maumentis I mene, þei can not sitte ne ryse;
> Thei ete not, [þei] drynke not in no maner of wise;
> Mouth wyth-oute speche, foot that may not goo,
> Handes eke haue thei and may noo werk doo. (4, ll. 592-5)

Maxentius is unable to offer any response to this criticism, but when the fifty philosophers are assembled the question is raised again. Katharine differentiates between her God and the gods of the pagans, since her God is the creator of all things, whereas the pagan images, which are themselves created, can do nothing:

> Spryng of all þinge þat euere be-gynnyng hadde
> Soo is he called; in whom alle þing is eke,
> Of whom all good þing, and no thyng badde,
> Procedeth [. . .]
> Make no comparyson be-twyx ȝour god and myn!
> ffor my god hath made al þing of nought,
> Eke your goddis arn not soo goode as swyn -
> Thei can noȝt grunten whan hem eyleth ought.
> (4, ll. 1471-4, 1478-81)

One of the philosophers identifies what he believes is Katharine's true objection to the pagan idols—that 'her ymages whiche we worship heere / May noȝt feele ne haue noon poweere' (4, ll. 1497-8). A sophisticated dialectician, he acknowledges the justice of such an objection but rejects it on the basis that it is founded upon an error of understanding:

> This wote I weel, thei ben but figures,
> Representynge other-maner thyng,
> Liche to these fayre riche sepultures
> Whiche be-tokene in her representing

> That there is beryed duke or ellis kyng –
> Soo arn these [ymages] tooknes of goddis oure.
> (4, ll. 1499-1504)

Images, he explains, are merely reminders of other things (in this case the pagan gods), and are not considered to be gods in themselves. This justification of images as reminders or memorials is, of course, a standard argument of Christian orthodoxy in favour of images; Archbishop Arundel, for example, is reported by the Lollard William Thorpe as using precisely this explanation:

> For, lo, erþeli kyngis and oþer lordis, which vsen to senden her lettris enselid wiþ her armes or wiþ her priuy sygnetis to men þat ben wiþ hem, ben worschipid of þese men; [for whanne þese men] resceyuen her lordis lettris [...] in worschip of her lordis þei don of her cappis or her hoodis to her lettris. Whi not þanne, siþ in ymagis maad wiþ mannes hond we moun rede and knowe manye dyuerse doingis of God and hise seintis, schulen we not worschipen her ymagis?[28]

The use of a Christian orthodox argument by a pagan philosopher is surprising and unsettling, and serves to give the philosopher something of an advantage over his saintly antagonist. Katharine, he suggests, has misunderstood the nature of pagan worship, failing to recognize the representative nature of the images; such a failure might be regarded as indicative of a lack of both orthodoxy and theological sophistication. Katharine's response to this position is to denounce the pagan deities thus represented, pointing out their moral failings: 'Alle to vices set was her laboure' (4, l. 1547). Another philosopher takes up the challenge, reproaching Katharine for emphasizing the bad and ignoring the good. He suggests that she has failed to understand because she is not versed in the secret language with which the pagans obscure their loftiest concepts: [29]

> We haue in this mater ful mysty intelligens,
> Whiche may noȝt be comon to euery man;
> But to you, lady, soo now as I can,
> Wil I þat comon, right for this entent,
> Be-cause youre-selue of wit sotil bee. (4, ll. 1566-70)

Acknowledging that Katharine's intellect qualifies her to be party to information usually reserved for a select few, he imparts the 'ful mysty intelligens' that the pagan gods are allegorical, representing eternal natures such as time, fire and air, which are considered divinities among the pagans: [30]

> Thus are oure goddis in maner of Allegorye,
> Resemble to natures whiche that be eterne.
> Than is oure feyth grounded on noo lye,
> But on swhiche thyng whiche is sempiterne. (4, ll. 1583-6)

This argument has two advantages for the pagans: it demonstrates the eternal nature of their deities, thus placing them on an equal footing with the Christian God, while also serving to add another hermeneutic layer between the image and what it represents. No longer is it simply the image of what is worshipped; it has become the image of an allegory of what is worshipped. Thus image and deity are forced further apart, thereby reducing the possibility that the image will be worshipped for its own sake.[31] Katharine remains unmoved by the force of this argument, which she regards as hiding behind 'figures and colouris' to conceal a fatal flaw in pagan reasoning:

> Arn not these planetes knowen wonder wyde?
> May we not seen hem whan thei shyne soo clere?
> The sonne, the mone, whiche shyne on vs here,
> This wote we weel that these been noo men.
> Why arn thei grauen thus of stoon and of tree?
> This errour is ful esy for to keen
> That men arn thei noȝt, ne neuere-[more] shal bee.
> (4, ll. 1608-14)

