Gender, Authority, and the Mouth in Western Medieval Culture, 1100-1500

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Abstract

This thesis explores the importance of the human mouth in defining humanity, upholding and subverting authority, and how gendering plays a key role in how the human mouth is both described and used to denote authorial power. Throughout this thesis the paradox of the mouth is key. The mouth plays an important role in the definition and maintenance of human authority and power, but it is also well-placed to subvert and undermine that same authority it helps to define. The primary source material is situated in Western Europe between approximately 1100 and 1500, and includes religious and medical discourse, literature, encyclopaedic texts, travel literature, and visual imagery. The chapters explore five ways in which the mouth is a conduit for transformation, connection and communication, focussing on speech, beauty, monstrous mouths, healing and singing. The thesis ultimately argues that the human mouth is a powerful mechanism for defining and ultimately subverting authority, evidenced in medieval written and visual source material through both implicit and explicit gendering. Therefore, the human mouth is important as a tool for the understanding of human experience in medieval culture.

Declaration and Statements

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in the footnote(s).

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List of Illustrations

List of Abbreviations

AASS – Acta Sanctorum

BL – British Library, London

DMLBS – Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources

EETS – Early English Text Society

o.s. – Original Series

MED –*Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath and S. M. Kuhn (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-) < https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>

OED – *Oxford English Dictionary*

TEAMS – The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages

Introduction

> oþir bestis lokeþ donward to þe erþe, and God ȝaf to man an hiȝe mouþ and hete hym loke vp and se heuen, and he ȝaf to men visagis arerid toward þe sterres.[1]

The intrinsic superiority of humankind over animals by justification of their upright position and, importantly, the placement of the mouth high up away from the ground, is recognised here by Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272) in his encyclopaedic work *De proprietatibus rerum*, originally composed in Latin in the mid-thirteenth century and translated into English in 1398. The importance of the mouth for the definition of human authority is already apparent in conjunction with an anatomy that places humans physically closer to Heaven and to God. Furthermore, the connection between mankind and the divine is a vital component of defining humanity as well as being implicated in some of the functions of the mouth. Bartholomew also recognises that 'man is a best iliche to God',[2] and importantly that man 'haþ kynde and propirte of bodies and of spiritis also'.[3] The upright anatomy of the human body, and the placement of the major sensory organs, including the mouth, in the topmost part of the body, both symbolically and physically places them further away from the earth and from animals. The mouth, through the body's anatomy, also has a close affinity with the digestive system and therefore the anus and defecation, which associates the higher part of the body with the more problematic lower body.[4] The mouth therefore behaves as both an important element in humanity's connection with the divine, but also potentially subverts this in its association with the basest elements of the human body. The mouth, then, has the capability to encompass both extremes of human experience – divine and fleshy connection – and is therefore central to an understanding of that experience in medieval culture.

This thesis considers the themes of gender and authority and how they are implicated in the functionality of the mouth in Western medieval culture, using European source material c.

[1] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, Volume 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 90-91, lines 30-31, 1.
[2] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 90, line 12.
[3] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 90, lines 9-10.
[4] Katie Walter, *Middle English Mouths: Late Medieval Medical, Religious and Literary Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 47.

1100-1500. Authority is the power to influence, or command thought, opinion or behaviour[5] and throughout this thesis is presented through several manifestations displaying a nuanced view of authority. In many of its manifestations here, authority is exercised by, or through the conduit of, a human being. Some demonstrations are of divine authority, such as Marie d'Oignies in Chapter Five whose divinely inspired singing, evidenced by a clear, sweet voice, provides spiritual education. In many examples, authority is interconnected with masculinity, social status, and good moral virtue. This authority is defined, upheld, and undermined by the mouth. Through the mouth authority can manifest in a clear, commanding speaking voice; a beautiful, sweet, singing voice; and also, a small, neat mouth containing even, white teeth and emitting sweet-smelling breath. Not all manifestations of oral authority are masculine, such as the small mouth and sweet breath, however, what is clear is that in all these manifestations, the mouth is key to defining that view of power, influence and superiority tied together in the term authority.

The ways in which authority is defined, upheld, and undermined by the human mouth are viewed, in this thesis, through the lens of gender. In some examples there are references to the normative masculine body and deviations from that normative body, such as in monstrous beings. Extending from this is the masculine/feminine binary, a system of understanding the body and its attributes through dichotomy, in which femininity and masculinity are defined in terms of opposition. Such a system is evident in medieval theoretical discourse and is placed alongside other binaries, including right/left, hot/cold, and dry/wet, which can be aligned with masculine/feminine. In medieval doom paintings there is a striking similarity between the masculine/feminine, right/left binary, and the placement of Heaven and Hell. *Femininity* as inferior to *masculinity* is further highlighted through reference to Eve, her mouth, and the downfall of humanity, which can only be saved through the perfect woman, Mary. However, in reality these binary oppositions are more nuanced in many of the texts used in this thesis, and they show diversions from the normative body which disrupt these clear-cut binary oppositions to reveal a blurring of medieval gender. Examples of disruptions of this theoretical binary include the feminised description of the Pardoner's appearance, in Chaucer's fourteenth century work, *The Canterbury Tales*, and monstrous beings, both frighteningly gendered, such as the Sirens, and dangerously neutral such as the Blemmyae or

[5] OED s.v.: 'authority, n,: Power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience; moral, legal, or political supremacy'.

Pygmeyes. Human authority, and its gendering, is intimately connected with the human mouth and this thesis argues that it is the mouth that defines, undermines, and displays humanity, and by association, authority.

This thesis considers the centrality of the mouth to denote, deny, and undermine human authority, and examines why the mouth is regarded as the part of the human body most able to define authorial control. This is viewed through the topic of gender and how the visual and literary image of the mouth may be used and abused in relation to femininity, masculinity, and other types of gendering. Furthermore, each chapter, in considering a different function of the mouth, examines where the mouth becomes gendered in support of, or in subversion of, authority. I argue for the centrality of the mouth in defining as well as undermining humanity, and its implications in questions on gender and authority. The mouth is a point of transcendence and transformation, but also a dangerous entry point into the body, and closely associated with the female genitals. As such, it is a paradox: the mouth both defines and upholds powerful authority, as well as undermines that authority it defines. Different gendered qualities of the mouth lead to different manifestations of authority for men and women, and the divisions between the supposed superior male sex and the inferior female sex are frequently blurred, rewritten and subverted completely. As Katie Walter has argued in her study of the mouth in the Middle Ages, the mouth is central to the definition of humanity and religious identity, and Walter focuses on an implicit reading between medieval vernacular and theological literature. Her thesis states that the mouth is 'the principal point where human and Christian identity is bestowed, maintained and ultimately dismantled', and she focuses on the 'everyday, physical aspect', of the mouth.[6] This thesis builds on Walter's work by focusing on different aspects of the mouth – speech, beauty, monstrosity, healing and singing – to illustrate how the mouth is a conduit for upholding and subverting human authority through both implicit and explicit gendering across medieval written and visual source material. These themes extend from Walter's theological and literary sources to include a wider cross-section medical literature and visual sources, as well as investigating more manifestations of oral functionality through monstrosity and singing.

[6] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 1.

The human mouth and its connections with gender and authority are explored in this thesis through five chapters, which focus on the functional aspects of speech, beauty, monstrosity, the healing mouth, and singing, and in doing so encompass different uses of the mouth and its importance as a gateway between the inner body and the outside world. Chapter Four, for example, on healing encompasses several functions: kissing, ingestion and the spoken word, to investigate the healing qualities of the human mouth. As this thesis developed, so too did the choices of the functions; each one developing from a previous chapter to highlight not only different aspects of oral functionality but also to illuminate human nature, understandings of humanity in opposition to animality, and spirituality. Each function has been chosen to demonstrate a facet of what it means to be human: singing and speech are functions particular to humans and are often used in connecting humanity and divinity; beauty and monstrosity work in conjunction with each other to define humanity by comparing it with views of abnormality and dysfunctionality. The healing qualities of the mouth combine several functions of the mouth but views each one from a human angle: a human need to return to full bodily health; full participation within society; and the human need for a connection with divinity. Every function chosen therefore focuses on what it means to be human, to have authority and, often, to be connected with God and divinity.

The choices of the functions of the mouth share some overlap with those covered in Katie Walter's work, *Middle English Mouths*. Both cover eating, kissing, surgical interventions in the mouth and highlight the topographical placement of the mouth in the human body, however many functions are viewed from different aspects. Walter's work investigates eating and ingestion as 'epistemological models' for 'spiritual and moral efficacy',[7] whereas this thesis highlights the power of ingested healing remedies. Also, Walter highlights kissing in the context of 'patristic and monastic considerations',[8] and the spiritual nature of kissing, in contrast to my own work on the healing power of the kiss which focusses predominantly on episodes in travel literature. While covering a broad base of oral functions, I do not claim to cover every aspect. This thesis does not include every aspect of ingestion or kissing, nor does it include episodes of egestion or vomiting, or the effects of overindulgence such as gluttony and drunkenness. Although every aspect of the mouth is important and can in some way comment on views of humanity, the functions chosen here are designed to highlight humanity

[7] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 79.
[8] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 116.

with particular reference to its viewed superiority over animality, and the ability of some functions to transcend humanity to connect with divinity.

Due to its importance for humanity, the mouth is not only used to define and uphold human superiority and authority but is also used for the subversion and subjugation of that authority. I argue that human authority is almost always gendered male, and the subversion of that authority is most often gendered female. In some examples this is an explicit gendering such as the subversive *vetula* in Chapter Two who has the potential to disrupt the ordered patriarchal structure, and in other instances it is an implicit gendering as with the feminisation of monstrous beings and the placement of Hell to the left of Christ in Chapter Three. The dangers of women with their colder, wetter and more uncontrollable bodies make them a prime target for examples of subversive behaviour, and this thesis demonstrates how often that is bound up with ideas of the female mouth, which corrupts through its voice as well as through its direct, folkloric and etymological connection with the female genitalia. This dangerous feminine nature is key in descriptions of monstrous beings, the decline of beautiful youth in ugly old age, and the power exercised by the sirens, for example. However, I also show how it is contrasted with the supportive and positive examples of feminine authority that are expressed through divine visions, ideas of purity and morality expressed through true beauty, and a femininity that supports rather than subverts masculinity.

A key argument of this thesis is how the subversive and dangerous nature of women is often defined by a close connection to the female mouth. The feminisation of the monstrous mouth demonstrates their subversive nature within society and mirrors the troubling nature of the decline of female beauty into the subversive, ugly old hag. This decline from beauty to ugliness highlights another fear concerning women which is expressed in the unknown deviant nature of the colder and leaking female body that infects the world through the foulness emanating from the mouth, as explicitly described in texts like *De Vetula*, a twelfth or thirteenth century Pseudo-Ovidian text, and more implicitly suggested through descriptions of open mouths without sufficient barriers of teeth, as in the Middle English

romance, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*.[9] Women also carry with them the continuous association with Eve, who through eating the apple and enticing Adam to do the same, secured the fall of humankind and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It is commonly with Eve that all subversive women are associated, and particularly pertinent is that the fall of humankind occurred through the mouth of a woman, and therefore the fear of women and their mouths is a recurrent theme across literature.

The feminine gendering of the mouth is not constrained to the dangerous and the subversive, however, as it can also be positive and affirming. The female mouth can be a connection between the earthly and the divine: female mystics are one example of the sharing of the divine knowledge which can be associated with communal or individual singing, as I discuss in Chapter Five. Furthermore, it is the female mouth that is often selected for descriptions of beauty in medieval literature, which has a close association with youth, purity, and morality, with the external manifestations being indicative of inner grace. This inner grace made manifest is also evident in a feminine comparison with the antithesis of Eve, the Virgin Mary, who is representative of perfect, 'chaste, silent and obedient' womanhood: the 'ideal of female conduct'.[10] Furthermore, Mary epitomises the perfect woman with a closed mouth, the opposite of the dangerous woman who corrupts the world through her open mouth.

Masculine authority expressed through the mouth, like feminine authority, can be a positive function but it can also be subverted by emasculating qualities and the female mouth. As I argue below, authority is defined by clear, uninterrupted speech and, within the largely patriarchal society of the Middle Ages, masculine authority is paramount in maintaining the perceived 'natural' order of society. This patriarchy is threatened by the dangerous, loquacious, uncontrollable female mouth, but equally can be supported by the perfect image of womanhood. It can also appear to be undermined by a lapse in clarity of speech and in the suggestion of effeminate speech. However, there is not always a straightforward connection between 'unmanly' speech and a lack of authority: both John the Dominican (c. 1350-1420),

[9] *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkett, 1968); *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle,* in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995).
[10] Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Secular Women and Late-Medieval Marian Drama', in *Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 43, (2013), 121-139 (p. 130).

who stuttered, and the Pardoner in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, examined more closely in Chapter One, are key examples of individuals (both 'real' and fictional) with different speech patterns who still hold authority over their listeners. As this thesis demonstrates, the ways in which gender and authority interact in relation to the mouth are manifold and can both uphold and deny the traditional view of gender binaries, to create a nuanced view of gendered authority in the late medieval Western world.

A further argument that is present across all chapters of this thesis is the transformative nature of the human mouth. Physical healing, spiritual healing, a direct connection with God, and an ability to influence others, are all made possible through the human mouth. The mouth is also central to the more distressing physical transformation of women through the life cycle from beautiful, fecund youth, to ugly, leaky old age. Transformation can be achieved through the mouth's functions: through speech, singing, ingestion, and kissing. Its nature, I suggest, as a site of transformation, adds to the mouth's importance in defining humanity: its physicality and functionality not only determine and articulate humanity but also alter and transform.

Part of the definition of humanity, as described by Aristotle in his *Politics*, is the ability to articulate Christian morality. Aristotle argues that 'speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong',[11] and therefore mankind has the ability to understand morality and to articulate it through speech which on two counts sets humans apart from animals. The idea of articulating and demonstrating morality is key to all aspects of this thesis. An inability to define morality through one's mouth is central to defining the monstrous; good morals are important for asserting religious and social authority, and the close association of beauty with morality help to delineate them from the type of beauty that, conversely, hides an inner ugliness. Gender, authority, transformation and morality all combine in the human mouth to indicate human perfection and superiority.

[11] Aristotle, *Politics,* trans. by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), I. I. 10, p. 11, with Greek on p. 10.

In this thesis, by considering, through the lens of gender, the importance of the mouth for human authority, it is apparent that the masculine/feminine binary is blurred. The traditional medieval understanding of masculinity as the superior and more perfect gender is not clear cut. Equally, female authority is often depicted in medieval literature but is not always subversive to masculinity. There are a variety of manifestations of the gendered mouth from the subversion of masculine authority by the mouth of an old woman, or the dangerous singing of the sirens, through to a deep female spirituality in song denoting a God-given authority. Furthermore, subversive femininity cannot always be easily recognisable in physical manifestations: sometimes female beauty, as with the beautiful young *puella* in *De Vetula*, epitomises notions of purity and perfection, but this can be contrasted with the beauty of the sirens' physicality and song which disguises a frightening power of female control and potential monstrosity. Furthermore, I argue that the mouth is used to define humanity and human authority through the definition of the 'other'. This occurs through the feminisation of the monstrous, images of the mouth of Hell, and even the denigration of other cultures by animalistic descriptions of their eating habits, speech and singing. The human mouth defines and subverts humanity, sets social groups apart, and creates a transcendental connection between Heaven and the divine, all through a gendering of roles of authority.

The role of the mouth as an opening into the inner human body, and as one of the senses which Suzannah Biernoff describes as the 'five gates or windows',[12] allows for detailed discussion of the connection between the inner and outer body. The mouth is a vital opening in the body, allowing for speech to exit, breath to be taken in and out, and food and drink to enter. The healing power of the mouth, as I explore in Chapter Four, relies on the mouth as a passage from the inner body to the outer, and vice versa. The very definition of humanity as relating to the articulation of the understanding of morality and rationality also relies on this opening in the body. Furthermore, the transcendent function of singing, discussed in Chapter Five which holds great importance within the liturgy as well as inspiring visions and deepening a connection with God, relies on the mouth being open and expressive. To its detriment, the open mouth also holds great danger as a point where sin can enter 'one's corporeal home' and be corrupting to the inner body.[13] Furthermore, speech and singing,

[12] Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 54.
[13] Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*, p. 54.

which are so important for humanity and religious practice, also hold a danger when wielded by monstrous beings and deformed by scandalous words. The open mouth, so necessary for ingesting food for nourishment and healing, could also be representative of animalistic devouring, and the most feared mouth of Hell leading its victims to eternal damnation. As a point of entry and exit for the human body, then, the mouth, this thesis argues, is in itself a paradox, being efficacious and vital for survival as well as dangerous and representative of pain and the entrance to Hell.

By foregrounding the mouth, this thesis contributes to a wide range of scholarship on the medieval senses, the emotions, gender studies, speech impediments, literary genres, and monstrosity studies. It is also an interdisciplinary body of research, which spans literary, scientific, medical, theological, and artistic sources. This thesis adds to the understanding of the mouth as an organ whose manifold manifestations are visible across the social, literary, and religious landscapes of the later medieval western world. In addition, it fills a scholarly gap by considering the mouth as vital for defining, and undermining, humanity through themes of gender, authority, rationality, and morality.

The Scholarly Context

The mouth has commonly been dealt with as a sensory organ in scholarship,[14] and it is in conjunction with the other organs of sense that it has contributed to our understanding of the medieval body. The mouth has also featured in some works dedicated to speech and appeared as an example in works on medicine, the body, and the grotesque. Ynez Violé O'Neill

[14] *The Five Senses in Medieval and Early Modern England,* edited by Annette Kern-Stähler, Beatrix Busse and Wietse de Boer (Leiden, Netherlands; Boston, Massachusetts: Brill, 2016); *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage Fascinations Frames*, edited by Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz and Alison Calhoun (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008); W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, edited by David Howes (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005); Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses from Antiquity to Cyberspace*, translated by James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); C.M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching in history* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

dedicates a book to speech and speech disorders in pre-modern western thought[15] which is pertinent to Chapter One of this thesis which opens with a discussion of Blessed John the Dominican and his speech impediment. O'Neill amasses a large variety of material on speech and presents it in a clear chronological order, highlighting the problem of terminology which I extend further in Chapters One and Five in the discussion on the separation of the voice, speech and singing. More commonly, the mouth and its functionality appear in scholarship on wider fields of study. The mouth as part of the creation of the grotesque is highlighted and discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin as the most important feature, for the 'grotesque face is actually reduced to the gaping mouth'.[16] Bakhtin further highlights the open, incomplete nature of the grotesque body[17] which finds parallels with my own argument concerning the ugly, monstrous, subversive, and often implicitly feminised mouth which transgresses the border between the inside and outside of the body.

Further studies on the body and medicine have been influential throughout this thesis as the mouth cannot be treated as a separate entity but should always be considered in relation to the rest of the human body. Such works include that of Marie-Christine Pouchelle on the body and surgery, and Jack Hartnell's work on the medieval body.[18] Pouchelle takes the work of Henri de Mondeville, a medieval French surgeon, as a case study from which to interrogate medieval views of the body and growing divisions between medicine and surgery. This has helped to inform my own discussion of medieval medical and surgical texts, as well as views on the body politic, connections between the mouth and the rest of the human body, and masculine and feminine medieval bodies. Hartnell's work takes a broader chronological and geographical source basis when discussing the medieval body, and includes discussion of monstrous beings, poetry, manuscript illuminations and artistic artefacts. His work on the head, senses, and travel literature particularly informed my argument in Chapter Three concerning the manipulation of the mouth in the depiction of monstrous beings.

[15] Ynez Violé O'Neill, *Speech and Speech Disorders in Western Thought Before 1600* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980).
[16] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Bakhtin, p. 317.
[17] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 26.
[18] Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* trans. by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Profile Books, 2018).

One full-length study that is devoted to the mouth in the medieval world is *Middle English Mouths* by Katie Walter. This book places the mouth at the centre of the argument rather than as an addition to other research questions, such as the works above. Walter argues for the importance of the mouth as central to defining and dismantling human Christian identity and views its importance across culture through the crossover between vernacular medical and theological literature.[19] Walter's work, as well as my own, seeks to understand the varied appearances, uses and abuses of the mouth in the medieval period more deeply. Walter focusses on medical and theological discourse, allowing for a more theoretical, academic, and theological view of the human mouth and its importance in understanding sin, salvation, and through these, humanity. My own research touches on ideas of sin and salvation in references to Eve and Mary, as well as through doom paintings and images of the mouth of Hell. However, my increased source base and varied genres seeks to show ideas of the mouth across medieval culture and how the mouth, through gender and manifestations of authority, can demonstrate, and deepen, our understanding of medieval society and humanity. In her focus on the everyday body, Walter highlights a deficiency of her research which is 'limited in its capacity to speak to the particularised experiences – especially of disability, but also of gender – of those who are differently embodied from the male, the normative, bodies of philosophy and medicine.'[20] It is into this gap of the gendered experience that this thesis fits, adding to the understanding of the mouth, its gendered qualities and humanity, highlighting the mouth as central to humanity through its ability to define, denigrate and subvert authority.

Walter's sources are principally of a medical and theological nature, and therefore I also use some of the same material, including works by Bartholomew the Englishman, Isidore of Seville, and Guy de Chauliac. Walter's texts are almost exclusively in their Middle English forms, and I too deal with many sources in Middle English, but also extend this to cover some texts in Latin and some translations from Welsh. This includes a greater scope of material from across Europe. Furthermore, the range of genres used in this thesis is broader than Walter's corpus and allows the movement of ideas about the mouth across geography and genre to be more fully explored and expressed, and what they can reveal about medieval

[19] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, pp. 1-2.
[20] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 6.

Western culture. For example, Chapter Three includes manuscript illuminations depicting the mouth of Hell, and doom paintings from church walls which provide evidence for the translation of written ideas into visual imagery to be viewed and shared with a wider cross-section of medieval society, not just focussing on the wealthy and literate elite.

In her work Walter's chapters are based on a 'core set of the mouth's properties', including the mouth and the tripartite soul, the mouth's place within the body, the epistemological relation of food and knowledge with eating and knowing, the power of kissing, and surgical interventions.[21] The focus on these properties of the mouth appears to show some crossover with my own work however Walter's research investigates spiritual meanings of the mouth and how these meanings can be read across both spiritual and medical texts to more fully understand the medieval mouth and body. My own research has a distinct focus on the themes of gender and authority and in many examples highlights the physicality of the mouth, including speech, beauty, singing, monstrous physicality and kissing. Many of my areas of research are oral functions or physical properties that can be seen or heard. Both my own work and Walter's has a focus on kissing. Walter highlights the transformative possibilities of the kiss through devotional practices whereas my own research focuses on kisses in travel and romance literature and their transformative healing qualities through physical touch. Furthermore, Walter considers the sense of taste in relation to spirituality, which my work approaches differently, particularly in terms of the healing properties of ingesting remedies. By taking a different methodological angle in examining the centrality of the mouth to medieval ideas about humanity, this thesis develops and adds to the existing work in the field.

Most other work concerned principally with the mouth is integrated into discussions of monstrosity, gender, the senses, the life cycle, medicine or religion, as opposed to discrete studies. Ynez Violé O'Neill's work on speech and speech disorders is a unique work centred on one function of the mouth.[22] This is a concise work that provides a detailed, but relatively brief, chronology of understanding of speech from the Classical authors through to the turn of the seventeenth century, following schools of thought and their development as well as individual contributors to the field. In the conclusion, O'Neill presents a singularly interesting

[21] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, pp. 15-16.
[22] O'Neill, *Speech and Speech Disorders in Western Thought Before 1600*.

way of visualising the development of understanding of speech, by placing it in the shape of a diamond. In this image, the Hellenistic period is the top of the diamond, and during this time investigators took two different paths, one emphasising the soul, and the other, the body, reaching the greatest distance in the High Middle Ages; the reunion of ideas is placed finally in the sixteenth century.[23] O'Neill's work is useful as an overview of the general chronology of understanding of speech up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, however it lacks detailed analysis of the mouth as a multifaceted organ.

Work on the history of the senses and sensory history is also related to this thesis through the mouth being the location of the sense of taste which informs some of the research for Chapter Four. A large part of this thesis is also concerned with speech, and in some definitions of the senses in the Middle Ages, speech was counted as a sixth sense. C. M. Woolgar finds so much reference to speech in relation to the senses that he includes a chapter on the subject in his work on the medieval senses.[24] Woolgar's work provides information on the connection between the senses, discussing the hierarchy of senses, and each of the five senses, and informs the background for much of my thesis. In discussing the mouth, its primary functions are as the location of the sense of taste and speech, and as such it cannot be detached from the other senses. Furthermore, speech and singing, emanating from the mouth are transferred to another person through the sense of hearing, and it is in this way that they are powerful and can wield authority. Further work on the senses is by Mark M. Smith who makes the distinction between the 'history of the senses' and 'sensory history', discerning that the first consisted of tracing 'the evolution of a particular sense in and of itself,' while that latter 'does the same but gestures towards the ecumenical, considering … its social and cultural construction and its role in texturing the past.'[25] It is through this second manifestation that my thesis perceives the senses: in its socially and culturally constructed role, the mouth, as the location of taste and speech, defines what it means to be human and have authority.

Other works of a longer chronology offer broader insights into the ways in which the senses interacted with their historical environment. Robert Jütte argues that through the 'given

[23] O'Neill, *Speech and Speech Disorders in Western Thought Before 1600,* pp. 214-215.
[24] Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, pp. 84-104.
[25] Smith, *Sensing the Past,* p. 4.

hierarchy or classification of the senses it is possible to discern mental outlines and productions of the social hierarchy and value system to which it is attached'.[26] Mark M. Smith's later work criticises Jütte's heavy reliance on 'an intellectual history of the senses'.[27] Smith's work seeks a more nuanced view of the senses through history while stressing that 'the senses generally traversed time and space in … a figurative, roaming fashion', and that it can be misleading to try to understand a period or place through a sense. Smith does, however, agree with other historians in the field that senses are a product of their historical and cultural environment, and it is this construction of sense, and the sensory organ of the mouth that Smith's work informs this thesis.

Research on the history of medicine and the body in the Middle Ages is also significant for much of the exploration in this thesis. Marie-Christine Pouchelle's work, already mentioned, addresses questions of medicine and medical practitioners through the analysis of the major work on surgery by Henri de Mondeville.[28] This work, along with other scholarship on medical history helps inform the argument of this thesis where one of the genres of literature is medical. Nancy Siraisi's broad work, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, focusses predominantly on the academic side of the medical education system and profession, highlighting one aspect of medicine in the Middle Ages, while sidelining the multitude of unseen medical practitioners not part of the educated, literate elite. [29] This supports the primary source material I use on educated medical practitioners including Guy de Chauliac and Gilbertus Anglicus. In an extension of source material, Carole Rawcliffe's *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* uses archaeological evidence, extracts from medical literature, evidence from art and even some propaganda literature to build a detailed picture of medicine in medieval England. I use a similar breadth of source material and extend the boundaries of England, as set by Rawcliffe, to include more of Western Europe.

The volume *Framing Medieval Bodies*, edited by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin is important in the developing research into the movement of medical ideas into society and other genres of

[26] Jütte, *A History of the Senses from Antiquity to Cyberspace,* p. 14.
[27] Smith, *Sensing the Past,* p. 14.
[28] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages*.
[29] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

literature, as well as viewing the body and medicine from this other angle of society.[30] This work gathers together many different ways of considering bodies and the intersection between historical, literary and theoretical perspectives. Its widened view encompasses theories of gender, religion, and literature. It is into this web of interrelated discourses that further work on gender, the life cycle, and monstrosity can be inserted to support and contradict each other, forming the basis of secondary research for this thesis. Many of the themes that arise in this work are also highlighted in my own research, including ideas of gender, the body politic, health, religious discourse, beauty, and the senses. From this work, I apply such themes to the human mouth in the medieval period to argue for its importance in defining, and upholding authority and humanity.

The field of study on gender in the Middle Ages plays a key element in each chapter of this thesis as this research focuses on the role of gender, and its portrayal in relation to human authority. Joan Cadden's work on sex difference makes use of medical and scientific material in conjunction with other literature illustrating the cultural context, to fully integrate ideas of sex and gender. [31] It works both chronologically and thematically to explore the many facets of gender and how the scientific is integrated into secular and religious ideas of sex and gender. Cadden's research not only explores the nature of sex in a medical and natural philosophical way but extends that into the social and cultural sphere. This diversity of source material aims at the 'unfolding of relations among various distinct but overlapping sets of theories, values and interests',[32] and it is through this that it links into my own work. The varieties of sex and gender that I encounter in my source material, covering a broad base of genres, cannot be reduced to a clear masculine/feminine divide, and takes Cadden's argument 'that scientific ideas about sex differences in the later Middle Ages participated in the broader culture's assumptions about gender'.[33] Moreover, that these interactions were varied and intricate, and in my own research I apply the scientific and natural philosophic views on gender and sex to other cultural contexts to illuminate their views but recognise that there is no clear divide between masculine and feminine, or indeed between science, and society.

[30] Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin, *Framing Medieval Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
[31] Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, science, and culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[32] Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 10.
[33] Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 2.

Many more works explore these interactions between medicine, religion, and gender more fully.

Gender also works in conjunction with studies on the life cycle. Thomas Lacquer's work *Making Sex*, covers a wide chronological base from the ancient Greeks through to the work of Freud. Lacquer argues that 'in these pre-Enlightenment texts … *sex*, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while *gender*, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or "real"'.[34] Lacquer argues for a "one sex" model beginning from the perfect male body with the female body being an imperfect version. However, Cadden develops this work and argues that the understanding of gender and sex is much more nuanced, and the medieval physiognomic view of the body cannot be reduced to Lacquer's model.[35] My own work contributes to this more nuanced understanding of the body through deep analysis of the role of the mouth in supporting and subverting authority, and the nuanced gendering that is exploited in the manifestations of the mouth.

In a continuation of the interrelations of gender with other fields of study Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa's edited volume, *Medicine, religion and gender in medieval culture* is a vital piece of research in arguing for the inseparability of the body and the spirit.[36] The chapters in this volume highlight important themes including the increased distribution of manuscripts containing both medical and spiritual texts; the ambivalent nature of the female body as being connected with both the Virgin Mary and with Eve, and in the later Middle Ages the convergence of women's medicine with popular devotion to the Virgin Mary.[37] Continuing from these connections across fields of study, and intersecting with gender and medicine is research on the human life cycle. For a detailed study on the life cycle in the medieval world Elizabeth Sears' *The Ages of Man* is essential. Sears' work provides a detailed overview of the variations on the stages of the life cycle that circulated but also highlights that it was not just a system, but it was given interpretation. These stages of life cycle 'do not mirror medieval life so much as they reflect medieval meditations, conscious and deliberate, on the

[34] Thomas Lacquer, *Making Sex: body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 8.
[35] Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages,* p. 3.
[36] Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, (ed) *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).
[37] Yoshikawa, (ed) *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, pp. 16-17, 19.

nature and meaning of human existence'.[38] This reflection of the medieval mindset and the symbolic hierarchy of society is also part of Shulamith Shahar's work on old age in the Middle Ages.[39] Shahar's work not only details differing attitudes towards old age and the elderly but highlights that knowledge of 'the views and attitudes of Medieval society will help to shed light on its historical uniqueness, as well as on the issue of continuity and change in Western society'.[40] This viewpoint ties together all the interwoven fields of study and their aims in working together, or individually, to better understand the medieval period and the people that lived in it.

Scholarship that investigates gender, anatomy and cultural differences all interweave in the study of the monstrous, a field that informs Chapter Three of this study in particular. Monstrosity is a wide field of study encompassing research into the monstrous beings, monstrous women, monstrous humans, and behaviour. This has influenced the argument for several chapters particularly in relation to views on women and their potentially subversive nature, as well as the dangerous singing sirens of Chapter Five. The first consideration which Asa Simon Mittman's work is vital to is the question of what constitutes a monster, or a monstrous race. Mittman's argument is that the use of the term 'race', and indeed 'monster', holds many problems as they are both artificial notions, and the term 'race' 'in this context … would have carried either no meaning for the creators, depicters and original audiences, or would have meant something radically different from what modern readers associate with this term'.[41] Although a common term and certainly a well-used and recognised one its inherent problems blur distinctions between monsters, monstrous humans, hybrids, transformational creatures, and demons. Within this thesis therefore the term monstrous beings will be used in reference to any creature not identified as traditionally human or animal.

Hartnell's later work on the medieval body discusses the human head and details monstrous beings whose heads were missing or deformed, including the Cynocephali and the Blemmyae. His work raises questions on the medieval understanding of 'normal', and on

[38] Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: medieval interpretations of the life cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 6.
[39] Shulamith Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Yael Lotan (London: Routledge, 1995).
[40] Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, p. 11.
[41] Asa Simon Mittman, 'Are the 'monstrous races' races?' *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 6.1 (2015), 36-51.

whether such monstrous beings were believed to truly exist; raising a light 'into the imaginations of everyday folk, their aspirations, their fantasies, their fears'.[42] Informing Hartnell's work on monstrosity is an earlier, foundational study by Lisa Verner, providing information on monsters through the Ancients, Anglo-Saxons, bestiary literature and *Mandeville's Travels*.[43] Definitions of what constitutes a monster become more complicated when also considering ideas of gender and culture which blur the distinction between the human and monstrous. This is a key theme that Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills grapple with in their edited work of 2003, whose chapters cover such topics as 'Jesus as Monster', 'Blood, Jews and Monsters in Medieval Culture', as well as the more typical monsters in travel literature.[44] The chapters work together to argue for the cultural symbolism attached to the use of monstrosity within the medieval world and its varied manifestations.

Gender and monstrosity are closely connected, as some chapters in Bildhauer and Mills' volume argue. Dana M. Oswald's work focusses on how these two themes are conveyed and explored in medieval English literature.[45] Her research is centred on hybrid monsters and sexual monsters and the threat of the unknown: a sexually reproductive monster invading the civilised world, or the transformative monster that moves unseen. This view of monstrosity as potentially unseen and dangerous is reflected in Sarah Alison Miller's work on monstrosity and the female body, which returns to ideas from research focussing specifically on gender. Miller's work leads through the Pseudo-Ovidian *De Vetula*, and gynaecological literature, to describe the monstrosity of the changing female body through the life cycle: a body that 'entices with its beauty and repels when that beauty cracks to reveal disorder and decomposition beneath its façade'.[46] All these areas of scholarship come together in my research informing my work on the mouth through offering medical, cultural and social contexts for my primary examples. They also help to build a more nuanced view of the mouth in the medieval period through the interconnections visible between culture, religion and medicine. Finally, this scholarship informs my main argument on wielding authority through

[42] Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, p. 31.
[43] Lisa Verner, *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1976).
[44] Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills, eds., *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).
[45] Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010).
[46] Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 140-141.

their explorations into different aspects that help to define humanity, and consequently human authority, in the Middle Ages.

Methodological Approach

In exploring the mouth, gender and authority in the Middle Ages, this thesis makes use of a wide range of primary source material, covering different literary genres including encyclopaedic texts, medical literature, travel literature, romance literature, other literary outputs, bestiaries, hagiographies, poetry, religious discourse, as well as visual imagery. The use of a wide source base allows this thesis to consider different manifestations of the human mouth across medieval culture, and the audiences this would have reached. The diversity of genres shows the range of ideas about the mouth in medieval culture and importantly, the fact that these ideas are embedded in the culture, evidenced by their appearance in different types of text, showing how deep-rooted some ideas about the mouth were. Furthermore, the range of sources allows for a wide audience in medieval society to have engaged with ideas of the human mouth to demonstrate that the theories on the mouth are not restricted only to the scholastic medieval world.

