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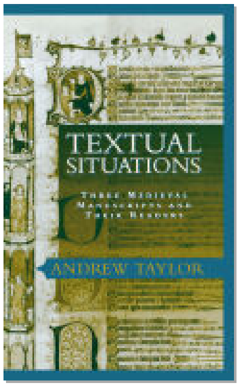
Textual Situations

Taylor, Andrew



Published by University of Pennsylvania Press

Taylor, Andrew.
Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers.
University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/43775.

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Chapter 4

British Library MS Royal 10.E.4

> We have but to give voice and life to all those pictures, and we have the spirit of the concourse at the Fair.
>
> —HENRY MORLEY

Ponderous and ornate, it sits ensconced on library shelves much as it has for over half a millennium, its elegant script, elaborate code of abbreviations, and its bulk symbolic of its authority. This is British Library MS Royal 10.E.4, the Smithfield Decretals, a massive legal compendium measuring roughly eighteen by eleven inches and containing 314 pages. Technically, a decretal is "a reply given by the Roman pontiff on an uncertain point of law to someone (most often a bishop, sometimes an abbot, a canon or a layman) who has asked him to clarify it," according to the definition given by the canonist Uguccio in the late twelfth century.[1] As Jean Gaudemet notes, the decretals "multiplied and gained more authority after the consolidation of papal omnipotence and Roman centralization in the second half of the twelfth century. With the conciliar canons, which they quickly overtook in number and authority, they became the essential sources of canon law."[2] This particular collection was commissioned by Pope Gregory IX and compiled by his chaplain and confessor, the Dominican Raymond of Peñaforte, who completed it in 1234. It was intended to be a single complete collection of all canon law promulgated since the time of Gratian's *Decretum* of 1140 and was known as the *Liber extra* (or occasionally as the *Liber decretalium extravagantium*, or more simply the *Extravagantes*) because it contained decretals that had circulated outside the *Decretum*. The *Liber extra* covers all matters of ecclesiastical governance: taxation of the clergy, simony, the rights of ecclesiastical property, the consecration of churches, and the performance of the sacraments; how everyone from subdeacon to cardinal is to be appointed or elected and if necessary punished or dismissed; and how their duties interlock, how far their powers extend, and how their disputes may be resolved. Its control is not limited to the clergy. It shapes the liturgical calendar, setting limits on when people can work; regulates marriage, sexual practice, and inheritance; defines heresy; and offers principles for the treatment of apostates and Jews. From the opening line, "De summa trinitate et fide catholica," its overall purpose is clear: to distinguish the true faith from error, to lay out the regulations by which this faith may be maintained within an institutional structure, to maintain order within Christendom.

According to George Warner and Julius Gilson, this particular copy was originally made in Italy in the early fourteenth century.[3] It contains the standard gloss of Bernard of Parma, revised for the last time in 1263.[4] It was intended for the "doctoribus et scolaribus univ*er*sis parisius" (fol. 4), presumably for the law faculty, but somehow it ended up in England instead, eventually arriving at the Augustinian priory of St. Bartholomew in Smithfield. On the first folio there is an inscription "Liber domus sancti Bartholomei in Smithfylde" in a hand that Warner and Gilson date to the late fifteenth century. How much earlier it had arrived at the priory is unclear, although Alexandra Bovey makes a strong case it was there by the 1370s. Once there the book sat in safety while outside the walls swarmed the chaos of Smithfield.

Smithfield lay outside the walls of London and outside its jurisdiction. The area was already notorious when the priory was founded in 1123 by one Rahere, "in his younger days a time-server and frivolous courtier," who abandoned the court of Henry II for monastic life.[5] The indefatigable nineteenth-century chronicler of London, Walter Besant, describes the area in these terms:

> The spot—Smithfield, the smooth field—was part of the fenny flat that lay north of London Wall: a barren heath covered with springs and ponds, and set with occasional clumps of trees. Horse races were held here, a weekly horse fair, there were stables and grooms and people to look after the horses, they were a rough and rude folk, living without the jurisdiction of the City, and they had no Church nor any religious people among them; it was the place also on which executions were held, and it was accounted infamous.[6]

Rahere established both a priory and a hospital; the priory was given jurisdiction over an annual cloth fair that opened on August 23, the eve of St. Bartholomew's day, and ran for two full days following.

> The fair was then a perfectly serious commercial institution; the cloth merchants exhibited their wares within the precincts of the Priory; at night the gates were closed; the Prior received the tolls. But outside the Priory, in the open space of West Smithfield, where the horse races were held and criminals were hanged, among the ponds and elms of that open area, another fair grew up; a fair at first tolerated and then com-

> pelled to pay tolls to the City; a fair where whole streets of booths exhibited things of every kind for sale; a fair at which amusements, shows, feats of skill and cunning, dancing, singing, mumming, music, feasting, gambling, and drinking went on all day and all night during the three days of the fair.[7]

The fair, Bartholomew Fair (abbreviated to "Bartelmy"), continued, with periodic efforts by the authorities to curtail its rowdiness, until it was finally suppressed in the 1870s. It inspired numerous satirists, most famously Ben Jonson, whose play teems with bawds, cutpurses, puppeteers, players, wrestlers, ballad-sellers, and sellers of trinkets, gingerbread, and ale.

For Londoners, Smithfield provided the closest open space for large public rituals. For over a century, from the reign of Edward III through the reign of Edward IV, that is for most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Smithfield was the stage for royal tournaments and jousts. These included the great tournament of 1357, where the kings of England, France, and Scotland were all in attendance; the seven days of jousts in 1374, where Edward III presided with his mistress Alice Perrers dressed as the lady of the Sun, and the jousts between Anthony Woodville and the Bastard of Burgundy in 1467.[8] Smithfield also served for judicial combats, the last one in 1524 when William Cator, an armorer, was slain by his servant, John David, who had accused him of treason.[9] And there were executions. Here William Wallace was hanged and then disemboweled in 1305. Here William Sautre, sometime priest of Lynne, was burned for Lollardy in 1401 and the artisan John Badby burned on the same charge in 1410, despite the dramatic intervention of the future Henry V, who ordered the flames extinguished to give Badby one last chance to recant and then relit when he proved adamant.[10] Here for centuries the crowds of London and the surrounding regions came to haggle and to gawk. This was the neighborhood in which the Smithfield Decretals rested until the dissolution of the priory brought the manuscript into royal hands.[11]

Harmony from Dissonance

"Law," the preface to the *Liber extra* tells us, "was set out so that harmful appetite might be bound by rules, and through it people taught to live honestly, not to harm each other, and to show due respect for everyone's rights."[12] Many of its modern advocates would concur. For them, canon law serves humanity by curbing its excesses.[13] It is a valiant effort to "to make a working reality of the kingdom of God upon earth; to express the laws of that kingdom in a coherent, all-embracing code, to enforce that code upon the still half-heathen kingdoms of this world."[14] As Stephan Kuttner, one of its preeminent scholars, writes:

> To many of us, clergy or lay, the law of the Church appears as no more than a sum of dry technical rules for ecclesiastical administrators and judges, the rubrics, as it were, of ecclesiastical routine or, even worse, a stifling instrument of regimentation. But in fact canon law is something much nobler and greater: it is a living force, giving form to the social body which is the Church; a rational order encompassing her sacramental and pastoral functions; an organized mode of thinking that teaches us the right reason of ecclesiastical life, from essential principles to practical particulars—in short a universal system of jurisprudence, composed of divine and human elements, and of no lesser intellectual dignity than the speculative disciplines of theology and philosophy. The fact that in its details canon law must deal with contingencies and practical necessities rather than with timeless truths must not blind us to the grandeur of its purpose, which is the ordering of those contingencies in a coherent whole.[15]

Like scholastic theology, canon law is one of the great medieval systematizations. It displays, for Kuttner, "the signal achievement of the medieval mind in organizing the law of the Church into a harmonious system out of an infinite variety of diverse, even contradictory, elements"[16] It brings harmony from dissonance.

For others, canon law is but one branch of the oppressive institutional apparatus developed in the High Middle Ages. While it aims at limiting violence and disorder, it contributes to the formation of what R. I. Moore has termed a "persecuting society," one in which, from the eleventh century on, "deliberate and socially sanctioned violence began to be directed, ***through established governmental, judicial and social institutions***, against groups of people defined by general characteristics such as race, religion or way of life."[17] Moore rejects the common view that canon law was a rationalist response to popular tumult, curtailing the excess of mob violence, or that heretics were persecuted in the thirteenth century "because there were so many of them."[18] While social conditions, such as the development of a literate urban middle class, may indeed have led to an increase in the number of religious dissenters, this does not account for the determination of the Church to suppress dissent or the way in which dissent was defined and linked to other marginalized groups. Instead, Moore argues, the ecclesiastical elites imposed a repressive intellectual order from above, creating through rigid taxonomies the figures, notably Jews and heretics, against which medieval society increasingly defined itself.

Canon law provided the judicial procedures for the pursuit of these outsiders. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 in particular brought in numerous legal mechanisms to facilitate the search for heresy. Among them, as Richard Fraher notes, was the innovation that

> the ecclesiastical judge could pronounce an interim sentence of excommunication against a suspected heretic who answered a summons but failed to cooperate in the investigation. Later developments included a ban on the right to counsel; recognition of the validity of testimony against suspected heretics, even if the source were an 'infamous' person, such as another heretic or a convicted perjurer; prosecutions against deceased suspects and Alexander IV's ruling that a party suspected of heresy who failed to answer a summons could be held as convicted and liable to the death penalty after a year.[19]

But perhaps more important, canon law provided the intellectual structure for the classification of outsiders, whether Jews, witches, heretics, or sodomites. For Moore, "the sharp and clear distinctions between Catholic and Manichee, between the leprous and the clean, even between the Christian and the Jew . . . originated very largely in the minds of the observers."[20] The new attitude defined heresy as something to be sought out or revealed through interrogation. It rejected community values in favor of objective intellectual standards. It used moral repression as a means of establishing the legitimacy of the ruling elite, and it drew upon the services of an intellectual elite to do so. The rise of canon law was part of the general "penetration of society by the culture and institutions of the literate minority."[21]

The disorder faced by the canonists came not just from the vicissitudes of daily life in a fallen world, it was also of their own making. Each new layer of commentary gave rise to new ambiguities and contradictions, and the ever growing body of legislation became unmanageable.[22] The alarming multiplication of canons was temporarily resolved when in about 1140 Gratian, who taught law at Bologna, compiled his *Concordia discordantium canonum*, generally known as the *Decretum*, a massive effort to systematize nearly a millennium of papal rulings and reconcile their numerous apparent contradictions. The *Decretum* was embraced enthusiastically and thus ironically spawned yet more commentary and yet more law making, the so-called *decretales extravagantes*, which often circulated outside the *Decretum* or as appendixes to it. There was also a thriving traffic in forged decretals. By the thirteenth century, the confusion of discording canons was as bad as it had been before Gratian.[23]

This was the situation that Gregory IX wished his chaplain, Raymond of Peñaforte, to rectify by assembling a single, complete collection of canon law since the time of Gratian, cutting extraneous material.[24] As he explained in the bull *Rex pacificus*,

> Various constitutions and decretal letters of our predecessors have been scattered in various volumes; some of them seem to have caused confusion because of their excessive similarity, others seem to have caused confusion by their contradictions, and still others have caused confusion because of their length. Still other letters have wandered outside of these volumes and because of this uncertain status they have caused uncertainty in rendering judgments. And so for the common use and especially for the use of students we have arranged that our beloved son, brother Raymond, our chaplain and penitentiary, should draw up these constitutions and decretal letters into one volume, leaving aside any superfluous material. And we have added our own constitutions and decretal letters in order that some things that had been in doubt might be settled. Wishing therefore that everyone should use only this compilation we strictly forbid that anyone should presume to do otherwise without the special authority of the apostolic see.[25]

This collection was officially promulgated on September 5, 1234, and copies were sent to Paris and Bologna.[26] Like its great predecessor, Gratian's *Decretum*, Raymond of Peñaforte's collection was a form of *summa*, a comprehensive and rigorously organized collection produced according to the logic of the schools. It was official, exclusive (for it replaced all previous collections since the time of Gratian's *Decretum*), authentic (for it excluded all false or superfluous canons), and consistent in its format.[27] It mirrored the Church itself, as the canonists understood it.

Of course, the closure brought by Gregory IX's *Liber extra* was only temporary. He himself proceeded to issue yet more decretals, and in 1298 Boniface VIII felt compelled to promulgate yet another collection, the *Liber sextus*, because "many more have been promulgated by [Gregory IX] and by other pontiffs on various matters, and they are not sure in the courts or schools whether they really are decretals or who issued them."[28] The history of these compilations, then, from that of Gratian through to that of Boniface, is one of continual struggle to impose order, first the order of law upon the disorder of human life and then some editorial order upon the endless proliferation of legal decision and commentary. The *Liber extra* stands as yet one more vain effort to put an end to the proliferation of books by writing a book that would be definitive.

Reading the Glosses

Let us imagine one of the Augustinian canons of Smithfield consulting this volume. His eye runs along the bottom of the page until after some fifty folios it comes to the figure of the sword dancer (fig. 16). (The canon is looking at

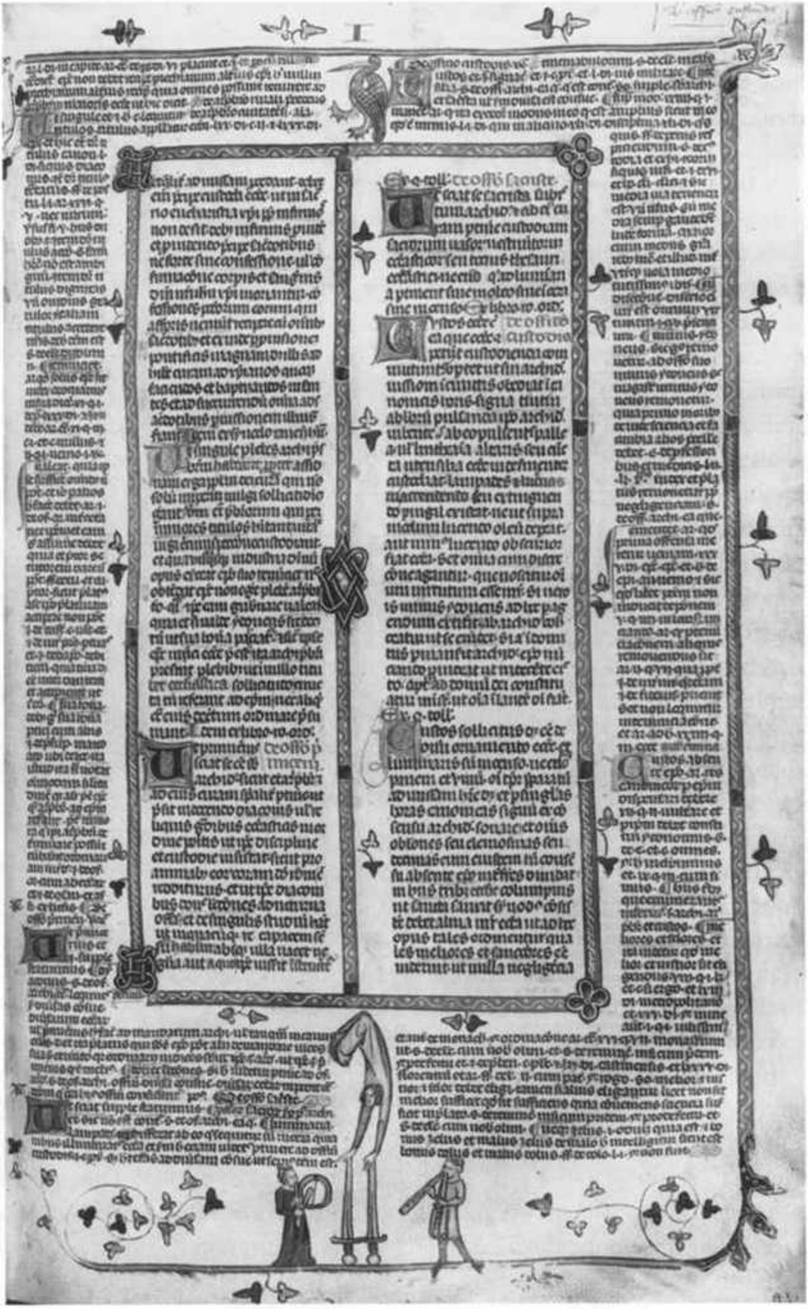


Figure 16. British Library, Royal 10.E.4, fol. 58 r (with permission of the British Library).

what will later be identified as folio 58r, but as yet the pages are unnumbered, and he is more likely to think of this as "the page with the sword dancer.") It is a memorable scene, that one could easily imagine taking place in a fairground. One figure in a long gown is performing a vertical handstand on the points of two fixed swords, while a second plays pipe and tabor and a third double pipes, as they might well do when drumming up an audience for their star attraction.

The canon now locates the text he seeks, say, for the sake of an example, the entry in the middle of the right hand column on the duties of the custodian. Ten lines down in the central text box, there is a rubricated heading: De offic*io* custodis. This is titulus 27 in Book 1 of the *Decretals*. The text runs as follows:

> Custos ecc*lesi*e c*u*i ea que ecc*lesi*e *com*petu*n*t custodienda com/mittunt*ur* op*or*tet/ ut sui archid*iaconi* iussioni cunctis obediat i*n* ca/nonicis horis signa tintinab*u*loru*m* pulsanda ip*s*o archid*iaconi* iubente ab eo pulsent*ur* palle/a v*e*l linth*amin*a altaris seu cu*n*c/ta utensilia ecclessiae indesinenter custodiat, lampades & lanternas in accendendo seu extiniguen/do p*er*vigil existat etc.

> The custodian of the church, to whom those things that concern churches have been entrusted, should obey the commands of the archdeacon in all matters, ringing the appropriate bells to mark the canonical hours at the archdeacon's command, guarding the altar clothes at all times, and being vigilant in lighting or dousing all utensils, torches, and lanterns.[29]

So far, the text presents few difficulties for a competent medieval cleric. The compression of the gothic hand makes certain demands on the eye, and the reduction of *m*, *n*, *u*, and *i* to a series of identical vertical lines creates a further level of uncertainty, especially for a modern reader whose Latin is at all shaky, but this would scarcely trouble a medieval canon.

