such peple as be not letterd in Scripture:
Popular Devotion and the Legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria
in late Medieval England

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines four different versions of the Legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Middle English in the context of laywomen's reading patterns in the late Middle Ages. The questions considered in the discussions of the individual texts or manuscript collections include: why was the legend of St. Katherine so influential and important in the Middle Ages, how does her cult accommodate the changing patterns of lay spirituality in the fifteenth century, and what function did the hagiographic literature and the other devotional texts with which they circulated, fulfil in the lives of the laywomen readers with whom they were so popular? This thesis argues that Katherine functions as a model, an exemplar, for women's reading. Significantly, the increase in popularity of this saint in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries coincided with the increase in English literacy among laywomen and the corresponding popularisation of religious and devotional texts amongst this new community of devout women readers. Since the Life of St. Katherine experienced its greatest popularity in the late Middle Ages, the versions considered in this study are all from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This thesis discusses Osbern Bokenham's "Lyf of S. Kateryne," included in The Legendys of Hooly Wummen, John Capgrave's Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria, and two previously unedited versions of the legend: the late Middle English prose Life of St. Katherine from MS. Harley 4012 and "Vita beate Katarine" from MS. Longleat 55. Transcriptions of the two manuscript versions are included in the thesis.

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\[ze \ pat \ rede \ it, \ pray \ for \ hem \ alle\]
\[pat \ to \ his \ werk \ eyther \ trauayled \ or \ payde,\]
\[pat \ from \ her \ synnes \ wyth \ grace \ hei \ may \ falle,\]
\[To \ be \ redy \ to \ godd \ whan \ he \ wyll \ calle,\]
\[Wyth \ hym \ in \ heuyn \ to \ drynke & \ to \ dyne,\]
\[Thorow \ he \ prayer \ of \ his \ mayde \ katelyne.\]
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Introduction

Two thyngys owyth euery clerk
To aduertysyn, begynnyn a werk,
If he procedyn wyl ordeneelly:
The fyrsste is ‘what’, the secunde is ‘why’.

(Bokenham, "Prologue" to Legendys of Hooly Wummen 1-4)

St. Katherine of Alexandria, the most important medieval non-Biblical saint, probably never existed.\(^1\) Nevertheless, the steady rise in the popularity of this saint between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries in England culminated in an abundance of visual representations, dedications, and versions of her life and martyrdom in the vernacular. Her legend provided the material for the earliest known religious dramatic productions as well as for some of the latest references to plays or performances in the Middle Ages, and extant English versions of her legend far outnumber those of any other non-Biblical saint.\(^2\) Most importantly, St.
Katherine’s popularity coincided with the increase in English literacy among laywomen in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the corresponding extension of religious and devotional texts in the vernacular into this growing community of devout women readers.

The study that follows is an attempt to position four distinct versions of the Legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Middle English into a broader discussion of laywomen’s reading patterns in the last century of the Middle Ages. The questions I consider in my discussions of the individual texts or manuscript collections include: why was the legend of St. Katherine so influential and important in the Middle Ages, how does her cult accommodate the changing patterns of lay spirituality in the fifteenth century, and what function did the hagiographic literature (of which the legends of St. Katherine are but a part) and the other devotional texts with which they circulated, fulfil in the lives of the laywomen readers with whom they were so popular? Late medieval women readers and the pressures and influences on their forms of spirituality provide the context for the different versions of the Legend of St. Katherine considered in this dissertation. Admittedly, only two of the four versions of the legend I discuss can be shown definitively to be intended for a specifically female audience (Bokenham’s "Lyf of S. Kateryne" and the prose Life in MS. Harley 4012), though all four have important connections to women readers.

Rather than discuss the versions of the legend in strictly chronological order, I have chosen to examine the movement of the legend from a private
devotional text outwards into a more public form. In each chapter, I describe the ways in which the author of the text presents the figure of St. Katherine as a model for his female audience, and consider, as well, the implications of that model in the lives of the women readers. Furthermore, organising the texts in this way also allows me to consider the corresponding extension of texts from the more private, enclosed space of professional religion outwards to the ever widening lay-audience, and the implications this movement had on the spirituality and devotional life of reading laywomen. In other words, the "generalising" of the legend of St. Katherine in the late Middle Ages can be shown to parallel the "generalising" of the forms of spirituality popular with fifteenth-century laywomen.

The first chapter explores the introduction and history of St. Katherine of Alexandria into England, considering primarily the textual "translations" of this particular saint. It considers as well questions of laywomen's literacy and devotional life, suggesting that the legend of St. Katherine forms part of a group of texts that can usefully be described as "popular" literature for women. The second chapter describes the legend in full, identifying specifically English features and harmonising the four separate versions into one composite narrative.

Chapters three to six discuss the individual versions of the legend. Since the Life of St. Katherine experienced its greatest popularity in the late Middle Ages, a time which also provided the greatest opportunities for laywomen readers, I have chosen to focus my attention on the texts from the late fourteenth and
fifteenth centuries. While it is true that the *South English Legendary*, for instance, circulated widely in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, its popularity is indicative less of the influence of a particular saint than of the interest in saints’ lives generally, nor was its readership in any way as clearly defined as I suggest is possible for the legends I consider from the fifteenth century. The first of these chapters discusses the previously unedited prose life found in MS. Harley 4012 (ff. 115r-123v) because, though it represents the same tradition as the *South English Legendary* and other cycles influenced by or based on the *Legenda Aurea*, there is substantial evidence that this Life of St. Katherine circulated independently of the collections (in this case, the *Gilte Legende*) and merits consideration as an individual text. The devotio *mori* miscellany which contains this text belonged to Anne Wyngefield, perhaps was compiled for her, and is a perfect example of the popular reading tastes of the laywomen readers of the late Middle Ages as it includes several works aimed at least initially at professional women religious.

The Prohemium to the Life is unique to this version, and effectively connects the text generally to the popular spirituality of the period and specifically to several other works within the manuscript. I have included a transcription of this legend and a description of the manuscript in Appendix I.

The fourth and fifth chapters discuss Osbern Bokenham’s "*Lyf of S. Kateryne*," and John Capgrave’s *Legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria*. Bokenham’s "*Lyf of S. Kateryne*" is one of the several saints’ lives he composed at the express desire of a laywoman patron, and is expressly concerned with issues
of authority. Bokenham is serious in his attempt to adapt the legends in his collection for his audience of laywomen (even though the collection’s unique manuscript ultimately found its way to a convent library and religious readership). He is clearly aware of the subversive potential of the popular material, and feels his responsibility as spiritual advisor to the (mostly) laywomen readers quite keenly. Capgrave, on the other hand, presents a more generalised notion of (women’s) reading since his long verse legend is directed at a less narrowly defined readership. Capgrave’s emphasis on Katherine’s identification with Mary and her mystical marriage to Christ implicates this version in the affective spirituality of the late Middle Ages and the cult of the Virgin. And, the legend’s relationship to other popular forms, particularly the romance genre and didactic literature, influences its structure in a way that strikingly affects its narrative.

The sixth chapter discusses the verse “Vita beate Katarine” found in The Red Book of Bath, MS. Longleat 55 (ff. 55r-65r). This previously unedited version of the legend reflects the importance of St. Katherine to the public and civic life of Bath, intended, as seems most likely, for the city’s celebrations of the saint’s feast day. It further generalises the private devotional relationship between laywomen and St. Katherine to a wider, more public audience, prescribing appropriate (public) female behaviour through its imagining of the life of the saint. In all likelihood a text written for public performance, it has strong connections to contemporary sermon and didactic literature. I have included a transcription of the legend and a description of the manuscript in Appendix II. The conclusion briefly
considers the legend of St. Katherine at the end of the English Middle Ages, in the context specifically of the role of hagiographic narratives in the lives of late medieval readers.
Introduction: Endnotes

1. Although St. Katherine's popularity soared after her introduction in the West, her feast day was suppressed in 1969. Other "Auxiliary" saints whose feast days were removed from the Roman Calendar in 1969 because of insufficient evidence about their lives include Sts. Christopher, Eustace, Barbara, and Nicholas.


Chapter One
The St. Katherine Tradition in Medieval England

Part I: The Origins of the Legend

According to her legend, St. Katherine was martyred in the early fourth century in Alexandria, but there is no evidence of a learned Christian noblewoman named Katherine, nor of her accomplishments or death, in sources contemporary with her period.¹ There is, however, a substantial tradition of defiance against the cruel and evil tyrant Maximin in Alexandria recorded by Eusebius (c. 260- c.340). He chronicles the acts of many Christians who chose death rather than recant, and among them is a noblewoman "renowned ... for wealth, birth and education," who refused to submit to Maximin's lustful advances and was ultimately exiled.² This woman, not identified as Katherine by Eusebius, has been traditionally linked with St. Dorothea, especially since Rufinus' Latin translation of Eusebius' Historia Ecclesiastica.

The connection between Eusebius' unnamed learned noblewoman and Katherine was made, however, by at least one hagiographer in the thirteenth century. Vincent of Beauvais, whose Speculum Historiale (compiled between
1246 and 1249) slightly predates the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine (compiled between 1255-1270), replaces the traditional historical introduction in his legend of St. Katherine with the account of the learned woman given by Eusebius. This connection is not, however, generally assumed by medieval hagiographers, despite the popularity of the *Speculum Historiale* and its circulation in England. Henry Hucks Gibbs, six centuries later, returns again to Eusebius' description of the unnamed, educated noblewoman, in his introduction to a Prose *Life* of St. Katherine. Though he is reluctant to identify the woman explicitly as Katherine, he does insist that the legend as it exists grows from that tradition:

though no holy woman called Katherine may have lived and been martyred at that time by the Emperor Maximin, and though the words and deeds and sufferings attributed to her happened precisely to no one at all, yet the life of St. Æcaterina or Katherine was not a mere false coinage uttered to deceive the ignorant, but rather a romance, not consciously written as such, but growing gradually and by continuous development out of a description of what a holy woman under persecution should be or might have been, and read by the faithful 'for example of life and instruction of manners'.

The earliest extant mention of the legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria occurs in a fragmentary Greek collection from the early eighth century. The ninth-century account of the discovery of the relics of St. Menas during the reign of the Emperor Basil, the *Menologium Basilianum*, also includes an account of Katherine's martyrdom. A century later, Symon Metaphrastes expanded and
elaborated this narrative, and at the end of the tenth century, St. Athanasius (c. 920-1003) is said to have compiled a version of the legend. After the introduction of the Saint's legend into Rouen in Normandy by Symeon of Trèves, and within two decades of the foundation of the Abbey, Ste. Trinité-du-Mont, a monk called Ainard wrote a Latin account of St. Katherine's martyrdom which may have been based on Athanasius' text, and which subsequently provided the basis for an early Anglo-Norman poem. It is possible that Ainard's account was in fact an attempt to publicise the relics and the newly formed Abbey. At about the same time, or even perhaps earlier than Ainard's Legend, the more widely circulating Latin version known as the Vulgate account was written.

The cult of St. Katherine as it became known in the West largely developed and first flourished in Normandy. C. W. Jones has argued that, though brief references to the saint predate the arrival of Symeon and the relics to Rouen, many of the defining characteristics of the saint's passio took shape only after the installation of the relics at the new Abbey, Ste. Trinité-du-Mont, founded outside Rouen, 1024-1033. Jones suggests that Symeon's gift of the relics in Rouen took on greater importance than initially seemed likely as the popularity of the new cult grew. Legend has it that Symeon, taking his turn collecting the oil exuding from the Virgin Martyr's bones at the monastery of Sinai, inadvertently collected three bone particles in the vessel with the oil. Eventually, one of a group of monks from the monastery at Sinai sent to collect gifts from Duke Richard II in Rouen, Symeon carried the precious relics to their new country, and with them the fame
of Saint Katherine. The Abbey of Ste. Trinité-du-Mont, dedicated to the Holy Trinity and established shortly after Symeon’s translation of the small bones, soon came to be known popularly as "Ste. Catherine à la Trinité au Mont." Jones argues, however, that what probably happened, based on the information (and the contradictions) to be found in various sources contemporary with the establishment of the Rouen Abbey, is considerably less flattering to both Symeon and the relics themselves. He states that it is likely that, "broke, and with his patron Duke Richard II dead, Symeon trafficked in relics of an undocumented and obscure saint who was just then coming to slight attention in the East and could have been known in the West only through the mouths of Palestine pilgrims like Duke Richard II (and shortly his successor Duke Robert, who died at Nicea) and through an anonymous translation of a passio of unidentified origin."\(^{12}\)

In his study of the movements of relics in the Middle Ages, Patrick Geary demonstrated that it was not uncommon for a cult to develop around the introduction of a saint about whom little (or, even, nothing) was known.\(^ {13}\) Jones’ argument continues that the cult developing around St. Katherine in Rouen reflected several distinct characteristics found already in the current and popular cult of St. Nicholas. What he describes is

the duplication at Rouen in the eleventh century, well before the First Crusade, of Nicholas’s myroblytic [i.e. exuding healing oil] power in the legend of Catherine. From Rouen it was conveyed to Sinai by crusaders and pilgrims. It effectively spread the cult of Catherine, with the Nicholas
traits of scholastic patronage, dramatic subject, and thaumaturgic healing, through transalpine Europe, as to Canterbury.\textsuperscript{14}

The implication of Jones' argument, simply put, is that when Symeon of Tréves arrived at Rouen, he carried with him relics that would ignite a tremendously popular and important cult in the West over the Middle Ages. The Legend of St. Katherine, previously little known, developed and grew through the duplication of narrative characteristics associated with St. Nicholas and through the creation and dissemination of the popular Latin and Norman versions intended initially to legitimise the translation of the saint's relics to Rouen and publicise their installation at Ste. Trinité-du-Mont. St. Katherine's popularity with the powerful Dukes of Normandy gained her immediate access into many countries and courts, and according to Jones' theory, ensured her enhanced popularity even at Sinai itself, as the Crusaders carried her legend and cult on their journeys back and forth to the Holy Land. Veronica Ortenberg suggests that the introduction of St. Katherine, an eastern saint, to England exclusively from Normandy is the only known example of the movement of a cult along that channel rather than the more common routes from the East through Italy or Germany.\textsuperscript{15}

The connections between Rouen and England were firmly established by the eleventh century, even somewhat before the period of Norman rule in England. With the appointment of Robert, abbot of the Monastery of Rouen, first to Bishop of London in 1044 and, in 1051, to the archbishopric of Canterbury, the channel between the centre of the cult of St. Katherine in Rouen and England was clearly
opened. The tenure of Robert’s English appointments predates, but only just, the earliest occurrences of St. Katherine in England, and thus he may have had some part to play in the introduction of her cult. Ortenberg claims that the cult of St. Katherine "was still rather weak in the eleventh century," during which time her name "was entered only in one Winchester calendar and at Wells." And Gibbs records that in the year 1100, "one Geoffrey de Gorham, a Norman, afterwards Abbot of St. Albans, having been promised the mastership of the School there, and having beguiled his time while waiting at Dunstable for the vacancy by writing and exhibiting a miracle play called Ludus Sanctæ Catharinæ, dressing his scholars for the purpose in vestments borrowed from St. Alban’s Abbey" (sic).

The history of the legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria after her introduction to England testifies to the Saint’s overwhelming popularity in the later Middle Ages. Working solely with medieval English manuscripts, Jennifer Bray catalogued 35 different versions of the legend in Latin, Anglo-Norman and Middle English. Though the Latin legends continued to circulate and to be updated by later writers, the Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria soon became very popular with writers and readers of the vernacular languages in England. The earliest of many extant vernacular versions of the legend was written by a nun at Barking, Clemence, in the last quarter of the twelfth century. The immediate source for Clemence’s Anglo-Norman poem was the Latin Vulgate, though she knew of, and refers to, at least one earlier vernacular translation in her introduction, probably the fragment preserved in the MS. French 6 of the John Rylands Library in
Slightly later than Clemence's Anglo-Norman translation of the Vulgate is the early Middle English *Seinte Katerine* which circulated with the Anchoritic texts *Sawles Warde, Hali Mējōhād*, and *Ancrene Wisse* (c. 1210-1230). This alliterative English version was also based on the Vulgate version, and though it would have been possible for the Middle English author to have known Clemence's earlier translation, D’Ardenne and Dobson have demonstrated that the evidence suggests that there was in fact no connection between the translations. Significantly, both the author of the Middle English translation, and Clemence of Barking, express their concern to adapt the Vulgate version for their contemporary readers. Clemence writes in the opening stanzas:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pur ço que li tens est mué} \\
\text{E des humes la qualité} \\
\text{Est la rime vil tenue} \\
\text{Car ele est asquans corrupue.} \\
\text{Pur ço si l’estuet amender} \\
\text{E le tens selvinc la gent user.}^{22}
\end{align*}
\]

[Because the times and the qualities of men have changed, the poem has fallen into disrepute, for it is somewhat damaged (corrupt). For this reason, it must be improved in keeping with the times and the customs of people.]

And in the Middle English translation, many of the lengthy speeches are
shortened, or removed, and particular details are "medievalised." The ability to adapt, and in so doing represent or reflect contemporary social, political or religious trends, is an important feature of the St. Katherine legends, and must account for a large part of the saint's enduring popularity.

The three centuries following these early translations witnessed a tremendous rise in the popularity of the saint. Her legend continued to circulate in the Latin Vulgate form, but the impulse to produce her life in the vernacular steadily grew. Eleven of the fifteen surviving English lives of St. Katherine were composed between 1350 and the end of the Middle Ages. That Katherine's legend was by far the most popular in this period is revealed by a comparison of the numbers of her legend with those of other saints; Severs' bibliography lists thirteen lives (by no means a complete account) of St. Katherine in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, and eleven of St. Margaret (with whom Katherine is most commonly represented), and Bray notes that no other saint in Severs' list boasts more than eight legends. Hardin Craig, in his study of medieval English religious drama, gives evidence of the performances of miracle plays in honour of Katherine in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. And Bray, in her research, concluded that the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries witnessed the greatest numbers of hospital dedications, church windows, wall paintings, surviving sculpted figures, and guild formations in honour of St. Katherine. This is particularly significant when one considers the fact that this rise in popularity occurred (almost completely) without the assistance of important
relics or shrines of the saint in England. Medieval dedications and chapels abound, but known relics are few.\textsuperscript{28} In fact, St. Katherine is not famous primarily because of her relics or shrines anywhere outside of Sinai; her corpus consists mainly of the body of texts recounting her legend. The translation into England that this saint engineered was not corporal, but textual, and thus it is fitting that her popularity be reflected so completely in the literary context of the Middle Ages.

Part II: Women Readers and the Popular Literature of the Fifteenth Century

Throughout this study, I refer to the texts which I am considering as "popular," though I am not at present so much interested in the relationship between the St. Katherine legend and the "illiterate commoners" (to use Aron Gurevich's term\textsuperscript{29}), as I am in the relationship between the legend and those people, mainly aristocratic women, whom we know to have had access to the written, vernacular narrative. Given that qualification, I believe it is appropriate to describe the legend of St. Katherine, and the other devotional texts with which it circulated, as "popular literature" and more specifically "popular women's literature" for the following reasons. First, the texts constitute a large body of work made available in the vernacular to English-literate (but mostly not Latin-educated) reading and/or book owning women of the late Middle Ages (and, through them, their dependents, peers or perhaps patrons). The authors and translators of these texts are usually
conscious of the fact that they are making material available for an increasingly widening non Latin-literate audience. As the author of Prohemium to the MS. Harley 4012 prose life of St. Katherine acknowledges, the version presented in that collection

is a thing most true and drawen oute of Scripture as the legent specefith.

and for this cause moreouer that such peple as be not letterd in Scripture may rede & see the hole entent of the same in the vulgar which is kallid the Comen speche of Englonde for their erudicin and speculacion of vertu. (f. 115v)

This version is made available in the "Comon speche of Englonde," then, for the benefit of those "not letterd in Scripture," or as is here implied, the Latin of the Legenda Aurea. As a devotional miscellany of primarily affective texts and saints' lives, the manuscript's main audience would be vernacular-literate laywomen and their households. Each of the other texts I consider in this thesis participates to a greater or lesser extent in the movement between Latin and vernacular literature. Capgrave's long prologue is concerned with revealing the arduous process by which he manages a translation of the long verse Life of St. Katherine from the "derk langage" of the earlier versions (Latin, Greek and perhaps an English dialect not his own or his intended readers') to the English version which he presents to his readers. Bokenham also describes his task as providing translations from the "latyn ... in-to our language" at the request of specific laywomen. And MS. Longleat 55 has a peculiar relationship to the Latin and vernacular languages: the
contents of the manuscript move between Latin, French and English, and though the Life of St. Katherine is in English, it contains Latin marginal tags to aid readers at varying levels of literacy, from the hearer of the legend to the vernacular-literate readers and to monastic, or Latin-literate, readers or commentators.

That these texts may also merit the description of "popular" based on their production and transmission histories seems likely. For instance, my research on MS. Harley 4012, a devotional miscellany containing both prose and verse texts, has convinced me that this compilation provides evidence for, to borrow Curt Bühler's description of Sir John Paston's "grete boke," an "early instance of 'mass-production'". MS. Harley 4012 shares several key items with at least one other manuscript, MS. Lambeth Palace 3597 (formerly of the Throckmorton collection at Coughton Court, Warwickshire), suggesting, among other possibilities, that these two manuscripts are not the products of random compilation, but derive from a "master" volume of stock items with additional pieces included to meet the needs of particular buyers and/or individual readers. Both manuscripts contain medieval inscriptions which indicate an early (possibly even initial) female owner, testifying to the popularity of such volumes with laywomen readers.

The most persuasive argument for describing these devotional texts as "popular" stems from their relationship with their female reader: however. Late medieval women of the upper and merchant classes comprised the majority of the
lay-audience for religious and devotional texts in the vernacular. The late Middle Ages has been, traditionally, an overlooked period in the history of women's reading patterns, even though, as Anne Clark Bartlett has also recently argued, "later medieval women may accurately be called the 'first generation' of English female readers." Feminist sociologists, when mapping the movement forwards to the popularity of the twentieth-century pulp-romance, tend to begin with the Renaissance and the increasing popularity of the romance form after the onset of printing, and though some considerable work has been done in re-thinking women's relationship with medieval French romances, for the most part the possible connections between late medieval popular reading tastes among women and the later (i.e. Renaissance and onwards) periods have not been contextualised. While it is impossible to know for certain how many women were in fact reading, the evidence, mostly from wills and similar documents, does imply that the majority of the manuscripts owned by women were devotional in content. Carol Meale has argued that "religion was by far the dominant reading interest of medieval women; they owned a variety of texts in addition to their service books, ranging from lives of the saints, to didactic works such as The Pricke of Conscience and Pore Caitif, to various of the treatises of the fourteenth-century mystics." In her essay "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," Susan Bell describes the ways in which laywomen book owners "substantially influenced the development of lay piety and vernacular
literature in the later Middle Ages." She argues that translators and compilers responded to the needs and demands of women readers in producing increasingly greater numbers of devotional texts in vernacular languages. Her theory is that women readers, discouraged from participating in the hierarchical male ecclesiastical establishment, began to substitute private devotional reading for the more public expressions of the religious life. I agree with her analysis and would push the point further yet: private devotional reading, which in Bell's terms was "inoffensive because of its privacy," placed woman readers in closer proximity to the secluded life of enclosure the texts were initially intended to supplement. In other words, laywomen readers found in devotional texts that were originally connected to the convent or reclusive life a way to experience and appropriate significant features of that religious life in their own public, mostly married, lives.

It may be that this substitution just described to some extent precipitated, at the very least coincided with, the popularisation in the late Middle Ages of "mixed life" texts like Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ. Certainly the metaphor of the "mixed life," that is, the combination of the active ideal (worldly duties and social obligations) with the contemplative ideal (private devotions and obligations to God and/or monastic community only), accurately describes certain aspects of late medieval devotional reading. Felicity Riddy has argued that laywomen's reading patterns mirrored conventual reading habits; she writes that "it seems clear that the literary culture of nuns in the late fourteenth
and fifteenth centuries and that of devout gentlewomen not only overlapped but
were more or less indistinguishable."41

The picture that emerges is one of the laywoman reader desiring the mixed
life in her own world, combining the "actyf" in her worldly duties with the
"contemplatyf" of her private devotion. Though other women saints function as
exemplars of this mixed life, notably, Saints Elizabeth of Hungary (particularly as
Boke.nhar.: imagines her life), Cecilia, Anne,42 and Mary, St. Katherine is,
perhaps, a perfect example of the mingling of the "actyf & contemplatyf": her
public life as queen of Alexandria is joined in her legend with her private life as
scholar and contemplative. She is, in this way, a model for the medieval
laywoman reader in both the spiritual and secular senses; Katherine fulfills her
social obligations (more or less well) while yet pursuing private space and the
solitude contemplation provides. Kathleen Ashley, in her discussion of St. Anne,
draws conclusions that are equally applicable to the place of St. Katherine in late
medieval women's spirituality: "In a society where many who were not in
monasteries aspired to holiness, the traditional boundaries between the
contemplative and active lives were being renegotiated. Saint Anne is a symbolic
means for that renegotiation to take place in the fourteenth and fifteenth
centuries."43 St. Anne is "the ideal mediating figure," in Ashley's conclusion,
because of her sanctity in spite of her multiple marriages, childbirths and
interaction in this earthly world. But St. Katherine, I would argue, equally
functions as an "ideal mediating figure for a society in transition from ideals of
chastity and contemplation to the elevation of marriage and the active life." Her legends represent her as marrying her Heavenly Spouse (which, as we will see, sparks a movement among saintly women) as well as engaging in the active life of ruler and scholar. Most importantly, for the late medieval woman forging a place for herself in a society where literacy is traditionally and ecclesiastically sanctioned masculine, Katherine participates in the clerical world of learning and debate, and her successes against the clerks and philosophers who attempt to suppress her must have struck a sympathetic chord with the women readers of her legend. In the description of the private study space at the centre of her court, Katherine's legend represents the physical realities of many of the (wealthy) devout laywomen readers of her life. Roberta Gilchrist, in her discussion of space as a form of material culture and its role in constituting gender, claims that "women's quarters were situated in the most segregated parts of the castles, and their separate 'inner' household may be likened to the greater segregation of female religious," arguing that even the physical construction of private (lay) female space can reflect a semi-religious pattern of behaviour in the middle of a public life.

Consider, in this context, the example of Cicely, Duchess of York, in whose life the public political world and the private life of devotional reading and contemplation were united. Among the vernacular books enjoyed by the Duchess of York and her household were Hilton's *Of Mixed Life* and Love's *Mirror*. Her strict daily timetable is recorded by the author of the *Orders and Rules of the*
Princess Cecily as a model for other noble women. Like those bound by religious life, the Duchess of York's day was organised more around the Hours of the Church than around secular or social obligation. Armstrong describes her daily routine as a "rigid concentration on the Christian life," and Bartlett suggests that "Cecily's attempts to conform her cultural practices to those observed in a cloistered setting" indicates "an instance of conscious self-fashioning."  

In The Sociology of Literature, Robert Escarpit insists that "reading is the supreme solitary occupation. The man who reads does not speak, does not act, cuts himself away from society, isolates himself from the world which surrounds him." Escarpit's notion of reading cannot, of course, be so easily translated back to the late Middle Ages; reading was frequently a more public act than it is now. Even the Duchess of York, though much of her contemplative time was solitary, had devotional texts read aloud to her household during meals. Therefore, pictures of women reading privately must be tempered with pictures of women reading to their household, or being read to along with their household. Even so, Escarpit's theory is a useful one, especially for a consideration of the overlapping nature of lay and religious women's devotional literature. I believe it may be that one of the main appeals of this popular form of literature in the late Middle Ages is that in reading it, in contemplating the same material read by her religious counterparts alone in the privacy of enclosure or together with other women in their communities, the potential exists for the laywoman to read herself (Bartlett's "conscious self-fashioning") into the role of the professional religious confirmed by
the devotional texts she chooses.

It is useful at this point to consider an analogous point in the recent history of women's reading, that is, the popularity amongst twentieth-century women readers of popular romances.\textsuperscript{51} I draw this connection not because the literature in question is the same, but because the basic situation is: frequently, the women who read popular mass-produced romances have little in common with the life-styles and indeed, the heroines, recreated in the novels they repeatedly turn to. Janice Radway, whose \textit{Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Fiction} pioneered the study of contemporary women readers of mass produced romance fiction, acknowledged that the results of her research rather surprised her: intending to shed some light on the meaning of romance fiction to female fans, she instead discovered that the Smithton women (her subjects) "repeatedly answered [her] questions about the meaning of romances by talking about the meaning of romance reading as an activity" (her emphasis). "What the book gradually became, then" she explains, "was less an account of the way romances as texts were interpreted than of the way romance reading as a form of behaviour operated as a complex intervention in the ongoing social life of actual social subjects, women who saw themselves first as wives and mothers".\textsuperscript{52}

Her general conclusions about the meaning of romance reading in the lives of the Smithton women complement nicely other feminist examinations of contemporary popular romance reading. Radway argues:

when the act of romance reading is viewed as it is by the readers
themselves, from within a belief system that accepts as given the institutions of heterosexuality and monogamous marriage, it can be conceived as an activity of mild protest and longing for reform necessitated by those institutions' failure to satisfy the emotional needs of women. Reading therefore functions for them as an act of recognition and contestation whereby that failure is first admitted and then partially reversed. Hence, the Smithton readers' claim that romance reading is a 'declaration of independence' and a way to say to others, 'This is my time, my space'.

A few years later, Jan Cohn argued in *Romance and the Erotics of Property: Mass-Market Fiction for Women* that contemporary romance fiction speaks to "desires that cannot be spoken, so powerfully would they subvert authority." "The love story in contemporary romance" she continues, "can be seen as a trope for what would otherwise be a forbidden exercise in female self-realization and the will to power." Cohn also acknowledges, however, that "Authority is challenged only at the deepest levels of romance; on the surface romance embraces and confirms conventional values."

Radway was surprised to discover that the participants in her study "insistently and articulately explained that their reading was a way of temporarily refusing the demands associated with their social role as wives and mothers." And more explicitly, she concluded that the Smithton women valued their romance reading as "an intensely private act." Reading, in this sense, "connotes a free space where they feel liberated from the need to perform duties that they otherwise
willingly accept as their own." The reasons for choosing the popular romance over other kinds of reading experiences are multiple and complex. Simply put, in Radway’s conclusion,

by carefully choosing stories that make them feel particularly happy, they escape figuratively into a fairy tale where a heroine’s similar needs are adequately met. As a result, they vicariously attend to their own requirements as independent individuals who require emotional sustenance and solicitude.

What interests me most about Radway’s argument here is the emphasis on the desire for solitude and privacy that emerges from the Smithton women’s testimonies. Similarly, late medieval women were increasingly discouraged from participating in the hierarchical male ecclesiastical establishment, though their enthusiasm for the contemplative life had not noticeably diminished. Fewer opportunities for practising the religious life, and increasingly more diverse models of female holiness, especially with regards to the married and lay-women saints, functioned to redirect late medieval women’s religious enthusiasm into the more socially accepted patterns of private devotion, or sanctity within married life.

In her discussion of virginity literature and women readers, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne argues that these particular texts have "at least the potential of offering an account of chaste lives from something like a female subject position, for it must address the interior life and not just the presence of a hymen in its female audience." There were in fact very few other opportunities for sympathetic
identification for women in literature outside the female saints' lives and contemplative texts until the romances of the later Renaissance. And though, as Wogan-Browne acknowledges, the "literature of the tower-cell offers women a paradoxical version of autonomy and self-fashioning at once empowering and disabling," at the very least, the saints' lives graphically represent women encountering and successfully resisting the aggression of a world hostile to their explicit desire for autonomy. The saints' lives and stories of devotional life, on the one hand, confirm obedience to the ecclesiastical patriarchy; on the other hand, they can be seen to encourage the reader to engage in anti-patriarchal activity in pursuit of the religious ideal. For instance, participants in the stories disobey authority regularly, dispense patriarchal goods and moneys, and refuse to comply with the sexual obligations of the marriage bonds by asserting their virginity, by joining female communities and/or by denying husbands conjugal relations.

With regards at least to laywomen readers, I believe it is possible to see in popularity of the religious literature - saints' lives and contemplative texts - a (perhaps not-so-subtle) assertion of autonomy. Wogan-Browne has argued that for the woman confronting Hali Meidhâd's version of married life, "solitude is attractive," and that "solitude" here "connotes a life unappended to an earthly man rather than a life without any human companionship." In other words, confronted with the model of married life presented in the writings of the medieval moralists, women imagined not the potential drudgery or boredom of the cloistered life but freedom from the constraints of the social and sexual obligations of the
public world. Given the mortality rates involved in medieval childbirth, a Bridegroom whose only offspring were the fruits of the spirit could have a strong psychological appeal to women who faced death every time they confronted sexual intimacy.65

Some texts address these desires directly, encouraging the female layreader to create for herself a spiritual refuge even as she must create the physical and personal space for her devotional life. For instance, Cicely Duchess of York provides an extreme example of this possibility: she more or less created for herself a convent in the midst of the court, though the opportunities she experienced must have been made possible, in large part, by her privileged position as the mother of Edward IV and Richard III. And though less fortunate laywomen could not have fashioned a literal convent in their husband’s or father’s houses (at least not on such a scale), there was ample encouragement in the late medieval texts to design a spiritual one in the midst of the world. In one such popular prose piece, The Abbey of the Holy Ghost, the author begins by describing the situation I have been considering in this chapter:

A dere brethir and systirs, I see þat many walde be in religyone bot þat may noghte, owthir for pouerte, or for drede of thaire kyne, or for band of maryage, and for-thi I make here a buke of þe religeon of þe herte, þat es of þe abbaye of the Holy Goste, that all tho þat ne may noghte be bodyly in religyone, þat þay may be gostely. A Ihesu mercy! whare may þis abbaye beste be funded and þis religione? Now certis nowhere so well als in a
place þat es called conscyence, and who so will be besy to funde þis holy religione, and þat may like gud crystyne mane and woman do þat will be besy þer-abowte.  

And though our author carefully addresses both "crystyne mane and woman," I think it is likely that this text is more applicable to late medieval women's desires and their modes of spirituality than to late medieval men, generally. For example, the reasons listed as keeping readers from the life they might choose include poverty (not having the dowry required for religious life), fear of one's kin (again a situation more common to women, perhaps), and the bonds of marriage - and though this could imply either husband or wife, we have less evidence of non-religious men desiring to conform their life to the patterns of the monastery. More specifically, however, the qualities that people this spiritual Abbey reproduce the social structure of the convent, and suggest a woman-identified community. For example, Charity stands in for the Lady Abbess, Wisdom for the Prioress, Meekness for the Sub-Prioress, Orison and Jubilation fulfil the roles of Chantress, Devotion functions as Cellarass, and Honesty becomes the Mistress of the Novices.

In conclusion, however, it is important to remember, even as Janice Radway was forced to acknowledge, that the "oppositional impulse" she perceived in romance reading can be disarmed by the very acts that seem to express it. This occurs precisely "because [romance reading] supplies vicariously those very needs and
requirements that might otherwise be formulated as demands in the real world and lead to the potential restructuring of sexual relations.”⁶⁷ And certainly, the late medieval woman reading herself out of her position as married woman, mother or daughter and into an "attractive solitude" (which of course may imply not so much absolute privacy as a perceived freedom from overtly patriarchal relationships within a female community⁶⁸), may not really be addressing her desires either.

The desire for the religious life could be contained by promoting sanctity within married life, and the anti-patriarchal tendencies found in the virgin Saints’ Lives could be suppressed to a certain extent through the encouragement of the mixed-life literature. And in the affective tradition, the focus on the female believer’s relationship to Christ’s humanity - through love-longings, spiritual submission, mystical "marriage" - is perhaps as much a confirmation of the sexual obligations enforced by the patriarchal authority as it is a substitute for it.

But as Tania Modleski concludes in Loving with a Vengeance, the centuries-old appeal of popular female narratives (whatever form they take) may suggest "that they speak to very real problems and tensions in women’s lives." And though they might not seem to change anything, "the narrative strategies," she continues, "which have evolved for smoothing over these tensions can tell us much about how women have managed not only to live in oppressive circumstances but to invest their situations with some degree of dignity."⁶⁹ It is my intent, in the chapters that follow, to consider what the figure of St. Katherine and the popular literature of her life can reveal about the methods late medieval
laywomen developed for living their lives.
Chapter One: Endnotes

1. Similarities do exist with the Neoplatonist philosopher Hypatia, a pagan scholar of Alexandria, who was attacked and killed by a Christian mob, but as Jennifer Bray argues, being beautiful, of noble kin, and (more or less) educated was a stock feature of Roman virgin martyr lives, for instance Sts. Euphemia, Dorothea and Barbara. She continues that "The tragedy of Hypatia may have provided a background of credibility against which the Katherine legend developed, but it does not explain the form taken by the lives" ("The Legend of St. Katherine in Later Middle English Literature," Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1984, 17). Cf. Anna Jameson, Sacred and Legendary Art, Vol. II (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1895) 467-468, who suggests that the location for the story of St. Katherine was "well chosen, and with a view to probability. Alexandria, famous for its philosophical and theological schools, produced, not one, but many women, who, under the tuition of Origen and other famous teachers, united the study of Greek literature with that of the Prophets and Evangelists; some of them also suffered in the cause of Christianity."


3. Bray 84-85; Manfred Gorläch, The South English Legendary, the Gilte Legende and the Golden Legend (Braunschweig: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik,


6. For this and the following material on the transmission of the legend in the early texts, see Gibbs' Introduction, and Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen, eds., St. Katherine of Alexandria: The Late Middle English Prose Legend in Southwell Minster MS 7 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993) 4-6.