Katharine argues that the images depict something they are not; the representation of the planets as though they were men, when everyone knows this is not so, is an error likely to mislead worshippers, and thus such carving 'of stoon and of tree' cannot be justified. This objection appears to echo the wider Lollard complaint that richly decorated images mislead Christians:

> And siþ þes ymagis ben bokis of lewid men to sture þem on þe mynde of Cristis passion, and techen by her peyntur, veyn

> glorie þat is hangid on hem [is] an opyn errour aȝenus Cristis gospel. Þei ben worþi to be brent or exilid [. . .] And so of ymagis of pore apostlis of Crist, and oþer seyntis þat lyueden in pouert and gret penaunse, and dispiseden in worde and in dede þe foul pride and vanyte of þis karful lif, for þei ben peyntid as þoghe þei hadde lyued in welþe of þis world and lustus of þeire fleyshe as large as euere dide erþely man.[32]

If we move beyond the debate with the philosophers in Book 4, we find Katharine once more condemning images, this time in response to the emperor himself. Maxentius has promised to create an image of Katharine, fashioned 'of stoon' and 'of clene metal' (5, ll. 406-7). The statue will be erected in a public place and all who see it will be required to honour it, on pain of punishment. But anyone who flies to the statue for protection, 'what-maner offens that he hath doo', shall be forgiven 'for reuerens of yow, mayde' (5, ll. 413-14). Katharine's reply continues in the same vein as previously:

> [The statue] shal be insensible,
> Stonde liche a ston, and byrdes flye rounde aboute,
> As I suppose it shal be right possible
> That þei shal come sometyme a ful grete route,
> her on-clene dunge shul thei there putte oute
> And lete it falle right on the ymagis face. (5, ll. 470-5)

The implication is that such a fate is, in fact, fitting for a statue which is 'insensible', unable to see, hear or walk, even after the greatest efforts of the workmen who create it. Moreover, the transient nature of such an image reveals it as mere 'fonned veynglorye' (5, ll. 482), of no profit to Katharine's soul, or indeed to anyone else's.

The remarkable nature of this debate cannot be over-emphasized. The pagan philosophers have made use of orthodox Christian defensive strategies to uphold their position, while Katharine the Christian saint has made use of language and arguments which appear to support an iconomachal, and finally iconoclastic, position—and which, moreover, could be regarded in fifteenth-century England as bearing a specifically Lollard stamp. This represents an astonishing divergence from the conventional roles we might expect to see played out in hagiography; a pagan might be more usually represented as genuinely

believing that the images of his gods are indeed the gods themselves, and contain within them something of the gods' powers.[33] Similarly, if hagiography is indeed an entirely conventional genre we would expect the saintly heroine to be depicted rehearsing the orthodox position of Christianity, rather than proclaiming heretical doctrine in a spirited and convincing performance.

The position is not quite as simple as this, however, for the images that Katharine condemns are not Christian icons but pagan idols, and as such there can be no real objection to her call for their destruction, since they are false gods. Any statue of herself created by Maxentius will be a secular memorial which he proposes to treat as a religious icon, and should therefore be shunned. Thus the question of images is problematized further: the reader must maintain a simultaneous awareness of the conflicting claims of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, of paganism and Christianity, and of the sacred and secular. By presenting the images debate in this many-faceted fashion, Capgrave achieves the effect of destabilizing the viewpoint of his readers; we believe that we should agree with the heroine, yet her position cannot be reconciled entirely with orthodoxy. For Capgrave's orthodox contemporaries this would have been a startling development, forcing them to admit at least the possibility of agreeing not with the saint but with declared pagans.[34]

The centrality of the images debate may be particularly appropriate to the life of St Katharine since, as a highly popular late-medieval saint, images of her would have been widely circulated. Indeed, she appears to have become something of a focus for argument, a test-case for orthodox or heterodox views on this issue, as two chronicle entries suggest. Henry Knighton recounts the tale of two heretics who chop up a statue of the saint to make firewood, with the cynical comment that 'per securim et ignem nouum pacientur martirium' [by axe and fire she will undergo a new martyrdom].[35] Rather less well-known is a short entry from Walsingham's *Chronicon Angliae*:

> [E]t inter omnes major fatuus, Johannes Mountagu, qui in tantam lapsus est vesaniam, ut cunctas imagines, quas apud manerium de Shenlee antecessores sui erexerant in capella sua, deponi faceret et in locis abditis collocari. Unum solummodo [privilegium adepta est] imago Sanctae Katerinae, quam in pistrinum suum deferri permisit, quia plures afficiebantur eidem.[36]

> [And more foolish than the others was John Montagu, who slipped into such madness that all the images, which his ancestors had erected in his chapel at the manor of Shenley, he caused to be got rid of and stored in a secret place. One image alone, of Saint Katherine, received individual treatment, being permitted to be brought into his flour-mill, because many were well-disposed towards the same.]