When we move to the glosses, however, the demands mount rapidly. Turning our eye to the first line of the glosses in the right-hand column, just to the right of a bird that might be taken as a heron, at the very top of the page there is a gloss on *tintinabulorum*: "tintinabulorum s. de elċ in cais et j. c. pr. et.l.di.ius militare" (fig. 17). What are we to make of this? The difficulty here lies in the appeal to specialized knowledge, not in the script; the printed edition is almost identical: "Tintinabuloru*m* s. de elect. in causis & j. c. proxi. & I. distin. ius militare" (fig. 18). To expand these references and then navigate one's way through the various canonical collections so as to locate the references requires a reasonable grounding in canon law. Even today, with

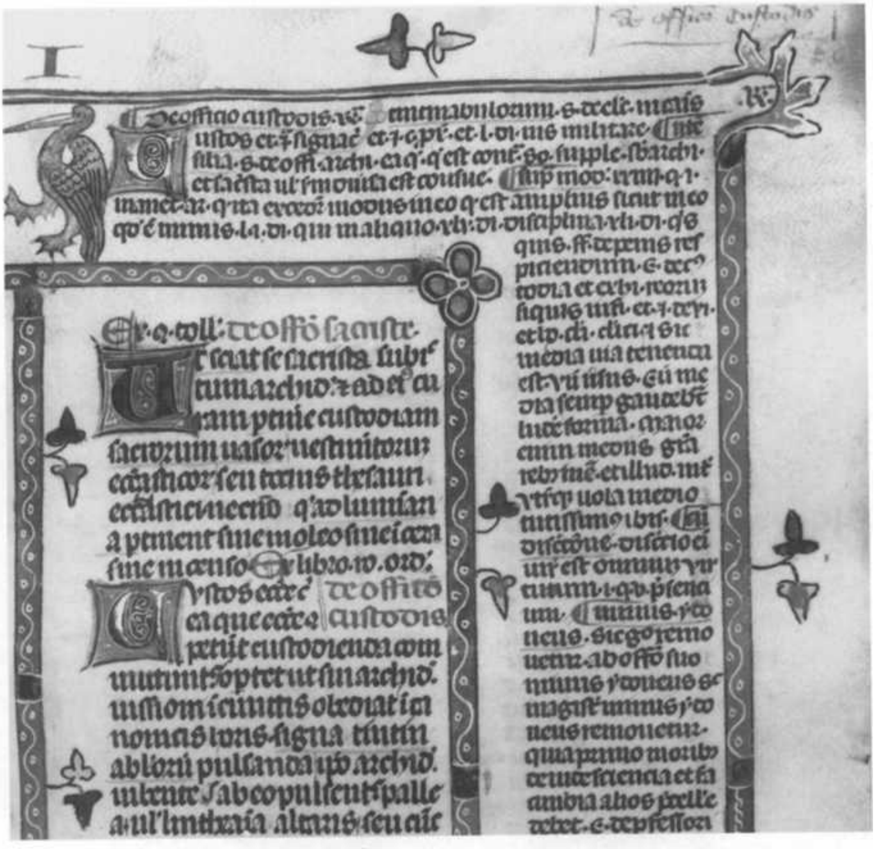
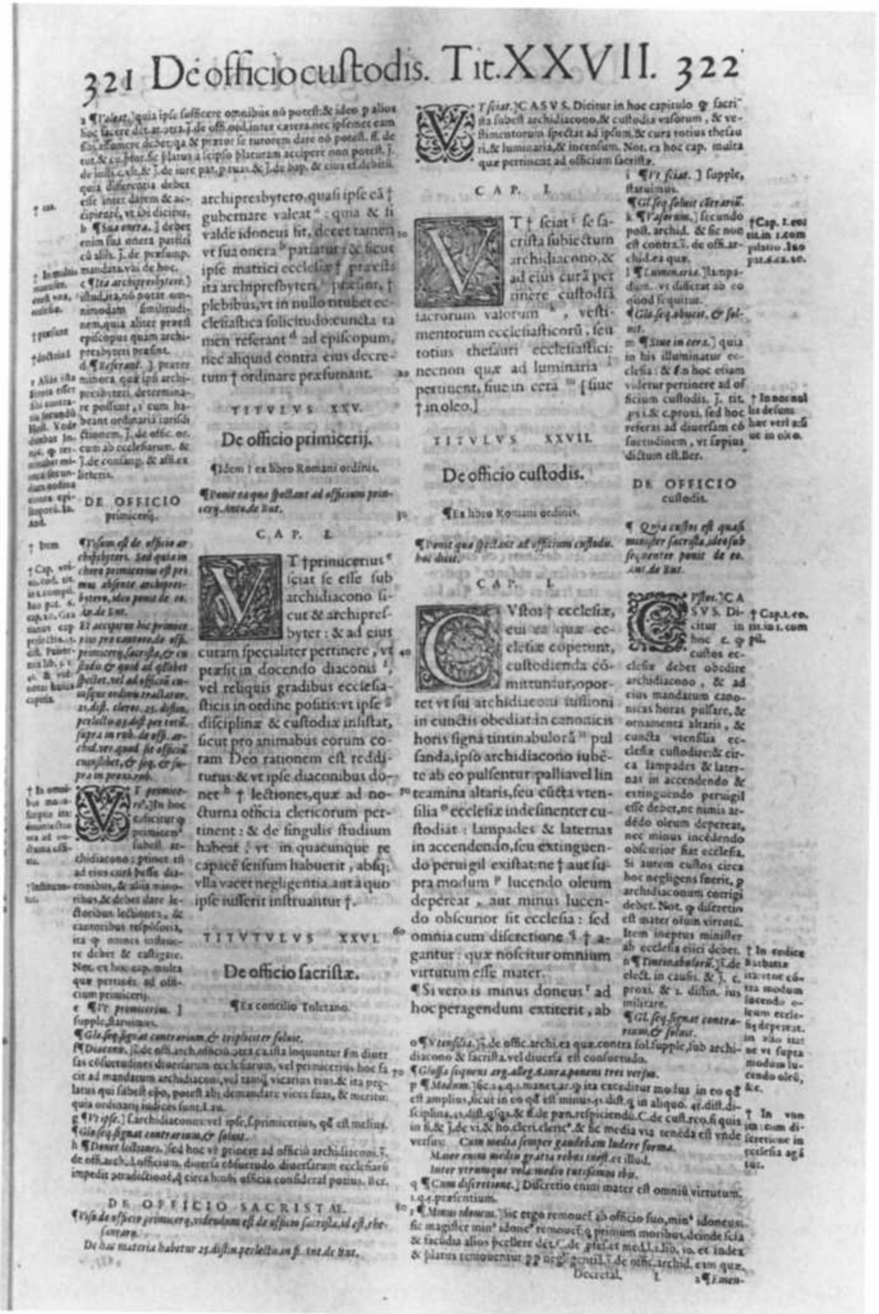


Figure 17. Detail of Royal 10.E.4, fol. 58r (with permission of the British Library).

the assistance of printed editions, indexes, and helpful introductory manuals, the search can prove vexatious. This would not have been a problem for one of the canons who had some training in the field, any more than it is a problem for those who have trained in it today. But the technical demands do reflect a highly developed professional structure, and they place significant limitations on interdisciplinary incursions, then as now.

In each case the referencing system demands familiarity with the canonical compilations. To follow the first reference (s. de elĉ in ca*us*is), the reader must recognize that "s." here stands for *supra* and that "de elĉ" stands for the titulum "de electione," remember roughly where this titulum occurs (it is the



321 De officio cuſtodis. Tit. XXVII. 322

Vt ſciat. CASVS. Dicitur in hoc capitulo q ſacriſta ſubeſt archidiacono, & cuſtodia vaſorum, & veſtimentorum ſpectat ad ipſum, & cura totius theſauri, & luminaria, & incenſum. Not. ex hoc cap. multa quæ pertinent ad officium ſacriſtæ.

archipreſbytero, quaſi ipſe cā † gubernare valeat [a]: quia & ſi valde idoneus ſit, decet tamen vt ſua onera [b] patiatur: & ſicut ipſe matrici eccleſiæ † præeſt: ita archipreſbyteri [c] præſint, † plebibus, vt in nullo titubet eccleſiaſtica ſolicitudo: cuncta tamen referant [d] ad epiſcopum, nec aliquid contra eius decretum † ordinare præſumant.

TITVLVS XXV.

De officio primicerij.

¶Idem ex libro Romani ordinis.

¶Ponit ea quæ ſpectant ad officium primicerij. Ante de Rut.

CAP. I.

Vt † primicerius [e] ſciat ſe eſſe ſub archidiacono ſicut & archipreſbyter: & ad eius curam ſpecialiter pertinere, vt præſit in docendo diaconis [f], vel reliquis gradibus eccleſiaſticis in ordine poſitis: vt ipſe [g] diſciplinæ & cuſtodiæ inſiſtat, ſicut pro animabus eorum coram Deo rationem eſt redditurus: & vt ipſe diaconibus donet [h] † lectiones, quæ ad nocturna officia clericorum pertinent: & de ſingulis ſtudium habeat, vt in quacunque re capacē ſenſum habuerit, abſq; vlla vacet negligentia aut à quo ipſe iuſſerit inſtruantur †.

TITVTVLVS XXVI.

De officio ſacriſtæ.

¶Ex concilio Toletano.

CAP. I.

Vt † ſciat [i] ſe ſacriſta ſubiectum archidiacono, & ad eius curā pertinere cuſtodiā ſacrorum vaſorum [k], veſtimentorum eccleſiaſticorū, ſeu totius theſauri eccleſiaſtici: necnon quæ ad luminaria [l] pertinent, ſiue in cera [m] [ſiue † in oleo.]

TITVLVS XXVII.

De officio cuſtodis.

¶Ex libro Romani ordinis.

¶Ponit quæ ſpectant ad officium cuſtodis. hoc dicit.

CAP. I.

Cuſtos † eccleſiæ, cui ea quæ eccleſiæ cōpetunt, cuſtodienda cōmittuntur, oportet vt ſui archidiaconi iuſſioni in cunctis obediat: in canonicis horis ſigna tintinabulorū [n] pulſanda, ipſo archidiacono iubēte ab eo pulſentur: pallia vel linteamina altaris, ſeu cūcta vtenſilia [o] eccleſiæ indeſinenter cuſtodiat: lampades & laternas in accendendo, ſeu extinguendo peruigil exiſtat: ne † aut ſupra modum [p] lucendo oleum depereat, aut minus lucendo obſcurior ſit eccleſia: ſed omnia cum diſcretione [q] † agantur: quæ noſcitur omnium virtutum eſſe mater.

¶Si vero is minus idoneus [r] ad hoc peragendum extiterit, ab

Figure 18. *Decretales d. Gregorii Papae IX* (Lyons, 1584), 322 (with permission of the Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies).

sixth), and then leaf through the chapters in this titulum until arriving at chapter thirty. This chapter deals with contested episcopal elections, specifically an election in Toulouse, and the various procedural tangles involved. Chapter 30 is quite long, and only after several lines do we finally come to the relevant information that during the election, when the chapter was fed up waiting for three of the electors to return, they rang the bells to summon them.[30]

The second reference, "j. c proxi" can be expanded "i*n capitulo* proxi*mo*." This must refer to the capitulum that follows the original *text*, that is, to the capitulum 2 in titulus 26 (as opposed to the capitulum that follows the first *cross-reference*, capitulum 31 in the titulus "De electione," because this cross-reference nowhere refers to the ringing of bells), so in fact the reference only moves the reader a little further on the same page. Any reader who could follow this far would have little difficulty with the third cross-reference ("& I. distin. ius militare"), provided there was a complete collection of canon law texts at hand, since only the *Decretum* is divided into *distinctiones*, and *distinctio* I has only twelve *capitulae*, none of them long. Here the connection to the bells is straightforward:

> Military law consists of the forms of waging war: the making of treaties, the advance or assault upon the enemy once the signal has been given, the reception of the enemy once the signal has been given; the flogging of deserters; the rates of pay; military ranks; the honor of rewards, as when soldiers are given wreathes or rings; as well as decisions over booty, its just division among the troops according to rank and the value of their service and the value of the leader's share.[31]

Taking these references as a whole, the canon might conclude that bell ringing is no idle ceremony. It has an important role in ecclesiastical protocol, one analogous to its role in military protocol. It can form part of the due process of an ecclesiastical election, giving all a fair chance to attend. It has, or can have, a legal function.

The difficulties in following just this one short passage suggest the extensive professional formation required to make much use of the book.[32] Some canonical collections would include indices and some indexes would even refer to page numbers (although the use of page numbers is on the whole a very late development, in part because of the awkwardness of larger Roman numerals), but in most cases readers would need to navigate their way back to the right general area by memory. Even if a reader knew the exact number of a capitulum, this would not necessarily be of much help, because the convenient system of page headers, used to such advantage in the modern printed edition of the *Corpus iuris canonici*, was not originally provided for

Royal 10.E.4. A later writer, probably in the fourteenth century, has added these headings (fig.17, top right-hand corner). The original reference system does supply book numbers at the head of each page, but still works best for a reader who is well acquainted with both the texts and the specific manuscript. Royal 10.E.4 is a book that is intended to be at least partially memorized.

The professionalization of canon law as a form of specialized academic knowledge is also reflected in the overall page design, the elegant layout of interlinking text boxes that hold text and gloss in balance. The Royal manuscript, as it was first copied in the early fourteenth century and before the illustrations were added, represents the culmination of two centuries of academic book design. The single-column format of a twelfth-century text such as the Digby 23 *Timaeus* is relatively simple in comparison.

This layout does far more than just provide visual appeal. This particular kind of book design reflected and reinforced the development of professional academic culture. As M. B. Parkes argues, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, "the structure of reasoning came to be reflected in the physical appearance of books."[33] Parkes finds telling parallels between the visual clarity of the thirteenth-century school text, often laid out in two columns, with clear separation between words and an elaborate gradation of textual authority, from major to minor glosses, and the structure of scholastic thought, with its elaborate division and subdivison of an argument.[34] As the universities grew and consolidated, the texts grew more complicated. The glossed biblical commentaries of the twelfth century represent the first major development, in which "The whole process of indicating text, commentary, and sources was incorporated into the design of the page."[35] Glosses, in other words, were no longer additions made by later writers; they were an integral part of the text from its initial copying. In the case of the *Liber extra*, for example, Gregory IX's *Decretals* are normally accompanied by Bernard of Parma's gloss, as they are in Royal 10.E.4. The rediscovery of Aristotelean logic and its elaborate categories in the thirteenth century, and "the consequent interest in more rigorous philosophical procedures entailed the adoption of principles which demanded a more precise method of dissecting and defining human knowledge."[36] These principles in turn led to an even more elaborate and clearly defined ordinatio. The divisions of an argument were marked out by rubrication and by the use of larger letters or paraph signs according to a clear hierarchy that remained the same throughout a given volume. Within a century, academic book design changed more fundamentally than it had since the introduction of the codex. As Parkes argues, "The late medieval book differs more from its early medieval predecessors than it does from the printed books of our own day."[37] Certainly, there is a more striking difference between the layout of Digby 23(1) and that of Royal 10.E.4 than there is between Royal 10.E.4 and the Lyons edition of 1584 (fig. 18) or even Friedberg's edition of the complete corpus of canon law of 1881.

The development in thirteenth-century book design corresponds closely to the contemporary development of academic institutions and professional academic culture. The thirteenth century saw further expansion and internal consolidation of the universities, accompanied by the expansion and consolidation of academic publishing, so that regulations governing curriculum and regulations governing the copying of text books often follow hard upon each other. During the second half of the thirteenth century, for example, the University of Oxford defined its curriculum, took measures to bring all students in the city under the control of official university professors, and fought for its independence from ecclesiastical control.[38] These regulations were only partially successful; medieval Oxford was filled with scholars who pursued more practical subjects with little regard for the official curriculum, William of Winchester being one likely example. But the drive to regulate student life was strong. At roughly the same period in major university centers, there developed a professional core of scriveners, parchimeners, liminers, and stationers, a nascent commercial book trade, which in Oxford was centered on Catte Street.[39] These were the scriveners who kept copies of the lais of Marie de France and other Anglo-Norman romances among their exemplars, the scriveners who produced the version of the Anglo-Norman *Horn* that appears in Douce 132, the personal manual of the Berkshire lawyer, and perhaps also the lais of Marie de France in Harley 978. The same scriveners also copied the texts on the curriculum, and it was here that the university endeavored to impose control, most notably through the *pecia* system, in which a licensed stationer kept an approved exemplar (the *pecia*), which he would rent out to students for them to copy for themselves.[40] The system was well established in Paris by the mid-thirteenth century and was probably used in Oxford not much later. As Marcel Thomas argues, the system gave the university "intellectual as well as economic control over the use of books."[41] This method depended upon the existence of a well-defined and stable curriculum as well as a well-defined and stable corporate body that controlled it and had licensing rights that were supported by civic and ecclesiastical authorities. The restrictions may have been resented by the stationers, but without this consolidation of academic control the economies of book production would have been very different and the elaborate school texts of the thirteenth century would scarcely have been possible. There was, then, a close interdependence between the developing university book trade, the self-regulating academic culture of the thirteenth century, and scholastic ordinatio seen in a work like Royal 10.E.4.

The most revealing category in this academic order was the gloss. Canon law developed as commentary, each pope or council responding to the decrees that had already been passed and each teacher commenting on these layered texts to produce a bewildering tissue of judgments. The struggle faced by Gratian as a compiler, to formulate principles for the effective organization of this material, was also played out on the individual page. In both cases, sources needed to be ranked, grouped, and cross-referenced, and the cross-referencing had to be precise and succinct so that a text could be identified precisely on the basis of an entry as elliptical as "s. de elect. in cais." or "I dist. ius militare." Text and gloss stood in a clear and mutually reinforcing relation that was represented no less clearly on the page. A gloss not only interpreted the text but confirmed its authority, just as it confirmed the authority of the glossator. Writing a gloss was the privilege of a master; reading a gloss required that one be a scholar.

The potential danger that glossing might lead to arbitrary and over-ingenious interpretation was raised by clerics as early as the thirteenth century.[42] From a lay perspective, however, glossing was not just a moral but also a social concern because it was all too clearly the perogative of the textually adept. How far back this anxiety goes is hard to tell, but it was widespread by the fourteenth century, when the *Middle English Dictionary* records the earliest English examples of the word's pejorative meaning, to gloss over or misrepresent. Langland, for one, expresses sharp criticisms in *Piers Plowman*.[43] While Dame Study uses the term to refer to wholesome basic instruction on the Psalter (P 10, l. 172), on two other occasions it refers to the misrepresentation of Scripture by corrupt professional interpreters, friars, or counselors. Glossing friars are among the first groups satirized in the prologue:

  I fond there freres, alle the foure ordres,
Prechynge the peple for profit of [the] womb[e]:
Glosed the gospel as hem good liked. (Prol., lines 58–60)

Later Covetousness, a servant of Anti-Christ and a figure for general social corruption, employs glossing to deceive the people:

His wepne was al wiles, to wynnen and to hiden; *weapon*
With glosynges and gabbynbges he giled the people. *beguiled*
(P 20, lines 124–25)

The best-known and most evocative play on these tensions, however, is found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.[44] According to the Wife of Bath, her fifth husband, a cleric, combined sexual prowess with flattery:

And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,
Whan that he wolde han my *bel chose*;
That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,
He koude wynne agayn my love anoon. (III, D, lines 509–12)

But the Wife uses the term more specifically to denote sophisticated textual misrepresentation and insists:

Glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and doun
That they were maked for purgacioun
Of uryne, and our bothe thynges smale
Were eek to knowe a femele from a male,
And for noon other cause—say ye no?
That experience woot wel it is noght so. (III D, lines 119–24)

Those who makes such ingenious claims are one with the toadying and hypocritical Friar described by the Summoner, who claims that he can prove Jesus referred to friars when he said "blessed are the poor in spirit":

I ne have no text of it, as I suppose
But I shal fynde it in a maner glose. (III D, lines 1919–20)

The Wife of Bath's Tale and Prologue stage the conflict between clerical authority and women's experience. In this struggle, the word "gloss" is a telling metaphor for the clerical husband's ability to manipulate or coerce his wife, whether by flattery or selective citation. As Robert Hanning argues, the ultimate force of glossing in the tale is that it reduces people "to the status of texts."[45] These tensions ran strong in late fourteenth-century England. The Wife can stand for that large segment of the population, women, most laymen, and many of the humbler secular clergy, who lacked the textual training of the glossators and did not trust them.[46]

Reading the Margins

Around the pages of the Smithfield Decretals, and above all on the strip that runs along the bottom, there flows a stream of disorderly life: minstrels, tumblers, sword dancers, beggars, and charlatans; wild men and wild animals;

hunting parties, errant knights, royal messengers, peddlers, ale sellers, battling couples, lecherous clergy; rogues and sinners. It is as if all the life and chaos of the adjoining fair had spilled out onto the book's pages.