9. D'Ardenne and Dobson xvi. This edition of the early Middle English Life of St. Katherine includes as well both the full Vulgate version and the "Shorter Vulgate." Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen argue that Ainard's version is the Vulgate version (5); other readers of these lives, however, insist on the distinction between the two early Latin accounts (cf. MacBain xiv; d'Ardenne and Dobson xvi-xvii).

11. This event is recorded in part in the version found in MS. Longleat 55, f. 65r.


17. Ortenberg 256.


19. MacBain xxiv-xxv.


22. MacBain i, 41-46. The translation is mine, with thanks to Dr. Jeff Tennant for his assistance.

23. Cf. D’Ardenne and Dobson xxxvii-xxxviii. Some examples they give are of the adaptation of the titles of the characters: Porphirus, "militie princeps" in the Vulgate becomes "cnihtene prince" and an "icudd cniht;" Cursates, "urbis prefectus" in the Vulgate becomes "a burh-reue," and the Empress becomes "cwen."

24. Bray 216.


27. Bray 220-222.

28. Bray describes the phial of oil allegedly brought into England by Edward the Confessor, 10.


33. For feminist critiques of women's reading in the Renaissance, see Caroline


35. Wills are both an essential and problematic means of determining accurate ownership of texts, in that they may not provide historians with the complete picture. Religious books are mentioned and bequeathed most frequently, but as Carol Meale notes, "a sense of decorum could well account for the preponderance of religious over secular books amongst wills in general" ("‘alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englisch, and frensch’: Laywomen and their books in late Medieval England," *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale
Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550


36. Meale 137.


38. Bell 752.

39. Bell 752.


43. Ashley 118-119.
44. Ashley 119.
47. Armstrong 74. The Ordinance he refers to is the *Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill* included in *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household* (London Society of Antiquaries, 1790) 37-39.
48. Armstrong 77; Bartlett 11.
50. Armstrong 73-77.
51. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has made this connection already, and pointed out the usefulness of Janice Radway's research, in the context of the "possibilities of repetitive formulaic reading" of the Katherine Group lives. My argument differs from the one she makes in "The Virgin's Tale" in that I want to use Radway's (and others') theories about the importance of romance-reading in modern women's lives to talk about the ways in which devotional literature in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries qualifies as "popular literature" for reading

52. Radway 7.
53. Radway 213.
54. Cohn 5.
55. Cohn 5.
56. Radway 11.
57. Radway 92-93.
58. Radway 93.

60. Caroline Bynum argues that over the late Middle Ages the "rise of the woman saint correlates most dramatically, however, with the rise of the lay saint" and "by the sixteenth century almost all the males canonized were clerics, and the model of holy behavior offered to the Catholic laity was almost exclusively female." She

61. Wogan-Browne 169.

62. Caroline Lucas argues that the main distinction between Medieval and Elizabethan romances is the location of the "focus;" that is, the romances of the Middle Ages did not feature heroines as regularly as heroes, and did not provide the sympathetic identification for women readers that occur in later forms of the genre. She claims that "What happens at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries - and even more forcefully so in popular modern romances - is that the focus shifts from man as subject to woman as object of the romantic tale, and it is this object, not the male subject, with whom the reader is asked to identify." *Writing for Women: The Example of Woman as Reader in Elizabethan Romance* 5.

63. Wogan-Browne 171.

64. Wogan-Browne 172.


67. Radway 213.

68. Cf. Wogan-Browne 172.

69. Modleski 14.
Chapter Two

The English Legends of St. Katherine of Alexandria, Virgin and Martyr

Souerayne3 & frende3 þat beþ now here
and hyt 3ow lyke 3oure soule to saue
lesteþ a lessoun : Wyþ hertly chere
Wyþ hertly chere . and 3e schall hyt haue
3e schall a lessoun of helth be taw3t
how þat 3e schall heuen wynne
hureþ & lerneþ and for3ete hyt naw3t
Of mayde & martyr Seynt Katerynne

[MS. Longleat 55, f. 55r]

The legend of St. Katherine of Alexandria abounds with the "gret myracles doyng" and "gret passyon suffryng" outlined by Eamon Duffy in his discussion of medieval saints' narratives: Katherine is resolute in her faith, is oppressed and tortured by enemies allied with heathen and/or demonic forces, and her enemies are struck down by God's anger both in the present of the story world (the four
thousand heathens who die in the explosion of the Wheels) and in the future defeat of Maxentius. But though Katherine’s torments are vivid and gruesome, they are significantly less vivid and gruesome than the tortures applied to others of the Roman virgin martyrs. Most obviously, the tortures frequently associated with the beautiful and young virgins in other legends and connected specifically to their femininity are omitted from the legend of St. Katherine or transferred onto the only other female character in the story. For instance, there is no explicit rape threat and an overall lessened emphasis on her virginity in the story of Katherine’s passion, and though she is beaten and denied food or drink, frequent heavenly visitations ease her suffering. And though the most explicitly "feminine" torment in the virgin martyr accounts - the tearing out or twisting off of breasts - is present in the legend of St. Katherine, it does not happen to the saint herself. Rather, the disfigurement of the specifically female body is displaced onto Maxentius’ wife, and Katherine’s body is preserved whole (more or less) until the final beheading. This displacement is altogether consistent with the relatively reduced emphasis in the legends, compared to St. Margaret for example, on Katherine’s virginity and physical beauty and the increased emphasis on her intellectual skills and ability to debate. Significantly, however, the "Vita beate Katarine" in MS. Longleat 55, which of the four versions I discuss has the least emphasis on her intellect, has the most emphasis on her vulnerability as a girl "tender & yhong" (f. 56v).

Katherine is characterised by her specific torture, the four spiked wheels,
and is easily recognised in iconographical imagery by the representation of a broken wheel, and/or sumptuous robes or other indications of royal status (i.e. sheaf of wheat, sceptre), and/or her sword. She is characterised, also, by her learning and ability to debate and teach, a very significant factor in her popularity with late medieval women. Though public teaching and public debate was forbidden to the fifteenth-century laywoman, some women, for instance Cicely Duchess of York, did create their own environment of learning in their homes, teaching their children and their dependents the lessons of Scripture and holy lives, finding, it would seem, an appropriate model in the description of St. Katherine’s court:

heo kept heore servauntes & heore howsholde

Wyp clennesse of leuynge vnder goddes lawe

Wonder hyt ys to penke a mayde 3ong be bolde

So to rywly heore self ; alone as y trawe

Ther was no wast in no wyse of mete ne drynke

But pe powre hadde part of fode & of cloþ

heere many studied : & somme dude Swynke

In prayour : & labour as trywe men dop

("Vita beate Katarine," f. 55v)

Many of the features of the legend of St. Katherine are found in other saints’ lives, since as Jennifer Bray argues, the "reproduction ... of a number of stock hagiographical features is a product of the medieval hagiographer’s concept
of an individual saint as a manifestation, chronologically and geographically limited, of Christian virtues" resulting in, she continues, "the interchange, among saints’ lives, of events, virtues and miracles."³ Jacobus de Voragine lists several of the hagiographical features St. Katherine shared with other saints, intending with the comparison not to lessen the worship due her life, but to increase her spiritual value, the efficacy of her cult by emphasising the "preuylege of dygnyte" bestowed on her when she received so many recognisable signs of Grace.

for certeyn specyal preuylegys were in somme sayntes whan they deyed / lyke as the vysytacion of Ihesu Cryst was in Saynt John theuangelyste / The flowyng of oyle in Saint Nycholas / theffusyon of mylke for blood that was in Saynt Poule / the preperacoun of the sepulcre that was in Saynt Clemente and / the heeryng & grauntyng of the peteycons that was in Saynt Margarete whan she prayed for them remembryng hyr memorye / Al thise thynges to gyder were in this blessyd vyrgyn Saynt Katheryne / as it apperyth in hir legende.⁴

Some features of the legend, however, are specific to or originate in the lives of St. Katherine, in particular the representation of her union with Christ her spouse as a literally understood marriage. It is not clear what caused the account of the mystical marriage to become associated with St. Katherine, though Auvo Kurvinen has suggested that the marriage ceremony may reflect "the distinctive features of the ordination of Dominican nuns" and that this connection may suggest that "the Conversion of St. Catharine may have been composed at or for a
Dominican nunnery." Bray argues however that though the similarities exist, "It is the purpose of the ceremony, not its form, which is the same, for both saint and nun are virgins who are dedicated to God through its performance: the differences in detail do not permit the reader to accept as the established source any one dedication ceremony but the fundamental identity of the mystical marriage of St. Katherine and the dedication services for women who take the veil make it at least probable that the general form of the latter had a formative influence on the former." Bray concludes:

An unknown catalyst crystallized an ancient symbol so that it became a concrete - if one may use the word of a visionary experience - specific incident in the life on one saint, giving that saint a pre-eminence not previously implied by the term sponsa Christi, which had been, and continued to be, used as a generic term, particularly of virgin martyrs and more generally of dedicated women, mainly nuns.

What is of primary interest with regard to the mystical marriage of St. Katherine is the direct influence the representation of her union with Christ had on the lives of actual holy women of the late Middle Ages. Bray notes that the earliest extant account of the mystical marriage is in a version of the legend contained in a mid-thirteenth-century manuscript from North Italy, and that in little more than one hundred years the "marriage as an actual event in the life of St. Katherine introduced into devotional life a new formulation of the mystical experience." The most obvious examples are St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Catherine of Sienna
and Margery Kempe.

The chronology provided by Bray of the introduction of the mystical marriage into the conversion narrative coincides quite tellingly with what Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has described as the re-sexualising and feminising of virginity in the high middle ages: "virginity writers are less inclined to congratulate women on becoming like men in their choice of virginity, and place more emphasis on virginity as the choice of the bride who has opted for the best groom of all."9 She continues that "Virginity is rewritten as marriage,"10 and I would agree, adding that in the marriage ceremony included in the Legend of St. Katherine we see a literal imagining of that rewriting of virginity, one which proceeds to have a considerable effect on the spiritual experiences of late medieval women.

Some of the specifically English features to be found in the late medieval versions of the life of St. Katherine include the influence of contemporary devotional writings and their focus on Christ’s humanity on the saint’s relationship with her spouse (as in, for example, the late Middle English prose Life of St. Katherine in MS. Harley 4012 [ff. 115r-123v]). As well, the introduction of a parliament into the story of the saint’s youth and conversion is, as Bray argues, "a purely English addition" found in "only the three long lives of the late fourteenth and the first half of the fifteenth century."11 Bray continues that the lives of St. Katherine reflect the contemporary English emphasis on the increasing importance of the parliament in both the social and literary sphere: "parliaments became fashionable as a literary device in the late fourteenth century in England, probably
as a result of the increased importance of parliament as a national institution."

An interesting parallel to the parliament in the life of St. Katherine is the parliament summoned to persuade Walter to marry in Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale." It is imperative at this point in my discussion of the Lives of St. Katherine of Alexandria to present the legend itself in as brief a form as is possible, given the long narrative familiar to medieval readers. Though the legend was extremely popular in the late Middle Ages, it is considerably less well-known now, and this presentation of the narrative is intended to bridge that gap somewhat. The story of St. Katherine's life and martyrdom that follows contains details from all four of the versions discussed in this study: John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria*, Osbern Bokenham's "Lyf of S. Kateryne," in the *Legendys of Hooly Wommen*, the prose *Life* found in MS. Harley 4012, and the rhyming performance poem contained in MS. Longleat 55. My purpose has been to provide a composite version based on the details common to all four legends, indicating the significant differences or variations within the group only as appropriate. For instance, of the lives under discussion, only Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria* includes the account of the saint's youth and conversion, and thus the description of that part of the legend summarises Capgrave's account alone.
The Youth and Conversion of St. Katherine

(Summarised from John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria*)

The legend claims that it was first written by Athanasius, Katherine's teacher and a clerk of Alexandria, who witnessed her martyrdom and the miracles around her death, and who later became bishop of Alexandria. Katherine is the only child of King Costus and his wife, pagans but very good, and her father provides for her a full and complete education. She advances rapidly and soon is far better than her teachers, besting them and many other learned clerks in a debate engineered by her father to prove her intelligence. Costus dies while Katherine is yet young, and she inherits his kingdom, and all his wealth, and lives her life in an environment of virtue and study.

A parliament is convened, at which Katherine's councillors, with her mother's support, urge her to choose a husband and marry soon, the better to protect the kingdom. She refuses, and a debate follows in which various members of her kingdom attempt to persuade her of the foolishness of her behaviour. Katherine, weary but resistant, finally agrees to marry but only a bridegroom better in every way than she is, one who is, above all, immortal. The parliament disperses, the councillors leave disappointed, and Katherine returns to her solitude and her books.

A certain hermit, Adrian, who has lived many years in seclusion in the desert outside of Alexandria, is approached one day by the beautiful Virgin Mary,
and commanded to go to Katherine’s court and there give her a message from the Queen of Heaven: Mary has provided a husband for Katherine, according to her description, in the person of her son.

Adrian walks to Alexandria, and enters Katherine’s enclosed garden, finding that the doors open at his touch and without a key as Mary had promised. Adrian and Katherine discuss matters of his faith, and he reminds Katherine of her vow to marry only the husband she has previously described, and tells her that he has been sent by the mother of that husband. God has prepared her heart for this message through her study and her virtue, and she agrees to go with him to his cell. Together they leave the city. As they come near the spot where Adrian’s cell should be, they discover that it is not there, and the hermit begins to despair. Katherine comforts him, and points to the palace on the horizon which Adrian then sees; he understands her steadfastness to be a sign of her holiness.

The two are met at the gate of this palace by a glorious company which escorts them into the court. They proceed to the chapel where they are met by Mary who takes Katherine to meet her new spouse. Katherine must be baptised, even as, Mary points out, a new bride must be washed before her wedding, and with Mary’s assistance, Adrian, blindfolded, baptises her. Katherine returns to the chapel, receives a ring from her bridegroom, and is told that because she willingly gave up all other husbands for his sake, she will be the highest of the virgins in his kingdom, next only to his mother.

Katherine and Adrian are returned to his cell, and are visited there by Mary
with John the Baptist and other virgins. Katherine is told by Mary of her coming torment and martyrdom, and is instructed to return to her court. Mary reveals that Katherine has not been missed since a divine impersonator has taken her place while she was with them. Mary tells her also that her mother has died, and that from now on, Mary herself will be even as a mother to her. Katherine returns home to her kingdom and her duties, and proceeds to convert her household to Christianity.

The Passion of St. Katherine

(Summarised from all four versions)

Soon after Katherine's conversion to Christianity, the Roman Emperor Maxentius enters Alexandria, and decrees that all inhabitants must sacrifice to his idols on a certain day, or be cruelly tormented. At this time, Katherine, eighteen years old, and sitting in deep contemplation of her lord and spouse, hears the terrible noises of the sacrifice outside her court. She sends a servant to discover the cause of the commotion, who returns and tells her of the sacrifices in the city. When she hears of the great dishonour done to her spouse, Katherine immediately sets out to learn more for herself; signing herself with the cross and with complete disregard for her own safety, she enters the thick crowd and approaches Maxentius. Her first words are of rebuke, and he, unable to respond to her arguments and completely astonished by her beauty, commands that she wait, under guard, until he is
finished his sacrifice.

When the ceremony is over, Maxentius orders that Katherine be brought back into his presence, at which point he asks her who she is, and from what family she comes. He quickly discovers that he cannot overcome her arguments, and imprisons her; meanwhile he sends across the land for the most learned and cunning men to come to him as soon as is possible, offering them great gifts and great honour if they assist him. Katherine learns that great learned men are coming to debate with her, and prays for help. An angel visits her and comforts her, foretelling her victory and the conversion and martyrdom of the fifty clerks.

Much to the amazement of the clerks, Katherine defeats their logic easily, and they must admit, even though they had at first scorned debating with a woman, that they are unanimously persuaded by her arguments and have converted to Christianity. Maxentius, furious, commands that they be burned in a great fire in the midst of the city. The clerks willingly embrace martyrdom for their newfound Christ’s sake, but regret having to go to their death unbaptised. Katherine comforts them, explaining that the fire is baptism enough. They die, but their bodies, hair and clothes are unharmed by the fire’s flames, and this is considered a miracle by the Christians in the city.

Maxentius then offers to make Katherine second only to his queen in his court if she agrees to sacrifice to his gods, promising to erect a gold image of her in the middle of the city before which all the citizens must stop and worship. Katherine refuses, scorning his offer, and contrasts the love she has for Christ and
he for her with the transience of earthly worship and human love. Maxentius orders her bound and beaten and thrown into prison where she must remain for twelve days without food and drink. He then leaves the city on business matters.

During the Emperor’s absence, the Empress desires to go and see the imprisoned Katherine and arranges privately with Porphyrius, the captain of the guard, to go together with him to the prison. As they enter the prison, they see a great light and smell a sweet smell and hear the sounds of heavenly music; they also witness angels ministering to Katherine’s wounds. Both of them are so astonished by these sights that they are unable to proceed further. Katherine calls to the visitors to come closer. She tells the Empress that she has foreknowledge of a crown in the Empress’s future, and that she will come into heaven but only after great suffering and martyrdom. The Empress and Porphyrius convert to Katherine’s Christianity, as do two hundred of Porphyrius’ knights.16

After they leave the prison, Katherine is fed by a dove from heaven and visited by her spouse, Christ. He comforts her, promising never to leave her side but to be with her in her torments. He blesses her then vanishes, leaving behind a smell so sweet that no one could imagine it.

When Maxentius returns to the city, he calls for Katherine to be brought before him. Expecting her to be weakened and made ugly by her fasting, he becomes mad with anger when he sees her health and beauty, and begins to torture the guards who he believes must have given her food. Katherine intervenes, claiming that she had no food from earthly hands, but was ministered to from
heaven. Maxentius once more tries sweet words and fair promises to woo her to his gods, but to no avail. Then he threatens her, demanding that she choose sacrifice or torture and death. She steadfastly chooses death.

At this point, Cursates approaches the Emperor, and describes a new instrument of torture so horrible that even Katherine, he predicts, will submit before it. Maxentius orders it to be constructed immediately, and when it is completed, Katherine is brought before it. It consists of four wheels, turning in opposite directions, two one way, two the other. Each wheel is spiked with long knives, and they are positioned in such a way that any object set between them would be torn into pieces as one set of wheels dragged it up and the other ripped it back down. Katherine, when she sees this monstrous device, prays for delivery, and an angel appears immediately to break the device apart. The explosion caused by the angel’s blow kills four thousand heathen onlookers; the watching Christians rejoice and take great comfort in this.

The Empress, who has been watching these events, approaches the Emperor and rebukes him for his tormenting of Katherine. He accuses her of being false, and commands that she sacrifice to his gods. She refuses and confesses her Christianity. In great anger, Maxentius orders that her breasts be ripped out with iron nails and that she be beheaded and her body left for scavenger birds. She begs Katherine to pray for her, and Katherine comforts her, describing to her the reward that awaits her in heaven, and the heavenly spouse she will receive in exchange for the mortal one she has renounced.
The execution is carried out according to Maxentius' commands, but that night Porphirus steals the body of the Empress away in order to give it a proper burial. The next morning, the body is missed, and Maxentius begins to torture those he thinks might have been responsible for taking it away. Porphirus, however, comes forward and admits to burying the body; he then confesses his conversion to Christianity, as do the two hundred knights with him. Maxentius, ferocious in his rage at the loss of his valued knight and friend, orders them to be beheaded and their bodies thrown to the carrion beasts.

The Emperor then implores Katherine to think of her own safety, promising to make her his queen if she will sacrifice to his gods. She refuses, and he commands that she be taken and beheaded. As Katherine walks with the guards to the place appointed for her execution, she is followed by wives, widows and maidens weeping and begging her to save herself, but she comforts them, reminding them where and in whose company she will be after her death. When the appointed place is reached, she kneels and prays, asking God that whosoever has her passion in mind whether in time of need or at the moment of death shall be delivered from sorrow and disease and receive comfort and profit from their prayers. A voice sounds from heaven, telling her to have comfort and know that this boon shall be granted, and telling her also that the gates of heaven are opened against her coming.

She is beheaded, and instead of blood, milk flows from her severed neck. Then angels take her body and carry it away to be buried on Mount Sinai. The
Christian people mourn that they have no knowledge of where her body has been taken. Eventually, 130 years later, an angel appears to a group of holy hermits who have erected a chapel to St. Katherine, and reveals to them that God has granted that they should have St. Katherine's body and that they are to follow him.\textsuperscript{18} The hermits follow the angel along a treacherous path up the mountain, not seeing the angel himself, but following the shadow of the palm leaf he carries in his hand. They find her body in the spot where it had remained hidden all the time since her death; the flesh has dried completely, but the bones are uncorrupted and dripping a healing oil. They bring the body down the path and install it in the chapel that they had built, and there the saint performed wondrous miracles and secreted healing oil and, occasionally, very small bones which would continue to secrete oil wherever they were taken.

2. For example, St. Agatha and St. Barbara both had their breasts torn off in the course of their torments.


7. Bray 266.

8. Bray 266.


10. Wogan-Browne 166.

11. Bray 256.

12. Bray 257.
13. In fact, there are several striking parallels between these two narratives: besides the parliament convened to persuade each leader to wed, Katherine and Griselda share many similarities. Both are virtuous, both are prepared, so to speak, for their higher callings by their early life or experiences (for Katherine, her classical education and inner virtue prepare her heart to recognise her spouse, and for Griselda, her inner virtue and natural "gentillesse" prepare her for her role as noblewoman), both undergo similar physical preparations for their marriages (i.e. each is stripped, bathed and dressed), both are steadfast in the face of torment, both intercede on the behalf of others (Katherine to God for her believers, Griselda to Walter for his new wife), and both are welcomed into the arms of their spouses at the end of the narrative.


15. Clearly this offer is meant to be juxtaposed with Christ’s promise that she will be first in his kingdom, next only to his mother Mary, juxtaposing as well the price of earthly marriage or concubinage for medieval women with the giving of oneself to God.

16. The Empress is generally more important to the narrative than Porphirus: she initiates the meeting, occupies the majority of Katherine’s attention and conversation, and is the first to confront Maxentius after their conversions.
Porphyris is drawn into the action mostly because of her, and is seen mostly against the backdrop of his 200 knights with whom he dies.

17. The image of the women following the saint to the spot of her death is a common component of the Passion of St. Katherine (e.g. Capgrave, V. 1793; Bokenham 7280-83; MS. Longleat 55, f. 64v) and most likely reflects the very considerable popularity of this saint with women in the Middle Ages.

18. Of the four versions, this part of the story appears only in the prose Life of St. Katherine in MS. Harley 4012, ff. 122v-123r.
Chapter Three

"3our modres tonge": The Late Middle English Prose Life
of St. Katherine of Alexandria in MS. Harley 4012 and its Laywoman Reader

A swete voys wyþ meke stevene
þer com adoun þo þer fram hevene
alle þe puple huryng
Come Kateryn to hevenly kyng anoon
Whar to makest þu suche a boen
with long taryynge
Whoso worschuþ þe god in þy passioun
ffor nede or for any tribulacioun
what so euer hyt be
he schalle haue hys desyring
Kateryn for þy prayynge
ffor love Kateryn of þe

(MS. Longleat 55, f. 64v)
Despite its considerable popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the late Middle English prose Life of St. Katherine has been mostly unavailable to interested readers of this century. Henry Hucks Gibbs, in 1884, produced an edition for the Roxburghe Club of the prose Life from a manuscript he had in his own possession, one which until recently was thought to be lost.\textsuperscript{1} Auvo Kurvinen, for her 1960 Oxford dissertation edited an example of two versions of the prose Life,\textsuperscript{2} but despite at least one promise in print to produce an edition of her thesis, never did so.\textsuperscript{3} A recent edition by Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen (working closely with Kurvinen's posthumous papers) of a version of the prose Life not included in Auvo Kurvinen's catalogue appeared in 1993.\textsuperscript{4}

The prose Life of St. Katherine warrants more critical attention, if only because of the Life's popularity in its own time: as Kurvinen's work makes clear, this form of the legend circulated not only as part of the larger collection of saints' lives in the *Gilte Legende*, but also in smaller groupings and on its own.\textsuperscript{5} For this reason, the text is an important part of the discussion of medieval "popular" literature as described in my introduction. But the importance of this particular saint in the late Middle Ages coupled with the ever-increasing critical interest in the medieval women readers of such literature further assert this text's value, however, and it is for all of these reasons that I include this previously unedited, unique version in my study of the legends of St. Katherine. This chapter, therefore, will consider how the St. Katherine legend included in the MS. Harley 4012 is situated in the larger collection of prose Lives, as well as how it fits into
the devotional miscellany gathered in the manuscript which houses it. I will also discuss the Life in the context of late medieval piety, of which it is clearly a product, and in the context of one laywoman who owned the manuscript, and for whom it very probably was compiled.

In her monumental work on the prose Life of St. Katherine, Auvo Kurvinen divided the twenty-two extant fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century manuscripts (including three early printed editions) she examined into four distinct categories based on the events each version includes, and on how the versions influence each other.⁹ Version a as described by Kurvinen contains the traditional Prologue (outlining how the life was written by Athanasius, once teacher of Katherine), the account of Katherine's youth and her conversion (including the description of her marriage to Christ), and the account of her martyrdom. Kurvinen argues that this version, the earliest of the four and the one from which the others are derived, is "in all probability a translation of two texts, a Latin text comprising the youth and conversion and possibly also the Prologue and the martyrdom of St. Catharine in the Légende dorée of Jean de Vignay, itself a translation of the Legenda aurea of Jacobus de Voragine."⁷ She continues that the most likely date for version a is "1420, or slightly before": "If Version d was written during the reign of King Henry V, as the incipit of MS. G [Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge MS. 390/610] says, Version a cannot be later than the year of the king's death" (1422). She continues that the King's "marriage to Catherine of France in 1420 is perhaps
the occasion that caused the legend of St. Catharine to be written in prose.\textsuperscript{8} This version survives in six manuscripts.\textsuperscript{9}

Version b as described by Kurvinen contains the Prologue, an account of Katherine's Genealogy and Birth, her youth and conversion (including the description of her marriage to Christ), her martyrdom and the account of the later discovery of her body on Mt. Sinai and its translation to the monastery there. This version, explains Kurvinen, "is derived from a good early MS. of Version a" and is extant in 12 manuscripts.\textsuperscript{10} She continues:

In 1438 the text of Version b was incorporated into a translation of the \textit{Legenda aurea} made or completed that year. The date of composition of this version is therefore anterior to 1438; but since Version d is based on Version b and may have been composed during the reign of King Henry V, it is probable that Version b dates from about 1420 and is only slightly later than Version a. Nothing is known about its author.\textsuperscript{11}

In other words, the earliest version of the Middle English prose life of St. Katherine was composed, based at least in part on Jean de Vignay's \textit{Legende doree}, sometime around 1420; it was revised very soon after its composition into a version Kurvinen calls b, and included in 1438 in the English translation of the French \textit{Légende dorée}, the \textit{Gilte Legende}.\textsuperscript{12} The translator/ compiler of the \textit{Gilte Legende} adopted this significantly expanded prose version of the legend of St. Katherine in place of the original one, making very few changes to the new version, perhaps since, as Gorläch suggests, "he found a text which he apparently
preferred to the *Legende doree* text because it was much more comprehensive, and just copied it among his own translations."

The legend continued to circulate separate from the *Gilte Legende*, however, as is demonstrated by the existence of (at least) three more distinct versions of the prose life based on Kurvinen’s version b. The second of these, version d is, as Kurvinen argues, "derived from a good early MS. of Version b, except that it has a different martyrdom, a translation of the Vulgate, and additional historical matter perhaps translated from the *Nova legenda* of Brother Petrus." She continues:

The *incipit* of MS G. [Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge MS. 390/610] states that the version was ‘sent bi a discrete maister unto t’ kyng Henry the V.(te)’. If the statement is true, Version d was made before the king’s death in 1422, perhaps soon after his marriage in 1420. The author is unknown, but dialectal features in the extant MSS. suggest that his home was London or a neighbouring county."

This version survives in three manuscripts."

Two separate versions of the prose Life of St. Katherine survive in one manuscript only: MS. Southwell Minster 7 (ff. 175r-189r), edited by Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen, and not included by Kurvinen in her four categories; and Kurvinen’s version g, British Library MS. Harley 4012 (ff. 115r-123v), the subject of this chapter. Version g contains the martyrdom of the saint and the finding of her body and its translation to the monastery on Sinai, as well as a unique
introductory discourse which clearly identifies the Life as a private devotional and meditative text. This introduction also functions to link the prose life with other texts in the manuscript, providing an interrelated reading program for the user of the book.

M. B. Parkes dated the hand of MS. Harley 4012 to ca. 1460, and internal evidence seems to support this well. Anne Dutton notes that "one of the texts contained within it, The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene Which is Syon (fols. 110r-113r), contains references to John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1443 to 1452, and Walter Lyhert, alias Hart, Bishop of Norwich from 1446-1472," concluding that the manuscript "cannot date from before 1446 at the earliest." On the back leaf of the manuscript (f. 153r) is an inscription which under ultra-violet light clearly reads: "Thys ys the boke of dame anne wyngefild of ha[r]lyng" (the "r" is no longer visible). Anne Wyngefield (the only daughter and heiress of Sir Robert Harling and Jane Gonvile) lived between c. 1426 and c. 1500, which would make the terminal dates for the composition of MS. Harley 4012 c. 1446 and c. 1500. Various items collected in the manuscript suggest that it may have been compiled with Anne Wyngefield in mind, and that consequently she may have been the first owner of the book: for instance, there is a Life of St. Anne in verse (ff. 130v-139v) as well as "The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene which is Syon" (ff. 110r-113r). Anne Wyngefield appears to have had a special connection to Syon Abbey, to which she made special mention and a bequest in her will: "to the house of Syon where I am a suster." Dutton suggests that "St.
Anne was not only Anne Harling’s name saint, but also a saint to whom Anne had a particular devotion,” continuing that, in her will, “Anne commends her soul to St. Anne, and requests burial in the chapel of St. Anne in her parish church at East Harling.”

Kurvinen has argued that the MS. Harley 4012 Life of St. Katherine (version c) is derived from version b, and the events included seem to be based on the prose Life collected in the Gilte Legende. Several errors occur in the MS. Harley 4012 Life, most likely scribal corruptions, which may provide some insight into the transmission of this particular version. For instance, "and" and "in" are reversed (once each way) in ff. 115v and 118r, words or phrases are duplicated across line divisions and page breaks (ff. 120r, 123r, 123v; 122v-123r, 123r-123v) and, in the description of the translation of the relics, St. Katherine’s bones are referred to as "his blessid body" (f. 123r). The majority of these kinds of errors occur in the last folios of the Life.

More serious errors occur, however, which affect the integrity of the narrative in different ways. For example, the Harley Life has Katherine complain against the unfairness of setting "xl mastres agayne a semple maiden" (f. 118v), though the traditional number of pagan philosophers is 50. Version b includes the usual number of participants in the debate: "his is a fayre jugement of a lord to sette fyfty maystrys a3ens a simple mayde." And there is considerable confusion surrounding the events of Katherine’s main prison stay in the Harley account. Maxentius’ queen and Porphirus, the head of the Emperor’s knights, visit Katherine
in prison and, along with two hundred accompanying knights, convert to
Katherine's Christianity. Version b describes that:

qwan Porphyrye had herd alle þer talkynge, he fel doon to þe feet of þe
virgyn and reseyved the feth of Ihesu Crist wyth ij. hundred knyȝtes.
And for þat the tiraunt had comaundyd þat sche schuld be xij. days
wythoute mete and drynk, almyȝty God here sovereyn lord sent to here a
qwȝȝt dowve fro hevene þat fed here wyth hevenely mete. (ll. 745-750)
The Harley MS. alters this passage, changing the events, switching the names of
the characters, confusing the number of people imprisoned, and ignoring the
meaning of "and for þat":

And when Purfire þe Empres had herde all this talking she enclinid to þis
virgen and fell downe to hir fete receuyng stably þe faith of Ihesu Criste
with cc knyghtis wherfor þe Tirante commaundid þem to be kepte in Preson
wythoute mete or drinke xij daies and owr lorde god Sent to hir a White
Coluer doue from heuen þat fed hir with heuenely mete. (f. 129r)
The Emperor is not able to imprison his queen and chief knight, being himself out
of Alexandria "for necessary ocupaciones" (f. 119v); the "þem" should read "her",
the "wherfor" should imply "and because that" not "therefore," and there should
be no "and" in "and owr lorde god." No further indication of the group
imprisonment is implied in the narrative. These inconsistencies might be an
indication that this particular version was revised at the page; it is more likely,
however, given the derivative nature of much of the manuscript, that the errors
indicate that this Life was copied with its Prohemium, together with at least the
Passion poem and prayer (ff. 106r-108v, 109r-109v) and perhaps others of the
saints’ lives, from an existing copy which already included the errors in the text.

Besides the omissions of the early parts of the narrative, MS. Harley 4012’s
Life of St. Katherine differs most obviously from its source text by the addition of
its introductory discourse. The Prohemium serves to connect the text to the other
items in the manuscript, and most likely, at the very least, was composed for this
particular grouping of texts (i.e. Life of St. Katherine, Passion poem and prayer).
It emphasizes the affective spirituality of the period generally, as well as the forms
of piety popular with laywomen readers, such as Anne Wyngefield, specifically.
Doyle suggests that Anne Wyngefield’s personal history and religious sensibilities
placed her in an “excellent position to have the tastes and the facilities to acquire
such a volume as Harley 4012,”22 and, as I will argue, the text clearly reflects the
probable needs and interests of a specifically laywomen audience.

A considerable amount is known about Anne Wyngefield’s life.23 She was
born c.1426, daughter and sole heir of Sir Robert Harling, of East Harling,
Norfolk, and Jane Gonville, and after her father’s death in 1435, she became the
ward of Sir John Fastolf. She married three times: first to Sir William
Chamberlain of Gedding before 1442; he died in 1462. Doyle notes that after her
first husband’s death, “Sir John Paston was a suitor for her hand”.24 She married
a second time, sometime after 1462 or 1463, to Sir Robert Wyngefield, who died
in 1480/81. Her third marriage was to John, 5th Lord Scrope of Bolton, sometime
between 1490-92 (he died shortly afterwards, 1494). Doyle suggests that it was after the death of her second husband, Sir Robert Wyngefield, and before her third marriage that the inscription was made on MS. Harley 4012. He continues that "the Northern elements in the book suggest that it had something to do with her next husband," Lord Scrope.25 But in fact, she could have inscribed the manuscript anytime between c. 1463 and before c. 1492. Wilson has connected the hand of the manuscript with a scribe of Sir John Fastolf's in British Library MS. Additional 39848, and it may be that this is the route by which MS. Harley 4012 came to Anne Wyngefield (i.e. purchased for her through or by Fastolf) and not, as Doyle suggests, through her third husband before their marriage.

Blomefield describes Anne Wyngefield as "a lady remarkable for her gifts to many religious foundations" and emphasizes her generosity to Rushworth College.26 She made many bequests to religious houses in her will. Doyle provides a list: besides the "house of Syon" mentioned earlier, she bequeathed "to East Anglian friaries; ... the Suffolk nunneries of Campsey and Brusyard similarly; and to the nunneries of Thetford, Carrow and four or five other places in East Anglia."27 Besides MS. Harley 4012, she is known to have had service books and French books, one of which seems to have been Christine de Pizan's Othéa,28 and she seems to have at one time borrowed Sir John Paston's Troilus and Criseyde.29

Anne Wyngefield is precisely the kind of reader for whom MS. Harley 4012 would have been intended. The volume, a devotional miscellany of both
prose and verse pieces, provides a classic example of the popular devotion of the fifteenth century, and provides, as well, a full and complex program of spiritual reading. The first and longest piece is \textit{pe clensing of manes sawle} (ff. 1r-68v), a treatise on penance expressly directed at a non-Latin literate audience, or in other words, female professional religious and/or layreaders. The author states "This epistele oonly I write to 3ou pat haue none oper vnderstondynge of other manere of scripture pat of suche pat is writen in 3owr modres tonge," emphasising a concern repeated in the Prohemium to the Life of St. Katherine. In that text, the author describes the task of presenting his legend in the vernacular "for this cause moreouer that such peple as be not letterd in Scripture may rede & see the hole entent of the same in the vulgar which is kallid the Comen speche of Englonde for their erudicin and speculacion of vertu" (f. 115v).

\textit{Pe clensing of manes sawle}, the first item in the manuscript, introduces the target audience for this volume, the lay-reader of spiritual texts, and this audience is confirmed by the later pieces. Though \textit{pe clensing of manes sawle} was at least initially intended for a community of female religious, and perhaps the community at Barking Abbey, it contains broad references to a widening of the expected audience. It combines penitential guidelines for both celibate religious and married layreaders, adaptable to the use of either and epitomizes perfectly Doyle's "notion of literature that is peculiarly religious," or, rather, literature which expresses

a regular habit of mind and living, shared by solitaries and widows in
vows, however, besides monks, nuns, and friars, and accepted as something to be emulated, so far as possible, by earnest seculars, clerks and layfolk.\textsuperscript{34}

This situation - the desire to emulate - perfectly describes the position of laywomen readers in the late Middle Ages. As I noted in chapter one, Felicity Riddy has shown that laywomen's reading patterns mirrored conventual reading habits, arguing that "it seems clear that the literary culture of nuns in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and that of devout gentlewomen not only overlapped but were more or less indistinguishable."\textsuperscript{35}

Besides be clensing of manes sawle, MS. Harley 4012 contains other items which expressly link it to the popular reading interests of late medieval laywomen. Several of the items are explicitly affective in their form of devotion, including the Prohemium to the Life of St. Katherine. The manuscript also contains, among other short texts, the "Charter of Christ" belonging to Pore Caintif, instructional treatises on meekness and suffering, a short piece beginning "Theis be the wordis that oure saueoure ihesu spake to his holy spouse and virgen Sent Molle" (an excerpt from Mechtild of Hackeborn's Book of Gostlye Grace), a passion poem and prayer, and four saints' lives: St. Katherine, St. Margaret, St. Anne and an imperfect life of St. Patrick.