Many of the texts chosen for this thesis were popular within the later Middle Ages, and to demonstrate the popularity, where possible texts in Middle English, and of wide distribution, have been selected as reaching a larger literate audience. For each type of source material used, and the most commonly referenced texts, the details on language and distribution are set out in the rest of the methodology section below. This translation into the vernacular is demonstrative of a movement of ideas throughout the Middle Ages, most frequently from continental Europe to England. Translations into the vernacular highlight on the one hand texts that were considered important to share, but also made information available to a wider cross-section of society to include those outside of the strict academic sphere. The inclusion of a range of popular texts helps to show the ubiquity of ideas of thought and movement of ideas across culture, as well as a large audience for such ideas. There are the male-authored scholastic medical texts of Guy de Chauliac and Gilbertus Anglicus intended for academics and medical students, and the *Trotula* ensemble whose composition shows female influence,

and which was copied and disseminated through the Middle Ages. Other source material shows a wider intended audience such as romance and travel literature for the educated lay person, or for a wider audience to listen to, as well as the *Golden Legend* intended as an aid to preaching, or the visual sources of doom paintings available for anyone to view, irrespective of age, social position or education. Although the ideas are nuanced across the texts and they are not homogenous ideas, they are repeated and therefore propagated, for example the aspects of descriptions defining the ugly old hag in Chapter Two is, in some ways, extended and exaggerated to produce monstrous mouths in Chapter Three, and these ideas spread across literature, travel writing, and into visual imagery. Through these sources I aim to demonstrate that many of the ideas and understandings of the human mouth in the later Middle Ages are not isolated, theoretical, scholastic concepts, but were integrated into a wide range of genres, accessing a large number of the population.

Across all chapters, encyclopaedic literature forms a backbone of the source material, in particular the influential seventh-century *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) and *De proprietatibus rerum*, originally composed in the mid-thirteenth century, by Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272). The *Etymologies* is a standard text in the medieval period being arguably 'the most influential book, after the Bible, in the learned world of the Latin West for nearly a thousand years'.[47] As such it is key to the development of other works of academic literature and to the transmission of ideas from the Classical scholars into the medieval period. Even through to the later Middle Ages, Isidore was considered as an authority and large numbers of copies of his entire work as well as excerpts were still being produced and even printed.[48] This thesis uses the modern English translation of *Etymologies* alongside the same Latin edition used to create the modern translation.[49] The direct comparison of the modern English against the Latin proves the accuracy and value of the modern translation. Bartholomew's text, completed in c. 1245 was soon widely circulated and translated into French in 1372, and into English by John Trevisa in 1398.[50] According to Elizabeth Keen,

[47] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.
[48] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, pp. 24-25. Barney et al, detail that 'more than sixty manuscript copies of the whole work, a well as more than seventy copies of excerpts, were written in the fifteenth century', and 'nearly a dozen printings appeared before the year 1500', (p. 24).
[49] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* (Oxonii: e Typographeo Carendoniano, 1911), 2 vols.
[50] 'Bartholomaeus Anglicus', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.) (Oxford University Press) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10791> [Accessed 03/08/2023].

Bartholomew's work is 'often referred to as the most popular medieval encyclopaedia', and makes use of a wide range of source material, including contemporary texts from the 'Christian, Arab and Buddhist medieval worlds'. [51] These texts combine information from across a wide variety of subject areas and are influential to other literary genres including medical literature. The interdisciplinary nature of encyclopaedias is an important addition to this thesis which is also interdisciplinary in nature.

In my selection of source material, medical texts provide a consistent presence in informing my reading of the medieval mouth as a physical element of the human body. Furthermore, medical sources supply information on the treatment of mouth problems, beautifying remedies, and the mouth as a conduit for ingested and spoken healing. The main sources that are utilised in multiple chapters are *The Trotula*, consisting of three texts, composed originally in Latin, in Italy in the twelfth century, the *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts* which contain four manuscripts, written in the vernacular, from the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the *System of Physic* (c. 1460) which includes the Middle English translation of Gilbertus Anglicus' medical work, and *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, written in the fifteenth century.[52] The medical texts used are from across Western Europe and date from the high to late Middle Ages. These sources show some similarities in the medical remedies detailed, as well as sharing a common base in Classical literature as well as early medieval literature such as the work of Isidore of Seville. For the most part such texts are produced by academics and intended for teaching medical students or for practising physicians and surgeons. The works of Guy de Chauliac (c. 1300-1368) and Gilbertus Anglicus (c. 1180-1250) were produced by active practitioners who were university-trained, and they provide detailed medical information on signs, symptoms and treatments of bodily ailments in the traditional head-to-toe arrangement. The work of Gilbertus Anglicus, originally composed in Latin in the mid-thirteenth century, is entitled *Compendium medicinae*. The work was one of the major written texts on medicine of its period and is 'the

[51] Elizabeth Keen, *The Journey of a Book: Bartholomew the Englishman and the Properties of Things* (Australia: Australian National University Press, 2007), p. 3, 18. Keen also refers to the earlier work by Robert Collison, *Encyclopedias: Their History Throughout the Ages* (New York and London: Hafner, 1966).
[52] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Diana Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts, Volume One: The Recipes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020); Laura Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic (GUL MS Hunter 509, ff. 1r-167v)* A Compendium of Medieval Medicine Including the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012); *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, ed. by Margaret S. Ogden, Vol 1, EETS o.s. 265 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

oldest complete treatise on general medicine written by an English author'.[53] Gilbertus' text consists mainly of remedies for ailments, arranged in the traditional head-to-toe fashion and are taken largely from other academic literature.[54] Gilbertus, in the course of his text, references a large number of Classical, Arabic, and some medieval authorities, thus demonstrating his wide reading and education.[55] The Middle English translation of *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac* displays many similarities with Gilbertus Anglicus, and quotes or references a large number of common authorities such as Galen, and the Arabic authorities including Avicenna, Rhazes and Haly Abbas.[56] Guy's text has been described as 'the end of medieval medicine', and it 'brought medieval surgery to a close'.[57] As such an important and influential text that brings together so much knowledge accrued across the medieval period it is a central work for this thesis. One aspect that is unusual though is that a comparison between this Middle English edition and the Latin original, *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, shows that the translation into the vernacular was quite accurate, with little editing.[58] This is unusual because when translating into the vernacular it was common for texts to be elided, edited, and added to: 'translators and copyists felt free to adapt their material in various ways and by that adaptation achieve a result that was in some ways "original"'.[59] The academic nature of the text leaves questions concerning the daily implementation of such treatments, and the medical support sought by people across society. They do show, at least academically, the range of bodily ailments that were recognised, and the treatments believed to be efficacious. Furthermore, by encountering these texts in their vernacular translations, the usage of these texts fits more neatly into the general chronology of this thesis, as well as widening the potential audience accessing, using and disseminating such texts.

[53] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 17.
[54] Faye Marie Getz ed., *Healing and Society in Medieval England: A Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. xv.
[55] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 19. Estaban-Segura lists a select list of authorities mentioned by Gilbertus: 'Amongst the authorities named by Gilbertus, the following are found: Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Galen, Rufus, Macrobius, Boethius, Alexander of Tralles, Theodorus Priscianus, Theophilus Philaretes, Stephanon, the Arabians Haly Abbas, Rhazes, Isaac Judaeus, Joannitius, Janus Damascenus, Jacobus Alucindi, Avicenna and Averroes, the Salernitan writers, especially Constanin Africanus, Nicholas Praepositus, Romoaldus Ricardus and Maurus, and two unknown authors, Torror and Funcius', (p. 19).
[56] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 19; Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, 2 vols, ed. M. McVaugh (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. xiii.
[57] Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, ed. M. McVaugh, p. ix.
[58] Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*.
[59] Getz, ed., *Healing and Society in Medieval England,* p. xliv.

The *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, written originally, unlike the works of Guy de Chauliac and Gilbertus Anglicus, in the vernacular, show the movement of medical ideas far across Europe and their dissemination in several manuscripts, which Diana Luft has gathered together and translated. Within this edition it is clear to see the communication of ideas and remedies from one text to another as well as some regional differences, and Luft has edited the work into remedy collections followed by remedies unique to particular manuscripts.[60] The manuscripts combined in this edition are British Library Additional 14912, Cardiff 3.242; Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson B467, and Oxford Jesus College 111 also known as The Red Book of Hergest. Luft argues that these texts have previously, and erroneously, been classed together as the work of the Physicians of Myddfai, and she seeks to dispel this myth of combined authorship and demonstrate a similarity in source material and the use of academic ideas and remedies combined with some local additions and amendments.[61] It is important to gain perspective on the variants of medicine available: the Medieval Welsh Medical Texts gathered here in Luft's edition may not have the strict head-to-toe, in-depth information found in Guy de Chauliac and Gilbertus Anglicus, but they show a more remedy-based, perhaps practical approach to medical practice.

The final set of medical texts that is used in most chapters of this thesis is the *Trotula* ensemble, a set of three texts: *Book on the Conditions of Women* (Liber de Sinthomatibus Mulierum), *On Treatments for Women* (De Curis Mulierum), and *On Women's Cosmetics* (De Ornatu Mulierum). These are different from the other medical literature as they are devoted to medicine for women and display a certain interest in women's medicine. The *Trotula* texts were most likely to have all originated in the Salerno region and were popular from the late twelfth century onwards.[62] These texts were transported and included in different manuscripts across Western Europe sometimes in a combination and sometimes separately, but were combined into the *Trotula* ensemble at the end of the twelfth century.[63] In their authorship these texts are uncommon as Monica Green argues that at least the second of these texts was written by a woman but overwritten by one or more other authors of unknown gender.[64] The

[60] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts,* p. 27.
[61] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, pp. 9-19.
[62] *The Trotula: An English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine* ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2002), pp. xi-xii.
[63] *The Trotula,* (2002), p. xii.
[64] *The Trotula*, (2002), p. xv.

placement of a female voice at least somewhere in the creation gives a suggestion that there was not simply academic interest in women's health gleaned from classical source material, but also practical interest. In the corpus of medical literature used for this research these are four texts that form a basis for several chapters and provide information from different authors, different geographies and languages, but are all popular texts that have some commonality of sources and outlook.

In addition to the medical texts described above, this thesis also utilises travel literature as a means of exploring medieval ideas about otherness. Travel literature forms a central corpus of sources for the chapter on monstrous mouths because these are most commonly encountered in 'exotic', or foreign, parts of the world. *Mandeville's Travels* (fourteenth century) and *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* (late thirteenth and early fourteenth century), both originally composed in the vernacular, are important sources for the Chapter Three on monstrous mouths. *Mandeville's Travels* and the work of Marco Polo (d. 1324) are both examples of travel literature, ostensibly describing places and cultures of the Eastern world, although *Mandeville's Travels* shows much borrowing from other source material and rather than considered as an original work the author has been described as, at best, 'a compiler'.[65] Despite its lack of originality, and the uncertainty concerning authorship, *Mandeville's Travels*, probably composed originally in French, was widely circulated and translated with 'two hundred and fifty to three hundred medieval manuscripts' still surviving today.[66] An unreliable guide to medieval geography it may be, but this text does provide a guide to contemporary fears, imagination and interests, as well as social and religious concerns in the West.[67] The work of Marco Polo, likely first produced in Franco-Italian, which is believed to have been a collaborative work with a writer, Rustichello da Pisa, did not achieve the fame of the slightly later work, *Mandeville's Travels,* surviving in approximately half the number of manuscript copies.[68] John Larner does describe Marco Polo's work as 'one of the most influential books of the Middle Ages', due to its 'immense body of new geographical

[65] *The Book of John Mandeville,* ed. by Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p. 3.
[66] *The Book of John Mandeville,* ed. by Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson, p. 1.
[67] *The Book of John Mandeville,* ed. by Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson, p. 7.
[68] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, Volume 1, ed. and trans. by Henry Yule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 reprint), First published (London: John Murray, 1871), p. cxxxvi; John Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 106.

knowledge'.[69] However, the usefulness of these texts does not lie in their geographic descriptions or proposed knowledge of other peoples, but rather in their approach to different cultures and their gathering of myths and stories. Stories and their repetition, particularly of monstrous beings is revealing about Western fears of the invasion of their society by such beings, as well as a fascination with the exotic and the monstrous. Such descriptions of monstrous beings demonstrate social, and religious, fears not only about the reality of such beings but also offering some insight into concerns within society.

The romance genre is also of importance for this thesis where beauty and gender are central themes. This forms an important source basis for Chapters Two and Four, where medieval cultural ideas about physical beauty inform my argument about the mouth's gendered manifestations. For ideas of beauty and ugliness a key source is *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, 'composed or written down in the fifteenth century or later' as part of the Middle English Gawain poems.[70] Within this text the plot centres around a popular storyline in which the something threatening, in this case the old hag of Dame Ragnelle, is normalised and 'brought into line with legitimate…idealized chivalric society'.[71] In a similar way to the travel literature this demonstrates a fear of medieval society, but one that, through the genre of romance literature, can be removed to enable the established social order to be retained. As with many sources, it is difficult to locate what might be considered the 'original', however this text, and other Gawain romances, had popular appeal. Thomas Hahn argues that these 'romances were composed for broad consumption, …mainly for listeners in large, diverse, and mixed groups'.[72] Therefore, unlike other literature of a strictly academic nature, reaching a small educated, literate audience, these romances were designed to reach a much wider audience, and so reflect wider social concerns and fascinations.

Another romance text, *Lybeaus Desconus* (c. 1350) is pivotal to the argument within Chapter Four. This romance also briefly features Sir Gawain but focusses on the next generation of knights and is an example of the fair unknown sub-genre of romance literature, where a figure, uncouth but strong and determined, seeks honour and often wins a lady as well, and

[69] Larner, *Marco Polo and the Discovery of the World*, p. 1.
[70] Thomas Hahn (ed.), *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 2.
[71] Hahn (ed.), *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 41.
[72] Hahn (ed.), *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, p. 11.

later is revealed to be of an aristocratic bloodline.[73] This text has seen many variants and 'belongs to a widely disseminated intertextual network of narratives'.[74] For this thesis it is the Middle English version that is used as it fits with the large amount of other Middle English literary source material in the primary source corpus. It is not only a popular text in the medieval period but is an addition to the romance literature that places Sir Gawain at the centre and continues to uphold the virtues of the chivalric knight. Popular literature, among which is counted the romance literature, continues to display ideas that were influential for medieval society: highlighting fears, fascinations, judgements on society, and upholding or subverting the 'natural' order. In this vein, Geoffrey Chaucer's (c. 1340-1400) monumental work, *The Canterbury Tales*, written at the end of the fourteenth century, is a key source. As a canonical example of medieval literature it is 'acknowledged as one of the masterpieces of English literature'.[75] It offers, through the variety of tales, an overview of many medieval genres and integrates them into this one work.[76] Chaucer's work was popular and well-regarded both by contemporaries and later scholars, and *The Canterbury Tales* offers a vivid image of, and commentary on, a cross-section of medieval society, and is therefore a valuable source for understanding popular views on the mouth.

In addition to the literary sources already discussed, texts of a religious nature are used in my corpus for Chapters One, Four and Five. With Christianity as a central part of the life of medieval European people, the works of a religious nature, especially those which were available to lay people, cannot be ignored. The most common source used here is hagiographical literature. Many of the examples of hagiographical literature used have been taken from the *Golden Legend* (compiled in the 1260s), originally composed in Latin, which Eamon Duffy describes as 'one of the most influential books of the later Middle Ages'.[77] Its popularity is attested to by the large number of surviving manuscripts, as well as being

[73] Stephen Knight, 'The Social Function of the Middle English Romances', in *Medieval Literature: criticism, ideology and history*, ed. by David Aers (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), (99-122), p. 105.
[74] 'Introduction', *Lybeaus Desconus (Lambeth Palace, MS 306)*, edited by Eve Salisbury and James Weldon, 2013, [online TEAMS edition].
[75] 'Chaucer, Geoffrey', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.) (Oxford University Press) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5191> [Accessed 04/08/2023].
[76] 'Chaucer, Geoffrey', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5191> [Accessed 04/08/2023].
[77] Eamon Duffy, 'Introduction', to Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. xi.

translated into most of the vernacular languages in Western Europe.[78] The intended purpose of this text was as an aid to preaching, in which form the information gathered into the *Golden Legend* could be easily and efficiently disseminated.[79] Such a hagiographical text shows the authority of the Church and its historical saintly members, and for each one is an inspiring life story to teach and encourage the medieval Christian. Other hagiographical texts that are included are the Life of Marie d'Oignies (composed c. 1215), which forms a central source for Chapter Five, and some examples taken from the *Acta Sanctorum* database. The *Acta Sanctorum* database contains a large amount of early Christian and medieval hagiographical literature including such texts as *vita, passions,* and *miracula*. It is a useful resource and entirely in the Latin originals; therefore, all translations of sections are my own. The Life of Marie d'Oignies was originally composed, in Latin, shortly after her death in 1213 and demonstrates a fascination with the lives of holy women, their visions, and miracles. In its authorship this text is interesting as Jacques de Vitry had studied with Marie d'Oignies[80] and writing so soon after her death suggests on the one hand a good knowledge of the subject but on the other a close connection that could result in a positively biased account of Marie. It was a widely circulated biography and has been 'hailed as the earliest extant document offering details of an innovation in female piety'.[81] It was also translated into English in the fifteenth century and survives in a manuscript with several other female saints' lives. As with other hagiography this text has an agenda, but unlike other ones it is very specific: it was written at the request of Bishop Fulk of Toulouse to provide positive preaching material against the Cathar heresy.[82] As with all texts, there is a context, and its relationship with the text in question gives it a bias or agenda that makes it sometimes difficult to work with but also demonstrative of its period both historically and geographically.

[78] Duffy, 'Introduction', to Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, pp. xi-xii. Duffy lists that the *Golden Legend* 'has survived in almost a thousand manuscripts copies of the Latin text alone, with another five hundred or so manuscripts containing translations of all or part', (p. xi).
[79] Duffy, 'Introduction', to Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend,* p. xi.
[80] Alicia Spencer-Hall, 'Marie of Oignies, of Nivelles, or of Villers: The Multiple Textual Identities of a 13th-Century Holy Woman', Open Library of Humanities, (2017) 3(1): 11, (pp. 1–34), p. 3.
[81] Spencer-Hall, 'Marie of Oignies, of Nivelles, or of Villers: The Multiple Textual Identities of a 13th-Century Holy Woman', p. 3.
[82] Spencer-Hall, 'Marie of Oignies, of Nivelles, or of Villers: The Multiple Textual Identities of a 13th-Century Holy Woman', p. 7.

An additional source material, that is used in Chapters Three, Four and Five, is visual imagery, with examples taken from manuscript illuminations, church wall paintings, as well as stained glass windows and sculpture. This, in addition to the variety of literary genres discussed, helps to demonstrate the movement of ideas across the medieval world and how they infiltrate all areas of culture. As this thesis focusses on ideas of gender and authority in medieval *culture*, it is important to address as many different forms of cultural material as possible. Most of the images used are from manuscript sources. These images include monstrous beings, mouth of Hell images, *Maria Lactans*, and images of sirens. Each visual image presents its own set of considerations, including the type of manuscript or location of the image, who might have seen that image, and in some cases questioning what a viewer may have understood from that image. This last question is impossible to answer with certainty as understanding of an image changes with time, geography and education. Many images are contained within manuscripts that were personal possessions and therefore the placement of such images within the texts is important, and the people who owned them were wealthy and probably well-educated. However, some images appear in public places and were certainly viewed by a larger number of members of society across the spectrum. In Chapter Three, doom paintings are used in the exploration of Hell imagery, and these were commonly painted in churches and were visible by all visitors to that space. Images in public places have been considered since the time of Gregory the Great as 'books for the illiterate',[83] however each image must be viewed in context and its iconography dissected, for different people with different levels of educational background will understand or interpret images differently. Therefore, my argument surrounding images takes into consideration the available literature of the time but makes no judgements about what viewers definitively understood: to know what people thought looking at images is impossible to determine.

Structural Divisions

In discussing the mouth, authority, and gender, this thesis is divided into five chapters. Speech is a faculty that is particular to humanity and separates humans from animals, and this is the focus of my first chapter. Speech is intrinsically linked with rationality and provides the

[83] Athene Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate': Understanding English medieval wall paintings', *The British Art Journal*, 9.1 (Spring, 2008), p. 4.

ability to articulate morality giving humans an immediate superiority over animals as well as being important within society for defining the social and authoritarian hierarchy. This chapter argues for the predominance of the wealthier members of society in high social positions being most concerned with their speech and its clarity, and the promotion of social and religious authority through speech, as demonstrated in this chapter by the large number of remedies designed for the perfection of the speaking voice. However, there are exceptions to this, such as the case of John the Dominican whose speech impediment, although listed as a reason for his initial rejection from acceptance into the Dominican order, is eventually described as 'a beauty and treasure',[84] allowing John to teach others to be more accepting and inclusive of every human. The sections of the chapter lead through various levels of impeded speech ranging from hoarseness, through stammering, to muteness, as well as considering how speech changes through the life cycle. Many of the examples, I argue, highlight masculine authority with hagiographic literature, concerning male saints, being recorded by male authors, and medical literature often written and implemented by men. Women appear in relation to their complexion, their humoral balance, which is colder and more moist than men, and its connection to the medical ailments with adverse effects on the voice and speech.

In Chapter Two, I explore the ideas of beauty and health, which are intrinsically linked in medieval discourse. Beauty, however, which can be expressed in connection with the mouth, transcends health to encompass ideas about virtue, morality, bodily control, social position, and authority. Most of the examples in this chapter centre on female beauty as medieval views on beauty focus on the feminine and connect ideas on beauty with sexuality and morality. This chapter demonstrates the prevalence of such ideas about beauty in medical discourse and literature although the reality of such connections, in the everyday lived experience, is more problematic. The ideal of feminine beauty is a creation of patriarchal authority designed to maintain masculine superiority, and is defined by the romance heroine, a beautiful young woman of noble birth and pure character. Medical and cosmetic literature attest to the desire of women to prolong and enhance the ideal appearance of youth and beauty. As I explore here, such a physicality, along with its associated ideas of purity and morality, lend beauty a power and authority that the masculine-created ideal seeks to subjugate, but women seek to achieve and exploit. The chapter is structured around the

[84] B. Joannes Dominici, Vita auctore Fr. Joanne Caroli Florentino...CAPUT II. Ingressus ad Ordinem Prædicatorum, Novitiatus, Professio, (AASS).

female life cycle, moving from the healthy, natural beauty and fertility of youth, through the declining middle age where beauty enhancement is useful, to the leaking, decrepit female body of old age, whose toothless mouth supposedly infects the world with bad breath and evil speech.

The centrality of the mouth for defining and articulating humanity makes it an ideal site for expressing abnormality and particularly monstrosity. In Chapter Three, I argue for the mouth's capacity for demonstrating physical as well as moral monstrosity, through its position within the head of the body and as the source of speech. Such monstrosity is explored through textual and imagistic descriptions of hybrid monstrous beings and through images of the mouth of Hell, examples that contain manipulations of the mouth to produce something inhuman and potentially dangerous. This chapter argues for the implicit feminisation of monstrosity through immorality, carnality and, in a similar way to the old ugly women of Chapter Two, the leaky female body, as well as some direct comparisons between the face's mouth and the women's secondary mouth: the genitals. The underlying feminisation of monstrosity, I suggest here, is also visible in imagery of the mouth of Hell, where damnation is linked to Eve's eating of the apple in the Garden of Eden, and the placement of Hell to the left of Christ mirroring a common binary association of women with the left, and men with the right. The notion of 'kynde', furthermore, forms a central strand for this chapter, considering understandings of the 'natural' and the 'normal'.

Chapter Four argues for the transformative power of the mouth and its centrality as a conduit for healing, both physically and spiritually. Within this chapter, the healing mouth is explored through three main areas: kissing, ingestion, and spoken healing. The healing power of the kiss focuses on romance and travel literature, exploring examples of transformative kisses, including the dragon lady in *Lybeaus Desconus*, that demonstrates and upholds the gender binaries as well as notions of power, authority, social position, and morality, all expressed through the mouth. This example therefore supports masculine authority, however, allows a certain level of female authority to be demonstrated but only in a way that is not subversive of masculinity. The dragon lady takes authority of the situation in initiating the kiss with Lybeaus, thereby effecting her transformation, but does not maintain a position of dominant authority after the transformation. Healing through ingestion argues for the healing power of

the female body through the use of breastmilk as an ingested remedy, both within medical and religious discourse. The Virgin Mary is important in this section through her breastmilk, which upon ingestion is of great power. Here her authority is importantly expressed through a closed mouth, rather than an open mouth which could dangerously allow passage into and out of the uncontrolled body. The final section concerns the healing power of the spoken word, and uses examples of healing charms, incantations, and miracles, to suggest how speech and the mouth bridge the medical, folkloric, and religious genres, to be a powerful conduit for human healing. The transformative nature of healing speech is also explored through the projection of speech towards the patient to enact healing, the mouth in this instance as the conduit for divine and medical exhortation.

The final chapter of this thesis focusses on how power and authority are expressed through the human singing voice and argues that the production of singing is the most transcendent of the mouth's functions. Power wielded through the singing voice is centred on the melodic nature of the song and supports both individual and group authority. The singing voice has the power to control and influence, and can be spiritually, physically, morally and socially defining. The singing voice can also bridge the gap between the earthly and the divine, as well as defining the earthly and the 'other' within society. To investigate these areas more fully this chapter is loosely divided into three sections. The first explores the efficacy of the singing voice particularly within a religious setting, using the Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies and *The Booke of Gostlye Grace* as two central sources. This opening section on efficacious singing is almost entirely devoted to the female mouth, focusing on the lives of female mystics who experience close connections with God, or share divine knowledge through their singing. The second part of the chapter is on the dangers of the singing voice, and my argument focuses on an in-depth case study of the mythological creatures, sirens. Sirens epitomise the dangerous nature of the female singing voice and infiltrate different genres, including literature, art, and religious discourse, to denote the ultimate corruption of morality. The final section of this chapter considers the use of the singing voice to label other social or racial groups as different, such as Simon of Saint-Quentin's description of the barbaric singing of the Tartars, as well as the description of the Pardoner in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The Pardoner lacks traditional masculinity through his physicality, though his femininity and high voice do not detract from his ability to capture an audience and influence them. Both his high singing and speaking voice are beautiful, and beguile the

listener, which the Pardoner exploits to his own ends. Although apparently subversive of masculine authority, the Pardoner exploits his voice, and his mouth to achieve authority over his listeners. The argument of the transcendent nature of the human singing voice combines together many of the main themes of the chapters in this thesis. The importance of speech for authority, the power of beauty and its antithesis in monstrosity, and the transformative effects of speech are all present in the most transcendent quality of the mouth, singing.

Through its functionality, its transformational and transcendent qualities the mouth is central to the definition not only of what it means to be human, but also to the definition of human authority. The mouth demonstrates this role physically, spiritually and symbolically. It also bridges the earthly world with the divine; connects and divides the human and the monstrous, and defines the changing physicality, and perceived morality, through the life cycle. Furthermore, it is the centrality of the mouth for defining humanity and authority that allows it to also be subverted in order to undermine authority, most commonly through the feminised mouth. Where the female mouth emerges as authoritative, it takes on the characteristics of purity, morality and perfection, emulating the most perfect of women, the Virgin Mary, and contradicting the antithesis of the postlapsarian Eve.

Chapter 1

'Þanne an euen, clere and stronge, byndinge and plyaunt voys … is good and ipraysed': Locating humanity and authority in speech

> To this they added, our religion is called the Office of Preachers from the prescribed obligations to preach: he however, since he has impediments of speech and stutterings, that can be known and can be proven by experience, what do we need from his fellowship?
>
> [Ad hæc adjiciebant, nostram Religionem a prædicationis officio Prædicatorum vocari: hic vero, cum impeditioris sit linguæ ac balbutientis, ut nostis omnes & experimento probare potestis, quid tandem ejus consortio indigemus?][1]

As this example attests, Blessed John the Dominican (c. 1350-1420) desired to join the Dominican Order and was nearly rejected, partially on the basis of his speech impediment.[2] His speech was absolutely vital to his pathway and vocation in life, and his speech impediment was, almost, detrimental, and life-changing. This episode highlights one of the key arguments of this chapter: that social and religious authority is promoted through speech, an oral functionality particular to humans that, through the articulation of rationality and morality, sets humanity apart from animals.

The 'Life' of Blessed John, composed in the fifteenth century by Fr John Caroli, a leading Dominican theologian and biographer, from which the opening quotation is taken, is a unique piece of historical evidence, as much of the information for the medieval period regarding speech problems, and certainly much of the source material for this chapter, comes from medical sources, encyclopaedias, or works of literary fiction, that provide little information about the daily life of a person with impeded speech. John's speech impediment is of paramount importance to the story of his life as it is presented as one reason for the rejection

[1] *B. Joannes Dominici, Vita auctore Fr. Joanne Caroli Florentino...*CAPUT II. Ingressus ad Ordinem Prædicatorum, Novitiatus, Professio, (AASS). All translations of the 'Life of Blessed John the Dominican' are my own.
[2] BHL 4387 has dates listed as 1419-1500 on *Philosophie et Lettres: histoire*, <https://www.unamur.be/philo_lettres/histoire/h2224_i.htm > [accessed 01-03-2021].

of his request to enter the Dominican Order. In consideration of the Dominican Order being also known as the 'Office of Preachers', the final words, 'what do we need from his fellowship?' demonstrate that the Fathers believed that John's stammer would prevent him from fulfilling his preaching obligation and therefore he would not be an asset to the Order. John's speech impediment would not have completely prevented his ability to speak, and so this episode presents some idea of the prejudice with which speech impediments were regarded. A preacher would require a voice that demonstrated authority, giving their speech power and persuasion. The suggestion for John is that his speech impediment would interrupt his vocal authority and make him a less persuasive preacher. This episode further highlights the importance of clear speech for the maintenance of masculine and religious authority within a patriarchal social structure.

In the predominantly oral, and therefore aural, society of medieval Europe, clarity of speech and voice were important traits for figures of authority. This chapter therefore concerns the human voice and speech, a key function of the human mouth, in relation to questions of authority. Voice and speech are intrinsically linked: clarity and pitch of voice directly impacts upon the clarity and pitch of speech, which carries with it associated understandings of morality, rationality, and humanity. Many of the examples used in this chapter closely reflect the wealthy strata of medieval society in literary depictions, in medical texts, and in religious texts. These demonstrate how in these two areas of society, the wealthy and the religious, speech was very aurally noticeable and therefore of importance. How far these views on speech and the voice filtered down into the everyday lives of the poorer classes of society is not made visible in the sources of this chapter. Most of these sources were written by the educated, for the educated to read. For example, many medical texts, Gilbertus Anglicus' (c. 1180-1250) *Compendium medicinae* and Guy de Chauliac's (c. 1300-1368) *Cyrurgie* among them, were composed by university-educated men, for educated practitioners catering to the wealthy, to read, and later when translated into Middle English, for the educated layman to read.[3] Considering the education of the writers, the readership they were designed for, and the

[3] Laura Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic (GUL MS Hunter 509, ff. 1r-167v)* A Compendium of Medieval Medicine Including the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 17-19; Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, 'Introduction', ed. M. McVaugh (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. ix-xiv.

social positions of the patients such practitioners usually catered for, it is unsurprising that the poorer classes of society are not visible within such medical texts.

The social and educational authority displayed in the authorship, and general readership, of the medical literature is to some extent mirrored by the religious texts because both evidence institutional authority: the medical profession and the Church. However, for texts of a religious nature, including the hagiographic literature, there is a potentially wider audience, thereby promoting the authority of the established Church to all levels of society and enhancing that authority through the nature of religious literature as aids to preaching.[4] Although neither the protagonists of such literature, nor the eventual audience, were necessarily of high social status, the texts are still intended to define, and exalt the authority of the Church on earth. It is apparent that both medical and religious literature are concerned with maintaining the established social hierarchy; with those of authority continuing to exercise it through their clear, unimpeded speech. A key aspect of social position rests upon the ability to communicate clearly through speech and to thereby carry vocal authority.

This chapter argues that speech is an intrinsic function definitive of humanity itself, through the ability to clearly articulate rationality of thought and understanding of morality. Furthermore, there is a clear connection between the level of perfection of the speaking voice and the power and authority wielded by the speaker. This authority of speech is more naturally of a concern to the higher social positions in society for maintaining the social hierarchy, and this chapter further argues that the large number of medical remedies for speech is demonstrative of this. Much of the source material used here has an implicit bias towards masculine authority both through its authorship, general readership, and consequent perpetuation of ideas. This highlights the argument for concern with maintaining the social hierarchy, largely predicated on a patriarchal structure.

[4] Eamon Duffy, 'Introduction', to Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. xi.

In order to explore the functionality of speech and its impediments, this chapter comprises two main sections. The first considers medieval scholastic understandings of the voice, speech, and aging. The voice, although not particular to humans, does show authoritative importance through its pitch and clarity, and anything that impedes that, or does not conform, undermines the level of authority of the speaker. When vocal production is combined with speech it defines humanity because humans are the only life forms capable of speech. The association with humanity, and further associations of speech as a conduit to understand and articulate morality, places speech as a key part of what it means to be human, and impediments, whether slight or severe, blur that concept of humanity, morality, and authority. Throughout the life cycle patterns of speech are assigned to different ages which help to denote levels of authority. Most particularly, a stammer in the speech pattern is associated with youth and old age, two extreme stages of the life cycle which do not wield significant vocal authority.

The second half of this chapter focuses on increasing levels of impeded speech, divided into sections concerning hoarseness, stammering, impeded speech (a term I use to indicate examples in medical texts where speech is affected in some way, temporarily, but not clearly defined by that text), and finally muteness. Within the medical literature describing and treating ailments that adversely affect the voice and speech production, there is an implicit feminisation, focussing on the colder and wetter humours. This implicit feminisation sets up an opposition of wet and cold versus hot and dry, which is reflected by femininity and masculinity, as well as vocal clarity and authority versus vocal subversion. In consideration of the authority harnessed by a clear voice and fluent speech, then, this chapter argues that speech is a key aspect of defining humanity, but that clear, unimpeded speech is of greatest importance to those of a higher social position.

The Voice, Speech, and the Life Cycle

In medieval scholastic understanding, the voice and speech are treated both as distinct entities, as well as interacting with each other. Aristotle (384-322 BC) differentiated between

speech and vocal sounds, and further used this distinction to differentiate between humans and animals. In his *Politics* he states that 'man alone of the animals possesses speech. The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well'.[5] Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272), a thirteenth-century encyclopaedist, in his *De proprietatibus rerum*, follows the distinction of Aristotle that 'Spekynge is aproprid to mankinde.'[6] Speech and humanity are intrinsically connected, the one being definitive of the other, and it is the argument of this chapter that speech, and particularly clear, unimpeded speech, is associated with authority, often with masculinity, and with the ability to articulate morality, rationality, and ultimately humanity.

In *De proprietatibus rerum* Bartholomew goes into great depth in discussing the voice, differentiating between the voice of men and women; young and old, and distinguishing the character traits that can be determined by the sound of the voice. Bartholomew states, following the work of Aristotle, that 'alle femals hauen smaller[r] and sharper voys þan males', and that the voice of the young is sharper than the old; men and old men have heavier voices.[7] Through these distinctions the differences between men and women, and between children and the old, are clear through their voices.

Bartholomew also dedicates a detailed section to the best type of voice:

> Þanne an euen, clere and stronge, byndinge and plyaunt voys and mene bytwene heuy and scarpe is good and ipraysed. Þe contrarye is a quakynge

[5] Aristotle, *Politics,* Translated by H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 264, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), I. I. 10, p. 11, with Greek on p. 10.
[6] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, Volume 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 212, line 16.
[7] *On the Properties of Things*. pp. 212-213. Aristotle gives details about all aspects of the voice in several of his works. In his *History of Animals*, Aristotle says: 'For while a woman's voice is on the whole higher pitched than a man's, young women's voices are higher than the older women's, just as the boys' voices are higher than the men's; but the female children's voice is higher than the males', and the "maiden's pipe" is higher than the "boy's".' Aristotle, *History of Animals, Book IX (VII), Volume III: Books 7-10,* Edited and translated by D. M. Balme, Loeb Classical Library 439, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 41**5** (Greek on p. 414). Aristotle also discusses the voices of men and women in *Problems,* when referring to the question 'Why do those incapable of generation—such as children, women, those already old, and eunuchs—utter high sounds, whereas men utter low ones?' Aristotle argues that 'Those incapable of generation, therefore, have high voices; but men, being strong in breath, move more air, and being more, it would be moved more slowly and produce a low voice. For the thin and quick movement produces a high voice, neither of which qualities occur in the case of a man'. Aristotle. *Problems, Book XI, Volume I: Books 1-19.* Edited and translated by Robert Mayhew. Loeb Classical Library 316. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 361 (Greek on p. 360).