The pictures tell stories. Some of these stories are well known and find analogues in surviving romances, fables, fabliaux, or exempla; others have never been identified. The series begins with the biblical stories of Joseph and his brothers and of Samson. It includes numerous miracles of the Virgin, including the tale of Theophilus, whom she rescued after he had sold his soul to the devil to win back his position; scenes from the lives of Saint Hubert, Saint Eustace, Saint Dunstan, and Saint Mary of Egypt; tales of knights who rescue lions from dragons or maidens from wildmen; and tales of lost children suckled by a lioness. Other pages simply reflect the colorful incidents of the wide world, showing us street performers, naval battles, tournaments, hunting scenes, ball games, or a boy stealing from a blind beggar. There are centaurs, satyrs, and mermaids, and the more bizarre menagerie of gothic marginalia, the baboon-like creatures known as babewyns, men with eyes in their chest (blemyae), and sciapods. The gryllus, or face set on two legs, is ubiquitous. Phantasmagorical eyes peep from behind trellis-work. Sometimes the chaos slips into the body of the text as well, but for the most part it is confined to the bottom margin.

The Smithfield marginalia are simple drawings crudely colored—it is not always easy to distinguish the rabbits from the foxes—and they are frequently repetitive. But they were not put there by some casual scribbler. They constitute a program of illustrations and are the work of professional English artists, probably ones accustomed to handling ecclesiastical commissions. They were added at significant expense, and they require an explanation. Unfortunately, little is known about these anonymous artists. Lucy Sandler notes that the Kalendarium or table of contents at the beginning, the miniatures within the text block itself, and the marginal illustrations are all in distinctive styles, so there were, at the very least, three artists involved.[47] Given the size of the commission, the marginal illustrations may well be the work of several artists who shared a common style, although, as Sandler suggests, "One draughtsman probably did all the marginal drawings on any single page."[48]

Following a standard format first developed by illuminators in Bologna, each of the five books of the Decretals begins with a large illustration that fills the top of the page and shows a scene that matches the book in question.[49] Thus we see Gregory receiving the Decretals on folio 3v (fig. 19), a judge and litigants on folio 91v, a priest celebrating the Mass on folio 167, the sacrament of marriage on folio 229, and a bishop in judgment on folio 251r. What

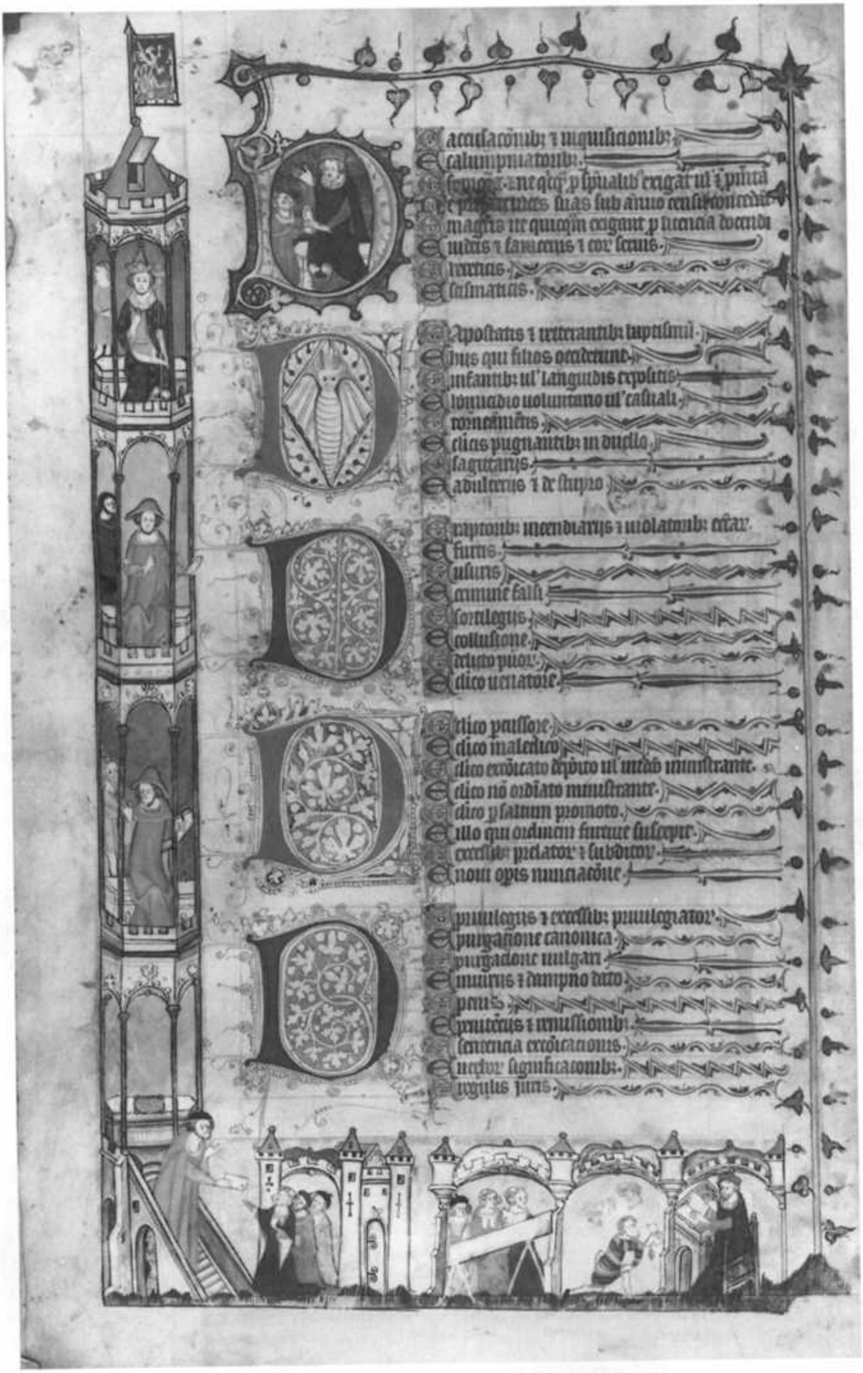


Figure 19. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 3v (with permission of the British Library).

has brought the Smithfield Decretals to modern attention, however, are the marginal illustrations. Sandler dates them to ca. 1340, notes their similarity to the slightly earlier Taymouth Hours, and characterizes both as examples of an "unstylised" vernacular.[50] It seems very likely that these illustrations were done in London. At this period many of the artisans involved in the book trade worked independently in small quarters close together in the area immediately north of St. Paul's, and this may well have been where the book was illustrated.[51] We cannot assume with Morley that it was the canons of St. Bartholomew's who copied the illustrations, or even that they commissioned them. Alexandra Bovey has recently identified the arms that appear on several folios as those of John Batayle, who came from a gentry family in Essex and was a canon at the priory in the 1370s and 1380s. If indeed Batayle acquired the manuscript and had it illustrated in the 1340s, it was probably before he came to the priory. This could explain why the artists did not depict Saint Bartholomew in the margins, although his adventures in India might have appealed to them. But whenever the manuscript came to the priory, the parallels between its images and the life of Smithfield are not merely fortuitous. Smithfield had a symbolic resonance in the English consciousness. It offered a space for large public gatherings on the very edge of the metropolis and had long been associated with trickery, haggling, louche diversions, and punishment. Eventually it would pass into the language, in terms such as "Smithfield bargain," reported in the seventeenth century, but even in the late Middle Ages it was notorious. When one of Margery Kempe's mockers suspects her of Lollardy, she wishes that Margery might be burnt at Smithfield.[52] Liminal and partially unclean, it was suitable for ritual purging through execution, torture, or fire. The history of the priory incorporates this function into the very story of its foundation, describing how Rahere, the king's minstrel, tricked the devil and then cleansed the site both spiritually and physically:

> Truly thys place aforn his clensynge pretendid noone hope of goodnesse, right uncleene it was, and as a maryce dunge and fenny with water almost everytyme hawbowndynge. And that that (that which) was emynente above the water drye, was deputid and ordeyned to the Jubeit or galowys of thevys, and to the tormente of othir that were dampnyd by judicialle auctoryte. Truly whan Rayer hadde applied his study to the purgacion of this place, and decried to put his hande to the holy bilying (building), he was nat ignoraunte of Sathanas wyles, for he made and feyned him self unwyse, for he was so coattid, and outward pretendid the cheyr (manner) of an ydiotte, and began a littil while, to hyde the secretnesse of his soule, and the more secretely he wroght, the more wysely he dyd his werke. Truly yn playnge wise, and maner he drewe to hym the felischip of children and servantes, assemblynge hym self as one of them, and with ther use and helep stonys and othir thynges profitable to the bylynge, lightly he gaderyd to gedyr, he played with them and from day to day made hym self more vile in his own

ye (eyes), in so mykill (much) that he plesid the apostle of Cryiste to whome he hadde provyd hym self.[53]

Even had the artists been working in some other city, and not ten minutes walk away, the influence of Smithfield would easily have emerged in their work. When the book came into the priory's possession, whether early or late, in some sense it came home.

The presence of these ribald sketches in a canonical collection, no matter who its owner, is more than a little scandalous, and the scandal requires explanation. The problem of the indecorous marginalia is, of course, an old one, as St. Bernard's well-known fulmination against the "deformed beauty and beautiful deformity" (deformis formositas ac formosa deformitas) of the decorative Romanesque capitals of the Cluniac cloisters reminds us.[54] It is a feature of this problem, as well, that the arguments used to account for one form of marginalia can so easily be applied to another.

There is, to begin with, a long tradition of discounting medieval marginalia as harmless decoration. Emile Mâle sees in the hybrid creatures on the bas-relief of the doors of the cathedral at Rouen the marks "of a gay invention or good-humoured raillery" and concludes that "if ever works of art were innocent of ulterior meaning surely these are." Similarly, he finds no cause for alarm in the blending of human and animal forms in contemporary manuscripts.[55] He is convinced that the marginalia serve only to amuse or to express the wit and ingenuity of the artist and that in most cases their value is "purely decorative."[56] But they may have also served a practical function. According to Mary Carruthers, the pictures in the Smithfield Decretals and in other learned compendia were put there to help memorization. In the words of a fifteenth-century French *ars memorativa*: "one best learns by studying from illuminated books, for the different colors bestow remembrance of the different lines and consequently of that thing which one wants to get by heart."[57] As Carruthers notes, "The Decretals are a digest of canon law, and required memorizing in order to be fully useful"–a point that our struggles with the glosses on the sword-dancer page has dramatized.[58] In Carruthers' explanation, the pictures are merely mnemonic icons, chosen for their colorful heterogeneity; they provide "grotesque incident" and have "no apparent relationship to the material in the text which they accompany."[59] They are, in other words, a functional device serving within the greater institutional apparatus that generated the text; marginal on the page, they are contained within the official order of the book. In this sense, Carruthers tends to the same conclusion as Mâle. In neither reading do the margins pose any threat to the text, nor indeed do they bear any significant relation to it.

If we examine the images one by one, it is certainly hard to find any obvious pattern linking them to specific moments in the Decretals. What does the sword dancer on folio 58 have to do with the question of the office of the custodian (*De officio custodis*, I. 26) or the man who is balancing a wand on his head (or possibly breathing fire) on folio 5 have to do with Christ's dual nature (I. 1. ii)? What has the man fighting a butterfly on folio 91 verso have to do with the question of judges at the beginning of book II (*De iudiciis*, II. i)? What does the battling couple depicted as hybrids have to do with the conferral of vacant benefices (I. 30. vi, fol. 69v)? What does the stipulation against the imposition of a new census have to do with the story of a blind beggar being cheated by the boy who guides him (III. 39. vii, fol. 218v)? There is certainly some plausibility to Carruthers's suggestion that the only purpose of these marginal drawings is to make a specific page visually memorable. The frequent repetition of images, the crowding of a variety of images on some pages, and the absence of any correspondence between textual and pictorial divisions, however, all make these pictures less than ideally suitable for establishing a theater of memory.[60] Certainly, the illustrations make the book easier to memorize and easier to navigate, and this might even have been offered as a justification by the artists or by whoever paid for their work, but this hardly seems to offer an adequate explanation for the entire diverting chaos.

Besides, even if we wish to follow this path and minimize the symbolic import of the margins, we cannot do so consistently, because on the first few pages the illustrations explicitly reinforce the book's authority. On the opening page we see Christ in Majesty (fig. 20), and two pages later we see the varying degrees of ecclesiastical hierarchy (fig. 19). The picture offers a visual representation of the chain of authority that runs from Christ himself to the doctors of the Church, from Pope Gregory to Raymond of Peñaforte, and from theology to law and book to world. The road itself, which will wind along the foot of the next three hundred and more folios, first appears on these opening pages as the road of textual dissemination. Here we see the Decretals themselves being delivered into the hands of trusted doctors and taken out to govern the people of the Universal Church (fig. 19). The illustrations at this point carry an obvious and moral symbolic value.[61] If we are invited to accord our respectful attention to the pictures in the opening folios or to the large illustrations that begin each of the five books, at what point are we to simply dismiss them as mnemonic aids or casual dissipations? If the road is first evoked by one artist as an image of authorized dissemination, does it not remain symbolically significant ten folios later when it has become the road of swarming humanity for another?

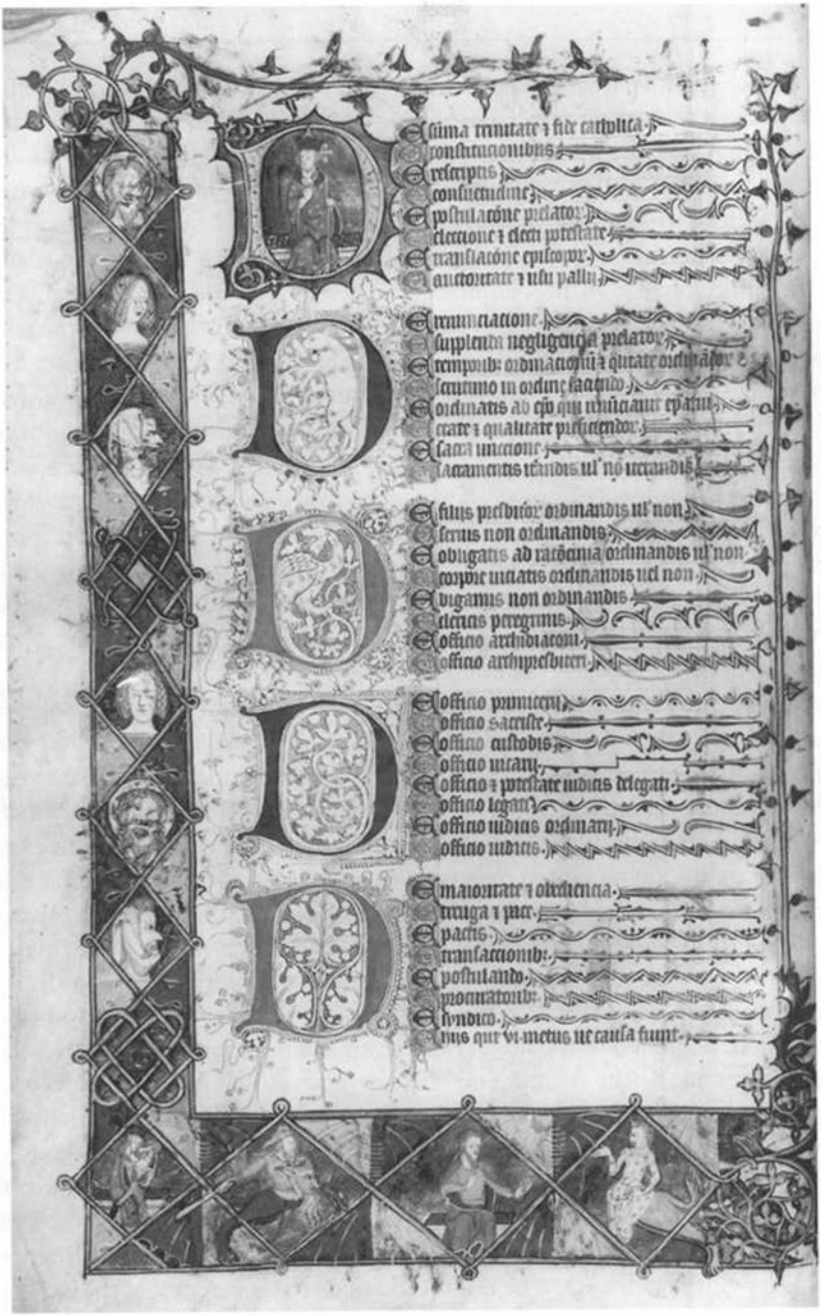


Figure 20. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 1v (with permission of the British Library).

It is when we join this diverting crowd and begin to consider the illustrations as a group that they seem less innocuous. They suggest a pattern, one that is identified by Mikhail Bakhtin as "carnivalesque." Bakhtin introduces his famous study of Rabelais by examining the recurring "images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life," all depicted in exaggerated form, and tries to understand their deeper force. Why, to put the question rather more bluntly than Bakhtin does, is a serious writer like Rabelais—or, we might add, any number of medieval writers—so fascinated by gorging and swilling, belching, shitting, pissing, and farting, by fat bellies and mighty buttocks? Bakhtin argues that this grotesque but vital body is "deeply positive," a life force that is linked to images of fertility and abundance and stands for the people as a whole, for their "collective ancestral body" and their capacity to renew themselves.[62] In this vision, the body is triumphant and all attempts to suppress it or stand above it are ridiculed.[63] For Bakhtin, "the popular corrective of laughter applied to the narrow-minded seriousness of the spiritual pretense" is also a form of class struggle. The body is the body of the people, and folk humor is one of the few ways of resisting the official culture of the upper class.[64] Laughter is the last resort of the underprivileged.

Bakhtin's reading has been justly criticized for its utopianism, its evocation of a organic folk culture that defines itself by mocking "official ideologists," rather than, as is so often the case, by mocking and indeed ostracizing certain of its own members. The great strength of his reading is to show that a series of what might otherwise seem no more than trivial cultural oddities are actually significant and interconnected forms of expression. Bakhtin links the celebration of the body in grotesque realism to a specific location, the marketplace, where the common people meet and folk culture triumphs. This in turn is linked to the general category of the carnivalesque, which refers to all ritualized times of license, such as feasts of fools or Shrovetide celebrations, but can also be extended to the literary or artistic celebration of carnival in Rabelais, Cervantes, or the painting of Hieronymous Bosch or the Breughels, as well as in medieval beast fables and parodies. The carnival and the marketplace are the sources for the rich heteroglossia that Bakhtin so values: the sounds of laughter, haggling, swearing, scatological insults, vendors' cries, the babble of multilingual oaths. By incorporating this language of the marketplace, the writer may break the constraints of traditional forms and create a multivoiced or heteroglossic work, one that is fluid and open to the carnival of the world.[65] The model can be applied more generally to show how any number of elite or authoritative cultural forms draw on oral culture.

The Smithfield Decretals certainly matches many of these features. Here is grotesque realism, the lower bodily strata, parody, laughter, and the chaos of the marketplace, with all its capacity to undermine authority. It is a world of street theater, crowded with jugglers, stilt-walkers, musicians, and wrestlers; a world of exotic animals, elephants, unicorns, and camels; a world of deer hunts and boar hunts and dirty jokes, when a monk sprinkles a lord and lady with urine instead of holy water or a miller catches his wife and a hermit in flagrante delicto (fig. 21). Above all, it is a topsy-turvy world, in which animals mimic human actions and humans and animals mingle forms, a world of metamorphosized grotesques—centaurs, mermaids and mermen, wild men, and monsters, preaching foxes, and hunting rabbits (fig. 22).