A quite remarkable addition occurs in the Harley Life, for which I can find no precedent in the earlier prose lives. When Katherine comforts Maxentius' converted Empress before her gruesome martyrdom, version $b$ describes her encouragement in this way:
"Drede 3ou not, ryght wel-belovyd quene of God, for þis day 3e xul
reseyve an everlastyng kyndom for this feylyng kyndom, and 3e schul have
an undedly kyng to 3oure husbond, full of goodnesse and of bewte, for thys
corupt and foule dedly þat 3e have had before."36

The Harley Life changes this speech to include a reference to not only the king of
heaven for whom the martyred "bride" exchanges her earthly husband, but also to
her dowry, a concept introduced through "endued" and "doure."

"drede þou not yee excellent quene for þis day shall 3e be endued in þe
kingdome everlasting which shalbe your doure and a good exchaunge for
þer shall 3e be with þe king and þe quene eternall who is moste beutefull
and repletid with endles goodnes." (f. 121r)

The notion of the dowry, along with the emphasis in the Prohemium on Mary’s
"maternall loue" which the reader is to emulate speak directly to the concerns of a
laywoman reader who would almost certainly have been married at some point in
her life, and would also likely have been a mother.

The inclusion of the "quene eternall" in the list of good things waiting for
the martyred Empress in heaven is extremely unusual, as well, though the
importance of the figure of Mary to the reader of this life is made apparent in the
introductory discourse. The second paragraph of the Prohemium exhorts "euer
creature" to "remember as did this holy maiden and virgen":

for she rememberde this daily and howrely and printid hit in hir mynde and
thoght on his passion andayne and rewardid hym with hir consiens and
good herte to hir power and seuerally chose hym for hir speciell loue and no loue but hym as ye shall finde hereafter. moreouer þis virgen daily remembrid the mekenes and compassion with þe lamentable teris of pite whiche the virgen mare had in the tyme of his precus passion and when she saw hir sonne slayne with a spere on the crosse then hir maternall loue was ferently kindelic [and] stedfastly printid in hir hert.

This virgen mary kyndly loued hir sonne whiche was a president vnto this holy virgen. (ff. 115r-v)

There are several important things happening in this passage. First, the writer encourages his readers and listeners to engage in a highly affective form of devotion popular in the late middle ages. He identifies Mary's "lamentable teris of pite" at the sight of Christ's torment as the definitive spiritual expression for the religious or lay (woman) reader. Sandra McEntire, in The Doctrine of Compunction in Medieval England, argues, that the "link between the affective devotion to the crucified Christ and the doctrine of compunction is particularly encouraged by the widespread devotion to Mary in her sufferings at the foot of the cross."37 The focus on Mary watching and, in so doing, suffering, shifts the focus from an identification with the incarnate and tormented Christ to an identification with the sufferings of the first to experience that affective relationship. Mary is earthly, of the earth, in a way that Christ, even when incarnate, is not, and the woman reader is; she has experienced maternity, as most laywomen probably did, and she is virgin, even as the Christian woman (religious or lay) is encouraged to
various levels of chastity. And Mary's attitude of contemplation and her meek behavior confirms the obedience required of the enclosed nun or woman of the nobility. In fact, Mary is an image of the affective spirituality promoted in this text: through her very posture she embodies the characteristics of this devotion by standing and looking on the cross. She provides the "president vnto this holy virgen" and all practioners of affective piety by allowing her love to be "ferently kindelid and stedfastly printid in hir hert" by the sight (or contemplation) of Christ's passion. The experience this promotes, however, is a highly mediated one: the reader contemplates Katherine imitating Mary contemplating the Cross (f. 115v).

Margery Kempe expresses this desire for association with Mary in her devotion through many of her visions, but unlike the experience prescribed by this text, she insists in participating in a strikingly less mediated way. She imagines herself as Mary's handmaid, contemplating the nativity by participating in the physical nature of the event. She uses, even as the writer of the Prohemium urges, the memory of Mary's sorrows at the foot of the cross as an entry-point into the devotion of Christ's humanity, but allows the identification with Mary to draw her mind into Christ's passion in a much more...ive way. Margery recasts her relationship with Mary and her companions at the foot of the Cross into a female community of which she becomes an important part. She is advised by Mary to rejoice in her personal offering as it symbolises her identification with the first women watchers of the Cross: "And [erfor, dowl3r, 3yf þu wylt be
partabyl in owyr joye, þu must be partabil in owyr sorwe."

Several moments in the MS. Harley 4012 Life of St. Katherine itself reflect the desire for affective devotion apparent in the Prohemium. Taken on their own, the descriptions and phrases are not necessarily unique, or even unusual; however, the suggestions of affectivity become intensified by the proximity of the more overt exhortations in the opening discourse. For instance, the legend begins with a description of Katherine "as she sate musing in hir stode and contemplacion of hir moste dere lorde and truée spouse" (f. 116r). And a little later, we read that she "pensiued and sorowid gretly for the dishownor donne to our saueowr and very spouse" (f. 116r). Both of these images are common to other versions of the prose Life, but in this instance, they strikingly recall the descriptions of appropriate female behaviour prescribed in the Prohemium. In this way - by the introduction of the images in the Prohemium - Katherine’s behaviour is rescripted into an example of acceptable female religious experience.

After his final offer to make her his queen, Katherine rejects Maxentius with an intensity not found in the other versions:

"O þou moste ffole Wher is thy Sapiens whi spekiste þou so folely in voide termes and of vayne cantilis for hit is vnkindines to thinke on hym for I haue tolde þe plainly and doo. þat I am only youuen to our lord ihesu C.iste in whom is all my joy and loue With all þe Switnes of my saule nothin paising in my Stomake but for hym or in hym wher flatring nor
compulsion with turnamentis intolerable shall not disseuer me from hym."

(f. 119v)⁴⁰

The phrase "nothin paising in my Stomake but for hym or in hym" is the most unusual here, apparently meaning "nothing affecting or stirring my passion and/or affection except for him."⁴¹ This added phrase intensifies the affective element of the love relationship and emphasizes the other descriptions of her union with her spouse, Christ.

The closest relationship to the themes occurring in the Prohemium and Life of St. Katherine can be found in the Passion poem, "Ihesu the sonne Mare mylde" (ff. 106r-108v) and the Passion prayer "Wofully araide" (ff. 109r-109v).⁴² The poem begins with an acknowledgement of the efficacious power of meditating on the passion: "let thy passion be in my mynde/ To put away tentacion of the feide." The writer of the poem invites the believer to indulge in the tears encouraged in the Prohemium by asking "Hoo myght behold and wepe not to see?"

On Caluery, pat hie montayne

þou were brought up with many a spere.

What creature myght behold sartayne

The tiranny of the lues ther.

So malicius what tyme thei wer?

To se þe hong on the rode tree

Hoo myght behold and wepe not to see?
To see what he hanging on he crosse
With a crowne of thorne set on thi hed. (f. 108r)

The poem includes many of the images of the passion (delayed over, repeated in
detail, persuading the reader towards pity) that are found in the Prohemium. The
Prohemium repeats these images in a more compact form, reminding the reader of
her obligation to pity the sight of Christ’s broken body, even as St. Katherine did.

This holy virgen and martir is remembrid in scripture in somoche that
every man and woman may haue a respecte and se what meret is youen
vnto them that stedfastly with herte will and mynde in the laues of all
myghte god be daily and howrely abiding hauyng remembrans on the
precious passion of criste ihesu and a remors how tenderly how louyngly
how mekely he kamme and discendid from the trone celestiall into a
maidens ombe in erthe suffering honger and colde rebukyng and disspsising
of the fals Iues ... how in erthe was slayne on the montayne of caluery
solde and betraide with treson by Iudas the fals traitor and so brought vnto
the Iugement of pilate and execusion goun he to be cruceside and displaide
and his handis and feete nailed with nailes and his herte persid with longes
sharp Spere and on his hed a crowne of thorne drinkyng esell and gall then
ranne his precius blode downe distilling from the hert and all this was for to
redeeme mankynde and bringe hym vnto the glot, us habitacion of heuen

If this muste euery creaturee remember as did this holy maiden and
virgen for she rememberde this daily and howrely and prayid hit in hir
mynde and thoght on his passion and payne. . . . (ff. 115r-115v)

Similarly, the poem describes how Christ was beaten, bound hand and foot, his body red with blood, providing verbal pictures for the devout imagination to contemplate. As well, the poem considers how he came to earth, experienced hunger and cold, was betrayed, and all for the salvation of humankind - images and phrases repeated in the passage cited above.

To swete ihesu, which borne were of a maide
In the tyme of Brume with his furnis colde,
Lying in krib full porely araide.
And after Iudas ful falsly the solde
This were þou betraied many a folde,
Suffring hunger and thirst, bothe to,
And for owre weth bothe sorow and woo. (f. 108r)

The Passion poem, the prayer and the Prohemium work on the principle that the images will be intensified in the mind of the reader through a series of repetitions in close proximity. For example, the poem recounts:

The blod from thy hert fast gan ran downe,
þi side was launsid with longis spere,
On þi hed an vnniytly crowne
ffor suche a kyng right semple to were. (f. 106r)

Compare this with the following passage from the Prohemium: the grouping of images are identical - the blood from the heart, the spear, the crowne - though
expanded and in slightly different order.

... and his herte persid with longes sharp Spere and on his hed a crowne
of thorne drinkynge esell and galle then ranne his precius blode downe
distilling from the hert. ... (f. 115r)

The Prohemium also makes use of images from the passion prayer,

"Wofully araide." The prayer is an appeal from the cross to the believer for
sympathy and pity for the suffering Christ endured. It is graphic and compelling, a
catalogue of the wounds and sufferings inflicted on Christ. A crude sketch of the
crucifixion occurs at the head of the prayer, directing the reader's attention yet
more explicitly to the Cross. The sketch provides a not so subtle visual emphasis
of the imagery in these texts, and forces the reader actually to look on the Cross
even as she has been persuaded to do.

Thus nakid am I nailid, O man, for thy sake.

I loue þe, þenne loue me. Why slepist þou? Awake.

Remember my tender hert-rote for the brake,

With paynes my vaines constrayned to crake.

This was I defasid,

This was my flesh rasid,

And I to deth chasid.

Like a lambe led vnto sacrefise,

Slayne I was in most cruell wise.

Of sharp thorne, I haue wore a crowne on my hed,
So rubbid, so bobbid, so rfulle, so red,
Sore payned, sore strayned, and for þi loue ded.
Vnfyndern, not demed, my blod for þe shed,
  My fete and handis sore,
  With sturde I suffer more
  What myght I suffer more
  þen I haue sufferde, man, for þe?
  Com when þou wilt, and welcome to me.

(ff. 109r-v)

The similarities between the poem and prayer and the Prohemium suggest that this unique introductory discourse originated with the grouping of texts described. That is, the Life as it exists in MS. Harley 4012 is not radically different from version b except for the Prohemium which emphasizes the themes and images found in the other works of the manuscript. It is possible that the introduction to the Life came into being when this particular manuscript was compiled (it is, relative to the Life, free of copy errors); at the very least, the Prohemium was written in an attempt to link the Life with the affective spirituality espoused in the texts intended to be read together with it. The addition of the Prohemium to suit the compilation, or even to adjust the focus of the Life, would not necessarily have been considered a corruption of the original text. As Vincent Gillespie has argued, "Whatever governed the process of selection, compilers and collectors felt little compunction when excerpting and rearranging material from
other texts. The important criterion is not the integrity of the text, but its utility in context."43

If as seems probable, MS. Harley 4012 was prepared specifically for Anne Wyngefield, then what remains to be considered is what part she might have played in its compilation. This can not be determined with any real certainty, but Gillespie suggests that, in some cases, "books were produced to order specifically for lay readers."44 And Felicity Riddy, in her discussion of the compilation process of the Vernon manuscript, argues that "we should not assume that women were merely passive recipients of books. . . . In the relation between the male clerks and their women readers it must often have been difficult to tell who followed and who led."45 Carol Meale returns to the example of Sir John Paston's 'grete boke' in order "to gain an idea of the control which a buyer could exert over the making of a book." She concludes that "In the main, investigation of the make-up of manuscripts provides the most reliable evidence concerning the choices open to buyers. The recurrence of the same texts within the component booklets of a volume, for example, . . . suggest that scribes and/or stationers increasingly came to rely upon reproducing a set combination of texts within units which, although self-contained and relatively inexpensive to produce, could be collected together by a purchaser to create a more substantial 'library'."46

While not exactly the same situation as Sir John Paston's 'grete boke,' MS. Harley 4012 does prompt similar questions concerning its compilation. Curt Bühler argued that Paston's manuscript was based on a 'standard' volume, from
which possibly numerous copies derived, providing evidence for an "early instance of 'mass-production'."\textsuperscript{47} MS. Harley 4012 has close connections with at least one other manuscript, implying a derivation similar to that suggested by Bühler. MS. Lambeth Palace 3597 (formerly of the Throckmorton collection at Coughton Court, Warwickshire) shares the first eight items found in MS. Harley 4012, though their placement in the manuscript is somewhat different.\textsuperscript{48} What this reveals, however, is that these manuscripts are not products of random compilation, and suggests that they derive from a "master" volume of the kind imagined by Bühler. If this is so, then the implications for a discussion of "popular literature" - perhaps even "mass-produced" women's literature - increase dramatically. The only medieval inscription in MS. Lambeth Palace \textsuperscript{597,}

"Elyzbeth", indicates a female owner early in its life,\textsuperscript{49} who, like Anne Wyngefield, may have had some control or influence over the extra texts included in her volume.

What must be considered at this point in the discussion is how the extra items in MS. Harley 4012 (the ones Bühler describes as "special items ... added to suit the tastes of the individual purchaser"\textsuperscript{50}) were chosen. If the first eight items are considered the "stock" pieces, then the ones possibly chosen for or by Anne Wyngefield include the "Pardon of the monastery of Sheen" (where she had clear commitments), the Lives of St. Margaret, Anne and Patrick, the Passion poem and prayer discussed in this chapter, and the prose Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria. The significance of the Life of St. Katherine in the context of the other texts
(specifically the Passion poem and prayer) suggests that it at least was a central choice. Either Anne Wyngefield requested a Life of St. Katherine in her collection, or the compiler considered the Life of St. Katherine suitable reading material for a devout lay-woman; either of these possible situations implies the importance of this particular saint within the reading patterns of medieval women.

In her discussion of MS. Harley 4012, Anne Dutton argues that ownership of this particular manuscript fits into Anne Wyngefield’s conscious construction of herself as a pious woman and therefore a respectable wife and widow.51 This self-fashioning is mirrored in the construction of St. Katherine in this version of her legend as a model of the contemporary affective devotion so popular with the women of Anne Wyngefield’s class. St. Katherine’s importance as a means of both demonstrating appropriate female behaviour and providing indications of the ways in which women resisted that regulation becomes even more pronounced in Bokenham’s "Lyf of S. Katryne."
Chapter 3: Endnotes


5. Kurvinen catalogues 22 extant manuscripts of the four versions from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, not including the Southwell Minster MS. This remarkably high survival rate indicates a tremendous popularity in the Middle Ages, and yet the prose Life has received, relatively, very little interest in modern
criticism when compared to, for example, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (16 extant manuscripts including 2 fragmentary, all fifteenth century) and *The Canterbury Tales* (55 complete extant, 28 more containing one or more tale). Cf. Larry Benson, gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987) 1118, 1161.

6. The material in this section summarises some of the information provided by Kurvinen in the introduction to her thesis, and in the later chapter titled, "Interrelationship of the Manuscripts," 1-3, 138-162.


12. Manfred Gorläch describes the progression of the Latin collection of saints' legends known as the *Legende aurea* which greatly influenced many later collections of saints' lives, including the *South English Legendary* (composed before 1285), the *Scottish Legendary*, and the *Northern Homily Collection*. According to Gorläch, the Latin collection was translated around 1334 by Jean de Vignay, whose French *Legende doree* was only one of several independent French translations (11-13, 14). This French version was "englished" around 1438 and became the *Gilte Legende*, which provided one of the sources (along with Latin and French models) for Caxton's *Golden Legend* in 1483. Gorläch, *The South English Legendary, the Gilte Legende and the Golden Legend*, (Braunschweig: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1972) 7-18.


15. MS. Addit. 33510, ff. 1-68v; Gonville and Caius College, MS. 390/610, ff. 56v-82v; and the MS. edited by H. H. Gibbs for the Roxburghe Club, London, 1884, which has been identified by Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen as Harvard University Library, Richardson MS. 44, ff. 2-125. Kurvinen 2; Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen xii.


22. Doyle, note XXII, 270.


24. Doyle, note XXII, 269.
25. Doyle, note XXII, 269.


27. Doyle, note XXII, 269-70.


30. For a full list of items contained in MS. Harley 4012, see the introduction to Appendix I.


32. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family" 240; Cf. Regan liv, cxxxviii.

33. Regan xcvi.

34. Doyle, "Books Connected with the Vere Family" 231.


36. Kurvinen’s version b: ll. 813-816. This construction is similar to the encouragement found in Kurvinen’s example for version a, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS. 237, ff. 1-12 (cf. ll. 717-721), and in the Southwell Minsier MS. 7, (Nevanlinna and Taavitsainen’s version Q). ll. 895-897.

37. Sandra McEntyre, The Doctrine of Compunction in Medieval England: Holy


39. Kempe ch. 29.

40. Cf. Version b ll. 724-729; a ll. 635-639; (Q) allows Katherine relatively little expression of mystical love at this point in the narrative: "Do all þat þu hast þouȝt, for I am redy to suffre for the love of God all þat þu cannyst ymagyne" (ll. 914-915).

41. "Paising" seems to be from OF verb "Peise" - meaning weigh down, burden, oppress.

42. The poem, "Ihesu the sonne Mare mylde," has been printed by Edward Wilson in "An Unpublished Passion Poem in British Library MS. Harley 4012," Notes and Queries December (1977): 485-488. "Wofully araide" appears in Carleton Brown's Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century, 1938, no. 103. All quotations in this chapter are from my own transcriptions, included with the transcription of the Prohemium and Life of St. Katherine.


44. Gillespie 319.

45. Riddy 107.
46. Meale 220.


48. Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript" 296-299.

49. Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript" 298.

50. Bühler 351.

Chapter Four

"In balnadhys rymyd ful craftyly":

The "souereyn cunynge" of Osbern Bothenham’s Legendys of Hooly Wummen

Many a matrone of hy wurthynesse,
Many a wedwe, & many a maydyn ying,
Aftyre yer folawy, ful sore wepyng
For sorwe pat she pis wys shuld deye.

("Lyf of S. Kateryne" 7280-83)

Very little is known for certain about Osbern Bothenham’s life, and the few facts we do have are mostly provided in the Introductions to the separate narratives in his Legendys of Hooly Wummen. He was born on St. Faith’s day ("Lyf of S. Feyth," l. 4034) fifty years before beginning the "Vita S. Margaretae" (l. 248). Since he states that he began his version of the Life of St. Margaret on 7 September 1443, his birthdate, therefore, was either 6 October 1392 or 1393,
depending on whether he was anticipating his fiftieth or fifty-first birthday (ll. 187-91).\textsuperscript{2} The unique manuscript of the complete \textit{Legendys}, British Library MS. Arundel 327, was copied in 1447; Mary Serjeantson suggests that since Bokenham's name is given in this copy (and he had expressly desired that his name be left hidden) it is likely that he had died just before the copying was complete.\textsuperscript{3} Sheila Delany, on the other hand, claims that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Bokenham was living at Clare Priory at least as late as 1463.\textsuperscript{4}

During his life as an Augustinian friar of Clare Priory,\textsuperscript{5} Bokenham participated as an active member in the flourishing writing community of East Anglia, described by A. S. G. Edwards as catering "to appetites of readers for vernacular works, often lay readers."\textsuperscript{6} Samuel Moore, at the beginning of this century, considered the benefit of a community of enthusiastic patrons for a group of writers:

It occasionally happened, however, that in a prosperous and unified country district a number of persons, closely connected by ties of acquaintance and interest, were patronising literature of about the same time, causing books to be written and rewarding writers who composed books for their benefit. It is obvious that such a condition must have been very favourable to literary production, first, because the number of possible readers of a new book was increased by its chance of passing from the hands of the patron for whom it was written into those of friends who would cause it to be
copied, and secondly because writers were encouraged to seek new patronage, or to undertake works which they would not have attempted had they lived in a community where but one person was known to be interested in the writing of books, ... Moreover, among patrons who were mutually well known to each other, the spirit of emulation could scarcely fail to be a stimulus to activity in the work of patronising letters.  

Just such a community, Moore and others argue, existed in mid-fifteenth-century East Anglia (the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk), home to Bokenham, and also to John Capgrave (in Lynn), John Lydgate (in Bury St. Edmunds), as well as other writers such as John Metham and Margery Kempe.  

It is very probable that Bokenham, Capgrave and Lydgate, anyway, knew each other, or at the very least knew of each other.  

Bokenham, at least, was familiar with the writings of the others for he refers directly to them both in his *Legendys*. That their audiences overlapped seems likely given the reading patterns of layfolk in the fifteenth century and their common manuscript histories confirms this: Lydgate’s *Life of Our Lady* appears in MS. Arundel 168 with Capgrave’s *Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria*, and also in MS. Harley 4011 with a unique copy of Bokenham’s *Polychronicon* translation.  

The *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* exists in only one manuscript, British Library MS. Arundel 327.  

Serjeantson states that the "hands of three scribes appear in the manuscript, referred to here as A, B, and C. A was the copyist of ‘St. Margaret,’ B of ‘St. Anne,’ and C of the remainder of the volume, except for
the latter part of the final note, which, . . . was added by B." 12 The text consists of thirteen saints' lives, in this order: Sts. Margaret, Anne, Christine, Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins, Faith, Agnes, Dorothy, Mary Magdalene, Katherine, Cecilia, Agatha, Lucy and Elizabeth of Hungary. It includes also a general Prologue to the collection, an extra "Prolocutorie" to the legend of St. Mary Magdalene, and individual prologues to all of the legends except Sts. Christine, Ursula, Faith and Dorothy. Bokenham employs three different verse forms throughout the 10,617 lines of the collection: decasyllabic rymed couplet, rhyme-royale (ABABCC), and Monk's Tale stanza (ABABBCBC).

Bokenham began the Legendys with the "Vita S. Margaretae" on 7 September 1443, at the request of "oon whom I loue wyth herte entere,/ Whych that hath a synguler deuocyon/ To thys virgyne of pure affeccyoun" (ll. 178-80). By Twelfth Night, 1445, in an account of a conversation with Isabel Bourchier, the Countess of Eu and one of his patrons, Bokenham lists the legends he has already translated: Sts. Anne, Margaret, Dorothy, Faith, Christine, Agnes, and the 11,000 virgins. If, as seems likely, the collection was complete sometime just before the copying was finished (1447) that would leave Sts. Elizabeth, Katherine, Cecilia, Agatha, and Lucy for the years between 1445 and 1447.

Edwards has described the probable history of the compilation of MS. Arundel 327. Given the multiple scribal hands, the variations in codicological styles and decorations, and the addition of two quires into the original quire sequence, he argues that the "creation of this manuscript was, in some respects a
rather piecemeal affair." Edwards hypothesises that Bokenham began with the prologue and the "Life of St. Margaret," probably not intending to translate any other lives; however, for some unclear reason ("Whether it was Burgh's response ["Frere Thomas Burgh" the one for whom the manuscript was copied], local pressures, Bokernam's evident facility in this form of composition, or some combination of these factors") he produced more lives and transmitted them to Burgh for compilation. As he emphasizes, "there is nothing in the first part of the manuscript to suggest any larger design or plan," and further, "there appears no controlling schematic or other necessity to the sequence of legends as we now have it." Edwards' conclusions are especially significant given Sheila Delany's recent argument concerning the relationship between Bokenham's Legendys of Hooly Wommen and Chaucer's Legend of Good Wommen. Delany's hypothesis is that "Bokenham's poem is modeled on Chaucer's Legend of Good Women, and that this imitation provided, to some extent, a principle of selection and arrangement." She argues further that, though Bokenham's selection of the legends may seem to be based more or less on the desires of his patrons and arranged mostly, by his own textual admission, chronologically, in fact "we cannot know the literal truth about the commissions and whether the author himself might have proposed a subject; nor can we know at what point an organizational structure suggested itself, whether from the start or partway through." Unfortunately, the evidence Delany brings forward to support this possibility is
unconvincing. She insists on a parallel relationship between the two texts, claiming that Bokenham's intentional "correspondences with Chaucer's mock-legendary are consistent throughout the first ten lives, that their order follows the order of Chaucer's Legend, and that their number is statistically far beyond coincidence."17 But, as she does admit, several of Bokenham's legends have no connections at all with Chaucer's collection, and at least one of Chaucer's legends (Phyllis) finds no correspondence in Bokenham's collection. Delany's argument relies primarily on superficial thematic correspondences between the stories; for instance in describing Bokenham's connections between his legend of St. Dorothy and Chaucer's story of Lucrece, she claims that Bokenham directs our attention to "the image of feet as a memorable detail."18

In fact, I do believe that Bokenham, in his translations of the saints' narratives for his (mostly) female patrons, was influenced by Chaucer's Legend of Good Women, but not in the specific ways Delany suggests. It is simply not possible to maintain that Bokenham followed a close structural or organisational pattern based on Chaucer's earlier collection. If it is tempting to see intricate connections between the works, it is only because Chaucer's poem parodies the genre Bokenham participates in. But Bokenham's collection, on the surface, is perfectly conventional and traditional; it just happens to follow, chronologically, Chaucer's very unusual appropriation of the saint's life genre. In other words, Bokenham does not reproduce Chaucer's style. Rather, Chaucer anticipates Bokenham through his appropriation of the language of hagiography and his
interest in an all-female legendary. Chaucer's exemplary women are all "clene
maydenes and . . . trewe wyves"; the narratives describe the "wo that they endure
for here trouthe." 19

For to hyre love were they so trewe
That, rathere than they wolde take a newe,
They chose to be ded in sondry wyse,
And deiden, as the story wol devyse;
And some were brend, and some were cut the hals,
And some dreyn for they wolden not be fals;
For alle kepeth they here maydenhede,
Or elles wedlok, or here widewehede. 20

The women in this collection endure torments similar to hagiographical narratives
in order to maintain their "trouthe," here understood as sexual constancy (like the
virgin's sexual purity). The description of Medea, betrayed by Jason, is very like
the familiar accounts of female saints choosing the heavenly bridegroom over the
wishes of mortal suitors and earthly fathers

This is the mede of lovynge and guerdoun
That Medea receyved of Jasoun
Ryght for hire trouthe and for hire kyndenesse,
That lovede hym beter than hireself, I gesse,
And lafte hire fader and hire herytage. 21

Bokenham was influenced by Chaucer's earlier mock-hagiography, I would
argue, but not in the precise nature of thematic correspondences or structural parallels. Rather, it seems clear that Bokenham anticipated that his collection (or even, initially, individual narratives) would be set beside, and compared with, Chaucer’s Legendys of Good Women in the minds of his readers. His Legendys would, ideally, replace the earlier secular exemplars of “good” women with more appropriate examples of “holy” women\textsuperscript{22} - appropriate, that is, for the laywomen readers he provided translations for. In other words, it is the very hagiographical references or structures in Chaucer’s poem that attract a comparison between the two; Bokenham is attempting to wrest the form away from Chaucer’s secular poem and firmly re-establish it in the spiritual realm for his readers. As the internal description of his collection affirms:

> Of dyuers legendys, wych my rudnesse

> From latyn had turnyd in-to our language,

> Of hooly wummen. . . \textsuperscript{23}

It is in the context of this rescripting of Chaucer’s secular legendary that we must place Bokenham’s repeated references to the Chaucer, Lydgate and Gower trio throughout his Legendys. The discourse of humility that connects the various accounts of Bokenham’s creative activity needs to be considered in light of the relationship with Chaucer’s early poem (described above), as well as with his relationship with his (mostly female) patrons. Both Nicholas Watson and David Lawton have described the ways later readers of fifteenth-century poetry mistakenly accept the familiar and frequent modesty topos as legitimate statements
of the poet's skill. Watson argues that "Many of the fifteenth-century 'Chaucerian' poets are still patronized even by those seeking to rehabilitate them; their rhetorical expressions of gratitude to Chaucer are read at face value (as signs of inferiority), while the ambition and confidence of many of them is not." This description accurately describes most of the readers of Bokenham's Legendys of Hooly Wummen. Serjeantson acknowledges Bokenham's admiration of Chaucer and Gower and Lydgate, concluding that his statements of inferiority are unfortunately accurate: "His writing is not very polished or skilful, in spite of considerable practice." Derek Pearsall, in "The English Chaucerians," claims that Bokenham's "rejection of the high style is explicit, but he rejects it so often and at such length, with so much elaboration of the rhetorical topics and so many references to the Gower-Chaucer-Lydgate trinity, that he seems to be hankering after it. The disclaimers sound as conventional as Lydgate's, but the difference is that Bokenham really means them." And even Delany, though intending to create new interest in Bokenham and in the Legendys, only extends half a compliment: "When Bokenham apologizes for his lack of polish, he is to some extent indulging in the conventional 'modesty topos,' for his management of rhyme and rhetoric is skilled enough; but his metrics surely warrant the disclaimer."

That Bokenham's discourse of humility masks a moral superiority, however, is clear from a close consideration of some of his references to Chaucer and Gower and Lydgate. In the prologue to St. Anne he claims:

IF I hadde cunnyng and eloquens
My conceytes crafly to dilate,
Als whilom dede the fyrsh rethoryens,
Gowere, Chauncere, & now Lytgate,
I wold me besyn to translate
Seynt anne lyf in-to oure langage.
But sekyr I fere to gynne so late,
Lest men wolde ascryuen it to dotage.
For wel I know that fer in age
I am runne, & my lyues date
Aprochith fast, & the fers rage
Of cruel deth- so wyl my fate
Ineuytale - hath at my gate
Set hys carte to carye me hens;
And I ne may ne can, than I hym hate,
Ageyn hys fors make resistens. (1401-16)

He continues that it "Best were for me to leue makynge/ Of englysh, & suche as
ys amys/ To reformyn in my lyuyenge," reasoning that that

. . . ys a ryght souereyn cunnynge:
A man to knowen hys trespasce,
Wyth ful purpos of amendynge,
As ferforth as god wyl grawnte hym grace. (1421-24)

Lawton has argued that for Bokenham this "souereyn cunnynge" implies "a piety
and moral uprightness superior to the merely poetic cunning that [he] admits he lacks. 

I agree completely, and would argue further that this piety informs all of Bokenham's relationships within and outside the text: the juxtaposing of the "cunnyng and eloquens" of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate (and by extension all of the authors acknowledged by Bokenham) with the "souereyn cunynge" of Christian living sets up a hierarchy of virtue wherein the rhetorical skill is eclipsed by the knowledge of (and importantly the ability to instruct) Christian living.

Bokenham illustrates this juxtaposition - rhetorical "cunnyng and eloquens" against the "souereyn cunynge" of virtuous living - perfectly in the "Lyf of S. Kateryne;" Katherine is the female saint most closely allied with learning and debate, yet Bokenham emphasizes her dependence on "crystys sacramentys" for her "wyt" in the debate with the philosophers.

For treuly I mak a protestacyoun
That syth I am in crystys sacramentys
Instruct, I for-sake alle argumentys
Of seculer kunnyng, & of phylosophye,
And oþir thyng to kun I now denye
Than hym whych welle is of alle uertu
And of al kunnyng, my lord cryst Ihesu,

\[\ldots\]\n
Lo, syrs, þis my phylosophy ys,
Myn wyt, myn art, & al my kunnyng,
Bysyde wych I knouleche to kun no þyng.

Thys kunnyng passyth al tresore & cophyrs.

(6764-70, 6792-95)

Earlier in the poem, Bokenham had similarly exchanged the classical muses as a means of inspiration (lines 1450-64) for the "influence dyuyne" of heaven, specifically Mary. He beseeches his patron to pray for that creative intercession on his behalf -

Preyth ye enterly þat blyssed virgyne,

Whiche of seynt anne þe dowter was,

That she vouchesaf som beem lat shyne

vp-on me of hyr specyal grace,

And þat I may haue leyser & spaas,

Thorgh help of influence dyuyne,

To oure both confort & solace. (1469-75)

This appeal explicitly affirms the hierarchy of moral superiority through the juxtaposing of secular and spiritual inspiration (classical muses vs. the Virgin Mary) and establishes Bokenham as the spokesperson of this same virtuous knowledge he ascribes to Katherine, notwithstanding his seeming lack of rhetorical skill. In this way, the rhetorical eloquence of the earlier poets becomes devalued by comparison with the "souereyn cunnyng" of Christian living, and his value as spiritual director increases, even as he continues to regret his inability to compete in "seculer kunnyng."
The inverted hierarchy (spiritual living over rhetorical skill) implied by Bokenham's discourse of humility provides the context for his relationship with Capgrave's earlier *Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria*. Though he knows the text, and refers to it directly, he admits to deliberately not making use of much of the narrative material found there, specifically Capgrave's description of the youth and conversion of Katherine and the details of her journey with Adrian and her marriage to Christ. He does this, however, through an extended modesty topos that screens his real desire: to justify his selection and arrangement of the narrative events. He beseeches his reader not to expect from him the story of how Katherine was "conuertyd & crystnyd in hyr youthe," for he claims "pat mater to me is ful vnkouthe." And further:

But who-so lyst knowleche for to haue,

And in pat mater enuereyd to be,

My fadrys book, maystyr Ioon Capgraeue,

Wych pat but newly compylyd he,

Mote he seke, & he þere shal se

In balaadys rymyd ful craftyly

All þat for ignorance here nowe leue I. (6354-60)

In a clever subversion of the modesty topos, Bokenham laments his inability to compete with his "fadrye book" in exactly the form he praises, the "balaadys rymyd ful craftyly" (the rhyme royale stanzas) of Capgrave's text. Bokenham's "Lyf of S. Kateryne" consists of rhyming couplets; the prologue to the legend,
however, and the references to Capgrave's poem, consists of rhyme royale stanzas. In this way, Bokenham defuses the modesty topos he begins with - he is obviously technically capable of "balaadys rymyd ful craftyly" - and directs our attention to what he really means, which is, his evaluation of the appropriateness of Capgrave's poem for his reader. For, as he continues, according to his "estymacyoun," that "book is rare/ And straunge to gete," therefore:

Compendously of al I wyl declare
No more but oonly be passyoun,
Of kateryne Howard to gostly consolacyoun,
And to conforte eek of Denstoun kateryne,
If grace my wyt wyl illumyne. (6361-67)

It is possible that this declaration - that he will only recount the passion of the saint and not the lengthier narrative events featured by Capgrave - reflects in part the limitations imposed on Bokenham by the necessity for brevity: he claims that the whole legend only took him five days to translate (7367). It is more likely, though, that in his "estymacyoun" the material he chooses not to include is less appropriate for his intended readers (Katherine Howard and Katherine Denstoun) than the material he presents from his obvious source, the Legenda Aurea. The effect of Bokenham's "estymacyoun" implicitly privileges his source material over Capgrave's lengthier account. What is really at issue here is Capgrave's description of Katherine's defense of her virginity (Book II of his Life of St. Katherine is devoted to the parliament convened by her councillors to
persuade her to marry) and her union with Christ which he represents in Book III as a literally understood marriage. Significantly, Bokenham does return to some of the imagery familiar to readers of Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine* at the end of his "Lyf." The heavenly voice which answers Katherine's final request describes the celebration waiting for her on the other side of her martyrdom:

'Come, loue! com, spouse! come hedyr to me!

For þe gate of blysse opnyd is to þe.

And owte þere-at, my spouse swete,

Of seyntys greth noumbe commyth þe to mete,

Bryngynge wyth hem to glade þe wyth-al

Of euere-lastynng blysse a crowν tryumphal,

Wych þou shalt weryn eternally. (7319-25)

This uncommon\(^2\) description of the "seyntys greth noumbe" and the "crown tryumphal" waiting for her at the gates recalls Capgrave's account of this final speech (V, 1860-83) as well as his description of her reception into the heavenly court in Book III - precisely the material Bokenham claims to avoid in the opening to his "Lyf."