> voys, hoos and rouȝ, febil and discordinge. To heuy or to scharpe is euel and iblamed, for on discordinge voys and vnordinat schendiþ þe acoord of many voys. Also a swete voys and ordynat gladeþ and sturieþ to love, and schewiþ out þe passiouns of þe soule, and witness þe strengþe and vertue of spiritualle membres, and schewiþ purenesse and goodnesse of good disposicioun þerof.[8]

In this discussion of the best type of voice, the best voice lies somewhere between the sharp and the heavy, which, relating this to his other writing on male and female voices, means that this voice is between a male and a female voice. The perfect voice is not classified by the gender of the person using it but rather on important characteristics of the voice such as clarity and strength. Furthermore, a sweet voice has the power to affect the emotions, 'þe passiouns of þe soule', of the listeners, and has the ability to 'sturieþ to love', as well as being demonstrative of purity and good character, showing 'purenesse and goodnesse of good disposicioun'.[9] This final aspect of the voice is to demonstrate morality and virtue; to 'witness þe strengþ and vertue of spiritualle membres'.[10] There is a vast amount of information and authority to be found in the sound of the voice: it is indicative of age, gender, of goodness and evil, of 'strengþ and vertue', and has power to effect an emotional response.[11] Humanity, power and authority are defined, and through the best type of voice superiority and virtue can wield that authority.

Such notions of clarity and strength in an authoritative voice are not confined to the encyclopaedic, academic literature but cross genres and are found for example in Geoffrey Chaucer's (d. 1400) *The Canterbury Tales*, a popular and widely disseminated work offering a more culturally integrated social viewpoint. In 'The Knight's Tale', the King of India is described in comparison with Mars, the god of war, and 'His voys was as a trompe thonderynge'.[12] His appearance is impressive and beautiful, with some more exotic characteristics, but importantly his voice is deep, full, clear and carries well. The King of India's voice is traditionally masculine, being deep, bold and resounding, as well as encompassing some of the qualities outlined by Bartholomew of being 'clere and stronge'.[13]

[8] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 213, lines 8-16.
[9] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 213, lines 13-16.
[10] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 213, lines 14-15.
[11] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 213, lines 9, 11, 14.
[12] 'The Knight's Tale', *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by L. D. Benson, Third Edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 54, line 2174.
[13] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 213, line 8.

On this basis it is both a 'pleasing' and authoritative voice: one that commands attention and wields power. A more specific reference to the voices of kings is to be found in the *Secretum secretorum*, a pseudo-Aristotelian text translated into Latin in the twelfth century and subsequently into the vernacular. In a section discussing the appropriate characteristics of a king it states: 'It sitteth a kyng to be wele faukened, out-spekyng clere voice havyng, the which is moche worth and profitable, and specialy in tyme of bataille'.[14] The King of India clearly demonstrates a commanding voice and one with the authority to lead.

The antithesis of the masculine, commanding voice of the King of India is possessed by the Pardoner in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, whose small weak voice is indicative of a corrupt character as well as undermining his potential masculine authority. The Pardoner is described thus: 'A voys he hadde as small as hath a goot'.[15] This small weak voice is far removed from the thundering, commanding, traditionally masculine voice of the King of India, and the associated high moral virtue.[16] The Pardoner has a small, effeminate voice, and his other emasculating features are further highlighted in his physical description which imply he may be a eunuch: 'No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;/ As smothe it was as it were late shave./ I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare'.[17] Furthermore, the *Secretum secretorum* describes the negative, effeminate, immoral associations of men with high voices, claiming that 'To smalle voyce tekenes foly and wommanhede', and 'if þe voyce be smalle, he es hasty, vncurtas, foltische, vnbihofull and besely lyeng…And he þat has a swete voyce es envious and suspicious. Also a faire voyce signifies foly, vnwisdome, mekil wille and oftesithes liccherie'.[18] In her analysis of the Pardoner's features and behaviour, Elspeth Whitney recently noted that a high voice, combined with soft hair were indicators of effeminacy. Whitney goes further in her analysis arguing that the Pardoner's general physiognomy is indicative of a phlegmatic constitution and, when combined with his effeminacy, is associated with 'cowardice, cunning, unreliability, and a tendency to lie'.[19] Even the scholarship of the 1960s, with Walter Clyde Curry, identified the importance of the

[14] 'The Secrete of Secretes', (Ashmole Version), in *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, ed. M. A. Manzalaoui, EETS o.s. 276 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 37.
[15] 'General Prologue', *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 34, line 688.
[16] Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Senses* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 58-59.
[17] 'General Prologue', *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 34, lines 689-691.
[18] 'Certeyne Rewles of Phisnomy', (From British Library MS. Sloane 213), in *Secretum Secretorum*, p. 13.
[19] Elspeth Whitney, 'What's Wrong with the Pardoner?: Complexion Theory, the Phlegmatic Man, and Effeminacy', *The Chaucer Review,* 45.4 (2011), 357-389, at p. 380.

Pardoner's physiognomy and related character traits, reflecting that in this portrayal of the Pardoner 'the thin, high voice together with glaring eyes are directly associated with shameless impudence, gluttony and licentiousness'.[20] William Ian Miller furthers the effect of a voice upon the listener, arguing in his discussion of disgust theory that 'Certain qualities of voice disgust us because of the personality traits they indicate or partially create'.[21] These envious, suspicious, and lecherous character traits associated with a small, high male voice instil in the reader, who encounters the Pardoner, feelings of both moral disgust and the accompanying sensation of social, and moral superiority.[22] The clear effeminacy of the Pardoner is set in ironic contrast to his claim to 'have a joly wenche in every toun'[23] and blurs the definition of the Pardoner as a eunuch. Alastair Minnis argues for a more nuanced approach to the Pardoner whereby 'Chaucer could simply be satirizing this hypocritical braggart through sexual insult based on his feminoid appearance'.[24] This is an idea in-keeping with the irony of the Pardoner's moral 'Tale' which is juxtaposed with his immoral behaviour and greed for material things.

The human voice carries definitions of gender, age and characterisations, but vocalisations are a connection between the human and animal. What sets humans apart from, and as arguably 'superior' to, animals is the ability to produce speech. In the production of speech, the mouth is central not only as a conduit but also for the suitability of its features. Aristotle discusses speech in many of his works, and even analyses the suitability of the tongue for speech:

> The human tongue is the freest, the broadest, and the softest of all: this is to enable it to fulfil both its functions...It has, also, to articulate the various sounds and to produce speech, and for this a tongue which is soft and broad

[20] Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Senses,* p. 58.
[21] William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 83.
[22] Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, p. 9.
[23] 'The Pardoner's Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer,* p. 196, line 453.
[24] Alastair Minnis, *Fallible Authors: Chaucer's Pardoner and Wife of Bath* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 168. For more on the problem of the Pardoner and his feminised appearance see Vern L. Bullough with Gwen Whitehead Brewer, 'Medieval Masculinities and Modern Interpretations. The Problem of the Pardoner', in *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. by Jacqueline Murray (New York; London: Garland, 1999), pp. 93-110; Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'The Pardoner's Voice, Disjunctive Narrative, and Modes of Effemination', in *Speaking Images: Essays in Honor of V. A. Kolve*, ed. by R. F. Yeager and Charlotte C. Morse (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 2001), pp. 411-444.

> is admirably suited, because it can roll back and dart forward in all directions; and herein too its freedom and looseness assists it.[25]

In his *Politics*, Aristotle expands on the importance of speech claiming it is the 'special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities.'[26] This understanding is echoed in Bartholomew the Englishman's *De proprietatibus rerum*, that 'Spekynge is aproprid to mankinde'.[27] Speech and the associated ability to understand and articulate morality are distinctive to human beings and set them apart from the rest of the animal kingdom, however there is an important connection between these properties, as Aristotle argued, because speech can indicate both good and bad, as well as right and wrong.[28] Here, Aristotle shows that speech does not specifically designate a level of morality but rather that humans have the gift of understanding moral questions, and speech provides them with the ability to articulate that morality. This would suggest that a loss or lack of speech has implications for a person's understanding of morality, rationality, and even their very classification as human.

Through the human life cycle speech alters and so too does authority. The two extremes of infancy and old age are where the imperfections of speech are most noticeable. According to the *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), an influential encyclopaedic work of the early seventh century, the very term for a young child is directly linked to their inability to speak intelligibly:

> A human being of the first age is called an infant (*infans*); it is called an infant, because it does not yet know how to speak (*in*-, "not"; *fari*, present participle *fans*, "speaking"), that is, it cannot talk. Not yet having its full complement of teeth, it has less ability to articulate words.
>
> [Infans dicitur homo primae aetatis; dictus autem infans quia adhuc fari nescit, id est loqui non potest. Nondum enim bene ordinatis dentibus minus est sermonis expressio.][29]

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[25] Aristotle, *Parts of Animals. Movement of Animals. Progression of Animals.* Translated by A. L. Peck, E. E. Forster, Loeb Classical Library 323, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), Book II, Chapter XVII, p. 201, with Greek on p. 200.
[26] Aristotle, *Politics*., I. I. 11, p. 11, with Greek on p. 10.
[27] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 212, line 16.
[28] Aristotle, *Politics*., I. I. 10, p. 11, with Greek on p. 10; refer to Introduction, p. 14 for full quotation.
[29] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XI.ii.9, p. 241; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*

This lack of speech, intimately connected with a lack of teeth, is also mirrored in a lack of moral understanding, and two of the Church Fathers, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Gregory the Great (c. 540-604), associated this period of the life cycle with innocence.[30] Augustine extended this idea through the next stage of life, *pueritia,* highlighting that this function of speech is as Erin Abraham argues 'a double-edged sword'.[31] Speech allows for an understanding of reason and morality, but at the same time it allows for the ability to 'deceive through innumerable lies' ['fallendo innumerabilibus mendaciis'].[32] The age of speech is clearly then also an age of reason and allows a closer acceptance into human society, but it is not an infallible function. Any impediment to that function calls into question the ability to fully participate in, and contribute to, society in an authoritative way and, attempts to cure or improve these impediments shows the importance of clear speech. As many of the medical texts here discussed are written by educated, university-trained men, catering for the wealthy in society, the implication is that clear, unimpeded speech was of greatest concern to those wealthy people being seen and heard and displaying authority within society.

In order for a child to participate fully in society their speech must be developed correctly, and this is aided by some treatments. In the medieval gynaecological and obstetrical treatise *Book on the Conditions of Women* [Liber de Sinthomatibus Mulierum], within the twelfth century *Trotula* ensemble, which has a short section devoted to 'On the Regimen for the Infant' [De regimine infantis][33], there is detailed a recipe to encourage speech in the child:

> And so that it might talk all the more quickly, anoint the palate with honey and the nose with warm water, and let it always be cleaned with unctions, and let the mucous secretions always be wiped off and cleaned.

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recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay (Oxonii: e Typographeo Carendoniano, 1911), Vol 2, XI.ii.9.

[30] Erin Abraham, 'Out of the Mouths of Babes: Speech, Innocence, and Vulnerability in Early Medieval Perceptions of Childhood', *Eloas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, 7 (2014), (46-64) pp. 50-51.

[31] Abraham, 'Out of the Mouths of Babes', pp. 52.

[32] Augustine *Confessions* quoted in Abraham, 'Out of the Mouths of Babes', p. 52. Latin provided within Abraham's article and cited as Augustine, *Confessiones libri XIII,* ed. Lucas Verheijen, CCSL 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), I.19.30, 16.

[33] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's* Medicine, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001). This section begins on pp. 106-107.

> [Et ut cicius loquatut, unge palatum cum melle et nares cum aqua calida, et unctionibus semper mundificetur, et muscillagines semper emungantur et emundentur] [34]

The text adds a further recipe, also for encouraging speech in children but adding that it is important to rectify delayed speech:

> After the hour of speech has approached, let the child's nurse anoint its tongue frequently with honey and butter, and this ought to be done especially when speech is delayed. One ought to talk in the child's presence frequently and easy words ought to be said.
>
> [Postquam hora loquendi appropinquauerit, nutrix eius linguam frequenter cum melle et butyro ungat, et hoc maxime faciendum est cum loquela tardauero. Ante eum frequenter est loquendum et facilia uerba dicenda sunt][35]

These two passages show the importance of encouraging speech in children, and the concerns that delayed speech might incur. They both appear in a text written about conditions of women but clearly these recipes for infants are not particular to female infants, but rather the suggestion is that as mothers and nurturers it is the responsibility of the women to encourage and promote speech in their children. Also, this is a text whose author, Monica Green argues, is male, and therefore this highlights masculine, and medical, views on the place of women within society, and the level of their authority.[36] Clarissa Atkinson, in writing about women and motherhood argues that the 'sources for the history of ideas about reproductive physiology…have traditionally been confined to the writings of learned men and a few unusual women'.[37] The implication of such texts and their authorship is that women do not have the same level of authority as men, being assigned the job of caring for children. However, considering the importance of speech within medieval society, women would seem to be instrumental in supporting their children in being accepted as thinking, reasoning, speaking human contributors to society.[38]

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[34] *The Trotula*, (2001), [124], pp. 106-107.
[35] *The Trotula*, (2001), [124], pp. 108-109.
[36] *The Trotula,* (2002), p. xvi.
[37] Clarrisa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 26; Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[38] Isabel Davis points out the divisions in historical research between domestic life and society, with men aligned with society and public life, and women with private, domestic life. Isabel Davis, 'Unfamiliar Families: Investigating Marriage and the Family in the Past', in *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle*

When speech does develop in children it often appears indistinct and there is an association between youth and stammering. Guy de Chauliac highlights in his fourteenth-century surgical work that 'It is schewed also þat kyndely wlaffynge ne pallesie þat is longe lastynge ben neuer perfitly helede. Neuerþelatter, in childerne when þat þey come to adolescence (i. to 30ng manis age), ben ful ofte tymes amendede, as Avicen saith.'[39] These sentences fall within the section entitled 'Of pallesye and of wlaffyng'[40]. There is a strong connection between the two terms as 'pallesye' can denote not only a physical paralysis but can also be used in direct association with a 'loss of the power of speech', as well as other variations of 'palsy', and 'a shaking, quaking'.[41] This is quite a broad term, whereas 'wlaffyng' is more specific in its direct associations with a stammer or a stutter.[42] This connection is further strengthened by the placement of the information within Guy's text, and the assertion that stammering and chronic paralysis from birth are incurable. Indeed, among the causes of stammering as listed by Guy is that 'it cometh of þe pallesye.'[43]

This association between stammering and childhood is not unique to medical literature but appears in hagiographical literature as well. In two examples, one in the miracles of Saint Francis (1181-1226), who founded the Franciscan Order, and the other in those of Thomas of Cantilupe (1218-1282), bishop of Hereford in the thirteenth century, the use of the term to stammer is directly linked to the speech patterns of children. In the miracle of Saint Francis a

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Ages, ed. by Isabel Davis, Miriam Müller, and Sarah Rees Jones, 1-13, p. 3. This problem of divisions is further intensified in the primary sources which as Clarissa Atkinson argues 'tell us little about the experience of mothers'. Atkinson further argues that motherhood 'has always been shaped by religious systems, power relationships, and material structures', Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, pp. 26, 246.

[39] '*The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 482, lines 3-7. In the Latin original, 'pueris' can be translated as 'boys' or 'children'. Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, vol 1, Tr. 6, Doctr. 2, Cap. 2, Pars. 5, p. 354, lines 16-18. It is unknown which translation is most appropriate however, the NHS website does recognise that 'Stammering is more common in boys than girls. It is unclear why this is.' < https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stammering/> [accessed 6/3/2020].

[40] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, pp. 481, lines 31-39, 482 and 483, lines 1-29.

[41] MED s.v.: 'palesi(e, n: (a) The failure of the part of the body to function properly; loss of motor power, paralysis; loss of tactile sensation; numbness; impairment or loss of the power of speech; **bodili** ~, physical paralysis (as opposed to spiritual paralysis, i.e., sin); **cold** ~ [cp. **cold** adj. **7.** (g)]; **men of strong** ~, men greatly afflicted with paralysis; ~ **of the reines**, kidney failure; **particuler** ~, paralysis of one member; **universel** ~, ~ **universel**, paralysis of a side of the body; (b) **in (the)** ~, with paralysis; having paralysis, paralyzed; (c) an attack of palsy, a paralysis; **gret** ~, a severe paralysis; (d) a shaking, quaking; (e) ~ **ivel (pine)**, paralysis; ~ **men**, paralytics'.

[42] MED s.v.: 'wlaffing(e, ger: Stammering, stuttering'.

[43] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 481, line 33.

boy who is described as being near to death, recovers, and when asked a question by his mother 'he responded stuttering' ['Et ille balbutiendo respondebat'], and in the next sentence, 'He could not speak completely because of his youth' ['Non enim poterat propter infantiam plene loqui'].[44] In the miracle of Thomas of Cantilupe a young boy, who was not quite two years old, had slipped into a lake, and, as with the miracle of Saint Francis, the mention of his stammering comes with his recovery: 'he began to speak stuttering, just as he had previously managed to speak' ['cœpit loqui balbutiendo, sicut prius loqui gestiebat'].[45] Both miracle texts use stammering as an adjective to describe what are quite normal speech patterns for young children. Young children lack full control over their speech, and consequently it is not unusual for there to be some stuttering, and this is mirrored by their age, incomplete moral awareness and consequent lack of social authority. With age comes a greater awareness of morality and clearer speech which is synonymous with authority.

Clearer speech, gained through age and maturity sees a decline in the latter period of the life cycle where some similarities are drawn with the speech patterns of youth. Old age is a difficult term to accurately ascribe to a numerical age, but in the medieval period it is commonly viewed as being the final stage of the life cycle, lasting until death. A treatise included in the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus provides the description: 'Elde lastiþ fro fifty ȝeere or sixty tyl on-to lyuys ende'.[46] In the thirteenth century, Robert Grosseteste (d. 1253), a medieval scholar and bishop of Lincoln, refers to the defects of old age, and specifically related to speech is 'stammering again like a child' ['linguam iterum pueriliter balbucientem'].[47] A similar suggestion of impeded speech has been argued by Irina Metzler regarding the description of the character of Old Age in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, where he is described as 'alle babirlippide'.[48] Metzler argues that this description of thick lips

[44] *S. Franciscus, Vita Prima Inedita, Auctore Thomas de Celano, Sancti discipulo. Ex codice Ms. Longi-pontis, Ord. Cisterciensis,* Liber III, Caput III 'Reliqua miracula' (AASS).
[45] *S. Thomas de Cantilupe*, *Compendium vitae ex processu canonizationis, Ex codice Vaticano 4015, Miracula Ex Processu Conanizationis*, Miracula II et II 'Duo alii pueri submerse, resuscitati', (AASS).
[46] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 44, line 4. See also Sears, *The Ages of Man*, and Shulamith Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, translated from the Hebrew by Yael Lotan (London: Routledge, 1995).
[47] Irina Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages: cultural considerations of physical impairment* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 105. Latin quoted in Metzler's work and cited as Robert Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis [de quarto mandato]*, Auctores Britannici medii aevi 10, ed. Richard C. Dales and Edward B. King (1987), 47.
[48] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. by M. Y. Offord, EETS o.s. 246 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), f. 170, line 158 (p. 5).

implies an impairment of speech.[49] The Middle English term, in its strictest definition, refers only to the physicality of being 'Thick-lipped', however its etymology is the term 'blaberen', which refers to indistinct speech or babbling speech.[50] Also, one of the quotations given by the Middle English Dictionary cites the Latin word associated with 'blaberen', as being 'balbutiet', a derivative of 'balbut', meaning to stammer.[51] There is a distinct connection here between the lips and the ability to speak clearly, and the possibility of impaired speech.

These examples show that one of the negative traits of aging is the possibility of impaired speech, which has a consequent effect upon the level of authority that the speaker is viewed as holding. As speech declines there is some connection drawn to the imperfect speech of children and therefore with the lack of knowledge, understanding and usefulness to society also associated with children. It is important to note Shulamith Shahar's argument that 'not all who wrote about old age were themselves old', and therefore 'what they did was express concepts, the attitudes, the images and anxieties surrounding old age that were prevalent in their culture'.[52] Speech, and its associations of morality, rationality, and authority, are undermined by the indistinct and sometimes stuttering speech of the young and the very old, and it is in middle age that speech is at its most important because it is in this period of life that people, predominantly men, hold the most powerful social roles.

Speech and its Impediments

As demonstrated by the direct comparison of the King of India and the Pardoner, the clarity and pitch of the voice affects how human speech sounds, and has further implications for rationality, morality and humanity. Due to the centrality of the mouth and speech in defining and articulating humanity the remainder of this chapter will consider impediments to the

[49] Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages*, p. 118.
[50] MED s.v.: 'baber-lipped, adj: Thick-lipped'; 'blaberen, v: To speak indistinctly or incoherently; read or repeat (sth.) unintelligibly or without regard to its meaning; babble, mumble; (b) to talk loosely or foolishly; **blabering**, foolish of speech; babbling'.
[51] MED s.v.: 'blaberen, v: … (a1382) WBible(1) Prols.Esd.(Dc 369(1)), p.478 : The tunge kut of it shal blaberen [L balbutiet]'.
[52] Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, p. 7.

production of clear speech, focussing on several areas: hoarseness, speech impediments (most commonly stammering), a loss of the voice and speech (usually denoting a temporary affliction), and muteness.

Hoarseness

The natural voice can be indicative of gender, age, morality and authority, however an alteration to the natural voice, which impacts upon clear speech, can be a subversive element, undermining vocal authority. One aspect of the voice contrary to perfection, as listed by Bartholomew, is hoarseness, and this is highlighted in medieval medical literature accompanied by a vast number of remedies to improve the speaking voice, restoring its clarity. Hoarseness receives some discussion in most of the main medical sources used throughout this thesis, thus emphasising the importance of a clear voice and speech for human functionality and authority. The *Flos medicinae,* a regimen written in verse form and composed in twelfth century Salerno, and the work of Gilbertus Anglicus, are the only two texts in this corpus that discuss the causes of hoarseness. The Medieval Welsh Medical Texts[53] and works by Taddeo Alderotti (d. 1295), a thirteenth century Italian medical practitioner, and Gilbertus Anglicus all have some information on treatments; and Guy de Chauliac mentions hoarseness as a sign of leprosy and a wound of the neck or back but does not comment upon hoarseness as a separate ailment. Hoarseness is presented in several variations in these medical and surgical texts, showing the commonality of the ailment, and is suggestive of the importance of recognising and treating it.

The earliest of these sources to mention hoarseness is the *Flos medicinae* which devotes a short verse to the causes of hoarseness:

> **Causes of hoarseness**
> Nuts, oil, cold of the head, eels and drink,
> and even raw apples make men speak hoarsely.

[53] The recipes used in this edition are taken from four manuscripts dating from the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth century. These manuscripts are British Library Additional 14912, Cardiff 3.242 (Hafod 16, Card), Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson B467, and Oxford Jesus College 111 (The Red Book of Hergest, RBH). Diana Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts, Volume One: The Recipes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).

[**Cause raucitatis**
Nux, oleum, frigus capitis anguillaque potus
atque pomum crudum faciunt hominem fore raucum.][54]

This brief list of causes is all the information the *Flos medicinae* provides; essential information but without giving any indication about treating the ailment. The minimal information provided by this text may stem from the nature of the text as an *aide memoire*, intended primarily for students and practitioners.[55] Many of the causes listed here are cold or wet substances which may indicate an underlying humoral association between hoarseness and women, a reflection of the subversive nature of women and their perceived authoritative inferiority. In medieval humoral theory women are associated with 'frigidity and humidity' [frigiditate et humiditate] in direct opposition to the 'heat and dryness' [caliditas et siccitas] of men.[56] These qualities help not only to separate the sexes humorally, but also by strength and superiority: 'so that the stronger qualities, that is the heat and dryness, should rule the man, who is the stronger and more worthy person, while the weaker one, that is to say the coldness and humidity, should rule the weaker [person], that is the woman' [ut qualitates fortiores, scilicet caliditas et siccitas, uiro tamquam fortiori et digniori persone, debiliores, scilicet frigiditas et humiditas, utque debiliori, scilicet mulieri, dominarentur].[57] A cooling of the humours is also associated with aging, as is hoarseness which has a weakening effect upon the voice. [58] Here the causes of hoarseness are closely aligned with two types of people who are of either subversive, or limited social authority, women and the aged, and therefore the implication is that with hoarseness comes a cooling of the humours which has a consequent deleterious effect upon the voice and authority.

The *Compendium medicinae* of Gilbertus Anglicus is the only other text, within the textual corpus of this chapter, which includes information on the causes of hoarseness. Gilbertus

[54] *Flos Medicinae: (Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum)*, ed. and trans. by Virginia de Frutos González (Valladolid, Spain: Universidad de Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Editorial, 2010), p. 226, lines 671-673. All translations from the *Flos medicinae* are my own.
[55] *Flos Medicinae*, p. 31.
[56] *The Trotula*, pp. 70-71.
[57] *The Trotula*, pp. 70-71.
[58] The *Secretum Secretorum* highlights these qualities and aligns them with the season of winter as well as old age: 'And than is the worlde as an olde woman…The wynter is colde and moist', 'The Secrete of Secretes', (Ashmole Version), in *Secretum Secretorum,* p. 58; Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval interpretations of the life cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 13.

states the ‘maneres’ in which hoarseness comes: the humours, or ‘of sicnesse of the heed,’ or ‘febilnesse, and namlyche of siche men þat drynkyn myche water.’[59] As with the *Flos medicinae* Gilbertus lists causes that are closely aligned with coolness, moisture, and the head. Gilbertus qualifies the term ‘sicnesse of the heed’, by following it with two examples, ‘as apoplexie, and epilencie’.[60] This clarification of the sickness of the head highlights that there may be a more serious connection between hoarseness and the mind or sanity of the patient. Through an alteration of the voice, and speech, the rationality of a person may be called into question, and not only their authority but their very humanity may be impeded.

Gilbertus further outlines the four sub-sections of causes: hoarseness coming from ‘blood’, ‘habundaunce and plente of flewme’, ‘febilnesse’, and ‘drynesse of þe breest’.[61] According to this breakdown, hoarseness cannot only be attributed to causes of a cold and moist nature but can also arise from drier causes. Gilbertus’ detailed description of all the potential causes is demonstrative of his medical education and knowledge as well as the academic nature of medieval medicine that was based upon acceptance of the accuracy of their Classical forebears.[62] Whether this information reflects Gilbertus’ beliefs or simply his accumulation of knowledge, it highlights the array of information available on the topic of hoarseness. The result of all causes is a debilitating effect upon the voice and therefore upon speech. It is a weakening and potentially effeminising effect which undermines vocal authority, and questions the humanity, rationality, and morality of the patient whose speech provides the ability to articulate their humanity and sets them apart from animals.

Apart from its many causes, hoarseness can also be listed as a sign or symptom of another ailment, and in the case of the ones outlined by Guy de Chauliac the ailment may be very serious. Guy lists hoarseness as a sign of a wound of the neck or back: ‘Forþermore woundes

[59] Esteban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 159, lines 16-22, f. 67v.
[60] Esteban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 159, lines 19-20, f. 67v.
[61] Esteban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 159, lines 25; 29-p.160 lines 1; 4; 8, f. 67v.
[62] For more on the text and Gilbertus as an author and practitioner see the Introduction to this thesis, as well as Faye Marie Getz, (ed) *Healing and Society in Medieval England: A Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Esteban-Segura, *System of Physic.*

þat comen to þe crokede synowes, þai engender euerlastynge horsenes.[63] Later Guy also lists it as a symptom of leprosy: 'The tokens forsoþe whiche signifie þe dede…an hose voice as þoghe he spak with his nose þirles'.[64] Both conditions are potentially life-threatening and, certainly in the case of leprosy, it is physically and socially redefining. Luke Demaitre argues that 'Social consequences made leprosy worse than relatively comparable afflictions because it turned patients into "exiles from human intercourse"'.[65] Although there have been changing views concerning the exclusion and persecution of lepers, and Elma Brenner singles out the work of Touati in rejecting this earlier viewpoint, Brenner raises the point that the 'prominence of the leper as a motif in medieval hagiography suggests that hagiographers were drawing upon popular fear regarding the appearance of lepers and the possibility of encountering them.'[66] Leprosy carried a social stigma with it as well as a fear. This placed those suffering with leprosy into the spotlight of society whilst at the same time rejecting them from engaging with society and, in doing so destroyed the authority of the person as an active member of the community. Furthermore, the degenerative effect of the disease upon the voice, as well as the rest of the body, arguably destroyed a key element of human nature. The centrality of speech in the definition of humanity, means that a degenerative effect on the voice, such as that caused by leprosy, would have an equally degenerative effect on the ability to speak, and therefore have the potential to question the sufferer's very classification as human.

In consideration of the vast array or causes, as well as hoarseness as a sign of something more serious, and the effect on the voice, speech, and the implications for authority and rationality, it is unsurprising that many medical texts provide treatments for hoarseness. The Medieval Welsh Medical Texts contain two remedies for hoarseness. The first appears in several medical texts and details a short recipe:

> For hoarseness, take wood avens and common St. John's wort and boil them with fresh milk, and give it a good boil and drink it every morning

[63] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, ed. by Margaret S. Ogden, Vol 1, EETS o.s. 265 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 257, lines 9-10.
[64] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 380, lines 1, 6-7.
[65] Luke Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 102.
[66] Elma Brenner, 'Recent perspectives on leprosy in medieval western Europe', *History Compass*, 8.5 (2010): 388-406, at p. 400.

> [Rac y crygi, kymryt y vapcoll a'r erinllys ac eu berwi trwy leffrith, a dot ias da arnaw, ac yf bop bore][67]

The second remedy for hoarseness is listed in only one of the manuscripts that Luft surveyed:

> For hoarseness, take mugwort and red dead-nettle and greater plantain and boil them well in goat whey and drink a cupful of it every morning
>
> [Rac y crygu, kymer y ganwreid a'r dynat coch a'r erllyryat a berw yn da trwy veid geifyr ac yf gwpaneit o hwnnw bop bore][68]

Although these treatments appear simple concoctions, this work is not of an unsophisticated nature: Diana Luft and Morfydd Owen both argue that the remedies in this text are drawn from Middle English and Latin sources and show affinity with the medical learning throughout Europe, and Faye Getz also draws similarities with the work of Gilbertus Anglicus.[69] Neither remedy provides information on the length of the recovery period nor the exact quantities of ingredients necessary. Therefore, such remedies may be useful not only as treatments for hoarseness but also as preventative measures and were to be administered by a medical authority who knew the necessary measurements. The ingredients, although different in each remedy, are mostly of a warming or drying temperament, suggesting that these are concentrating on a wet and cold cause for the hoarseness.[70] Also there are further similarities in the ingredients and the processes of the treatments: they both contain a milky protein and are boiled and consumed every morning. The ailment, hoarseness, affects the voice, which emanates from the mouth, and importantly the treatment enters the body through the same opening. In this case, therefore, the mouth is both the agent of diagnosis as well as the conduit for its healing: through the mouth, voice, speech, and the articulation of rationality and morality are expressed, undermined and restored.

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[67] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts,* remedy 2/7, pp. 72-73. This recipe is contained within all four manuscripts consulted for Luft's edition, including British Library Additional 14912, Cardiff 3.242 (Hafod 16, Card), Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson B467, and Oxford Jesus College 111 (The Red Book of Hergest, RBH).
[68] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts,* remedy C/11, pp. 300-301. C is to designate manuscript Cardiff 3.242.
[69] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, p. 19; Morfydd E. Owen, 'Meddygon Myddfai: A Preliminary Survey of Some Medieval Medical Writing in Welsh', *Studia Celtica* (1975), (210-233), p. 221.
[70] Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica: being an herbal with many other medicinal materials written in Greek in the first century of the common era, a new indexed version in modern English by TA Osbaldeston and RPA Wood* (Johannesburg: Ibidis Press, 2000). 'Artemisia monoklonos Artemisia monoklonos etera', 3-127, pp. 513-514, identified as mugwort; 'Arnoglosson, Arnoglosson Mikron', 2-153, pp. 276, 279-280, identified as Greater Plantain.

Further treatments are also provided by Gilbertus Anglicus and Taddeo Alderotti, an Italian physician and professor of medicine, however they differ from the simple herb and milk combinations of the Medieval Welsh Medical Texts. Taddeo Alderotti and Gilbertus Anglicus both have university educations and cater to a wealthy, elite clientele and this may explain the differences in the treatments. Taddeo claims that hoarseness is cured with 'hot, dry air, fumigations with myrrh and other substances, and a fire in the room all day', an environment that is also suitable for patients suffering from cataracts and "softness of the tongue".[71] According to medieval understandings of the body, health is dependent upon the balance of the four humours; such a hot and dry environment would combat a cold and wet ailment, as was the case in the Medieval Welsh Medical texts. The three ailments for which this hot, dry environment is suitable are notably all ailments of the head and Nancy Siraisi, in her analysis of Taddeo's work, has concluded that Taddeo 'thought this the best environment for people afflicted with complaints of the head.'[72] Taddeo specifically prescribes a fumigation of myrrh as part of the treatment: an exotic and expensive ingredient. Given Taddeo's high level of education and the fact that he was a practitioner and professor at the University of Bologna, he is likely to have catered for and treated the upper classes of society, who would have been able to afford such a costly ingredient. Further, the inclusion of such an ingredient may have made the rich clients believe that they were receiving a superior type of remedy to the lower classes.[73] Such an exotic and expensive treatment for a relatively simple ailment is suggestive of the importance of treating hoarseness, perhaps more so for the wealthy patient who is visible, and heard within society; whose authority through their speech is of paramount importance in the social hierarchy.

The last of the sources on treatments for hoarseness to be analysed here is the *Compendium medicinae* of Gilbertus Anglicus. Just as his information for the causes of hoarseness is very detailed, so too is the information for treatments: Gilbertus carefully details treatments to fit each cause. For each cause there are listed a variety of treatments, three of them contain a

[71] Nancy G. Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils: two generations of Italian medical learning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 293, referencing Taddeo, *Consilia*, no. 5, 10, 24.
[72] Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils,* p. 293.
[73] Getz (ed.), *Healing and Society in Medieval England*, p. xix. Getz makes this comment in reference to Gilbertus Anglicus but the same principles may be applied to Taddeo.

purge, others are pills, and several mention the use of an electuary. There are some similarities between the treatments provided: the pills prescribed for blood being the cause are also prescribed when an overabundance of phlegm is the cause. Also, there are some ingredients that are re-used including the juice of liquorice, the seeds of gourds, and quince, to name but a few. One recipe example is for hoarseness caused by dryness: 'A good electuarie: Tac of dragage, gumme arabe, amyde, of þe seed of citonyes, of gourdis, of meloun, of portulake, ounce iiij; of saffren, ounce j; of penydes, ounce vj.'[74] This recipe contains a variety of ingredients, far more than, for example, those used in the remedies of the Medieval Welsh Medical Texts. Such a list of ingredients, combined with the exotic nature of some, such as saffron, would imply that Gilbertus aimed his work at physicians treating patients of a wealthy status. The likely wealth of the patients, and the educated nature of the students or physicians using the text, along with the detailed information in the text, suggests that those of higher status are concerned with treating hoarseness and returning the voice to full strength and authority. The variety of possible remedies for treating hoarseness, from the simpler herbal remedies of the Welsh Medieval Medical Texts to the rather exotic ones of Taddeo and Gilbertus, is suggestive of the importance of curing the ailment. In curing hoarseness its pejorative associations are minimised, including effeminacy in men, gluttony and licentiousness, as well as restoring a clear strong voice, demonstrating authority and the purity of the soul within.

Stammering

Hoarseness has a debilitating effect on the voice, reducing its strength, clarity and consequently its authority, however of greater impediment to clear continuous speech is stammering. This is more commonly associated with being a permanent speech impediment, however there are some examples of temporary or acquired impediments. One of the clearest insights into the life of a person with such a speech impediment is the 'Life of Blessed John the Dominican', from which the opening quotation of this chapter was taken. This episode from John's 'Life' details the process of his entry into the Dominican Order, and how his value and authority is called into question because of his speech impediment. It is also a piece of writing that bridges the gap between speech, the mouth, religion and understanding of the

[74] Esteban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 162, lines 13-15, f. 69r.

body, for 'the inseparability of bodily and spiritual concerns was paramount', and medical and devotional literature often entered into dialogue with one another.[75] Katie Walter has analysed this connection, drawing heavily on the 'late medieval habit of reading between works of vernacular theology and vernacular medicine', which 'arises out of a profound understanding of the interrelation of body and soul'.[76] Walter pursues this argument through the 'late medieval insistence on oral confession suggesting that the physical, material act of 'speaking a confession' has intrinsic physical, moral and spiritual value'.[77] Unlike Walter's analysis of cross-reading between vernacular theology and vernacular medicine, this analysis concerns the implications of John's stammer for his perceived authority and passage through adult life into a religious order.