Taking a hint from this parodic inversion of natural and legal order, it is possible to see Royal 10.E.4 as a site of ideological conflict and the margins as the source of resistance, reading the images as a subversion or escape from the authority of the text. Meyer Schapiro, for example, suggested in an article first published in 1941 that the Romanesque sculptures that so offended St. Bernard reflected "a pagan life-attitude which will ultimately compete with the Christian, an attitude of spontaneous enjoyment and curiosity about the world, expressed through images that stir the senses and the profane imagination."[66] Although Schapiro described the pictures as "entirely independent of the accompanying text," in his reading they are no longer merely casually decorative but reflect a fundamental opposition of values, a sustained rejection of the dominant message of the Fathers. In a similar vein, Michael Camille has described the margins of Gothic manuscripts in general as "a repository of . . . the medieval unconscious" and argued that "the parodic marginal compositions challenge the authority of the text and deny its presentation of the whole truth. . . . [B]y subjecting the transcendental signifier to ridicule and relativism, the riotous blasphemy of . . . Gothic marginal scenes is in the transgressive language of 'heteroglossia' whose plurality of meanings Bakhtin discusses in his great study of carnival imagery."[67]

There are obvious difficulties in applying the model of carnival, based as it is on the conflict between social groups, to a single work such as the Smithfield Decretals that was subject to official control, or indeed in applying the same model indiscriminately to both social festivals and their literary depictions.[68] For Camille, however, the margins are less a site of conscious resistance than a form of medieval dream work in which carnivalesque images may circulate freely. Similarly, Stephen Nichols proposes that "the manuscript matrix consists of gaps or interstices, in the form of interventions in the text made up of interpolations of visual and verbal insertions which may be conceived, in Jacques Lacan's terms, as 'pulsations of the unconscious' by which

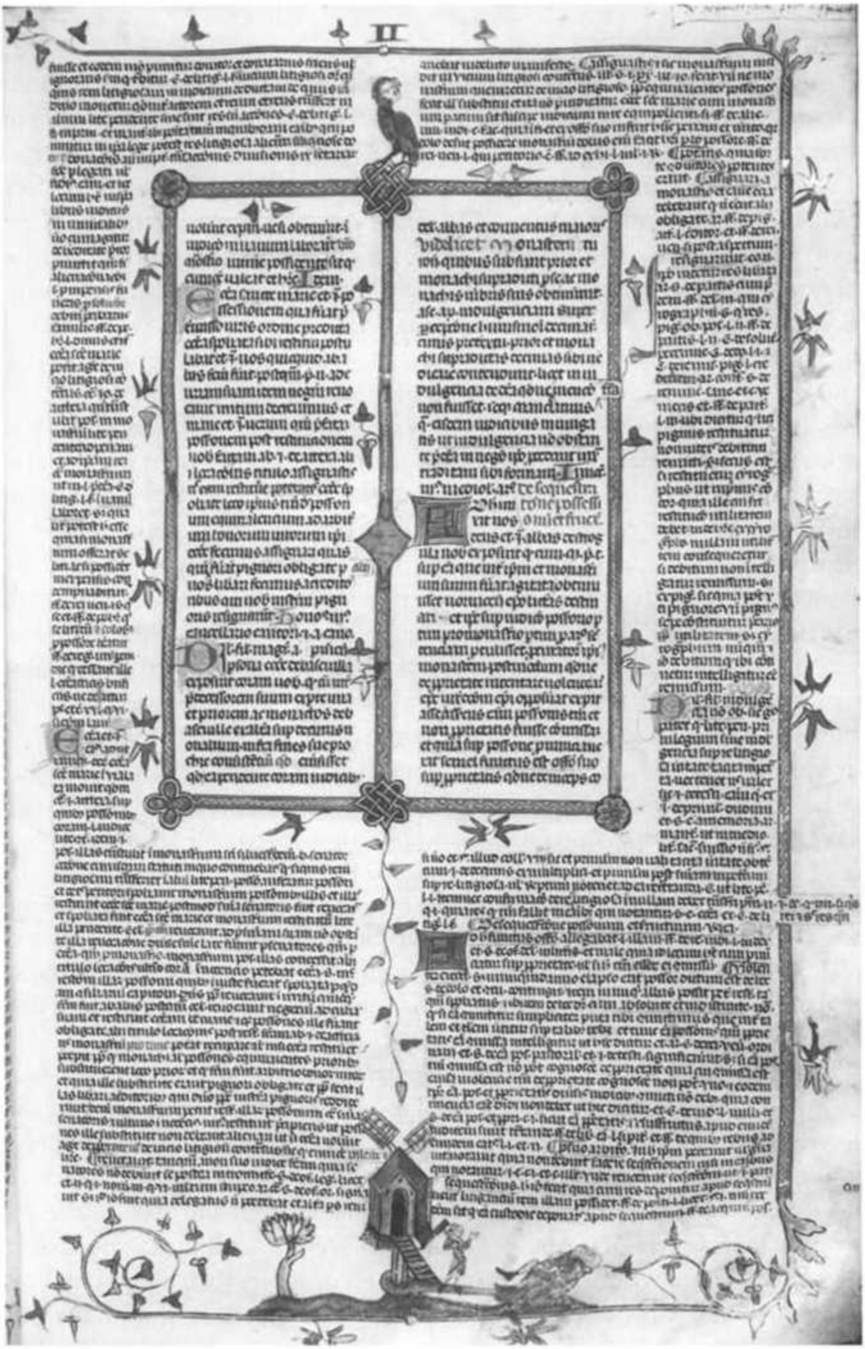


Figure 21. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 115r (with permission of the British Library).

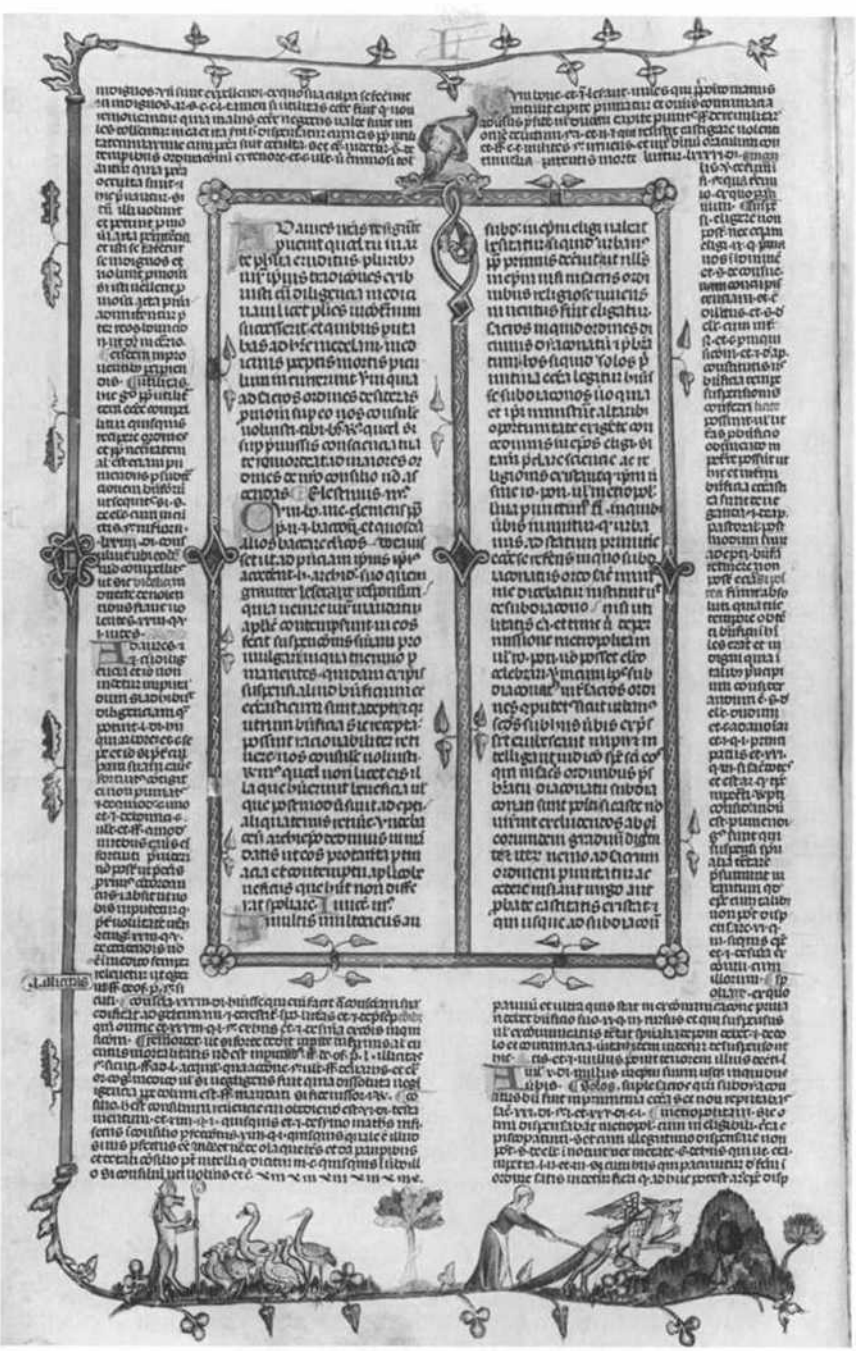


Figure 22. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 49v (with permission of the British Library).

the 'subject reveals and conceals itself.'"[69] This appeal to the unconscious resolves some of the difficulty of applying the model of carnival to an object produced not by of a subversive satirist like Rabelais but by a group of artists working on an ecclesiastical commission.[70] A further consequence is that Camille's reading is not directly challenged by Carruthers because the mnemonic function of the pictures is exactly the kind of rationalization that the artists might be expected to give if asked to justify their work at a conscious level.

This opposition between the conscious and unconscious may be too schematic.[71] Certainly, it would begin to break down if one could find specific pages where a particular marginal illustration subverted a particular line, as Camille does with a number of Psalters.[72] On the whole, however, the Smithfield Decretals do not suggest a conscious effort to play off the text. Ironies abound but they seem to be an inevitable result of the juxtapositioning of the fallen, inverted, and chaotic with the law, rather than *jeux d'esprit* at the expense of a specific line. The tournament depicted on folio 65 verso, for example, bears an uneasy relation to the prohibition of tournaments that occurs over two hundred folios later ("Torneamenta fieri non debet," V. xiii on fol. 278v), but seems to bear no relation at all to the selection of legates, the question that appears on its own page (*De officio et potestatis iudicis delegatis*, I. 29. xxx, xxi, xxxii). It is, in any case, doubtful that the artists, even if they had some Latin, could have followed much of this technical and heavily abbreviated text, which, unlike a Psalter, has too many words crammed too tightly to allow for any single line to easily become the butt of a visual joke. Whether the subversion expressed in the margins is to be attributed to any conscious artistic decision remains a perplexing question. For these readers, from Schapiro to Camille, however, there is no doubt of the basic point: the margins have real force and this force works against that of the text.

There is, however, a radically different way of reading the margins, one that gives full credit to their symbolic resonance without accepting them as an authentic voice or privileging their subversive energy. Their spectacle might still be characterized as a carnival, but as a carnival of worldly vanity. It is worth noting, to begin with, how many of the images are not merely grotesque or casually amusing but are already fully coded within official religious commentary. The ape and the fox, for example, who figure prominently in the Smithfield margins, commonly represent human folly and trickery.[73] Similarly, in Patristic and clerical commentary, minstrels or performers often become figures of disorder, loose language, and sexual impurity. They are condemned for engaging in a blasphemous imitation of creation, and their idle language is condemned as *turpiloquium*, a term that links verbal and sexual license. Just as their histrionics are a mockery of creation, so their *turpiloquium* is a counterpoint to the Logos, and their disorder a counterpart to divine order.[74] As John of Salisbury tells us, they fall outside the law: "Concerning actors and mimes, buffoons and harlots, panders and like human monsters, which the prince ought rather to exterminate entirely than to foster, there need no mention to be made in law; which indeed not only excludes such abominations from the court of the prince, but banishes them from among the people of God."[75] The *mimi* are truly and in several ways *des marginaux*.[76]

This clerical commentary opens up a third possible reading of the marginal illustrations. In contrast to those who dismiss the marginalia as insignificant and harmless, or to a Bakhtinian reading, which sees them as a site of resistance to official culture, the exegetical tradition, revivified by scholars such as D. W. Robertson, incorporates the marginal figures within an Augustinian vision of evil as absence in which disordered non-being "contributes to the ordered beauty of the whole."[77] Whether it is a question of gargoyles, marginal grotesques, scurrilous actors playing devils in mystery plays, or carnal images in love poetry, the basic argument is the same. In the words of one twelfth-century commentator on the Psalms: "Material about contrary things, that is, about impious demons, is inserted, not because it is the principal material, but in order that it should serve the principal material, being mixed with right things."[78] Similarly, Lucy Sandler suggests that the hybrids "reflect a spiritual view which, in the Gothic period, was highly conscious of the sinfulness and evil that beset mankind. How appropriate are such obscenely two-faced creatures, with their open mouths, their projecting tongues, their spitting and vomiting actions, as visual embodiments of sins such as blasphemy and gluttony!"[79] This appeal to a comprehensive exegetical code serves to reinscribe subversive energy within the word of the Fathers and the order of the text.

Both Bakhtinian and Augustinian readings have full explanatory power and ample historical justification. Both appeal to certain classes of modern readers and their visions of medieval society. Both are fully capable of explaining all that they might encounter in the book, whether obscenity or legality. When a group of monkeys pick up pens and imitate a scribe, as happens in the margins of the fourteenth-century Amiens Missal, is it the Sacred Word that is ridiculed, as Camille suggests, or the pretensions and folly of monkey-like mankind?[80] Are the wriggling buttocks of the hermit who is screwing the miller's wife a piece of grotesque realism that celebrates the body and its rights or a stern reminder of the degradation of sin? When we see a monk seduce

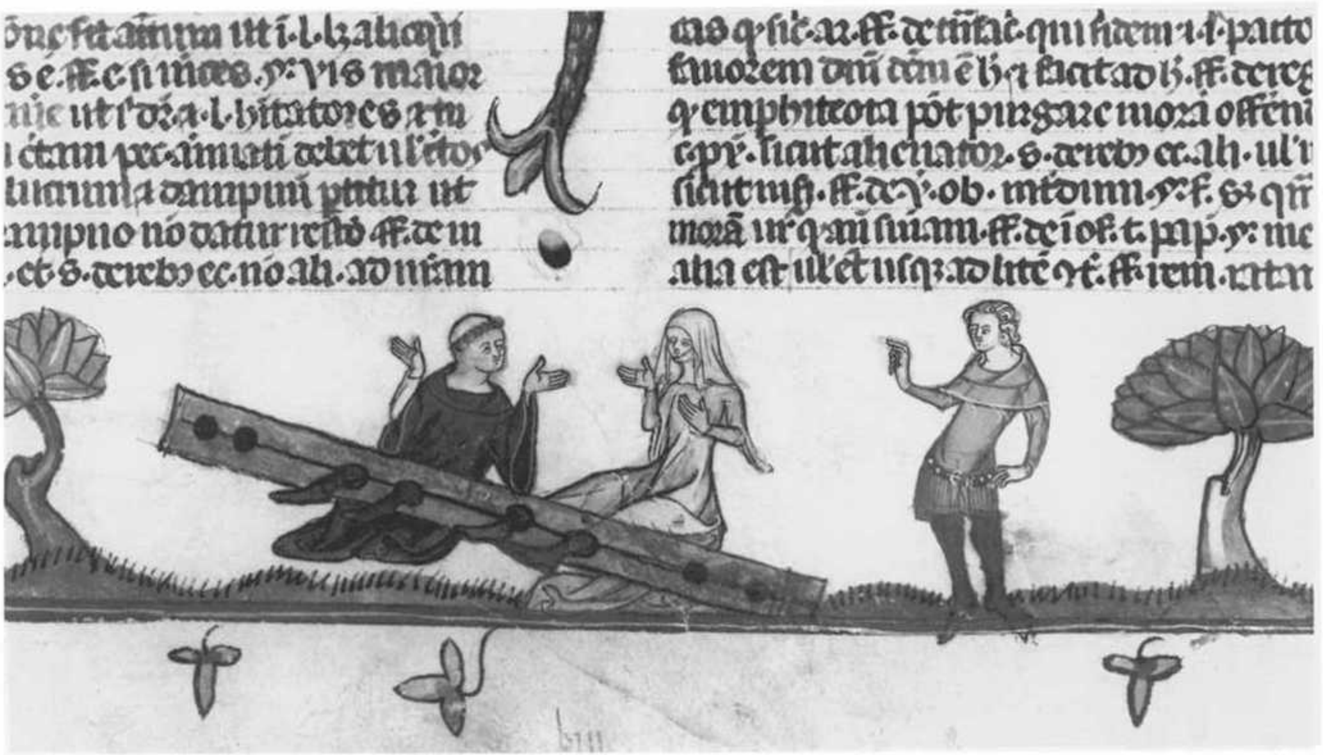


Figure 23. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 187r (with permission of the British Library).

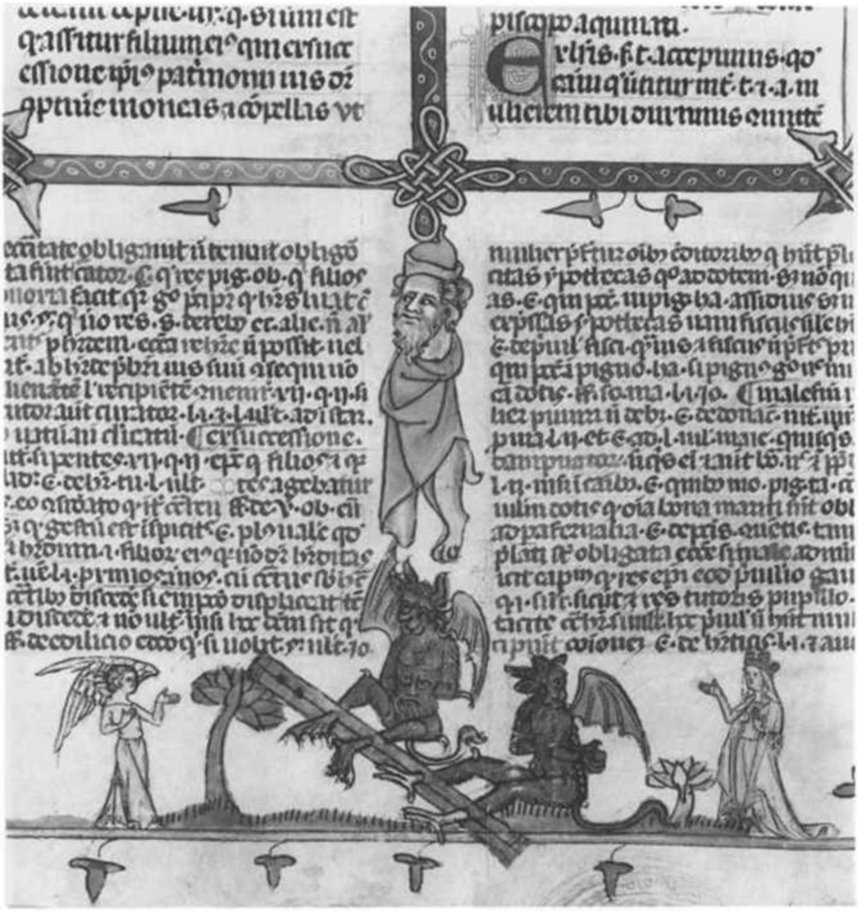


Figure 24. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 188v (with permission of the British Library).

a nun and end up in the stocks, only to have the Virgin replace the two sinners with two demons (figs. 23 and 24) is this sequence primarily a celebration of her mercy or simply an excuse to tell a dirty story? Do the margins of the Smithfield Decretals ultimately confirm or subvert the authority of the one truth Faith and its Law?