I would suggest that Bokenham includes this description of the rewards awaiting Katherine at the end of her life as a means of adapting the narrative for his specific readers. Capgrave introduces the heavenly host and the crown Katherine receives in the course of describing her pre-martyrdom union with Christ: we read that she is there precisely because of her virginity ("Welcome, of
clennesse very swote rose! / ffor youre virginite, with-outen ony glose, / Shal we receyue you" [III, 949-51]). In other words, Capgrave's Katherine is a pure virgin, a suitable bride for Christ even before her conversion to Christianity (by a remarkable miracle, as it later is explained), and the emphasis in this narrative is on her union with Christ and her fight to maintain her virginity and her Christian faith against Maxentius' demands. In Bokenham's account however, there is a lessened emphasis on Katherine's virginity: certainly she is virgin, but he does not over-emphasize the fact, choosing instead to accentuate other parts of her character as well. For instance, after Maxentius offers Katherine the chance to be "honouryd lyche as a quen" in his court, she responds in a rational, reasonable manner, matching his demand that she "lystyn what I say" with her own "to my wurdys ageyn/ Tak hede, & lystyn what I shal seyn." She compares her options matter-of-factly, without, however, the emotionally charged description of other accounts:

Dyscern now trewly by a iust sentence,

Whethyr I owe of uery prudence

Rather hym chesyn wych in mychty,

Stable and regnyng eternally,

Graceyous, gloryous, ful of beute,

Or hym wych stant in contrarye degre;

That is to seyn, myhtlees & vnstable,

Whos regne is short & sone meuable,
Graceles, vngloryous, ful of deiformyte. (7057-65)

The reduced emphasis on her position as virginal bride of Christ throughout the early part of the narrative, and the somewhat greater stress on this part of her character at the end of her life (and the end of the legend) reveals Bokenham's intent: in this collection of saints' stories generally, and in the "Lyf of S. Kateryne" especially we see his desire to accommodate the specific life situations of his acknowledged lay-women readers. By turning the focus away from a life of perpetual virginity and union with Christ (as literal Bride, in the case of Capgrave's account), Bokenham redirects the reader towards a contemplation of Katherine's rewards at the end of her saintly and holy life. In other words, she is still the spouse of Christ, but the emphasis of that relationship comes at the end of the narrative (the end of her life), and not during her life on earth. Significantly, in the heavenly speech welcoming Katherine to her eternal reward, no explicit mention is made of the saint's virginity, as if to make that specific relationship more inclusive of Christians, generally.

Bokenham's desire to accommodate his text for his lay-women patrons is further revealed in his description of the crowds following Katherine to her death:

Many a matrone of hy wurthynesse,

Many a wedwe, & many a mydyn ying,

Aftyr hyr folwyd, ful sore wepyng

For sorwe þat she þis wys shuld deye;

To whom benygnely katelyne dede seye:
'O nobyl wyuys & wedwys & maydyns ying,
Leuyth your heuynesse & your wepyng.' (7280-86)

Not once, but twice, he explicitly inverts the traditional hierarchy of virgin, widow, wife to emphasize the "wurthynesse" of wives in this description. With this representation of the women who follow St. Katherine, Bokenham provides implicitly a compliment to the "nobyl wyuys" for whom this life was translated. Katherine Howard and Katherine Denston (6365-66) both belonged to families of some considerable importance in East Anglia, and both epitomise perfectly late medieval laywomen readers. Katherine Denston and her husband John Denston, who seems to have been active in the public life of Suffolk, were the patrons also of Bokenham's "Vita S. Annae matris s. Mariae," perhaps on account of their daughter, Anne, named for that saint (2092-98). And though Moore claims that John Denston was well connected to "the group of literary patrons" in East Anglia, the Legendys of Hooly Wumen provides clear evidence that Katherine Denston was as well. Katherine Howard (possibly a relative of Elizabeth de Vere, countess of Oxford) was the wife of John Howard who became Duke of Norfolk in 1483. Moore records evidence of John Howard's book-buying, but suggests that "he is not known to have been a patron of literature in the strict sense of the word." Edwards suggests that this Katherine is "presumably the same person who was granted a letter of confraternity to Clare in 1445." Bokenham provides us with a full and detailed illustration of fifteenth-century lay patronage in his "Prolocutorye" to the "Lyf of Marye Maudelyn." On
Twelfth Night, 1445, he recounts:

In presence I was of þe lady bowsere,
Wych is also clepyd þe countesse of hu,
Doun conueyid by þe same pedegru
That þe duk of york is come, . . . (5004-07)
I saye, whyl þis ladys foure sonys ying
Besy were wyth reuel & wyth daunsyng,
And òpere mo in þere most fressh aray
Dysgysyd, . . . (5023-26)
I seye, whyl þei þus daunsyng dede walke
Aboute þe chaumbyr, wyth me to talke
It lykyd my lady of hyr ientynnesse
Of dyuers legendys, wych my rudnesse
From latyn had turnyd in-to our language,
Of hooly wummen . . . (5035-40)
And whyl [we] were besy in þis talkyng,
My lady hyr hooly & blyssyd purpoos
To me þis wyse þer dede oncloos:
‘I haue,’ quod she, ‘of pure affeccyoun
Ful longe tym had a synguler deuocyoun
To þat hooly wumman, wych, as I gesse,
Is clepyd of apostyls þe apostyllesse;
Blyssyd Mary mawdelyn y mene, . . . (5062-69)

Whos lyf in englysshe I desyre sothly
To han maad, & for my sake
If ye lykyd þe labour to take,
& for reuerence of hyr, I wold you preye.' (5072-75)

Bokenham records that he suffered serious doubt at this point, concerned as he is with his "lytyl experyence in rymyngs art," but continues:

I thowt how hard it is to denye
A-statys preyer, wych aftyr þe entent
of þe poete is a myhty comaundement;
Wherfore me thoht, as in þis caas,
That my wyt wer lakkyd bettyr it was
Than my wyl, & þerfore to do
My ladyys preyere I assentyd to. (5082-88)

He concludes with the agreement they reach: he asks and receives the Countess' permission to make his already promised pilgrimage to St. James before he begins the translation. This lengthy description is rich in details about the patronage community in East Anglia. Isabel Bourchier, Countess of Eu (sister of the Duke of York, and wife to Henry Bourchier who was later to become Earl of Essex\textsuperscript{39}) is an interesting example of a laywoman reader of devotional material. She is familiar with Bokenham's earlier legends (which confirms that they circulated amongst the East Anglian literary community), and apparently seeks him out to
request a translation of particular, personal interest. Important in Bokenham's account is the juxtaposition of the secular world of dancing and social obligations with the private, devotional life of this laywoman reader. And important, also, is the relationship Bokenham represents between the (male) writer/ cleric and the (female) laywoman/ patron.

Anne Clark Bartlett has described what she calls the "discourse of familiarity" which characterizes the relationship between male authors and female readers in the late Middle Ages. She argues that Middle English devotional texts which incorporate this discourse include:

elaborate protestations of humility like those found in earlier treatises of spiritual friendship exchanged between men. Male authors assert that they are unequal to the task of writing, characterize women readers as their spiritual and intellectual equals (and occasionally even their superiors), and claim that they presume to write only in response to the reader's request.

Texts originating out of the spiritual friendships between male writers and female patrons and which incorporate this discourse of familiarity are important primarily, according to Bartlett, because they provide a "challenge to the conventional spiritual hierarchy of God, man, and woman, and present an additional alternative to the ascetic antifeminism of earlier devotional literature."

What Bartlett does not seem to incorporate into her consideration of these relationships, however, is the possibility that spiritual directors may in fact have appropriated this discourse in a subtle attempt to manipulate the responses of their
female readers. In other words, she depicts the spiritual friendship as one in which the two parties engage with mutual respect and esteem. And these texts, she argues further, frequently openly reject the misogyny of earlier traditions in favour of an "affirmation of sexual equality," a "reciprocity that implicates the male author in his own advice and targets moral flaws among both sexes, rather than singling out women as weaker and inherently more sinful than men." I would agree that the model of spiritual friendship identified by Bartlett in her discussion of medieval devotional texts is crucial for a complete picture of the relationship of patron and writer, but would suggest further that this model may also screen the inherent inequality in that same relationship. That is, what Bartlett describes as an affirmation of the equality between the writer and reader may, at least in some cases, function more precisely as a tactic for the regulation of appropriate female behaviour. In other words, when a writer employs a modesty topos in relation to either his patron or his source material, it is at least occasionally possible to contextualise that modesty within a larger strategy of control or censorship.

Bokenham, as we have already seen, uses his excessive humility in relation to Chaucer to mask the underlying competitiveness of his task: to replace the legends of "good" women with the legends of "holy" women more appropriate to the layreaders of his community. And further, his modesty with respect to his "fadrys book" (Capgrave’s Life of St. Katharine) functions to redirect the reader’s attention away from Katherine’s union with Christ and her authority-defying
actions in defense of her virginity and on to the celebration of her union with her Bridegroom at the end of her life. The clearest indications of Bokenham's desire to regulate the behaviour of his laywomen readers, however, surface in relation to the final legend in his collection, the "Lyf of S. Elyabeth."

Though Edwards has persuasively argued that there is no clear logic to the arrangement of the legends generally, it seems likely that the version of the legend of St. Elizabeth of Hungary provides the one important exception to that statement. It is positioned last in the series, though we know from the prologue to the legend of Mary Magdalene that it was started before Isabel Bourchier made her request (5045-55). This legend is exceptional in the collection, for unlike any of the other saints, Elizabeth provides a contemporary model of a married woman saint, one complete with children and social obligations and secular responsibilities. She is, for Bokenham, the most appropriate mirror he can hold up to his readers:

And of þat holy & blyssyd matrone

Seynt Elyabeth, whos lyf alone

To alle wyuys myht a merour be

Of uery perfecceyoun in sundry degre. (5045-48)

Elizabeth yields herself to the rule of her father, acquiescing to his worldly demands, which among other things stipulate that she marry according to his arrangements; we can assume these sorts of demands were commonplace in the lives of the women readers of Bokenham's text. Though she would rather have
lived her life as a virgin for Christ, Bokenham describes how she submits to her
father's rule as befits a Christian daughter (9669-80), vowing to live her
widowhood, should her husband die before her, in "Perpetuel continence" (9688).

Elizabeth's spiritual and religious sentiments manifest themselves in very
practical ways: she cares for the sick, distributes her wealth among the poor,
founds a hospital, educates her attendants in religious matters, stands as godmother
for poor children who need baptism, buries poor pilgrims, makes clothing and
dresses the naked poor. All of these virtues are, theoretically, socially acceptable
actions for upper-class or noble late medieval women, and Elizabeth's willingness
to perform them confirms their appropriateness for her devotees. Significantly, the
greatest trial Elizabeth suffers in her legend concerns her desire to live in chaste
widowhood, a desire which we can presume may have been familiar at least in
theory to the laywomen readers of this life. Consequently, Bokenham describes
her heroism in the face of a forced second marriage in much the same terms used
for the defiant acts of the virgin saints. She vows:

    I truste in my god onely, for whos loue

    Perpetuel avowyd I haue contynence,

    þat he wyl my purpose graciously approue,

    And brekyn to þat contrarye euery vyolence,

    And geyn al mannys counsel make resystence.

    And yf I noon opir wyse may me sure make,

    Kuttyn of my nose I shal in here presence;
than me so dyfformyd no man shal wyl take. (10209-16)

Finally, Elizabeth’s subordinate relationship to her spiritual director, Master Conrad, confirms the importance of submission to the guidance of spiritual directors generally. In other words, if Elizabeth is to be a "merour . . . Of uery perfeccyoun in sundry degre" for Bokenham’s laywomen readers, then it seems appropriate that her relationship with Master Conrad should provide a mirror for the relationship of spiritual director and woman believer. Of course, this relationship is considerably more complicated, given the complexity of patron and writer, but nonetheless, the Life of St. Elizabeth provides important insights into the relationships between Bokenham and his laywomen readers. For instance, Elizabeth eagerly embraces Master Conrad’s rules and precepts for her life, obeying everything "wych he hyr bad, wyth-out resystence/ Or murmur or grocchyng," despite the extreme social inequality in their relationship.

And oft she seyde: ‘yf for god drede y
An erdely man, þe heuenely iuge to fere
Mych more I owe; & þerfore trewely
To þis pore man, wyche ys but a beggere,
I chese to be subiect & obedyent rathere
Than to ony oþir more ryche man. (10323-26)

In other words, Bokenham, in setting Elizabeth’s life up as a mirror for holy wives, must surely see his own relationship with his laywomen readers reflected back in the image of Elizabeth’s willing submission to the regulations of her
spiritual director. And although his relationship with these noble, worldly women is specifically textual (that is, he doesn’t actually command that they be beaten for their transgressions), he clearly at some level longs for the obedience Elizabeth gives to Conrad:

O very mekenesse! O blyssyd obeyence!

What wumman koude now obeyin to

Swych a comaundement wythoute offence

As dede þis myroure of pacyence, lo! (9833-36)

The desire to regulate, to direct the spiritual life of his readers is expressed in the selection and arrangement of the texts which he offers them.

And yet, even though Bokenham’s relationship with his laywomen readers can be shown to be shot through with his desire to regulate their devotional life, nevertheless the system of patronage at the very least allowed women readers significant opportunities for expanding their access to literary culture.46 The picture Bokenham provides of Isabel Bourchier’s request portrays perfectly what Susan Bell describes as the way in which laywomen “played an important role in the development of vernacular translations” of religious material.47 And the saints’ lives themselves, regardless of Bokenham’s possible intent, still provide an important model for the negotiation of female autonomy, as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has demonstrated.48 Finally, it is pleasant to imagine that the irony of Bokenham’s life of St. Katherine might not have been lost on his laywomen readers: in choosing to exclude Capgrave’s account of her youth and conversion,
he consequently omits all of the material concerning her relationship with her spiritual guide, the hermit Adrian. The resulting representation then, free as it is of Katherine’s spiritual submission to an earthly confessor and director, provides a remarkably unconstrained picture of female autonomy and intelligence shared between women readers.
Chapter Four: Endnotes


2. This, of course, assumes that Bokenham’s “fyfty” was meant literally.

3. Mary Serjeantson, Introduction, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* xv. She makes this (not really very persuasive) assumption based on Bokenham’s request in the Prologue to the *Legendys*. He asks Thomas Burgh to keep his identity hidden:

   My name I wil not here expresse,
   As toforn is seyd; wherfore I praye
   And requere’ eek, if I it dare seye,
   Yow, sone and fadyr, to whom I dyrecte
   This symple tretys, that ye detecte
   It in no wyse wher that vylany
   It myht haue . . . . (200-205)

Serjeantson argues, that “since, therefore, by publishing the name in the poet’s lifetime Thomas Burgh would be ignoring a very clear request, the suggestion is that Bokenham was then dead” (xv).


7. Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450 (I)," PMLA 27 (1912): 188-90. This lengthy study is continued in PMLA 28 (1913): 79-105.


11. Serjeantson describes the manuscript in her introduction to the edition: "This is a small stout volume, containing 193 written and a few blank folios (parchment), 6 3/4" X 4 3/4" (xxiv).


13. Edwards 158.

15. Delany xxi.


17. Delany xxi.

18. Delany xxv. We read in Chaucer’s legend of Lucrece that, as she “kaughte forth a knyf, / And therwithal she rafte hirself hir lyf,” she maintained the presence of mind to look to her virtue:

   And as she fel adoun, she kaste hir lok,
   And of hir clothes yet she hede tok.
   For in hir fallynge yet she had a care,
   Lest that hir fet or such thyng lay bare;
   So wel she loved cленnesse and eke trouthe.  (LGW, ll. 1854-1860)

Dorothy, Delany insists, parallels this story because she “is hanged by the feet” (xxv).

   But on a iebet, and vpward hyr feet,
   Dorothye þei heng ful horrybilly,
   And wyth yerdy & skourgys hir body beet,
   And wyth hodys of yren hyr flesh curely
   They al to-rent, & hyr papis vnpetously
   Wyth feerbrondys brent, & aftyr hyr dounn
   Half-deed takyn þei shettyn in presounn.  (ll. 4834-4840)

I do not think that the image of her feet is the most memorable detail in this description, nor in the legend as a whole, and neither, really, does Delany. She
acknowledges, in a parenthetical aside: "The central incident in Dorothy's story is the roses and apples produced miraculously in winter; there is no parallel to this in the Chaucerian tale" (xxv).


22. Delany argues this as well, that Bokenham's Legendys of Hooly Wommen "is at once homage and critique; his strategy, to replace the mock-hagiography with a real one" (xxvi). Where we disagree is in the nature of the relationship between the two authors and the two texts.

23. Bokenham, Prolocutorye to the "Lyf of Marye Maudelyn" II. 5038-5040.

Serjeantson, in her edition of MS. Arundel 327, chose to use this description as the title of the collection, though earlier editions named the work Lives of Saints (xix).


25. Watson 90.
26. David Lawton is the notable exception to this statement. In his comprehensive re-examination of the poets of the fifteenth century, he includes a brief but clear vindication of Bokenham's ambition, arguing that what he does, specifically, is make a "moral virtue out of poetic deficiencies" (767). My argument about Bokenham's discourse of humility with reference to Chaucer specifically, as well as his relationship to his patrons, has been informed by Lawton's discussion; my intent, however, is to provide a reading of the legendary in the context of fifteenth century lay-piety specifically.

27. Serjeantson xxv.


29. Delany xviii.

30. Lawton 766.

31. Serjeantson describes the immediate sources of all of the legends in her introduction to the edition, noting that most often Bokenham works from the Legenda Aurea of Jacobus de Voragine, suggesting further that "it is possible that Bokenham used as his authority a version or text which as yet remains unpublished, or perhaps no longer exists; his version varies in some details from that of the best known text" (xxi-xxiv). Though as I argue in this chapter, it is possible to read the variations as explicit changes Bokenham felt obliged to make in his role as spiritual director for a particular group of (female) readers.
32. The final emphasis on the waiting saints and the "crown triumphal" is not found in the *Legenda Aurea*, nor in the late medieval prose Life of St. Katherine, nor in the earlier *South English Legendary* account. It is, however, similar to the version associated with *The Northern Homily Cycle* in MS. Harley 4196:

‘Cum unto me, my maiden dere,

Resaiue þe coron of blisses sere!

Bihald and se in þe pase plain

How many halows cumes þe ogaín!’


33. The description of the women following Katherine to her death is not found in *The South English Legendary*, or in the late medieval prose Life of St. Katherine. The account included in *The Northern Homily Cycle* includes the crowds, but the order in which they are described is very clearly not inverted: we are told that, as she went to her execution, there "folowed maydens manyane/ & widows & wiuues, wepeand fulsare" (Horstmann, ed., "De Sancta Katerina Historia," 706-707).

34. Cf. Moore 84.

35. Moore 84.

36. Edwards 166.

37. Moore 85.

38. Edwards 166, n. 45.


41. Bartlett 97.

42. Bartlett 91.

43. Bartlett 101.

44. Edwards 159.


Chapter Five

"þou mote rede ete þis book":

John Capgrave's St. Katharine and Reading Women

ffor now we lyste this lady a rose to calle,

Of fyue braunches ful precyously I-dyght.

The rede colour, that shon in hir so bryght,

That was hir martirdam; the fyue leues grene

Betokne hir lyf, thus distincte, I wene,

In diuers bookis, liche as we haue dyuysed

Be-fore this tyme . . . 1

When Osbern Bokenham, in the prologue to his translation of the martyrdom of St. Katherine included in the Legendys of Hooly Wummen, states his intention to reject the narrative details contained in John Capgrave's Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria, his purpose is twofold: first, it defends his new translation of the
(much shorter) *Legenda Aurea*, and second, it justifies Bokenham's own agenda with regard to his female lay patrons in the literary community of East Anglia. Capgrave's description of St. Katherine, her intellectual ambitions, and her identification with the Virgin Mary, as Bokenham is keenly aware, have important repercussions for his female audience. In fact, Capgrave's expression of his literary project and its emphasis on the incorporative nature of reading and the internalisation of textual knowledge quite significantly differs from Bokenham's program of selective presentation, and this is the primary motivation for Bokenham's explicit dismissal of the book he describes as "rare/ and straunge to gete."²

Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria* is generally accepted to have been completed and in circulation by 1445.³ This version of the legend consists of 8,624 lines of rhyme-royal stanzas in five books (each with an introductory prologue) and an initial framing prologue describing the text's origin and discovery. Book I describes Katherine's youth and education and her ascension to her father's throne after his death. Book II describes the parliament which is convened to persuade her to marry, her arguments in defense of her virginity, and the description of the peerless immortal she vows will be the only spouse she will have. Book III reveals her conversations with the hermit Adrian, her conversion, her relationship with Mary, and her union with Christ in a mystical marriage. Book IV describes her encounter with Maxentius, her debate with the fifty philosophers, their conversion and subsequent martyrdom. And
Book V describes the conversion of the Queen and Porphyrus, their martyrdom, Katherine's torments and, finally, her martyrdom and the removal of her body by angels.

The Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria survives in four manuscripts only, and these in fact provide most of the information we have about the circulation of the text. Unlike Bokenham, who acknowledges his patron readers in several of his legends, Capgrave offers no explicit indications of his intended audience in his Life; we can however make some informed assumptions based on textual transmissions, manuscript compilations and lay reading history. Capgrave seems to have anticipated private reading of his text, as indicated by references to "3e þat rede it," (Prol. 247) and "3e redes of þis lyffe," (III. 22), though the length of the legend and the narrative breaks across the Books might also suggest an oral reading situation. Certainly one manuscript at least reveals the possibility that, as Derek Pearsall argues, "both kinds of 'publication'" may be expected by the writer. MS. Arundel 20 has a slightly different ending, replacing the final four stanzas common to the other manuscripts (V. 1954-81) with two alternate stanzas, which include this prayer:

He þat thys lyue wryȝtis, redis or els cvthe here, [can hear]

Cryste, kyng off glorye, graunt þem þat grace

Off alle þeir synnes mercy to purchace.6

Capgrave (1393-1464), like Bokenham, was a native of the East Anglian literary community described by Samuel Moore and others.7 He was born in
Norfolk, probably at Lynne, and became an Austin friar while still quite young. In an order known for its learning and scholarly fame, none, Pearsall claims, "could dispute the preeminence of Capgrave." His Latin works include biblical commentaries, theological works, and historical texts, while his English writings include various lives of saints in both verse and prose (Katherine, Norbert, Gilbert, Augustine), a guidebook to Rome (*Ye Solace of Pilgrimes*) and the *Chronicle of England*. A.I. Doyle argues that "most of his works in both tongues . . . survive only in autographs and apographs corrected by himself," indicating, he continues, a surprising "lack of evidence of activity . . . towards the further publication which his prologues adumbrate." Doyle continues that a notable exception to this, however, is Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine*: "From the fact that none of the copies show the author's hand, and that they are of distinctively derivative quality, we may infer that the poem had some success in East Anglia." Pearsall, in his discussion of the romance elements of *The Life of St. Katharine*, argues that this text includes "concessions to a kind of audience somewhat different from that to which Capgrave is accustomed, that is, men of religion and learning like himself." He concludes that these concessions (specifically the romance features and the desire to abbreviate or, indeed, suppress theological elaborations) indicate "presentation to the uninstructed," in other words, professional women religious and/or layfolk readers. The manuscript history of the text confirms both Pearsall's and Doyle's suggestions: at least two of the four surviving manuscripts have explicit links with female readership, though
all four seem likely to have connections with this particular group of readers. Pearsall notes that the other items included in the three MSS. Arundel "are miscellaneous religious verse, mostly Lydgatean,"12 which as I have argued in previous chapters appealed to late medieval laywomen readers. MSS. Arundel 168 and 396 are the most explicitly connected to a female readership, however; the first forms an anthology of sorts with Lydgate's Life of Our Lady and versions of the lives of Sts. Christina and Dorothea,13 and the second contains a statement of ownership linking it clearly, through Katherine Babington, sub-prioress, to the Austin nuns of Campsey in Suffolk.14

Any suggestions about the likely readers (professional women religious and East Anglian laywomen) of this text are confirmed by the subject matter of the manuscripts generally and of The Life of St. Katharine specifically. Capgrave is quite explicit about his sense of responsibility to his readers, shaping his description of St. Katherine (the preeminent reading woman saint) around a series of metaphors and images which reinforce his instructions for reading in the text. Capgrave's views on women('s) reading need to be contextualised in the larger picture of late medieval women's reading, even as his extensive description of Katherine's identification with Mary needs to be considered in the context of late medieval women's spirituality.

Though the life of St. Katherine experienced considerable popularity in the later Middle Ages and circulated in multiple forms and versions, Capgrave claims in his
Prologue to be conscious of the need to bring the story forth from the obscurity of "derk langage" (Prol. 209) into the English of his readers:

Therfor wyl I þe serue so as I can,

And make þi lyffe, þat mor openly it schalle

Be know a-bowte of woman & of man.

(Prol. 44-46)

There is a small but significant debate over the nature of Capgrave’s indebtedness to his source material, a debate which relies, in fact, on an understanding of Capgrave’s relationship to the elaborate discovery narrative provided in the Prologue. This narrative consists of five distinct sections framed by an opening and closing prayer, mirroring the structural pattern of the five book poem. Through it Capgrave introduces four separate characters, and three separate texts, only the last of which he claims to have used and which reputedly provides the manuscript history he recounts here in its own prologue. I will briefly describe the discovery narrative Capgrave provides, but unlike Capgrave, I will tell the story chronologically.

Athanasius, Katherine’s tutor and biographer and later bishop of Alexandria (Prol. 127-69), describes in a Greek account all that he witnessed concerning the saint’s life, conversion, conversation, and death. Capgrave comments that after Athanasius’ death, the life of St. Katherine might have been lost forever if Arrek had not translated the Greek account into Latin (Prol. 170-203). Arrek finds the legend approximately one hundred years after Athanasius’s death, or sometime in
the fifth century, in a miracle of preservation:

fful longe it was or he myght it sene,
þe lyff þat Athanas made of þis mayde;
But at þe last he cam, as it is sayde,

Ther as he fonde it from mynde all I-ded.

ffor heretykys þat wer than in þat londe
had brent þe bokys, boþe þe leffe & þe brede,
As many as þei soute & þat tyme ffonde;
But, blyssyd be godd of hys hye sonde,
þis boke founde þei not in no-maner wyse -
Godd wolde not þat þe nobyll seruyse
Off hys own mayde schulde be þus for-ȝete.

(Prol. 187-97)

Arrek's Latin text is later found by a Christian knight, "Amylion fitʒ amarak," in Cyprus "a-mong old tresour" in the time of Pope Urban V, or between 1362-70 (Prol. 118-’26); Amylion later buries this text in Greece where it is, presumably sometime around or just after 1370, found by the English parson of St. Pancras (Prol. 227). This priest, Capgrave recounts, spurred by a desire to know more about St. Katherine, spent eighteen years in Greece looking for information about the saint (Prol. 71-77). The location of the legend is revealed to him after a vision in which he is made to eat an old book by a heavenly visitor (Prol. 78-117); he returns to England with the book, attempts a translation of it into English, but dies
before he can finish it (Prol. 47-70, 204-231). Capgrave, in a rhetorical strategy
which justifies his literary project while asserting his own authority over the
present text, describes the priest's incomplete version and inadequate skill:

And be þis preste was it on-to englischmen
I-soute & founde, & broute vn-to londe.
hyd in all counseyll a-mong nyne or ten,
It cam but seldom on-to any mannes honde;
Eke qwan it cam, it was noght vndyrstonde,
Be-cause, as i seyd, ryght for þe derk langage.
Þus was þi lyfфе, lady, kept all in cage.

(Prol. 204-10)

But þet he deyed or he had fully doo:
Thy passyon, lady, & all þat scharp whele
he left be-hynd, it is þet for to doo;
And þat he mad it is ful hard þer-too,
Ryth for straungenesse of hys derk langage.

(Prol. 58-62)

Yet, lest he seem too harsh or proud, Capgrave qualifies this description of the
priest's poor effort somewhat:

Neuyrthelasse he dyd mych thyng þer-too,
þis noble preste, þis very good man:
he hath led vs þe wey & þe door on-doo,
Many readers of *The Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria* have expended considerable intellectual energy in the pursuit of the identity of this unnamed priest and the location of his incomplete English legend. A large part of the early critical writing about Capgrave's legend, in fact, has been concerned with the exact nature of his relationship to his source material. Jane Fredeman has argued that Capgrave's language and narrative details offer sufficient "evidence which would precisely identify his source were it still extant."¹⁶ And Furnivall lamented his inability to find any indication of Capgrave's parson, whom he mistakenly confuses with Arrek, in the records of the parish of St. Pancras in London.¹⁷

Auvo Kurvinen, in a lengthy exploration for the source manuscript Capgrave describes, ultimately concludes that Capgrave's version of Katharine's martyrdom is derived from the Vulgate version, but the rest (that is, Books I-III as well as "various added portions" in Book IV) derive from a different source. It is most likely, she argues that "Capgrave did not use the Vulgate direct but had an intermediate source in which the account of Catherine's martyrdom was based on the Vulgate."¹⁸ Though Kurvinen does not find the source itself, her consideration of the Latin Life of St. Katherine contained in MS. Bodley Laud 205 (ff. 82r-
144v) which she calls Staneborn’s version, convinces her that this version and Capgrave’s account derive from a common source: “Capgrave’s claim to have used a source, is, therefore, correct, and this source, possibly the work of Arrek, is also the source of Staneborn’s version.”¹⁹ And though I agree, given the detailed description of Staneborn’s version she provides, that it seems certain that it and Capgrave’s account derive from a common source, I still find her faith in Capgrave’s narrative of his process of translation rather excessive.

Unlike Kurvinen, who accepts Capgrave’s description as historical fact (“there is no reason to doubt Capgrave’s sincerity” she avows²⁰), I believe that Capgrave’s relationship to his source, in whatever form he may have found it, needs to be problematised in much the same way that critics problematise Chaucer’s relationship with his auctore Lollius in Troilus and Criseyde.²¹ The prevailing practice when discussing Capgrave’s Life is to accept his frame-story at face value, though doing so means disregarding the corresponding claim that this legend remained hidden and unavailable until Capgrave brought it out of the obscurity of “derk langage” (Prol. 209), a claim which is clearly inconsistent with what we know about the history of the St. Katherine legends in England.²² That Capgrave had a source text, and that that text may have been related to the version Kurvinen calls Staneborn’s version, seems almost certain. I would argue, however, that it is equally, if not more, productive at this point to consider what Capgrave’s description of his relationship with his "sources" reveals about his project.
That stated, I would suggest that it is possible to account for the framing discovery story of the priest and his search in a couple of ways. To begin with, it functions as a type of the *translatio*, as discussed by Patrick Geary in his study of relic thefts in the Middle Ages, both in the sense that it is *The Life of St. Katharine* that is "translated" like an actual relic into England from Greece, and in the way that the priest’s act, and Capgrave’s, is to translate the older text into the current poem. The *translationes* (specifically, narratives describing the translation of a saint’s relics between locations) necessarily involved divine assistance (usually from the saint directly), a long and difficult search and journey, and some variation of a miraculous revelation of the location of the body in question, elements all contained in Capgrave’s account of the history of the manuscript. The *translationes* were a popular form of narrative usually originating around the site of a saint’s shrine and relics, serving, according to Geary, to "establish the legitimacy of the theft [of the saint’s body] through conformity to traditional models."23

Clearly, Capgrave is not attempting to "steal" this legend in the obvious sense of the word. In another sense, however, he is. The life and death of St. Katherine was one of the most popular and most important saints’ legends for the medieval English reader, and Capgrave’s version is one of the last in a long line of medieval productions. Geary argues that the *translationes* significantly functioned to provide a new history for the stolen saint, offering information when the communities actually knew very little about their new patron: "without pasts to
give them appeal and authenticate their power, these saints appear on the scene
with a flourish at the moment of their translation." In a similar way, we can
understand part of Capgrave’s project: to provide a "flourish" in order to provoke
a new appeal for an already quite familiar legend. This tactic, the motif of
translatio, implicates the new legend with the act of revealing a new and powerful
patron, bringing her out of the obscurity of pagan lands (here it is old texts and the
"derk langage" of Capgrave’s immediate source) and placing it firmly in a new
context. Thus, Capgrave can claim that:

Mech þing hath be do whech hath be ful ryue
And is not wretyn ne cam neuer to our hande,
Mech þing eke hyd in many dyuerse lande;
Euene so was þis lyffe, as I seyd in þe prologue be-for,
Kept all in cage, a-boute it was not bore.
Now schall it walk wyder þan euyr it dede,
In preysyng & honour of þis martir Katerine.

(III. 24-30)

Capgrave’s Prologue, and specifically, the priest’s vision which he
describes, provides the central image around which he constructs his model of
appropriate reading. The priest, Capgrave tells us, laboured eighteen years in
Greece "Wyth prayer, fastyng, cold & mekyll tene" (Prol. 77), but without ever
finding the legend of St. Katherine. Then, he had a "reuelacyoun" in which "A
persone honest, clothed in precyous schrowde" approached him, holding in his
hand "a boke ful elde/ Wyth bredys rotyn, leuys dusty & rent" (Prol. 78, 81, 85-86). He greets the priest, commanding him to eat the book he offers him:

And euyr he cryed vp-on þe preest, "be-helde,
here is þi labour, her is all þi entente!
I wote ful welle what þou hast sowte & ment;
Ope þi mouth, þis book muste þou ete;
But if þou doo, þi wyll schall þou not gete."

(Prol. 87-91)

The priest responds in confusion, crying that his mouth is too small, the book too big, and the leaves "derk & dyme": "þis mete to me is lykly to do noo note" he argues. The heavenly messenger, however, insists:

"3ys," seyd he, "þou mote nede ete þis book,
þou schalt ellys repente. ope þi mowth wyde,
Recyue it boldly, it hath no clospe ne hook,
let it goo down & in þi wombe it hyde,
It schal not greue þe neyther in bake ne syde;
In þi mowth bytter, in þi wombe it wyll be swete."

(Prol. 99-104)

The priest does as he is advised, eats the book, and discovers that it is in fact sweet to him "ryth as it hony wer" (Prol. 107). When he awakes, the story continues, he finds the same book buried in a field nearby.

This familiar image clearly illustrates Capgrave's theory of reading, one
which, although presented here in visionary form, is elaborated variously in the
text of the poem as well as in Capgrave's own literary project. The priest's labour
in this description is to consume the "boke ful elde" and to internalise it, no matter
how difficult or unsavoury the message - "in þi mowth bytter" - even as Capgrave
himself must incorporate "peis latyn bokys" (II. 52), "oure bookys" (IV. 78), "the
storyes" (V. 766) and even the "Auctouris whiche this legende trete" (V. 1697),
producing from the "derk langage" a new and sweeter text. Furthermore, and
with regard to Capgrave's audience, the "in-corporation" of the text through
reading results in the reformation of the reader, even as the text turns from bitter
(in its initial application) to sweet as honey (in the resulting manifestation of new
virtue). Anne Clark Bartlett, reading a passage of William of St. Thierry's
Meditations (which I will provide from her discussion), offers a powerful
statement of the way this image worked to inform the reading of late medieval
women. Bartlett gives the passage from the Meditations first:

As your clean beasts, we there regurgitate the sweet things stored within
our memory, and chew them in our mouths like cud for the renewed and
ceaseless work of our salvation. That done, we put away again in that
same memory what you have done, what you have suffered for our sake.
When you say to the longing soul, "open your mouth wide, and I will fill
it," and she tastes and sees your sweetness in the great Sacrament that
surpasses understanding, then she is made that which she eats, bone of your
bone, and flesh of your flesh.
Bartlett continues:

William argues that his readers become progressively changed
(psychologically, intellectually, and physically), brought into conformity
with the discourses that they consume. Reading is figured as physical
nourishment, and readers literally "become what they eat," as the "in-
corporated" prescriptive text is manifested in outward actions.  

Capgrave instructs his readers to "in-corporate" the spiritual lessons
presented through the life of St. Katherine, even as the saint herself is shown to
have "in-corporated" the spiritual nourishment from her own (classical) reading.
The image Capgrave uses to emphasize this model still further is provided in the
analogy of the worker bees and the drones which begins Book IV. The bees who
work the fields of flowers are like the good readers who "Leerne and teche bothe
to soke and drawe/ Of good examples of hooly predecessoures/ Swete conceytes,
weel famed sauoures --" (IV. 10-12). The drones, by comparison, know not how
to read and digest profitably, turning all they consume only into "waaste": "Thei
ete and drynke, deoure eke and waaste" (IV. 16). In contrast, the reader is
reminded, Katherine is ever "Oon of these bees:"

This mayde Kataryne, whiche with besynesse
Of euer flooure whiche was fayre to seen
Souked outhe the hony of grete holynesse,
bare it to the hyue, and þer she gan it dresse.

(IV. 43-47)
Capgrave offers Katherine to his reader as a model of appropriate reading, indicating that even as she did, so should the reader digest, in-corporate, internalise the "good exaumple of hooly predecessoures." Further, he emphasizes the efficacy of the devotion to St. Katherine specifically for his readers in their "grete labour" (IV. 36):

    Be-cause þou wer so lerned & swech a clerk,
    Clerkes must loue þe, reson for-sothe it is!
    Who wyl oute lerne, trost to me, I-wys,
    he dothe mech þe bettyr if he trost in þis may.