John's entry into the Dominican Order highlights his speech impediment and, through this, questions his ability to command authority and to fully participate in the daily life of the preaching order. There is great detail throughout this episode on the sequence of events that took place from John's request to enter the Dominican Order, through the discussion between the Fathers on whether to accept him, and then his contribution to the order. Some ideas about speech impediments and the way in which they were viewed become apparent, but the circumstances of the story must also be taken into consideration. Firstly, John wanted to enter the Dominican Order, also known as the preaching order, and therefore his ability to speak clearly was imperative to his contribution to the order. Also, this is a hagiography, and therefore has the purpose of religious exhortation, intended not only to support John's entry into the canon of the beatified but also to teach a lesson to those reading the text, and uphold the centrality, and authority, of the Christian faith to society.

Following John's request to enter the Dominican Order, the Fathers discussed him and opinion was divided as to whether to accept him as a novice in the order:

[75] Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, (ed) *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), p. 1.
[76] Katie Walter, *Middle English Mouths: Late Medieval Medical, Religious and Literary Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 144; Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', in *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, pp. 1-24.
[77] Walter, *Middle English Mouths,* p. 171.

> He was indeed already for some time known about by nearly everybody: and generally some judged and indeed settled [in] agreement that the young man, should not be rejected who had come to serve the Lord: others however voted utterly either to refrain from or refuse [him].
>
> [Erat quidem jam pridem notus fere omnibus: & alii quidem annuendum putabant adolescenti, neque rejiciendum esse qui ad serviendum Deo veniret, omnino judicabant: alii vero aut supersedendum aut negandum censebant penitus.] [78]

The reasons for rejecting John are then carefully detailed in the story and they are as follows:

> [He was an] Inexperienced youth, and although good, nevertheless would be inept and lazy...
>
> [Rudem adolescentem, & quamvis bonum, ineptum tamen & inertem fore...]
>
> Furthermore now he is of advanced years: [yet] he is altogether inept at letters: ...
>
> [Præterea jam satis provectæ ætatis **[Col. 0402E]** esse: omnino litteris esse ineptum: ...]
>
> ... he can certainly satisfy his desire, ... in some other religious family, which do not require such learning of letters as with ours.
>
> [...posse vero desiderio suo satis efficere, ... in aliqua alia religiosorum familia, quæ ita litterarum peritiam non requirat ut nostra.]
>
> To this they added, our religion is called the Office of Preachers from the prescribed obligations to preach: he however, since he has impediments of speech and stutterings, that can be known and can be proven by experience, what do we need from his fellowship?
>
> [Ad hæc adjiciebant, nostram Religionem a prædicationis officio Prædicatorum vocari: hic vero, cum impeditioris sit linguæ ac balbutientis, ut nostis omnes & experimento probare potestis, quid tandem ejus consortio indigemus?] [79]

[78] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[79] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).

The three main reasons put forward for John's rejection are his advanced age, lack of learning, and his speech impediment, the latter two of which are directly associated with the level of authority that John would be able to display. There seems to be a contradiction in his age, being described both as an 'Inexperienced youth', as well as 'of advanced years'. These terms refer to different aspects of John's character. He is a youth in terms of his lack of motivation to work, while he is of advanced age in a negative correlation to his level of education. In reference to youth in the medieval life cycle, this term could be applied to a variety of ages up to 35 years of age, before reaching the age of 'manhode', or possibly middle age.[80]

John's speech impediment is listed as the final point for rejection, and it is described as 'impediments of the tongue and stutterings' ['impeditioris sit linguæ ac balbutientis'], and later it is described simply as 'impediments of the tongue' ['linguæ impedimenta'].[81] In this case, and almost all other references in the Latin primary sources of this chapter, the Latin word being used stems from 'balbut', a term most commonly translated as a stammer or stutter, although also sometimes translated as to babble, lisp or to speak indistinctly.[82] In placing John's speech impediment as the last point the implication is that his advanced age and lack of learning were of greater weight in the argument. C. M. Woolgar has argued that 'the sound and content of speech might indicate the holiness of a man', as well as be indicative of unholiness and he names speech impediments as one of the examples, alongside hoarseness of the leprous and the noises of the mad, as such unholy signs.[83] A similar theory is discussed by Irina Metzler, who highlights that historians have tended to think that medieval authors attribute impairments to sin and quotes Deborah Marks that 'Impairment was believed to be the result of divine judgment and therefore a punishment for sin', and that 'disability was associated with evil and witchcraft'.[84] Considering the interrelation of religion and medicine in the Middle Ages, this association of impairment and sin may appear as implied in the Fathers' rejection of John, however the references to John's unsuitability do

[80] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 43-44; Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 13, 29.
[81] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[82] DMLBS s.v.: 'balbus…stammering, stuttering…to speak through the nose'; 'balbutio…to stammer, stutter…to speak upon something obscurely, not distinctly…to stutter, stammer, or lisp out something'.
[83] C.M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 93.
[84] Deborah Marks, *Disability: Controversial Debates and Psychosocial Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 28, quoted in Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about physical impairment during the high Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 13.

not include any suggestion that he is not holy, and more particularly there is no association made between any lack of holiness and his speech impediment. The only suggestion that John may not be entering the Order through religious devotion is mentioned following on from the first argument about his age; that he would be 'inept and lazy': 'it seems from these things that he is fleeing work by this favour, rather than being moved by devotion' ['videri ex iis posse, laboris fugiendi gratia, potius quam devotione moveri.'][85] Most of the arguments for rejecting John fall then into the practical rather than religious or devotional category and are connected with the level of authority that a member of the Dominican Order needs to possess to preach well. What is more pertinent in these circumstances is Debra Higgs Strickland's argument that a 'lack of speech has theological implications as well because from a Christian perspective, without speech the Word of God can be neither communicated nor disseminated.'[86] As John is entering the preaching order his ability to proclaim the Word of God is of paramount importance, and although his is not a 'lack of speech', it does appear to be highlighted by the Fathers as a definitive reason for rejection.

John's story continues with a long speech given by one important member of the order who, although he is not named, is described as being 'a man with noted eloquence and seriousness' ['ut erat vir eloquentia & gravitate insignis'.][87] This man's eloquence is highlighted here, demonstrating that he is good at speaking and preaching and therefore an exemplary member of the Dominican Order. Through his eloquent speech he demonstrates his authority, and it is this authority and sound reasoning that succeeds in convincing the Fathers to accept John into the Order. The advocate for John points out that 'it seems to me that we are treating this matter not in the way of religious [men], but as secular, or rather as gentiles ... with the ability to predict future outcomes; as if we had the power to bring about good or bad habits in men'. ['videtur mihi quod non religiosorum, at secularium, vel potius gentilium more ... in hac ipsa re quam tractamus de futuris eventibus augurari velimus; tamquam in nostra sit positum potestate hominum mores bonos vel malos efficere.'][88] He chastises them and encourages his fellow Dominicans to be careful that in 'seeming wise and prudent, we do not disregard

[85] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[86] Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: making monsters in Medieval art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 48.
[87] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[88] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).

divine grace' ['ac sapientes & prudentes videri, divinam gratiam negligamus'.][89] This sermon points to more moral and ethical concerns about rejecting John while stressing the need for fewer earthly worries in favour of trust in the divine.

Later in this sermon each of the arguments given for rejection are taken in turn and biblical evidence is provided for why these arguments are flawed. In the first place, they intend to reject based on John's education but 'did not God rightly choose David from the flocks, and Jeremiah from sheep?' ['Nonne & David ex pascuis, & Jeremiam ex ovibus bene Deus elegit?'][90] He then turns to the question of the speech impediment, relating God's choice of the imperfect as his prophets and preachers:

> And if you hold out the impediments of the tongue, surely too you distrust goodness from the divine. Is it not the case that he made Isaiah, polluted with the lips, Prophet; and Jeremiah, entirely ignorant to speak, preacher to his people? He knew how to restore the very eloquent speech of children, who did not deny even speech to Balaam's donkey through his wondrous virtue. Moses also, although having the most serious impairments of the tongue and hands, made sacred letters. Therefore this does not seem to be cause for rejection: instead this impediment of the tongue of the adolescent seems to have been gifted to him, not as a disgrace or impediment to style, but as a beauty and treasure, if you wish to consider it rightly.
>
> [Quod si linguæ impedimenta præfertis, nimium certe de divina bonitate diffiditis. Nonne & Isaiam, pollutum labiis, ipse Prophetam fecit; & Jeremiam, loqui omnino ignarum, suo populo prædicatorem dedit? Linguas ipse infantium disertissimas reddere novit, qui Balam asinæ nec elocutionem omnino sua mirabili virtute negavit. Moysem quoque& impeditioris linguæ fuisse, manuumque gravissimarum, sacræ Litteræ ferunt. Ergo ne hac quoque causa rejiciendus videtur: quamquam & illa ipsa hujus adolescentis impeditio linguæ, non ad elocutionis turpitudinem, non ad impedimentum, sed ad decorem atque delicias, si recte considerare velitis, ei videtur esse tributa.] [91]

Following more biblical examples, John's speech impediment is no longer shown as a reason for rejection but is described as 'a beauty and treasure,' and the other Fathers agree. It is

[89] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[90] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[91] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).

perhaps ironic that it takes a long speech and debate to agree that John's speech impediment is a treasure rather than a reason for rejection. Following this, John is admitted into the order and 'it is incredible to say, that the habit by its brightness and form seemed to change him into a different man.' ['incredibile dictu est, ... quam illo habitus nitore ac forma in alium visus sit virum confestim mutatus.'][92] This change manifested through all the points raised previously as objections to his entry into the order: despite his ignorance of letters he is now able, through due diligence, to learn quickly and recite the daily offices.[93] Also, the speech impediment is shown to not detract from his speech, as the author demonstrates that physical words are not important here:

> Nor, as boys and adolescents are accustomed to do, who act without consideration, did he dedicate them [the words of the office] only with his mouth; but with heart and mind, in so far as his age was able, and always reaching beyond his age; so much was desire carried in them, that he seemed not to need to eat food for his body. However he retained them [the Psalms] by a tenacious memory, so that it flourished in the man, so the common story goes, and whatever he learnt once was never forgotten.
>
> [Neque ut pueri utque adolescentes consueverunt, qui minus quæcumque agant considerant, ore illas dumtaxat libare nitebatur; sed corde & mente, quantum illa pateretur ætas, ... & non nunquam supra ætatem, contingere; tantoque desiderio ferebatur in illas, ut non avidius corporis assumere videretur cibum, Retinebat autem eas tenaci memoria, quæ ita in homine viguit, ut vulgata fama sit, quidquid semel didicisset numquam fuisse oblitum.][94]

His speech impediment was never a problem in his work, either in sermons or in working with the novices: 'Neither did the impediment of the tongue detract anything, even less it earned him the ability to persuade or preach; but this same impediment of the tongue sat delicately in his mouth.' ['Neque illi impedimentum linguæ detrahebat quidquam, quo minus persuadendi aut prædicandi ei demeretur facultas; sed ea ipsa impeditio linguæ ita in ejus ore deliciose sedebat, ut ad gratiam decoremque potius quam ad inconcinnitatem ei videretur esse

[92] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[93] 'Quippe litterarum licet omnino ignarus esset, bonitate tamen ingenii, & sedula exercitatione, & assiduitate ac perseverantia, celerrime omnem divinarum laudum excurrit notitiam, ita ut brevi in iis apprime videretur educatus.' Since he was completely ignorant of letters, notwithstanding goodness of disposition, and diligent with discipline, and with constancy and perseverance, very quickly he [was able to] recite the office of divine Lauds, as if he had been educated to the highest degree. *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).
[94] *B. Joannes Dominici,* (AASS).

tributa.’][95] John’s speech impediments do not detract from, or cause difficulties in his preaching life, as the Fathers had thought, but rather becomes a positive aspect to his life, making his preaching more persuasive.

The life of John the Dominican provides some idea of the problems that speech impediments may cause, particularly in relation to religion, in the ability to spread the Word of God, and this may also have implications for other areas of religious life, such as audible prayer and celebrating a Mass. The latter part of John’s story turns this on its head and describes the impediment as a ‘beauty’ and a ‘treasure’, now showing the impediment as a gift, and even goes so far as to suggest that physical speech and words are not important when compared with the internal operations of the heart and mind. It is obvious from the arguments put forward by the Fathers that the reasons for rejection are all practical and earthly, while the arguments against these, which ultimately win out, are all based on biblical examples and faith in God. So, among his other faults, John’s ‘stutterings’ are problematic in practical terms but not spiritual, and his spiritual authority overcomes the problems of the impediment and endows John with earthly authority as well.

John’s stammer raised important questions about his usefulness to society, and to the Dominican Order in their role of preaching the Word of God. The interconnection between religion and medicine also raised further concerns about his sin and morality. Due to this connection, it may be supposed that medicine would provide a potential cure or relief, however a stammer is rarely mentioned. Of the textual corpus examined for this thesis only Guy de Chauliac mentions a congenital stammer and notes its incurable nature and association with children.[96] It is the incurable nature of this condition that makes it impractical for medical texts to include any more information than Guy provides here.

However, despite its incurability, according to Guy, there is a notorious treatment that could be used to prevent, or solve, speech impediments, and that is the cutting of the tongue string.

[95] *B. Joannes Dominici*, (AASS).
[96] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 482, lines 3-7; refer to Chapter One, p. 51, (n. 39) for full quotation.

Metzler, in her work on disability, argues that such a procedure was both a remedy for speech impairments as well as a preventative measure carried out after birth: 'Ostensibly a therapeutic measure for speech impediments, cutting the tongue string actually seems to have caused more harm than good'.[97] Metzler identifies the probable origin of the practice as a passage in Celsus (first century) who advised the cutting of the tongue string to cure speech impairments.[98] He claims that it is successful in *many*, however there is a case where the 'power of speech has not followed'.[99] Of the sources analysed for this chapter only Guy de Chauliac mentions this procedure. As this is a surgical text and cutting of the tongue string is a surgical procedure, this is perhaps not surprising. Given the way Metzler classes this procedure, relating it directly to speech, it is striking that Guy makes no reference to speech in his description of the procedure. It is detailed in the section entitled 'Of þe crampe and of the þrede drawyng þe tonge'.[100] He firstly presents all the medicinal cures before detailing the cutting of the tongue string as a final option, and references Albucasis (936-1013) as authoritative support:

> But þe cure of þe þrede or of þe ligament drawynge þe tonge is kyttynge by þe brede til þat þe tonge be lousede fro his wiþhaldynge, as Albucasis saith. And lay þerto a lychynie by some dayes with vitriol þat it be not sowdede. And if it be dowtede for veynes, Avicen counsailleþ þat þere be putte yn a þrede wiþ a nedle, and bynde it til it be broken by itself. Or (after þe counsail of Lamfrank), in kyttinge, cauterize it wiþa rasoure of siluer ihette.[101]

Guy's reference to Albucasis not only demonstrates his vast knowledge, even including Arabic sources, but lends to this treatment a sense of history and authority. The work of Denyse Rockey and Penelope Johnstone investigates some medieval Arabic treatments, claiming that by 'the 9th century, cutting the frenum was a well-tried procedure,' and they make specific references to Rhazes (c. 865-c. 925) and Albucasis, both of whom are authorities that appear referenced throughout Guy's work.[102] It would appear that although

[97] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 97.
[98] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 97.
[99] The emphasis is my own. The quote is taken from Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 97, who references Celsus, *De medicina*, VII, 12, 4 transl. W. G. Spencer, London, 1938, cited in M. Eldridge, *A History of the Treatment of Speech Disorders*, Edinburgh and London: E. & S. Livingstone, 1968, p.20.
[100] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 481, line 4.
[101] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 481, lines 23-30.
[102] Denyse Rockey, and Penelope Johnstone, 'Medieval Arabic Views on Speech Disorders: Al-Razi (c. 865-925)', *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 12.3 (1979), (229-243), p. 241. The word 'frenum', is an alternative, and scientific term for the tongue string.

this was a dangerous and potentially fatal procedure it survived the test of time, even being copied in medical texts and advised right into the sixteenth century.[103] The prevalence of this procedure in medical texts does not preclude the prevalence of this as a common medical practice. That it took place is attested to by some accounts, one of which Metzler recounts of an eighteen-month old baby girl, abandoned at a foundling hospital in Florence in the mid-fifteenth century, who had a note that said her tongue string had been cut.[104] This note gave no personal information about the child or her family, other than that her tongue-string had been cut because she stammered, and the register at the foundling hospital records that 'afterwards she spoke badly'.[105] Although this procedure did not deprive the child of speech completely, it clearly made a minor problem of a stammer much worse. That the child was abandoned following the treatment suggests that either the guardian did not feel able to cope with a child with a severe speech impediment, or potential muteness, or indeed that they did not wish people to know they had sanctioned such a treatment that had not been successful. Either way there appears to have been a certain stigma attached to the defect resulting from cutting the tongue string.

Aside from the cutting of the tongue string, medicine and surgery presented little assistance for curing a congenital stammer. However, when medicine fails, a viable alternative in the Middle Ages was to seek a miraculous cure. One type of such a cure was the the medieval idea of the power of the touch of a king. This is most often associated with the kings of England and France and the healing of scrofula, also termed the 'King's evil'. However, there is a spurious claim made for the Hapsburg royal family having the ability to cure, among other things, a stammer. The only reference to this claim is analysed by Marc Bloch, who cites a work written near the end of the fifteenth century by a Swabian monk, Felix Fabri.[106] Fabri wrote in his *Description of Germany, Swabia and the town of Ulm* that 'it is a notorious and

[103] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 97. It is Metzler that details the appearance of such a procedure in medical texts through to the sixteenth century.
[104] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, pp. 97-98. Metzler quotes this story from the register of a foundling hospital in Florence, the Ospedale degli Innocenti, and references its quotation in another secondary source, P. Gravitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990 note 30.
[105] Quoted in Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe,* p. 98. Metzler provides this reference: P. Gravitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 194.
[106] Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. by J. E Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 86-87.

often demonstrated fact that any stammerer who is embraced by these princes, even without asking, soon finds he can speak quite easily...' [notorium est, et sepe probatum, quod dum quis balbutiens est, vel impeditioris linguae, si ab uno Principe de praemissis sine alio quocunque suffragio osculum acceperit, officium loquendi disertissime…][107] Bloch has assessed this text and finds the claims of healing powers of the Hapsburgs to be, most likely, without substance.[108] As Bloch argues, this claim of healing powers of the Hapsburgs may well be spurious but Fabri makes good use of a powerful idea that was well integrated into medieval belief: the sanctity of kings and their healing powers.[109] Within the belief in kings is the medieval understanding of their divine appointment on earth and their superior position within the social and political hierarchy. In the twelfth century John of Salisbury, in his *Policraticus*, mapped the political hierarchy onto the human body, likening the head of the body to the head of government: 'The position of the head in the republic is occupied, however, by a prince subject only to God and to those who act in His place on earth, inasmuch as in the human body the head is stimulated and ruled by the soul'.[110] Despite the suspicious nature of the tale, the choice of curing a stammer, as an additional healing power of the Hapsburgs seems an odd choice as it is not life-threatening. However, it shows an understanding of the importance of speech, possibly following the philosophy of Aristotle, as an important ability of a human, as a fully functioning, moral, reasoning being.

More common than seeking a cure from a king's touch was to seek a miraculous cure from a saint. It is striking that cures for stammers are almost non-existent in the hagiographical literature. There are no cures for a stammer as an ailment by itself or as the dominant ailment in a person suffering from multiple conditions in the *Acta Sanctorum* database. Such a dearth of miraculous cures would suggest that for the day-to-day life of many people a stammer was a manageable condition and not worth seeking a miraculous cure. As much medical literature that has been discussed in this chapter was produced by learned academics, with an intended

[107] Bloch, *The Royal Touch,* p. 87. Bloch references Felicis Fabri, *Monachi Ulmensis Historiae Suevorum*, lib. I. c. xv, in Goldast, *Rerum Suevicarum Scriptores*, Ulm, 1727, p. 60, and quotes the Latin in the n. 119, p. 325, from which this Latin quotation is taken.
[108] The description given by Fabri places many of the miraculous cures in Albrechstal in Upper Alsace, a territory where the Hapsburgs had ceased to hold power over a century and a half before Fabri wrote this text. Bloch, *The Royal Touch,* p. 87.
[109] Bloch, *The Royal Touch,* p. 87.
[110] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus. Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Book V, ch.2, p. 67; Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 51.

learned audience of practising physicians who would have catered for the wealthier members of society, it would seem that it was these members of society interested in their speech and authority. It could be supposed that those not wealthy enough to seek medical assistance may look for more spiritual assistance, but there are no such instances in the hagiography. Ruth Salter's own conclusions regarding the surprisingly small number of cases of miraculous cures of the deaf and mute are also pertinent to those of stammers. She concludes that 'It was not that these disabilities were wanted, or that a cure was not desired, but they were manageable and did not require immediate attention.'[111] Also, among miraculous cures, a cure of a more severe condition would have merited greater attention, and therefore if there were any such miracles they were not considered as astonishing as, for example, curing blindness or paralysis.

Stammering as an Acquired Impediment

Stammering raises concerns about the moral character and authority of a person as the impediment is disruptive to clear uninterrupted speech. It also has associations with the extremes of the life cycle, youth and old age, whose social authority and rational understanding are limited. The treatments for a congenital stammer are few, however there are more frequent references, particularly in medical literature, to a temporary stammer which appears to be receptive to treatment. The *Flos medicinae* presents a list of causes of stammering:

> **Causes of Stuttering**:
> Tongue impediments are caused by a shortage of fruit, an inept humour,
> diet, control of the mind, a wandering mind, fear.
>
> [**Cause titubacionis**:
> Impediunt linguam fructus brevis, humor ineptus,
> victus, mens presens, mens peregrina, timor.][112]

[111] Ruth Salter, 'Only Half Healed: The Unusual Accounts of the Deaf and Mute in Twelfth-Century English Hagiography', *Selected Proceedings from 'The Maladies, Miracles and Medicine of the Middle Ages', March 2014. The Reading Medievalist: A Postgraduate Journal*, 2 (March, 2015), (85-108) p. 106.
[112] *Flos Medicinae*, p. 224, lines 658-660.

Firstly, the Latin for stammering here is different to all other examples quoted in this chapter. Most commonly the Latin for a stammer has the stem 'balbut' which has a very specific definition as a speech impediment, however Latin words stemming from 'titub' are more descriptive in dealing with the idea of staggering or faltering.[113] The quotation from the *Flos medicinae* is easy to understand as referring to a speech impediment as it is clarified by the phrase 'Impediunt linguam'. The information on stammering falls into the fourth section of the *Flos medicinae*, which is a brief section divided into six chapters providing the reasons for a variety of ailments, including this on stammering and one on the causes of hoarseness. It has been noted in the analysis by Virginia de Frutos González that this section does not follow the usual head-to-toe organisation method of many medical and surgical texts.[114] The *Flos medicinae* here provides only the causes of the impediment, with no references to treating it, but within those it includes dietetic causes, humoral causes, emotional causes, and problems of the mind. This text is clearly intended to either be used by practitioners likely to be catering for the wealthy, where their education can be most fiscally fruitful, or by the educated person who would also count among the wealthy, being educated and able to afford such a text. These wealthy patients have a twofold access to the information, through the text itself but also through the physicians, who are medical authorities in their own right. This supports, as with many other medical texts, the argument that it is the wealthy members of society, those most publicly noted and judged by their voice and speech, who are concerned with maintaining a clear speaking style.

Guy de Chauliac, another writer whose text is suited to students and practitioners catering to wealthy clients, is the only other source for this chapter that provides information on the causes of stammering. Guy first mentions stammering in a list of 'The sekenesses of þe tonge lettynge his acte (i. dede) ben distemperures', included in the chapter 'of sekenesses of þe mouþe and of his parties', which, alongside stammering, includes problems such as ulcers and swelling.[115] He then goes on to devote a section to 'Of pallesye and of wlaffyng', as mentioned above, detailing that 'it comeþ of þe pallesye and of moystures drunken in in þe synowes and in þe brawnes and vnder þe tonge'.[116] The general causes and symptoms for

[113] DMLBS s.v.: 'titubo…to stagger, totter, reel'.
[114] *Flos Medicinae*, p. 32.
[115] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 479, lines 28-29, 8-9.
[116] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 481, lines 31-34.

stammering are made with a reference to common paralysis, but Guy adds 'and þerwith comeþ fluxe of spotil without wille, ne þay may not speke forth right ne schewe', and then a reference is made to Galen and the *Aphorisms,* where a connection is drawn between stammering and 'a longe dyarie (i. fluxe)'.[117] The main cause here appears to be moisture, and many of the following treatments confirm this. It is striking that an abundance of moisture was also a key factor in vocal problems and a common cause of hoarseness. Bartholomew the Englishman is very clear concerning the effect of moisture upon the tongue, in causing stammering, and refers to Galen saying 'Galen seiþ þat somtyme it happiþ þat þe tonge buffeþ and stamereþ by to moch moisture, whenne þe strengis of þe tonge may not strecche and sprede in þe vttir parties þerof for to moche moisture'.[118] Bartholomew further uses Galen's argument that stammering can be caused by 'to moche moisture of þe brayn, oþir of þe tonge, oþir boþe'.[119]

The close connection between the brain and speech, and between the brain and its moist constitution is clear, in medieval medical and scholastic understanding. Bartholomew the Englishman highlights 'þat þe substaunce of þe brayn is cooled and moyst'.[120] Further connections between the brain and speech are outlined in the *Flos medicinae* in the causes of stuttering:

> Tongue impediments are caused by a shortage of fruit, and unsuitable humour, diet, control of the mind, a wandering mind, fear.
>
> [Impediunt linguam fructus brevis, humor ineptus,
> victus, mens presens, mens peregrina, timor.][121]

Here, two of the causes of stuttering are directly related to the mind, or brain. Medical understanding not only involved a humoral connection between the brain and the mouth, as outlined by Bartholomew, but also a physical connection in the organisation of the cranial nerves. In the anatomy part of his surgical text Guy de Chauliac lists the seven pairs of cranial nerves that arise in the brain and lead to the eyes, ears, tongue, stomach and other

[117] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 481, lines 35-39.
[118] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 207, lines 25-28.
[119] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 207, line 31.
[120] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 175, lines 30-31.
[121] *Flos Medicinae*, p. 224, lines 659-660.

parts: ‘And from it spryngen for þe more partie 7 payre of felynge synowes, þe whiche beþ ladde to þe eyȝen and to þe eres, to þe tonge and to þe stomak and to oþer members, as it schal be saide’.[122] Guy gives further details in the following section ‘of þe anothomye of the face and of his particles’.[123] He states that for the tongue ‘To hym comen tastynge and mouynge synowes of the 4te and of þe 6te payre’.[124] Although Guy separates which nerves travel to which parts of the face, he does place the central location for the beginning of the nerves in the head. Evidently, there is required a certain amount of moisture for fluid movement of the tongue, and an overabundance of moisture results is a speech impediment. In some instances that overabundance of moisture comes from the brain, a cold and moist part of the human body. This close connection between stammering, the tongue, moisture and the brain, is often borne out in the recommended treatments.

As was the case for causes of hoarseness, a number of causes of stammering stem from cold or moisture. These two humours are of greater abundance in women and therefore there appears an implicit feminisation of the ailments that impede the voice and authority. Such an impediment may reflect the subversive qualities of women within established patriarchal society or may reflect more broadly a belief in the inferiority of female authority to male authority. There is a further connection borne out by the medical literature between speech impediments and the brain. It is striking that an adverse effect on the brain and speech, with consequent effects on articulating rationality and morality, should stem from humours connected to women. Apart from highlighting perhaps their subversive nature, it is further suggestive of the lack of rationality and morality displayed by women. Within medical discourse then there is an implicit understanding of perceived masculine superiority and perhaps a fear of feminine subversion.

Guy provides a long, detailed list of treatments for stammering, beginning with those for paralysis, and then progressing through three stages of specific treatments for which he references the work of Heben Mesue (c. 777-c. 857), an Arabic medical authority: diversion of matters; desiccation of the matter from the head; and consuming conjoined matter. These

[122] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 41, lines 25-28.
[123] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*. The whole section is page 42, lines 21-37, pp. 42-45, p. 46 lines 1-16.
[124] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 46, lines 4-5.

stages require that the 'matter', the excess moisture, firstly be diverted from the head, then dried, and finally more moisture should be consumed. This list of the three stages is omitted in the Middle English but the outline of the treatments that follows is the same as in the Latin original.[125] The diversion of matter is accomplished 'wiþ scharpe clisteries and wiþ frotynges and wiþ ventosynges behynde þe nekke.'[126] Then there are several suggested treatments to complete the desiccation process. The first being 'fulfilled wiþ drienge plastres vppon alle þe hede with þo þinges þat ben as mustarde and doufes donge, mylium and salte ybroylede, bayes of lorer, anise, fenell, piperes, clowes and other things þat dryȝen rewme un confortynge þe hede'.[127] Here Guy is following humoral theory as there is an excess of moisture, for which he is beginning by drying out the matter and several ingredients were known for their drying properties including mustard, anise and pepper.[128] Guy also recommends a cautery over the head and neck followed by two other recipes for plasters.[129] As with the desiccating plaster recipe, many of these ingredients are described as being warming, including the chamomile, marjoram and ginger.[130] Many of these ingredients are available herbs in the European west, but ginger, for example, Dioscorides (c. 40-c. 90), a Greek physician and pharmacologist, states, in his *Materia medica,* grows 'plentifully in primitive Arabia'.[131] The third, and final, stage, of consuming moisture, is the longest, and consists of 'Gargarismus…and wasshynges of þe mouthe or frontynges of þe tonge'.[132] It is significant that these recipes still contain some of the same ingredients used in the desiccation process, including ginger and marjoram, suggesting that the consumption of moisture should be tempered by drying ingredients, perhaps to prevent a relapse of the ailment. Throughout these treatments there is a significant list of ingredients, and the inclusion of ones that would need to be imported, adds to the cost of such a remedy, and therefore indicates a wealthy

[125] The Latin for the whole section which in Middle English is 'Of pallesye and of wlaffyng', is to be found in Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, 2 vols, ed. M. McVaugh (Leiden: Brill, 1997), beginning at p. 354, line 7 and continuing to p. 355, line 24.
[126] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 482, lines 11-13.
[127] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 482, lines 14-17.
[128] Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica.* The properties of the ingredients denote as: 'Sinapelaion', 1-47, p. 45, identified as mustard; 'Anison', 3-65, p. 440, identified as anise; 'Piper', 2-189, p. 316, identified as pepper.
[129] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 482, lines 17-24: 'And cauteries vppon the hede and in þe sydes and byhynde þe spondiles of þe nekke ben praysede. And Haly Abbas commaundeþ þis plastre vppon þe nekke to conforte þe synowes: Take of camomylle, of honysokell, or maioran, of gynger, of eueriche ʒ v, of mustarde, of pylettre, of þe leues of lorere ana ʒ iii, of opoponak, of castor ana ʒ ii. Breke ham alle, and medle ham wiþ wexe and wiþ oyle of sambuke, and make þerof a plastre'.
[130] The properties of the ingredients were followed up in Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*. 'Anthemis, Anthemis Porphuranthes, Anthemis Melananthes', 3-154, pp. 527-528, includes chamomile as one of the suggestions for identification; 'Sampsuchon', 3-48, pp. 419-420, identified as marjoram; 'Zingiberi', 2-190, pp. 319-320, identified as ginger.
[131] Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica:* 'Zingiberi', 2-190, pp. 319-320; 'Panakes Herakleion', 3-55, pp. 428, 431.
[132] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 482, lines 30-31.

patient being catered to, further supporting the argument that it is the wealthy who are most concerned about their clarity of speech and who have access to such medicalised authority.

The variety of treatments for acquired stammers indicates that clarity of speech, if it could be obtained, was of some importance and as was made apparent in the 'Life of Blessed John the Dominican', clarity of speech carried with it a level of authority, in that particular case authority to preach. Moving across genres into the literary, the description of the Friar in the 'General Prologue' of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* offers a very different view: 'Somwhat he lipsed, for his wantownesse,/To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge'.[133] Although the Middle English word used here is 'lipsed', it can be translated as a lisp or stammer, or to articulate with a hissing sound.[134] The Friar alters his speech, adding a lisp, in order to change the sound of his speech, making it 'sweete'. The Friar is a well-connected man: 'Ful wel biloved and famulier was he/With frankeleyns over al in his contree,/And eek with worthy women of the toun'.[135] Janette Richardson argues that the Friar dresses well and acts accordingly to make himself agreeable to his 'chosen associates', but she does not necessarily directly connect the affectation of a lisp with this behaviour.[136] Lisps and stammers are speech impairments most often associated with children and with childhood comes innocence and purity, the Friar here may be cultivating a similar characterisation, perhaps to encourage people to trust him, allowing him to continue in a lifestyle not entirely within the bounds of his religious vows. As his English is described as being 'sweete' it would seem that the affectation does not detract from his appearance but rather supports it. This is quite different from other examples explored here, but rather than the other stemming from hagiography and medical literature, this is a work of literary fiction. Therefore, the affected impediment may support the other aspects of his character that aim to ingratiate himself with the wealthy in society: he dresses and behaves in a manner that has so far proved successful in his life.

[133] 'General Prologue', *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 27, lines 264-265.
[134] MED s.v.: 'wlispen, v.,'.
[135] 'General Prologue', *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 27, lines 215-217.
[136] Janette Richardson, 'Friar and Summoner, the Art of Balance', *The Chaucer Review,* 9.3 (Winter, 1975), (227-236), p. 227.

This material represents the appearances of stammering across the different genres studied in this thesis. Other than the brief verse in the *Flos medicinae*, it is only the surgical work of Guy de Chauliac that has detailed information on treatment. The reason for this limited amount of information can be conjectured upon: is it that it was not a common ailment to treat, or that only the very rich could afford to spend money on an ailment that could be lived with? Most information is found in Guy's work, an educated man who was employed by the Avignonese papacy. He would clearly not have been providing medicine for the poorer people in society. Also, as mentioned, the large quantity of ingredients in the treatments; the number of stages of treatment, and the fact that some ingredients would have had to be imported, support the other evidence that Guy was producing his text for practitioners catering for wealthy patients. It is such wealthy patients that hold positions of authority and power with society and who therefore need to have a speaking voice that displays that authority. Therefore, a speech impediment is only really relevant to those people in public office or positions of aristocratic power, or religious authority. There is an intrinsic connection between stammering as an impediment of significance and those people in positions of social importance.

'Impeded' Speech

Stammering, whether congenital or acquired is an impediment to clear speech and carries with it potential assumptions as to the moral character of the speaker. It is also a relatively straightforward term to understand, however within the spectrum of conditions that affect the voice and speech, some terms are more difficult to define and categorise, and for those examples I employ the phrase 'impeded speech'. This is not a term generally recognised or used by medieval medical literature, but I use it here to indicate an example in medical texts where speech is affected in some way, temporarily, although not clearly identified, and not clearly categorised under another heading such as stammering and hoarseness. Such examples include the description, in the thirteenth century surgical work of Theodoric Borgognoni (c. 1205-1298), of 'impeded speech' that accompanies a dislocated mandible, or the description that 'speech is disturbed', which Guy de Chauliac names in relation to an incision in the membrane, when discussing wounds of the head.