Katharine's, it appears, is a special case; the 'privilegium' her image enjoys may be beneficial, in that a Lollard sympathizer such as Montagu stops short of destroying it, or it may be detrimental, as in the case of Knighton's heretics, whose burning of the statue acts as a bench-mark demonstrating the depth of their sin. Thus real images of Katharine are subject to a similar range of fates to those envisaged by Maxentius and the saint herself for her proposed statue.

The Desire for Religious Unity

Capgrave's unexpected distribution of arguments in the image debate, giving them to the 'wrong' people and hence unsettling the reader, is unusual and suggestive; nevertheless, it should not lead us to overlook the significance of the fact that the debate takes place at all. Given that images had been the subject of religious controversy for centuries, and taking account of their particular relevance to the problem of Lollardy, it is surely remarkable that Capgrave is prepared to devote considerable space within his text to this matter. Contrary to Watson's assessment of fifteenth-century vernacular theology, far from seeking to eliminate debate and dissent Capgrave appears to have embraced it. The reason for this strategy is revealed most clearly by turning briefly to his other writings, most notably the *Life of St Norbert*.

At the beginning of the *Norbert*, Capgrave explicitly calls for brotherhood and understanding between different religious orders, praying to God for unity: 'O lord Ihesu, of alle religious men / Abbot and maystir, bryng us to vnyte'.[37] Later in the same work he debates the problem of the varied interpretations of the Rule of St Augustine:

> Felawis, drede not þis dyuersite.
> Alle Goddis weyis are grounded, witȝouten ly,

> Vpon his treuth and upon his mercy.
> Alþouȝ þese reules be in dyuers manere,
> ȝet are þei not contrarie in no wyse;
> Thouȝ þese customes whech are vsed here,
> Be othir men be set in othir assyse
> In othir place as hem lest deuyse,
> ȝet are þei grounded alle on o charite,
> Whech is loue of god & neybour here by the. (ll. 1307-16)

In the final line quoted above Capgrave is referring directly to the opening sentence of the traditional medieval *Regula Augustini*: 'Ante omnia, fratres carissimi, diligatur deus, deinde proximus' [Before everything, dearest brothers, let God be loved, then your neighbour].[38] The orders of Austin friars (Capgrave's own order) and canons, among them the Premonstratensians founded by Norbert, were based upon this Rule, although with some variations in its practical application. That there was a need to emphasize the fundamental unity of the orders is clear. As early as 1327 rivalry had erupted between the Austin canons and Austin friars throughout Europe, when Pope John XXII granted custody of the body of St Augustine to the friars, thereby supplanting the canons, its previous custodians.[39] Relations deteriorated further in England when Geoffrey Hardeby, an Austin friar and Master Regent at Oxford, produced his treatise *De Vita Angelica* in 1357. In this treatise Hardeby examined the problems of whether St Augustine had personally founded the orders of friars and canons which bore his name, and whether Augustine himself had been a friar or a canon.[40] In 1380 William Flete, an Austin friar living as a hermit in Italy, wrote to the English Prior Provincial of his order:

> The friars are to preach peace and concord to the whole kingdom. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. [. . .] Let them preach charity to all—to bishops, priests, friars, monks, canons, and all men: that the whole English Church may be one spirit in God. 'Physician, cure thyself.' Many religious are deceived. They keep the external observances of religious life—silence, attendance at the chapter-house and in the refectory, and so forth—but they have not charity. They are envious, they criticize, they murmur, they blacken one another's character, they form parties in the community, setting one order

> against another, or brother against brother in a single order, according to their state and degree.[41]

It is at least possible that Capgrave saw a copy of this letter, since it was copied by an Austin friar named Adam Stocton who spent time at the friary at Lynn, as well as at Cambridge and Bedford.[42] Although Capgrave was, of course, writing somewhat later, the rivalry had not diminished by the fifteenth century. Around the year 1442 Capgrave wrote a work, now unfortunately lost, which was dedicated to 'þe abbot of Seynt Iames at Norhampton [. . .] whech boke I named Concordia, be-cause it is mad to reforme charite be-twix Seynt Augustines heremites and his chanones.'[43] Equally important was the Latin sermon which Capgrave gave at Cambridge in 1422, concerning the various orders under the Rule of St Augustine; in 1451 he translated the sermon into English, revised it and dedicated it to Nicholas Reysby of the Gilbertine canons. In this revised version he makes explicit reference to the issue at the heart of the rivalry between friars and canons:

> [Concerning the Canons Regular] If þese men be-gunne with Augustin in his cherch in þe same degre as þei stand now, sum men haue doute: but I wyl not stryue. I be-leue wel þat þere had þei her beginnyng [. . .]. I wel be-leue þat her first fundacion cam fro Augustin. (pp. 146, ll. 29-31, and 147, l. 2)

Capgrave is prepared to concede that the claim of the canons to have been established by Augustine is justified, unlike 'sum men'—presumably from his own order of friars—who continue to doubt. This is an important concession from a man who, within two years of producing this revised version of his treatise, would become Prior Provincial and hence in a position to exert considerable influence over his order. It is significant that the Premonstratensians and the Gilbertines, both recipients of Capgrave's hagiographical endeavours, were orders of canons rather than friars; perhaps his lives of Norbert and Gilbert of Sempringham were produced as a specific response to Flete's earlier injunction to 'preach peace and concord'.

Capgrave appears to make a further reference to this need for unity between the orders in the *Katharine* itself. In Book 3 he introduces the hermit, Adrian, who will be Katharine's guide in heaven, and concludes his description with a very curious passage:

> Alle blyssydly in abstinens & prayer
> þis lyffe led he, þis ermyte or þis frere -
> ffor frere was name þan to all crysten men
> Comon, I rede, & ermytys wer þei called
> þat dwelt fro town, mylys sex or ten,
> Wer þei growen, wer þei bar or balled;
> Be-cause þei wer eke all soole I-walled,
> Sume men called hem munkys, wyth-owte drede -
> ffor þeis wordes, munke & soole, ar on, as we rede. (3, ll. 83-91)

Friars, hermits and monks are simply different words for what are essentially the same things, Capgrave seems to suggest. Yet alongside this concern for unity, and inextricably mingled with it, runs a recognition of diversity and the need to remain intellectually open to alternatives. The injunction in *Norbert* to 'drede not þis dyuersite' (l. 1307) is followed later by a striking incident in which the devil teaches unlearned men to read (ll. 1898-1911). Unsure of how to respond, Norbert consults an 'eldeman' who counsels patience:

> 'Suffir now, maystir, þis þing for a while.
> It schal be wist ful weel and openly
> Wheithir it comth fro þe fendis gile
> Or elles it comth be reuelacioun fro hy.' (ll. 1926-9)

The *Norbert* was completed in 1440 and its reference to the teaching of unlearned men may well reflect continued concerns over Lollard literacy; the fact that it is the devil doing the teaching surely strengthens this probability. Yet there is no outright condemnation either of the men or the devil, but rather an acceptance that only time can prove where right lies. Elsewhere Norbert is portrayed as a peacemaker, striving to resolve a variety of disputes between princes, citizens and even rival workmen in a series of episodes which seem to suggest that even the bitterest of contention can, if dealt with properly, result in an enhanced unity.[44] Similarly, in his *Life of St Gilbert of Sempringham* Capgrave again takes up this theme:

> Thus he [Gilbert] sette hem lawes medeled with swech attemperauns þat ammongis dyuers kyndes, dyuers habites, dyuers degrees, he exorted hem in our Lord þei all schuld haue but o soule and on hert fixid in God. (p. 67, ll. 25-8)

Viewed in this context, the *Katharine*'s exploration of controversial issues can be seen as consistent with a larger project of seeking unity through a recognition of diversity. Capgrave himself was by no means a Lollard sympathizer, famously describing Wyclif's followers as 'erroneous doggis', yet this did not prevent him acknowledging the value of engaging in a dialogue with their ideas.[45]

The subtle and questioning approach which Capgrave brings to the *Katharine* does not accord with Watson's view of fifteenth-century vernacular theology; far from cowering away from contentious topics of religious debate, Capgrave was prepared to continue to engage with them, albeit not always entirely openly. His example demonstrates that he was committed to maintaining some form of dialogue with heretical positions, and even to gesture towards oblique approval of some of those positions. With its emphasis on female learning, teaching and preaching, the *Katharine* is a text which serves to draw attention to a number of issues with contentious implications for fifteenth-century religious orthodoxy; it also provides a dazzlingly complex matrix of views on images, combining the orthodox and heterodox with the sacred and secular, in a discussion in which a Christian saint seems to champion iconoclasm. The images debate in particular introduces an uncomfortable degree of instability regarding what actually constitutes orthodoxy, and would surely have given its original audience pause for thought.