    (III. 38-41)

Katherine as a model of imitative reading provides the context in which I wish to consider Karen Winstead’s recent arguments about The Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria and Capgrave’s interest in women’s reading.29 Winstead has suggested that Capgrave’s relationship to his protagonist saint is considerably less sympathetic than the one I have described. In fact, she argues that Capgrave "presents a compelling case against his protagonist" in his doubt concerning the sincerity of her desire for virginity: "Having been formulated before her conversion, Katherine’s resolution to remain celibate reflects her personal preference rather than religious commitment."30 Winstead reads Katherine’s mystical marriage with Christ as the culmination of an elaborate joke played on the saint, an opportunity for Capgrave to take "advantage of his protagonist’s naivete [sic] to amuse his readers."31 Katherine, she continues, has been caught out,
trapped by her description of an ideal spouse which is really nothing more than "a clever ploy designed to defeat her obdurate counselors with their own arguments."³²

Most significant, however, is Winstead's insistence on what she reads as Capgrave's explicit criticisms of the female saint's social transgressions. Capgrave, she claims, deliberately censures Katherine for her poor government (she is more concerned with spiritual than earthly matters), for her unwillingness to marry in the face of her councillors' compelling arguments, and, most importantly, for her transgressive reading.³³ "Taken as a whole," she argues, "the Life of St. Katherine has a conservative social message, which affirms marriage and family as temporal institutions," and condemns women's reading, she continues, as an activity which "may indeed foster ambitions that undermine tradition and destabilize the community."³⁴

Winstead's arguments depend most obviously on an identification of Capgrave as narrator with the complaints and criticisms traditionally spoken by Katherine's non-Christian dependents and citizens,³⁵ even when that means placing him in opposition with Katherine's heavenly advisors, specifically Mary. For instance, early in Book IV, one of Katherine's people reproaches her for her unwillingness to bend to their will, predicting that now she will soon regret not listening to their advice:

   Wherfore, madame, now is come that hour
   That was dred tho of youre freendes alle
Whan that ye wolde receyue no counseillour,
ffor no thyng that men myght on-to [you] calle.
I amful soory, for now are lykly to falle
all tho myshappes whiche that were seyde before.
Avyse zow weel what ye wil doo [perfore]!

(IV. 463-69)

The "myshappes whiche that were seyde before," that is the predictions made by
the lords and nobles in Book II, function to emphasize the distinction between the
world’s council and heavenly counsel, of which Katherine has been (Book III) and
will be (Book V) privy. As Dyan Elliott has argued, "one of the functions of
saints’ lives is to dramatize how frequently social and celestial expectations are at
variance."36 This speech, heavy as it is with irony, emphatically draws attention
to precisely that variance. To ally Capgrave with the voices of secular counsel in
the poem is to overlook the great narrative lengths he has gone to in order to
create Katherine’s explicit identification with Mary and the representation of Mary
as Katherine’s primary advisor in Book III and elsewhere.

One of the most significant ways Capgrave creates this identification
(Katherine with Mary) is to shift the narrative emphasis away from Katherine’s
martyrdom and on to her relationship with Mary. This occurs primarily through
the introduction of the uncommon five-book structure into this narrative.37 His
version of the life of St. Katherine is the only one of that saint, perhaps in fact the
only medieval saint’s life, to employ this particular narrative structure, and in so
doing, Capgrave deliberately places his poem in the tradition of didactic works such as Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, and, by implication, Boethius’ *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. The effect of this structure on the conventionally linear saint’s life narrative is very significant: the five-book pattern introduces a dynamic of rise and fall, of the turning of the wheel of fortune, that while iconographically very suited to the story of St. Katherine and her four wheels, nevertheless creates a sort of thematic tension between the “fall” of the protagonist/ruler from her elevated social position into torment and death and the traditional “rise” of the saint into martyrdom.38 Capgrave’s *Life of St. Katharine* contains a multitude of wheel images that suggest the influence of a familiar body of imagery.39 We read of a land bound to Rome “Tyll þat fortune turned so hyr honde” (I. 663), a people complaining over their lack of a King, “O þou blynd fortune, how turnyst þow þi wheel” (I. 868), and of virtues rolling like a wheel:

Here cours, þei sey, as sercle it is rownd,

ffor eueri vertu folowyth ryth aftyr odyr:

Whan on is come, he callyth ine his felaw.

(II. 35-37)

In the Prologue, Capgrave retells Athanasius’ account of the final lifting up and dropping down of Katherine and Maxentius, similar to the familiar lifting up and turning of kings on Fortune’s wheel:

He say þe awngelis how þei here body bere
ffer vp in to synay and leyde it down þere,

......

he sey eke maxense who he was slayn,

Dropped from a bregge downn in a reuer.

(Prol. 151-52, 155-56)

The most unusual reference to the wheel comes in Book IV, however, in the preliminary discussion between Maxentius and the pagan philosophers. Maxentius orders them to convert Katherine away from her Christianity, and they respond that they are the wisest in the world, and will not fail. One philosopher remarks:

And if she conclude hem be auctoryte

Or ellis be reson, leue me ful weel,

I wil sey thanne that a goddesse is she,

And mooost worthi to be sette on the wheel

Of natural sciens.

(IV. 1002-06)

This very unusual image, setting Katherine "on the wheel/ Of natural sciens," seems to suggest the worldly praise the philosophers recognise as due reward for unmatched learning, and appropriately anticipates the wheel of torture that adds to her heavenly reward even while it recalls the ring with which Christ wed her in Book III. Clearly, Katherine of all the saints, is the most closely connected to wheel imagery, as her iconography reveals. But this text, with its emphasis on
Fortune's Wheel, is remarkably caught up with the image, carrying the allusion of the motif even into the poem's structure.

The incorporation, into Capgrave's narrative, of the Boethian structure of rise, climax and decline associated with the five-book structure as borrowed from Chaucer and Lydgate, has interesting consequences for the traditional saint's life pattern. In The Life of St. Katharine, the structural emphasis is transferred to Book III, and this part of the narrative becomes the thematic and emotional centre of the poem. Book III contains the conversion story, Katherine's complex association with the Virgin Mary, and her union with Christ. This Book is also significantly unlike the other four books in tone and event: it contains several elements and/or images of romance literature which are conspicuous by their omission from the other books. As well, Book III contains the direct references to Katherine's union with Christ, and as such, it is the most affective section of the poem. But it is not just Christ who is incarnated in this poem: Mary, through her role as Christ's mother and Katherine's confidante and counsellor, shares the spotlight with Katherine in Book III. She is the match-maker and go-between for her son and the saint, she is Katherine's attendant at her wedding, stripping and dressing her, she is her advisor and mentor, encouraging her in proper bridal behaviour (that is, how to look at her groom [III. 1149-55], and encouraging her to "bathe" (be baptised) before her wedding [III. 1069-73]), and she is her godmother, standing up with Katherine during her baptism.

The intense identification of Katherine with Mary extends beyond Book III,
as well. Capgrave, early in the Prologue, establishes Katherine’s position in the saintly hierarchy, situating her above all other virgins next to Mary:

Iesu cryst, crowne of maydenys alle,
A mayde bar þe, a mayde ȝaue þe soke;

Ryth þus be ordyr we wene þou ledyst þe daunce:
Thi moder folowyth þe next, as reson is,
And after othir, þei goo rith as her chaunce
Is schap to hem of ioye that may not mys;
But next that lady a-boue alle othir in blys
ffolowyth þis mayde weche we clepe kateryne.

(I. 1-2, 8-13)

Katherine is also linked with Mary through her birth and ancestry. In Book I, Capgrave ties the occasion of Katherine’s birth to the miracles of conception recorded in the holy stories: God sent a child to the old King Costus and his wife, even as he did to “Zacharye & Elysabeth,” “abraham wyth sarra,” and “Ioachym & Anne”, proving therefore that “kateryne is not a-lone in þis degre” (I.182-189). Capgrave exploits the rose imagery commonly applied to Mary, using it to strengthen the association between the saint and the Virgin. For instance, he describes Katherine’s pagan but moral ancestors:

But ryght þus, wrote þei þat wer full wys,
Oute of þe harde thorn[y] brymbyl-tree
Growyth þe ffresch rose, as men may see;
So sprong our lady oute of þe Iewys,
And katureyne of hethen, þis tale ful trew is.

(I. 52-56)

Many of the events and characteristics familiar to readers of the stories of Mary are found in this legend of St. Katherine (and here it is important to remember how these readers overlapped: MS. Arundel contained both the Life of St. Katharine and Lydgate’s Life of Our Lady). For instance, Katherine is led first to a clearer knowledge of Christianity and then to the heavenly city by Adrian the hermit (at Mary’s request) even as Joseph was guide to Mary on earth (III. 59-62). And Katherine is described by Mary as the only other woman who, like her, lived a holy life before her conversion (III. 232-238). But most significantly, Capgrave informs his reader that before her knowledge of Christ, before even Adrian’s visit to her, Katherine had been prepared for her conversion by Christ’s imprinting his message, “hys grete tresour,” in her heart, even as Mary had been prepared for Gabriel’s news by God.

. . . cryst had made hys horde

Or þis ermyte cam, & leyd hys grete tresour
Ryght in hyr hert emprended full sore;
ffor þow þe sent þe ermyte as hys massanger,
Or þe ermyte cam crist hym-self was ther.
Ryght as gabiell, whan he fro heuen was sent
On-to our lady to do þat hye massage,

. . . . . . . . . .

But er that he cam on-to þis maydes cage,
Cryst was ther, as we in bokes rede:
Ryth so dyd he her, if we wyll take hede.

(III. 465-476)

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, representations of the Annunciation commonly depicted the Virgin surrounded by books, reading. In fact, late medieval Marian iconography generally (not just scenes of the Annunciation, that is) frequently portrayed the Virgin with a book in her hand.41 Susan Bell suggests that "artists' insistence on portraying the most significant medieval female ideal, the Virgin Mary, as a constant reader was surely based on the reality of their patrons' lives" and consequently, "This symbolism showing the Virgin as a constant reader in turn added respectability to laywomen occupying themselves with books."42 Certainly, the association with Mary elevates Katherine's position, both as a saint in the hierarchy of saints ("next that lady a-boue alle othir in blys/ ffolowyth þis mayde weche we clepe kateryne" [Prol. 12-13]), and as a model for women's reading. By juxtaposing the Annunciation scene, recalling as it must the familiar image of Mary reading,43 with Adrian's arrival in Katherine's study where he finds her "lenyng on a booke,/ In sad stodye, ful solitarie all a-lone" (III. 386-87), Capgrave emphasizes the suitability, the spiritual usefulness of reading for women. By reading, Katherine is shown to
imitate Mary, the highest of female ideals, even as the reader of the poem, the analogy suggests, should imitate Katherine - not in her acts of defiance against the state, nor her fiercely defended virginity, but in her mode of incorporative reading.
Chapter Five: Endnotes

1. John Capgrave, *The Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria*, ed. Carl Horstmann, foreword by F. J. Furnivall, E.E.T.S. o.s. 100 (London: 1893) V. 10-16. Subsequent references to this legend will appear in the body of the text noted by book and line number. The edition includes a complete text from MS. Arundel 396 and a partial text from MS. Rawlinson Poetry 118. For the first three books, quotations will be made from MS. Rawlinson Poetry 118 (that being the best, according to Furnivall, and apparently to Horstmann as well) and for the last two books quotations will be taken from MS. Arundel 396. The conflict between Furnivall and Horstmann concerning the choices the latter made with regards to this edition is vividly described in Furnivall’s foreword, xxiv-xxxi.


4. MS. Rawlinson Poetry 118, MSS. Arundel 20, 168, and 396. Cf. Furnivall


8. For this and the following information, see Furnivall's foreword to the E.E.T.S. edition, v-xiii, and Pearsall 122-123. Pearsall indicates that the fullest biography of Capgrave appears in A. de Meijer, O.E.S.A., "John Capgrave, O.E.S.A.," *Augustiniana* 5 (1955): 400-40 (Pearsall 132, n. 8).

9. This quotation and the following list of Capgrave's texts come from Pearsall 122-23.

10. A.I. Doyle, "Publication by Members of the Religious Orders," *Book*

11. Pearsall 130.

12. Pearsall 136-37, n. 76.


15. The Prologue is divided into the following five sections: 1, (lines 47-70) first introduction to the unnamed priest; 2, (lines 71-126) the same priest’s discovery (and vision) of the text left in Greece by Amylion fitz Amarak; 3, (lines 127-169) story of Athanasius and his writing of the legend in Greek after Katherine’s martyrdom; 4, (lines 170-203) story of how Arrek turned the Greek life into Latin, approximately one hundred years after the death of Athanasius, or sometime in the fifth century; 5, (lines 204-231) the description of the English version made by the priest of parts one and two. Roughly speaking, this structure mirrors the larger structure of the poem in that the outer and inner sections are parallel, moving into the centre and back out again (recent past - past - furthest past - past - recent past) much the way the poem progresses (birth - debate - identification with Mary/union with Christ - debate - death).

16. Fredeman 348.
17. Furnivall xxiii-xxiv.


21. See for example, Bella Millett, "Chaucer, Lollius, and the Medieval Theory of
Strohm and Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville: Published by the New Chaucer
Society, 1984) 93-103.

22. Jennifer Bray has shown that the years between 1350 and 1450 saw the largest
production of the Lives of St. Katherine. Almost half of all the versions written in
England were composed in the one hundred years before Capgrave wrote his
version, and of the fifteen written in English, eleven, Bray claims, date from this
period. "The Legend of St. Katherine in Later Middle English Literature," Ph.D.

23. Patrick Geary, *Furtam Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (New


25. The motif of ingesting books is based, of course, on the image of Ezekiel the
prophet eating the book given him in a vision (Ezekiel 3:1-3).

26. This term is Anne Clark Bartlett's, whose discussion of this motif has been
very influential in my consideration of Capgrave's Prologue. *Male Authors*.

Female Readers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 16-18. See also Vincent


33. Winstead, "Piety" 64; "Gynecocracy" 361-363.

34. Winstead, "Gynecocracy" 362.

35. For instance, after nearly one hundred lines of praise for Katherine's government, Capgrave begins a new chapter in a startling new voice:

What is a lond qwan it hath non hed?

þe lawes are not kept, þe lond desolate,

þe hertes hangyng and heuy as lede,
be comonyng grutchyng & euer at be bate,
beere is kept non rewle, kept non astate. (I. 848-52)

Winstead reads these lines as Capgrave's criticism, sympathetic with the people of
the poem, and eliciting sympathy from the fifteenth-century audience: "In an
astonishing departure from tradition, Capgrave voices these sentiments - sentiments
which any fifteenth-century reader would surely have endorsed - to introduce the
complaints of his protagonist's critics" ("Piety" 63). She neglects, however, to
continue with the next line: "pus seyde be puple of surry alle-aboute." The "pus"
of line 853 refers both to the "grutchyng" she takes for Capgrave's criticism and
to the next 60 lines in quotation marks, and this complaint functions to establish
the first of the pagan-Christian saint's trials.

36. Dyan Elliott, "Dress as Mediator Between Inner and Outer Self: the Pious
37. Staneborn's version, the closest possibility to a version sharing a common
source with Capgrave's poem, was intended to consist of four books: I, describing
Katherine's youth and the parliament; II, describing her conversion and mystical
marriage; III, describing Maxentius' arrival and Katherine's debate with the
clerks; IV (now lost), describing her martyrdom (Kurvinen 279-80). For the
suggestion that the five-book structure is uncommon enough in late medieval
literature to warrant attention, see Nicholas Watson, "Outdoing Chaucer:
Lydgate's Troy Book and Henryson's Testament of Cresseid as Competitive
Imitations of Troilus and Criseyde," Shifts and Transpositions in Medieval

38. One of the effects of this tension could understandably be a misinterpretation of the narrator's voice in Book IV. In other words, Winstead may in fact be responding to these specific tensions and this may explain why she (in my opinion) misreads Capgrave's position with regards to the saint. If Book III stands apart from the other books as figuring the protagonist's highest point, then it is easy to assume that Books IV and V become, on some level, the beginning and end of her decline.

39. W.A. Pantin suggests that the Wheel of Fortune motif was a very common image in medieval wall-paintings, and would have been familiar to all medieval church goers; The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955) 240.

40. Derek Pearsall has demonstrated the influence of the popular romance style, and especially The Lay of Havelok the Dane and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, on Capgrave's legend of St. Katherine, 127. I am referring however to elements and images beyond the rhetorical styles and modes of address marked by Pearsall throughout the poem. Events and elements which can only be described as magical, reminiscent of the style of the lais, abound in Book III; for instance, Adrian's journey and his entrance into Katherine's court (301-57) (Katherine wonders if his arrival is "be enchautment or be nygromancy," 423); his description of Mary which is in recognisably romantic terms (445-52, 456-62); and, finally, the remarkable changeling motif (Mary assures Katherine that no-one
has missed her because she has been replaced in Alexandria by a double, 1461-69).


42. Bell 762-63.

Chapter Six

"hureþ & lerneþ & forʒete hyt nawʒt":

Public Piety in the "Vita beate Katarine"

Myn housbonde was at Londoun al that Lente;
I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye,
And for to se, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk. What wiste I wher my grace
Was shapen for to be. or in what place?
Therfore I made my visitaciouns
To vigilies and to processiouns,
To prechynge eek, and to thise pilgrimages,
To pleyes of myracies, and to mariages,
And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.

("The Wife of Bath’s Prologue," 550-559)

Even though the predominant model in The Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria is
of the incorporative reader, Capgrave nonetheless anticipates a broader range of involvement with his text, a multiplicity of "readings" in fact. The structure of the poem itself suggests its suitability for oral presentation, and internal references to private reading and group listening, as well as, in one manuscript copy at least, the reading of the scribe who "thys lyue wry3tis," confirm the varieties of engagement possible with this text.\(^1\) The "Vita beate Katarine" (MS. Longleat 55, ff. 55r-65r),\(^2\) is a much more public text, written as it seems likely for public performance. Nevertheless, the "Vita" contains indications of more than one possible audience for the legend: the poet addresses the listening audience of the reading of the legend, and at the same time includes Latin quotations as extratextual material, thus acknowledging the presence of the actual readers of the text. Katherine herself becomes a model for both these audiences. Through the certain fact of her own reading, she provides an exemplar for the reader of the "Vita."

And yet more importantly in this legend, as a model of conformity to the ideals of female behaviour standard in contemporary sermon and didactic texts, her character works to reinforce the ways women are expected to externalise their piety in their behaviour and in their dress.

MS. Longleat and Late Medieval Bath

MS. Longleat 55, commonly called "Libello rubro de Bath,"\(^3\) or "the Red Book of Bath,"\(^4\) was compiled between 1412 and 1428 at the Bath Priory.\(^5\) It takes its title
from its appearance (calf-skin painted red), as well as from what that appearance
signified in the municipal life of medieval Bath: as a "Red Book," the manuscript
claims a specific civic and social function in the city whose records and documents
it records. Hubert Hall notes that Red Books (for example, of Bristol, London,
Derby, Gloucester and Nottingham as well as Bath) were "designed with the
common intention of preserving certain important documents, as well as of
displaying them to the best advantage for the purpose of convenient reference." Even if "rebound in another colour," Francis Bickley notes, "the old title would
generally be retained," revealing in this way that the significance of the title went
far beyond the material considerations of the manuscript and into an awareness of
the function of the book within a city's municipal identity.

The Red Book of Bath is a true miscellany of almost 40 separate items in
English, Latin and French, items which, at one point, were deemed necessary for
the preservation and perpetuation of Bath's civic self. These items include
correspondence between Henry V and Charles of France, a medical illustration
describing the art of bloodletting, forestry laws and penalties, various statutes,
Assizes of ale and bread, a calendar of feast days and celebrations, and an
astrological table, as well as a short chronicle of Brutus in Latin including a verse
life of Arthur in English, various shorter religious items, and the "Vita beate
Katarine" (ff. 55r-65r). Numerous specific items confirm the importance of this
manuscript in the daily civic life of Bath. For instance, ff. 14r-16r contain an item
described as "Item inde sequitur de preceptis domini et specialiter de iuramento et
ob hanc causam specialissime liber adordinatus ad terrorem iurancium in the table of contents (f.3r), and given the inclusion of the extracts from the Four Gospels (f. 5v), the suggestion that the manuscript may have functioned as an oath book for Jurors is quite believable. A further indication of the importance of MS. Longleat 55 to the municipal (in this case specifically, social and economic) life of Bath is that the cover of the manuscript appears to have at one time been used to store scales and weights for gold. Wright notes:

Within the upper cover of the Red Book is a large rectangular cavity guarded by a metal door, covered with calf-skin and studded with brass nails. In this socket balances for the weighing of gold were kept, as appears by the first entry in the list of contents: "In primo ij bilanc [sic] cum suis ponderibus ad aurum."

Jennifer Bray links this manuscript, primarily because of these indications of actual use in the daily life of medieval Bath but also because of the inclusion of the "Vita beate Katarine," with the chapel of St. Katherine in the church of St. Mary de Stalls "in the very centre of Bath, at the junction of Stall Street and Westgate Street." She notes that:

St. Mary de Stalls was the parish church of what is now called the Abbey Parish where the mayor and commonalty were at least occasionally expected to perform some religious duties. There is also evidence of the use of the church for legal business but there is not enough to indicate that this was more than occasional. 11
Though Bray offers this suggestion cautiously, I see no reason not to accept it as a strong possibility. The internal evidence provided within the "Vita beate Katarine" (the final stanza, most likely a later addition) clearly indicates this particular version’s association with an unidentified chapel:

Kateryn of maydes martyr & flour
we prayeþ þe be oure socour
In alle maner greuaunce
In worscheupp of þe ys oure chapell
Curtoysse Kateryn kepe vs well
fram destord & meschaunce.

(f. 65r)

Barry Cunliffe has suggested that St. Mary de Stalls "was the official church of the city and had a chantry chapel dedicated to St. Catherine, patron saint of Bath."
He continues that this church "was the symbol of the city, standing boldly against the great priory church only a few steps from it."\textsuperscript{12} St. Mary de Stalls seems likely to have provided an appropriate location for Bath’s Red Book.

The inclusion of the "Vita beate Katarine" in this manuscript needs to be considered in the context of the Red Book’s place in a city’s construction of its social and civic history. The Red Book seems to have functioned beyond a simple register or chronicle of events, and provided as well a representation of the way the chronicler(s) conceived of their city’s history or origins. Folios 35v-53v present a short chronicle of Brutus (mythic British history) which includes a
description of the acts of Bladud of Bath, the legendary founder of Bath, an
important component, obviously, in the city’s construction of its own place in the
larger history of the nation. St. Katherine’s relationship to the city’s civic identity
is a little less clear, although several clues are provided in MS. Longleat 55. First
of all, at 10 1/2 folios (ff. 55r-65r) the "Vita beate Katarine" is the second longest
item in the compilation, and it is the major religious piece and the only saint’s life
or story in the manuscript. And second, the manuscript includes a copy of the
oath taken by the Freeman of Bath which clearly suggests that Katherine may very
well have been the patron saint of medieval Bath.¹³

I schal buxum and obedient be to the mayr of bathe. And to alle hys
successoyrs and y schal mentayne me to no lordschyp for hynderans of any
burges of bath nether y schal no3th plete wyth no burges of bathe but on the
mayr curte yf hit so be that the mayr wylle do me ryght or may do me
ryght. Seynt Katern day I schal kepe holy day yerely and Seynt Katern
Chapelle and the brygge holpe to mentayne and to susteyne by my pore.
Alle other custumys and fredumys that langit to the fore sayd ffredom y
schal welle and truly kepe and mentayne on my behalfe selme [not clear]
god and halydome.¹⁴

The inclusion of the "Vita beate Katarine" in a collection compiling
legendary British history, with specific reference to the mythic origins of Bath,
and various items of special interest to the city and to the nation¹⁵, confirms the
prominent position in which this particular saint was held by the people of Bath.
In this way, the manuscript juxtaposes the mythic civic originary legend with the passion of the city’s patron saint, itself a religious originary or founding story. This is emphasized, as well, by the inescapable fact (obvious to any citizen) that swearing an oath on this manuscript was in effect swearing oaths not only on the Gospels, but on the legend and power of St. Katherine as intercessor for the individual and also, significantly, as guardian and patron of the city.

There is, unfortunately, little indication of how the "Vita beate Katarine," as a narrative, actually functioned in late medieval Bath beyond the dedication to what may be the chapel at St. Mary de Stalls. This version of the legend of St. Katherine is a unique verse life, and not, as has been mistakenly suggested, a version of the St. Katherine legend found in MSS. Cambridge University Library Ff. II. 38 and Bodley Rawlinson Poetry 34. The verse forms in the poem are not regular, and indeed are noticeably irregular. The poet mixes three distinct rhyming schemes: tail-rhyme stanzas aabccbb (the most prominent), the long-line quatrain abab, and its sub-group, rhyming couplets. There are, for the most part, no regular stanzaic divisions; instead the rhyming units or paragraphs are separated most frequently to accord with narrative breaks. The majority of the poem occurs in tail-rhyme stanzas, though moments of obvious narrative importance often are presented in the abab quatrain. For instance, the first 131 lines establishing the narrative are in the abab pattern (with some couplets), as are some of the moments in the poem when the narrator’s voice and the audience’s
voices mingle: for example, the "Fiat Misericordia" (f. 58v); and the
"Lamentacioun of Katrynes passioun" beginning:

    Cry Kateryn cry & greede
    Cry & lat me hure þy voyse
    Alass why nelle myn herte blode wepe.

    (f. 59r-59v)

The *abab* pattern is also the most likely to contain lines that are noticeably
alliterative, thus emphasising the narrative importance with the elevated tone
provided by alliteration. Though this is by no means consistent, the poem is
nevertheless strongly alliterative. For example:

In þat lond was a man called somtyme

Costus a comely knyȝt of cors for þe nones

A kyng of þat countre . by armeȝ & by syne

nowher a better of fflesch & of bones

    Thys kyng hadde a dawȝter by hys wyff

that men called þere mayde Katelyne

he putte heore to lerne how to lede heor lyff.

    (f. 55r)

Ther was no wast in no wyse of mete ne drynke

But þe powre hadde part of fode & of cloþ

heere many studyed : & somme dute Swyne
In prayour: & labour as trywe men doþ.

(f. 55v)

Ther was belewynge of bestys of dyuerse kynde

Of oxen & scheep & schreymyg of brydde

. . . . . . . . . .

Cateryn was in heore court & hurde þe noyse

þe Belewyng of bestys þe trumpyng boþe.

(f. 55v)

he called preueely a messager & let wryte a lettre
to seche þe countrey ferr & nerr whyche werr þe better
and most cowþe of clergye in all maner conynge.

(f.56v)

All þis whyle was Kateryn vpon þe gronde knelyng

herte houndeþ & heore eyoun vp to heuene reryng

In many a manneþ syȝte

. . . . . . . . . .

wþþ a swap swype smerte

he made heor hed forþ storte

many a man hyt say

and in þe stede of red blod

þer fled forþ a greþ placd
of melk þo full soundry.

(f. 65r)

The legend is divided into three almost exactly equal parts, with the divisions communicated to the reader by narrative breaks and repetitions, and through textual and/or marginal indicators such as the Latin directives "Amen" and "Pater Noster." The first section (ff. 55r-58r, 342 lines) establishes the location of the story, describes the young Katherine and her community, introduces Maxentius and his plans for Alexandria and begins the confrontation between the saint and the Emperor. This section includes also the greatly reduced debate between the clerks and Katherine, concluding with the conversion of the clerks and a very brief description of their group martyrdom. The second section repeats the narrative from the end of the first section somewhat, but in considerably greater detail, and it is worth demonstrating the movement between the sections here in full:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{1 þe Emperour whan he herde þis} \\
\text{he wexed wode & wroth y wyss} \\
\text{commandyng perde} \\
\text{þat in alle hast þat myȝt be done} \\
\text{make a fyre ryȝt anone} \\
\text{In mydward þe cyte} \\
\text{and bynde þys vyfty clerks stronge} \\
\text{leggs armes foot & honde}\end{align*}\]
and brenne ham sone
and anoon hyt was so doon
þe clerks were cast þer oon

But harm hadde þey none
þys myracle god schewed þere
In heed ne cloþes nat an heer
was perschyd or wast
But þe fyre & þat brennynge
torned & was a gode fresschynge
to ham furst & last
þus Kateryn hadde þe maystrye
þruþ feþp of heere enemy

Pater Noster

[Second Section begins here, top of f. 58v]

¶ The emperour boþe wode & wroth
to þe dome anon he goth

commandyng y wyss in gret yre
to take þe clerks echon

and to þe deþ at þey be don

and bren ham in a fyre
¶ Thes vyfty clerks of gret connynge

thanked god of þis typanye
and made grete solace
and kneled doun vp on be grounde
lyfytng peyre hondes as pey were bonde
vp to godde3 face
Seyyng þus wþþ herte & mowthe
wyþþ alle deuocioun at þey cowþþ
Glad for to dye
God Emperour of alle kynges
fforyeue vs alle oure mysdoynge3
lورد to þe we crye
here a fore we knew nat þe
lat hyt lord forþeue be
ffor þy muchelle my3t
In þe we tryst lord y wyss
lord forsake þu nat vs
þy mercy lord vs dy3t

† Hond & foot was bound fast
In to a fyre þei were cast

But þere spyllèd of ha-n noon heere
Noper in cloþ noper in skyn
þe fyre brend no þyng þer In
yhuȝ were þey dede þere
now þankeb god & gode Kateryne
þat with þis manere of pyne
cleped ham to blysse
Blessed god in trynyte
hyt ys worpy to þanky þe
ffor þat wounder y wysse
And in þat place þer anoon
þey were martyrs schon
with mylde chere & steveene
Gode folks þat were þer bye
Sawe har saules how þey fyve
vp streyȝt to heuene.

(ff. 58r-59r)

Repetition as a narrative strategy is quite consistent with oral narrative style,
which I will soon argue is fundamental to this version, and as a technique is not
unfamiliar to other versions of this life (and indeed, to other long poetic works).
For example, consider Capgrave’s version of this same event: his account of the
conversion and martyrdom of the clerks spans the break between Books IV and V,
and while he does not repeat their death in detail, he does repeat elements of their
conversion and Maxentius’ anger in a manner not dissimilar to the first division of
the “Vita beate Katarine.”18 Capgrave clearly intends the repetition to work as a
way back into the narrative for the reader or hearer of his long Life of St.
Katherine. Book IV ends with the poet's desire to make a break in his story-
telling:

I loue no longe tale, euere hangynge in oon

Wherfore as of this book I wil make an ende

Rigt it in this Chapetre - me thenketh it longe a-goon

Sith that i be-gan this book for to bende

Oon-to youre eres and on-to youre mende.

(IV. 2283-87)

He includes a summary of the events just described, concluding with:

Thus are thei conuerted; this conflicte is I-doo;

Oure book is at an ende, a newe we wil be-gynne -

It is ful conuenient that we shul[d] do soo.

(IV. 2339-41)

Book V begins with a clear acknowledge-ment of Capgrave's strategy of
reminding his audience of the events that have transpired, and of anticipating the
events to come. He implies that he intends the repetition to encourage the reader's
return to the world of the narrative, to "turne ageyn" from the concerns of this
world to the spiritual matter of the story.

Now is it come,oure leyser and oure space,

In whiche we may, after oure grete labo-

Of other maters, now, whil we haue grace,
Turne ageyn and taaste the swete sauour

Of this clene virgyne, of this weel sauoured flour.

(V. 1-5)

The first several chapters of this final book repeat and expand the conversion of the philosophers, leading, finally, to their martyrdom (V. 281-329). Similarly, the poet of the Longleat "Vita" intends the brief summary at the end of the first section to anticipate the longer detailed account on the other side of the "Pater Noster." The transition to the new events in section two is clearly marked by the underlined heading: "But now ber comeh nywe tydyng" (f. 59r).

The second section (ff. 58v- mid 62r, 368 lines) of the "Vita beate Katarine" continues from the martyrdom of the clerks and describes the beating and imprisonment of the saint, the visit and conversion of the Queen and Porphirus and the subsequent conversion of Porphirus' knights. It also contains two highly affective sections: the "Fiat Misericordia" (f. 58v) contained in the clerks' penultimate prayer, and the "Lamentacioun of Katrynes passioun" (f. 59r) included after the description of the beating of Katherine. The section ends without the repetition of the first break, but does include a very brief summary of the events that have just transpired:

Kateryn tauȝte Porphyrye so

And he hys knyȝtes þe same to do
God ȝeue ham gode chaunce.

(f. 62r)

This passage is followed by the Latin directive "AMEN PATER NOSTER" in the right hand space.

The third section (ff. 62r-65r, 349 lines) begins by reminding the audience of Maxentius' absence in the second section by describing the logical conclusion of his "rydynge fēr r ir þe reine in haste":

Now comeþ þe Empearour hoom

And hāþ hys needes alle ydoon

þat he rood out fore.

(f. 62r)

This section contains all of the expected elements of the martyrdom of St. Katherine: Maxentius' offer to construct a statue of her in the middle of the city and to place her next to his wife in his court; Cursates' four-wheeled torture device and the miraculous destruction of it and subsequent death of four thousand non-Christians (and the unusually macabre description of the dancing and leaping Christians rejoicing in the slaughter [f. 63r]19); the torment and martyrdom of the Queen; the martyrdom of Porphirus and his knights; and, finally, the death of Katherine after the granting of her "Boene" (f. 64v).

The most unusual elements of the "Vita beate Katarine" concern the passages where the narrator's voice or the characters' dialogue becomes mingled with the audience's responses. Exactly how these sections were to be negotiated is
not clear. They appear to indicate moments of audience identification with and participation in the oral delivery of the legend, but any possibilities I suggest must be constructed from indications given within the text (pronoun shifts, Latin directives) or in the extra-textual spaces on the folio pages (for example, the description on f. 59v, "Lamentacio ad excitandum devotionem audientium"), and from what little evidence there is concerning the production, performance or presentation of saints' legends in late medieval England generally, Lives of St. Katherine especially and the "Vita beate Katarine" specifically.

To begin with, even though there is very little direct evidence extant, there clearly is a history of dramatic performances of saints' lives in medieval England. E. K. Omanners outlines the problems confronting the reader of English religious dramatic history given factors like the widescale destruction of religious texts at the Reformation, and the situation is still worse when attempting to construct a history for the performances of saints' lives or plays (of which only three separate versions are extant: the Digby "Conversion of St. Paul" and "Mary Magdalene," and the Croxton "Play of the Sacrament"). The references that do exist in various sources to now lost plays witness persuasively, however, to the enduring popularity of the Legend of St. Katherine as a performance and dramatic text. In fact, the earliest record of a saint's play in England concerns a performance of the Life of St. Katherine in Dunstable at the beginning of the twelfth century:

*a ludus de Sancta katarina* was prepared at Dunstable in England by one Geoffrey, a Norman clerk who had been invited to England as schoolmaster
to the abbey of St. Albans. For it he borrowed certain choir copes belonging to the abbey, and had the misfortune to let these be burnt with his house. Deeply repentant, he took the religious habit, and in 1119 became abbot of St. Albans.  

Evidence of productions of plays recounting this particular saint’s legend turns up in records for urban centres as various as London, Coventry, Hereford, Dundee and Edinburgh. The London Chronicle records a performance in 1393, relatively contemporary with the compilation of the MS. Longleat 55, and there are accounts of the plays of St. Katherine in Coventry as late as 1491 and 1504.

Considerable evidence exists to suggest that celebrations in honour of St. Katherine, perhaps sponsored by guilds dedicated to that saint, were common in several late medieval cities; for instance, Ludlow in Shropshire held a three day fair over the feast of St. Katherine (24-26 November). If we can accept as likely the possibility that this manuscript was associated with St. Mary de Stalls in the centre of Bath (and I see no reason not to), then it is easy to imagine a guild connected to this chapel, and dedicating themselves to St. Katherine as we know other guilds in other urban centres did. Certainly, as I have demonstrated above, the civic importance of St. Katherine in Bath is undeniable; the worship of St. Katherine in Bath, the respect given her as patron saint of the city, and the honour reserved for her feast day were all fundamental to the municipal health of the city, as witnessed by both the centrality of her status in the oath described above and the inclusion of her legend in this manuscript. But exactly how Bath celebrated
the feast day of St. Katherine (25 November) is not now known. I would suggest, however, that this version of the "Vita beate Katarine" is more likely to have been performed than any other that I am aware of, and the tripartite structure may imply that the life was intended to be read aloud over three different services in celebration of her feast day. It is possible also that the services involved a type of "mumming," a dramatic performance mimed while a central reader read the life aloud.

At the very least, the "Vita" contains direct indications of its status as an oral narrative; like the English *Arthur* several folio pages earlier in the manuscript, the opening address clearly identifies this poem as intended for oral delivery:

Sowerayne & frendes pat bep now here
and hyt 3ow lyke 3oure sawle to saue
lestnep a lessoun : Wyp hertly chere
Wyp hertly chere . and 3e schalle hyt haue
3e schalle a lessoun of helth be taw3t
how 3at 3e schalle heuene wynne
hurep & lernep and for3ete hyi naw3t
Of mayde & martyr Seynt Katerynne.

(f. 55r)

These lines direct the audience's attention away, perhaps, from the bustle and noise of a feast day and guild celebration, to the "lessoun of helth" offered by the
legend. The command to "hureþ & lerneþ anó f: ñete hyt nawʒt" describes the appropriate listening mood and contemplative behaviour, even as the "hertly chere" connotes the more pleasant (because entertaining) elements of the listening activity - that is, the romance-style rhymes. Both the tail-rhyme stanza and the abab quatrain are forms common to romances. Their presence may suggest, in this life at least, a mood of celebration suitable to a festival reading. Certainly the celebratory tone surfaces in the most macabre of places. After the angel has destroyed the torture wheels and caused the four thousand heathens to die, we get the following description:

heþoun puple cryde & wepte
crystyn men daunced & lepte
holdyng vp þeire hondeʒ
heþoun puple for drede wyþ drowh
cristien maked murthe & lhowh
þonkyng god of hys sondeʒ.

(f. 63r)

The image of Christians making "murthę & lhowh" (laughing) is appropriate to the festivities surrounding the feast day of a city's patron saint, and the emphasis here on the celebration may provide some indication of the expected reading situation.