The surgical works of Theodoric and Guy de Chauliac treat two cases of 'impeded speech' as a sign of another condition: Theodoric treats a dislocated mandible, and Guy an incision in the membrane of the head. Theodoric lists the symptoms of a dislocated mandible as being an 'inability of the lower teeth to line up evenly with the upper ones; inability to close the mouth; impeded speech...'.[137] The speech problem is the only one of the symptoms, used for diagnosis, which is not an external visible sign.[138] Theodoric, also, does not mention speech again throughout the remainder of the section on a dislocated mandible, making no mention of whether normal speech is restored along with a successful treatment. The prescribed treatment though does suggest that the impediment to speech will continue, however it may be more a result of the treatment than a continuing symptom of the dislocation. The treatment to restore the mandible to its correct position so 'the lower teeth are aligned with the uppers', involves the mandible being 'bound up so that the teeth meet in their usual fashion and cannot be disturbed'.[139] Such a treatment will mean that the jaw is held in place and therefore speech will be restricted. It will not be impossible to speak, and most words and sounds will be able to be produced but speech will be quieter. Theodoric does not discuss how speech may be affected by the treatment but is obviously aware of some of the impact of such a treatment as he details that the 'diet for such cases should be liquid,' and offers encouragement at the end of the treatment through the words: 'it will heal quickly.'[140] Such reassurance is important for the patient, particularly if their position within society, which is probably a relatively wealthy one to employ a surgeon who has studied Theodoric's work, requires them to be seen and heard. Their social authority through their speech would need to be restored as quickly as possible.

In his surgical work, Guy de Chauliac lists, in relation to an incision in the membrane, under the section on wounds of the head, that 'speech is disturbed', and, like Theodoric, he makes no further mention of speech throughout the remainder of the section. Such descriptions of impeded, or disturbed, speech are impossible terms to qualify, and may demonstrate a lack of

[137] *The Surgery of Theodoric ca. A. D. 1267*, Translated from the Latin by Eldridge Campbell, M.D. and James Colton, M.A. Volume One, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc, 1955), Book II, Ch. 43: Dislocation of the Mandible, p. 203.
[138] Theodoric follows the diagnostic signs with prognostic signs which details that a swift intervention is necessary as it may lead eventually to fevers, headache, vomiting and death. *The Surgery of Theodoric*, Book II, Ch. 43: Dislocation of the Mandible, pp. 203-204.
[139] *The Surgery of Theodoric*, Book II, Ch. 43: Dislocation of the Mandible, p. 204.
[140] *The Surgery of Theodoric*, Book II, Ch. 43: Dislocation of the Mandible, p. 204.

knowledge of the exact manifestation of the speech impediments, or rather that the impediments to the speech are not demonstrated in the same way, or to the same degree in every patient. In the description of the signs that accompany the incision in the membrane, the signs are varied and among them all parts of the face are affected: eyes, ears, nose and mouth. This shows Guy's understanding of the cranial nerves that begin in the head and then spread out to different parts of the face.[141]

Although the speech problem is not the primary ailment that these two surgeries cure, it is important that the effects on speech are listed among the signs and symptoms. They are likely to be symptoms that appear each time these conditions are presented, and effects to speech must be classed among important symptoms to notice, as well as being audibly obvious, therefore easy to identify. For these two cases there is no mention made of what happens to speech after the treatment: whether it is completely recovered, only partially, or not at all. From this it may be assumed that the effect on speech is important enough to notice but the outcome of the treatment for this, or any other symptom, is not, or cannot, be guaranteed.

These surgical works of Guy and Theodoric, present their information in a way that is not case specific: they do not include large amounts of information from individual patients. This is not an uncommon trope of medical literature, whose primary function is not presenting individual case information, although there are sometimes references included to first-hand experiences. A notable exception to this, with particular reference to speech disorders, is the *consilia* of Taddeo Alderotti, composed in the thirteenth century, which provides information for a case study, Count Bertholdus, who had a speech disorder caused by a 'softness of the tongue'.[142] A medical *Consilium* is 'a text in which a learned physician wrote a response to a specific question', in this case the text has a particular patient in mind, Count Bertholdus.[143] This speech disorder, according to Taddeo, is due to the fact that 'either excess humidity of the brain had affected the nerves connecting brain, tongue, and genitals; or else the disease was originally in the genitals, whence vapors produced by the excess of melancholy humors

[141] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 41, lines 25-28.
[142] Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils*, p. 288.
[143] Elizabeth W. Mellyn, '*Consilia*', in *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia* ed. by Thomas Glick, Stephen J. Livesey, Faith Wallis (London: Routledge, 2005), (143-143), p. 143.

had risen to the brain'.[144] As this is a speech disorder and is caused by an abundance of humidity, it is possible that this refers to a stammer, as Guy de Chauliac states that a stammer is caused by excess moisture in the nerves and muscles. Taddeo does not openly identify the ailment, and it is for that reason that it is not grouped alongside other examples of stammering. Taddeo further believes that speech impediments may be 'a secondary result of a disease of the genitals.'[145] There is drawn here a distinct connection between the high and low parts of the body, and a similar, but not as extreme, connection was drawn in the work of Guy de Chauliac who stated that those who stammered were often struck with a long flux of the belly. Walter argues that 'the lower body has an inextricable connection with the upper body and is analogous to it'; in this case 'Verbal and faecal diarrhoea are expressions of the same pathological condition: a loss of control over speech is mirrored and mimicked by a loss of control over defecation'.[146] Taddeo has also written a commentary on the *Aphorisms* of Hippocrates and has commented upon the same section, later quoted by Guy de Chauliac, on the connection between stammering and a long flux of the belly, although Taddeo cautioned against a cause-and-effect relationship, and asserted that these were two separate conditions arising from the excessive humidity in the brain.[147] Walter also argues that 'Sin is manifested in the body through the literal collapse of the distinction between the mouth and anus'.[148] These arguments are centred on control, or alternatively a loss of control, where it is mirrored in both high and low parts of the body: a loss of control in speech may be mirrored by a loss of control over defecation.

An impediment to the voice and speech is problematic for defining humanity and authority, however a total loss of voice destroys the ability to articulate Christian morality and rationality entirely. Within medical literature there are instances of a temporary loss of voice which is both treated in its own right as well as appearing as a sign of another ailment. Bartholomew the Englishman directly links a loss of speech with the brain, and further notes a connection to a loss of wit:

[144] Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils,* p. 288.
[145] Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils,* p. 288.
[146] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 30.
[147] Siraisi, *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils*, p. 131.
[148] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 54.

> ȝif þe tonge semeþ hool wiþoute wemme, and þe speche faileþ, þe defaute come of þe brayn oþir of synewis of felinge istoppid. Sometyme lesinge of speche comeþ by lesinge of witte, as in frenesye and litergye[149]

Here again, Bartholomew highlights the connection with the brain, and also with potential mental problems: a loss of wit, and frenzy. The medieval understanding of speech being intimately connected with rationality is very apparent here, and with the loss of one comes a potential loss of the other. It also has further implications for a figure of authority who, without speech and rational thought loses their authorised status.

Due to this connection between the brain and speech, it is unsurprising that one of the signs of a fracture to the cranium, as listed by Guy de Chauliac is a loss of voice, which thereby results in a loss of speech. In listing the signs of the fracture to the cranium, 'The fourþe is taken of the accidentes the whiche þat comen in, as apoplexia, scotomia, destruccioun of his voice, spowyng, and suche oþer'.[150] Here the phrase 'destruction of the voice', would seem to indicate a detrimental effect, probably resulting in an inability to speak. The loss of voice is also listed a little further on in the same section as one of the signs, if it continues, of a serious fracture:

> 'And þerfore euel accidentes, as a feuer acu (i. agewe or scharpe feuer), quakyng, crampe, ravynge and swowning, lesynge of the voyce, goyng out, derkenesse and redenesse and goggeliȝednesse ben perilouse and dedely, and namely ȝif thai dwellen stille and ben not chaungede.'[151]

The treatments that follow make no further reference to treating the loss of voice; any other signs of the fracture, or whether the voice is recovered with the healing of the fracture. The most important aspect for a physician or surgeon treating a fracture, is the fracture itself, however as the signs make clear, the loss of the voice accompanies such an injury, and with that loss comes a loss of authority through the patient being silenced.

[149] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 207, lines 6-9.
[150] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 235, lines 31-33.
[151] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 237, lines 5-9.

The Medieval Welsh Medical Texts, manuscripts from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, list two instances of recipes for restoring speech, both of which are acquired ailments as the recipes make clear. The first appears in all texts analysed by Luft, and the second only appears in the manuscript Jesus 111, better known as the Red Book of Hergest. The first recipe reads as follows: 'To cause a person who has lost his speech to speak, take sage juice or cowslip juice and put it into his mouth'. ['I beri dywedut o deruyd i ddyn golli i barabyl, kymer sud y sayge neu sud y briallu a dot yn i eneu'.][152] This remedy is simple in the ingredients containing only one ingredient. Following up sage in the *Materia medica* of Dioscorides, it 'dissolves chilliness and coughs', and would therefore be appropriate for this ailment which seems to manifest through cold and wet humours, which Taddeo attempted to warm and dry out. This recipe is also simple in the manner of preparation, and in its simplicity, there is a lack of detailed information on what may have caused the loss of speech, the quantity of ingredients to use, and how often such a remedy should be administered. This suggests that the text is intended for an audience of practising, and educated physicians, who already have all the basic information and merely require a short sentence to remind them of the ingredients. Luft's analysis argues that the source basis for the remedies contained in these texts may be varied, including English, Latin, Anglo-Norman and native information.[153] Whatever the origins, Luft argues that 'this entire corpus of texts is based...on the systems of medical knowledge common to Europe during this period'.[154]

The other recipe, which is listed, is only in the Red Book of Hergest and shows great similarity in ingredient choice, but this time makes a connection between speech and reason. 'Whoever loses his reason or his speech, let him drink cowslip juice within two months of losing it, and truly he will be healed'. ['Pwy bynnac a gollo y synnwyr neu y ymadrawd, yuet sud y briallu ovywn y deu uis y collo, ac yn wir iach uyd'.] [155]Both recipes make use of cowslip to remedy a loss of speech, but this second recipe makes an interesting connection between speech and reason. This does not appear to be a direct connection whereby one leads to, or is caused by, the other, but rather that they must be of a similar nature to be able to be

[152] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, 9/37, pp. 250-251. This recipe is present in all four manuscripts of this edition: British Library Additional 14912, Cardiff 3.242 (Hafod 16, Card), Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson B467, and Oxford Jesus College 111 (The Red Book of Hergest).
[153] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, p. 19.
[154] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, p. 19.
[155] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, remedy J/7, pp. 308-309. J is to indicate manuscript Jesus 111, The Red Book of Hergest.

cured by the same recipe. Bartholomew the Englishman also highlighted this connection between the brain, speech, and rational thought in his assertion that the loss of speech may be directly related to a loss of wit.[156] Speech and reason, or rationality, are intrinsically linked, and they are both also distinct human qualities; the failure of one or both questions a person's very humanity.

Many of the causes of speech ailments continue to be of a cold and wet nature, a humoral composition synonymous with women, and requiring a hot and dry treatment, humours equally synonymous with men. Such qualities continue to support the implicit feminisation of speech ailments, however these remedies for the loss of speech also show a pertinent connection with the mind, reason, and rationality. This adds a further connection aligning femininity with irrationality and unreasonableness of mind: a cold, wet composition tempered by the warm, dry, reasoning and rationality of the 'superior' sex, man. The tempering qualities of masculine control and the detrimental results of feminine independence are borne out by the effects of the suffocation of the womb.

The suffocation of the womb, capable of causing a *total* loss of voice is detailed in the *Conditions of Women*, one part of the *Trotula* ensemble:

> Sometimes the womb is suffocated; that is to say, when it is drawn upward…Sometimes the woman is contracted so that the head is joined to the knees, and she lacks vision, and she loses [sic] the function of the voice…
>
> [Quandoque suffocatur matrix, scilicet quando sursum tollitur…Quandoque mulier contrahitur ita quod capud iungitur genibus, et uisu caret, et uoci officium amittit…][157]

There follow some details from Galen who supports the fact that the voice is lost as part of this condition, and then the causes of the condition are outlined:

> This happens to women who do not use men, especially to widows who were accustomed to carnal commerce. It regularly comes upon virgins, too,

[156] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 207, lines 8-9; refer to p. 81 for full quotation.
[157] *The Trotula*, (2001), [45], pp. 82/83-84/85.

> when they reach the age of marriage and are not able to use men and when the semen abounds in them a lot, which Nature wishes to draw out by means of the male.
>
> [Contingit autem hoc eis que uiris non utuntur, maxime uiduis que consueuerunt uti carnali commercio. Virginibus etiam solet euenire cum ad annos nubiles peruenerunt et uiris uti non possunt, et cum in eis multum habundet sperma, quod per maculum natura uellet educere] [158]

This condition, specific to women, draws a direct connection between the mouth, the voice and the womb, a connection between the high and low parts of the human body, in a similar way to the impediment of speech suffered by Count Bertholdus. In the medieval period there was a strong association of the mouth and the womb, both as openings in the body, as well as a strong anatomical connection.[159] The womb was sometimes further associated with speech, particularly excessive female speech.[160] This suffocation of the womb shows this internal connection and the dramatic effect that it has on the voice. As the womb, a part only of the female anatomy, moves it can destroy the ability to vocalise, and therefore produce speech, leading to suggestions of the destruction of female authority and questioning their very humanity. This apparent view on the speech and humanity of women may be associated with the authorship of the text: Green argues that she believes the author of this text, which 'is very much the offspring of Greco-Roman and Arabic medicine', to be male.[161] Ben Lowe has also argued in relation to feminine beauty, that 'patriarchal power could be maintained through the idealization of the female body', something which is rooted in the imposition upon women of ideals created by men within a patriarchal social structure.[162] Ideas concerning the causes of suffocation of the womb are created, written about and taught by men, predominantly to men, and it is unsurprising, then, in the male-dominated world of medicine that women are portrayed as difficult to control, and in this case even ill, without

[158] *The Trotula,* (2001), [47], pp. 84/85.
[159] Pouchelle highlights that Henri de Mondeville thought that 'the whole of the womb can be a mouth, as can the internal orifice of the womb or uterus', Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, translated by Rosemary Morris (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), p. 182.
[160] Pouchelle refers to a riddle of the end of the fifteenth century 'saying rudely that the reason why 'women talk more than men' is that they have 'two tongues'.' Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, p. 183.
[161] *The Trotula: An English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 36 and xv.
[162] Ben Lowe, 'Body Images and the Politics of Beauty: Formation of the Feminine Ideal in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, edited by Karen A. Callaghan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 22, 26.

the influence of men.[163] Within the idea of controlling women, it is pertinent that the women mentioned as suffering most commonly from suffocation of the womb are widows and virgins of marriageable age: these are women who are outside of a husband's control who need to be fitted into the male social structure, argued here, for their own health and well-being. The very humanity, rationality and morality of women is here dependent upon their 'correct' placement within the male-dominated social structure.

Muteness

All the impediments to speech discussed so far have been either temporary in nature or only partially impairing to speech. A complete lack of speech is termed muteness, and considering the close connection drawn between speech and humanity, morality and reason, a complete lack of speech would have serious problems for holding any level of authority within society.[164] Ynez Violé O'Neill, in her study of speech and speech disorders outlines the purpose of her study, and it is one that is relevant for any study of speech, or the disruption of it: 'for as long as people have spoken, they have wondered about those who are unable to do so'.[165] There is often defined a kind of *normality*, and it is a deviation from that normality that interests, shocks, or disgusts. In taking the view of Aristotle that speech is the privilege of humanity and divides it from animals, a lack of speech may be considered as a deviation from human *normality*. In some medical and encyclopaedic texts there is a certain interest in the state of muteness and its origins, and connections with other parts of the body. The *Prose Salernitan Questions*, an encyclopaedic text on science and medicine written in the late twelfth century, asked:

> Why are all mutes deaf? Response. The nerves which come to the tongue in their origin are continued by nerves which come to the ears. If therefore it should happen that a certain humour obstructs the nerves of the tongue about the beginnings they are obstructed like those which come to the ears, whence simultaneously he may be mute and deaf.

[163] Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 19.
[164] Safford and Safford argue that a 'dogma prevailed that deaf person, being incapable of speech, are therefore incapable of reason', Philip L. Safford and Elizabeth J. Safford, *A History of Childhood and Disability* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996), p. 7.
[165] Ynez Violé O'Neill, *Speech and Speech Disorders in Western Thought Before 1600* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 8.

> [Quare omnes muti surdi sunt? Responsio. Nervi qui veniunt ad linguam in sua origine continui sunt nervis qui veniunt ad aures. Si ergo contingat aliquem opilare nervos lingue circa principia, opilantur et illi qui veniunt ad aures, unde simul fit mutus et surdus.] [166]

This quote from the *Prose Salernitan Questions* suggests not only an interest in the origin of muteness but also an association with deafness. Such a connection particularly between those integral to communication and social interaction has implications for social position and authority. Lacking one function of social interaction can cause problems but lacking two makes communication particularly difficult. A connection between muteness and deafness was also of interest before the *Prose Salernitan Questions*; in Aristotle's *History of Animals* he states 'All persons who are deaf from birth are dumb as well: though they can utter a sort of voice, they cannot talk'.[167] Although the medical source base for this chapter provides no direct information on muteness, the inner anatomy of the cranial nerve connections between the brain and parts of the face, as described in the *Prose Salernitan Questions*, is borne out in the surgical work of Guy de Chauliac. There is here an interconnection between the brain, muteness and deafness, reason and rationality, and therefore between communication and humanity.

Although there are a few mentions made of muteness in medical literature, there is a distinct lack of recommended cures. Ruth Salter points out, with reference to muteness and deafness, that 'it must be recognised that few medical sources, despite discussing possible causes, suggest ways in which these sensory sufferings could actually be cured or even just slightly improved.'[168] The implication of this lack of direct information concerning muteness from birth is that medical literature shied away from permanent conditions with no known successful treatments. A similar pattern was seen in the medical information given for stammering as an impediment from birth: out of the main sources consulted for this chapter, only Guy de Chauliac had anything specific to say, and that was simply to state that a stammer from birth is incurable.

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[166] Quoted in Salter, 'Only Half Healed', p. 99. Salter quotes the Latin from *The Prose Salernitan Questions* Ba.12. Also quoted in Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, p. 78.
[167] Aristotle, *History of Animals, Volume II: Books 4-6*. Translated by A. L. Peck. Loeb Classical Library 438 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), Book IV, Chapter ix, p. 81 (Greek on p. 80).
[168] Salter, 'Only Half Healed', p. 100.

As with any ailment, particularly those where medical intervention proves unsuccessful, there is always the potential for a miraculous cure. Unlike stammering, there are a number of successful recorded miraculous cures for muteness. It is striking that the descriptions of miraculous cures do not always show the same attention to social authority and positions of power within their miracles: there is more social variance in the supplicants seeking miraculous cures. Ruth Salter has analysed several accounts of miraculous cures in twelfth-century English hagiography.[169] Within these miraculous accounts there is a young girl, and poor young boy, and two men. There is also a spread of people cured of muteness within influential compendium of saints' lives, *The Golden Legend* text: a young man, a nobleman, a woman, and a doorman. These miraculous cures show an interesting spread across social classes, but even in such a small sample there appears to be a focus on the cure of men, suggesting the desire or need for cure can be deeply gendered.

Of the miraculous cures of mutes within *The Golden Legend*, three of them very clearly demonstrate that through the miracle and return of speech comes, perhaps only temporary, authority. Within the chapter on Saint Apollinaris, the cure of 'a nobleman who was mute', meant that 'more than five hundred men accepted the faith'.[170] As a nobleman, a man of significant social standing, his cure would have supplied him with a greater ability to participate within society and governance, exercising authority and power. *The Golden Legend,* being an important collection of saints' lives clearly focuses on the cure and the faith, and in this case also the number of converts.[171]

Two further cures, not of noblemen, demonstrate the authority gained by those cured of their muteness: both effect change through their newly found voice. In the chapter on Saint Sebastian, the saint cures a woman who 'had lost the power of speech'.[172] Importantly,

[169] Salter's findings show relatively few records of individuals with a major sensory impairment being cured. Within eight sources Salter found that there were 293 accounts of cures of which five per cent were accounts of mute people, and a further one percent were deaf-mutes, Salter, 'Only Half Healed', pp. 88-89.
[170] Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, p. 384.
[171] Eamon Duffy 'Introduction to the 2012 Edition', in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* p. xi.
[172] 'Saint Sebastian' (Chapter 23) in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* p. 99.

though this woman is the 'wife of Nicostratus in whose house the two holy young men were kept under guard', one of the holy men being Saint Sebastian. Upon the return of her speech, the woman says: 'Blessed be the words of your mouth, and blessed be all who believe what you have said…'[173] It is upon hearing these words that Nicostratus prays to Sebastian for forgiveness and sets the holy men free. In the narrative the return of the woman's speech directly results in the change in her husband and the release of their prisoners. Her speech, perhaps only temporarily, carries the authority granted through faith to effect a significant change.

A similar accession of vocal authority occurs in the cure of a doorman in the chapter on John the Almsgiver. The cure is effected through a man named Peter who previously had been a tax collector but had changed his ways, sold his belongings and become a slave. At a dinner given by Peter's master, people attend who had known Peter as a tax collector and in his escape from the situation Peter must communicate with a doorman to open the door.

> The doorman was a deaf-mute who opened the door only at a signal, but Peter ordered him to open, not by signs but speaking. The man heard at once and received the power of speech, answered Peter, opened the door, and let him out. Then, going into the house, he said, to the surprise of all who heard him speak: "That slave who worked in the kitchen has gone out and run away, but, wait! He must be a servant of God, because when he said to me, 'I tell you, open!' a flame came out of his mouth and touched my tongue and ears, and right away I could hear and speak!"[174]

In the return of his speech and authority the doorman carries more authority, recognising Peter as a 'servant of God', and therefore more important than his previous menial status had suggested. Furthermore, it is the doorman, despite his lower status, who informs the rich guests at dinner of the miracle and the power of their previous slave. As with the woman of the previous miracle, this doorman, has gained, temporarily, more vocal authority than those of a higher social class.

[173] 'Saint Sebastian' (Chapter 23) in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, p. 99.
[174] 'John the Almsgiver' (Chapter 27), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* pp. 114-115.

Conclusion

As the myriad examples above show, humanity, rationality, morality, authority, and status are all linked by their connection to the human mouth and to speech. It is through speech that moral understanding and rationality of mind are expressed, and authority is displayed. In maintaining the traditional social hierarchy, it is the wealthy and educated in society most in need of clear, uninterrupted vocal authority. The vast number of remedies evident in medical literature, particularly the literature of the educated physician, containing exotic ingredients for ailments such as hoarseness attest to the desire of the wealthy for clear speech.

Speech is central for the wealthy maintaining social authority, but, as we have seen, it is also key in the maintenance of religious authority. John the Dominican's 'Life' highlights several aspects of religious authority. His impediment is derided and appears unworthy of spreading the Word of God, but it is also a tool for education; challenging the authority of the Fathers of the Dominican Order and forcing them to re-evaluate their views and Christian teaching. In other saints' lives the cures of the mute also allow for education, principally as aids to preaching. Their cures are not only physical cures, allowing the sufferer to participate more fully within society, but also examples of the power and authority of the Church on earth. Miracles provide authority, and humanity, to the patient, the listener, and the Church.

Furthermore, intrinsically linked with speech are reason and rationality which are distinct human qualities that set humanity apart from animals. The failure or impediment to speech implies a similar impediment to rationality and therefore humanity. It is therefore, through speech that humanity is expressed, and through that humanity, authority. More commonly this is an implied masculine authority, with femininity being implicitly connected with ailments affecting speech. The cold and wet nature of speech ailments directly connects to the general humoral composition of the female body. This connection links to the subversive nature of women, with the suffocation of the womb as exemplar of the physical expressions of dangerous women which is implicit in the humoral causes of other speech ailments. Femininity is dangerous in its humoral qualities, its physicality with the connection of womb and mouth, and in its emasculating qualities which in men is demonstrative of gluttony and

licentiousness. As we have seen therefore, there is an implied connection between masculinity and authority set up in opposition to femininity and subversion. Although this is not a clear binary opposition, nor is it arguable for everyday life in the Middle Ages, it is demonstrative of a grounding in medieval and Classical philosophy and medicine that perceived men as the more perfect formation of humanity and women as a less perfect version. In all its manifestations speech has the power to define and subvert humanity; to uphold the patriarchal structure of society and to undermine it; to maintain religious authority and question it. The human mouth and its speech are enormously powerful and through both the upholding virtues and subverting qualities they define what it means to be human, gendered, and to wield authority.

Chapter 2

‘With litel mouth and round to see’: Locating Authority through the Mouth’s Appearance

Hir nose tretys, hire yen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful small, and therto softe and reed[1]

Her mowithe wyde, her tethe yalowe overe alle,
With bleryd eyes gretter than a balle.
Her mowithe was nott to lake:
Her tethe hyng overe her lyppes[2]

Chaucer’s (d. 1400) description of the Prioress, in the ‘General Prologue’ to his popular work, *The Canterbury Tales*, has been argued as representing ‘the conventional mediaeval type of feminine beauty’, and displaying similarities to a romance heroine.[3] Such a description of a Prioress, a religious woman, in the same terms as a romance heroine, is striking, and perhaps seems incongruent with such a powerful religious woman. A beautiful religious woman should easily fulfil the other associations with beauty, those of inner virtue and purity, to reflect the outward physical beauty, but should a religious woman appear quite so overtly beautiful? Although there is no suggestion within Chaucer’s description that the Prioress is immoral in a sexual way, there are certain suggestions that she does not fulfil the virtues expected of both a beautiful woman and a religious one. Her gentleness is highlighted in her portrait description in the ‘General Prologue’, a clear sign of virtue, however it is not gentleness towards the rest of humanity but rather to her pet dogs.[4] The love she lavishes on her pets is not a character trait to necessarily be censured, but as Richard Schoek has argued, it ‘is a warped quality’, for she feeds her dogs expensively ‘and apparently ignores the human

[1] ‘General Prologue’, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by L. D. Benson, Third Edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 25, lines 152-153.
[2] *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle,* in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), p. 53, lines 232-235.
[3] Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Senses* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960) p. 55; Katherine J. Lewis, ‘The Prioress and the Second Nun’, in *Historians on Chaucer: The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), (94-113), p. 96.
[4] ‘Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde/With rosted flesh, or milk and wastel-breed./But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,/Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;/And al was conscience and tendre herte’, ‘General Prologue’, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 25, lines 146-150.

suffering so prevalent around her'.[5] Equally, Edward Condren has considered the same passage which 'raises questions about her [the Prioress] perspective', highlighting that the food fed to the dogs is the same as Avicenna's recommendations for weaning infants.[6]

These skewed qualities of the Prioress are similarly highlighted in her Tale, the story of a boy who resolves to learn the *O Alma Redemptoris Mater* and sings it walking through a Jewish ghetto where he is set upon and has his throat cut, but miraculously continues to sing.[7] Schoek describes this overt anti-Semitism, viewed through such a supposedly beautiful and pious woman as the Prioress, as a 'violation of the deepest sense of charity which fourteen centuries of Christianity had been laboring to develop, and its failure to carry the burden of charity which is enjoined on all Christians but especially on religious'.[8] The Prioress appears to be the archetypal medieval beauty, in a physical sense, however this is a beauty that is not mirrored by her internal virtue, indicating a subversion of the outward authority of her social position by her, more questionable, inner morality. This subversion is evident in the contrast of the beautiful outward appearance of the Prioress with her antisemitic *Tale*. This ironic and satiric representation of the Prioress' character is, as Katherine Lewis argues, further highlighted in certain elements of her character that question her apparent aristocratic nature. Lewis comments upon the description of the Prioress's French being not that of Paris, and the affected table manners she displays which 'describe a non-aristocratic woman who was seeking to imitate courtly behaviour'.[9] Joel Fridell's earlier work on the same subject also highlight the description of aristocratic qualities which are then satirically distorted to demonstrate a lack of success in aristocratic appearance.[10] Furthermore, Lewis argues for a comedic aspect in description of the Prioress couched in romance heroine tropes when considered alongside the likely age of a prioress, in consideration of the lesser administrative roles she should have undertaken. In this case, 'part of his satire could be derived from the implications that she is too old to be acting like a romance heroine'.[11] Such satiric uses of the

[5] Richard J. Schoek, 'Chaucer's Prioress: Mercy and Tender Heart', *The Bridge: A Yearbook of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Vol. II*. 14, (1956), (239-255), p. 245.
[6] Edward I. Condren, The Prioress: A Legend of Spirit, a Life of Flesh', *The Chaucer Review*, 23.3, (1989), (192-218), p. 194.
[7] 'The Prioress's Tale', *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 209-212, lines 488-690.
[8] Schoek, 'Chaucer's Prioress: Mercy and Tender Heart', p. 255. Articles by Schoek and Condren contain further analysis of the portrait and 'Tale' of the Prioress.
[9] Lewis, 'The Prioress and the Second Nun', p. 97.
[10] Joel Fridell, 'Late Gothic Portraiture: The Prioress and Philippa', *The Chaucer Review*, 23.3 (Winter, 1989), (181-191), p. 186.
[11] Lewis, 'The Prioress and the Second Nun', p. 104.

tropes of medieval beauty add another layer to medieval understanding of beauty and its elements which can be used and distorted for comedic effect.

The second example, above, describes Dame Ragnelle from Middle English version of the romance, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* in graphically grotesque terms, whose exaggeration also provides a comedic aspect to the appearance and behaviour of Dame Ragnelle. Dame Ragnelle is the antithesis of the beautiful Prioress and is an image of an aged and ugly woman showing signs of ill health, with yellow teeth, implying a lack of good oral hygiene, combined with a very large sized mouth and teeth showing bodily excess and a lack of control: a key component in descriptions of ugliness and old age. With a wide mouth and overhanging teeth, Dame Ragnelle cannot maintain a safe barrier between the inside of her mouth and the outside, unlike the Prioress whose mouth is small and therefore a more effective barrier to the outside, corrupting world. This barrier should also prevent the inside infecting the outside world through vomit or bad breath; preventing unsightly views of rotten or missing teeth, as well as preventing uncensored speech being unleashed. The lack of control that Dame Ragnelle's mouth implies carries with it a sense of fear of infection: infection from bad breath, and the infection of evil speech.

As with the comedic aspects included in the description of the Prioress, there has been some scholarly attention on the comedy contained within *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, particularly in relation to descriptions of Dame Ragnelle. Rebecca Davis argues for the production of 'humour through hyperbole and an accumulation of absurdities', through the exaggeration of the physicality of Dame Ragnelle.[12] The absurdly long description of Dame Ragnelle's monstrous appearance and its recapitulation with yet more exaggerated elements, including the description of yellowing overhanging teeth which become tusks, is evidence that the 'narrator appears to be carried away with silliness', and produces 'a humor that derives from excess'.[13] The exaggeration of physical elements then produces not only monstrosity and grotesquery but also comedy.

[12] Rebecca A. Davis, 'More Evidence for Intertextuality and Humour Intent in "The Weddynge of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell"', *The Chaucer Review*, 35.4 (2001), (430-439), p. 433.
[13] Davis, 'More Evidence for Intertextuality and Humour Intent in "The Weddynge of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell"', p. 433. Such exaggeration of description is taken further in the work of Sue Niebrzydowski in her consideration of the behaviour of Dame Ragnelle. See Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Monstrous Appetite and Belly

As this chapter will therefore argue, medieval views on beauty are most commonly associated with *female* beauty and how this is connected with sexuality and morality, and the mouth forms a central focus as a conduit for other elements of female health and beauty. These interconnections of health and beauty change throughout the female life cycle, moving from a natural, fertile, virtuous youthful beauty, through a more ambiguous middle age where fertility wanes and beauty requires cosmetic support, to an infertile, amoral, ugly old age.

While the lived reality of these interconnections, particularly of changing levels of morality, is impossible to argue, the prevalence of such ideas and their appearance in medical discourse and literature is evident and influential. The two extremes of the female adult life cycle, that of youth and old age, are opposites in every way. The juxtaposition of the two opening examples shows a younger woman and then an old woman. There is a clear move from the small, soft, and red mouth of youth to the large, wide mouth with yellow teeth hanging over the lips of old age. There is a similar juxtaposition of youth and old age in the twelfth or thirteenth century Pseudo-Ovidian text, *De Vetula,* with the description of the *puella* in conjunction with that of the *vetula,* where there is 'the most unbelievable and disturbing transformation: the beautiful, pure, meticulously ordered body of the *puella* has become the ugly, disordered body of a *vetula*'.[14] These are both striking comparisons: is it feasible that the beautiful Prioress could age and become like the figure of Dame Ragnelle, or that the *puella* will become the *vetula*?

The general terms used to define the two women, *puella* and *vetula* define them as opposing ends of the female life cycle: a *puella* is a girl, or maiden, while a *vetula* is defined as being older and 'no longer young'.[15] The reality of such figures is not in question here: all these characters are fictional descriptions. What is of consequence is the extremeness of the descriptions and the accompanying assumptions that can be made and understood about medieval views on the interconnection between beauty, health, and virtue. This chapter

Laughs: a reconsideration of the humour in *The Weddyng of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell*', *Arthurian Literature*, 27, (2010), pp. 87-102.

[14] Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 19.

[15] DMLBS s.v. 'puella – a female child, girl, maiden, lass'; 'vetula – vetulus, elderly, somewhat old, advanced in life, no longer young'.

argues that the mouth is an indicator of beauty and health, which corresponds to reproductive potential. Beauty and health are intrinsically linked: beauty is health and health is beauty, but beauty also transcends health to further concepts of morality and social authority. It is the figure of the romance heroine that represents the ideal of feminine beauty that is copied and aspired to, a perfect woman who is young, healthy and beautiful, as well as being of noble birth. Beauty, and its antithesis of ugliness, are defined through the appearance of the mouth whose size, colour and scent can denote health, fecundity and inner virtue, as well as decrepitude and amorality. In the maintenance and enhancement of the appearance of beauty (of greater necessity following the end of the first flush of youth) assistance can be sought in the medical and cosmetic literature more commonly available to the learned, academically trained physicians, and the wealthy, educated layperson. Such people are either of the higher social classes or catering to these social classes and therefore the ability to maintain youth through cosmetic treatment is the privilege of the wealthy; those with superior social positions of authority. Therefore, as I will demonstrate, beauty is health, but the ability to maintain beauty also denotes social authority and status.

The human life cycle is used as an organisational method for this chapter because beauty changes through the life cycle, generally with a gradual decline from when a woman reaches sexual maturity, a marriageable age, through to old age. It is through physical changes that the process of aging is most obvious,[16] and the physicality of aging is accompanied by other changes through the life cycle: the most notable for women is reproductive capability, and the moral and spiritual associations of virtue and purity. This chapter focusses on three main points of the female life cycle: youth, middle age, and old age. These are not definite divisions within the life cycle and do not correspond to specific ages. For the purposes of this chapter these divisions are aligned with reproductive capabilities: youth being the apex of reproductive ability; middle age being the waning of childbearing years and the onset of menopause; and old age the inability to bear children.[17] As much of the discussion in this chapter is on medical texts, I shall focus on the quadripartite system of dividing the life cycle,

[16] Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval interpretation of the life cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 9.
[17] Laura Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic (GUL MS Hunter 509, ff. 1r-167v)* A Compendium of Medieval Medicine Including the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012). The manuscript GUL MS Hunter 509 contains the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus and a short treatise on the quadripartite system discussing the four humours, stages of the life cycle, the winds, the seasons and the divisions of the day (ff. 1r-3v).

not least because it was defined along cosmological lines and was integrated into humoral theory, which was the basis for all areas of academic medicine.[18] In this system many areas of the natural world were aligned into a four-stage system. In the short opening treatise in GUL MS Hunter 509 it states that 'as þer ben iiij ages a-cordyng to þe iiij humours of complexion, riȝt so þer ben iiij tymys of þe ȝeer, and iiij maner of wyndys, and iiij partys of þe wor[l]d, þe wyche ben in temprure or in malicie a-cordyng to euery complexion for seyd.[19] This treatise goes on to describe each of these states, and below is comparison of the stages of the life cycle and the seasons:

> Chyldhood is fro þe tyme þat he is j-bore tyl he be xxv wynter eld, and þat age is hoot and moist. Ȝouþe is fro xxv ȝeer to xxxv or to xl wynter old, and þat age is hoot and driȝe. Manhood is fro xxxv or xl wynter tyl he bie fifty or sixty ȝeere elde, and þat age is coold and driȝe. Elde lastiþ fro fifty ȝeere or sixty tyl on-to lyuys ende, and þat age is coold and moist.
>
> Ver is hoot and moist. Somer is hoot and driȝe. Hervest is coold and driȝe. Wynter is coold and moist.[20]

Through this division of the natural world childhood is humorally aligned with spring, youth with summer, manhood with autumn, and old age with winter. Therefore, the fecundity and vitality of youth is directly juxtaposed with the abundance of summer, and equally the weakness of old age is like the cold, impenetrable winter.