We should note, however, that what we might call charitable and carnivalesque readings, or Augustinian and Bakhtinian readings, while diametrically opposed, are also mutually reinforcing, for each creates in the other the opposing principle that will define its own moral struggle (sin for one, authority

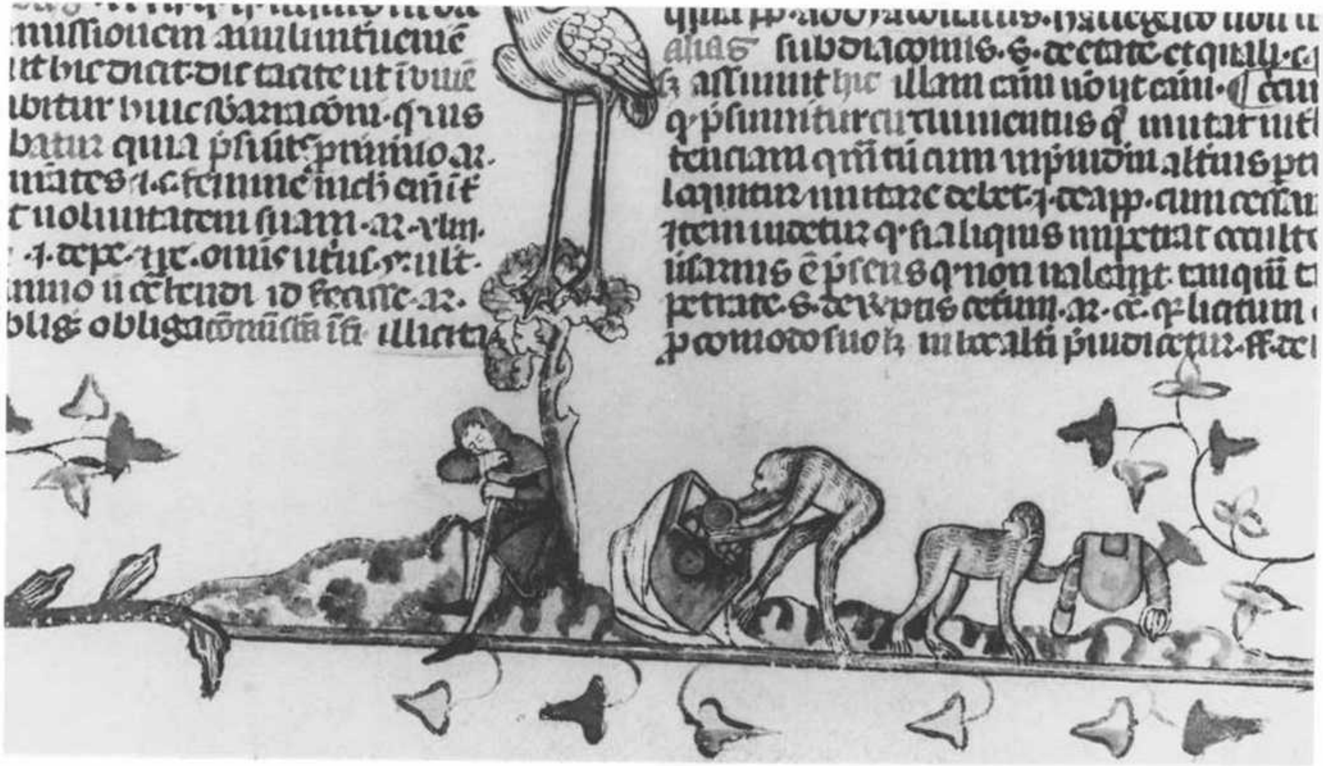


Figure 25. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 149v (with permission of the British Library).

for the other). The dark modernist reader of medieval culture, who wishes to find on the margins all that institutionalized rationality would deny, need simply point to John of Salisbury to show that for at least one ecclesiastical official a *mimus* is indeed a figure of subversion whose positioning within the manuscript is symbolically charged. An exegetical reader, on the other hand, can find ample evidence of the dangerous allure of cupidity in subversive readings of the medieval margins. Whichever side we take, we can run down the same series of binary oppositions under the general headings of *caritas* and *cupiditas*, opposing the Logos to *turpiloquium*, pious silence to the *innanibus verbis* of minstrels and gossips, the authority of the book to the oral traditions of the people, and the discipline of the cloister to the temptations of the road.

Nor can we privilege one side of this opposition as historically authentic and denigrate the other as anachronistic. To see one properly is to recognize the danger of the other, and this was as true in the late Middle Ages as it is today. In fact, to recognize that a certain reading struggles against worldly temptation toward the love of God implies that it will not be the norm. The material book is continually available for the misappropriation of the carnal reader. From St. Bernard on, austere moralists fulminated against those clerics who allowed themselves to be seduced by the facile delights of marginal illuminations. John Bromyard, in his widely disseminated *Summa praedicantium*, rebukes this idle pleasure under the rubric "curiositas":

> Just as those who in physical books only have regard for thick letters and capitals for play and curiosity, will never be good clerics, so those who only acquire knowledge in the book of God for the sake of pleasure and curiosity and only have regard for that which is beautiful and delectable to the eyes, nor use these things for the love and knowledge of God, will never be led through them to the perfect vision of God.[81]

Curiositas is a vulgar taste, one to be expected of the laity, who cannot follow the abstractions of logic and need concrete exempla or of lazy clerics, who concentrate on the story and not the moral message. In the Smithfield Decretals themselves, one might see curiositas figured in the inquisitive monkey who spills out the baubles and trinkets from the pack of a sleeping peddler (fig. 25). This simple-minded joy in the pictures may be sinful, but the sin is not the prerogative of the modern world.

The Smithfield Decretals and the Rising of 1381

The conflict between the text and the margins of the Smithfield Decretals can be seen as a conflict between two sets of values or ways of reading, but it can also be seen as a reflection of social tensions, specifically those between the *litterati* and *illitterati*. Since the eleventh century there had been a steady increase in the number of written documents that governed people's lives. The papal chancery led the way in developing more elaborate bureaucratic systems in the eleventh century, and royal chanceries followed.[82] In England, this bureaucratization of society was given a strong impetus by the Normans and was given symbolic expression in one of the most famous historical acts of inscription, the compilation of the great book or Domesday Book.[83] The triumph of Domesday Book, first as a symbolic assertion of Norman authority and then as a practical instrument of legal control, fits the general history that sees writing gaining ever more authority as the number of legal documents in circulation increased dramatically and their use spread down the social scale.[84] By 1300 even serfs and villeins were making some use of written documents.[85]

Keeping records was a job for professionals, and the increase in record keeping was matched by the increasing status of the well-educated cleric. The universities became training grounds for bureaucrats. As Jacques Le Goff argues, "social advancement was accomplished by means of a process which was completely new and revolutionary in Western Europe, *the exam*."[86] The formation and self-aggrandizement of medieval university scholars as an intellectual elite has been traced by Alexander Murray, who notes how the term *clericus* shifts from meaning someone in ecclesiastical orders to also meaning a scholar.[87] The hostility of the Latinate cleric for the unlettered was intense, expressed in such terms as *rusticus*, which fused clerical contempt for the unlettered with class hatred for the peasant. The professionalization of canon lawyers, reflected in the elaborate format of their collections, was part of a broad social trend.

By the mid-fourteenth century, when London artists were illustrating the margins of Royal 10.E.4, the tensions were mounting, and they were to come to a head in the Rising of 1381, one of whose crucial scenes was played out on Smithfield itself. Increases in taxation driven by the French wars, rising expectations due to the labor shortage that followed the Black Death, and the weakening of customary tenure, which allowed some peasants more advantageous leaseholds, are among the economic causes often cited for the rising.[88] The Ordinance of 1349 and the Statute of Labourers of 1351 set wages at the level they had been before the Black Death, and landowners struggled to enforce these regulations while extracting as high rents as possible.[89] Peasants resisted by refusing service, by allowing their animals to trespass on the lord's land, or by running away, while the landlords turned to the courts to maintain their privileges and keep the peasants on the old lands at the old rates.[90] Much of the struggle was waged in the manorial courts, which saw a stream of cases in the decades after the Black Death. In 1352 no fewer than 7,556 people were fined in Essex for breaking the Statute of Labourers.[91] When the revolt finally came, precipitated by the third poll tax in four years, the rebels turned first against the tax collectors and the justices of the peace who accompanied them and then against major monastic landholders, Flemish weavers, and the king's hated advisers, but they also hunted down clerks and lawyers and destroyed documents. The rebels burned manorial and court rolls, the records of Lambeth Palace, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and the Inn of the Hospitallers of St. John in London, and the major archives of Canterbury Cathedral and of St. Albans, Stratford, and Waltham Abbeys.[92]

The Rising of 1381 was once regarded as a revolt of illiterate peasants against the machinery of written law. This view in part echoes that of the major sources, monastic chronicles, which repeatedly dismissed the rebels as uneducated and inarticulate *rustici* (a term used repeatedly by John Gower and Walsingham) and the revolt as an act of brutish violence. In a much-cited passage, Thomas Walsingham, a monk at St. Albans, depicts the peasants as a bloodthirsty mob out to kill all clerics: "They compelled masters of grammar schools to swear that they would never in future teach children this skill. . . . They strove to burn all old records; and they butchered anyone who might know or be able to commit to memory the contents of old or new documents. It was dangerous to be recognized as a cleric, but far more dangerous for anyone to be found with an ink-horn hanging by his side, for such men hardly ever escaped their hands."[93] Neither the social makeup of the rebels nor their attitude to writing, however, were this simple. The majority of rebels indeed were peasants, and a significant number were "serfs by blood" (*nativi de sanguine*), but many of the rebels held positions of authority within their communities. Roughly three-quarters of those whose names have come down to us had served as reeves, chief pledges, ale-tasters, bailiffs, or jurors, or held other positions of responsibility, and many of them were middle-aged and came from well-established families.[94] A few of the peasants had holdings that brought them to the margins of gentry status. The rebels found allies among London artisans and among the clergy. They were not a mob.[95] Certainly some of the rebels were literate, including the mysterious John Ball and those who copied his letters.[96]

The rebels' attitude to written documentation was also more complicated than Walsingham allows. They belonged to a textual society, a society regulated by the written word: the Bible, liturgical and theological texts, collections of canon law, records of property transactions and tax returns. The authority of the written word applied to everyone, whether literate or illiterate.[97] Local acts of resistance to a particularly offensive or disadvantageous piece of written legislation did not alter the widening recognition of textual authority. Those with limited access to official writing nonetheless had an acute understanding of its local applications. The rebels destroyed documents, but they destroyed them with considerable precision. As Steven Justice notes, they destroyed "poll tax receipts; other documents of royal revenue (escheat and coroners' rolls, recording forfeits to the king by decease and felony); landholding and demense records of the lords (custumals, cartularies, extents, manorial court rolls); and the records of local and royal justice, including commissions of oyer and terminer and of laborers."[98] Exchequer writs, easily recognized by their seals of green wax, were particularly hated.[99] On the other hand, the rebels did not engage in wholesale vandalism of written materials in general. They did not attack the Cambridge libraries nor did they damage service books. Their struggle was not against all learning, as Walsingham asserts, but against "the entire documentary apparatus."[100] For Justice, the precision of their attack is evidence that "the insurgent animus against the archive was not the revenge of a residually oral culture against the appurtenances of a literacy that was threatening because alien and mysterious."[101] The rebels understood what they were after.

Throughout the struggle was waged in terms of written documents. According to Justice, "the rebels believed that *trewþe*–contractual faithfulness; mutual supervision, protection, and enforcement; the whole range of rights and responsibilities and penalties properly overseen by the 'common assent and judgment of the whole community'–had been *supplanted* by bureaucratic and judicial writing; taken away, enclosed in alien forms and languages, and locked up."[102] Yet for precisely this reason the rebels wanted the new order guaranteed by written documents. After the king had met the Essex contingent at Mile End on June 8 and ceded to their demands, clerks were immediately put to work copying charters of manumission.[103] In Bury St. Edmunds the monks were forced to promise to seal a charter that the rebels would draw up themselves.[104] In some cases the rebels placed their faith in old law and old documents. In the short-lived rebellion of 1377, the peasants withheld services on the basis of "an extract from Domesday Book by virtue whereof they claim to be exempt from such rents and services."[105] Similarly, the rebels who attacked St. Alban's forced the abbot to surrender documents but were not satisfied with those they received and "demanded of the said Abbot a Charter of their liberties, as they called it, which had a letter in gold and another in silver, although the Abbot had no such charter and there never was any such charter."[106]

There is one other way in which the rebellion might be seen as a struggle over textual access and control. In the eyes of some, the rebels were associated, through John Ball, one of their leaders, with John Wycliffe and thus with the growing call for theological discussion in English. A number of contemporaries such as Henry Knighton and Walsingham claimed that Ball was actually a follower of Wycliffe, and according to the anonymous *Fasiculi zizianorum*, Ball acknowledged as much at his trial.[107] William of Rymington went even further, claiming that "this pestilent doctrine apparently was the cause that inspired the recent rebellion of the commons against the king and his officers."[108] How much truth there is in these claims is hard to tell. Anne Hudson observes that the question of Wycliffe's relation to the Rising of 1381 "is one of the most obscure in a story noted for its opacity."[109] But she also characterizes the Wycliffite use of the vernacular in preaching, theological pamphlets, and biblical translation as an attack on "the whole edifice of clerical domination in theology, in ecclesiastical theory, indeed in academic speculation generally."[110] Steven Justice has pushed this line of argument further, pointing to Wycliffe and his followers as the first to make significant use of what he terms "broadsides," single sheets or rolls that were posted in public. For Justice, the broadside "was a polemical gesture that asserted the rights of the laity to the intellectual, as to the material goods, of the institutional church. . . . It contentiously announced the beginnings of lay literacy, in the deepest (and for the medieval audience) most paradoxical sense of the phrase: *literacy*, meaning not just that laypeople could read and write, but that they could maneuver and manipulate the bookish resources of intellectual culture."[111] For many establishment figures, the Rising of 1381 served as a terrible warning of what broader reading might encourage. For at least some of the rebels, it may have served as a herald of what broader reading might achieve.

On Saturday, June 15, 1381, the force of Kentish rebels met with the king at Smithfield in what proved the turning point in the Rising. Wat Tyler rode out across the field and presented their demands for a drastic curtailing of legal excess. According to the *Anonimalle Chronicle*, Wat

> demanded that there should be no law except the law of Winchester, and that there should be no outlawry through any process of law from that time on; and that no lord should have lordship, but only that which would be divided among all people, excepting only the king's lordship; and that the goods of Holy Church should not be in the hands of religious, nor of parson and vicars, nor of any of Holy Church, but that the religious should have sustenance alone, and the rest of their goods should be

divided among the parishioners; that there should be no bishop in England but one, and no prelate but one; and all the lands and tenements of the possessioners should be taken from them and divided up among the commons, leaving the religious only a reasonable sustenance; and that there should be no serf in England, and no service of neifty, but that all should be free and of one status."[112]

The demands combine a vision of agrarian communism with a rejection of the Church's wealth and all excessive legislation.[113] It is a challenge, but not quite a direct challenge, to the values of the *Liber extra*. Canon law per se is not the rebels' target, but written law certainly is. To return to "the law of Winchester," that is, to the Statute of Winchester of 1285, which made local communities responsible for maintaining law and order, would have been to reestablish the power of the "true commons" and of customary law untainted by clerical machination.[114] The rebels are challenging the order symbolized and reinforced by the expensive professionalized machinery of Royal 10.E.4. Yet when Wat Tyler was struck down by one of the king's outraged company, the commons carried him to the priory's hospital, "the hospital of the poor people near Saint Bartholomew" (al hospitalle des povers gentz pred de seint Bertelmews).[115]

St. Bartholomew's was not a particularly wealthy nor a particularly litigious house. It was not a target for the rebels, and there is no indication that they saw any incongruity in bringing their leader inside.[116] But the priory was part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and benefited accordingly. To be sure, canon law had little to do with the immediate legal pressure that had incited the Rising. It was not responsible for demands of the royal treasury; it did not issue the hated Exchequer writs or poll-tax receipts. The abbeys and other ecclesiastical landlords pursued their tenants under the common law and through the manorial court system just as secular landlords did. But canon law did set out the structure of the massive and wealthy institutional church that the rebels wished to divide up. It stood for stability and hierarchy, a world view in which social mobility was suspect, and for the continuing authority of that small number who could read complex glosses. As a legal code, the *Liber extra* governed the lives of all, including those who could not read its pages. In this respect the Royal manuscript resembles the "great charter" so assiduously sought after by the commons of St. Albans. It is an example of the inaccessible text reaching out to control the world outside its walls, as it did in 1399, when the deposition of Richard II was justified by an appeal to canon law, or in 1401 when William Sautre, the Lollard, was burned on the fields nearby, burned in accordance with canon law, burned for reading Scripture and for demanding that others might be allowed to do so.[117]

The Virgin and the Saints

If the text of the *Liber extra*, both through its contents and in its elaborate academic ordinatio, represents the authority of clerical culture, its margins represent the vigor of alternative and more popular traditions, and among the most powerful of these traditions are those associated with the Virgin and the saints. The favored story of the margins is that of the mercy the Virgin extends to sinners, freeing them again and again from shame, despair, and punishment, subverting the true course of the law in a fantasy world of reprieve. In this regard, the margins simply follow the common pattern of Marian devotion. "Prayer formed the figure of the Virgin Mary, and it is the chief function of her myth to answer it. She mediates between heaven and earth, for in her glorified body she belongs to both realms. She listens to the implorations of mankind, 'groaning and weeping in this valley of tears'-as the *Salve Regina* sings—and promises to ease their pain with heavenly medicine."[118] So Marina Warner evokes the central function of the Virgin in medieval Christianity. Her role as intercessor was spelled out in the twelfth century by theologians such as Eadmer (d. 1124) and St. Peter Damian (d. 1072) and was popularized in collections of her miracles. Mary placates the Judge. "As the son of God has deigned to descend to us through you, so we also must come to him through you," says Damian, pleading for her intercession.[119] According to Eadmer, "Sometimes salvation is quicker if we remember Mary's name than if we invoke the name of the Lord Jesus. . . . Her son is the Lord and Judge of all men, discerning the merits of individuals, hence he does not at once answer anyone who invokes him, but does it only after just judgement. But if the name of his Mother be invoked, her merits intercede so that he is answered even if the merits of him who invokes her do not deserve it."[120] Underlying this rather strained theological justification are prevailing codes of gender. Mary's mercy towards sinners reflects her kindness as a mother, or even her weakness and irrationality as a woman.[121] But Mary is also Queen of Heaven and, precisely because of her mercy for sinners, she is a queen of battle, protecting her favorites and crushing devils beneath her heel. At times she almost usurps her son's role.[122] In the words of Anselm, through her "the elements are renewed, the netherworld is healed, the demons are trodden underfoot, men are saved and angels are restored."[123] All this is shown in a series of miracles in the margins of the Smithfield *Decretals*, where again and again, for over a hundred folios, Mary asserts her power over devils-and sometimes also over Jews.