The opening call to attention and the emphasis on the mood it establishes is supported by various internal directions for group participation in the oral performance of the poem. At the most basic level, the "Pater Nosters" included at
the end of each section signalled, it is presumably safe to say, a break for prayer, probably for the audience as a group, and perhaps aloud. It is less clear how the reader of the text might have responded to the internal cues to expand or emphasize the material (through the Latin quotations, or the directive to "A lamentacioun of Katrynes passioun": "Lamentacio ad excitandum devotionem audientium" [f. 59v]), or how involved the audience might have actually become in the presentation of the legend. Certainly, there are several moments in the poem when the audience is encouraged to relate and respond to the material, but whether that response remained internal, at the level of silent prayer for example, or signalled a more public involvement (group prayer aloud, for example, led by the readers of the "Vita") is not evident from the poem. Audience involvement or response is encouraged, significantly, at moments of repentance or desire for grace, as when the clerks pray before their death and when the Queen goes to her torment, as well as in passages explicitly included to stimulate an affective response. For example, the "Fiat Misericordia" is at the level of narrative assigned to the clerks, but it would have engaged the audience if only because of the familiarity of the form of the prayer.

† Fiat Misericordia tua domine super nos te.

lat þy mercy be don on vs

as owre hoope ys in þe

Spare us lord swete Ihesus

for þat blood þu schaddest on tree
In by mercy ys alle oure tryst
Oure gode werks beþ as noone
Oure lyf in synne haþ be lost
to þe we þeildeþ vs echone
Kateryn tawþt vs furnst of þe
and brouþt vs þe furnst to knowe
we wende þe fend had god be
þerfor we loute to þe fulle loue
Alass Alass what haue we doo
vs lacked boþe grace & wyt
mamettys & stocks may not doo
Resoun schewþ now vs hyt
þe fend ys fader of alle leþynge
ffor whan he spēþe þyt ys gyle
he makeþ sprede no grass ne sprynge
we haue myss doo Alass þe whyle
To haue remyssioun of oure mysdedes
we beþ glad to leþe oure heedes
lord for þy loue
lord lat vs our lyf forlese
Erst þan we þe more dyspleþe
Gode god above.  (f. 58v-59r)
The prayer is clearly marked off in the poem as significant: the Latin title is the only Latin (excepting the ‘Pater Nosters’) to appear in the body of the text, and it is followed immediately by the English translation of the title suggesting that the first Latin line is a signal, an indication, to the audience of the prayer to follow. The Latin title may even have marked a key moment in the presentation of the narrative, announcing the upcoming special effect, so to speak. The content of the prayer is intended to take the audience out of the specific situation of the imminent martyrdom of the clerks, encouraging them to see in the confession and penitence of the dying clerks the need for confession and penitence shared by all humankind. The audience is encouraged, in other words, to see in the specific narrative the universal narrative of confession general to all Christians.

The prayer spoken by the Queen on the way to her martyrdom would have engaged the audience in a similar way. Katherine’s power and status as intercessor are what any version of her life and martyrdom ultimately celebrate, and the Queen’s final prayer would have prompted the audience of this celebration to claim the promise made to her as their own.

the Emperour commaunde yres be sette
and for to draw of eyper tette
to pemy heore fore
and as pey heore gan drawe faste
to Kateryn heore Eyoun heo caste
and prayde þus seyyng
Gentyl Kateryn haue me on mynde
and praye for me as ȝe beþ kynde

In my tormentynge

þat my feþe fayle nat me

Pray to god þat hureþ þe

ffor myn endynge. \(f.\) 63r

At this point in the narrative the Queen is not simply the Queen on her way to death, but all members of the audience of this "Vita," just as Katherine is not simply the virgin about to die for her faith but the saint and intercessor she becomes after her death. And again at the end of the poem, the narrative voice appropriates the first person plural pronouns, enlisting the audience in an identification with the sentiment expressed.

þus þey bouȝt heuenly blysse

þe qwehene Porphiry & his knyȝtess

god graunte \vs/ þe same
to suffre sorwe & compassioun here

þat we may see ham so þere

Ihesu for þy name. Amen

\(f.\) 64r

Ihesu crist goddes soone

for Kateryns passioun

we prayþe mekely þe
Saue vs fram sorw & neede
and kepe vs fram þe feendeʒ drede
Amen pur charyte

¶ Kateryn of maydes martyr & flour
we prayeþ þe be oure socour
In alle maner greuance
In worschupp of þe ys oure chapelle
curtoyse Kateryn kepe vs welle
fram destord & meschaunce. AMEN
(f. 65r)

The clearest indication, however, of the narrative intention to create an
identification with the emotional content of the legend occurs in the "Lamentacioun
of Katrynes passioun." After briefly describing the beating Katherine suffers ("no
hole skyn in heore þey lete" and "heor fayr body ran alle blode" [f. 59r]), the
narrator turns to contemplation of her pain and suffering, wondering "What caytf
ys þat hæþ þat herte/ þat wepeþ nat to hure þys/ to hure or þenke þe stroks smerte/
On heore þat neuer dude amyss" (f. 59r). At this point the title "A lamentacioun
of Katrynes passioun" appears in the right hand space of the folio, and a long
section begins, inciting the listener towards an affective response to the verbal
imagery. The extra-textual signal to this passage explicitly outlines its purpose:
"Lamentacio ad excitandum devotionem audientium" appears in the right hand
space approximately half-way down folio 59v.
† Cry Kateryn cry & greede
Cry & lat me hure þy voyse
alass why nelle myn herte \blode/ wepe
all þowȝ my Eroun hure no noyse
alass y hure þe strokys
and how þu art wylp soule sare
þu dudest neuer amyss
and þey wolle þe nat spare
þu stondest euermore stylle
as þowȝ hyt greuyd þe nowtȝ
þey dop to þe þeyr crywelle wylle
Cateryn wher ys þy þouȝt
wher ys þy mynde forsoþe y wene
hyt ys fram þe ysett in god fulle Euene
þu felyst nat what þey dop to þe
þy saule ys alle in heuene
y see þe bete in myn herte
þy body alle to toore
y wolle y myȝt with þe/ smerte
and stonde þe byfore
to kepe som of þy dysese
and of þy strong peyne
By dysez e hyt semeþ eþe
þu semest þeroff fulle feyne
God wolde y had loue
as ys now in þe
þan schalle y nat party frãm god above
ffor no peyne perde
why cloþes Cateryn beþ on ydo
vp þy body fulle of blode
þey beþ clungyn & Bake þe to
þys men beþ more þan woode
þæþ wþþ þþ/ fare & þy body kutte
& þutþ to þrysoun ayhe
What schalt þu in þrysone þutte
þorsþe hyt greuyþ sore me
In þrisone þutte what schalt þu do
What schalt þu do þere
now ys mys herte more wo
more þan hyt was ere
ffram þe topp into þe grond
In þe ys þe left no skyn
alle þy body ys fulle of wounde
by fayre face and by chyn.

(ff. 59r-59v)

This emphasis on the identification with Katherine’s passion presents an important moment of the externalizing (through public performance, oral delivery and group response) of the affective devotion typical to private experience. Unlike the MS. Harley 4012 Life of St. Katherine, which teaches an affective response to Christ’s passion through private reading (and Katherine’s example), the "Vita" makes this form of devotion public and directs it on to the passion of Katherine.

One of the ways in which the changing rhyme scheme works in the poem is as a textual indication of narrative emphasis; that is, most of the important bits (from the point of view of the religious experience) surface in the sections characterised by the abab rhyme pattern. Derek Pearsall has argued that movement between different forms of rhyme patterns (specifically tail-rhyme stanzas and quatrains) can function to make important changes in mood, tone, or material clear in the presentation of the poem.31 In the case of the "Vita beate Katarine," the "serious" material, that is the material dealing with the affective responses and the group prayers, is presented in the abab quatrain (the form most likely in the romances to describe epic, or heroic action or sentiments32). The tail-rhyme stanza, though used in the romances to present material considered less "serious" because it is more emotive, is here used for the majority of the legend, and only on rare occasions for material which is specifically emotive. In other words, the story is told primarily through tail-rhyme stanzas and the specifically
affective or devotional sections (the most emotive) appear in the \textit{abab} (or occasionally \textit{aabb}) quatrains. The effect of this is to maintain the hierarchy of "value" or "worth" attached to the different kinds of rhyme schemes, while reassigning the content most suitable to each form. For hagiographic legends like the "Vita beate Katarine," the elevated, or "serious" matter becomes specifically the emotive or devotional content, placing the overall emphasis on religious experience and response.

One of the important ways in which this version of the St. Katherine legend qualifies as a "public" text concerns the manner in which the characters (Katherine especially) conform to contemporary ideals of conduct disseminated through didactic literature. In any version of the martyrdom of St. Katherine, the Christian heroine and her oppressor occupy diametrically opposed positions within the narrative: Katherine of course represents the Christian ideal, and Maxentius epitomises the inability or unwillingness to accept the salvation held out to everyman or (as in the versions examined in this thesis) everywoman. The "Vita beate Katarine" filters this conflict through the lens of contemporary sermons and satire literature, so that Katherine's idealised status stems at least in part from her ability to "measure up" to the standards assigned in the prescriptive contemporary texts. The result, inevitably, is that elements of the "Vita" confirm and reinforce the regulatory agenda at work in the didactic literature familiar to the hearers of this legend.
Dyan Elliott has argued that "clothing is an essential tool in social semiotics and an invaluable shorthand for describing the wearer's condition to the outer world." In the "Vir the beat of Katarine," clothing and more importantly, the implications or the meaning clothing has for an audience familiar with contemporary sermons' invectives against particular clothing choices for women, function as an external monitor of the spiritual status of both Katherine and Maxentius in the narrative. Clothing as a measure of spiritual value first surfaces in the introduction to the legend:

In þat lond was a man called som tyme
Costus a comely knyȝt of cors for þe nones
A kyng of þat countre . by armeȝ & by syne
nowher a better of fflesch & of bones
¶ Thys kyng hadde a dawȝter by hys wyff
that men called þere mayde Kateryne
he putte heore to lerne how to lede heor lyif
To sauy heore sawle fram helle pyne
¶ And heo lernyd lustlych & cowþe grammere
Logyk Phylosophie . & cowþe welle despoyte
And in Dyvynyte heo hadde no peere
Of vanye & pryde heo sette fulle lyte
¶ Of felettys in þe forheed noþer of hornes
Of gay gowynes & furres noþer reuersse
he sette hyt & welle myght as gyle & \as/ skornes
and putte heore herte to vertyweʒ busynesse.

(f. 55r)

Costus’ value as a knight and a king, we learn, is displayed "by armeʒ & by syne." But the description of Katherine’s clothing is much more significantly articulated: juxtaposed with her learning, and specifically her pre-eminence in "Dyvynyte," is the praise for her modest wardrobe. "Felettys" (filet, a ribbon or headband, or chaplet), "hornes," "gay gownes & furres" and "reuersse" (reverse, a turned back, ornamented or embroidered border) are all common stock-in-trade for the preachers and satirists of the late Middle Ages. And that Katherine would scorn to wear them, demonstrating through her appearance her desire to "putte heore herte to vertyweʒ busynesse," would come as no surprise to an audience familiar with descriptions of the incompatibility of excessive dress and virtuous living. Chaucer’s Parson outlines this clearly: "Now, as of the outrageous array of wommen, God woot that though the visages of somme of hem seme ful chaast and debonaire, yet notifie they in hire array of atyr likerousnesse and pride."34

G. R. Owst lists numerous preachers who focused on women’s pride in clothing, providing as well examples of the kinds of ornaments that drew specific fire in the sermon material: low-necked dresses, sideless gowns (or sideless cote-hardie), tails or long trains on dresses, and most commonly, horns.35 Several of the sermons included in the collection Jacob’s Well address the issues of pride and dress, and as Arthur Brandeis argues, the material in this collection reflects much
of the sentiment of the late fourteenth century and can be taken as an example of
the kinds of images common to the genre. As an illustration to a sermon on
Pride and Vainglory, the author of the collection inserts a short story of a
Countess damned for Pride in dress, who after her death returned to "a lady of
fraunce" with a warning:

‘be þou ware be me & alle oþere! for I was a good lyuere in alle oþere
thynges, saaf I hadde delyȝte in pride & veynglorye, in prowde aray of myn
heuyd & of my body, in longe traynes, & in brode hornys, and I desyred
werdly worschyppe. and only for þis pryde I am dämpnyd wyth-outyn
ende!’

The author continues, with a further warning both on pride and, presumably, the
sin of dressing above one’s class: “Sythen þat a countasse was dämpnyd for
pryde, beth ware, ȝe poore folk þat are prowde, & takyth lownes!”

The late medieval satirists were considerably more graphic in their
descriptions of the fates awaiting women whose excessive pride revealed itself
through their clothing. In a French poem from the fourteenth century, horns are
described variously as "pechié l’ensaingne/ Desus son chef" ("the standard of sin
above her head") and "por tuer les hommes" ("to kill the men"). The poet
concludes that no woman who has wasted her time on her hair and horned
headdresses will make it into heaven:

N’iront pas, je les en respit,

Ou repos qui tout sansz respit
Est otroié

A celes qui bien emploié

Ont lor tens, et ont Dieu proié

Por lor pechié

Et ont si lor cheveus trechié,

Qu’autre chose n’i ont drecié

Ne ajouté.

[They will not go, I promise them, to the repose which, without any doubt, is given to those who have well employed their time, and who have prayed God for their sin, and have dressed their own hair, and have not decorated it, or added to it any other thing.]38

The headdress here functions explicitly as a reverse signifier of internal, spiritual worth: a bare head signals a woman bound for heaven because, the logic continues, the woman’s time is employed in prayer and other good works. Even more explicitly, in a poem attributed to Lydgate, "Bewe will shewe, thow hornys be Away (A Litelle short ditey agayne hornes),"39 the reader is reminded how the highest ideal of womanly modesty and beauty, Mary, scorned horned headdresses:

Take hede here-of, gefe to thy word crecence,

How maria, which had a preeminence

Aboue alle women, in bedlam whan she lay,

At cristis byrth, no cloth of gret dispence,

She weryd a keuerche; hornys were cast away.
He continues that Mary was "Pure in spirite, perfite in pacience,/ In whom alle hornys of pride were put away," concluding that women should "By example of hyr, 3owre hornys cast away."

Similarly, Robert Henrysoun would dress his "gud lady" in this way:

Of he honour suld be her hud,

Upoun hir heid to weir,

G·meist with governance so gud,

Na demyng suld hir deir.⁴⁰

In keeping with these stock images, Katherine exchanges items of clothing commonly labelled excessive for the "governance so gud" of Christian righteousness. When she first learns of Maxentius’ sacrifices ("Worschupynge mamettes wyþ bestys & blode"), she hurries off to confront him

Wyþ owte cloke cappe gurdelle or hoode

Sorwe heore hadde softe; heore herte fulle ny

to see þe fende y worschuped on such a manere

and cryed in hert to god þat ys an hye.

(f. 56r)

It is significant that this description, that is the emphasis on the saint’s lack of concern for her clothing as she rushes towards the temple, is given in place of the more common description of her "making the singne of the Crosse in hir forehed."⁴¹ The MS. Longleat 55 Katherine reveals her spiritual status, her sanctity and her Christian purity through her willingness to comply with
contemporary, common didactic standards for women's dress, a level of signification which would have been implicitly understood by the audience of this "Vita."

Much is revealed about other characters in the narrative through the descriptions of their clothing, or through the descriptions of their responses to appearances and excessive dress. The clerks, we learn, when they first arrive, are received by Maxentius with great honour, and present a very impressive picture:

Vyfty clerks þan bryngþ þe þeer spekyng as a belle
þan couþe in alle science : no man so much on lyve
Grete men & worthy and stode forþ fulle blyve
Proude of taberd & of hood & furreʒ gay forsoþe
þe Emperour was joyfulle : & muche þanke ham couþe.

(f. 56v)

Again, this image would have resonated with the descriptions common to the sermons of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but in this case the audience would have been expected to recognise the vanity of academic or intellectual pride as the specific sin. In a sermon titled "De equitate & de dono scientie," chapter 44 of Jacob's Well, the "furryd tabbardys, hodys, chymerys, & pylyouns" become the outward expressions of the emptiness of the knowledge which comes solely from "stodye":

A feend was in a cyte whom myche folk worschepyd for here god. and o man compellyd hym to tellyn hym how he myʒt best come to heuen. þe
feend seyde: 'to knowe bi-self. To knowe sterrys, & oþer scyens, þat kunnyng comyth of stodye; but to knowe þe-self comyth of no skole, ne of now clergye, ne of no letterure. sfor doctourys of lawe & of dyuynyte, & maystrys of oþere scyence, sumtyme summe of hem knowe noþt hem-self, ne wyll noþt knowyn hem-self, to gouerne hem fro synne to ryþtwysnesse; but summe lay-men kun bettyr knowyn hem-self in gouernauce fro synne þan summe grete clerkys. þerfore, þis ðyfte of knowynge comyth of þe holy gost, & noþt of skole. sfor þe holy gost þeyyth noþt þis ðyfte of kunnyngge for here furryd tabbardys, hodys, chymerys, & pylyouns, but þe holy gost þeyyth þis kunnyng & knowynge to leryd & lewyd þat arn in þe grounde of obedyence in ful equyte. to hem springeth þe holy gost þis watyr of grace to know hem-self, & to gouerne hem-self in goodnesse.42

This theme is explored in great detail in the "Vita beate Katarine." Much of the criticism for Maxentius behaviour stems from his inability to recognise that the "ðyfte of knowynge comyth of þe holy gost, noþt of skole," and much of Katherine’s power comes from her ability to distinguish between the kinds of knowledge described above.

Katherine’s relationship to learning in this version of the legend is the most cautious of all the versions considered in this dissertation. She insists that her learning cannot prepare her to describe the works of God, nor can it heal her soul or help her into heaven (f. 57v).43 But most importantly, she clearly states that Christ is her "wytt & alle [her] connynge," claiming that the intellectual abilities
that the clerks take so much pride in (and Maxentius finds so much joy in) are "mamettys" which "bep but gylynge" (f. 57v). This comparison juxtaposes Christ (Katherine's "connynge") with the "mamettys" (the clerks' "sotelte") establishing a hierarchy of understanding between Katherine's superior "connynge" received through contemplation and faith ("y sett my tryst my saule my pow3t") and the clerks' "gylynge" received through study and intellectual endeavor. Consequently, this version of the debate is significantly reduced, since intellectual ability is dangerously close to heresy here. Katherine directs the clerks' and the audience away from the "clergye and craft" Maxentius praised in the clerks to a meditation on Christ's humanity.

Katherine's repudiation of formal learning must be read against the presence of the other potential reader(s) of this legend. The Latin quotations and directives in the extra-textual space of the manuscript imply that the "Vita" also received a "scholarly" reading of the type seemingly discouraged by the "public" lesson of the narrative. Far from being a contradiction, this distinction (between scholarly reading and Katherine's repudiation of formal learning) merely acknowledges the experiences of the main audience for the "Vita." As a performed text, read on the occasion of the saint's feast day and celebrations, this legend would have drawn an audience consisting of the various citizens of Bath - from all social levels and class groups. The women to whom this Katherine would have been presented might likely have been women, like Margery Kempe or Chaucer's Wife of Bath, who in fact were not literate but were none the less
familiar with and eager for public sermons and reading."44

The Wife of Bath, though she unfortunately does not mention hearing this particular legend, refers to the pleasure she received from her "visitacion/ To vigilies and to processiouns,/ To prechyng eek, and to thise pilgrimages,/ To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages."45 And we know the Wife was familiar with the contemporary invectives against women's immodesty and dress; it is precisely her flaunting of these standards which reveals how common-place the criticisms were.46

More importantly, the Wife's inversion of the traditional hierarchy of "experience" and "auctoritee" with which Chaucer begins her prologue, provides an extreme mis-reading of the "lessoun" this legend provides: the power of this Katherine's "connynge" (contemplation and faith) over the Clerk's "gylynge" (formal learning). Obviously, the Wife is a male poet's literary invention, a character which consistently speaks and acts outrageously, and cannot therefore be taken as an indication of real medieval women's experiences or attitudes. Nevertheless, her extreme interpretation of the contemporary cultural trends to devalue and therefore discourage women's intellectual endeavor by emphasising the distinction between formal learning and experiential (spiritual, gained through contemplation especially) knowledge,47 is important. The Wife's gleeful embracing of this hierarchy of knowledge and acceptance of its potential empowerment provides an interesting suggestion of the possible ways real
medieval women might have responded to these clerical models of learning.
Chapter Six: Endnotes


2. A transcription of this text is provided in Appendix II.

3. Cf. MS. Longleat 55, f. 3r.


   Samuel Moore, Sanford Brown Meech and Harold Whitehall concluded that, even without the specific references to the civic life of Bath, there was sufficient evidence in the English items included in the manuscript to confirm a Somerset provenance; "Middle English Dialect Characteristics and Dialect Boundaries. Preliminary Report of an Investigation Based Exclusively on


9. I have used the title given for this life in the original table of contents, f. 3r, rather than the title added in a later hand in the right-hand space of the manuscript, "The Lyfe of Quen Kateren" (f. 56r). Cf. Jennifer Bray, who does use this later title, 136.

10. Cf. Wright's introduction; Bray 133. Furthermore, J.D.A. Ogilvy gives (in quite another context) the example of two other "Red Books" acting as oath books: the Red Book of Eye (possibly seventh or eighth century and now lost) and the Red Book of Darley (MS. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 422). Ogilvy cites an inscription in a sixteenth-century hand:

    The rede boke of darleye in the peake in darbyshire.

This booke was sometime had in such reverence in darbieshire that it was
comonlie beleved that whosoever should sweare untruelie uppon this booke should run madd.


Unfortunately, Cunliffe does not give more of the reasons or cite the relevant sources for this claim.

13. This suggestion has been offered in several places, but never documented. I would argue that this oath, as well as the inclusion of the "Vita beate Katarine" in the manuscript, amply demonstrates this fact. Cf., for example, R.E.M. Peach, *Bath, Old and New, A Handy Guide and a History* (London, 1888) 146; Cunliffe 81; and Bray 134.

14. F. 68v. This oath is in places very hard to read, and the line "Seynt Katern day ... chapelle" is stroked across but rewritten in again just below the line.

15. For example, the correspondence between Henry V and Charles of France (ff. 4r-v), the Magna Carta (ff. 23r-25r), the claim of the king of England to the Crown of France (f. 54r), and of course, the chronicle of Brutus.


17. Nearly three-quarters of the poem is presented in the tail-rhyme stanza. The *abab* quatrain occurs at lines 1-131 (there are some examples of *aabb* in this section), lines 367-87 (the "Fiat Misericordia" section), lines 424-79 (which include the "Lamentacioun of Katrynes passioun"), lines 492-507 (the majority of God's speech to Katherine in prison), and a few other very short instances: lines 527-30, 582-89, 626-35, and 906-10.

18. Bk IV. 2283 - Bk V. 154. Further references will be given in the text by Book and line number.

19. Compare the MS. Longleat 55 version of the event -

```
the pecys fly out wyp gret strenkþ
and sclowh þe heþoun in brede & lengþ
foure þousandes
heþoun puple cryde & weþe
crystyn men daunced & lepte
holdþng vp þeire hondeþ
heþoun puple for drede wyp drowþ
cristen maked murthe & lhowh
```
ponkyng god of hys sondeʒ (f. 63r)

with the longer, more sober description Capgrave gives:

Yet was this fyre soo horryble that hee

Brente the wheles and threw hem all-about,

Brent men eke, adn tho were not fewe -

ffoure thousand, seyth oure story with-ouen dowte,

Were ded with the blast, leyde alle on rewe

Of hethen caytyues, shrew rith be shrewe,

herowdes nouveau hem for thei can best.

The lady sat stille in hir holy nest,

Knelande deuoutely in sobyr prayers.

The Aungell and feer bothe thei took her weye

To place thei cam fro - for men myght hem here

Bothe in her comyng and goynge, thei seye.

Mechel fook for feere were in poynt to deye,

Saue þes! the conforte of this swete may

Lefte hem a-geyn fro þat afray.

This is the ende of al this costful werke.

hoo arn now woo but hethen men there?

hoo arn now mery, hoo gonne her frontes merke

But crysten folkys, whiche han skaped this feere?

Somme for vengeauns may not goo ne stere.
Thus oon syde is in Ioye, the other in sorwe & care.

Of swhiche-maney vengeauns lete euery man be ware!

(V. 1379-1400)

Capgrave focuses his reader's attention not on the joy one might get out of seeing 4000 enemies slaughtered cruelly before one's eyes, but on the joy the Christians would expect to feel for having "skaped this feere," warning the reader finally that rather than dancing or leaping, one should live one's life in such a way to escape such judgement: "Of swhiche-maney vengeauns lete euery man be ware!".


26. For example, there was a medieval St. Katherine’s guild attached to the St. Katherine’s Chapel in St. John’s Hospital in Coventry; see Harris 82.

27. Capgrave’s legend, while certainly suitable for group reading, does not lend itself to performance the way this text does.


29. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has already shown that the distinctions between romance and hagiography are not as firm as readers of Middle English poetry like to think; see ‘Bet .. to ... rede on holy Seyntes lyves...’: Romance and Hagiography Again,” Readings in Medieval English Romance, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994) 83-97.

30. See note 19.


32. Pearsall 16.


34. "The Parson’s Tale," The Riverside Chaucer, gen. ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987) l. 429. Katherine, however, demonstrates her "vertyweȝ buysynesse" through both her "array" and her "visage":

3ut was þere heore non lyke in any place

Of connynge of wytt of sadnesse & beawe
Amyable of chere womanly of face
Comfort to gode men: to loky & to see

Louely to loky on wyp chere & spech sad
fetures fulle fayre / werkes deuowte
heore presence made fooleʒ a drad
for grace & vertyw þat were hure abowte. (f. 55r)


37. Jacob's Well 80-81.


40. Fairholt 60.


Capgrave’s Katherine, rather than marking herself with the sign of the Cross, remembred what conuenant [bat] she made

Right in hir baptem whan she washed was,

Eke in hir weddynge, with beheestes ful sade.

And further, she looks on her "fair ryng" which was "eke youe hir at hir weddynge newe," thinking (as the other Katherines do, and as they express through outward signs of their spiritual status) "ffy on the world, fy on crowne and trone!" (IV. 484-486, 501-504).

42. Jacob’s Well 276-277, emphasis added.

43. Cf. Capgrave, whose Katherine is easily the most learned of the saints I discuss. Her heathen learning is in fact the groundwork for her conversion in that it prepares her for the truth of the Gospels.


1955). The writer of the *The Book of Privy Counselling* explicitly warns the reader that she/he cannot come to God through intellectual superiority alone: "þe contrary is sop in þinges contemplatyue":

& þerfore, I preie þee, seche more after felyng þen after kunning; for kunnyng ofttymes discelayþ wiþ pride, bot meek louely felyng may not begile. Scientia inflat, karitas edificat. In knowynge is travaile, in feling is rest.

Conclusion

Gentyl Kateryn haue me on mynde
and praye for me as ȝe beþ kynde
In my tormentyne
þat my feþþ fayle nat me
Pray to god þat hureþ þe
ffor myn endynte

("Vita beate Katarine," f. 63r)

In his discussion of traditional religion in the late Middle Ages, Eamon Duffy questions what appeal the popular virgin martyrs might have held for the "sober and not unworldly men and women of pre-Reformation England." The attraction, he suggests, of saints like "St. Zita of Lucca, the model domestic servant and pattern of woman in the kitchen," is considerably easier to understand: their appeal "probably lay in their suitability as patterns for imitation." For the average
medieval believer, Duffy continues, the virgin martyrs were not models to be imitated, "but rather a source of power to be tapped." Furthermore:

These virgin saints and their male counterparts were invoked by the prosperous and pious donors of the East Anglian screens not as exemplars calling away from marriage and money-making, nor as patterns of perpetual chastity or defiance of disobedience to patriarchy and government, but as the helpers of those who would 'have their boon or else a better thing', as protectresses of the marriage bed, auxiliary midwives, fire-insurance underwriters, and guarantors against what [St.] Dorothy calls 'hateful poverty'.

Duffy's question is still and repeatedly being asked: specifically, how did medieval women view their relationship(s) to the virgin martyrs? In what ways did the defiant and independent female saints and their stories function in the lives of the women who read or heard their legends? The answers are frequently strikingly different from Duffy's, however. Dyan Elliot, for instance, found that while the distinction between imitation and admiration of the saints may have been supported, in fact encouraged, by the medieval Church and its clergy in order "to channel and contain the worst excesses of lay piety," believers nevertheless found ways around these instructions. With regard to chastity within marriage, women, especially, began to internalise elements of the female saints' lives and narratives they read and/or heard read to them, in quiet opposition to the directions of the Church: "The discouragements were present, but the women were
not listening." And further, as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has more recently demonstrated, with regards to sexual and social autonomy, saints’ lives "offer an important model of resistance." She argues that "these texts, with their heroines’ supernaturally underwritten insistence that when women say no, no is what they mean, can offer serious encouragement to female readers."

In this thesis, I have argued that St. Katherine provided a very important model to be imitated by late medieval laywomen. Though her union with Christ must have added significantly to the attraction, her appeal lay not in her virginity specifically, but in her construction as a woman reading, learning and communicating that knowledge, moving within an environment supportive of these desires. Laywomen, like Cicely, Duchess of York, created their own places of reading and learning in their homes, finding in the description of St. Katherine’s court an appropriate pattern for the mixed-life of public activity and pious contemplation:

heo kept heore seruauntes & heore howsholde

wyp clennesse of leuynge vnder goddes lawe

wonder hyt ys to þenke a mayde 3ong be bolde

So to rywly heore self ; alone as y trawe

Ther was no wast in no wyse of mete ne drynte

But þe powre hadde part of fode & of clop

heere many studied : & somme dude Swynke
In prayour: & labour as trywe men doţ.

(MS. Longleat 55, f. 55v)

I have argued, in the previous chapters, that Katherine can and does function precisely as a model, an exemplar, for women's reading and (in the Longleat "Vita" specifically) as a model, also, for appropriate responses to contemporary didactic literature. Significantly, the increase in popularity of this saint in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries coincided with the increase in English literacy among laywomen and the corresponding popularisation of religious and devotional texts amongst this new community of devout women readers. In the representation of her court and her identification with Mary, Katherine's legend may speak to the desires of laywomen denied the opportunity to live the life of a professional religious, resisting, through these very desires if in no other way, the social and sexual obligations of the public, patriarchal world.

Having now completed the thesis, and in a position to reflect on its production, I can acknowledge that though there were persuasive reasons for considering this particular grouping of texts, I have been aware of other, equally interesting, potential arrangements. The texts I discussed allowed me to trace the movement of the ideal of St. Katherine and the broader issue of female spirituality from a private devotional context through to more generalised forms of public devotion. This arrangement provided me as well with four texts whose links to female readership were strong and defensible. Each of the legends, moreover, displays its
status as a woman's text (not always or necessarily exclusively), and therefore permitted interesting glimpses of some of the different relationships possible between (presumably) male writers and female readers. And each version, in its differences from its source material and in its relationship to the larger corpus of legends of St. Katherine, provided the opportunity to consider the ways in which individual texts were adapted to meet the needs of particular audiences and specific reading situations. At the very least, and given the rapidly increasing modern interest in medieval women's reading and devotion, it seemed to me useful to make both the Prose Life and the "Vita beate Katarine" available for interested readers.

That said, I can now admit to finding other arrangements and groupings for these texts equally compelling. For example, I might have considered Bokenham's Legendys of Hooly Wummen and The South English Legendary as two examples of saints' lives collections, similar in their content (indeed Bokenham relies on the other collection for much of his source material) but importantly different in the way each text imagines its relationship with its readers. This would have permitted me to develop my arguments about the Legendys of Hooly Wummen across several of the lives, in fact. Or, for instance, Capgrave's description of Katherine's identification with Mary in his Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria may yet be shown to have interesting connections with John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady. Besides the reference to Lydgate in Capgrave's poem, this comparison is encouraged by the manuscript history the two texts share. Furthermore, the
manuscript which contains both poems (MS. Arundel 168) contains as well other religious verse (mostly Lydgatian), and may very well provide other, interesting details about women's reading in the literate community of East Anglia.

Similarly, I might have considered MS. Harley 4012 in more detail and as a complete text, of which the prose Life of St. Katherine is but a part. This miscellany may yet reveal important information regarding laywomen's involvement in the production of their books of devotion, even as the collection itself may, through the arrangement and selection of its contents, show itself to be an exemplar of a particular kind of "program of reading" popular with late medieval laywomen. Furthermore, the MS. Longleat 55 legend, "Vita beate Katarine," could have been considered primarily in the context of other romance-like hagiographies or pious romances, perhaps, for example, the legend of St. Katherine contained in the Auchinleck manuscript.

Each of these projects would contribute to the ongoing critical discussions of women's reading and lay-spirituality in important and interesting ways. For this reason, and in conclusion, this thesis will hopefully prove to be an essential prolegomena for any and/or all of the projects just described.
Conclusion: Endnotes

2. Duffy 175, 176-77.
4. Elliott 216-17.
APPENDIX I

The Prose Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria

(BL. MS. Harley 4012, ff. 115r-123v)

A Description of British Library MS. Harley 4012

MS. Harley is a vellum manuscript, 11 1/10in. by 7 6/10in., consisting of 1 + 155 leaves, two of which are unnumbered and therefore not included in the British Library foliation (the blank leaves following f. 100 and f.151 (Wilson, 299). There are several other blank pages or leaves in the MS.: folios 1r, 72v, 78v, 102v, 152v, and 153 r-v. The titles are in red, paragraph divisions are in red and blue, and there is some decoration of capitals and initials. The pages are ruled, and the folios that contain "be Lif of Sent Katryne" (115-123v) have 25-28 lines on each page, except for f. 123v which has only 8 lines. The hand has been dated c.1460, and Edward Wilson (outlining information received by him from M. B. Parkes) suggests that the hand may be enough like that of MS. University College, Oxford, 85 and Bodleian Library MS. Ashmole 764 to be the product of the same scribe. (See Edward Wilson, "A Middle English Manuscript at Coughton
The manuscript contains the following items:

1. ff. 1v-68v  
   *be clensing of man's soule*  
   (Jolliffe, E.14; Raymo 84)

2. ff. 69r-72r  
   "Charter of Christ" from *Pore Caitif*  
   (Jolliffe, B; IPMEP 166)

3. f. 73r  
   *Foure thingis be nedefull ... to obtayne the sisse of heuen*  
   (Jolliffe, I.9; Raymo 147)

4. ff. 73r-77r  
   *the mirrour of sinnes*  
   (Jolliffe, F.8; IPMEP 213)

5. ff. 77v-78r  
   *Theis be the wordis that our saueoure thesu spake to his holy spouse and virgen Sent Molle.* Extract from Mechtild of Hackeborn's *Book of Gostlye Grace.*  
   (Jolliffe, I.31 (b); Raymo 142)

6. ff. 79r-83r  
   *A tretis of mekenes*  
   (Jolliffe, G.19; Raymo 77)

7. ff. 83v-100v  
   *The artikill of the faith*  
   (Raymo 41)

8. ff. 101r-103v  
   *Mirror of St. Edmund* (complete list of chapters followed by
chapters i-part of iii)

(IPMEP 800)

9. ff. 104r-105v *treatise on four manners of wasshinges*

(Jolliffe, E.8: he calls if for remember ther also ther be many
thingis pat be not exceptable before god; Raymo 93)

10. ff. 106r-108v *Ithesu the sonne of mare mylde*

(IMEV 1779)

11. ff. 109r-109v *Wofully Araide*

(IMEV 497)

12. ff. 110r-113r *the pardon of the monastery of Shene, which is Syon*

(IPMEP 184)

13. ff. 113v-114v *a short tretise on tribulacion mekely suffered*

(Jolliffe J.2 (d); IPMEP 287)

14. ff. 115r-123v *pe Lif of Sent Katryne*

15. ff. 124r-130r *pe Lif of Sent Margaret*

16. ff. 130v-139v *pe Lif of Sent Anne*

(IMEV 3207)

17. ff. 140r-151v *pe Lif of Sent Patrick*

(incomplete)

(IMEV 3038)
A Note on the Text

In all cases, the manuscript spellings have been reproduced, and the scribal abbreviations have been expanded and are represented by italics in the transcription. Bold text is used to represent instances of emphasized (larger, darker) script in the original. When required, words have been divided according to modern word divisions. Paragraphing, punctuation and capitalisation all follow the original text, and folio divisions are given in square brackets. This text does not purport to be a critical edition and therefore does not include either a glossary or annotations, though I intend to make the prose Life of St. Katherine available in that form in the future.
Here begynneth þe lif of Sent Katryne
This holy virgen and martir is remembrid in scripture in somoche that
every man and woman may haue a respecte and se what meret is youen
vnto them that stedfastly with herte will and mynde in the laues of all
myghte god be daily and howrely abiding hauyng remembrans on the
precious passion of criste ihesu and a remors how tenderly how louyngly
how mekely he kamme and descendid from the trone celestiall into a
maidens ombe in erthe suffering honger and colde rebukyng and dissipising
of the fals lues and all was for the conforte and redemcion of mankynde
and to bringe his saule oute of the paynes infernall vnto the blis whiche is
during parpetuall and how in erthe was slayne on the montayne of caluery
solde and betraide with treson by Iudas the fals traitor and so brought vnto
the lugement of pilate and execusion gouen he to be crucefide and displaide
and his handis and feete nailid with nailes and his herte persid with longes
sharp Spere and on his hed a crowne of thorne drinkyng esell and galle then
ranne his precious blode downe distilling from the hert and all this was for to
redeeme mankynde and bringe hym vnto the gloryus habitacion of Heuen.