To maintain the outward appearance of beauty through health, and therefore youth and virtue there are a wide variety of treatments available in both medical and cosmetic texts. The intrinsic connection between beauty and health means that in many cases it is impossible to fully differentiate the purely cosmetic from the practical treatment beneficial to health. If, for example, the teeth are cleaned to keep them healthy and functioning, they will naturally look better through cleaning. The difficulty of separating the cosmetic treatment from its practical

[18] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 9. The Middle Ages did not universally subscribe to one view of the human life cycle. Division by four fits into the tetradic system where each life stage is aligned with a season, a humour and an element. The other popular division was into seven stages which correlated with the seven planets, an idea which gained ground with the translation and assimilation of Greek and Arabic texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Augustine divided this seven-age system a little differently, allowing for six ages of life and the seventh after death. Still following the number seven is the division of the life cycle into, usually, ten stages, each lasting exactly seven years. All divisions of the life cycle survived alongside each other into the later Middle Ages. Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 9-68.
[19] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 44-45, lines 25-27, 1-2.
[20] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 43-44, lines 26-27, 1-5, p. 45, lines 4-5.

application may in part be attributable to the fact that the beautiful woman is necessarily one that is both young and healthy.

Although I argue for a strong connection between treatments intended for purely cosmetic reasons and treatments for practical and health reasons, and the difficulty of separating these treatments, the inclusion of material related to beautifying caused some consternation for medical writers, both medieval as well as their classical forebears. Galen (129-c.210) drew a distinction between what was termed *cosmotico*, an enhancement of beauty, and *decorativa*, the preservation of the natural body, and referred to the 'depravity of cosmetics'.[21] Luke Demaitre has identified a similar distinction and consequent issues in the work of Henri de Mondeville (c. 1260-1320), who disliked the treatments for embellishment of women's faces but at the same time recommended the provision of such treatments if required to 'reap great profit'.[22] Demaitre further argues, in his work on leprosy, of the importance of the face and how the 'awareness of facial features and interest in cosmetics…intensified during a period of adaptation to the rise of towns', with 'closer proximity, greater attention for visual detail, and – arguably – a keener sense of stigma'.[23] The rise in towns surely had an effect on the use of cosmetics, however this is not always obvious in medical literature. In medical literature the treatments included, although not overtly cosmetic, often had a cosmetic value as well as a health value. For example, treatments for cleaning the teeth and to wash out the mouth both improve the appearance and smell of the mouth as well as maintaining the health of the mouth.

The face is the most visible part of the human body and thus receives the most cosmetic treatments in medical discourse. As a central feature of the face, the mouth is an important point of communication and is demonstrative of health and hygiene: central concepts in the

[21] Luke Demaitre, 'Skin and the City: cosmetic medicine as an urban concern', in *Between Text and Patient: The Medical Enterprise in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Florence Eliza Glaze and Brian K. Nance (Florence: SISMEL-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011), (97-120) pp. 100-101. Demaitre provides a translation of a passage from Galen, *Miamir*, I.3, in *Galieni Opera*, Venice 190, I, ff. 185vb-186ra, as well as another translation given by Michael McVaugh in *The Rational Surgery,* p. 220.
[22] Demaitre, 'Skin and the City', pp. 110-111; J. Pagel, ed., *Die Chirurgie des Heinrich von Mondeville (Hermondaville)*, Berline 1892, pp. 398-99, quoted in Demaitre.
[23] Luke Demaitre, *Leprosy in Premodern Medicine: A Malady of the Whole Body* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 224. Demaitre also continues this argument in 'Skin and the City: cosmetic medicine as an urban concern', saying that 'medical texts in general manifest a sharper perception of superficial features, which was no doubt enhanced by the proximity of town life', p. 105.

descriptions of beautiful women. This is also the conduit through which the inside of the body may be able to make contact with the outside world, either demonstrating internal purity and virtue or infecting the world through evil words, bad breath, or other body fluids. Equally, the mouth can behave as a barrier, along with the teeth, protecting and preventing potential contamination, demonstrating a level of control, associated with youth, over speech and the mouth. Therefore, I argue that the mouth is a key component of a beautiful female face both physically and morally. It is a part of the human body that changes through the life cycle and offers insights into the changing physicality, functionality, and morality of the female human body.

Medieval Understandings of Beauty

The fundamental aspects of female beauty in the medieval period are inseparable from concepts of youth, health, and virtue. The physical attributes of a beautiful female mouth include both external and internal parts, containing the ideals of a small mouth, soft red lips, neat white teeth, and sweet-smelling breath. Although not every aspect of physical beauty is present in descriptions, the allusions to the tropes of beauty are often enough. In *The Romaunt of the Rose*, Lady Idleness is described 'With swete breth and wel savoured, / Hir face whit and wel coloured, / With litel mouth and round to see'.[24] Such beauty presents part of the ideal of feminine perfection, and Lady Idleness is a literary character, so her physicality is based not on a reality but on imagination, and repeated literary tropes. These ideals are formulated within a patriarchal society and have their origins within biblical, classical, and theological writings,[25] which are predominantly composed by men. This creation of the ideal of feminine beauty within a patriarchal society appears as part of a way of maintaining masculine primacy and authority: by creating an unattainable ideal of beauty, along with its associations of cleanliness and virtue. Within medical literature, [26]

[24] 'The Romaunt of the Rose', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 692, lines 547-549.
[25] John Haldane, 'Medieval Aesthetics', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by Berys Gaut, Dominic McIver Lopes, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 26.
[26] The main texts used within this chapter are the *Trotula* ensemble, *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, the *Compendium medicinae* by Gilbertus Anglicus, and several Medieval Welsh Medical Texts. *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine,* ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, edited by Margaret S. Ogden, Vol 1, EETS o.s. 265 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); Laura Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*; Diana Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts, Volume One: The Recipes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).

predominantly composed by men, there is evidence for medical and cosmetic treatments, however within the *Trotula* ensemble, a popular set of texts composed in the twelfth century, there is more female intervention in composition of the texts, suggesting that women were aspiring to these prescribed beauty ideals.[27] Within the *Trotula* ensemble is a text, *On Women's Cosmetics* [De Ornatu Mulierum], which highlights methods of cosmetically enhancing the female body and opens with 'On adorning women' [De palliandis mulieribus].[28] It seems evident that there is a demand for such cosmetic treatments and the beautifying of women is no secret. This text details the smoothing of skin, removal of hair, whitening of the skin, reddening of the lips, whitening the teeth and freshening the breath. The text also implies that beautifying treatments are both a necessity and effective: 'After beautifying the hair, the face ought to be adorned, [because] if its adornment is done beautifully, it embellishes even ugly women', [Post ornatum capillorum facies est ornanda, cuius ornatus si fuerit pulcher, deformes mulieres palliat.][29] This demonstrates some requirement for, and understanding of, cosmetic treatments in an effort to achieve perfect beauty. Other than the *Trotula* ensemble there is little gender specificity within the medical treatments, most of which are practical treatments but have accompanying cosmetic benefits. Such cosmetic and medical treatments that could help towards the ideal of beauty suggest women subscribed to the ideal, sought to achieve it, and thereby sought to achieve some level of authority, whether physical or moral authority, within a male-centred social structure.

Although there is a standard set of ideal attributes for a beautiful woman, not all of them are included in every description: Chaucer's description of the Prioress at the start of this chapter, shows her mouth to be small, soft, and red, but makes no reference to her teeth or breath.[30] When Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) describes Emilia in the *Teseida*, an epic poem concerning the love of two men, Arcita and Palemone, for the same woman, her mouth is small and teeth are pearls, but when the same character appears in the form of Emily in 'The Knight's Tale', she is hardly described at all, and certainly nothing about her mouth.[31] D. S.

[27] Monica Green argues that the text, *Treatments for Women,* was written by a woman but overwritten by one or more other authors of unknown gender. She also highlights that the author, male, of *On Women's Cosmetics,* himself admits that some of his sources were women practicing cosmetic treatments. *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine* (2001), pp. xv, 46-48.
[28] *The Trotula*, pp. 166-167.
[29] *The Trotula*, [272], pp. 176-177.
[30] 'General Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 25, lines 152-153.
[31] D. S. Brewer, 'The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature, Especially "Harley Lyrics", Chaucer and Some Elizabethans', *The Modern Language Review*, 50.3 (July, 1955), pp. 265-266.

Brewer argues, with particular emphasis on Chaucer's and Boccaccio's descriptions of Emily/Emilia, that neither author fully describes the character because it was not necessary: 'Everybody knew her. She was always the same'.[32] These medieval ideals of feminine beauty were so well-known that they could be alluded to, altered easily to create the hideous old hag, and used to define ideals of functionality, morality, and authority.

The antithesis of the young, beautiful woman is that of the ugly, old woman, who shows all the opposing characteristics: age, ill-health, excessiveness, a lack of control and morality. Naomi Baker argues that within the medieval period 'ugliness tends to be viewed as an unnatural intruder into a fundamentally beautiful universe,' and that 'ugliness is sin, set against a beauty defined in terms of virtue'.[33] Not only does the ugly old woman undermine the beautiful universe and the beautiful, virtuous young woman, but through this she appears as a subversive force; a challenge to male authority which defines the ideal to which women aspire. The ugly old woman is also a controversial force because in all her basic forms, she represents what the beautiful young woman will become: having fewer and more yellow teeth, bad breath, pale and dried-up lips; the definitive unhealthy, non-productive female body.

The beautiful woman is young, healthy and fecund, but alongside this, beauty in the medieval period is also connected with ideas of harmony and functionality. The philosophy and scholasticism that defined medieval beauty highlighted these ideas, connecting the body and soul, a concept that has wider reaching effects when considering a person's morality. William of Auvergne (c. 1180/1190-1249), a thirteenth-century philosopher, in writing *On Good and Evil (De bono et malo)*, says 'the body when well-formed and properly ordered, derives its beauty from the harmony of its parts, so the soul receives its beauty from the ordered exercise of its powers'. [34] Here, beauty is derived from the correct formation of the body, and therefore in a similar logic, a disordered or ill-formed body is less than perfect and not beautiful. Irina Metzler follows a similar argument when discussing disability in the Middle Ages, connecting the beautiful with 'the proper proportions of the body, and with related notions of

[32] Brewer, 'The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature', p. 266.
[33] Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 11-12.
[34] Quoted in Haldane, 'Medieval Aesthetics', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, p. 32.

the disproportioned impaired body'.[35] William of Auvergne also commented on the association of a lack of harmony with ugliness, 'grounding ugliness in concepts of failure', with things being ugly 'if they diverge from their intended design, either through excess or lack'.[36] The images of ugly old women are often characterised by excess: a large mouth, large yellow teeth, bad breath escaping the mouth, with Dame Ragnelle fulfilling at least two of these excesses within her mouth. Although this lack of harmony should signal, as Metzler described, a 'disproportioned impaired body', in fact in literary descriptions the hideous old woman is rarely impaired.

Beauty is also defined in terms of morality, and the strong connection between external, physical beauty reflecting internal, spiritual beauty. Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272), a thirteenth-century encyclopaedist, described in his *De proprietatibus rerum* many ideas concerning the mouth, its functions, and even considered the connection between the mouth and the inner soul: 'how its operation was revelatory beyond the physical'.[37] In discussing the tongue, Bartholomew highlights that one of its purposes is 'to telle þe meninge of þouȝtes of þe soule'.[38] He then goes on to mention that the tongue 'is iclosid wiþ doble wal', and previously Bartholomew had referred to the work of Gregory 'þat þe mouþe is closed and iclippid with many kepinges and wardes, as wiþ teeþ and lippis, þat by so many meenes þe witte and þe soule may deme and auyse what he schal speke'.[39] This makes the connection that the mouth is the form by which the thoughts of the soul are spoken. Here the mouth takes on an important function, to divulge the inner thoughts of the soul. Within the parameters of beauty, this may allow for an expression of inner goodness and virtue, but equally it may reveal that a woman's inner soul and moral virtue is not as beautiful as the outer body suggests. The mouth therefore takes on a further concept as being a potentially dangerous place which needs to be walled and protected by the teeth and lips to safeguard against speaking thoughts that should not be spoken.

[35] Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about physical impairment during the high Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 51.
[36] Baker, *Plain Ugly*, p. 17.
[37] C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 84.
[38] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, Volume 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 208, lines 21-22.
[39] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 208, line 22; p. 200, lines 29-32. There is no specific reference to identify the source, but it is most likely to be Gregory the Great.

Ben Lowe has argued that 'For women of medieval and early modern Europe, beauty was, therefore, not so much a physical trait as a behavioural one, tied to the twin notions of morality and moderation'.[40] The medieval world understood the connection between external beauty and morality, a physiognomic connection, however a physical image cannot be entirely defined by behavioural traits, as Lowe has argued. Many of the images that appear in medieval literature describe a beautiful exterior with the express understanding that the interior is as beautiful. In the Pseudo-Ovidian *De Vetula* for example, the *puella* is beautiful on the outside, and when she smiles, the view inside her mouth of her small, white teeth, is as beautiful. Although this is the physical interior, the associated understandings were that the spiritual interior was equally beautiful.[41]

> But when my mistress is smiling or talking or eating, the visible line of a certain barrier, brighter than quicksilver, comes into view, inasmuch as her teeth have been set in order there, placed in a line, strong, neatly fit together, of equal size, and small.
>
> [Sed domina ridente loquenteve seve cibante,
> Intus cuiusdam spectabilis ordo cathene
> Clarior argento vivo se visibus offert
> Dispositis ibi dentibus in serieque locatis
> Firmis, consertis, equalibus atque minutis.] [42]

The mouth acts as that point of contact between the inside and outside, where, as Bartholomew stated, the inner thoughts of the soul can be expressed.[43] This may show the beauty of the inner soul, or undermine it, and the beautiful parts of the mouth, the small lips and the neat white teeth, are barriers acting to control that movement from the inside to the outside. Therefore, the physical and behavioural cannot be separated and placed in a hierarchy of importance, for they are intimately linked together.

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[40] Ben Lowe, 'Body Images and the Politics of Beauty: Formation of the Feminine Ideal in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, edited by Karen A. Callaghan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), p. 28.
[41] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18.
[42] Pseudo-Ovid, *De Vetula*, (2. 296-300), quoted in Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18; Latin in notes, p. 151.
[43] 'to telle þe meninge of þouȝtes of þe soule', *On the Properties of Things,* p. 208, lines 21-22.

Youth

Representations of beautiful women are most commonly also women who are young. Defining age brackets for periods of the life cycle though is a difficult task, not only with authorities ascribing ages to the life cycle differently, but also through the varying ways of dividing the life cycle: four, six, or seven stages. Using the four-stage system, youth refers to the second stage of the life cycle, one whose qualities are warm and dry, and this stage is associated with the summer season.[44] A short treatise included with the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus in manuscript GUL MS Hunter 507 states that the age of youth being between25 and 35 years of age.[45] Avicenna places this period of the life cycle as lasting until the age of thirty.[46] A beautiful young woman is also necessarily one that is healthy, virtuous, and in the case of the romance heroine, also a woman of a certain social standing, usually of noble birth. Her social standing is of importance, providing the wealth to afford the best medical advice for maintaining good health, as well as the education necessary to perhaps read the medical literature.

The description of the mouth of the *puella* in the Pseudo-Ovidian text *De Vetula*, encompasses many of the key aspects of a beautiful young woman. *De Vetula* is the longest of the Pseudo-Ovidian poetry from the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, a period of fascination with Ovid's works and of imitation of his writing.[47] Sarah Alison Miller argues,

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[44] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, pp. 3, 13.

[45] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 44, line 1; refer to p. 96 for full quotation on the stages of the life cycle. Although this passage (ff. 1r-14r) is included in this manuscript (GUL MS Hunter 509), Estaban-Segura acknowledges that the source of this section of the text is unknown: the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus comprises the remainder of the manuscript (14r-167v). It is included in some other versions of Gilbertus but is not included in all versions. Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 24

[46] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 29. Avicenna places this period of the life cycle as lasting until the age of thirty. Although I refer to Avicenna at each stage of the life cycle, his division of the stages and associated ages is slightly problematic. Avicenna does use the four-stage system but divides it into 'the period of growth to ages 30 (*etas adolescentie*); that of stability, to 35 or 40, which is called the age of beauty (*etas pulchritudinis*); that of initial decline before strength is lost, to 60 (*etas senectutis*); and then that of manifest weakness, to the end of life (*etas senium*)'. This leaves a very small age gap for the age of beauty, and as beauty is so closely aligned to youth, health and reproductive ability, especially for women, this division focusses beauty with the later stages of reproductive ability, rather than when puberty begins. Although the ages of man are not usually gender specific, I would suggest that Avicenna's division would more suitably apply to men rather than women.

[47] Dorothy M. Robathan, 'Introduction to the Pseudo-Ovidian *De Vetula*', *Transaction of the Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 88, (1957), (197-207), p. 197; Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 2. Robathan details thirty-four codices, one of which is assigned to the thirteenth century, and she further lists a number of writers, including Roger Bacon, Petrarch, and Piero di Dante Alighieri, who reference or quote from the work, arguing for its popularity and wide dissemination within the Middle Ages.

in reference to the *puella*, that the 'virgin's body is a study in order and containment'.[48] This young woman proves to be both physically beautiful as well as having an authority over her own body, maintaining harmony between the parts so that nothing exceeds its boundaries. Firstly, 'The small mouth, is to be noted for its smallness alone; if not, then only when she smiles, for indeed then it returns to its ordinary state. The lips swell a bit…' [Bucca brevis, sola brevitate notanda, nisi tunc/Cum ridet, tunc namque statum redit ad mediocrem./Labra tument modicum…].[49] The mouth is beautiful precisely because of its small size but also because of its ability to return to its small shape after smiling. The beautiful young woman is not devoid of emotion, but she is in control and does not expose the inside of the mouth in smiling for long, thereby controlling the boundary between the inside of her body and the outside. The description also mentions that 'her lips are *a bit* plump and turn outwards *a bit* as if they want to be kissed' [Labra tument modicum…Que cum sint inversa parum, se velle parare / Seque offerre videntur ad oscula suscipienda]. [50] This suggestion of wanting to be kissed opens up two opposing possibilities. It may firstly show a level of sexual maturity and ability to reproduce, a key aspect of the female life cycle. It may also demonstrate, opposing philosophical views on beauty, that the *puella* is not entirely virtuous, but rather promiscuous, thereby undermining the moral authority that could be held by a beautiful, virtuous young woman. As the text is written from a male perspective, the protagonist being Ovid himself, this description of the lips swelling to be kissed may be more a male fantasy, or desire, rather than a female reality.

The teeth of the *puella*, when they are glimpsed are in some way as beautiful as the lips:

> But when my mistress is smiling or talking or eating, the visible line of a certain barrier, brighter than quicksilver, comes into view, inasmuch as her teeth have been set in order there, placed in a line, strong, neatly fit together, of equal size, and small.
>
> [Sed domina ridente loquenteve seve cibante,/Intus cuiusdam spectabilis ordo cathine/Clarior argento vivo se visibus offert/Dispositis ibi dentibus in serieque locates/Firmis, consertis, equalibus atque minutis.] [51]

Authorship of the text is unknown but again Robathan highlights that is has tentatively been assigned to Richard de Fournival.

[48] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 3.

[49] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18; *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan, 2.290-92. The translation given is by Miller, but the Latin, quoted in Miller's footnotes comes from *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkett, 1968), 2. pp. 290-92.

[50] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body,* p. 18; *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan, 2. 292, 2.294-95.

[51] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18; *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan, 2.296-300.

Here the teeth are described as being 'brighter than quicksilver'.[52] Also, the description given by Boccaccio of Emilia lists among her beautiful features that her teeth are pearls.[53] The use of the pearl image as a comparison for the teeth shows the whiteness of the teeth but also points to the purity of the woman. A pearl is costly, and Bartholomew the Englishman describes it as 'chief of alle white preciouse stones', and it is particularly precious because it is 'ygendred of a dewe of hevene'.[54] Pearls are precious for their colour, purity and heavenly connection, but also because of their rarity: 'oonliche oon is yfounde and neuer two or mo togidre'.[55] The perfection of the pearl is highlighted in the medieval poem, *Pearl*, whose descriptions refer both to pearls as well as the Pearl maiden, who is so perfect she is also a pearl: 'So was hit clene and cler and pure,/That precios perle ther hit was pyght'.[56] *Pearl*, like other medieval works of literature stages a dream vision in which she, Pearl, acts as a spiritual guide to her father who mourns her loss. Her perfection, heavenly substance, and spirituality align her with purity, morality and religious edification. Purity and indeed beauty are therefore made evident through the description of Emilia's pearl-like teeth. They are also a sign of youth and good oral hygiene which is the indication of good health, and a healthy body is also a fertile body, a clear sign of youth. These associations between beauty, youth, purity, health and fertility are clearly all intimately connected.

The neat white teeth of the *puella* are described as being a 'barrier'; they are in a line 'neatly fit together', and equally sized. This is both a physical barrier, preventing the view of 'liquids, amorphous tissues, or macerated foods on their way to becoming waste',[57] as well as a metaphorical barrier protecting the tongue and thereby guarding against any careless speech. This metaphorical barrier most commonly takes the form of a door, guarding the building, the body, and is vital for controlling the main 'hole' of the body, the mouth.[58] In Marie-Christine Pouchelle's words, 'to see the mouth as a door is to feel reassured that this

[52] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18.
[53] Brewer, 'The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature', p. 266.
[54] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 856, lines 13, 16-17.
[55] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 856, lines 19-20.
[56] *Pearl*, edited by Sarah Stanbury, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), lines 227-228.
[57] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18.
[58] Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, translated by Rosemary Morris (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), p. 147.

gap in the body's defences is under control'.[59] In his seventh century work, *Etymologiae*, Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) shows how the word for mouth, *os*, is derived from the word for door, *ostium*:

> The mouth (*os*) is so called, because through the mouth as if through a door (*ostium*) we bring food in and words come out.
>
> [Os dictum, quod per ipsum quasi per ostium et cibos intus mittimus et sputum foris proicimus.][60]

Through this metaphor there is a direct connection to another orifice in the female body, the womb, which is also guarded by a door.[61] The womb, when guarded successfully by the door, is that of a pure and chaste woman, and as with the door guarding the mouth it is a vital aspect of female control.[62] Here beauty transcends health to focus on chastity, an important element of female bodily control, showing a woman's authority over her own body.

Most of the associations between beauty and the mouth are physical: the teeth and lips, however there is also the potential for an olfactory experience in the form of the breath. The image of beauty is viewed as being an outward reflection of inner perfection, such as the account from *De Vetula*, where Ovid glimpses the inside of the *puella*'s mouth, and it is as perfect as the outside of the body. The smell of the breath coming from inside the body and moving to the outside could be an indicator of a woman's health, potentially demonstrating the nature of the inside of the body: a sweet breath is healthy, and a foul breath is unhealthy. In *De Vetula*, the breath of the *puella* is not described in a fashion to indicate that it smells sweet, and it is not strictly associated with the mouth; instead, the contemplation of odour accompanies the description of the nose. Although it is not directly describing the mouth, it is stated that her nostrils do not prevent movement of the breath, nor do they 'threaten the air with a foul stench' [Passibiles auras tristi fetore minatur].[63] There is adequate control shown here, allowing breathing without the movement of anything of a corrupt nature from inside

[59] Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, p. 147
[60] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), Vol 2, XI.i.49, p. 234; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* (Oxonii: e Typographeo Carendoniano, 1911), Vol 2, XI.i.49.
[61] Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, pp. 148, 182.
[62] Pouchelle offers an example from Jacopo da Voragine describing the virginity of the Mary: 'the door of Ezekial remained closed'. Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, p. 148.
[63] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 18; *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan, 2.278.

the body to leak out. The encounter with the *puella* is one that is not accompanied by any obvious scent of breath, but an alternative encounter, and one that is equally pleasant is in the description of Alison in 'The Miller's Tale', in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*: 'Hir mouth wa sweete as bragot or the meeth,/ Or hoord of apples leyd in hey or heeth'.[64] It is unusual for a description to pinpoint the scent of the breath: it is more common to have an allusion to sweet breath as with Lady Idleness in *The Romaunt of the Rose.*[65] Here however, Alison's breath is specified as smelling of mead and apples, pleasant scents in their own right although incongruous with the usual noble class of medieval female beauty through their associations with the countryside, working women and alehouses. Indeed D. S. Brewer has pointed out the 'absurdity of describing a carpenter's wife, a wanton village wench, *as if* she were a heroine, a noble and ideal beauty'.[66] Alison does not fulfil the whole ideal of feminine beauty through the romance heroine, but Chaucer creates this character through a parody of conventional beauty.[67] Although her breath is scented by smells more suited to the country and hostelries, and less to the aristocracy of the romance heroine, it is no less sweet and enticing. In not fulfilling the ideal of feminine beauty in all its aspects, Alison further fails to conform to the necessary moral standards associated with beauty. Alison is not virtuous and true to her husband but sleeps with Nicholas, a student boarding with Alison and her husband: 'Doun of the ladder stalketh Nicholay, / And Alisoun ful softe adoun she spedde; / Withouten words mo they goon to bedde, / Ther as the carpenter is wont to lye'.[68] Alison, in not fulfilling all aspects expected of a beautiful young woman, particularly that of noble blood, demonstrates a lack of social authority, although through her behaviour she does demonstrate a different authority or power, that of sexual power.

In youth, there is natural beauty, beauty that requires no cosmetic additions, beauty that is pure, virtuous, and healthy with the ability to carry children. This is the expectation that accompanies feminine beauty, although when external beauty is undermined, there is an associated problem with internal beauty as in the case of Alison who did not fulfil the ideal of the beauty of a romance heroine and she was also not as morally virtuous as expected of a medieval beauty. As the female life cycle moves towards middle age, after the first flush of

[64] 'The Miller's Tale', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 69, lines 3261-3262.
[65] 'The Romaunt of the Rose', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 692, line 547, 'With swete breth and wel savoured'.
[66] D. S. Brewer, 'The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature', p. 267.
[67] D. S. Brewer, 'The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature', p. 267.
[68] 'The Miller's Tale', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 74, lines 3648-3651.

youth, natural beauty begins to fade, but the availability of medical and cosmetic treatments have the potential to enhance beauty and extend the period of outward physical beauty.

Middle Age

There is a juxtaposition of opposites in comparing the youthful beauty with the ugly old woman, but between these two stages of the female life cycle there lies a middle age. Women's middle age is often overlooked in medieval literature, not featuring clearly in the schemata of the human life cycle, which Sue Niebrzydowski points out, focused on the male subject, and therefore it often has to be inferred rather than being explicitly described.[69] A short treatise included with the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus in manuscript GUL MS Hunter 509 is more vague about the middle age of life, stating it begins at around 35 to 40 and ends between 50 and 60 years old.[70] This middle age sees alterations in the four qualities: the mixture of the elements of fire and water. From the warm and dry quality of youth, in the middle age there is a move to the quality of being cold and dry.[71] As their warmth cools, the older woman moves away from the period of fertility, into reproductive decline.

As this middle age unfolds and fertility wanes, there are also the physical changes of aging. Youth and natural beauty are in decline in this life stage and therefore it is in this period of life that cosmetic treatments will be most effective and valuable in prolonging the outward appearance of beauty. Equally, medical treatments in this middle age assist with the maintenance of good health and hygiene: key components of a beautiful young woman. The maintenance of the physicality of beauty highlights the social standing of a woman, demonstrating her ability to afford such beautifying treatments and the time to devote to such treatments. Also, through fulfilling the ideals of feminine beauty to which women aspire,

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[69] Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Introduction', in *Middle-aged Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Sue Niebrzydowski (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 1-14, at p. 7; Laura Kalas, *Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine: Suffering, Transformation and the Life-Course* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), pp. 102-103.
[70] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 44, lines 2-3, refer to p. 96 for the full quotation on the stages of the life cycle. Avicenna, in his *Canon*, lists the period of 'initial decline' as being between approximately forty and sixty years of age. Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 29. This middle age of life, for women, sees the waning of reproductive ability and the onset of menopause. Laura Kalas has gathered together some medieval views on this period of life. See Kalas, *Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine*, pp. 102-103.
[71] Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 13.

such a woman acquires a celebrity status, a physical perfection for other women to admire and aspire to rather than just the perfection of literary characters.

The Wife of Bath, from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, is in this middle age of life, known to us because she describes herself as being the bran of age and experience:

> But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,
> Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.
> Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!
> The flour is goon; ther is namoore to tell;
> The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;
> But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.[72]

She openly acknowledges that she is past the age of youth and beauty and therefore is within the period of life where some cosmetic assistance could be used to help maintain some appearance of youth for a little longer. She compares herself to bran, having described that the flour is gone, implying she is past the age of natural beauty, and has entered the coarser stage of middle age. This aging is not presented as problematic but merely a statement of fact that this bran is what she has to offer, although it is suggestive of 'female internalisation of male attitudes to older women's physiology'.[73]

Later in her description of herself, the Wife of Bath describes some aspects of her physical appearance: 'Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel'.[74] There are some gaps in her teeth: they are not the tight, even barrier highlighted in the description of the *puella*. If, as Bartholomew the Englishman highlighted, the teeth are a wall, then, as Mel Storm has argued, this physicality of the Wife of Bath 'figuratively betokens undisciplined speech. If the teeth are indeed palisades to wall in the tongue, in the case of Alison there is a breach'.[75] Furthermore, as the mouth can tell the thoughts of the soul, as discussed by Bartholomew,[76] this breach in the wall of the teeth has implications for the speech that may be inadvertently released. Such speech, not properly controlled, may have moral implications, being gossip or

[72] 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 111, lines 474-479.
[73] Niebrzydowski, 'Introduction', in *Middle-aged Women in the Middle Ages*, pp. 1-14, at p. 11.
[74] 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 113, line 603.
[75] Mel Storm, 'Speech, Circumspection, and Orthodontics in the "Manciple's Prologue" and "Tale" and the Wife of Bath's Portrait, *Studies in Philology*, 96.2 (1999), (109-126), p. 124.
[76] 'to telle þe meninge of þouȝtes of þe soule', *On the Properties of Things,* p. 208, lines 21-22.

something corrupting of the morals of others. The Wife of Bath is certainly loquacious and 'literally undisciplined', and her loquacity is proved by the substantial length of her Prologue within which she undermines the perception that women should control their speech and refrain from unguarded speech. [77] She openly acknowledges her views on female sexuality and presents her Prologue with an authority that is in direct opposition to traditional masculine superiority. The Wife of Bath further shows no reservations about her desire for men and openly acknowledges her desire to marry again as soon as one husband dies.[78] Furthermore, she fulfils some of the catalogue of characteristics that Curry assigned to gat-toothed women, that of being 'envious, irreverent, luxurious by nature, bold deceitful, faithless, and suspicious'.[79] She is also open about her sexuality and its power, 'In wyfhod I wol use myn instrument / As frely as my Makere hath it sent'.[80] Her openness and loquacity have closer associations with the excess and lack of control of old age rather than the chaste, closed nature of youth and beauty. The Wife of Bath also moves towards the more subversive qualities commonly associated with old age in her detailed description of how to keep control of a husband, and the wily methods, usually exploiting her sexuality, of making them obedient to her will.[81] Through all these behavioural traits, the Wife of Bath openly demonstrates a lack of fulfilment of the ideals of beauty: purity, chastity, and control.

This middle age of life for women is a transitory period between the beauty and virtue of youth and the ugliness and excessiveness of old age. It is in this period that cosmetic treatments may be effective: in youth they are unnecessary because beauty is natural and requires no artificial enhancement, and in old age the use of cosmetics are of little use in preserving the appearance of youth and beauty, but in this middle age they can be more effective. Throughout medical and cosmetic literature there are a number of treatments that

[77] Storm, 'Speech, Circumspection and Orthodontics in the *Manciple's Prologue* and *Tale* and the Wife of Bath's Portrait', p. 124.
[78] The Wife of Bath is open about her desire to continually remarry: 'For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al. / Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon, / Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon', 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 105, lines 46-48.
[79] Storm, 'Speech, Circumspection and Orthodontics', pp. 123-124. Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Senses*, quoted in Storm, 'Speech, Circumspection and Orthodontics in the *Manciple's Prologue* and *Tale* and the Wife of Bath's Portrait', p. 124.
[80] 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 107, lines 149-150.
[81] The Wife of Bath refers to her control over her husband: 'I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,/ That ech of hem ful blissful was and fawe/ To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre./ They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,/ For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously./ Now herkesth hou I baar me properly,/ Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde', 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 108, lines 219-225. This section on husbands continues beyond this quote.

can be applied to preserve and enhance the physical beauty, and treatments for each part of the mouth will be highlighted to demonstrate the possibilities for beautifying treatments. Some treatments are clear in their beautifying nature such as those contained within *On Women's Cosmetics* from the *Trotula* ensemble, which contains recipes pertaining to the 'contemporary hygienic needs of women…and to their own cosmetic practices'.[82] Other ideas are contained within treatments for the mouth that are ostensibly practical treatments but also have cosmetic qualities. It is striking to note that – as will be shown – it is almost impossible to fully separate the cosmetic treatment from the purely medical as these medical treatments have, in some way, a beautifying element: health and beauty are inextricably linked and to be beautiful a woman must necessarily be healthy.

The lips, the external part of the mouth, are often described in images of beautiful women, detailing that they are small and red, and in the description of the *puella* they swelled a little, as if to be kissed. There is a fine line between the small lips that swell a little with passion and large, thick lips that are less attractive. In *On Women's Cosmetics*, part of the *Trotula* ensemble there is a recipe listed for 'Thickness of the lips':

> Thickness of the lips is attenuated with an unction of honey or water in which root of bistort, Florentine iris, or figwort has been boiled, or even starch dissolved in honey water, and let powder of marble and powder of roasted pumice, and cuttlefish bone be mixed in, and let the area be anointed with a mixed powder of agaric with dried mastic.[83]
>
> [Labiorum grossicies attenuatur cum unctione mellis aut aqua in qua bullierit radix draguntee, yreos, uel scrophularia, uel etiam amidum in mulsa dissolutum, et puluis marmoris et puluis pumicis assi et os sepie misceantur, et ungatur locus mixto puluere algarici cum mastice siccati.]

There is no accompanying explanation identifying this either as a treatment for a medical condition resulting in swollen lips, or a cosmetic treatment to reduce the size of the lips. As this treatment is included within this text that Monica Green identifies as describing 'in head-to-toe order how to beautify women's skin, hair, face, lips, teeth, and genitalia,'[84] I would posit that the recipe for thickness of the lips is intended as a cosmetic rather than medically

[82] 'Introduction', *The Trotula: An English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 47.
[83] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine,* (2001), [299], pp. 186-187.
[84] *The Trotula*: *An English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine,* (2002), p. 3.

practical treatment. Since it contains a wide number of ingredients, some of which would be more expensive to obtain, it is therefore likely to be a cosmetic treatment for the wealthier woman. The ideal female beauty that women aspired to was that of the romance heroine who was almost always of noble birth,[85] and so it appears to be women of fortune who are the intended recipients of such cosmetic treatments. Reducing the thickness of the lips is one way to reduce the overall size of the mouth, and thereby bring it into closer proximity with the beautiful ideal of a small mouth.

Further to gaining the ideal lips there are some treatments in *On Women's Cosmetics* for adorning the lips, which are very clearly identified as cosmetic treatments.