There is no evidence to suggest that the ecclesiastical authorities were concerned about the *Katharine*'s possible heterodoxy, or about its use of English for the discussion of what is sometimes highly controversial material. Capgrave's fraternal status may have provided him with some level of protection from criticism. As a friar he enjoyed exemption from many of the restrictions imposed upon parish clergy, and the ability of the episcopal and archiepiscopal hierarchies to intervene in fraternal matters was severely restricted.[46] More importantly, the death of Archbishop Chichele in 1443 changed the nature of the response to heresy within the province of Canterbury. Chichele had been an indefatigable prosecutor of heretics, as his impressive legislative record demonstrates.[47] By contrast, his successor, John Stafford, showed little desire to pursue a similar course; indeed, Thomson demonstrates that no major heresy prosecutions took place in the Canterbury province during Stafford's incumbency.[48] The loss of the architect of much of England's anti-Lollard legislation may well have reduced the pressure on the episcopate to seek out and destroy Lollardy, and in such a climate the expression of heterodox views was unlikely to represent a significant risk.

Perhaps the most important factor in explaining the nature of Capgrave's *Katharine*, however, is its likely audience. The population of East Anglia at this time was, as I have pointed out, sophisticated and well-educated, with a reputation for an unusual degree of religious toleration, and it would have provided Capgrave with an audience very capable of engaging with the theological complexities of his work to arrive at its own reasoned conclusions. Located within such a milieu, the challenges posed by reading the *Life of St Katharine* become more explicable. Confident of a sympathetic and receptive audience able to engage with his ideas, Capgrave was free to explore the sometimes contradictory implications of female learning, the images debate and his twin commitments to unity and diversity. This freedom to explore did not result in firm conclusions, and indeed Capgrave sometimes appears distinctly uncomfortable with the direction of his own work, as is suggested by his evasive approach to Katharine's relationship with St Athanasius. But significantly this does not lead to an attempt to impose false resolutions, or to adduce explanations to render problematic issues doctrinally more acceptable. The contradictions and difficulties are revealed and explored, but remain unresolved.

NOTES

[1] Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 823-64 (p. 823). The definition of 'vernacular theology' is discussed in detail on p. 823, n. 4.

[2] Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', p. 833.

[3] Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', p. 824, n. 4.

[4] M. C. Seymour, *John Capgrave* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1996), p. 21.

[5] Peter J. Lucas, *From Author to Audience: John Capgrave and Medieval Publication* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1997), pp. 13-14. The manuscripts are listed in Seymour, *John Capgrave*, p. 53. The work can be dated quite closely as a result of Bokenham's reference to it in his own version of the life of Katharine: Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ed. by Mary S. Serjeantson, EETS o.s. 206 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 173, ll. 6354-60. Much of Capgrave's literary output has been lost, but of that which remains most of the manuscripts are either in Capgrave's autograph, or have been amended by his hand, or are otherwise closely associated with the house of friars at Lynn, suggesting that he exercised considerable control over the production and dissemination of his works. Capgrave's care in this regard has made his manuscripts invaluable to dialectologists. See *John Capgrave's Abbreuiacion of Cronicles*, ed. by Peter J. Lucas, EETS o.s. 285 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), where the editor makes the following observation: 'From the historical linguist's point of view autograph or holograph manuscripts that can be precisely dated and localized, and some facts about whose author are known, represent an ideal [. . .]. Such ideal texts are provided by the autograph and holograph manuscripts of vernacular works by Capgrave [. . .]. The Capgrave material probably constitutes the single most important corpus of linguistic evidence for the W. Norfolk area in the fifteenth century' (p. xliv). See also the references to Norfolk manuscripts in Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels and Michael Benskin, *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, 4 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986); entries relating to Capgrave's manuscripts appear in I 67, 102, 105, 108, 146, 218 and 223, and III 320-21, 328 and 333-4.

[6] *English Gilds*, ed. by Toulmin Smith, intro. by Lucy Toulmin Smith, EETS o.s. 40 (London: Trübner, 1870), pp. 67-8 (p. 67).

[7] For discussions of the population of fifteenth-century East Anglia, see Richard Beadle, 'Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays Celebrating the Publication of 'A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English'*, ed. by Felicity Riddy, (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), pp. 89-108; Gail

McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 19-46; Emma Lipton, 'Performing Reform: Lay Piety and the Marriage of Mary and Joseph in the N-Town Cycle', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 23 (2001), 407-35 (pp. 420, 434); and Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370-1532* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984). The gild returns of 1389 reveal that Lynn had a greater number of gilds (51) than any other recorded town: H. F. Westlake, *The Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* (London: SPCK, 1919), p. 38.