† this muste euery creaturee remember as did this holy
maiden and virgen for she rememberde this daily and howrely and
hit in [f. 115v] hir mynde and thought on his passion and payne and
rewardid hym with hir consiens and good herte to hir power and seuerally
chose hym for hir special loue and no loue but hym as ye shall finde
herafter. moreover his virgen daily remembrid the mekenes and compassion
with pe lamentable teris of pite whiche the virgen mare had in the tyme of
his precus passion and when she saw hir sonne slayne with a spere on the
crosse then hir maternall loue was fervently kindelid in stedfastly printid in
hir hert

¶ this this2 virgen mary kyndly loued hir sonne whiche was a
president vnto this Holy virgen of whom and of the same the story foloing
makith true mención whiche is a thinge most true and drawen ovte of
Scripture as the legent spacefith. and for this cause moreouer that suche
peple as be not letterd in Scripture may rede & see the hole entent of the
same in the vulgar whiche is callid the Comen speche of Englonde for their
erudicion and speculacion of vertu for here may men se that intendith and
purposith to leue in vertu euydent ensampill of vertus leuyng whiche ihesu
gue grace and graunt vs the lernyng of them

AMEN

EXPLICIT PROHEMIUM
In the tyme of maximean Emperowre of Rome that was ytter enmy vnto god and contrary to his lawes and preceptis a cruell & an enuyus tirrant conciderd the nobill plente and grete suffisans in the cite of Alixaunder ordeyned and prouided to goo thethir well Emparelid and araide with grete multitude of people to do a solum Sacrefice at whos comyng he made and coartid all the pepill by compulsion to assemble bothe pore & riche for to do Sacrefice to the Idolitis and tho that were cristen and wolde do no Sacrefice he made them to be crually turmentid

¶ This quene Kateren was then of the age of xvij yere

abiding in here pales whiche was was3 well emparelid with riches and enhabite with servantis and as she sate musing in hir stode and contemplacion of hir moste dere lorde and truee spouse. She harde an huge noise of instrumentis and Song and kryng of bestis wondering gretyly what hit myght be and callid a messauntger vnto hir commaunding hym too bringe the sartaynete what hit ment or shulde mene. Hoo in haste kamme agayne and sartefide the trauthe and deuysid & informed hir of the trauthe and all the maner of giding.

¶ And when she vnderstode the informacion of the truthe She pensiued and sorowid gretyly for the dishownir donne to owr saueowr and very spouse who was supplantid be Idolatrye whiche she myght not endure to suffer. Wherfor in all the haste possible She rose hir vp forgetting himself and hir estate making the singne of the Crosse in hir forehed and withowte
any doute or fere She went to the Emperor [f. 116v] takyng good aduisement and euer she saide wheras she saw diuers and Sondre of cristen people meuyd to doo Sacrefice by expression for drede of deth whiche causid hir gretly to be agreued in hir saule

¶ She gothe forth boldely in the presse and all tho that behelde hir meruelid of hir grete bewte and lefte their Sacrefice for to folow hir to aduise hir when she kame to the Emperor she lokid on hym with a demure chere and by good deliberacion and aduisement saide vnto hym vn this wise

¶ Sir Emperor the dignite of thi order with reson shulde meue the to saule helthe if þou were þe creature of heuenly inspeccion and liste to resiste thy corraʒ for thi fals goddis and refuse the warkis of thi observantius Whi hast thow now assemblid this multitud of peple in vayne ffor too worship the made Idolitis

¶ Shamyst thow not of thi blindnes þou meruelist gretly of this temple that is made with mans hande and pransly affiste the in the ornamentis þat shalbe as powder before þe wynde þou shuldiste rather and þou haddist any discrete wit prudent polecy or þit resonabill affians ponder and conceue þe maruelus workis of Heuen and of yerthe and of all things þat be contayned theron þe Sonne þe mone and þe Sterris how thei shyne. ffore þe begynnyng of þe worlde vnto þe ende whiche renne in sircute nyght
& day. first to the Oxident and so from thens to the orient and thei be neuer wery and be forme porof and when you hast perceued all theis thingis by credibill informacion and playne intruction. Enquire and aply the to knaw- [f. 117r] en the makir and former whos grace entende you to purchase and hat don you shalt finde none like hym for he is eternall and almyghte. And hym honowre & worship and eschue bees vanytes and exclude be consaites and warkis of the finde and apli the to almyghite god Kyng of all kyngis and lorde of all lordis

¶ And then she beganne to declare the Incarnacion of be goodnes of be Sonne wherwith be Emperowr was abasshid nor nas not experte nor kowde not aunswere hir till at be laste he saide. O you woman Suffer vs to ende owre Sacrefice and after hat we shall aunswere be commaundying hat she shuld be brought in to his pales and kept with grete diligens he and all them hat harde hir had gret maruaile of hir excessive wisdom and passing beute

¶ ffor hir beute and faire colowr florishing all other exceeding all other women hat then leuyd so aperid she to hem all and specially to be cristien peple. hat were constrayned to do Sacrefice who for drede condecendid

¶ But thei toke suche a corage to them and the beholding of hir sadnes and reuerent beute hat they had leuer to a sufferdd be deth then a
forsaken per faihte.

¶ After when be Emperor kame in to his pales anon he sent for be young quene and Saide vnto hir in bis wise.

¶ Maide we harde of your eloquens and maruaile of your excellent wisdom But we war so ocupide in sacrefice pat we myght not attende vnto you wherfor I aske you of what kynred ye be come. Andd she aunsword and saide vnto hym I shall comprehende [f. 117v] myne aunsword withoute aduantaung of pride only but mynester be trowthe to the

¶ I am Kateren be daughter of Kyng Costis and I was borne and norishid in purple and taughte in all be liberall aris of be lawe refusing all worldly pingis and enclinid to owr moste Soueraine estate my lord Criste iones. Who is very god and man where as be goddis which ye worship be fals ytterli vayne and disseuab and withoute any profite for be may yeue no Socowr to no wight in trobilacion ne releue ne deliuer none owte of parell

¶ Then saide be Emperowe too hir if hit be soo as pou saist be vniuersall worlde failith and pou only saist Sothe and all trauthis be confermed by po or per witnes. If pou were and Angell or a celestiall vertue 3it me aught not to beleue be alone and somoche be lesse for pou arte a frele woman

¶ She aunsword and saide sir Emperowe I require be to
Suffer þi madnes and obstinacy to be ouercom and reclaymed þat so grete incombrans of parturbacion meue so not þi corage þat holdist thiselve So myghte ffor and if þou wilt alter þi disposicion þou maiste leue rially as a Kyng and orels finally þou shalte be thrall truste me verely. Wherfor doiste þou aply to embage vs in þi dedly subteltes with thyne ensampels of philosophers þat preuailith not þe nor hurtith vs

† But and if þou wilte be converted and aduerte þe and to be a meke dissiple I shall teche þe true Philosophy wherby þou shalt haue experiens and experte to know þi lorde god þi maker who formed þe I shall 3eue þe occasion of right to rule þiself and to raigne rially as a worthi kyng and when þe [f. 118r] Emperowr parceued þat he kowde be no mene overcome hir conclude hir ne aunswere hir to no purpose he departide from hir with grete vnder and forthe withall sent his letters vnto gramarions and famus rethoriens to come and apere in his presens in all þe haste possible vnto þe Cite of Alisaunder to reforme and overcome an eloquent virgen whiche passith all comparison and þat done he shulde be to them so bountefull in his rewarde þat hit shulde be to þem beneficiall and perpetuite and fxfe wer brought in conclusion to conclude hir whos fame soreemowntid all other in worldly wisdome and parfite Doctrine as in þer consaitis as in tho daies. And when þei come to þe Emperowris presens and had instruction of þe cause of ther comyng. Anon thei enclined to his
will and saide hit shulde sone be donne. Then saide the Emperor to them I
myght haue constrayned hir by coarcion and compulsion to do Sacrefice
But I have leuer too confuse hir opineon by hir agrement thorow your
prudent polecy and nobill discrécions.

¶ Then saide þe maisters bringe hir forthe and when she is
concludid & ouer come in hir awne sole she shall say þat she neuer erste
met with wise men and when þis glorius virgen shulde be in vre with þis
Iubertous disputacion she comyttid þe Inparte þerof vnto þe merce of god
hir moste graciuste Spouse noping atemtid with presumpcion but fully
trusting to his mercy and graciuse promyse

¶ And then Angellis anon aperid vnto hir comforting hir and
to drede in nowise but excitid hir to be stab[i-[f.118v]]l and strange in þe
faithe for she shulde haue a victorios victory and bring þem all to þe
crowne of martirdome þen was hir saule replenishid full of vniuersall ioy
guelyng seueraine Lorde and worshipfull thankings and humble þankyngis
vnto hir moste derelorde and true Spouse

¶ And when she came before þe Emperowre she saide vnto þe
Emperowr your sentens and iugement is not commendable considering þe
promissis to Set xl masters agayne a semple maiden behoting þem grete
guerdons to opresse my smalle reson and I leue contuined to dispute with
them ho may not aske nor astert to avise of counsaill but my lorde god in
whom I fully truste and whom I magnifie who is veri guerdon to all them
pat will strif and abide a Iubarde for hym which shalbe my parfite Guerdon

I then beganne he masters and saide pat hit was impossible a
man to be borne of a virgen and after he sufferd deth wilfully

I pen pat intentieth virgen declarid pat her was nobing
impossibill too god. And also she toke on hir and saide paynems toke an
opineon whiche was long or hit was declarid observid and donne. ffor
Caton and Sibill saide pat he was blissid pat shulde honge hie on a tre.
And when she had opened pe blindnes of her yiie and declarid her goddis
vay and fals peis masters were confusid and so astoned and abashid pei wist
not what to say to contrarie hir but afermed [f. 119r] her conclusion and
kept them still as Dome men pe Emperor parceuyng this was indiscretely
wrathe began to blame them sharply because pei were so scomfetid and
ouercome to pe vtter rebuke of a Symple and a innosent maiden pat is but
ignorant and negligent

I pen pe grettist master of all saide Sir Emperowr wete ze
right wel her was neuer none so profoundid in conyng to withstond or
resiste owr Doctrine excepte only his maide in whom pe Spirit of god
spekith whiche concludith so owr resons pat we haue no pouer to
determyne agayne owr lordee ihesu criste vnto whom we be finally
convuertid ffor we canne fynde no prouable Sentens to excite vs pe contrary
And when þe tirant herde þis he was fervently and ardently
set on fire with irus odenes commaunding to bren þem in þe myddis of þe
cite whom þis holi virgen comfortid and stabelishid þer hertis too Suffer
martirdome teching þem þe faithe and þey sorowid to suffer martirdome
withowte Baptime þis meritory virgen saide vnto þem dispaire not þy dere
brotherne ne drede not for shedding of your blodd for your entent shalbe to
owr lorde a Satisfaccion and recompens for your baptyme by vertue wherof
ye shall resiste þe violens of þe Deuell. blisse 3ou with þe Signe of þe
crosse and þe shalbe crowned in Heuen. and when þei were caste in myddis
of þe flame þei yeldid þer Saulis vnto God that neþer þer clothis nether ther
here was tained with þe firee and when þe Cristen had bered þe bodes þe
tiraunt saide vnto þe virgen. a þou noble younge virgen haue com-[f.
119v]passion on thi thoght and þou shalt nexte be quene and þou shalte be
callid Lady of my pales and þi Image shalbe set vp alofte in þe myddis of
þe cite and þou shalte be honowrd as a goddes to whom þe virgen saide

O þou moste ffole Wher is thy Sapiens whi spekiste þou so
folely in voide termes and of vayne cantilis for hit is vnkindines to thinke
on hym for I haue tolde þe plainly and doo. þat I am only yonnen to owr
lord ihesu Criste in whom is all my joy and loue With all þe Switnes of my
saule nothin paising in my Stomake but for hym or in hy : where flatring
nor compulsion with turnamentis intollerable shall not disseuer me from
hym þen he fullfillid with sirquidous Wodenes remyttid hir to preson
commaunding to spoile h'â and bete hir with sharpe cordis turmenting her
þe xii daies withoute mete or drinke

¶ In this meane tyme þe Emperowr rode oute for necessary
ocupacions and þe quene had a fervent desire to se þe virgen and on a
nyght She toke with her þe Prince of Knyghtis goinge preuely vnto þe preson
where þe holi virgen was and þer she saw a grete light þat þe worldly light
was but derkenes þerto and therwith she saw Angells gloriouls and
beningly anointing þe wondis of þe glorius virgen magnysiing hir humylite
and þen þis blessid virgen releuyd þis quene with instruccion telling hir of
þe Ioees of Heuen with swete and wordis right delicius convertyng hir to þe
faithe bidding hir to be stronge and saide she shulde receue þe Crowne of
martirdom [f. 120r] and so þei spake togeder til mydmydnyght. And when
Purfire þe Empres had herde all this talking she enclined to þis virgen and
fell downe to hir fete receuyng stably þe faith of Ihesu Criste with cc
knyghtis wherfor þe Tirante commaundid þem to be kepte in Preson
withoute mete or drinke xij daies and owr lorde god Sent to hir a White
Coluer doue from heuen þat fed hir with heuenly mete and after þat owr
lorde ihesu kam hymself with a multitude of Angelis and Virgines and saide
vnto hir my dere daughter and effectuall true Wif knawiste þou me thi
maker for whom þou haste taken on þe odius labor and trauaile and when
she behelde hir Soueragnee lorde and herd hym she fell downe to his fete
with Solempne Ioy and saide a my Soueraigne and moste dere lorde whow
shulde I but knaw þe whiche is my hertis Ioy who hath sent me plenteusli
þe meretis of þi grace after whom gracius lorde my spiritis cotidialli7 haue
longid and god my Soueraigne with all my herte truly is youris. I þank
your hie goodnes of þes victories þat 3e haue gouen me. At whos
commandement I am redy to receue with an hole entent al þe supportable
turnamentis þat canne be Imagened or deuisid wherfor my Soueraigne lorde
remember me to your plesure who with a glad countenance blessidly
aunswerid hir and saide drede 3ou not my wif nor haue no maner of doute
nor fere. But be stronge and of good comforte. ffor I shall neuer disseuer
from 3ou but abide with you in all your bataiðis but blissid hir and vanishid
away from hir and þen So gretenes of Swete hodowr remayned in þe preson
after his departing þat no mynde kowde thinke hit

And when þe Emperowr was retorned home agayne he had þe
virgen [f. 120v] afores hym and when he beheld þe shynyg of Hir beute he
supposid þat she had be disfigurid by ouer fasting and detrauid that hir
kepers had youen hir sum mete. He was oute of hymself for anger. and
commandid þat þe kepers shulde be tormentid. then saide þe holi virgen
truly I toke no mete of no mans hande of all þis tyme ffor my Lorde Criste
ihesu hath norisshid and ffosterid me
¶ Then saide 

eth Emperor to hir I pray 

eth faire Virgen print in 

eth Herte what I shal shall saie to 

eth and aunswer not by cantellis nor 

suche vayne wordis of Collusion. ffor we will not retayne 

eth as a 

Chamberer but holde 

eth with ffees and robis as a lady riall and like a quene 

of beute and Soueraigne. Who aunswerid. Now Emperor I praye 

eth vnderstonde me well and iuge truly wheper I aught to chese 

eth king 

almyghty eternal and everlastine most Semly moste faire and glorius or els 

a faire stinking Dunghill most filthe and horibill of wrachidnes and 

mystery. Then 

eth Emperowr ful of wrothe andisspite said in hast chese of 

too pingis eper to do Sacrefice or els theis Horible Turmentis greuos and 

habominable in perssis. Presiselie she saide delay no turnament but do to 

me what 

eth wile for I desire to offer to my lorde god my flesh and my 

bloode in likewise as he offerd hymself for me who is my lorde and my god 

¶ pen was eper a cruell thirant which Imagened for plesur of 

eth Emperor contrieud a maruelus lus wherwith he endusid 

eth Emperowr 

who by his aduice let ordayne iiiii whelis of Iron groundid 

with sharp nailis 

every turnyng agaynee [f. 121r] other with grete violens so 

eth 

shulde rent anypyng set betwene 

eth.

¶ pen bis blessid virgen with tymerus drede besought owr 

lorde of grace and grete myght to distroie and fordo his horibill turment 

publisshing openly 

eth name of ihesu 

eth pepill hering to 

eth entent 

eth
peple myght haue inspeccion and relacion of his myght and power by vertu
of whiche myrakill many and diuers were convuertid for anon continent as
sone as þe virgen was set in þis turnament. þe Angill of god aperid and
brake þis Ingynne with so grete force myght and violens þat hit sleught iii
thousant paynems.

\[ Þe quene stode in hir tower beholding all þis ho was vttelith \]
atteintid with anguysh and sorow and in all haste possible came downe
descending from aboue blamyng þem gretly of þer grete cruelte

\[ Þe Emperowr conseuyng þis and was full of Cruelte \]
commaundung but if she olde do Sacreifice to rent of hir bristis with Irons
and after hir hed to be snyten of. And as she was led vnþo hir martirdom
she praied vnþo Sent Kateryn to be advocat for hir vnþo owr lorde ihesu
Criste. Sent Kateryne aunsverid and saide drede þou not yee excellent
quene sh for þis day shall þe be endued in þe kingdome euerverlastung whiche
shalbe your doure and a good exchaunge for þer shall þe be with þe king
and þe quene eternall who is moste beutefull and repletid with endles
goodnes. With þat þe quene was enspirid and stabilshid in þe feith and
nothing agurgid but bade þe turnentowrs to fulfill þe commaundment of
their lorde. and þen thei led hir oute of þe cite and with tongis of Iren
pluckid of hir bristis and afterwarde smote of hir hed. And purferay stale
awaie þe body and berd hit [f. 121v] þe daie foloing. When þe body was
myssid diuers and sondri were tormentid and compellid to saie þe trauthe
by commaundment of þe Emperowr Purphurie þen cam boldly forthe and
saide hit was I þat berid þe Saruante of ihesu Criste

† þen þe Emperor MAXENCIUS for Woo griued with his
tethe and trimelid like an wodeman krying dredefuly. O. thou cursed caitif
parceuiste þou not þis cause how Purphure þat was only keper of my Saule
in whom was all my truste and confidens and þe chef relif of my conforte
in eury trobilacion necessite and disses and when he had publishid þeis
wordis to his knyghtis þei aunswerid all with one voise and Saide purph:

hath don wiseli ffor we all be cristinoed and of his opeinon and redy to
receue deth for þe love of ihesu criste

† With þat þe Emperor was drowned in wodenes
commaunding to strike of ther heddis and too caste þer bodes to þe houndes
and callid afte: Sent Kateryn and saide þou hast causid my wif to Suffer
deth þorow þi wiche crafte. And ʒit if þou wilt repente þe þou shalt be the
Hiest in all my reine soueraine quene and Empres and if þou wilt not
encline and condesende to þis a non forthewith plainly þou shalte dy
withoute remission or any redempccion to whom she saide do on anon and
Satisfye þi openyon ffor I am redy to suffer or Imagen for þe plesure of my
lord god and þen he gaue Sentens agayne hir and bade she shulde be
biheddid and anon she was laide to a Sartayne place wher she knelid downe
and lifted vp hir hed vntoo [f. 122r] Heuyn praing in pis Wise O pou moste blessid Lorde ihesu Criste whoo is pe worship of pe worlde and ioy of virgens hope and helthe vnto tru bileuers I besche pe my lorde godd to graunte me pis bone who sumeuer haue mynde compassion or pite on my passion be hit at his deth or in any necessite pat callith to me seye pat thei may haue conforte and relif of per disses and prophithe of their praier and a vo: 2 was herde from heuen pat saide conforthe my faire loue and dere wip pe catis of heuen be opened agayne the and I promyse pe al tho pat worship pis passion or do pe reuerens by any servuiable meane shalbe releuid with heuenly comfort and whom pou praisist for shal not perish and pis done and asermed hir hed was striken of and in pe stede of blod per camme owte a grete streme of blod mylke and Angellis toke pe holy consecratid body and conuaide hit to pe mownte of Synay more pan xxte daies Iurnay pens where hit was worshipfully bered

¶ But for as moche as hit was not knawen by non experiens where pe body was become per was dole and sorow among pe cristen who saide within pemself Alas pe moste clerenes of owr faithe and excellent wisdome with pe very temple of pe Holi goste is departid and gonne from vs

¶ But in pis grete heuines I leue pem and retorne to shew to shew 3ou as I finde in writing how hir right precius and holi corse was
founde þe whiche holy body as hit is writen was a c and xxx 3er [f. 122v] was hid from þe Knowlge of þe Cristen peple

† And as it plesid owre lorde to shew þe grete meret of his mercy he grauntid vs þat holi relique and did put vs in possession þerof in þis wise in þe region of þe Deserte of þe mounte of Synay wher were many Cristen hermytis þat wer illumened with grace and Enflamed with parfite Deuocioun to þat holie virgen wherfor by þer comen assent þei haue ordanyed a chapell wherin þis holi virgen Spouse vnto ihesu Criste myght continuallly and cotidially¹⁰ be honowrd and worshipid in which lande and prasing. Whiche Chapell was preuidid by þe premson and ordinans of almyghte god not far from þe hiest cop of þe hill wherby was þe place þat þe bush growid wherby owr Lorde liste to apere vnto Moyses in þis Saide Chapell þes saide hole Ermytis with grete abstinens and deuocioun leued a glorius and a gracies lif. Whiche causid þe Angellis of God to aper vnto þem hauynge þeis wordis in theis termys your deuote and effectuall deuocioun god hathe visitid and beholde from heuen wherfor he hathe ordanyed you þis grace þat by 3ou shalbe founde and experiently knawen. þe blissid body of þe holy virgen Sent Kateryne to his soueraigne worship þerfor rise and folo me. and þogh hit so be þat 3e se not me þe shadow of þe palme þat I bere in my honde shall neuer depart owte of your sight but conuey 3ou.

† Theis Ermytis grauntid and went forþe foloing þe angell till
pei kamme to þe proper place wher vnnethis any creature myght enter for straitenes of þe way and sharpenes of [f. 123r] of craggis and rockis and when thei camme to þe cop of þe cop of þe hill thei sau not þe Angell but they parceuyd so euydently þe shado of þe palme þat it semyd þat all the place was full of þe Shadow of þe leuys of þe palme by experiens wherfor þey knew þat þei were at þe place where as virgen had layne þe saide cxxx yere in a Stone. þe fflesh was consumed and dried vp for þe length of þe tyme but þe bonis were compacts and pure þat hit semyd by Significacion þat they were obseruid and kept with þe cure of Angellis

¶ þen þei with Due reuerence and grete ioy toke vp his blessid body and conueyd hit downe into þe Chapell þat þey had ordayned Descending downe by grete merakillis ffor þe place þat she laie in was so stirill and so straiete and daungerus to com to þat vnneth any mans myght myght Enmagen or conceue how hit myght be don

¶ When þís Holy Body was brought vnto þís Chapel with grete Solemnite and they in quiete pese and tranquilit

¶ thei Ordayned þe Invencion of þís Holy virgen whiche day is Customably kep of Cristen þer aboute being whiche tyme is aboute þe Invencion of þe Crosse

¶ This holi place liked owr Lorde to endue with grete honor and many merakillis ffor þo same bones whiche had layne and dried in þe
top of be Mountayne cxxx yere & were drye and fell lique and plente of
yole wellid & distillid owte largely

¶ The whiche is of So grete vertu pat hit youith helthe to all
maner of Sekenes as [f. 123v] as hit is Well vnderstonde and knawen by
many a deuote pilgrem whiche hathe visetid pat holy and deuote place

¶ This holie virgen sufferd hir deth and passion vnnder be
Cruell Tirant Maxensius. Who beganne be yere of owr lord M(1)M(1)M(1)
and nyne and hit is contayned in be Invencion of be hole Crosse how
maxensius was ponishid for his ffelony and tirannye and for his vntrauthe
and mysbeleleue12
Ihesu the sonne of Mare mylde
The secunde parsone in trinyte
ffrom all myschaunsis that þou me shilde
And euer to leue in charite
With pes reste and tranquilite
And let thy passion be in my mynde
To put away temptacion of the fende

And ihesu for thy glorius passion
þat þou didiste suffer at Caluery
ffor mans gilte and transgression
Chef salfe and beste remedy
On the cros thow didist hong an hy
What tyme þat þou saidist cicio
þi body with blode was all in a blo

The blod from thy hert fast gan ran downe
þi side was launsid with longis spere
On þi hed an vnniytly crowne
ffor suche a kyng right semple to were
Many of thy foes forsothe were ther

And kried full faste crucifige
All was in þe disspite of the

Mary thy moder stode and behold
So did Iohn the Euangelist alsoo
Now that þi body waxid colde
ffulfillid they were with sorow and woo
þe cursed Iues whi ded thei soo
Vnto þe that never ded offende
Males agayne paciens þer ded pretend

That tyme that Pilate gaue Judicall
And saide on the that þou shuldiste honge
Crucifige the Iues ganne calle
þou haddist never a frende to allter þer songe
Gret dissipite was them amonge
Towardis þe and they wist not why
On þe as enmes all did they kry

[f. 106v]
First to the piler when they brought \textit{he}
\textit{With} cordis thei bounde thei body faste
\textit{With} shorgis then \textit{withouten} pite
Thei rentid thi flesh while ther myght laste
Their rodis and whippis on the were braste
\textit{he} flesh on thi body was all to-tore
Greusly beten and made ful sore

Then broughte thei \textit{he} into a vaute of stone
And ther all nyght \textit{hou} didist suffer colde
\textit{pi} moder and Iohn for \textit{he} made gret mone
Which sorow of no tong kanne be tolde
\textit{pat} sorow passid a thousand folde
\textit{ffor} any tong erly to expres
\textit{pat} was \textit{pi} payne \textit{pen} is now our gladnes

In \textit{he} mornyng whan hit was day
The brought \textit{he} owte into \textit{he} strete
And made on \textit{he} a proclamacion
\textit{3it} had they bounde \textit{he} bothe handis and fete
And \textit{he} reuiliid \textit{with} defamation
\textit{3it} thi paciens made protestacion
Agayne ther malis and \textit{per} il will
\textit{per} didist \textit{hou} the ; prophecy fulfill

Sibella in hir prophecy of \textit{he} made mencion
Saing \textit{hou} shuldist come man to redeame

Hit to filfil thi true entencion
The tyme of thi passion hit was wel sene
Hir versis wer fillid all bedene
I meane of Sibill the true prophecy
Which to fulfill \textit{piself} didist aphy

Owte of preson \textit{pen} were \textit{hou} brought forthe
Towards \textit{pi} passion and in the hy way
Veronica met \textit{he} which saing is sothe
What tyme \textit{pat} \textit{he} cros in thy necke lay
She brought a clothe and this did she say

\begin{center}
\textit{Haue prophite ihesu} and wipe \textit{with} all \textit{pi} face
\end{center}
Which vnto thy servautis is now most solace

Then sum ther wer \textit{pat} fast did kry
And saide haue forthe pis fals traytowr
Ther stodist thyself ful paciantly
Suffring injury makyng no dolowr
Mekely thow tokyst many a sharp shouwr
All was no mor but to redeeme our gilte
Or els we all had sothely be spilte

Peter with thy dissiplis all
80
At þat tyme were in grete dowte
þe mode of thy moder in nowise did apall
She had so grete faith she ferid not þe rowte
þe fendis temptacions she made for to lowte
So fillid with paciens and humylite
She trustid agayne þe alif to see

Then wentiste þou forth vnto Caluery
And barist thi crosse as a lambe meke
When þou were on the montayne an hy
To suffer deth then were þou leke
90
þou frendis hertis then waxid seke
To se the giltes suffer payne
þat from mornynge thei kowde not refrayne

This wer þou shamefully put vnto deth
And all for redemcion of all mankynd
And on þe crosse forsokiste thy breth
Mans saule in prison for to vnbinde
100
Al Scripture þe same putithe in mynde
ffirst of þi glorius natallacion
Of the Virgen Mary for owre salvacion

To swete ihesu which borne were of a maide
In the tyme of Brume with his furnis colde
Lying in krib full porely araide
And after Iudas ful falsly the solde
This were þou betraied many a folde
Suffring hunger and thirst bothe to
And for owre welth bothe sorow and woo

On Caluery þat hie montayne
þou were brought vp with many a spere
What creature myght behold sartayne
The tyranny of the Iues ther
So malicius what tyme thei wer
To se þe hong on the rode tree
Hoo myght behold and wepe not to see

To se what þe honging on þe crosse
With a crowne of thorne set on þi hed
Hit was our wynnyng and ther grete losse
What tyme thy body with blod was so red
The Iues knue* not in that sted
That thei did so grete trespas

þei wiste not that þou þe sonne of god was

Now ihesu for þi glorius passion
That thow didist suffer for all mankynd
And for thi glorius resurreccion
On vs synners haue thow mynde
And thogh þat we be so vnkinde
Louynge the not as we shulde do
God graunte vs amendis or we hens go

Moreouer þat we perish nor spill
But here amendis parfitely to make

And in the tyme of owre laste will
That we our synne may clene sake
And vnto thy mercy that þou vs take
Euen with the worlde þat we may make an ende
And þe fende from vs to defende

Also good lorde that þou graunt vs
To dy in loue and charite
To commne and se þe sweete Ihesus
In heuen wher as thy saintis be
And þer to be dwelling with vnite

With thy angellis and sentis all
Whos number is innumerall
Wofully Araide MS. Harley 4012, ff. 109r-109v

Hosumeuer saith þis praier in þe worship
of þe passion shall haue c þere of pardon

WOfully araide
My blode man
ffor the ran
hit may not be naide
my body blo and wanne
WOfully araide

Beholde me I pray þe with all thyne hole reson
and be not hard hertid for this encheson
þat I for thi saule sake was slayne in good seson
Begilid and betraide by Iudas fals treson
Vnkindly intretid
with sharp corde sore fretid
þe Iues me thretid
The mowid they spittid and disspisid me

Condemned to deth as þou maiste se

Thus nakid am I nailid . O man for thy sake
I loue þe þenne loue me . Why slepit þou awake
Remember my tender hert rote for the brake
with paynes my vaines constrained to crake
This was I defasid
This was my flesch rasid
And I to deth chasid
like a lambe led vnto sacrefise
Slayne I was in most cruell wise

Of sharp thorne I haue worne a crowne on my hed
So rubbid so bobbid so rufulle so red
Sore payned sore strayned and for þi loue ded
Vnfayned not demed my blod for þe shed
My fete and handis sore
with sturde naylis bore
what myght I suffer more
þen I haue sufferde man for þe
Com when þou wilt and welcome to me

DEre brother non other thing I desire
But geue me thi hert fre to rewarde myne hire
I am he that made þe erth water and fire
Sathanas þat slouen and right lothely sire
   hym haue I ouer-caste.
   In hell presoune bounde faste
   Wher ay his woo shall laste
I haue puruaide a place full clere
ffor mankynde whom I haue bought dere

Whosomeuer saith this deuotely
hathe grauntid be diuers Bishops
saing at the laste ende fiue pater nosters
and fiue Aves . cccccc dayes of pardon
APPENDIX I: Endnotes

1. This should read "and".
2. *sic.*
3. *sic.*
4. This should read "in".
5. This is not really clear.
6. This word is not clear.
7. This might read "cotidiially", but is not really clear.
8. This final letter looks like an "s", or possibly an "i" (i.e. "prssio"). The other texts read "perish" as in, "grevous tormentys and perysche" (version b, l. 789). Auvo Kuurin, "The Life of St. Catharine of Alexandria in Middle English Prose," D. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1960, 326.
9. *sic.*
10. See note 7.
11. The text should read "her" at this point.
12. *sic.*
APPENDIX II

"Vita beate Katarine" (MS. Longleat 55, ff. 55r-65r)

A Description of MS. Longleat 55

MS. Longleat is a vellum manuscript, consisting of 68 leaves (and one fly leaf); many of the pages contain some decoration or illumination. Reginald Wright, in the description (not dated) included with the manuscript, suggested that the various items were written "more or less by one scribe," and were compiled at the Bath Priory sometime between 1412 and 1428 (the date A.D. 1428 is given on f.3), or during the tenure of John Tellesford as Prior of Bath. Wright has also noted that the manuscript takes its name, "libello Rubro de Bath" (f. 3), "from the original colour of the undressed calf-skin, painted on one side only in sandalwood red, and strengthened by unpolished vellum, the whole secured by hide cords over thick oak boards." He continues:

An unusual feature of the binding is the handsewn head-bands, which is comparatively early for book-binding. The covers are protected by five copper bosses or noduli as a preservation against wear. The back cover
originally had a metal crucifix in the centre fastened by four nails, but this, like the leather clasps, is missing. Its mediaeval prototypes were often of ponderous weight, as Erasmus satirically spoke of Thomas Aquinas’ *Secunda Secundae* "No man can carry it about much less get it into his head.

Within the upper cover of the Red Book is a large rectangular cavity guarded by a metal door, covered with calf-skin and studded with brass nails. In this socket balances for the weighing of gold were kept, as appears by the first entry in the list of contents: "In primo ij bilanc cum suis ponderibus ad aurum."

The following list of contents is taken from Wright’s description, expanded where appropriate from the list of contents given in the manuscript (f. 3) and the entry included in the *Third Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, (London, 1872).

1. ff. 1r-2v The Golden Numbers with Saints and Deaths of Bishops.
2. f. 3r Contenta in hoc libello Rubro de Bath A.D. 1428. ij bilances cum suis ponderibus ad aurum.
3. f. 3v Warrant to usurers and cheats.
4. f. 4r Letter, in Latin, of King Henry V to Charles of France, dated 13 August, 1417.
5. f. 4v Reply, in French, of Charles dated Paris, the last of August
1417.

6. f. 5r
English version of some of the Ten Commandments.

7. f. 5v
Extracts from the Four Gospels.

8. ff. 6r-10v
Calendar (May and June absent).

9. f. 11r
English verses for the prognostications for the days of the week.

10. ff. 11v-12v
Astrological table with horoscopic notes.

11. f. 13r-v
Figure of a man according to the art of bloodletting with accompanying notes.

12. ff. 14r-16r
Precepts of our Lord in respect of oaths especially for the "terror of swearers" - caution on taking oaths.

13. ff. 16v-17v
On bell-ringing, its status founded on ecclesiastical law and what it comprehends.

14. ff. 18r-22r
Statute of Coroners (in Latin).

15. f. 22v
Forme de Abjuracion (in French).

16. ff. 23r-25r
Magna Carta.

17. ff. 25r-27r
Charter of Forests with sentences in law on violators.

18. f. 27v
Terms of Common Pleas with command days on the Bench.

19. f. 28r
Manner of rendering homage; and oath of Fidelity.

20. ff. 28v-29r
Of Weights and Measures with list of Values.

21. f. 30r
Famous historical events and battles of the World. (The latest is the taking of Rouen, A.D. 1419.)
22. ff. 30v-31r Battle Abbey Roll; names of gentlemen who came over with the Conqueror.

23. f. 31v Assize of Ale.

24. ff. 32r-34r Assise of Bread.

25. f. 34v Law relating to the measuring of land.

26. f. 35r Genealogy of Mary and Christ our Lord in immediate relationship to God.


28. f. 54r The Claim of the King of England to the Crown of France.

29. f. 54v Three things for the Just Cause of War.

30. ff. 55r-65r The "Vita beate Katarine" in verse.

31. f. 65v How the Evangelists and Doctors had written the book of the Decretals.

32. f. 66r Statute of 12 Richard 2 (Cambridge) confirmed by Statute 11 Henry 4 (Westminster) against Quoits, Quails, and Balls.

33. f. 66v Statute concerning serfs.

34. f. 67r-v Statute of the King's Prerogative.

35. f. 68r Copy of presentment touching the Pillory at Bath, Friday 6 November 1412, before the Mayor of Bath. Some twenty-four aldermen and councillors are named, all of whom, except
one, say that the best place in the city for the Pillory is near the High Cross in North Street as it stood of old; and that was confirmed by Robert Hulle, the seneschal, on the Law-day following. A sketch of the pillory is also given.

Copy of the oath taken by the Freemen of Bath.

Copy of the Epitaphs on Alexander de Alneto and his family said to be on the right arch of the ruinous temple of Minerva yet standing. (Written in a different hand and dated 1582.)