> Women adorn their faces thus, and thus the lips can be adorned. They have skimmed honey, to which they add a little white bryony, red bryony, squirting cucumber, and a little bit of rose water. They boil all these things until [it is reduced] by half. With this ointment, women anoint their lips. They wash them with hot water at night and in the morning; it solidifies the skin of the lips, refines it, and renders it extremely soft, and preserves it from every ulceration, and if ulcerations should arise there, it heals them.
>
> [Mulieres ornant sic facies suas, et labia sic possunt ornari. Habent mel dispumatum, cui addunt parum brionie, uiticelle, cucumeris agrestis, et parum aque rosacee. Hec omnia usque ad medietatem bulliant. Hoc unguento mulieres labia sua ungunt. Lauant in nocte cum aqua calida et mane; id cutem labiorum consolidat, subtiliat, et eam reddit tenerrimam, et ab omni ulceratione preseruat, et si ulcerationes in eis fiant, sanat.] [86]

This treatment begins by advertising that this is how 'lips can be adorned', however by the end of the treatment, in referring to the division given by Galen, it is more concerned with preservation rather than adornment. The ingredients, particularly honey and rose water, have soothing and moisturising effects, and the author describes the 'healing' effects of this treatment on ulcerations. The result though is both a preservation, therefore a practical treatment, as well as cosmetic because the lips will appear soft and healthy. Therefore, it is clear from this treatment that the result would be closer to the beauty ideal of women's lips being soft, yet firm. The lips would look beautiful and very importantly, healthy, and youthful.

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[85] Corinne Saunders, 'Beauty, Virtue and Danger in Medieval English Romance', in Saunders C., Fuller, D., Macnaughton, J., (eds) *The Recovery of Beauty: Arts, Culture, Medicine* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 38.
[86] *The Trotula*, (2001) [294], pp. 184-185.

The aforementioned treatment claimed to have healing applications as well as purely cosmetic ones, showing a blurred line between practical and cosmetic treatments. However further in the text, *On Women's Cosmetics*, is listed a treatment that shows no practical value, but definite cosmetic value:

> If, however, a woman needs to color herself, let her rub the lips very well with bark of the root of the nut tree. Let her put cotton upon the teeth and gums and let her dip it in the composite color, and with this cotton let her anoint lips and gums inside.
>
> [Si autem colorare se debeat mulier, fricet optime labia cum cortice radicis arboris nucis. Super dentes et gingiuas habeat bombacem et intingat in colore composito, et cum tali bombace ungat labia et gingiuas interius.] [87]

There is no declaration here of any practical medicinal or preservative effects of this treatment, and the opening statement shows it is of a cosmetic value, designed to fulfil the requirements of the ideal beautiful mouth. A woman would need to colour herself if she were too pale and required a healthier colour in her lips and gums: a colour that would indicate a good blood flow and the consequent associations of health and youth, necessary to be considered beautiful. Bartholomew the Englishman also notes the healthy colour of lips, attributing it to 'hoote blood', a characteristic that cools with age, as well as associating the colour of the lips with inner perfection: 'And þerfore þe rednesse of lippes is tokene of clene and pure complexion, wiþoute mellunge of troubly blood, and of þe inner virtue'.[88] As the changing qualities show, in reaching this middle age of life there is a move from being warmer in youth to now being cooler, and such a treatment may provide the impression that there is more warmth within that woman's bodily qualities and therefore that she is younger, and more beautiful. Neither Bartholomew's comment on hot blood, nor the bodily qualities is gender specific, however the treatment recommended by *On Women's Cosmetics* is intended specifically for women. This suggests that women are more concerned than men to maintain the appearance of youthfulness and beauty and thereby avoid becoming the archetypal ugly old woman.

[87] *The Trotula*, (2001) [295], pp. 184-185.
[88] *On the Properties of Things*, pp. 198-199, lines 32-35, 1.

What such examples might tell us about women's beauty concerns and the accompanying ramifications for their authority is that their ability to devote such time to beautifying treatments probably places these women among the higher classes of society; those who did not need to work all day and therefore had time for such treatments. Their social authority and status show through the time they devote to beauty, and the beauty itself implies an inner moral authority associated with physical beauty. *On Women's Cosmetics* is a 'witness both to the contemporary hygienic needs of women in southern Italy in the twelfth century and to their own cosmetic practices,' and Green argues that the author of this text is male.[89] That such a text, devoted to cosmetics, was thought to be important enough to write, would suggest that women were using such practices and thereby aspiring to the ideal of female beauty. Green further highlights that the author admits the source of his information as being women 'practical in practicing the art of cosmetics'.[90] This supports that idea that women were aspiring to such beauty ideals as first, there were enough women providing the knowledge and help for the author of *On Women's Cosmetics* to know and consult, and second, there were enough women desiring such treatments to make it plausible to have a text specifically catering for cosmetic treatments. There is no given rationale in this text for its composition, and the question remains whether it was written as a male-centred text commenting on how women should look and could look, or from a feminine objective to have such information recorded and potentially available to other women. If it is to be understood that through such beautifying treatments women could achieve the aspirational ideal of feminine beauty, outlined by men, and as Lowe describes it 'unreachable', then this could be undermining to male authority. How far such 'beauty texts' could deliver on their promises of beauty is unknown and it may be that the hope was present but the ability to transform a woman from ordinary to the beauty of a romance heroine remained elusive.

The suggestions for adorning the lips are clearly cosmetic treatments designed to enhance and maintain beauty, however there are certain circumstances, in relation to the lips, where the distinction between cosmetic and medical treatments is difficult to define. A condition which appears in two of the *Trotula* texts, Gilbertus Anglicus and Guy de Chauliac (c. 1300-1368), is termed 'fissures of the lips', or in the Middle English Guy 'Cliftes of þe lippes', and in

[89] *The Trotula*, (2001) p. 47.
[90] *The Trotula*, (2001) p. 47.

Gilbertus 'Cleuying of lippes'.[91] Alongside a successful treatment for this apparent medical 'disorder' there will be an accompanying beautifying aspect: the lips will look smoother without cracks, and therefore will also be soft, as were the lips of Chaucer's Prioress, as highlighted at the start of this chapter.

Regarding the face and mouth, in most medical texts there is no mention made of the gender of the prospective patients. Exceptions are the remedies contained within the texts that are grouped together in the *Trotula*. There are three remedies listed in *Treatments for Women*, two of which refer specifically to 'women who suffer from fissures of the lips'.[92] With the first remedy there is a description included on the cause of the fissures and these causes make some commentary on the type of woman inclined to have fissures.

> There are some women who suffer from fissures of the lips, and this on account of the excessive embraces of their lovers and their kisses with their lips rubbing between them. For in the morning her lips are found to be cracked, dried by the heat. We treat these women with an ointment made of fleawort or with the unguent made from lily.
>
> [Sunt quedam que fissuras labiorum paciuntur, et hoc propter nimios amplexos amasiorum et eorum basia labiis inter se fricatis. Illa enim in mane siccata per calorem fissa inueniuntur. Has curamus inunctione facta de psillio uel unguento facto de lilio.] [93]

This treatment does not make a derogative comment about these women who suffer fissures of the lips through excessive embraces and kisses, but this treatment is aimed solely at the female participant in such activities; there is no mention of the men requiring such treatment for their lips. This treatment highlights the drying effects of 'heat', and in medieval understanding men were hotter in temperament than women, therefore men may not have been so dried by the heat due to their naturally hotter nature. This distinction in the 'natural' temperaments of the male and female bodies is detailed in the *Book on the Conditions of*

[91] In the Latin for *Treatments for Women* from the *Trotula* ensemble the phrase Green has translated as 'fissures of the lips', is 'fissuras labiorum'. In the Latin version of the Guy, which the Middle English has rendered as 'Cliftes of þe lippes', it is 'fissure labiorum'. These terms denote a non-serious condition, which would appear to be like cracked lips, rather than a more serious condition such as a cleft lip. *The Trotula*, [184], p. 142; Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sieve Chirurgia Magna*, vol 1, Tr. IV, Doctr. 2, Cap. 2, p. 237, line 15.
[92] *The Trotula*, (2001) [184, 185], pp. 142-145.
[93] *The Trotula*, (2001) [184], pp. 142-143.

Women, relating that the stronger qualities are possessed by men and the weaker by women.[94] It is apparent that the 'natural' qualities of heat and cold, dryness and moisture are directly linked not only with sex but also with strength and superiority, with heat and masculinity being stronger than cold femininity. This, however, is not a strict binary opposition, but these complexions of men and women are nuanced in the second text of the *Trotula* ensemble, *On Treatments for Women*, which opens with a sentence about hot and cold women. 'In order that we might make a concise summary of the treatment of women, it ought to be noted that certain women are hot, while some are cold' [Ut a nobis de curatione mulierum compendiosa fiat tradicio, notandum est quod quedam mulieres sunt calide, quedam frigide, ad quod tale experimentum fiat'].[95] Such variations in the temperaments of women may indicate a closer association with masculinity if they have a hotter temperament and therefore subversive nature, behaving more manly, or indeed a different level of authority. It may be supposed by the drying nature of the affliction of fissures of the lips that it is the colder and wetter women that suffer more. Within the text there is a lack of commentary on the specific type of woman in need of such a treatment and this may be partially accounted for by the authorship of this text. Green claims that this text 'represents what I believe to be a palimpsest, with a female author's voice overwritten by another', a voice of unknown gender.[96] A female voice behind such a text suggests the importance of such treatments, particularly those specifically designed for women, as well as a cultural demand; as Green argues 'we sense that this material is coming out of the real-life concerns of local women'.[97] This is probably the closest that medical literature can get, other than case studies, to revealing the lives and needs of people. There is also an unspoken moral element as the appearance of these fissures in women's lips may show them to be freer with their kisses, therefore being more flirtatious, possibly promiscuous, and therefore having lower moral values. Furthermore, such women are clearly less controlled in their actions, and with their mouths and kisses which, through the assumed connection between the mouth and the womb, both as openings into the body and as mouths of the body,[98] may have deeper suggestions about their chastity, thereby casting further doubts on their ability to be classed as beautiful.

[94] *The Trotula*, (2001) [1], pp. 70-71, refer to Chapter One p. 55, (n. 57) for full quotation.
[95] *The Trotula*, (2001) [132], pp. 116-117.
[96] *The Trotula*, (2002), p. xvi.
[97] *The Trotula,* (2002), p. 43.
[98] Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, pp. 182-183.

There is also listed a different type of woman who 'suffer fissures caused by the air and the wind and similar causes' [fissuram paciuntur ex acre et uento et similibus causis].[99] This treatment requires that 'we anoint the lips with honey, and afterward we sprinkle on powdered Greek pitch' [illinimus labia cum melle, et postea picem puluerizatam superaspergimus].[100] Although such a woman demonstrates no lack of morals, unlike those who gain fissures through excessive kissing, the appearance of fissures could give that impression, and therefore a treatment is required. This is a different treatment to that for excessive kissing: the causes are different and therefore must be treated differently. Kissing causes heat which dries the lips, whereas air and wind are less likely to have a hot effect. Not only will the cause determine the treatment, but that treatment may help to define for other people the cause, and therefore the moral standing of the woman being treated. Both are cosmetic treatments which will improve the look of the lips, but the treatments differentiate, between the likely morality of the different women.

The third, and final treatment contained in *Treatments for Women* does not specify the gender of the patient nor the cause from which the fissures arise. Although the remedy is in a text whose title specifies its intention of being appropriate for women, the following remedy is taken from another source which is stated as being Master Ferarius: [101]

> take walnut and cook it under some ashes, and grind the core. And after tartar has been put on, apply [the walnut] to the fissure and it will be healed.
>
> [accipe magnam nucem et decoque sub cinere et nucleum tere et fissure appone apposito tartaro et sanabitur.] [102]

That such a text, designed for women and with a female voice behind it, should contain three separate remedies for this one, fairly minor, ailment suggests the importance for women of having beautiful, unblemished lips. It also implies certain things about the women being

[99] *The Trotula*, (2001) [185], pp. 144-145.
[100] *The Trotula*, (2001) [185], pp. 144-145.
[101] It is uncertain who exactly is referred to here, but it could Faraj ibn Sălim, or Ferarius, a thirteenth century Jewish physician in Sicily. As Monica Green's research attests, the standardised ensemble was most popular in the fourteenth century and the 'ensemble became a magnet for bits and pieces of material from entirely unrelated sources'. Green, *The Trotula* (2002), pp. xiii, 58; S. M. Imamuddīn, 'Māristān (Hospitals) in Medieval Spain', *Islamic Studies*, 17.1, (1978), p. 50.
[102] *The Trotula*, (2001) [186], pp. 144-145.

treated: they are wealthy and educated enough to understand and perhaps question the differing causes for fissures of the lips, and therefore recognise the relevant treatments.

Also contained within the *Trotula* ensemble are two further treatments for fissures of the lips but they are in *On Women's Cosmetics*. These occur in the section subtitled 'On Fissures of the Lips' [De fissuris labiorum][103], within which is also contained a treatment for thickness of the lips and bad breath. As this defines itself as a cosmetic text, these treatments are to be viewed as for the purposes of beautifying the lips. However, the recipes within *Treatments for Women* are for the same ailment but make no implicit connection to beauty. It is difficult to separate the medical, practical treatment from the cosmetic, as in the case of the lips a medical treatment to solve a visible problem will have an improving effect on the look of the lips. Both treatments are simple ointments:

> Fissures of the lips are removed by anointing them thoroughly with rose oil or linseed cooked in a hollowed-out sowbread. And also they should be smeared with saxifrage seed pounded with juice of common centaury or with round birthwort.
>
> Juice of wormwood is good for the same.
>
> [Labiorum fissure remouentur peruncte cum oleo rosaceo uel semine lini decocto in ciclamine concauato, et etiam ex semine saxifrage cum succo centauree uel aristologia rotunda trito liniantur.
>
> Valet ad idem succus absinthii.] [104]

Each of the treatments within these two *Trotula* texts are different, containing different ingredients all to treat the same visible disorder. These texts are also catering, as their titles suggest, to a female clientele. This would suggest that the appearance of the lips, a very visible part of the face, is of importance: such women are aspiring to the smooth lips of the ideal of feminine beauty, and fissures of the lips undermine that beauty. Furthermore, the lips are very visible in certain social situations that may involve speaking, eating, or smiling. These are opportunities to display wealth and social standing through the ability to afford lip treatments, and the time for such treatments as evidenced by perfectly smooth unblemished lips. Such perfection also implies an underlying spiritual purity associated with beauty.

[103] *The Trotula*, (2001), pp. 184-185.
[104] *The Trotula*, (2001) [297-298], pp. 184-187.

Two medical texts of the later Middle Ages, both of which are considered important enough to be translated into the vernacular, and boast a Middle English translation, are the works of Guy de Chauliac and Gilbertus Anglicus. Both texts were originally composed in Latin, Gilbertus' work in around 1240, and Guy's in 1363, and both were translated into Middle English in the fifteenth century.[105] Neither of these texts are devoted to women and therefore it remains unclear whether these treatments were intended more often for women or were prescribed for both sexes. *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac* recommends:

> Cliftes of þe lippes ben amended with þe oynement aforesaide in the nose or with þe oyle þat goth of note kernel wile þat it is brente. Ylayde to forsothe, it heleth ham merveilosly, as Rogeryn saith. If it be night helede forsothe with þise þinges, Albucasis commaundeth o cauterize it vnto þe botume and after to cure ham til þat they be helede.[106]

Guy, in this treatment, is practical about how to heal fissures of the lips, specifically associating such treatments with those prescribed for the nose, as well as showing his academic learning through referencing other authorities. The main advice for the treatment is non-invasive, however the final suggestion is to cauterise it: a radical treatment for something that other texts have recommended herbs and ointments. It must be important to cure fissures of the lips, or perhaps to have an alternative in case other treatments prove unsuccessful. Also, this treatment uses a masculine pronoun throughout, but that does not necessarily denote that the main intended patient must be male, but whoever the patient was, the clear intention given by the final few words is that any fissures will be healed.

The final text within the medical source base for this chapter that deals with this condition is the *Compendium Medicinae* of Gilbertus Anglicus. In the Middle English version, the condition is termed 'Cleuying of lippes', and as with all other areas of Gilbertus' text the manifestations and causes are outlined, and then a large variety of potential treatments are listed. Gilbertus provides the most comprehensive information of any of the medical texts

[105] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 17; 'Preface', *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. v; Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, 'Introduction', ed. M. McVaugh (Leiden: Brill, 1997), p. xiv; Faye Marie Getz, (ed) *Healing and Society in Medieval England: A Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. xi. On the sources, see the Introduction to this thesis.
[106] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 317, lines 7-12.

studied here, listing a large number of possible causes: 'pymples j-broke, oþer of smytynge, oþer of euel humour and a corrupt þat cleueth þe lippes, oþer of coold, oþer of wynd, oþer of cancre'.[107] Such a variety of causes suggests that this may be a relatively common complaint, and Gilbertus goes into further detail providing a different treatment for every cause, as well as a few that do not appear to be associated with a specific cause. Several of these appear to be external causes: the wind, cold, and being hit, however one cause has been separated from the others, that of an 'evel humour', because it is an internal cause. Cracked lips, or fissures of the lips, caused by exposure to the elements may have a connection with lower social status women who work outdoors. Therefore, remedies in medical literature could be a way for elite women to maintain social distance from their social inferiors. The ability to maintain smooth lips, and cure any cracking, denotes a level of wealth, to purchase the treatment, and social status, with the time to devote to treatments. This carries with it a level of social authority and superiority.

There is next the cosmetic value of the teeth which, in descriptions of youthful beauty, are a neat, even, white barrier. Oral hygiene is intrinsically linked here with beauty although there are significant problems, once again, in terms of separating the medical from the cosmetic. In the medical texts used in this chapter there are a number of treatments that refer specifically to whitening the teeth, or for treating dirty and discoloured teeth; the implication being that the treatment is more for cosmetic reasons than as part of a regular oral hygiene routine. However, as many of these treatments provide cleaner teeth which will therefore survive longer to be useful for eating and speaking, and be less likely to rot, the distinction between cosmetic and practical or preventative is a blurred one, but as with other treatments beauty is health, and health is beauty, particularly for the wealthy who can afford treatments for good hygiene and health.

As expected for something that may appear to be cosmetic there are two treatments in *On Women's Cosmetics*. The first begins, 'The teeth are whitened thus,' [Dentes sic dealbantur] which gives a clear description of its purpose: to improve the look of the teeth.[108]

[107] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic,* p. 142, lines 20-23.
[108] *The Trotula*, (2001) [302], pp. 186-187.

> The teeth are whitened thus. Take burnt white marble and burnt date pits, and white natron, a red tile, salt, and pumice. From all of these make a powder in which damp wool has been wrapped in a fine linen cloth. Rub the teeth inside and out.
>
> [Dentes sic dealbantur. Accipe marmor album combustum et ossa dactilorum combusta, et nitrum album, tegulam rubeam, sal, pumicem. De omnibus istis fac puluerem in quo lana succida inuoluta in panno lineo subtili; dentes interius et exterius frica.] [109]

This treatment contains a selection of ingredients not immediately available to ordinary people, including white marble, date pits, and pumice, and therefore demonstrates the importance, for those of higher social standing, of keeping the teeth clean. Such an idea of course does not preclude the notion that aspirations of beauty and oral hygiene were only felt by the wealthy, but rather highlights the nature of the ideal of feminine beauty which stems from the noble romance heroine as well as the nature of the surviving source material.

The second recipe in this text adds further confusion to defining any distinction between the cosmetic and the practical treatment, as it follows on from the first and begins, 'The same thing cleans the teeth and renders them very white' [Idem dentes emundat et albissimos reddit].[110] This is the only treatment in the medical texts discussed here that specifically refers to cleaning the teeth, and it appears, in this opening phrase, to define itself as both practical and cosmetic. The treatment then follows with directions for a routine for a woman to follow after dinner:

> The woman should wash her mouth after dinner with very good wine. Then she ought to dry [her teeth] well and wipe [them] with a new white cloth. Finally, let her chew each day fennel or lovage or parsley, which is better to chew because it gives off a good smell and cleans good gums and makes the teeth very white.
>
> [Mulier post prandium os lauet uino optimo. Deinde bene exsiccare debet et extergere cum panno albo nouo. Ad ultimum masticet cottidie feniculum uel leuisticum uel petroselinum, quod melius est masticare, quia bonum reddit odorem et bonas gingiuas emundat et dentes facit albissimos.][111]

[109] *The Trotula*, (2001) [302], pp. 186-187.
[110] *The Trotula*, (2001) [303], pp. 186-187.
[111] *The Trotula*, (2001) [303], pp. 186-187.

As with the first treatment from *On Women's Cosmetics,* this post-prandial routine seems to be aimed at a woman of a certain social standing, and wealth: it requires a certain level of wine, defined as 'good', and requires a 'new white cloth', not something that ordinary people would be able to afford just to satisfy the need for white teeth. Therefore, it would seem that such beautifying treatments are aimed at wealthy women who would have the time and income to accommodate such beautifying treatments as well as be visible in society and potentially scrutinised by their social peers or admired by both peers and social inferiors. Beauty here appears to be a form of wealth visible on the face and allows wealthier women to hold authority over those who are less wealthy. It does not necessarily follow that because only the wealthier could afford such treatments, the less wealthy woman did not aspire to the ideals of womanly beauty. Rather, the medical texts would have been written by educated men catering for the educated and wealthy in society; the treatments used by ordinary people are more difficult to locate, more likely belonging to an oral tradition. The text *On Women's Cosmetics* does demonstrate a movement of ideas across cultures, as several treatments are attributed to Muslim women, as well as the aim of the author that 'to whatever noble or even common woman who seeks from me something of this art I should offer counsel appropriate to her status and means'.[112] Women at all levels of society wished to achieve beauty and such a text was designed to help with full knowledge that perfection was reached cosmetically more often than naturally.

Within the *Trotula* text, in *Treatments for Women*, there are three more recipes 'For black teeth', 'For whitening black teeth and strengthening corroded or rotted gums and for bad-smelling breath', and 'to make black teeth white', respectively. Each treatment is unique and requires a different set of ingredients with which to clean the teeth. As with the first treatment in *On Women's Cosmetics* all three of these treatments specify that the remedy must be rubbed on the teeth, and they contain ingredients that are in some way abrasive. The first uses walnut shells; the second includes a variety of ingredients that are ground to a powder, and the third contains pumice and salt.[113] These treatments also each specify that they are to treat 'black teeth', an extreme description, and will result in 'white teeth', an equally extreme description. The resulting 'white teeth', are the outcome that women are searching for,

[112] 'Introduction', *The Trotula,* (2002), p. 47. Green highlights that this aim of the author which she quotes is from the prologue which was 'later lost from the *Trotula* ensemble and so not found in the present edition', p. 47.
[113] The Trotula, (2001) [182], pp. 142-143; [237-238], pp. 162-163.

fulfilling the ideal of feminine beauty: the brightness and pearl-like qualities of the *puella,* the Pearl maiden, and Emilia.

Beauty is not simply one perfect part of a woman but is inclusive of many aspects; incorporated within the mouth there are the lips, teeth, and breath. As with the final treatment in *Women's Cosmetics*, the second treatment here shows an overlap with other oral problems, claiming to be efficacious for gums and bad breath as well as the teeth. It also goes on to claim, 'this works the best' [optime facit].[114] In one treatment to be able to improve several aspects of the mouth; to make them more beautiful would imply a demand for such treatments able to help with multiple problems, and thereby perhaps more efficiently achieve the desired ideal of beauty.

There are further treatments in other medical texts designed to clean the teeth but not specifically aimed at women. In the *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*,[115] there is a simple treatment:

> To make your teeth white, take branches of grape-vine and burn them into charcoal, and brush your teeth with that charcoal
>
> [I wneuthur danned yn wynnyon, kymer geinghenneu o'r gwinwyd a llosk yn lo, ac a'r glo hwnnw rugyl dy ddanned] [116]

In comparison to the vast array of ingredients listed in the *Trotula* texts, this treatment is very simple, but still maintains the same two main themes, that of a powder and rubbing the teeth. This recipe comes from a collection of recipes common to medieval Wales, which although is not the centre of medical education that Salerno was, where the *Trotula* texts originated, does, according to the work of Diana Luft, show 'the theory upon which this entire corpus of texts is based, the plants chosen for the *materia medica* and the … conception of the workings of the body and the nature of disease, all seem to be based on the systems of medical knowledge common to Europe during this period'.[117] Although this is not at the centre of the exchange of

[114] *The Trotula*, (2001) [237], pp. 162-163.
[115] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*. For more on the *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, please see the Introduction of this thesis, p. 30.
[116] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts,* 9/9, pp. 238-239. This recipe is present in all four manuscripts included in Luft's edition.
[117] Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, p. 19.

information, the desire for white teeth is still present, demonstrating the distances that such ideas of feminine beauty travelled and were aspired to in a European-wide context.

In a more practical, medicinal, and less cosmetic focus, Guy de Chauliac provides a treatment for 'dirty and filthy-coloured teeth'. The nature of this remedy does not advertise itself as being able to turn black teeth to white, but the academic knowledge of the author and his auspicious career within the Avignonese court demonstrates the types of patients that he was used to dealing with, and as with the treatments provided in the *Trotula* texts, these patients were wealthy.[118] Guy recommends a mouth wash followed by a dentifrice:

> The commune rewle iput þerto, wasshe þe mouthe with wyne of the sethynge of hors mynte and of piper. And after, he schal vse þis medecyne by þe maner of a frotynge of tieth: Take of cotil bone, concularum marinarum albarum, porcellanarum, of pomysshe, of brent hornes, of glasse, of alume, of sal gemme, of brent suphre, of þe roote of yreos, of aristologie, of þe rote of brente rede. Make a powder of hem alle or of eueriche by itself.[119]

Guy details here a large selection of ingredients necessary to make the recommended dentifrice, however he does suggest at the end of this paragraph that any one of the ingredients by itself would also serve the purpose. If any one of these ingredients would be sufficient then it is interesting that such a detailed list is provided with the initial implication that they be combined together for the treatment. This may have some connection with the wealth of the potential patient who may consider they have a more efficacious remedy the more ingredients it contains.

To fulfil the ideal of feminine beauty, as outlined in this chapter from predominantly literary and encyclopaedic texts, the teeth must be uniform, small, and most importantly white. The range of medicinal treatments intended to provide these ideals, particularly that of white teeth, shows the importance of good oral hygiene. The maintenance of healthy teeth connects intimately with the medieval view of health, youth, and beauty, as well as demonstrating an ability to control the flow of potentially dangerous substances from the inside of the body to

[118] Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac), *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna*, 'Introduction', ed. M. McVaugh, p. xiii.
[119] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* p. 490, lines 1-8.

the outside. Also, with age may come some degrading of the teeth and potentially a loss of a tooth, although probably not commonly a loss of many teeth. This gap created by a lost tooth may be associated, as was the gap in the Wife of Bath's teeth, with gossip and immoral behaviour. Although there are very few possibilities for solving a problem with gaps between the teeth, Guy de Chauliac does suggest some solutions, in a section on loose and weak teeth. Assuming that other medicinal treatments are unsuccessful Guy lists two final solutions:

> The whiche, if it helpe not, bynde ham with a softe small cheyne of gold, as Albucasis techeþ. And if þai falle away, make hem of oþer menis teeþ or of a kowes bone, and bynde ham with a sleiȝte, and he may be serued with hem longe tyme.[120]

Here, Guy is offering solutions to maintain or replace teeth. This will have both practical and cosmetic purposes. On a practical level it will help with eating and speech, and on a cosmetic level, the teeth will look better without obvious gaps where teeth are missing. These are not the first solutions that Guy proposes for loose teeth, but they do demonstrate a practical solution to the problem. Neither of these solutions are cheap solutions, with one requiring a gold chain to fasten two teeth together, and the other a suitable tooth made to fit the gap in the mouth. These are therefore solutions intended for the wealthy, and although this process is equally applicable to both men and women, it does help to reach the aspired to ideal of perfection personified in the romance heroine, a woman of noble birth.[121]

The final aspect of the mouth that has aesthetic value is that of the breath, which when included in descriptions of youthful beauty, is sweet-smelling. Halitosis, particularly through food ingested, can be an affliction at any stage of the adult life cycle but it is the effort to conform to the sweet breath associated with youth that is important. As with all other beautifying treatments, in the middle age of life they can have an enhancing effect, prolonging or attempting to reproduce the beauty of youth. Breath is one aspect of beauty that is not immediately obvious, and not necessarily essential to outward appearance, but it does have an aesthetic quality. The image of beauty is viewed as being an outward reflection of inner perfection, such as the account from *De Vetula*, where Ovid glimpses the inside of the *puella*'s mouth, and it is as perfect as the outside of her body. Bad breath coming from inside

[120] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 489, lines 16-20.
[121] Saunders, 'Beauty, Virtue and Danger in Medieval English Romance', p. 38.

the body and moving to the outside demonstrates that there is some form of corruption, and the inside of the body is not as beautiful as the outside. Bad breath may be a sign of another, more serious condition: it had clear associations with leprosy and was listed by Guy de Chauliac among six definitive signs 'þat bitokene always the lepre'.[122] Bad breath may also be an indicator, not just of something physically wrong, but rather something morally or spiritually wrong.[123] The inner imperfection made manifest may not necessarily be a physical imperfection.

The importance of fresh breath within medieval literature is mirrored in the large quantity of information and treatments provided in the medical literature. Across the sample of medical sources used for this chapter, four texts provide information on the causes of bad breath and six texts provide treatments, many of them providing more than one possible treatment. Some treatments have already been encountered within the previous treatments discussed including in *Treatments for Women* 'For whitening black teeth and strengthening corroded or rotted gums and for a bad-smelling mouth' [Ad dentes nigros dealbandos et confortandas gingiuas corrosas uel comestas et ad os male olens].[124] Although in this case it is an added extra, the fact that it is mentioned at all would imply that it is important and that sweet-smelling breath is as equal in importance as healthy gums and white teeth, thereby indicating that it may be included as a sign of beauty. Beauty, and the components of a beautiful mouth are intimately connected with ideas of health and youth, and among white teeth, red lips, and healthy gums, sweet-smelling breath can be included as a sign of health, and bad breath as a sign of ill-health. Maintaining good health may also be associated with a certain social status: having the ability to purchase preventative medical care demonstrates social and fiscal authority within society.

The existence of bad breath within medical literature sometimes occurs as a condition to be treated in its own right and, as with other medical conditions, its causes are outlined. *Treatments for Women* treats a 'stench of the mouth caused by a disorder of the stomach'

[122] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 380, line 2. The list of six signs follow on p. 380, lines 3-7: 'rowndenesse of þe eyȝen and of þe eres, spredynge of þe browes, and writhinge or crokynge of þe nose þirles withouteforth wiþ streytenesse withynforth, fowlenesse of þe lippes, an hose voice as þoghe he spak with his nose þirles, stynkynge of brethe and of al þe persone'.
[123] Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 86.
[124] *The Trotula*, (2001) [237], pp. 162-163.

[fetorem oris ex uicio stomachi], and *On Women's Cosmetics* provides two treatments, one for bad breath stemming from the stomach or intestines, and another from 'putridity of the gums' [putredinis gingiuarum].[125] Gilbertus Anglicus ascribes bad breath to 'corupcion of þe gomys and of þe teeþ; oþerwhile it comeþ of þe stomac', [126] and Guy de Chauliac lists possible causes from corruption of the nose, gums or teeth, or to the brain, stomach, or chest:

> And þat is sometyme made for a wiþdrawen cause in þe place, as ben corrupciouns and rotynges of vlcers of þe nose þirles and of the gomes of þe tieth and of þe nyghe members. And sometyme it is made for a communede cause and sente fro the brayne, fro þe stomac and fro the breste[127]

Each of these causes are internal causes from different body parts and may demonstrate a lack of internal beauty, with parts of the body becoming in some way diseased: each cause is showing an internal corruption becoming, through bad breath, an external manifestation. It also indicates a lack of control, through allowing such bad breath to escape the mouth and potentially infect the air around. Such images are synonymous with the ugly old woman: the *vetula*'s mouth is 'perpetually open, stretched out, spewing forth a steady flow of foul-smelling liquid', and Mistress Will is 'dry-mouthed, infecting the air with her foul breath'.[128] In *De Vetula*, upon discovering the *puella* is not the beauty he thought Ovid curses her, describing the ugly corrupting mouth of the *vetula*:

> May her mouth gape, distorted in stiff exhalations, and may her elches stink. May she be unable to wipe her nose, may her mouth dissolve into one big bloody catarrh.
>
> [Oscitet halitibus distenta rigoribus atque
> Feteat eructatio, non emungere nares
> Possit, in os sanies sed descendat tota corize.][129]

A number of treatments deal with bad breath once it has been identified, and its cause located, and most of them require that something be drunk, eaten and used as a mouthwash. In this way they are both treating the main cause as well as generally improving the smell of the

[125] *The Trotula*, (2001) [178], pp. 140-141; [301], pp. 186-187; [304], pp. 186-187.
[126] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 144, lines 1-2.
[127] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 477, lines 5-9.
[128] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body,* p. 15; Susannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 35.
[129] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body,* pp. 23-24, 152; *De Vetula*, ed. D. M. Robathan, 2.532-534.

breath immediately. Although many of the treatments for bad breath are intended to be administered when the condition becomes obvious, there is at least one treatment that is a preventative measure, and is listed in *On Women's Cosmetics*:

> I saw certain Saracen women liberate many people with this medicine. Take a little bit of laurel leaves and a little bit of musk, and let her hold it under her tongue before bad breath is perceived in her. Whence I recommend that day and night and especially when she has to have sexual intercourse with anyone that she hold these things under her tongue.
>
> [Ego uidi quamdam Sarracenam cum hac medicina multos liberare. Accipe parum de foliis lauri, parum de musco, et sub lingua teneat antequam percipiatur graues ei anhelitus. Vnde laudo die et nocte et maxime quando debet coire cum alio, quod hec sub lingua teneat.] [130]

This treatment opens with an acknowledgement of the origins of the treatment as being Saracen. Although the images of medieval beauty that have been considered here are primarily western ideals, the implication here is that sweet-smelling breath is not limited to a western ideal of beauty but is more universal. It also demonstrates an important exchange between cultures and Green argues that 'the attribution of a certain cosmetic preparation to Muslim noblewomen suggests Christian women's turning to this neighboring culture for any symbols that would help secure their own class aspirations'.[131] The ability to have fresh breath, and perhaps even to have fresh breath that smells expensive would be advantageous not only in attaining the ideal of beauty, but as Green argues, also to attain and maintain social status. The feminine pronouns used within the text and the title of the text indicates its audience as being female, and the indication of 'many people' being treated by this may simply be a way of claiming its efficacy or may point to the widespread importance of breath. There is also a further connection with youth, and functionality which features throughout the discussion of beauty, and that is reproduction. This treatment is recommended when a woman has sexual intercourse: when she is fulfilling her duty of producing children, and at this point she is in very close contact with a man who will be able to smell her breath. It therefore appears that sweet-smelling breath can be an indicator of a woman's reproductive efficacy: she is not only beautiful and sweet-smelling but is healthy and fecund.

[130] *The Trotula*, (2001) [305], pp. 188-189.
[131] *The Trotula*, (2001), p. 9.

Old Age

As with the earlier stages of the life cycle, of youth and middle age, there is no definitive outline of the age at which a person is considered to have entered this final stage of life. A short treatise, included with the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus in manuscript GUL MS Hunter 509, is as vague with detailing the exact moment of old age as it was with middle age, stating old age beings at 50 or 60 and lasts until death.[132] In youth there is natural beauty firmly intertwined with notions of health, hygiene and virtue; as this moves into the middle age, there is the need for some cosmetic aid to continue to fulfil the ideals of feminine beauty, but as a woman enters the period of old age there are associations of excessiveness, a lack of control, foulness and ugliness. In old age, all reproductive abilities for women have ended and the quality of the human body has moved from the cold and dry quality of middle age to cold and moist. Alongside these changes there are further physical changes which are beyond the aid that may have been provided by cosmetic treatments. The old woman is often shown in literary descriptions as the antithesis of the beautiful young woman, no longer in control of her body, the old body is full of excesses and overflows. As with old age a woman loses her valuable social function of bearing children, and within the secular world, if not controlled by her husband or family, she represents a subversive force within society. The subversiveness of her character is described and exaggerated in literary depictions showing her ability to infect, and affect, the morality of the world.