[8] Katherine J. Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), p. 14. Other fifteenth-century versions of the legend include the prose life in Harvard University, MS Richardson 44, edited by Henry Hucks Gibbs as *The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Katherine of Alexandria, Virgin and Martyr* (London: Nichols, 1884); a shorter and later version of the prose life from Southwell Minster MS 7, printed as *St Katherine of Alexandria: The Late Middle English Prose Legend in Southwell Minster MS 7*, ed. by Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993); and Caxton's version, *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, ed. by F. S. Ellis, 7 vols (London: Dent, 1900), VII 1-30. The version in MS Richardson 44 has also been published in a modern English translation: *Chaste Passions: Medieval English Virgin Martyr Legends*, ed. and trans. by Karen A. Winstead (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 115-63 and Appendix B. In addition Katharine's story appears in numerous legendaries and sermon collections. The best study of Capgrave's sources is still Auvo Kurvinen, 'The Source of Capgrave's *Life of St Katharine of Alexandria*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 61 (1960), 268-324.

[9] Great powers of scholarship are a traditional attribute of the saint and may have been derived from the assimilation of details from the life of the pagan philosopher Hypatia into the Katharine legend. Indeed, it is possible that the Katharine legend owes its very existence to Hypatia, a renowned female scholar living in Alexandria, who was put to death by the Christian authorities c. 415. See Maria Dzielska, *Hypatia of Alexandria*, trans. by F. Lyra (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), for a discussion of Hypatia's history and her subsequent connection with the Katharine legend. For an analysis of the historical evidence for the existence of St Katharine, see Jennifer Relvyn Bray, 'The Legend of St Katherine in Later Middle English Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Birkbeck College London, 1984), pp. 6-17.

[10] John Capgrave, *The Life of St Katharine of Alexandria*, ed. by Carl Horstmann, EETS o.s. 100 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1893), I, ll. 400-27. All subsequent references will be by book and line number in the text. A modern English edition is also available: *The Life of Saint Katherine*, ed. by Karen A. Winstead (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

[11] For St Eugenia see Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, ed. by Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Florence: Galluzo, 1998), II 925-6. The translation is from *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), II 165, slightly emended. All future Latin quotations will be from *Legenda Aurea*, with translations (amended where necessary) from *Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan. For infant saints see *Golden Legend*, I 21 and 102; II 303. For English saints see S. Baring-Gould, *Lives of the English Saints* (Lampeter: Llanerch, 1990), particularly St Ethelburga, p. 75; St Aldhelm, p. 13, was academically precocious.

[12] Such a view had been commonplace for centuries, though usually in the context of male scholarship being disrupted by wives. Perhaps the most famous (and vitriolic) expression of this idea came from St Jerome: 'Primum enim impediri studia Philosophiae; nec posse quemquam libris et uxori pariter inservire. [. . .] Si doctissimus praeceptor in qualibet urbium fuerit, nec uxorem relinquere, nec cum sarcina ire possumus' [Indeed, first the study of Philosophy is hindered; no one can serve books and a wife at the same time.[. . .] If the most learned teacher is in any of the towns, we can neither leave our wife behind, nor go with the burden]: *Adversus Jovinianum*, in *PL* 23, cols. 276-7. Fascinatingly, Heloise employed the same argument, effectively against herself, when resisting Abelard's proposal of marriage: 'Quae enim conventio scholarium ad pedissequas, scriptoriorum ad cunabula, librorum sive tabularum ad colos, stylorum sive calamorum ad fusos? Quis denique sacris vel philosophicis meditationibus intentus pueriles vagitus, nutricum, quae hos mitigant, naenias, tumultuosam familiae tam in viris quam in feminis turbam sustinere poterit? Quis etiam inhonestas illas parvulorum sordes assiduas tolerare valebit?' [What agreement is there of scholars with waiting-women, of writing desks with cradles, of books or writing-tablets with distaffs, of styluses and pens with spindles? Who, indeed, in his contemplations of sacred or philosophical purposes, will have been able to bear infants crying, the lullabies of the nurses soothing them, and the confused hubbub of men and women of the household? Who, indeed, will be able to tolerate the unremitting and unseemly squalor of the little ones?]: Abelard, 'Epistola I, seu Historia Calamitatum', in *PL* 178 col. 131. It should be noted, as Blamires makes clear, that these words are in fact Abelard's; he is reporting the view of Heloise in a letter to a third party: *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires with Karen Pratt and C. W. Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 87-8.

[13] *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. by Patricia H. Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 5.

[14] *Legenda Aurea*, II 925-6; *Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan, II 165.

[15] For a detailed consideration of female learning and its association with Lollardy, see Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), chapter 2. See also Claire Cross, '"Great Reasoners in

Scripture": The Activities of Women Lollards', in *Medieval Women*, ed. by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), pp. 359-80; Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 137, 165 and 188-9; and Shannon McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 47-72.

[16] *Jack Upland, Friar Daw's Reply and Upland's Rejoinder*, ed. by P. L. Heyworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), *Friar Daw*, ll. 99-101.