Devotion to the saints was often closely tied to devotion to the Virgin, and both gave rise to strong local cults. Saints were popular because they worked miracles, both the spectacular pyrotechnics of the distant past and the more mundane assistance they still offered, healings above all else. St. Bartholomew, for example, was said to have found lost horses, cured sick cows, and saved houses from burning, in addition to curing blindness, palsy, paralysis, and madness.[124] The saints were human and accessible, familiar helpers, with special ties to particular places and particular groups of people. Julian of Norwich's reference to St. John of Beverley as "a kynd neyghbour and of our knowyng" could equally be applied to many others.[125] Aron Gurevich sees in these stories of the saints one of the great expressions of medieval popular culture, embodying a collective memory that selects a few gripping episodes, tells them according to standard epic conventions, and attributes them to a single hero.[126] The combination of miraculous aid and familiar narrative pattern was a powerful solace. As Aviad Kleinberg suggests, the appeal of the saints testifies to "a desperate wish to believe in happy endings."[127]

The miracles retold in the margins of the Smithfield Decretals could, therefore, be regarded as roughly analogous to contemporaneous vernacular romances or the beast fables, morally improving perhaps, but definitely not part of the higher intellectual order of the text. To call these images "popular" is to suggest not that they gave voice to some authentic and illiterate folk culture, but rather that they would have appealed to artists and canons alike. If we were to follow André Vauchez, however, we might go one step further and argue that the great intellectual and political systematization of which the *Liber extra* is but a part was actively engaged in limiting or repressing the more popular hagiographic tradition.[128] Earlier saints had often begun as sinners, had no particular education, and demonstrated their sanctity by vigorous actions; the standards for canonization were relatively loosely defined and often reflected local cults. A major change occurred in about 1242 when Innocent IV declared that a saint's entire life must have been "glorious," that is, one of unbroken virtue, thus shutting out the possibility of canonizing penitents.[129] In 1297 Pope Boniface VIII praised St. Louis for a life that was "not just human but superhuman," and within a few years this too had become a prerequisite for canonization.[130] Contemplation and detachment from the world replaced more active virtues. During the period that Vauchez surveys, bishops and lay people become less and less common candidates for sainthood, while theologians become more common. Learning itself was sometimes advanced as a mark of sanctity. St. Louis of Anjou was praised not just for his piety and austerity and because he avoided women and laymen as much as possible, but also for being a *magnus clericus* who enjoyed disputation and needed at least six pack animals to carry his books.[131] Vauchez attributes this change to a conservative clerical elite that feared that the multiplication of saints and their localized cults would fragment the Church. In the increasingly hierarchical approach to canonization, he sees the power of "a Holy Alliance . . . of clergy who were unanimous in their desire to allow the laity only a marginal role and reject the faith of the masses, who were for the most part uneducated."[132] This movement parallels the rise of clerical culture traced by Le Goff, the rise of canon law as the dominant intellectual formation for senior ecclesiastics traced by Ullmann, and the formation of Moore's "persecuting society," based on the rigorous intellectual definition of outsiders.

One danger in Vauchez's analysis, however, is that it presents a binary vision of medieval culture: on the one side, the papal curia and senior ecclesiastics—the men who studied canon law and then moved into administration—and on the other the laity or masses. Often, however, the most active promoters of popular devotion to a particular shrine were members of the local clergy.[133] Certainly, if we turn back to the pages of the Smithfield Decretals, the division between lay and clerical or elite and popular seems less clear cut. When the Virgin steps in to rescue sinners from punishment, in most cases these sinners are clerics. There is the story of the hermit who is forced by the devil to sin at least once, by getting drunk, committing adultery, or committing murder. The hermit chooses getting drunk, as the least serious sin, but once drunk he commits adultery with the miller's wife (fig. 21) and then kills her husband (fols. 113v–118v).[134] There is the story of the Clerk of Chartres, who was refused burial in holy ground because of his scandalous life. The Virgin intervened on his behalf, insisting that his body be dug up, whereupon a lily was seen growing from his chest as a sign of her special favor (fol. 228b).[135] There is the story of the sacristan who has an affair with a knight's lady, is caught, placed in the stocks, and saved by the Virgin (fols.185r–191v, figs. 23 and 24) and the story of the sacristan who robs a church, is caught, and is punished and rescued in the same way (fols. 218r–225v). Twice the Virgin rescues someone who is drowning; once it is a nun (fols. 192r–192v), the second time a monk (fols. 225r–227r). Assuming that one of the St. Bartholomew's canons responded to these images, then the manuscript would have been a site of ideological conflict, pitting the intellectual order of the law against the human desire for mercy, but this conflict would have been played out not between two social groups but within the mind of a single man.

One long sequence (folios 161r–172v) tells the story of Theophilus, the sacristan who was driven to sign a pact with the devil when he fell out of favor with the new bishop but repented and prayed to the Virgin for help. First translated into Latin by Paul the Deacon in the days of Charlemagne, the

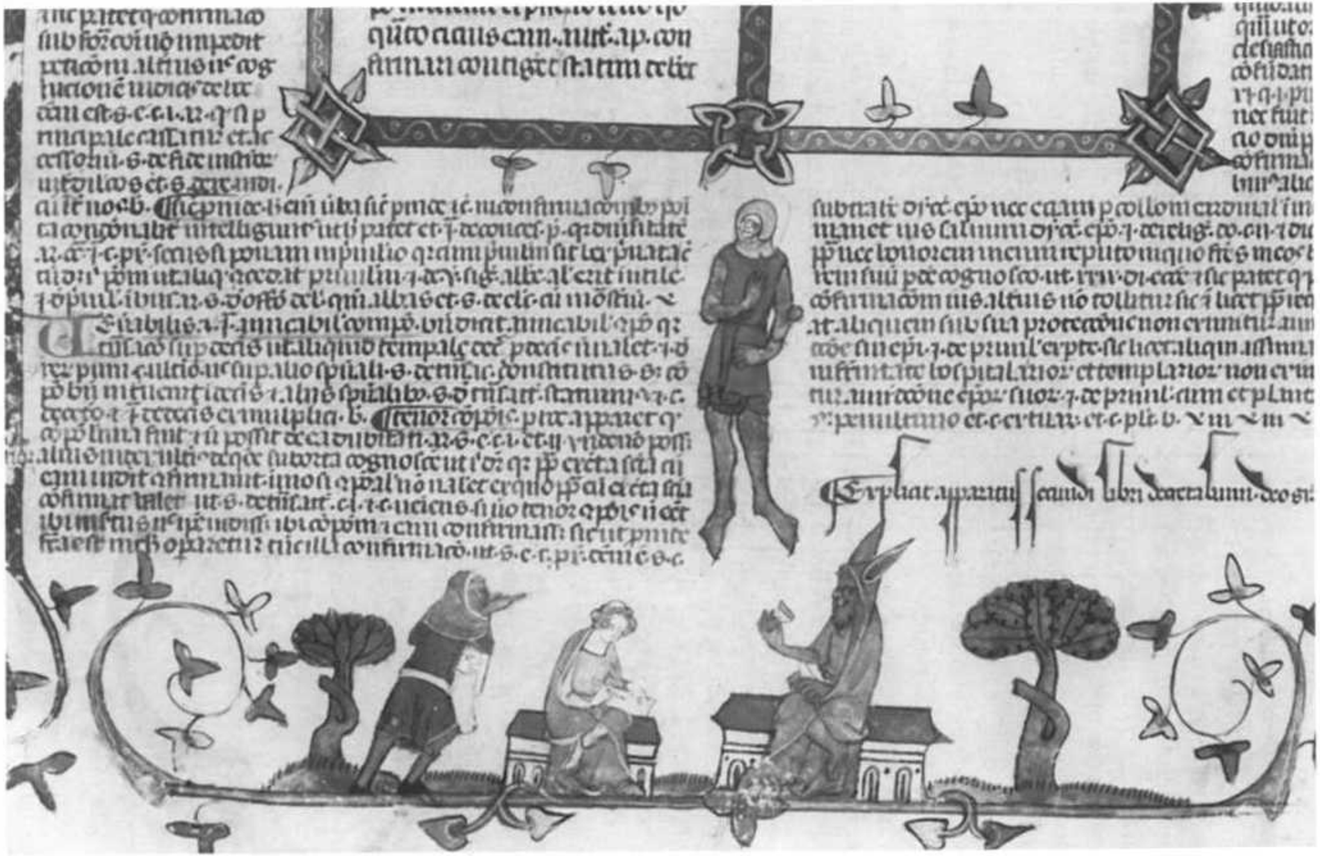


Figure 26. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 166v (with permission of the British Library).

story circulated widely. It appears in the *Legenda aurea*, and in the collection of Gautier de Coinci, while the Parisian minstrel Rutebeuf turned it into a play. In English it is found in the late thirteenth-century *South English Legendary*, in the anonymous *Golden Legend* or *Gilt Legend*, completed by 1438, and in Caxton's famous *Golden Legend* of 1483, but circulation must have been much broader.[136]

The version in the Smithfield Decretals follows the familiar story with no particular deviation. Theophilus is seen distributing charity, and then, after his fall, he is so desperate that he is reduced to selling his clothes for food and begging at a woman's door. On folio 163r he turns for help to a sinister bearded and hooded figure, who takes him, in the following folio, to his seated master, an even more sinister figure, with furry paws and long ass's ears poking out from under his hood. The seated figure is the devil, and in the written tradition his accomplice is usually a Jew and sometimes a magician. Fulbert describes him simply as "quemdam Judaeum maleficum" (a certain evil Jew), and the *South English Legendary* just calls him "þe Giu," as does the *Gilte Legende*, but Gautier de Coinci describes him as a magician, learned in enchantment and trickery.[137] Rutebeuf goes one step further and gives this magician a name, Salatin, as if to suggest that he is Moslem.[138] In the Smithfield Decretals this figure is given a bulbous nose, glaring eyes, and a bestial countenance that often serves to designate dangerous outsiders, whether Jews, Saracens, or heretics.[139] He urges Theophilus forward, first tugging on his hand and then draping an arm around his shoulder. The fatal moment in the story occurs when Theophilus literally signs away his soul, entrapping himself with a written contract. The document is given prominent treatment in many versions of the story—it is clearly visible in the twelfth-century sculptural program at Souillac, for example—and the Smithfield artist emphasizes it by devoting two full scenes to it, the first showing Theophilus signing the document and the second showing him handing it over (fols. 166v and 167r, fig. 26).

There is one other antisemitic tale in the Smithfield Decretals, that of the Jewish father who, when his young son told him that he had received the Eucharist, casts the son into an oven. As Miri Rubin notes, this was one of the most common of the stories associating Jews with hostility to the Eucharist.[140] On folio 210v a priest engages the boy, holding out what appears to be an apple, or at any rate a piece of fruit with a stem, cupped in the palm of his hand, while the boy's mother watches from her house. The apple, and the suggestion that the priest enticed the boy, does not appear in the written versions and was a mistake, for the communion wafers in the next scene are very large and look rather similar. In this scene the priest performs the Mass for two celebrants while two altar boys hold out a large houseling cloth (in case the host should be dropped) and a third, presumably the Jewish boy, watches. There is no sign, however, of a small child appearing in the host, as occurs in the version told by William of Malmesbury.[141] The following scenes show the father, a bearded man with no antisemitic or monstrous features, leading the boy away and placing him in the oven (fig. 27), the Virgin rescuing him, a crowd gathering while the mother kneels, and finally the father being dragged to his death by a horse. As Miri Rubin has shown, this story, often attributed to a Jew of Bourges, spread throughout Europe in written versions and in a pictorial tradition in manuscript illustations and church windows such as that of Lincoln, in which the oven is the key icon that identifies the story.[142]

Miracles of the Virgin often expressed strong antisemitism. Gautier de Coinci's miracles, as Hardy Long Frank observes, "condemn the Jews as passionately as they celebrate the Virgin, and the same might be said of Chaucer's Prioress' Tale."[143] The Smithfield artists are more restrained than many of the writers; and without the broader context, it would often be hard to follow the stories at all. Within this context, however, Theophilus is a Jew (although sometimes he is also a Moslem or a magician). The connection between the merciful Virgin and the punishment of Jews remains troubling, even if in the pages of Royal 10.E.4 it is confined to two episodes, and it raises, more strongly than ever, the challenge of trying to understand the irrational mind, whether medieval or modern. Why this combination of sentimentality and violent prejudice? Various suggestions have been offered. The cruelty and cunning attributed to the Jews made a powerful contrast to the mercy of the Virgin and the innocence of her devotees, especially small children, but the narrative value of melodramatic villains is obviously only a partial explanation.[144] There is a theological rationale too. The Virgin stands for the wisdom of the spirit that the Jews, as literalist believers in the Old Law, deny. The Virgin birth, the Eucharist, baptism, and bodily resurrection were cited by Ambrose as central examples of the spiritual truth that the carnal senses cannot grasp.[145] Hence, as Sherman Hawkins notes, the Virgin birth and the Virgin herself (and, we might add, the Eucharist) "become the target of Jewish incredulity in countless medieval legends."[146] However, the emotionally charged association of the two extremes—stories of mercy that end in torture and execution—cannot be adequately explained simply as an expression of a doctrinal point. In these stories, surely, we touch on the medieval unconscious.

Of the many efforts to account for the grim fantasies of late medieval antisemitism, two in particular might help to explain its recurring connection

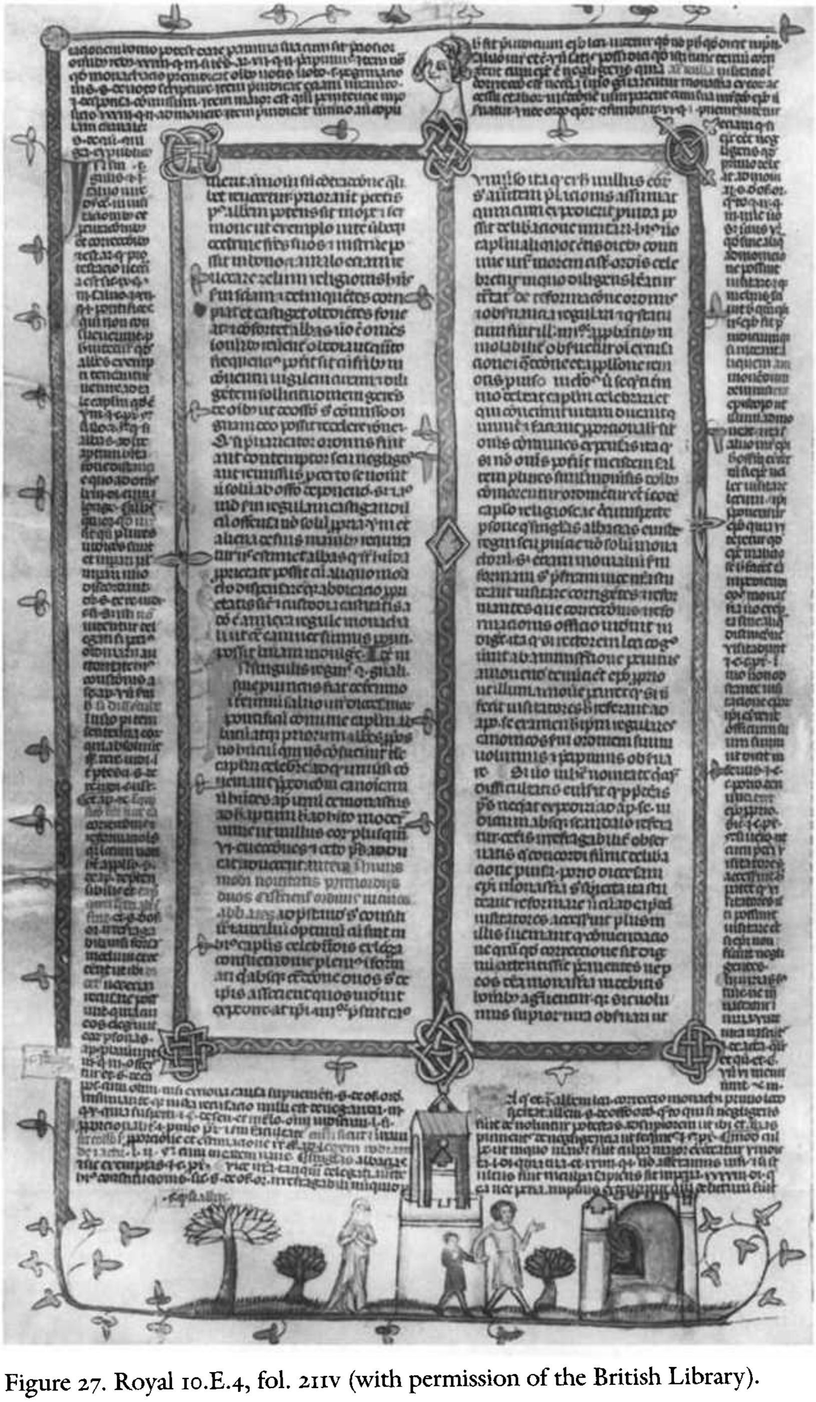


Figure 27. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 211v (with permission of the British Library).

to the Virgin. The first, advanced by Gavin Langmuir, sees the figure of the Jew as the projection of religious doubt. Langmuir notes that the blood libel and other antisemitic legends appeared in the twelfth century just as emerging textual rationalism was creating doubts about the miraculous claims of Christianity, especially those associated with the Eucharist.[147] Berengar (d. 1088), canon of Tours and a pupil of Fulbert of Chartres, argued that "A portion of the flesh of Christ cannot be present on the altar . . . unless the body of Christ in heaven is cut up and a particle that has been cut off from it is sent down to the altar."[148] This position, which was said to have "infected" the entire Church, was condemned by the Council of Vercelli in 1050. Langmuir follows Brian Stock in seeing in this phenomenon the spread of "a type of rationality inseparable from the text."[149] Berengar "reasons from texts to reality, that is, from words to things."[150] While his theological position was condemned, the general attitude that gave rise to it, one that "dismissed as rustic, popular, and irrational all that did not accord with a *ratio* synonymous with the inner logic of texts," was to prevail, casting doubts on the central mysteries of the faith.[151] The doubting Jew was a projection of this internal doubt. If the miracles of the Virgin and her saints offer the consolation of happy endings, the Jews absorb the fear that these endings are mere fantasy. In England by the late fourteenth century, Jews thus came to represent any who cast doubt on the Real Presence, and the miracles of the Virgin served equally well as anti-Lollard polemic.[152]

The second approach sees the abjection of the figure of the Jew as an attempt to reassert the unity and purity of the social body. Here, the role of the Virgin's human body or of Christ's human body as symbols of the body of the unified faithful is crucial. This analysis can be applied, in the first instance, to ecclesiastical policy. Jeremy Cohen provides a possible explanation for the hostility of ecclesiastical authorities and intellectuals to Jews and heretics in the developing notion of Christendom as an organic society. He argues that thirteenth-century theologians and canonists increasingly saw the Church not merely as the jurisdiction of the papal see but as the entire congregation of the faithful: "In a society which was committed to an ideal of organic unity, which demanded of all its members a functional contribution to the achievement of unity, which defined both its ideal and its mode of organization in terms of the mystical body of Christ, which operated (at least in theory) as the centralized monarchy of the earthly vicar of Christ, and which gave rise to intense feelings of patriotism on its own behalf, no room existed for infidels."[153] This vision of a unified Christian society found expression in the Fourth Lateran Council and the monumental effort at systematic public education that it initiated, which included both the establishment of the preaching orders and the development of preaching aids, collections of exempla among them. Here, too, the psychological conflict is embodied in the manuscript. Cohen draws an important connection between the intellectual vision of the canonists (of which the *Liber extra* is but one expression) and some of the most vigorous storytelling of the day, stories told not just by peasants around the hearth but by preachers.