A Note on the Text

I have attempted, as much as is possible, to retain the appearance of the "Vita beate Katarine" in this transcription. The manuscript spellings have been reproduced, and the scribal abbreviations have been expanded and are represented by italics. When words are inserted into the text, for example, above the line or in the margins, those words are indicated by \( \checkmark \) marks. The stanzaic divisions, punctuation and capitalisation all follow the original text. The Latin quotations and phrases appear, with one exception, in the right hand margins and I have attempted to reproduce that in this transcription; the Latin lines (except for the title "Fiat Misericordia..." which appears in the body of the poem) are not included in the line count. This text does not purport to be a critical edition and therefore does not include either a glossary or annotations, though I intend to make the "Vita beate Katarine" available in that form in the near future.
"Vita beate Katarine"

Souverayn3 & frende3 pat bep now here
and hyt 3ow lyke 3oure sawle to saue
leste nep a lessoun : wyb hertly chere
wyb hertly chere & and 3e schalle hyt haue
3e schalle a lessoun of helth be taw3t
how pat 3e schalle heuene wynne
hurep & lernep & for3ete hyt naw3t
Of mayde & martyr Seynt Katerynne
Ther ys a lond here som what by Eeste
pat v5 called pe lond of pe grekes
Grecia on latyn whare men haue no reste
but euer bep in studye, pat makep pynne chekes
In pat lond was a man called som tyme
Costus a comely kny3t of cors for pe nones
A kyng of pat countre . by arme3 & by syne
nowher a better of fflesch & of bones

¶ Thys kyng hadde a daw3ter by hys wy:. that men called pere mayde Kateryne
he putte heore to lerne how to lede heor lyff
To sauy heore sawle fram helle pyne
¶ And heo lernyd lustlych & cowpe grammere
Logyk Phylosophie . & cowpe welle despoyte
And in Dyvynyte heo hadde no peere
Of vanye & pryde heo sette fulle lyte
¶ Of felettys in pe forheed noper of hornes
Of gowy gowynes & furres noper reuersse
he sette hyt & welle myght as gyle & /as/ skornes
and putte heore herte to vertywe3 busynesse
¶ Noper daunced ne trypped as do many mon
pat ys a werk of pryde & rancor & of synne
and butteþ at helle doore : brekyng har schoon
huppyng & skyrpyng at þey wer þer inne

¶ 3ut was þere heore non lyke in any place
Of conmyng of wytt of sadness þe beawte
Amyable of chere wommanly of face
Comfort to gode men : to loky & to see
¶ Louelý to loky on wyrþ chere & spech sad
futures fulle fayre / werkes deuowte
heore presence made fooleþ a drad

40
for grace & vertyw þat were hure abowte
But as kynge askþ after in a thrawe
heor fader and moder in heore 3ong age
wyrþ deþ fram þis worlde : þey were withdrawe
and lefte heore þeyre good : wyþ heore heritage
heo kept heore seruauntes & heore howsholde
wyþ clennesse of leyynge vnder goddes lawe
wonder hyt ys to þenke a maybe 3ong be bolde
So to rywly heore self ; alone as y trawe
Ther was no wast in no wyse of mete ne drynke

50
But þe powre hadde part of fode & of cloþ
heere many studied : & somme dude Swynke
In prayour : & labour as trywe men doþ

¶ And whan heo was of age c½ Eyȝtene yheer
the Empourr maxence goddes Enemye
Come to þe countrey despoytþ hym þeer
Into þe cyte of Allexandrie
Commaundedy alle men in alle maner wyse
To come to þe temple : hys goddes to honoure
and bring bryddeþ & bestys for þeyr sacrefysye
ffor þey schulde in batelle do hym socoure
ffor in batelle þere a fore he was yslowe
and hadde þe worsse of cristien men
and so hadde after forsoþe as y trow
So mote alle suche amen amen amen

¶ Ther was belewynge of bestys of dyuerse kynde
Of oxen & scheep & schremynge of brydde
Trumpes & organes by blast of þe wynnþ
þe noyse was so greþ hyt myȝt nat be hydþ
dany an oxe many a scheep ; was ded þer þat day

Annorum duodeuiginti\(^4\)

pulsant ostium inferni
vt ingrediantur\(^3\)
In worschup of hys mametys & many a fowlle also
Oryble hyt ys to þenk : or make such aray
and many a cristien man ; þer of was fulle woe
But 3ut drede of þep compellyd hem þerto
alle wepyng & mornyng 3ut were þey þere
doyn þe sacrifiçe as dude oper moo
wyþ þe lyf þey myȝt non oper wyse for bere
Cateryn was in heore court & hurde þe noyse
þe Belewyn of bestys þe trumpyng boþe
And lerned of heore mayne what was þat voyse
and bad ham a spye & telle heore þe sothe

The seruaunte3 wende forþ to þe temple in haste
and seye & lernye in busy wyse
and come ayhe to kateryn wepyng fulle faste
certeynyng heore of þis sacrifiçe
and how þe Emperour dude aȝenst god of heuene
worschupynge mamettes wyþ bestys & blode
Kateryne cawȝt þe wey þyder fulle euene
wyþ owte cloke cappe gurdelle or hoode
Sorwe heore hadde softe ; heore herte fulle ny
to see þe fende yworschuped on such a manere
and cryed in hert to god þat ys an hye
and to þe Emperour heo drewh heore neere

† Syre emperor he seyde a lord of gret dege
honeste & resoun tecþep vs alle
þat we awȝt worschupy & honoury þe
yf þu woldest aȝmȝts god knowen & calle
and do to hym reuerence þat made þe of nowȝt
þat ys pleȝed with herte wyþ Inne
In to þyn astaat also be þe browȝt
leþ sur þis sacrifiçe : for dampaign synne
he ys kynde to þe : & curtseye boþe
and ȝeþep þe/ alle þy goodes : hym forto knowe
why despyseþ þu hym & makest hym wrothe
to hym sir Emperor þu awtest bowte fulle lowe
þis innocente bestis blode : þat bþ þere sclayn
for worschupe of mametts þat may nat avayle
Greþep sore aȝmȝts god y telle þe certayn
let sir Emperor y þe rede erst deth þe asayle
for þo at doest to þis fals honowre
beþ stocks & stones : þe fende þer with Inne

The lyf of quen Kateren
The may noþer help noþer do socoure
mannes handewerk : her craft & har Synne
But yf þu þenke welle to spede : after þy þowȝt
þenke wel & worschupe hym þat made þe of nowȝt

† Maxence þe Emperor hurynge þis mayde
was abasched of þe wordeȝ ; & of heore sadnesse also
and for þe countenaunce & þe chere . to heore he sayde
þe schalle speke with þe of þis after þat we haue doo
he called preuely a messenger & let wryte a lettre

to seche þe countrey ferr & neer whyche werr þe better
and most cowþe of clergye in alle maner connynge
hastly he made for to aspye : & charged wyþ hyme brynge
In to þe cyte of Allexandry : he byhȝte gret honor
To despyte wyþ Cateryn . & brynge heore to dolour
Gret ȝyftes & presenteȝ he byhȝȝt ham alle
þat cowþe Katryn wyþ argument : make adoun falle
The messager doþ hys deuyr wyþ lettr & wyþ ceelle
Vytty clerks þan bryngeþ he þeer spekyng as a belle
þan cowþe in alle science : no man so much on lyve

† But alle þis tyme þat þis was done
Katryn was in harde pryson
boþe derk & depe
And þo was heo forth ybrouȝt
Of þo clerks reyȝt heo nouȝt
many ongan to wepe
and dradde for heore þat louyd god
last heo schulde suffry oþer þan good
on any maner wyse
ffor heo was but tender & yhong
and þey were men grette & strong
& bygan heor despyse
Seyyng to þe Emperor þus
Sir þe beþ nat fulle wyss
after clerks to sende
To despyye wyþ a womman
a dameselle þat no good can

also ȝong of age
men wolde 3ow skorne & vs perfay
To sende for vs & make aray
ht y s but an owt rage
They grennyd & grunt wyb þe tere
Stankyd & blaste with her breþ
as þey hadde be woode
Katryn lokyd vp on hye
And preyde god of hys mercye
with fulle mylde mode

160
Heo crossed forhed & brest
þan was heo redy & prest
to talke of goddeþ lawe
heore hoope was euere in heuene above
and alle heore herte & heore love
ht miȝt nat be withdrawe

† Than bygan þe Emperor speke
And seyde why wolle 3e nat be wreke
wharfor be 3e here
Spekeþ and preveþ heore nat wyse

170
þat wolde oure goddes despyse
nowre solempanyte
heo made of heore god parde þo
more þan of owre ôper of me þerto
with heor woode vanyte
and now my clerks þat beþ here
dœþ to heore alle 3owre deuyre
for y telle 3ow hyt
whan y spak wyþ heore me self sone
al my resouns fram me were goone
for to heor hadde y no wytt

† Than seyde alle wyþ oo voyse
cryynge & made a fulle gret noyse
now lat heor \do/ þe same
and emperour yf heo now dop soo
þan goþ heo welle þer to
and we beþ muche to blame
we cone Grammer & phylophye
Logyk . Art & Astronomye
Gemetrye also more

190
Ausmetryk & gemancye
and any craft þat man can spye
in þis wordele ybore
we can wþp craft boþe spyte & speke
On alle manerys to be a wreke
as by craft of wordes
Ther for now what ys doone
lat be spoke & seyd eft soone
and þe schalle hure gode borde
he leuyþ nat in þis wordle y wyss
pat can wþp þþy clerks
    despyte & haue þe beter

Katryn hadde be in pryson strong
fast ybounde foot and honde
þis worthy kynges douþter
But þut þe whyle heo was þere
an aungelle comforted heore
        with wordes sweete ofter
Seyynge to heore confortynge
Be gode of herte in þy fyþynge
þu schalt þe maystrye haue
þyn enemyes schalle þþy frendeþ be
and to ðeyþ comuntyd by þe
        and in þat wyse be saue
heo tryst in god hyt schold so be
In þe name of þe trynyte
    heo crossed heor heed & hert
and seyd to þe clerks echone
Seynourþ þeþ welcome
    ffor god wolde on þow werk
Your craft of comynge in wordfulle werks
y know ham alle : as welle as clerks
    y haue lerned þe same
But þey beþ but sotelte
Sotel speche & vanye
dory goddes grame
y knowe þowre wordes sotylte
lesyng of tyme & vanye
    y forsake þat craft
þey helpeþ at neede neuer a deele
to heuene noþer saule heele
    So þey beþ ryþt nawþt
In hym þat made heuene above
þe sonne þe monne hym y loue
as so we be holde
tfeeldeʒ & wodeʒ water & welle
Erthe Eyr þe See & helle
   alle þyngs in þys molde
lyf dep beþ at þys wylle
þynges moueþ & beþ stylyle
as he wolde ordeyne
whan alle þynges were nawȝt
he formede ham & made ham awȝt
after hys demeyne
þus of hys myȝt he wrouȝt perde
Inuysyble to man þut was he
   tyl fram heuene/ he cam
toke boþe flesch & blode
and vysybely as man yhode
   and so by come a man
he suffred dep for vs in cross
and fram þe dep also a rooss
   and styed vp y rede
and he wrouȝt muche more
he helyd alle syke & sore
   awyked þat wer dede
meȝelȝ also lame & blynde
with word he cured forsoþe y fynde
   þe whyle he here was
þus he proued hym god & man
260 By gretter werks þan y telle can
   In many a wonder cas
he ys my wytt & alle my commynge
3owre mameþys beþ but gylynge
   with owt help or grace
ho þat trystþ vp on þo
þey may hym noon help do
   noper no solace
for þey beþ but stocks & stoon
þey ðay/ nat loke speke ne goon
   ne help in no maner
But in hym þat haþ alle wrouȝt
y sett my tryst my saule my þowȝt
   with stable feþ þ & clere

† Whan Katryn hadde heore tale tolde
Eche bygan other byholde
of his wounder crafe
and stode stytle longe space
as men a stoyned with oute solace
they cohe speke ry3t nau3te

280 the Emperor wexed wroth þo
he reproved his clerks also
Seyynge to hem þus
what do 3e lo3el3 clerks heere
why speke 3e nat & do me chere
In helpynge of our goddes
3e made bast late fulle grete
pat 3e wolde wyþ heore meeete
with clerge & craft
3e dude to me gret comfort

290 and now 3e can nat speke oo word
certis 3e beþe nau3t

¶ But oon þe worthyest of ham
Answeryd þe Emperor anoon
and seyde in his wyse
certys emperour we telle hyt þe
But yf we better ycerfyed be
we wylle in no gyse
þy goddes honoure but despysse
þey beþe nauþ ii. owre avyse
noþer may no help do

300 Kateryn haþ taw3t vs ry3t welle
heo seþe sopl euery deelle
hyt most nedre be so
þy god can nat make a sterre
noþer speke ne go ferr ne nerre
ne make grass ne trë.
and yf he speke hyt ys but gyle
hyt ys þe sfeend and hys wyle
Euylle moot þey the

310 we haue be decyued many a day
we wolle no lenger withoute nay
we haue oure saule3 lost
But god þat sytt above
3yf vs mercy grace & love
throw þe holy gost
þus þey seyde euerychone
makyng sory moone
ffor har mysleynge  
And þere þus anoon
320  þey vnderfong cristen doon  
        In godde3 owne blessynge

† þe Emperour whan he herde þis  
he wexed wode & wroth y wyss  
commandyng perde
þat in alle hast þat myȝt be done  
make a fyre ryȝt anone
        In mydward þe cyte
and bynde þys vyfty clerks stronge  
leggs armes foot & honde
330  and brenne ham sone  
and anoon hyt was so doon  
þe clerks were cast þer oon  
        But harin hadde þey none
þys myrayle god schewed þere  
In heed ne clopes nat an i.eer  
was perschyd or wast
But þe fyre & þat brennynge  
torne & was a gode fresschynge  
to ham furst & last
340  þus Kateryn hadde þe maystrye  
þruȝ þeyȝ of heere enemy
        Pater Noster

† The emperour boþe wode & wroth  
to þe dome anon he goth  
commandyng y wyss in gret yre
† Thes vyfty clerks of gret connynge  
thanked god of þis tyȝnynge  
and made grete soiace
350  and kneled down vp on þe grounde  
lyfynge þeyre hondes as þey were bonde  
vm to godde3 face
Seyynge þus wyþ herte & mowthe  
wþþ alle deuocioun at þey cowþe  
Glad for to dye
God Emperour of alle kynges
fforyeue vs alle oure mysdoynge
lord to þe we crye
here a fore we knew nat þe
lat hyt lord for þeue be
ffor þy muchelle myȝt
In þe we tryst lord y wyss
lord forsake þu nat vs
þy mercy lord vs dyȝt

† FFiat misericordia tua domine super nos te
lat þy mercy be don on vs
as owre hoope ys in þe

Sparc us lord swete Ihesus
for þat blood þu schaddest on tree
In þy mercy ys alle oure tryst
Oure gode werks þeþ as noone
Oure lyf in synne haþ be lost
to þe we þeldeþ vs echone
Kateryn tawȝt vs fyrst of þe
and brouȝt vs þe fyrst to knowe
we wende þe fend had god be
þerfor we loute to þe fulle loue

Alass Alass what haue we doo
vs lacked boþe grace & wyt
mametys & stocks may not doo
Resoun schewþe now vs hyt
þe fend ys fader of alle leȝynge
ffor whan he spekeþ hyt ys gyle
he makeþ sprede no grass ne sprynge
we haue myss doo alass þe whyle
To haue remysioun of oure mysdedes
we þeþ glad to leȝe oure heedes

lord for þy loue

Lord lat vs our lyf forlese
Erst þan we þe more dyspleȝe
Gode god above

† Hond & foot was bound fast
In to a fyre þei were cast
But þere spyled of ham noon heere
Noþer in clop noþer in skyn
þe fyre brend no þyng þer In
ynotin were þey dede þere
now þankeþ god & gode Kateryne
þat with þis manere of pyne
cleped ham to blysse
Blessed god in trynyte
hty ys worby to þanky þe
ffor þat wounder y wysse
And in þat place þer anoon
þey were martyrþs schon
with mylde chere & steveene
Gode folks þat were þer bye

Sawe har saules how þey flye
vp streyȝt to heuene

But now þer comeþ nywe rydynge
þe Emperor hastþe to rydynge
ferr in þe reine in haste
Kateryn was cawȝt & bounde & bete
no hole skyn in heore þey lete
In derk prysoun heore caste
heor fayr body ran alle blode
heo chaunged neuere chere ne mode

But suffred as a lamb
ne maked no wepyng noþer no cry
But sedyde: god for þy mercy
take my saule in hand
help me lord þatt y ne fayle
In þis harde turnementynge
noþer þe fend me neuer assayle
y loue þe lord ouer alle þyng
Deelfulle hyt ys to þenke or see
a kynges douȝter so yhong a thynge
an Innocent þus to beete þee
wþpoute cause or deseruynge
what caytyf ys þat hap þat herte
þat weþþ nat to hure þys
to hure or þenke þe stroks smert
On heore þat neuer dude amyss

¶ Cry Kateryn cry & greede
A lamentacioun of Katrynes passioun
Cry & lat me hure þy voyse
alass why nelle myn herte 'blode/ wepe
alle þowȝ my Erown hure no noyse
alass y hure þe strokys
and how þu art wyþ soule sare
þu dudest neuer amyss
and þey wolle þe nat spare
þu stondest euermore styyle
as þowȝ hyt greuyd þe nowȝtȝ
þey dop to þe þeyr crywelle wylle
Cateryn wher ys þy þouȝtȝ
wher ys þy mynde forsoþe þe wene
hyt ys fram þe ysett in god fulle Euene
þu felyst nat what þey dop to þe
þy saule ys alle in heuene
y see þe bete in myn herte
þy body alle to toore
y wolle y myȝt with þe/ smerte
and stonde þe byfore
to kepe som of þy dyseȝe
and of þy strong peyne
þy dyseȝe hyt semeþ eȝe
þu semest þeroff fulle feyne
God wolde y had loue
as ys now in þe
þan schalle y nat party fram god above
ffor no peyne perde
why cloþes Cateryn beþ on ydo
vþ þy body fulle of biode
þey beþ clungyn & Bake þe to
þys men beþ more þan woode

¶ þus wyþ þe/ fare & þy body kutte
& putþ þþ to prysoun ayhe

What schalt þu in prysone putte

forsoþe hyt greuyþ sore me

In prisone putte what schalt þu do
what schalt þu do þere
now ys myn herte more wo
more þan hyt was ere
ffram þe topp into þe grond
in þe ys left no skyn
alle þy body ys fulle of wounde
þy fayre face and þy chyn
The Emperour commaundede also Parfay
to kepe heor bope nyʒt & day
fram mete & fram drynke
twolfe dayes fastynge þey kepþ þis may
fram drynk also wþp ouþe nay
heuy hyt ys to þynke
But god þat may do alle þynge
Sende heore drynke & feedyng
by a whyte culler flyʒt
and god hymself more too
com confortyng heore also
wþy mayþes bryʒt
and seye þe gode \off_ herte &\ of constaunce y pray
þu schalt fare in hast welle
and haue þe maystrie in batelle
wþpoute long delay

þu hast forsake þy faderys reme
hys corowne and oþer goodes mo
as muche y schalle þe qweme
an þousand fold part mor þan þo
þu hast bouʒt my love fulle harde
and for me schadde þy blode
y schalle þe ryʒt welle reward
with endly murthe and gode
y stonde wþþ þe in peynynges
þerfor douʒter at þu ne drede
þenke on þy rewardyng
þu schalt nat fayle of þy mede
fare welle douʒter myne owne swetynges
þu schalt many on to me brynge

By example of þe
þe Emperoures wyff & heore styward
Whas name ys Porphyrion9
hasteþ to come hyderward
conuertyd þey schulle be
and for þy stedefast worchynge
y þyf þe my blessynge
so vansched awey he

Now alle þis crywelte & doynge
coom to þe qweenys hurynge
what was to Cateryn doone
hyt made þe qweene fulle of woo
he wyst neuer how to doo
and to wham make heore moone
But god made heore herte sturye
ffor speke to Porphyrye
after heore desyre
heo desyred in som wey and gyn
by day or by nyȝte
to speke wþp mayde Kateryn

In any wey yf heo myȝte
and þat heo tolde to Porphyrye
and þerof was he fulle murye
for he desyred þe same
the qween \&/ Porphyrye wþp gode entent
wrought togadere wþp oon assent
alle for oo gaame
and sone after at mydnyȝt
þey come to þe pryson withoute lyȝt
with suche as þey to truste

↓ And whan þey come into þe towr
þe smelled so swete a savour
whannes hyt coom þey nuste
hyt was so swete of smellynge
hyt passed alle oþer þynge
so myȝty was hyt
þey hord mynstrelsye & song
wþp þis sauor medlyd among
hyt passed mannes wyt
þer hertys were glad & woundred soore

Of þis & of other þynges more
at þey after founde
They seye neuer such a lyȝt
noþer so clere noþer so bryȝt
ther for þey fylle to grounde
thys lyȝt þis sauor & þis songe
made þat þey were nat stronge
þey fylle adoun in þat stonde
þey were a stune þer þoo
þat þey ne myȝte stonde ne goo
ne what to do þey nuste
þey sey angels wþp heore bysyde
\hat wassched & helyd \hat e woundeʒ wyde
    no word speke \hat ey durste

\dagger Cateryn conforted ham a noon
and seyde dame qweene ʒe be\h welle coom
    now into \h is place
ʒe be\h welcome alle to me
y am glad \hat at y ʒow see
    God gyf ʒow gode grace

570 And dame qween y telle hyt \h
\hat pat ʒut after dayes \h pre
    Boϕe ʒe and y also
Schullen suffry martyrdom
and in heuene bere a crowne
    where ys no care ne woo
Dred \h ϕu nat \h yn fleschly husbande
But hym \h ϕu loue and kepe in hande
    \h pat ys a kying of blysse
In heuene he schalle \h ʒeue sancʒfaylle

580 Ioy & murthe \h pat neuer may fayle
    ffor \h be\h Endless
\h bis lyf here & peyne schalle sone be paste
ʒe fynde by resoun and knowe
    \h be joye of heuene euere more last
\h bis wordle ys but a throwe
\h wp\h peyn \h pat passed men comeϕ to blysse
And in noon oϕer manere
wypoute \h peyne/ dame qweene ywysse
    \h ber may no man come \h ere
\h peyn ys schort and passeϕ sone
Blysse ys long schalle neuer be done
    take \h is for \h a/ comfort
Be ryʒt glad to suffry here
to come to \hat blysse \h ere
    and syt at goddes bord
Alle paynes in \h is wordle y wyss
beϕ nat worthy \h leste blysse
    \hat ys hye in hevene
Peyne hap ende \hat blysse hap noon

590 \h pan hyt ys grete wysedoom
    to drawe \h yder evene
and ho \hat wolle to blysse go
he most suffry peyne and wo

[f. 61r]

Penitentiam agite appropinquabitís
    regnum celorum\textsuperscript{10}
Regnum celorum vim patitur:
et violentes rapiunt illud\textsuperscript{11}

Non sunt condigne passiones
be whyte he ys here
and whan he schalle henne3 weende
he schalle haue murthe withoute eende
a redy for hym þere

Porfyririus þat worthy knyʒt
Seyde to Kateryn anoon ryʒt
to hure more of þys
Of heuene y wolde lere
and of þe blyss þat ys þere
þat þe telleþ of to vs
y pray þow for alle þynge
þyf me an enformynge
in þis maner doynge

Katryne seyde to þat knyʒt
Hyt passeþ mannes wytt & myʒt
and alle wordly connynge
to telle alle how þat hyt ys
alle hertys ne tongys
ne can nat hyt declare
But a smalle example þe schalle se
By þat som y knowe may be
how þat hyt ys þare

Heuene ys as a cyte
þat ys as fayr as hyt may be
of streyts howss & byldynge
And weþ13 as fulle of alle gode also
þat nawʒt lacked þat scholde þerto
----onde14 manneʒ þenkynge
alle þat beþ on þat cyte
beþ of on a corde
what wille y þat wylle he
In þowʒt work and worde
þer ys no hunger, þurst ne cold
heete ne tempest manyfolt
But pees & alle reste
reyn wynd ne no sykenesse

Age feuyr ne feblenesse
Alle þyngs at þe beste
Doundryng lyʒtynge mʒt also
no þyng þat may myssdoo
   ys in þat stede þere
Eche body þer ys as swyft
as þe sonne beem bryght
   as sonne be ferr or nere
Se þey bêp boþe swyft & lyʒte
and more clere & more bryʒte
650
pan ys þe sonne beem
They may nat roty ne ded be
Example by þe sonne þu see
   and by þe sonne3 leem

 fulfilbunt iusti sicut
   sol etc\textsuperscript{15}

þe Sonne ys fayr clere & bryʒt
he ʒeueþ swyftly heore lyʒt
   ffram est into þe weste
þer may no þyng þe sonne a peyre
water wynd yre noþer þe fyre
   ne chaunge hyt fram reste
660
So alle þe bodyes þat þere schalle be
Schulle be as swyft and clere as he
   and þat withoute ende
ffor þey haueþ þis securyte & stabelnesse
þat þey schalle neuer haue changeablenessse
   marke þis in mynde
Ther ys gode a cord & gode love þerto
and þat schalle laste Eure moo
   with murthe Joye & blisse
Eche body as swyft as þouʒt
670
no þyng may let hem ouʒt
to be whar ham luste
alle þynges see in goddeʒ face
þat þey desyre in any place
   clerely & juste
Such werdes & many other moo
Kateryn tolde ham þer þoo
   And þey toke goode hede
þey toke þeire leve & wente awey
redy to deye for cristus fey
680
   yf tyme were & nede
Porfyrius cleped hys knyʒtes echoun
and tauʒt ham þis swete lesoun
   After Katerynes sawe
two hundred knyʒtes strong of myʒte [f. 62r]
bat seruyd Porfyry  bope day & ny3te
  whan þey hurde þis lawe
 þey þou3te welle hyt most so be
 þer was no god forsoþe but he
  þat made alle þyng of nau3t
þat made heuen þe sonne & mone
and saat above vpon hys throne
  ryulyng alle in ----¹⁶
he most be god þat made alle þynge
Erbes grasses trees spryng
  he was most of my3t
þe mametys were stock & stone
ßfendes ofte spoke þere one
  þey hurd & se with sy3t
þey þou3t also þey schulde be deed
þey lefte þe feende þe mames reed
  repentyng fulle sore
þat þey hadde leuyd amysse
worschuppyng fals goddess
  þey wolde do so no more
þey were redy wyþ Porphyrye
  In cristien blyeue for to dye
  vnder verry repentaunce
Kateryn tau3te Porphyrye so
  and he hys kny3tes þe same to do
God þeue ham gode chaunce

AMEN PATER NOSTER

Now comeþ þe Emperour hoom
and hap hys needes alle ydoo[n
  þat he rood out fore
he syttþe on hys dome see
Kateryn he seþ þryng to me
to schew heor lawe & lore
They þryngeþ forþ þis virgyn
at þe dome byfore hym
  many oon stooode þo þere
Som heþoun : som cristyn
Som helde with heore : som with hym
  In dyuerse manere

¶ The Emperour seythe to Kateryn
þu art coome of worthy kyn
fayn y woide þe saue
worschupe oure goddes as y do
and do as dop my puple also
and þu schalt þy lyf haue

¶Alle þe substaunce of my reeme
þu schalt dysposy and deeme
after þyn owne reede
þu schalt be next to my wyff
ffulle of worshup alle þy lyf
3ut schalt þu haue more mede
In þe myddal of þe cyte
y schalle ordeyn an ymage to þe
To wham alle schalle lowte
3ut schal y do þe more welle
and make an ymage of gode marbellæ
a kyng yherd in heor honde
[f. 62v]

740
In þe temple among ymagesse
þat beþ oure goddesses
worthely þere stonde
Alle puple þat gop þerby
schulle þat honoury
thruþ alle my londe
yf þu wylt leuy do þu þis
worschupe oure goddys
wyp out more delay

Y profere þe gode & worschupp
Kateryn forsake nat hyt
and come to our fay

¶Kateryn seyde wyp chere sadde
ffor to leuy ; y wolde be gladde
Almyþy god to serue
But cece syr Emperour þat permissioune
to þenke hyt for to ço0 ys dampnacioun
y hadde leuyr sterve
y knewleche crist my god & lord

750
wyp herte wylle werk & word
to hym y me bytake
he ys me lord & euer haþ be
hym y knewleche perde
y schalle hym neuer forsake
¶ Than spake a man þe fendes þralle
the seruant of þe feende Belyalle
Cursates by name
Syr Empereour þis Kateryn
Say neuer þat maner Gyn

noper þat maner game
þat scholde make heore to drede
þerfor suf do by my rede
commaundyng in haste
forre whelys for to make
By myn wytt/ þat þey be schape
y trew þey schalle heere goste
two goon up . & two to grounde
Oryble cry & oryble sounde
fulle of hobs & sawe

¶ Thys wheles were made of greiz myʒt
Oryble and crywelle to manneʒ syʒt
when þey fast yhede
Kateryn was sett out of prysoun
and by þe wheles knelede adoun
and prayd god for spede
God hurde Kateryn fulle welle
and send doun a gode aungelle
wyp a fulle bryʒt swerd
and as þe whelys ronne faste
alto pecys he ham braste
þat made men aferd
the pecys fly out wyp greiz strenkþ
and sclowh þe heþoun in brede & lengþ
foure þousandes
heþoun puple cryde & wepte
crustyn men daunced & lepte
holdyng vp þeire hondeʒ
heþoun puple for drede wyp drowh
cristien maked muþhe & lhowh
ponkyng god of hys sonde3
be Emperor as he sey hyt
he wexed alle out of wyt
god sende hym schame & schonde3

810  ¶ the qwehene byhelde þis wounder þyng
to be Emperor heo com gredynge
  with stedefast fey & love
þu wrecched caytiff Emperoure
how darst þu god dyshonoure
  þat worcheþ þus above
worschupe cristien mennes god
and lef ham þat dop no gode
  þat euer hap gyle do
Se what werks here beþ done
turne & worschupe hym anone
  last þu be damned þerto

820  ¶ Tho þe Empyreour was woode wyss
and seyde to þe qwehene þus
  alas what eyleþ þe
who hap torned þe awey
ffram oure godde3 & oure fey
  þu schalt ychasted be
the qwehene answerd wþþ sad chere
huryng alle þat wer þere
  and seyd to hym þus
þy chastement y drede ry3t nou3t
y worschupe hym þat me hap bou3t
  alas y haue do amyss
þe Empyreour bad do sacrifi3e
heo seyde heo nolde in no wyse
  agyst god no more
the Empyreour commaunde yres be sette
and for to draw of eyper tette
  to peyny heore fore
830  and as þey heore gan drawe faste
to Kateryn heore Eyoun heo .aste
  and prayde þus seyynghe
Gentyl Kateryn haue me on mynde
and praye for me as þe beþ kynde
  In my tormentynge
þat my feþþ fayle nat r.
Pray to God that hure be ffor myn endynge
Kateryn to heore þo þus sayde
ffor no peyne be þe dysmayde thenk fast in þor mede
thenk on þour mede buȝely þour peyn schalle passe so lyȝty
without any drede þour peyn ys schorte þe mede ys longe Beþ glad þerfor to suffry wronge
and kepe hyt welle in herte Stondeþ fast in þour byleve þour peyn þe lasse schalle þow greve
iñulle lyte schalle hyt smerte and god be þyp þow: & so he ys ffor þe haste faste te blyss
and for þow y schalle pray Thys qwehene was brouȝt to þe doom by drowh of heor tettys anoon
without long delay So þan anoon ryȝt þeer heo dyde a blysséed martyr
In sadnesse of fey þey made heore body þerowte lygge To be devovred of best & brydde
Of kyteȝ fox & hounde But Porphiry þat worthy kynȝ Toke hyt av⁄ey by nyȝt
and buryed in holy grounde wyp myrve & wyp franc Encense and was þer hymselfe in presence
and made hyt be soo The next day after vp on þe morw þo þer rooss a nywe sorwe
for þat body was agoo Ther was made enquerymge for þis maner of doynge who hyt hadde doo
And many a man was wyp foule fare and putt to much sorw & care þat was nat guilty þo

† Porphiry þat dude hyt anoon
To þe Emperor gan to goon
and sayde to hym þus
Blame noon oper hyt ys no nede
ych am he þat dude þat dede
þu doest alle amyss
heo deyde crystes marter
y buryed þeor hys confesser
yfor so welle þe werk of mercy
þe feyþ of god so wolde
þat y hyt do scholde
last my saule percy

Thu art to crywelle & out of blyeue
ne wolt þe dede buryyng yheue
perde þu art to crywelle
A:nende þy lyff y telle hyt þe
Oper ellys þu wolt ydampned be
among þe fende3 of helle

Whan Maxence þe Emperor hurde þys
he was boþe wood and woo
he seyde my Joye murthe & blyss
now hyt ys fram me goo
ffurst my qwene my ow...e wyff
wham y loved as my lyff
fforsoke my godde3 lawe
now Porphyry on wham y trust
my comfort my socour & my lust
ys to høre ydrawe
now troublþ myn herte & blode
ffor sorwe y wexy almost wode
y not what y schalle doo

¶ Tak þis Porphyrye with alle speed
and smyteþ of anoon hys heed
lat hym no more speke
two hundred of hys knyþtes also
lat ham neuer förþer goo
fforsoþe y schalle be wrekë
wyþ glëd chere for goddes sake
þer þey dude martyrdome take
wyþ meke herte & wylle
many on þat day also
wyþ herte suffred deþ þerto
930 alle bow pat bye wer stonde
bus bye bou3t heuene blyssse
pe qwehene Porphiry & his kny3tess
god graunte \vs/ be same
to suffre sorwe & compassioune here
pat we may see ham so pere
Ihesu for by name Amen

A Nywe day pere ys now come
pe Emperour he sytt in dome
and Kateryn stondep forp

940 Maxence pe Emperour callep heore seyynge
pu wycke make no more taryyng
by craft ys nat worp
Do sacrify3e to oure goddes y rede
Or elles pu schalt in haste be dede
chese now lyf or dep

¶ Kateryn seyde wyp meke mode
to levy sur y trowe be gode
But whyle pat y haue brep
y schalle by feyp & godde3 despyse

950 to cryst y offre me self sacrefi3e
sawle body & blood
Spare nat me for no torment
Doo to me alle pyn entent
wexe pu neuer so wood
by tormentynge ys to me e3e
pu canst no wyse me dysple3e
thy malyce dop me good

¶ The Emperor pis maybe fulle fayr & free
commaundede out of pe cyte
anon to be led
and yhass pe dome & pe sentence
withoute any maner reuerence
to smyte of heor hed

¶ Kateryn went wyp welle glad chere
after pe false tormentere
and many ano3er moo
wyfes wydewe3 & maydes many one
wepyng & crynyge makyng mone
  hat heo scholde deye soo

970 ¶ Kateryn comforted ham þo þus
and prayd ham cecy of wepyngys
    And pray ham to be glade
ffor now y goo to my kyng
wham y love ouer alle þyng
  þat of nauȝt me made
wyþ hym ys Ioye murthe reste
Of alle kynge he ys þe beste
   vnder hym beþ ober alle
Ther for lord of myȝtes moste
to þe y come : and yhelde my goste
    and wyþ hertede þe calle

¶ And here y knely lord to þe
Off a Boene y pray to þe
    and rere vp hertede & honde
Graunte me lord god þis boone
  þat alle þat/ hureþ my passione
  þat y suffred for þe
In worschup lord of þy name
Delyuer ham fram sorw & schame
    for þe love of me
and alle þat haue deuocioun
to honoure þe in my passioun
   graunte hyt god pur charyte

¶ A swete voys wyþ meke stevene
þer com adoun þo þer fram hevene
  alle þe puple hurynge
Come kateryn to hevenly kynge anoon
whar to makest þu suche a boen
    with long taryynge

1000 ¶ Whoso worschuþeþ god in þy passioun
ffor nede or for any tribulacioun
  what so euer hyt be
he schalle haue hys desyring
Kateryn for þy prayynge
    ffor love Kateryn of þe
Alle þis whyle was Kateryn: vpon þe gronde knelyng herte hounde3 & heore eyoun: vp to heuene reryng
In many a manne3 syʒte heo seye god þu art fulle tryw: in alle þy byhestis sfulfylle to men þes boenys after þeyr requestis for þy grete myʒte

lat þe puple know lord: þat for þy law y dye and ʒy ham þeyr askyngs for þy mercye Lord y pray þe God þat madest alle þyng, heuene sterre & mone y þanke þe gode lord for graunityng of my bone þat prayeþ þe by me

And lord þat þe tormentes may nat here sclee my saule y þe pray lord take hyt to þe now at þis owr Doo þu tormentor þy werk and þy dede come forth in haste & smyte of myn heede Go godde3 honoor

The tormentor anon ryʒt toke out a swerd bryʒt withoute delay wyþ a swap swype smerete he made heor hed forþ sterre many a man hyt say

and in þe stede of red blod þer fled forþ a gret flod Of melk þo fulle sound þat alle was melky at þer was þe stoel þe swerd & þe gras þat me: bygan to woundry

Aungels come fram heuene and bare þe body fulle euene to mounte of synay fourty dayes Jorney & moore as seþ þat haue þe þare withoute any nay
Oyle wellep of heore toumbe
bat curep bope s,keness & wounde
with lyte touchyng
and smale boenes þer comþ þerto
Of ham oyle þer comþþ also
wher euer men ham brynge

Ihesu crist goddes soone
for Kateryns passioun
we prayþþ mekle þþ
Saue vs fram sorw & nêde
and kepe vs fram þe seendeþ drede
Amen pur charyte

¶ Kateryn of maydes martyr & flour
we prayþ þe be oure socour
In alle maner greuance
In worschupp of þe ys oure chapelle
curtoysse Kateryn kepe vs welle
fram discord & meschaunce

AMEN
1. "A fat stomach emits flatulent judgements."
2. "She despised the world and all its customs."
3. Gregory: "they knock at the door of hell so that they may enter."
4. "Eighteen years."
5. "Let your mercy be on us O Lord" (Psalm 51).
6. "The devil is a liar and the father of lies: he made the first lie in paradise saying you will be like gods knowing good and evil" (John 8:44; Genesis 3:5).
7. "Lamentation to encourage the devotion of the audience."
8. These words appear to be stroked out.
9. These words appear to be stroked out.
10. "By doing penance you will approach the kingdom of heaven" (Cf. Acts 14:22).
11. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it" (Matt. 11:12).
12. "The passions of this time are not worthy in comparison to the glory to come" (Cf. Rom. 8:18).
13. This word appears to be rubbed out.
14. This word is not legible.
15. "The just will shine like the sun [in the kingdom of my father]" (Matt. 13:43).
16. This word is not legible.
List of Abbreviations and Short Titles

E.E.T.S. o.s.: Early English Text Society, original series
E.E.T.S. e.s.: Early English Text Society, extra series
E.E.T.S. s.s.: Early English Text Society, supplementary series
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