[17] Thomas Hoccleve, 'The Remonstrance Against Oldcastle', in *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. by M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), ll. 145-9. Not all contemporary poets took such a jaundiced view, however; see Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (London: Hambledon Press, 1989), pp. 221-42, for Chaucerian references to maternal advice and education.

[18] For the accusations against Margery see *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. by Barry Windeatt (Harlow: Longman, 2000), for example pp. 95-6, 229 and 252. Margery Baxter's trial is recorded in *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, ed. by Norman P. Tanner (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 47-8.

[19] Johanna Clyfland's testimony appears in *Heresy Trials*, ed. by Tanner, pp. 43-9 (p. 44).

[20] Hull's translation is extant in a single manuscript, Cambridge University Library, MS Kk.1.6. It has been edited by Alexandra Barratt in *The Seven Psalms: A Commentary on the Penitential Psalms translated from French into English by Dame Eleanor Hull*, EETS o.s. 307 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); the colophon quoted appears on p. 202. For the dating of the manuscript, see Barratt's introduction, p. xxii.

[21] For Hull's biography see *Seven Psalms*, pp. xxiii-xxxiii; see also Alexandra Barratt, 'Dame Eleanor Hull: A Fifteenth-Century Translator', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Roger Ellis, Jocelyn Price, Stephen Medcalf and Peter Meredith (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989), pp. 87-101. For studies of female literacy and book ownership in late medieval England, see the chapters by Felicity Riddy, Carol Meale and Julia Boffey in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[22] For fraternal involvement with heresy trials, see for example John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, intro. by John Stoughton, ed. by Josiah Pratt, 4th edn, 8 vols (London: Religious Tract Society, 1877), III 107-8 (trial of William Swinderby, 1389), 235-6 (trial of John Badby, 1409) and 583 (trial of William Taylor, 1422). While Foxe may not be an objective and dispassionate witness, Hudson suggests that he is 'trustworthy to a fairly high degree': *Premature Reformation*, p. 40.

[23] The trials must have attracted a good deal of notice; William White, Hugh Pye and John Waddon were burnt for heresy in Norwich in 1428: *Heresy Trials*, ed. by Tanner, p. 8.

Nicholas Drye from Lynn was tried in August 1430 and sentenced to do penance; a fellow-citizen of Lynn acted as surety to guarantee that he performed his penance and remained free from heresy: pp. 25 and 173-4.

[24] Bray also makes this point: 'The Legend of St Katherine in Later Middle English Literature', pp. 174-75. Eleanor Hull, too, recognized an affinity with this most learned of saints; in her will of 1460, she leaves 'vij*d.* in worship of Seynt Kateryn'. See *Seven Psalms*, Appendix, p. 203. Such an interpretation may be further supported by Capgrave's decision to write a life of St Gilbert of Sempringham; from the earliest days of the foundation of the Gilbertine order in the twelfth century, it had made education available to girls as well as boys. Significantly the libraries in the Gilbertine double houses were administered by a nun—a *precentrix*—rather than a canon. See Brian Golding, *Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order c. 1130 - c. 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 170-87.

[25] The *MED* cites five broad definitions of 'ledere', two of which may be relevant. The first, 1(a), is 'ruler, lord, king', and is probably not what is required here, although the emphasis on social and political authority may be worth noting. More likely is definition 2(a), 'one who leads the way', or, if understood figuratively, 2(b), 'guardian on a journey, chaperon'.

[26] See Alastair Minnis, *Magister Amoris: The 'Roman de la Rose' and Vernacular Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 219-34. Capgrave may have sought to provide himself with a further degree of protection by stressing that his work is a translation: Prologue, ll. 232-3.

[27] The dialogue form has a long and distinguished history, its most famous early incarnation being in the Socratic *elenchus* reported in Plato's dialogues, and medieval university education relied heavily on dialectic and techniques of disputation. See Martin Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der Scholastischen Methode*, 2 vols (Freiburg: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1909 and 1911); for academic use of the dialogue form, see especially p. 98 (Greek writers), pp. 193-4 (Alcuin), pp. 222-4 (Berengar of Tours and his Eucharistic heresy), p. 264 and pp. 317-22 (Anselm). Also useful is M.-D. Chenu, *La Théologie Comme Science au XIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957), chapters 1 and 5. See also Janet Coleman, 'The Science of Politics and Late Medieval Academic Debate', in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Rita Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 181-214 (esp. p. 193).

[28] *Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. by Anne Hudson, EETS o.s. 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 57, ll. 1086-94. The concept of the image as a reminder owes a good deal to Augustine's discussion of signs in *De Doctrina Christiana*, which starts from the premise that 'signum est enim res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem uenire' [a sign is a thing beyond its appearance, which thrusts itself onto the senses, making something different from itself come to mind]: *De Doctrina Christiana*, in *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 176 vols (Paris: Brepols, 1954-65), vol. 32, book II, i (1).