But the force of popular antisemitism seems to go beyond what might be achieved by the dissemination of an intellectual agenda. Even if "heretics and Jews owed their persecution in the first place not to the hatred of the people, but to the decisions of princes and prelates," as R. I. Moore argues, the persecution became popular.[154] The dark fantasies and conspiracy theories about Jews found willing believers. The anxieties about the unity and purity of the community were widespread. To account for the popular antisemitism expressed in the miracles of the Virgin, we must consider ways in which the notion of an organic community worked at a more passionate level. Mary's virgin body symbolized "the inviolacy of the mystical body of the Church, the unassailability of its beliefs, and its perdurability through history."[155] Devotion to the Virgin could easily entail hatred of her enemies. The same holds true for the devotion to Christ's body, which was if anything more intense. For the late medieval Christian, the emotional power of the legend of the Jewish boy lay in his devotion to the Eucharist as much as in the mercy of the Virgin. Here the work of Miri Rubin is especially helpful in showing how the Eucharist served as the focus of social rituals that reinforced community identity. She argues that the Eucharist became the central symbol in Western medieval culture and was a "unifying symbol," one with strong "inducements towards conformity."[156] The assurance offered by the Eucharist that "the channels of regeneration and salvation were available and attainable, renewable and never exhaustible" made it the object of immense demand, a symbol embraced with enthusiasm that defied ecclesiastical moderation.[157] Congregations deprived of the Eucharist jostled each other violently, and priests needed to be continually on guard against parishioners making off with communion wafers for use in spells.[158]

The Eucharist, a symbol of the social body of believers, celebrated the miracle by which the host became the body of Christ. In the late Middle Ages this body was increasingly represented as the bleeding flesh of the Passion, which became the focus of intense emotional concentration. Devout lay people dwelt on the details of the Passion in systematic meditation, imagining themselves as participants in the final scenes. The organic body of the faithful was, therefore, not just an intellectual theory for the canonists but, through the symbol of Christ's body in the Eucharist, an emotionally charged and widespread vision of communal identity. The ritual processions of the Corpus Christi drama, for example, were civic expressions of social unity as much as they were programs of ecclesiastically sponsored education.[159] But this symbol of union demanded a no less emotive repudiation of outsiders.[160]

Here the logic of the medieval unconscious becomes ever more elusive, but in some way these various bodies are connected by something more than just a play on words. The commitment to a unified social body, the obsession with the purity of the Virgin's body, the emotional concentration on Christ's suffering body, and the depiction of Jews as bodily defilers, torturers, and murders whose own bodies must in turn be subjected to corresponding violence are all part of one psychological nexus. The intensity of late medieval affective piety is psychologically connected to the Eucharistic rituals of social union and to the violent attacks, both textual and physical, directed against outsiders. But the nature of the connection, that is, the nature of the medieval unconscious, remains puzzling. When Kathleen Biddick writes that the blood of late medieval Passion iconography "marks a crisis of exteriority and interiority in the construct of Christendom," she suggests important interconnections in phenomena too often regarded as discreet, but her account of this crisis is not anchored in any particular historical moment.[161] A full explanation of these tales requires that we confront directly the challenge of psychoanalytic reading and how it might be brought into contact with a historical investigation that respects "the specificities, singularities, specific conjunctures and contingencies of the past," as Daid Aers argues it must. The task is still largely before us.[162]

With these tales of the Virgin and of the evil outsider, the relation between the text and the margins can be read in several ways. If the margins offer pulsations from the unconscious, as Nichols suggests, here these pulsations reveal a strong fear of the outsider and a drive to reunite the community through violent purgation. Here it is the unconsciousness of a large cross-section of English society that is at issue, of both the *litterati* and the *rustici*. Law, on the other hand, provided an apparatus for defining the outsiders and was an expression of the persecuting society that created them, but it also imposed restraints upon their persecution, restraints that popular antisemitism often ignored. The tales of the Virgin in the margins hasten toward their endings, in which the Virgin crushes the devils beneath her feet or the Jewish father is dragged to his death without benefit of trial.[163] They may remind us, too, of the grimmer side of carnival—ostracism, scapegoating, the ritual purification of the community by expulsion. The two topsy-turvy series in which the birds rise against the fox and the rabbits rise against the hounds are comic delights, echoes of such perennial favorites as the *Roman de Renart* or Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale, but both end in a lynching (figs. 28 and 29).

More often, though, the margins offer a reprieve from the world's ugliness and evoke the "poetic enchantment" of the cult of the saints that so moved Emile Mâle.[164] Perhaps the best example is the section devoted to Mary of Egypt. The story of this penitent prostitute is as old as that of Theophilus, and it too first comes into Latin in the translation of Paul the Deacon. Of wealthy parents, Mary of Egypt takes to prostitution not for any financial need but to satisfy her voracious sexual appetite. Traveling widely as community after community drives her out, she eventually comes across a ship of pilgrims bound for Jerusalem and offers to pay her way by lying with every man in the boat. When she arrives in Jerusalem, however, and goes to pray, she finds she cannot cross the threshold of the church. This divine warning transforms her. Taking nothing but three loaves of bread, she crosses the Jordan and goes out into the wilderness, where she spends forty-seven years, her clothes gradually rotting off, her skin darkening in the sun, and her hair growing down to her feet. Throughout this time she is sustained first by the three loaves of bread and then by divine providence alone. Eventually she encounters a monk, Zozimas, to whom she tells her life. He returns a year later to offer her communion. Immediately afterward she dies, and Zozimas, with the aid of a lion, buries her. In Paul the Deacon's version, the story begins with Zozimas, and Mary's entire history is presented as the account she related to him. In the twelfth century, however, an anonymous French poet, who may have been either Continental or Anglo-Norman, reshaped the story from the perspective of Mary and her psychological development.[165] (This version is designated simply as T and is the earliest of at least nine distinctive French versions of the story, many existing in several manuscripts.) Zozimas remains an important figure in this vernacular tradition, and his long conversations with Mary take on some of the overtones of a chaste courtly romance, but she is always the focus of the story. Paul the Deacon writes of a monk's conversation with a saint; T tells of the saint's life and adventures.

The Smithfield artist had the same impulse as T. He clearly knew the story well, and he retells it, with one apparent slip, with a sure and independent hand, both cutting and expanding freely. He begins *in medias res* on folio 268v at the crucial moment when Mary of Egypt finds that she cannot enter the church in Jerusalem. In this respect he breaks decisively with the many vernacular versions of the tale that dwell on Mary's life as a prostitute in voy-

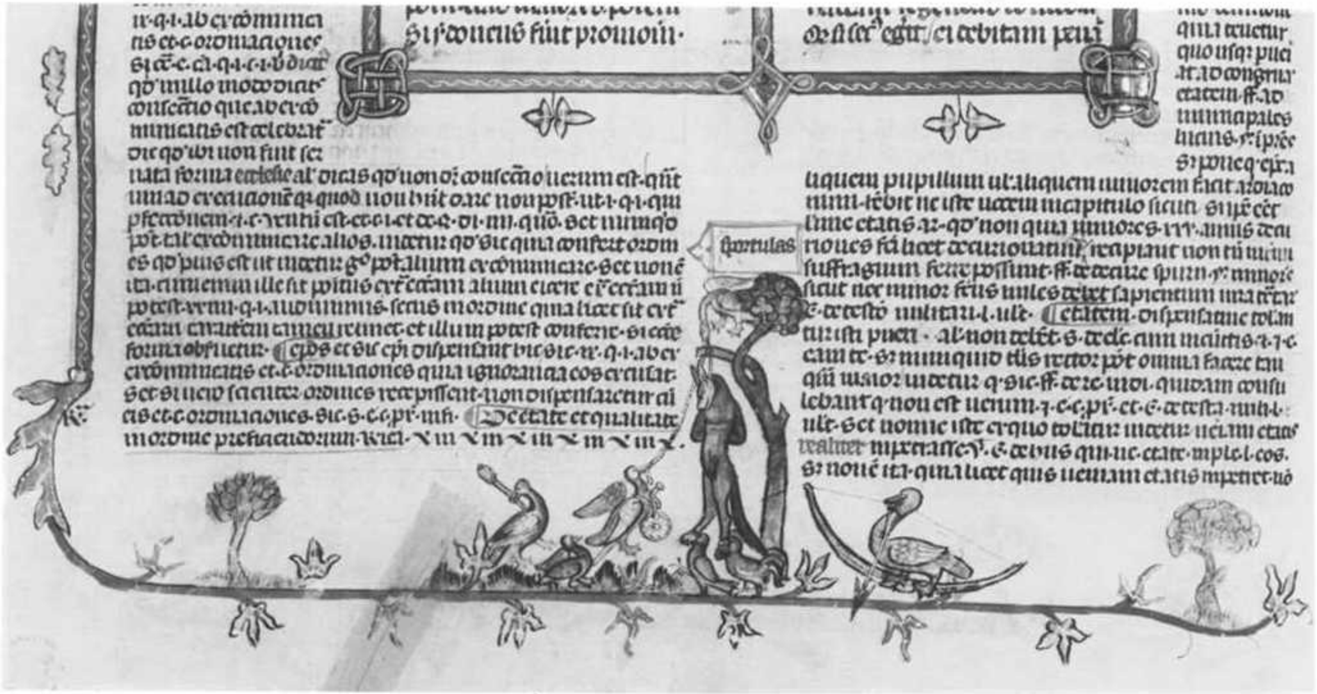


Figure 28. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 48v (with permission of the British Library).

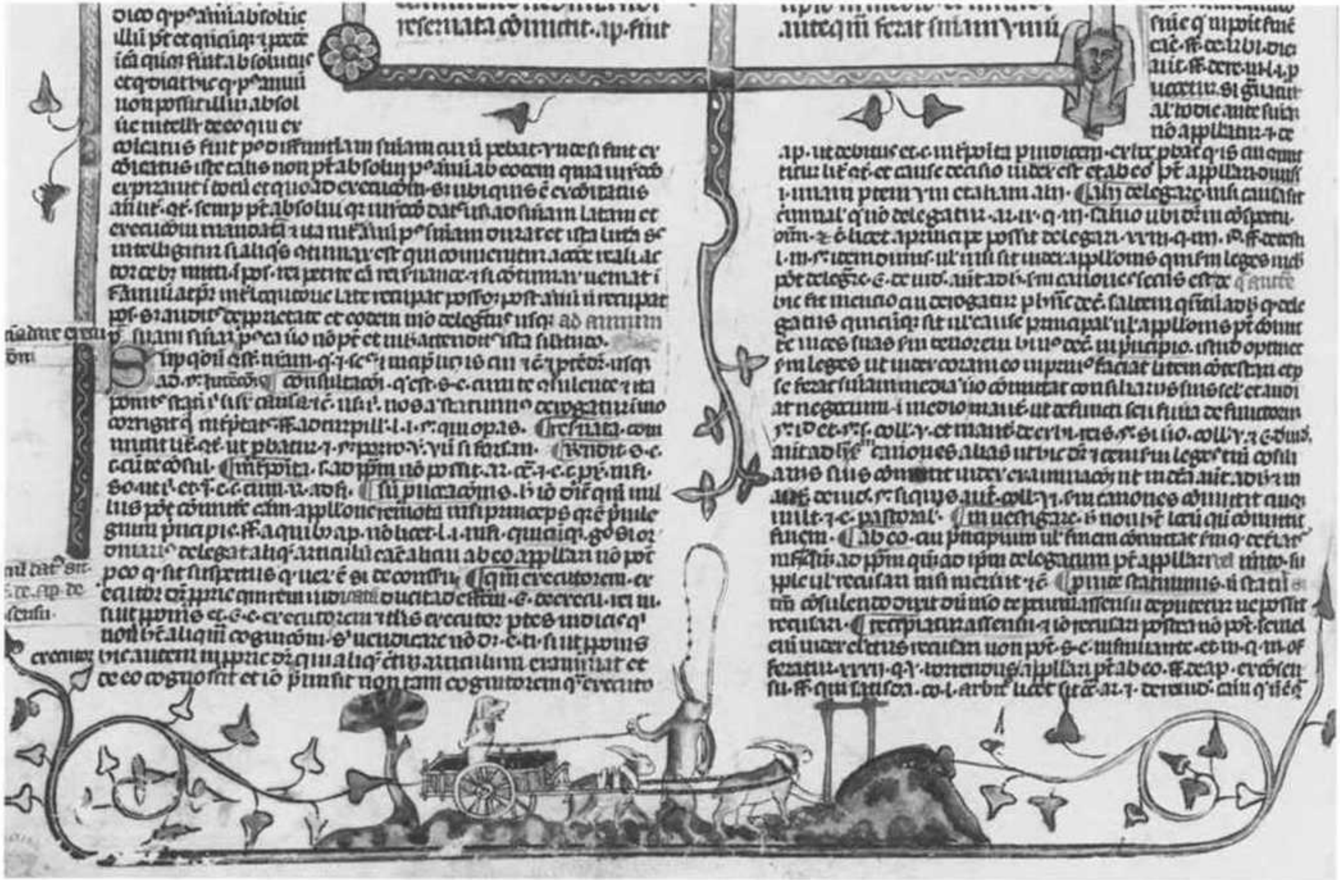


Figure 29. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 63v (with permission of the British Library).

euristic detail.[166] On folio 271v the artist deviates slightly from the standard versions by making it a woman in her own house, rather than a male pilgrim, who gives Mary the three loaves. This woman stands in front of her small house, with a man peeping out from the door behind her. Does her charity spring from a prudent desire to make sure that the dangerous temptress, her beauty still untouched by the rigors of the wilderness, moves along quickly? Or is she a generous woman defying an avaricious husband? The sketchy treatment invites readers to create their own stories. Mary now comes to the river (fol. 272r), where a boat is conveniently waiting for her and guides her across as if by magic, for there are no sailors and the boat has neither oars nor mast. Perhaps the artist is just omitting the inessential, but this might equally well be a magic boat, for when Mary crosses the river she enters a world that is closer to Celtic romance than to the lives of the desert saints. Here, as Mary emerges on the other side, the artist seems to slip for a moment. In all the written accounts Mary first crosses the Jordan at the very beginning of her penance, long before her clothes fall away or her hair grows. In the Smithfield Decretals, however, Mary is seen in the boat naked and with her hair down to her waist. When she arrives on the other side, however, she first appears putting on a dark robe (fol. 273r), and then immediately afterward she appears naked but with her hair down to the ground. The lapse is worth noting because it may suggest that the artist, for all the fluency of the treatment, was following someone else's instructions and did not know the story that well.

For the next seven folios, however, the story makes excellent sense, although it differs markedly from the surviving written versions, which all insist on Mary's solitude. For the most part they make no mention of animals one way or the other, although the *South English Legendary* does say explicitly that during all this time she "ne sey best ne man" (line 104). In the Smithfield Decretals, on the other hand, Mary moves not into a savage desert but into a lush garden, almost a second Eden, where she is greeted by friendly animals who threaten neither her nor each other. The first illustration shows Mary picking nuts or fruit from trees while monkeys watch. Then she is visited by lions who lick her feet, by a unicorn and a bear who do obeisance before her, and by a stag, a bear, and a lion who tag at her heels. She feeds a lion from one of her three loaves, and when a devil tries to attack her as she sleeps, the lion mauls him. In several of these scenes Mary's hand gestures suggest she is actually talking to the animals.

I have not come across any direct source for these episodes, with their echoes of tales of Saint Jerome and Androcles, or of Orpheus taming the wilderness. Perhaps this anonymous teller took a hint from the ending of the story, where in the written versions Zozimas buries Mary with the aid of a friendly lion. This episode is found in the *Legenda aurea* in its briefest and plainest form, and the vernacular versions expand the episode, each one giving the lion a slightly different role.[167] What is distinctive about the Smithfield lion is that he is no stranger. He does not suddenly appear out of the wilderness, and he does not need Zozimas to tell him who Mary is because he has guarded her sleep for the last few folios. Now, on folio 288r he actually stands on his hind legs and assists Zozimas in laying her body in the grave (fig. 30).

Two other saints find their way into the manuscript, Eustace and Dunstan. The story of Eustace draws heavily on standard elements in the Smithfield artists' repertoire: lions and wolves, people lost in the wilderness, and river crossings. Eustace, one of Trajan's generals, who converted after he saw Christ's head appear between the stag's horns while out hunting, was a popular saint whose story can be found in the *Legenda aurea* and in windows at Chartres, Sens, Auxerre, Le Mans, and Tours.[168] The Smithfield Decretals tell the story more or less in its entirety. After Eustace is baptized (fol. 228v), God decides to test him as he tested Job. Eustace is ruined and driven into exile. He and his family try to escape by sea but he is separated from his wife when the sailors drive him overboard at the command of the lecherous captain. Eustace manages, however, to keep his two children. Coming to a river in spate, he attempts to cross with one child at a time, only to have one snatched by a lion and the other by a wolf as he is in midstream (fols. 232v, 233r). Unbeknownst to Eustace, shepherds rescue the children, and years later the entire family is reunited when the sons, now soldiers, recognize their father and someone else brings news of their lost mother. As Emile Mâle notes, the way the action turns on moments of anagnorisis follows the conventions of romance, but it ends in sterner hagiography. When Hadrian succeeds as emperor, he tries to force Eustace to worship the idols and, when he refuses, Hadrian has him burned alive in a bronze bull with his wife and sons (fol. 240v).[169]

Dunstan can easily be recognized in the Smithfield Decretals from what is the best known of all the stories about him, that of his grabbing the devil's nose with his tongs. The saint suffered from temptations and kept himself busy practicing painting, embroidery, and metalwork, and setting up his own smithy. The devil still pestered him continuously. As the *South English Legendary* tells it, one day when Dunstan was at work in the smithy the devil appeared disguised as a woman. Dunstan had his suspicions. He placed his tongs in the fire until they were good and hot, and then "Þe deuel he hente bi þe nose & wel faste drou." The Smithfield Decretals capture the crucial moment beautifully as the devil writhes in agony (fol 250v).

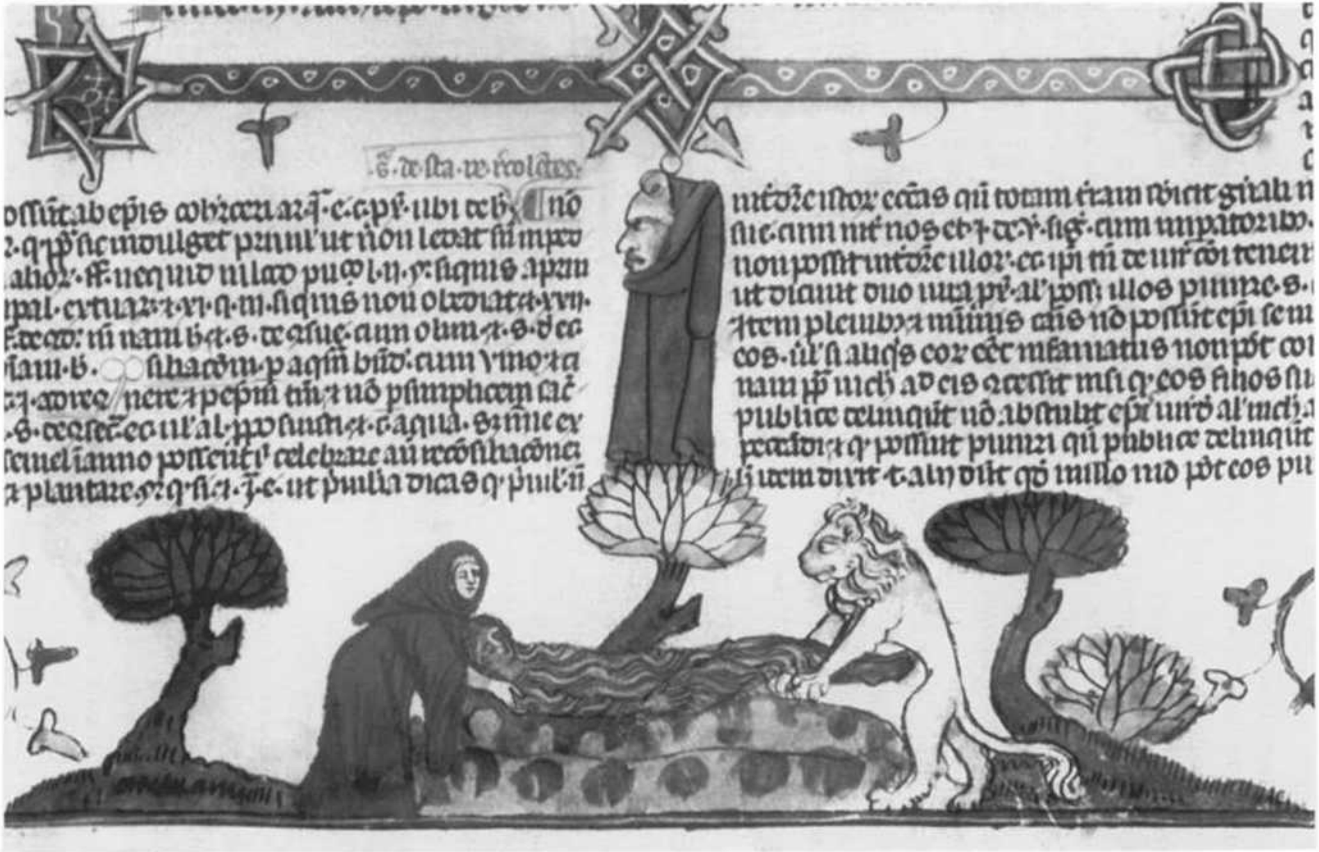


Figure 30. Royal 10.E.4, fol. 288r (with permission of the British Library).