See also Margaret Aston, 'Wyclif and the Vernacular', in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. by Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 281-330 (p. 288, n. 19), for the theological idea of the *signa recordativa*.

[29] In an illuminating discussion of Evrart de Conty's *Eschez amoureux*, Alastair Minnis cites Evrart's explanation of ways in which fiction may be employed: Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, pp. 282-92. One of these is in order to speak more secretly: 'Here the commentator defends deliberate obscurity on the grounds that on occasion meaning should be withheld from the unworthy' (p. 288).

[30] Again this argument appears to be foreshadowed by Evrart de Conty: 'there is no good thing imaginable to a reasonable man that the ancient poets, who were wise and great philosophers, have not meant to express by various gods and goddesses—neither maintaining nor believing that they were real deities (!)'. Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 285.

[31] The argument given by Capgrave to the pagans here is identical to one dismissed by Augustine, who equates it with spiritually-unaware Gentiles. 'Et si quando aliqui eorum illa tamquam signa interpretari conabantur, ad creaturam colendam uenerandamque referebant. Quid enim mihi prodest simulacrum uerbi gratia Neptuni non ipsum habendum deum, sed eo significari uniuersum mare uel etiam omnes aquas ceteras, quae fontibus proruunt? [. . .] Quid ergo mihi prodest, quod Neptuni simulacrum ad illam significationem referetur, nisi forte ut neutrum colam? tam enim mihi statua quaelibet, quam mare uniuersum, non est deus' [And if ever any of them attempted to interpret these statues as signs, they related them to the worshipping and venerating of a created thing. For what good is it to me that an image of Neptune, for example, does not contain a god in itself, but by it is to be signified the whole sea or indeed all other waters that rush forth from springs? [. . .] Therefore what good is it to me that an image of Neptune is assigned this significance, except perhaps that I might worship neither? As far as I am concerned, a statue is no more God than the whole sea is]: *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book III, vii (11).

[32] *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 83-4.

[33] For example, in the legend of St Sebastian the prefect's slaves are afraid to lay hands on their idols and destroy them, for fear of divine retribution: *Golden Legend*, trans. by Ryan, I 99.

[34] See also James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 420-9.

[35] *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337-1396*, ed. and trans. by G. H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 296 and 297. For an excellent examination of the important connections between St Katharine and the images debate, see Sarah Stanbury, 'The Vivacity of Images: St Katherine, Knighton's Lollards, and the Breaking of Idols', in *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm*

in Late Medieval England: Textuality and the Visual Image, ed. by Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 131-50.

[36] Thomas Walsingham, *Chronicon Angliae 1328-1388*, ed. by Edward Maunde Thompson, Rolls Series 64 (London: HMSO, 1874; reprinted New York: Kraus, 1965), p. 377.

[37] John Capgrave, *The Life of St Norbert*, ed. by Cyril Lawrence Smetana (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1977), ll. 64-5.

[38] Aubrey Gwynn, *The English Austin Friars in the Time of Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 4.

[39] Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, p. 43.

[40] For an account of the treatise and its exacerbation of the rivalry between Austin friars and canons, see Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, pp. 90-5. The Austin friars also argued among themselves (pp. 90-1).

[41] Trinity College, Dublin, MS A.5.3., quoted and translated by Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, p. 207.

[42] The Trinity College manuscript belonged to Stocton and was copied in his own hand in the 1370s and 1380s: Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, pp. 236-9.

[43] John Capgrave, *Lives of St Augustine and St Gilbert of Sempringham, and a Sermon*, ed. by J. J. Munro, EETS o.s. 140 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1910), p. 146, ll. 5-7. St James's abbey in Northampton was home to the Canons Regular: Lucas, *From Author to Audience*, p. 10.

[44] See, for example, *Norbert*, ll. 554-609, 631-7, 1751-64 and 2304-10.

[45] John Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion of Cronicles*, p. 197.

[46] During FitzRalph's dispute with the friars, 1356-57, it was alleged that fraternal exemptions interfered with the duties of the ordinary clergy; however, in 1359 Innocent VI issued a bull confirming these privileges: Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, pp. 80-89. For Arundel's order specifically exempting friars from the licensing requirements of the Constitutions, see *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. by David Wilkins, 4 vols (London, 1737), III 324. For Chichele's objections to exemptions, see E. F. Jacob, *Henry Chichele and the Ecclesiastical Politics of His Age* (London: Athlone, 1952), pp. 8-12, and chapter 6, pp. 230-1.

[47] See, for example, Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, III 358-65, 378, 393, 433, 438-59 and 493.

[48] John A.F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards 1414-1520* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 237-8.