Dunstan was famed for his music and painting and to this day is the patron saint of goldsmiths and jewellers, and the Smithfield Decretals include a scene in which he paints a butterfly (fol. 248r).We may even see here an image of the professional artist himself in one of the ground-floor shops in the area around St. Paul's.[170] Once we move away from these two scenes, however, it becomes difficult to know quite where the story of Dunstan begins or ends. Warner and Gilson, who did a remarkable job of locating analogues for most of the episodes in their catalogue, become vague at this point, and I have not been able to do any better. They believe that a short scene of three folios (197v–198v) showing the lame being cured at a saint's shrine refers to Dunstan, but there is no clear indication of this. Some of the episodes that follow, such as that of the worker who cuts his leg with an axe (fol. 208r), might equally well be miracles of the Virgin. It is not until some thirty folios later, after the story of Eustace, that there is a finally a clear sequence referring to Dunstan (fols. 241r–250v), and this sequence, which may in part recount Dunstan's relations with King Edmund, is not easy to follow. For many readers it would only be clear in retrospect, when they finally came to the episode of the tongs on folio 250v, that the saint they had been watching was Dunstan. Further ambiguity follows, as the artists now move into what Warner and Gilson can only describe rather desperately, as "a very elaborate series" (fols. 251r–263r). One of these scenes shows the Three Quick, in this case three kings, confronting the Three Dead (fols. 258v–259r), just as they do in the contemporary Taymouth Hours.[171] Another shows one of the kings cutting his robe into two after the manner of Saint Martin, to give it to beggars (fol. 261v).

In some cases the Decretals offer us iconic moments that would have been instantly recognizable to most medieval Londoners. Elsewhere, however, readers would have needed to let their imaginations run freely, linking episodes together, filling in the lacunae, and skipping over the occasional blunder. But while the narrative thread is easily lost, just as it is in many romances, the imaginary world in which it was set is constant. The lions that lick the feet of Mary of Egypt resemble those that lick the feet of the penitent hermit; the Virgin twice punishes devils by putting them in the stocks; hunting scenes appear again and again. There are castles and churches set in a wilderness, and through them move knights, ladies, priests, and hermits, taking refuge in caves, witnessing miracles, being tricked by demons. Perhaps the repetition shows the limits of the artists' imagination—after all, they had three hundred folios to fill—but it also testifies to widespread narrative conventions.

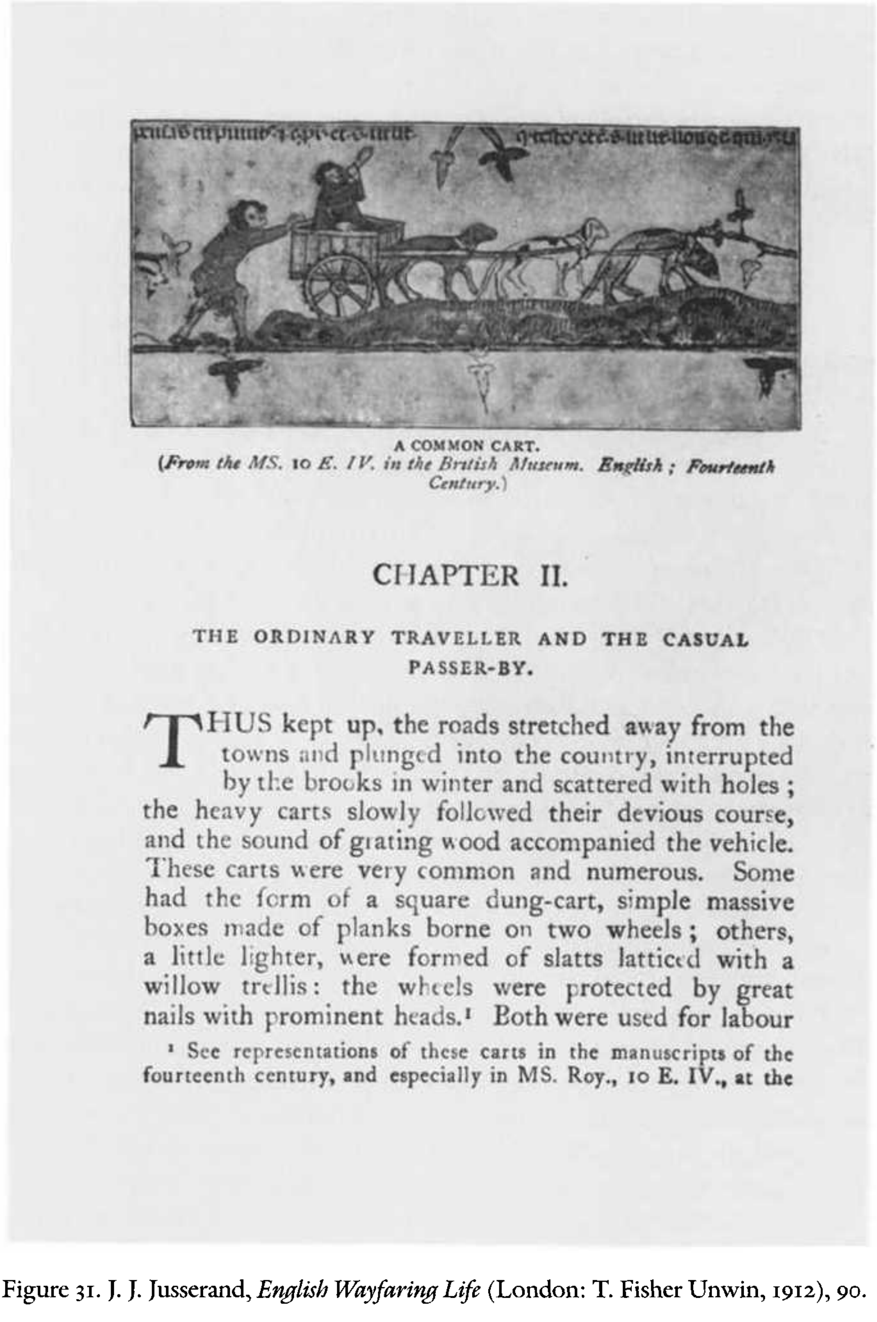
Perhaps it was just serendipitous, but the book had fallen into the right hands. As we have seen when considering the thirteenth-century owners of Digby 23, the Augustinian canons were known for their broad intellectual interests and their urban mission, which included preaching. A canon might be assumed to know the punchier legends for use in popular sermons and how to meld romance and piety in his own storytelling. Unfortunately, we know relatively little of the intellectual culture of St. Barthlomew's in particular. There are only the slimmest traces of the library.[172] *The Liber Fundacionis* survives as Cotton Vespasian B.IX. John Repington, prior from 1391 to 1404, left a collection of sermons.[173] John of Mirfeld, one of the doctors who lived with the canons but was never actually a canon himself, compiled both a medical encyclopedia, the *Brevarium Bartholomei*, and a personal florilegium of alphabetized extracts on the vices and virtues, the *Florarium Bartholomei*.[174] If we wish to invoke a specific reader whose tastes ran to chivalric romances, however, we must look a little further afield. Thomas Arnold, a monk at the Benedictine abbey of St. Augustine's in Canterbury in the early fifteenth century, would be one example. He donated no less than fourteen books to the abbey: Guido de Colonna's *Historia de bello Troiae*, the chronicle of Marianus Scotus, a collection of devotions in French, two otherwise unidentified French books, Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, and seven French romances, including *Launcelot*, the *Graal*, *Per le galois* (that is, *Perceval*), a dual volume with the deeds of Guy of Warwick and Ypomdeon, and the book of William Marshall.[175] Thomas would have had little difficulty piecing his way through the retelling of the story of Yvain, Eustace, Beves, or Guy of Warwick in these margins. Combine Thomas's private collection with the more substantial biblical and theological commentary that his profession expected him to know, and one has a reading list that embodies the same diversity as Royal 10.E.4.

Text, Margin, World

If the text of the Decretals stands for the intellectualizing and centralizing forces of clerical culture, it is tempting to make the marginal illustrations stand for all that fall outside them. Just as the text reaches out into the wider world, the pictures bring this world spilling back onto the edges of the text. The margins subvert the solemn rituals of authority. When the peasants of St Albans fastened a rabbit on a pillory, they played out a scene that had already been drawn in the Smithfield margins.[176] In the illustrations of the miracles of the Virgin, the lives of the saints, well-known romances such as *Beves of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick*, and stories about the tricks of a blind beggar's boy, we have a record of oral narrative that has otherwise been lost, a record of episodes not found in the *Legenda Aurea* or the *Roman de Renart* or Caesarius of Esterbach or the *Noveau recueil des fabliaux* or anywhere else.[177] Thus the margins evoke the broader world of the storyteller and the common memory. But the relationship cannot be reduced to one of simple opposition. In some regards the margins assert local perogatives and the force of popular traditions of vigorous, old-fashioned, miracle-working saints. But the text could just as easily be said to represent the forces that generated these stories as the effort to contain them. Among the chief sources for these stories, after all, are collections of sermon exempla designed as part of the great post-Lateran wave of vernacular preaching.[178] The two cultural streams were thoroughly intermingled.

For many modern scholars, themselves ensconced in academic traditions, these marginal images, or others like them, have exercised a powerful fascination, conjuring up the vibrant, living babble of a world we have lost. The earliest modern reference to the Smithfield marginalia is in Thomas Wright's *A History of Domestic Manners and Sentiments in England During the Middle Ages* of 1863, and the pictures continue to circulate in books on daily life in the Middle Ages.[179] It is in J. J. Jusserand's *English Wayfaring Life*, however, first published in English in 1889, that the carnival of the Smithfield Decretals entered the stream of popular medievalism in full force. Jusserand uses visual evidence without regard for its manuscript context, as if it were a direct report on an outside world, cannibalizing the Smithfield Decretals for illustrations of the messengers, peddlers, beggars, an escaped prisoner fleeing to sanctuary, woodcutters, hunters, dancing bears, and minstrels. In all, he reproduces nineteen images from Royal 10.E.4, in each case offering them as if they were shots of photojournalism, direct glimpses of medieval people (fig. 31). He insists, for example, that while the illustration of the sword dancer evokes Salome's dance before Herod, "as the idea of such a dance could not be drawn from the Bible, we must believe that it arose from the customs of the time," and he notes records of payment to dancers at Richard II's court and similar dances "[i]n the East, where, in our travels, we have sometimes the surprise of finding ancient customs still living which we can at home only study in books."[180] By cutting the images from the text, Jusserand allows them to tell the story that he wants, to invoke "the changefully coloured current of travellers, vagabonds, wayfarers, and wanderers," those people who are "neither fanciful nor dreamy things, [but] bony beings . . . with strong muscles and alert tongues, and the dust of the road to Rome or the East on their feet."[181]

Jusserand, privileging the pictures while ignoring the text, follows a com-



A COMMON CART.
(*From the MS.* 10 *E. IV. in the British Museum.* **English ; Fourteenth** *Century.*)

CHAPTER II.

THE ORDINARY TRAVELLER AND THE CASUAL PASSER-BY.

THUS kept up, the roads stretched away from the towns and plunged into the country, interrupted by the brooks in winter and scattered with holes ; the heavy carts slowly followed their devious course, and the sound of grating wood accompanied the vehicle. These carts were very common and numerous. Some had the form of a square dung-cart, simple massive boxes made of planks borne on two wheels ; others, a little lighter, were formed of slatts latticed with a willow trellis : the wheels were protected by great nails with prominent heads.[1] Both were used for labour mon urge, one that can be seen in the naive empiricism of the social-history picture book, the endless fascination of naive readers with what the characters might do if they stepped off the page.[182] This is an idle taste, one that might well be dubbed a form of curiositas, to give a medieval term to what was a recurring medieval pleasure. It is the taste of the anonymous author of the *Tale of Beryn*, possibly a monk of Canterbury, who, dissatisfied with the austerity of the Parson's homily, finished Chaucer's story so that we could find out *what happened* when the pilgrims got to Canterbury, and the taste of the authors of innumerable other sequels who cannot abandon characters who for them have become real people.[183] It is Hurry's taste when he inserts the drawing of Reading Abbey and mine when I reproduce it (fig. 10). These interests continue to flourish in popular medievalism. It is fitting that the most recent appearance of one of the Smithfield images, that of a nun and monk in the stocks, comes in a manual designed for those who want to stage "living history" and recreate medieval life.[184]

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[1] See representations of these carts in the manuscripts of the fourteenth century, and especially in MS. Roy., 10 E. IV., at the

Figure 31. J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), 90.

The drive to recapture medieval lived experience is not far removed from the drive to recapture lost voices, and this is another source of fascination with this manuscript as a repository of lost oral culture. For Henry Morley, "We have but to give voice and life to all those pictures, and we have the spirit of the concourse at the fair."[185] Jusserand praises the "ready tongues" of the lost wanderers. Steven Justice concludes his recent study of the Rising of 1381 by admitting to a similar drive: "When I was writing the first chapters, I thought I was trying to give the rebels back their own voices."[186]

As modern scholars give ear to these lost voices, the role of their own unconscious desires becomes ever more important. These lost voices are associated with exotic and forbidden terrain—the East, the marketplace, and the road, but also the tavern and even the slum—and this too is part of their allure. For Victor Hugo, these voices emanate from the forbidden Court of Miracles in Paris, the ultimate source for the parade of thieves, street performers, and fake beggars that people the more respectable quarters by day and miraculously regain the use of their limbs or eyes at night. The Court of Miracles both fascinates and horrifies him: a "magical circle where the officers of the Châtelet and the provost's sergeants, when they ventured to enter, were broken up and vanished, a city of thieves, a hideous wart on the face of Paris, a sewer from which each morning there escaped and each night there returned to stagnate that stream of vices, deceit, and vagrancy which overflows continually into the streets of a capital."[187] Appropriately enough, Hugo places the Court of Miracles on what was to become the site of the great market of les Halles, confirming the symbolic association of marketplace and carnival. Hugo's exploration of the urban underworld, of sewers both literal and metaphoric that spill out into a picaresque street life, finds an English parallel in Henry Mayhew's copiously illustrated *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861), a massive sociological survey that shows many of the same overlapping fixations.[188] Mayhew's vagabond, vigorous and debauched, might be one of Jusserand's "colourful current" of vagrants and tricksters or one of the "merry rogues" of Bakhtin's carnival. Mayhew's work appealed to a voyeuristic fascination with the life of the poor conceived as an exotic underworld free from bourgeois propriety. Like the Orient, the world of the poor was a reservoir of "infinite peculiarity."[189] Stallybrass and White see this fascination with all that has been cast out or repressed running through nineteenth-century depictions of slums, fairs, and sewers.[190] One might consider what role it plays in the great nineteenth-century efforts to reconstruct the history of London's streets and of Smithfield.

Whatever its sources, the fascination of this lost world is yet one more reminder of our own psychological investment in the construction of the manuscript. Here we encounter a persistent desire to move beyond books and find out about people, a desire that all our learning cannot entirely kill and that often drives our learning. Mayhew's work is a case in point. His massive chronicling, what E. P. Thompson describes as "the fullest and most vivid documentation of the economic and social problems, the customs, habits, and grievances, and individual life experiences of the labouring people of the world's greatest city of the mid nineteenth century," was inspired by a fascination with what both Mayhew and his readers considered a brutish race apart.[191] Without this psychological investment, his project would have been neither financially feasible nor sufficiently engaging to occupy him for the fifteen hectic years of collecting.

Using a characteristic recent idiom, I have twice referred to the Smithfield Decretals as a *site* of ideological conflict, either between two social groups or within a single individual. But if the metaphor implies, as I think it does, that this is a location we regard from on high, as objective witnesses to a conflict that precedes us, then it is not well chosen. We cannot approach a book without desire or without history, without situating ourselves within a particular institutional apparatus and undergoing its disciplines. To read either the text or its margins requires an emotional investment, whether it is in a vision of a unified Age of Faith rising above sublunary disorders and bringing harmony from dissonance or in a vison of human resistance and freedom.[192] Confronted by Royal 10.E.4, some will follow the interlacing logical paths of the texts, duplicating the scholastic mastery of the canonists, others will turn to the margins from which this great legislative architecture can be undermine, others will wander through the picture book of daily life in the Middle Ages. Of course, the dichotomy I am suggesting between those who value textual harmony and those who value marginal dissonance is an oversimplification, just as it would be for the canon of St. Bartholomew's. But it does not grossly misrepresent the shape of much current professional debate. The polarization can be seen within some disciplines and between others. With few exceptions, those working in canon law, theology, or the various forms of medieval Latin stand aloof from those who invoke Derrida or Freud. As modern readers, we tend to dream our Middle Ages in a limited spectrum of colors. We are champions of harmony or champions of dissonance, and our bibliographies scarcely intersect. Few of us, at least in our professional reading practice, can embrace the range from piety to intense worldliness that was the common lot for so many medieval people.

This problem is dramatized by the technical difficulties of reading the *Liber extra*. From time to time one hears the complaint that art historians do not always read the texts from which they cull their images. What I have tried to show with this manuscript in particular is that this condition is not easily avoided. Reading the *Liber extra*, like reading the Digby glosses, is not something to be done in an afternoon. I have been at some pains to make it clear that it is not something I claim to be able to do myself, except in the most tentative fashion and with a great deal of assistance. It is not just that in order to read a collection of canon law one needs to reproduce something of the early stages of a canon lawyer's training, learning to navigate one's way through the unwieldy corpus by recognizing its underlying intellectual structure, all a matter of some years' training. More pressingly, to undertake this training requires that one enter, at least temporarily or with one part of one's mind, into the spirit of canon law. People may on occasion steep themselves in writings they find repugnant but few will steep themselves in writings they find merely tedious. If canon law strikes us as "no more than a sum of dry technical rules for ecclesiastical administrators," we are unlikely to read it much, and as Kuttner suggests, that is how it may strike us unless we share his vision of canon law as "a living force, giving form to the social body which is the Church." Reading canon law was, for medieval clerics, a form of social as well as professional formation. It encouraged a view of human affairs as disordered but not ultimately ungovernable, and it demanded the clerical reformer's faith in government from the center. So, at some level, it must be for any reader. The sustained commitment required to read the book, to actually piece one's way through even a single page, is a correlative of a certain way of interpreting it, one that keeps the margins in their place, holding disorder and irrationality, whether social or psychological, at bay.

However we envisage it, the conflict within these pages is one we half create while it half creates us. Our access to this guarded treasure is no more immediate or neutral now than it was in the fourteenth century; we do not approach it innocently or from an absolute without. Even before we have read it, it has already read us, inscribing us within its order, through the officially sanctioned dissemination of the canons that is figured in the opening illustrations of the doctors receiving the book or through the web of oral narrative evoked on the later folios. It is an object that permits no mastery for no single scholar can fully pursue such conflicting desires or do justice to such conflicting orders, and this may help explain the lack of any proper commentary on a book so regularly plundered for its pictures. The carnival of the Smithfield margins speaks with as many voices as the great fair outside the priory walls.