Both men and women will experience old age but in descriptions there is a marked difference between the ugly images of old women and the noticeable failure of the body for old men but without a sense of hideousness. Old Age features as a character in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, composed in the later fourteenth century.[133] This text features a dream setting, which is a standard framework used in medieval literature, seen also in *The Romaunt of the Rose* and

[132] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 44, line 4; refer to p. 96 for full quotation on the stages of the life cycle. Avicenna believed that this final stage was from the age of 60 until death, Sears, *The Ages of Man*, p. 29. There is great variance between texts on the age at which a person is considered old. Shulamith Shahar's research shows that 'in the few examples given, old age beings at 35, 40, 45, 50, 58, 60 and 72'. Shulamith Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, translated from the Hebrew by Yael Lotan (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 17. Laura Kalas has also gathered a variety of medieval authors' views on old age, see Kalas, *Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine*, pp. 185-186.

[133] 'Introduction', *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. by M. Y. Offord, EETS o.s. 246 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. xxxvi.

Pearl.[134] It only survives in two extant manuscripts, one complete and the other fragmentary, however, its intention as a text to be listened to for entertainment allows for a wider audience than the limited, literate elite.[135] In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* the allegorical character of Old Age is male and the description of him shows the decrepitude of old age but it is not hideous or appearing to be lacking in virtue as with old women: 'Alle disfigured was his face, and fadit his hewe…He was ballede and blynde, and all babirlippede,/ Totheles and tenefull, I tell ȝowe for sothe;/ And euer he momelide and ment and mercy he askede'.[136] This image shows the decline in the beauty of the mouth with age, with a lack of teeth, a faded colour, and thick lips. Despite his lack of beauty, Old Age is not a hideously ugly figure, and the author does not imply a lack of virtue, or a corrupting nature to accompany the aging image. In comparison to the opening description of Dame Ragnelle, Old Age is showing a bodily decline but not the excessiveness of the old woman. Dame Ragnelle has overly large teeth that protrude from her mouth, and an excessively wide mouth showing an almost animalistic image, whereas the male gendered Old Age appears more pitiful than hideous. Clearly here there is a gender distinction suggesting that old women are more dangerous to society than old men whose body fails but does not become something verging on the monstrous.

In almost every way, and every part of the mouth, in descriptions of old women, excess plays a significant part; everything is exaggerated. Firstly, the lips, which in youth were small and slightly plump, and in middle age could be cosmetically reduced, in old age are thick and oversized. The descriptions of Dame Ragnelle, in *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, that pertain specifically to the size of her mouth and lips show 'Her mowthe fulle wyde', 'Her lyppes laye lumpryd on her chyn'.[137] Undermining the perfect female form is the large, gaping, thick-lipped mouth of the ugly and the old. In the Pseudo-Ovidian *De Vetula,* the smallness of the mouth of the *puella* is sharply contrasted with the stretched and perpetually open mouth of the *vetula* from whose mouth is poured forth foul-smelling liquid.[138] This is a direct contrast between the controlled or, considering the patriarchal society, controllability of the beautiful young female body, and the uncontrollable aged female body that can no longer contain the inside, which now spews forth. Miller argues that

[134] 'Introduction', *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, p. xxxix.
[135] 'Introduction', *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, pp. xi, xliii.
[136] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, f. 170, lines 155, 158-160 (p. 5).
[137] *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, p. 62, lines 552 and 554.
[138] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body,* p. 15.

this monstrosity of old women 'issues from an association between the reproductive life cycle…and mortality: female bodies inevitably change from something stable and attractive into something loose and leaky'.[139] The strong correlation between beauty, youth, functionality possibly in the form of reproduction, and the controlled body clearly contrasts with the ugly, aged, uncontrollable, and infertile body. This is more strongly associated with women and is pertinent as their ability to bear children is finite, and therefore after the point of menopause their functionality within society arguably diminishes to leave behind it something more dangerous in the form of the older woman.

Miller describes the old woman's body in *De Vetula* as being 'characterised by extremes', so too can the body of Dame Ragnelle be explained, as compared to the *puella* whose body is 'moderation';[140] Here, as with the old woman in *De Vetula*, the mouth is large, and not contained to a small, beautiful size, and that her lips are lumped on her chin suggests that they are also excessively large, and her mouth overflows with foul odours. Miller characterises this contrast between *puella* and *vetula*: 'The *puella's* rigidly demarcated body boundaries have collapsed and her orifices have lost the capacity of self-regulation'.[141] These images are extremes, as is the older female body: no longer contained and controlled, it expands. The slightly plump lips of the beautiful young woman that are suggestive of being ready to be kissed are in the old woman pushed to the extreme of being large, thick lips that are hideous and no longer attractive. In youth, there was fecundity and although the suggestion of kissing adds a sexual dimension to a description, the woman has the potential to fulfil her role of bearing children. However, in old age that ability has failed, and the lips are no longer plump but have failed in their beauty along with the failing of the reproductive organs: the body has lost its control both in respect to bodily functionality, and potentially with regard to social interaction as well.

This image of the large mouth is most commonly applied to descriptions of ugly old women but it is not exclusive, for in 'The General Prologue' of *The Canterbury Tales* the description of the Miller details that 'His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys'.[142] Walter Clyde Curry

[139] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body,* p. 3.
[140] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body,* p. 23.
[141] Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 24.
[142] 'General Prologue', *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 32, line 559.

has argued that this simple detail is 'sufficient to brand the Miller as a glutton, a swaggerer, a sensualist, and an impious fornicator'.[143] Curry follows this argument with a reference to a pseudo-Aristotelian text on physiognomy which claims that the person with a large mouth 'is pugnacious, gluttonous, audacious; breadth of mouth and thickness of lips signify desire and voracity of stomach' and associates a large mouth with 'ill-will and of murder, …lust and copulation'.[144] Some of these associations are applicable to the Miller, but they can equally be associated with the depictions of ugly old women, and demonstrate why such characteristics make these women dangerous to society.

As old age progresses it is likely that some teeth are lost, thereby creating breaches in the wall of the teeth; more significant breaches than the 'gat-tothed' Wife of Bath. These breaches in the wall of the teeth are a common feature in images of the aged, whether male or female, specifically ugly or simply old. In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* Old Age is described as being 'Totheles', firstly an idea associated with aging and the gradual degradation of the human body, but on a moral level it indicates that there are significant breaches in the barrier, thereby allowing the potentially corrupting influence of the inside of the body to interact with the outside world.[145] This breach is evident in the amount of talking that Old Age does within the poem, and the contrast between the speech of Youth, the short replies of Middle Age, and the 'dignified sermonising of Old Age'.[146] In this case the breach in the teeth does release an amount of speech but it is not evil and corrupt speech. The character of Old Age is male, and the same associations do not apply to images of old women. In the description of Dame Ragnelle, the uneven nature of her teeth implies that there may be a breach in the wall guarding the tongue: 'Her tethe hyng overe her lyppes', and 'She had two tethe on every syde / As borys tuskes, I wolle nott hyde'.[147] Such an image is both hideous and revealing: unlike the *puella*, Dame Ragnelle's teeth have no chance of fitting together neatly and providing a strong barrier to control what passes from within her body to the outside, and vice versa, and therefore there is nothing to prevent her from corrupting the world with bad breath or foul words.

[143] Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Senses*, p. 84.
[144] Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Senses*, p. 84. Curry references Foerster (ed.) *Physiognomoniae secreti secretorum pseudaristotelici versions Latinae*, II. 168, 205, 226 ff.
[145] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, f. 170, line 159 (p. 5).
[146] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,* 'Introduction', p. xliii.
[147] *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, p. 53, line 235, p. 62, lines 548-549.

Alongside the loss of teeth, and the gaps that appear, is a discolouration of the teeth, and in referencing the work of Aristotle, Bartholomew states 'þat teeþ in olde men and beestes ben generalliche blak and nouȝt sharpe'.[148] Although this uses a masculine pronoun, it is a characteristic of age for both sexes, and shows the deterioration of health with age, and the consequent deterioration of beauty, and there is a consequent close association between beauty and oral hygiene. Dame Ragnelle also has 'tethe yalowe', and thereby shows a lack of good oral hygiene.[149] Although Dame Ragnelle has a certain social standing, her appearance denotes a failure in bodily care, and together with hideous, almost monstrous, features such as the boar's tusks, she loses a certain amount of femininity, and through it female authority.

This loss of teeth, and blackening and wearing down described by Bartholomew, are the complete opposite to the beautiful neat, white, even teeth of the beautiful young woman. Is such a transformation a realistic one? A significant loss of teeth is a key characteristic of descriptions of old age. There is the character of Old Age in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, who is 'Totheles', and this has earlier echoes in a description by Augustine that among other things 'his teeth rot and disappear…his breath stinks', as well as the late twelfth century treatise *On the Misery of the Human Condition [De miseria humanae conditionis]*, written by Lothario de Segni, the future Pope Innocent III, which agrees that the breath becomes 'malodorous…The teeth rot and the ears become deaf'.[150] From this it is clear that there are significant oppositions between descriptions of old age and descriptions of youthful beauty. In youth the teeth are even and brilliantly white, whereas in old age there are gaps for missing teeth and a degree of rottenness in other. There is equally an opposition in other characteristics, with youth being synonymous with virtue, purity and control, while old age is excess and immorality: almost good and evil extremes.[151] Old age being synonymous with toothlessness is not entirely inaccurate, but it is certainly an exaggerated image. In a cross-

[148] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 203, lines 17-18.
[149] *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, p. 53, line 232.
[150] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, f. 170, line 159 (p. 5); Augustine and Lothario de Segni are quoted in Irina Metzler, *A Social History of Disability in the Middle Ages: cultural considerations of physical impairment* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 107-108, 110.
[151] These medieval associations of good and evil; youth and old age are mirrored in the way modern films depict the medieval period. In film there is a juxtaposition of gleaming white teeth and rotten teeth or blackened stumps. Patricia Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 43.

section of fifteenth archaeological studies on teeth in European medieval populations covering the fifth to the sixteenth centuries, all studies show that ante-mortem tooth loss is proportional to age which is to be expected and this supports the general association of images of old age with a loss of teeth, however it is unlikely to be major loss of teeth suffered by Old Age. It is noticeable that the highest ante-mortem tooth loss is in an eighth century Avar population, from Austria, with a frequency of 23.8% in a studied population of 136 adults, as compared to lower frequencies in populations of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries.[152] It is striking though that in any of these studies that discuss how different teeth are affected by ante-mortem tooth loss, the worst affected are the molars.[153] These teeth would have been less visible and therefore had less aesthetic effect on the appearance of the mouth. This information cannot be directly applied to the cosmetic and medical treatments discussed because those treatments are designed for the wealthier patients whereas the archaeology does not provide information on class distinctions. Despite this, the archaeological information demonstrates that tooth loss was certainly a problem but, in most cases, not as extreme as literary descriptions portray. The literature exaggerates descriptions of the aging process, while the medical literature provides some ways of slowing this process down, or cosmetically covering it up. Therefore, despite the archaeology indicating that the most visible teeth may have been less affected by ante-mortem tooth loss, the importance of the visual aspect of the mouth is evidenced in the medical literature, and literary descriptions push imagery to the extremes of perfection versus complete toothlessness.

The image of beauty is viewed as being an outward reflection of inner perfection, such as the account from *De Vetula*, where Ovid glimpses the inside of the *puella*'s mouth, and it is as

[152] The lower frequencies are 4.4% in 60 adults in southwest France; 14.1% in four cemeteries in northern Spain and 7.2% in 734 individuals in southwest Scotland. A. Meinl, et al., 'Caries frequency and distribution in an early medieval Avar population from Austria', *Oral Diseases*, 16 (2010) 108-116; S. Lucas, et al., 'Study of dental caries and periapical lesions in a mediaeval population of the southwest France: Differences in visual and radiographic inspections', *HOMO – Journal of Comparative Human* Biology, 61 (2010), 359-372; Belen Lopez, et al., 'Socio-cultural factors in dental diseases in the Medieval and early Modern Age of northern Spain', *HOMO – Journal of Comparative Human* Biology, 63 (2012), 21-42; M. E. Watt, D. A. Lunt and W. H. Gilmour, 'Caries Prevalence in the Permanent Dentition of a Mediaeval Population from the South-West of Scotland', *Archives of Oral Biology*, 42.9 (1997), 601-620.

[153] R. Esclassan, et al., 'Dental Caries, Tooth Wear and Diet in an Adult Medieval (12th-14th century) Population from Mediterranean France', *Archives of Oral Biology*, 54 (2009), 287-297; Ian Tattersall, 'Dental Paleopathology of Medieval Britain', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 23.4 (1968), 380-385; Marija Djuric-Srejic, et al., 'Anthropological Analysis of Dental Remains of Two Medieval Serbian Populations', *Variability and Evolution*, 6 (1997), 73-79; Mario Novak, 'Dental health and diet in early medieval Ireland', *Archives of Oral Biology*, 60 (2015), 1299-1309.

perfect as the outside of the body. Bad breath may indicate a form of internal corruption, an ugly inside, but it further demonstrates a lack of control over movement between the inside and outside: a clear association with ugliness, old age, and the inability to regulate the body. As the breath connects the inside of the body with the outside world, it causes an effect on the viewer, bringing them into direct contact, through smell, with another human body. Richard Barnett has argued that 'stinking breath or black teeth carry a stigma that is both peculiarly personal and entirely public'.[154] This sentiment is one that is also present in the primary sources: Guy de Chauliac claims 'þat stynkynge of þe brethe is schameful and harmeful, and namely to a leche'.[155] Other than this example from Guy de Chauliac, the medical texts do not offer any judgemental comments upon conditions, so it is pertinent that the case of bad breath is one of the few times that this occurs.

An equally grotesque image of the old female body is that of Mistress Will in Bernard of Clairvaux's *On Conversion*, a sermon he presented in 1140.[156] Here Mistress Will, classed by Susannah Biernoff as the 'epitome of a non-productive body', in described as being 'dry-mouthed, infecting the air with her foul breath'.[157] Biernoff highlights one of the key points about the old body and its ugliness being intimately linked with functionality, youth and the ability to reproduce. This description shows some similarities to that of the *vetula* because it is not really the smell of the bad breath that is problematic but its ability to infect the air and spread its corruption. There is a direct link here to the medieval understanding that infection could be spread through the air.[158] As well as the spreading of infection, there is the potential for the spread of spiritual and moral corruption, whereby the breath may not be indicative of internal physical problems but internal spiritual problems.

External, physical beauty is epitomised by literary tropes centred on the ideal perfection of the romance heroine. Although she is rarely described in full in any single example, her ideal

[154] Richard Barnett, *The Smile Stealers. The fine and foul art of dentistry* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2017), p. 26.
[155] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 477, lines 18-19.
[156] Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*, p. 34.
[157] Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages*, p. 34. Bernard of Clairvaux is quoted in Biernoff's work.
[158] Mary Carruthers notes the connection that 'Smells and other 'exhalations' of the air could be both sweet and healthful, or fetid – indeed could cause pestilence and disease', in *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 34.

characteristics can be pieced together. The descriptions of the female mouth are indicative of overall beauty and health. With regard to her mouth, it is small, with plump red lips, neat small white teeth, and sweet-smelling breath. Her carefully guarded mouth, demonstrated by a barrier of teeth, is mirrored by another carefully guarded 'mouth': her vagina. She is modest, guarded, pure, as well as healthy and fecund. Such ideals of bodily perfection are impractical and suggest a masculine control defining an unattainable feminine perfection, ensuring masculine superiority. Furthermore, beautiful romance heroines, epitomise the beautiful young woman but incidentally say very little: their role is one of physicality. Their authority is defined by their outward appearance, a creation of the male imagination.

Through middle age and old age, the physical body changes; beauty fades and reproductive capability diminishes. In the initial decline of beauty and youth, medicine and cosmetics appear to restore and enhance the physical, as well as maintain health, for, as argued here, health equates to beauty, and beauty to health. To be both healthy, and consequently beautiful, is to achieve a more authoritative position within society, as beauty equates to health, and health to strength, and strength to superiority, with consequent authority. The human mouth, an entrance into and out of the body is treated, enhanced and beautified in order to attain the aspired to definition of beauty. Male-authored medical literature responds to a female demand to attain a male-created and propagated definition of beauty, which Lowe argued should be unattainable. This paradox has been explored in this chapter through the human mouth. This centre of speech, definition of humanity, conduit for demonstrating rationality and morality, as well as undermining authority now takes on the role of defining beauty, reproductive capabilities, virtue, and age.

The ever-changing physicality of the mouth through the life cycle draws on changing views of health, virtue and beauty, and also questions attitudes towards sexuality and sexual allure. The small but plump lips of the *puella* beg to be kissed, yet in old age they have bloated to grotesque proportions, exaggerating the tropes of beauty to create something almost monstrous. This shift from youth to old age is described in the frightening transformation from beauty to ugliness, where the manipulation of the mouth and grotesque excesses combine to create a subversive, yet by its nature powerful, force. At each stage of the female life cycle there is a chance to demonstrate authority whether through perfectly beautiful lips

denoting health and fecundity, a strong middle age making use of medical and cosmetic treatments to enhance beauty, or through a subversive, yet arguably unattractive, old age.

Chapter 3

‘here mouth is…in the myddes of here brest’: Locating the Monstrous Mouth

> And in anoþer yle toward the south duellen folk of foul stature & of cursed kynde, þat han non hedes & here eyen ben in here scholdres And here mouth is croked as an horse schoo & þat is in the myddes of here brest. And in anoþer yle also ben folk þat han non hedes & here mouth ben behynde in here schuldres [1]

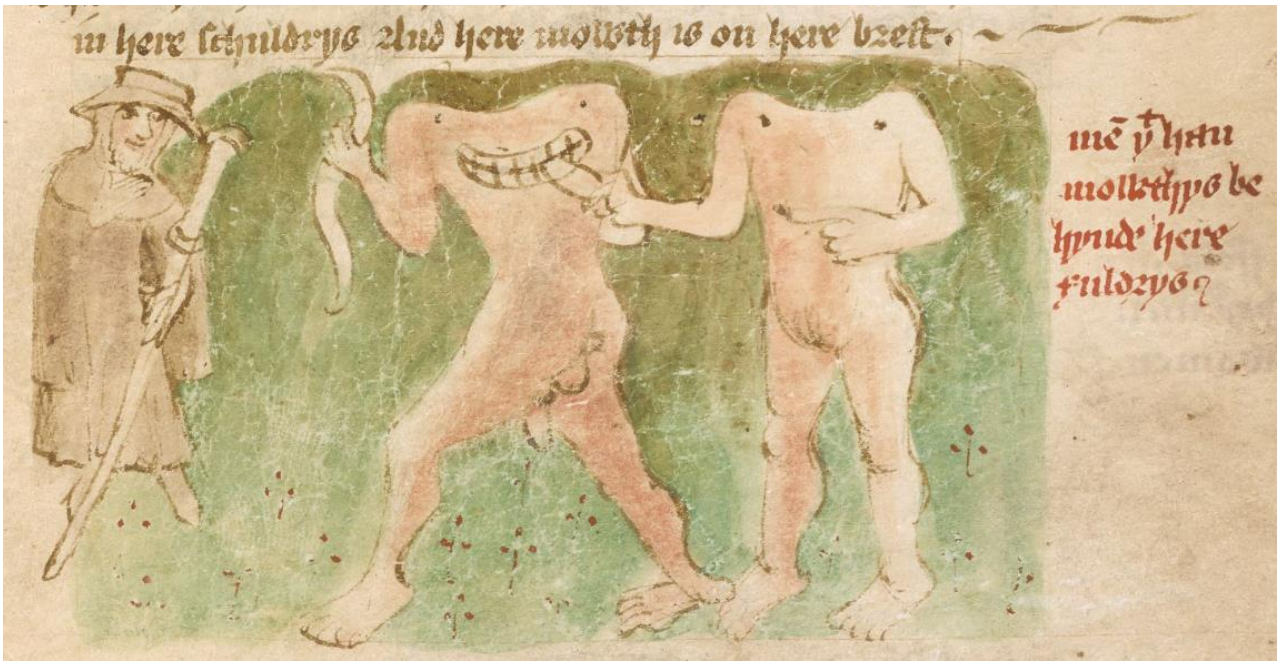

Fig 1: London, British Library, Harley 3954, f. 42r
English miscellany with Mandeville’s Travels, Piers Plowman, catechetical texts, and devotional poems.

[1] *Mandeville’s Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d’Outremeuse, edited from MS. Cotton Titus c. XVI, in the British Museum, by P. Hamelius, vol 1, EETS o.s. 153 (London: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 133, lines 33-36, p. 134, lines 1-2. This edition is based upon one of four Middle English prose versions of *Mandeville’s Travels*; the one contained within MS. Cotton Titus c.xvi. In their own edition of another version known as the Defective version, taken from the manuscript British Library MS Royal 17C. xxxviii, Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson argue that most of the English versions ‘descend directly or indirectly from a single French textual tradition’, however they all differ one from another. *The Book of John Mandeville,* ed. by Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p. 12.

Mandeville's Travels (c. 1357) was a popular text purporting to detail John Mandeville's explorations of the exotic East, describing the Muslims, the Brahmins, Constantinople and China.[2] This quotation and the image above illustrate a well-known race of monstrous beings called Blemmyae: beings without heads, whose faces appear in their chests, as well as other beings whose facial features appear on the back, between the shoulders. It is immediately apparent that there is a 'problem' with the physiognomy of these monstrous beings: without a head they have their mouths in their chest. How can such a being eat, speak, and indeed, without a head, think? If they cannot think and speak, they are not rational beings capable of understanding and expressing morality, and therefore lack authority, and are set apart from humanity. Such monstrous beings, through their anatomy and particularly their problematic mouths help to define what it means to be human. It is through the mouth, the conduit for speech and expressing humanity, that abnormality and monstrosity can be expressed, and this chapter argues for this expression in the manipulation of the mouth.

It is striking, that before describing the physicality of these beings, Mandeville states they are 'of foul stature & of cursed kynde'.[3] These monstrous beings, in Mandeville's view, are not physically attractive beings, and their physical descriptions relate to the ways in which human ugliness is expressed and described. Furthermore, and of great importance is their 'cursed kynde': their creation in opposition to nature. 'Kynde', is defined as being 'Naturally, by nature', but these monstrous beings are against all that is 'natural'.[4] Kynde also extends to knowledge that is inherent to humanity and understanding about nature as well as understanding gained through nature.[5] Throughout the later Middle Ages this idea of kynde was widely known and discussed, and referred to how the medieval Western world viewed the human body that obeyed the rules of nature, and deviances from nature as potentially monstrous.[6] As Elizabeth Bearden argues 'Identifying and excluding unnatural bodies are fundamental …to…people's understanding of the world and to their argument about human being's right to dominate that world'.[7] Kynde as an understanding by natural experience

[2] *The Book of John Mandeville,* ed. by Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson, p. 1.
[3] *Mandeville's Travels*, p. 133, lines 33-34.
[4] MED s.v.: 'kinde, adv.'
[5] Katie Walter, *Middle English Mouths: Late Medieval Medical, Religious and Literary Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 2.
[6] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 2.
[7] Elizabeth B. Bearden, 'Before Normal, There Was Natural: John Bulwer, Disability, and Natural Signing in Early Modern England and Beyond', *PMLA*, 132.1 (2017), p. 33.

'teaches man through the example provided by the body and its parts', and if that body and parts are rearranged or missing, as with the Blemmyae, then they are therefore of 'cursed kynde'.[8] These monstrous beings are, by their 'cursed kynde', a creation in opposition to nature, and Dana M. Oswald notes that such creatures threaten 'the boundaries of humanity'.[9] It is this notion of 'kynde' that will frame the central premise of this chapter, and act as a point of comparison against which the examples offered will be viewed.

Focussing on the idea of 'kynde' – the 'natural' – this chapter argues that such notions of 'kynde' are disrupted through the manipulation of the mouth's position in the Blemmyae, and other monstrous beings, as well as in the mouth of Hell iconography. In the creation of the monstrous, the mouth is a key component and Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the grotesque states that the mouth, or more particularly the gaping mouth, is its most important feature.[10] This gaping mouth, as seen in the Blemmyae, in its most monstrous form, also becomes, in the medieval imagination, the entrance to Hell. Through the manipulation of the mouth and the creation of what Mandeville termed 'cursed kynde', a formation contrary to nature, these monstrous beings and the iconography of the mouth of Hell threaten the boundaries and the very foundations of human society.

This chapter argues that not only is the manipulation of the mouth key to the creation of the frightening and the monstrous, but also in descriptions and images there is an implicit feminisation of monstrous beings and monstrous mouths. Medieval philosophy defined a binary opposition of male and female[11], with further associated oppositions of mind and body, and spirituality and fleshiness. In this medieval view of sex difference, the male is associated with heat and the right, versus the female associated with cold and the left. These are not just a set of binary oppositions but present a 'general hierarchy of value, in which the

[8] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 21. Walter uses an example from *The book of Vices and Virtues* to highlight this knowledge through natural experience: 'Relative to the size of his body, man's mouth is small, and while the other organs of sense are doubled, man has just one mouth. The lesson this teaches us is of 'sobrenesse', or measure: we do not need great quantities of food and drink (if we did, we would have two mouths)'.
[9] Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010), p. 12.
[10] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 317; refer to the Introduction of this thesis, p. 17 for quotation.
[11] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 198.

better alternatives are ranged against the worse'.[12] Monstrous mouths are aligned to femininity and show some similarities to the descriptions of the ugly old woman with an uncontrollable body, discussed in Chapter Two, and the association of carnality with femininity both through the mouth and through the secondary mouth, the vagina. The imagery of monstrous mouths and particularly the tooth-filled fearsome mouth of Hell displays direct connections with the *vagina dentata*, 'monstrous sexuality incarnate'.[13] The feminisation of monstrous beings and the iconography of the mouth of Hell that this chapter proposes focuses on the fleshy nature of the body. This in turn displays a direct comparison between the presumed superiority and authority of mankind over beast and monster, as with man over woman. Both monstrous beings and the iconography of the mouth of Hell are subversive forces within medieval society, just as the ugly old woman was a subversive force within a society that encouraged beauty, harmony, and female bodily control, as seen in Chapter Two. The manipulation of the mouth which disrupts the notion of 'kynde', and the implicit feminisation of monstrous beings and the mouth of Hell that I propose, produces, as I will show, depictions that are subversive to human society and authority.

In discussing ideas of humanity and monstrosity, society and its subversion, the terminology used to discuss groups of beings is challenging. Asa Simon Mittman has drawn attention to the problematic, although often used, term 'monstrous races', which reflects modern concepts onto the medieval world.[14] The terminology is further complicated by arguments over theories of race in the premodern world, a category that can be considered anachronistic before the modern period. Geraldine Heng has argued that '*Not* to use the term race would be to sustain the reproduction of a certain kind of past', for the medieval period also contains many definitions of human social and cultural differences 'not adequately served by the invocation of categories of greater generality'.[15] In Mittman's argument the term 'race' is anachronistic, meaning something very different in the medieval period in comparison to

[12] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 198.
[13] Sarah Alison Miller, 'Monstrous Sexuality: Variations on the *Vagina Dentata*', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, edited by Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), (pp. 311-328), p. 312.
[14] Asa Simon Mittman, 'Are the 'monstrous races' races?' *Postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies*, 6.1 (2015), pp. 36-51.
[15] Geraldine Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages', *Literature Compass*, 8.5 (2011), 315-331, at p. 322.

modern understanding.[16] For Heng, 'race' can be used in discussing the medieval period as it extends from simple analyses of physiognomy to include cultural and social conditions, in order to 'distribute positions and powers differentially to human groups'.[17] However Mittman argues that it is irrational to try to combine under the term of 'race', the variation of outward physicality, behaviour and location visible in monstrous beings. As, in the descriptions of monstrous beings, human writers are clearly setting themselves up as superior to these creatures that are formed contrary to 'kynde', the same concepts used to define a race, including physiognomy, social structure, and culture, are used to demarcate the monstrous beings are 'different'. In order to include all variations in descriptions and visual imagery across the representations of non-human beings this chapter will refer either to specific groups of beings, such as the Blemmyae or Cynocephali, or use the inclusive term 'monstrous beings'.

The Human and the Monster

This chapter, in exploring monstrous mouths, uses two manifestations of the mouth – hybrid monstrous beings, and medieval depictions of the mouth of Hell – to highlight the use of the mouth in the creation of the monstrous, what Mandeville termed 'cursed kynde', and how this reflects medieval notions of humanity, and 'normality'. Monstrosity, in the medieval imaginary, is not restricted to these areas but also includes demons, non-Christians, humans with deformities, and even women.[18] There are many different layers of monstrosity, explored by scholars specialising in the field of monstrosity studies such as Jeffrey Cohen, Sarah Alison Miller, and the edited work by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills.[19] The term, monstrosity, is broad enough to encompass all manifestations, not only including different people, religions, and ethnicities, but also the ways in which the body can be used monstrously such as through unpleasant or subversive speech, or female behaviour.

[16] Mittman, 'Are the 'monstrous races' races?' p. 48; refer to the Introduction to this thesis, p. 24 for full quotation.
[17] Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages', pp. 323-324.
[18] Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 1.
[19] Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Of Giant: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*; *The Monstrous Middle Ages,* ed. by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003).

In order to more fully investigate the culture that created the monstrous beings of the medieval imagination, the terms 'monster' and 'monstrosity', particularly in connection with monstrous beings, should be explicated. What is a monster, and what is monstrous? John Mandeville defines a monster thus: 'a monstre is a þing difformed aȝen kynde bothe of man or of best or of ony þing elles & þat is cleped a Monstre'.[20] Here, Mandeville makes a clear association with a monster being formed against nature, a concept that shows striking similarities to the ideas of ugliness being in direct opposition to beauty, derived from harmony and functionality of form that were discussed in Chapter Two of this study. William of Auvergne (c. 1180/1190-1249), in defining beauty, argued for beauty defined by harmony of the body parts.[21] Anything 'difformed' would disrupt this harmony and therefore be ugly, but also anything 'difformed' is contrary to kynde and could be monstrous. Therefore, there is a close connection between characteristics that define ugliness, and those that define the monstrous. Monstrous beings, by their very nature, cannot fulfil the necessary requirements of beauty, and in the cases of many of the hybrid monstrous beings, they also fail to fulfil the characteristics necessary to be equal to humans. There is an equally fluid relationship between monstrosity and disability in the medieval imagination, which also compares with concepts of ugliness. Irina Metzler's work on disability includes, under the term impairment, 'extreme deformations or monstrosities, for example, two heads, lack of mouth, twisted head, misplaced eyes, twisted feet'.[22] Metzler's definition can be seen in William of Auvergne's definition of ugliness in terms of excess, lack or inappropriateness which can apply to misplacement of body parts.[23] In referring to the eye, he states that 'The eye is in itself shapely and beautiful…but only when it is in its proper and rightful place. If, however, it were where the ear is, or in the middle of the face, that is, in an inappropriate place, then it would make the same face ugly.' [24] These definitions not only also apply to monstrous beings, particularly the Blemmyae who lack heads, but also contravene the well-formed and 'properly' ordered body in terms of medieval taxonomies. The fluid nature of definitions of

[20] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, lines 4-6, also quoted in Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 2.
[21] William of Auvergne, *On Good and Evil*, quoted in John Haldane, 'Medieval Aesthetics', in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by Berys Gaut, Dominic McIver Lopes, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 32; refer to Chapter Two, p. 100 for full quotation.
[22] Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about physical impairment during the high Middle Ages, c.1100-1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 5.
[23] Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 17.
[24] William of Auvergne, *De Bono et Malo*, 206, quoted in Baker, *Plain Ugly*, p. 17.

ugliness, impairment and monstrosity make them difficult to separate with clarity. Often monstrosity is described in terms of an exaggeration of the elements of ugliness and impairment, but more distinctly, ugliness and impairment remain within the spectrum of humanity, whereas monstrosity, and monstrous beings are defined as 'different', as 'non-human'.

The monstrous, in the Middle Ages, were also defined etymologically by a definition that focussed less on a being's physical appearance, and more on its portentous purpose within the world. In *De Civitate Dei,* written in the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) explained that:

> The term 'monster', people say, plainly comes from *monstrare*, 'to show', and monster 'show' by signifying something; *ostentum*, meaning 'sign', comes from *ostendere*, 'to point out', while 'portent' comes from *portendere*, meaning 'to portend', that is, 'to point out ahead of time', and 'prodigy' comes from *porro dicere*, 'to say beforehand', that is, 'to foretell the future.
>
> [Monstra sane dicta perhibent a monstrando, quod aliquid significando demonstrent, et ostenta ab ostendendo, et portenta a portendendo, id est praeostendendo, et prodigia, quod porro dicant, id est futura praedicant.][25]

Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), in his seventh-century *Etymologies*, follows closely the work of Augustine with regards to the etymological understanding of the term 'monster', and clearly demonstrates the divine influence in the creation of such beings: 'they are created by divine will, since the nature of everything is the will of the Creator' [divina voluntate fiunt, cum voluntas Creatoris cuiusque conditae rei natura sit.][26] Isidore shows a direct contrast to the definition later provided by John Mandeville of monstrous beings created against nature in stating that 'A portent is therefore not created contrary to nature, but contrary to what is

[25] Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God (De Civitate Dei),* quoted in Spencer J. Weinreich, 'How a Monster Means: The Significance of Bodily Difference in the Christopher Cynocephalus Tradition', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, ed. by R. H. Godden and A. S. Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), (181-207) p. 181; Latin taken from *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Episcopi De Civitate Dei Libri XXII iterum recognovit B. Dombart, vol II, Lib. XIV-XXII* (Lipsiae: In aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1877), p. 507, lines 12-16.
[26] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book XI.iii.1, p. 243; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.iii.1.

known nature' [Portentum ergo fit non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura].[27] Isidore later clarifies the term portents as being 'Portents, then, or unnatural beings' [Portenta igitur vel portentuosa], before discussing different types of monstrous being including the Blemmyae and the Cynocephali, people with the head of a dog.[28]

In very simple terms, as Hartnell argues 'These monsters … reflected broader medieval ideas of what a 'normal' body should be',[29] most particularly the natural human being, or rather the normal male, as women can be included in the category of the monstrous. This creates further complications in understanding what constitutes a 'normal', or 'natural' being. In *De Civitate Dei*, Augustine qualifies a human being thus:

> Yet whoever is born anywhere as a human being, that is, a rational mortal creature, however strange he may appear to our senses in bodily form or colour or motion or utterance, or in any faculty, part or quality of his nature whatsoever, let no true believer have any doubt that such an individual is descended from the one man who was first created.
>
> [Verum quiquis uspiam nascitur homo, id est animal rationale mortale, quamlibet nostris inusitatem sensibus gerat corporis formam seu colorem sive motum sive sonum sive qualibet vi, qualibet parte, qualibet qualitate naturam, ex illo uno protoplasto originem ducere nullus fidelium dubitaverit][30]

Augustine here places the central defining characteristics of a human being as rationality and morality, regardless of appearance or utterance. This is striking, as I argued in Chapter One for the great importance of being able to articulate rationality and morality in order not only to prove humanity but also to carry authority within society. The implication of Augustine's words is that monstrous beings, despite their inability in many cases to produce articulate speech and their strange outward appearance, may be equal in status to humanity, and are even descended from Adam. Augustine creates further complications in trying to discern the

[27] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book XI.iii.2, p. 243; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.iii.2.
[28] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book XI.iii.7, p. 244; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.iii.2. More monstrous beings are discussed throughout Book XI.iii.
[29] Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Profile Books, 2018), p. 31.
[30] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, quoted in Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 3-4.

exact relationship between humanity and monstrous beings, or the non-human, in Book XVI of *De Civitate Dei*, where he states:

> [e]ither the written accounts of certain races are completely unfounded or, if such races do exist, they are not human; or if they are human, they are descended from Adam.[31]
>
> [au tilla, quae talia de quibusdam gentibus scripta sunt, omnino nulla sunt; aut si sunt, homines non sunt; aut ex Adam sunt, si homines sunt.]

Here Augustine has reached a point of indecision on the existence and the origin of monstrous beings. [32] The difficulties in categorising them according to their appearance or behaviour leaves an open-ended view. What is clear though is the focus in the works of both Isidore and Augustine on the influence of nature and divine will. Isidore is explicit in his understanding of all creation being through divine will, while Augustine is more implicit, referring to a descendancy from Adam, the first man created by God. Nature and divine will here are two indivisible concepts, for what is natural is the will of God, and there is a resistance to believing in something created that is not from God, but also something that appears against 'kynde' that was created by God. This friction between monstrosity and humanity; 'kynde' and divine will, is a continual underlying problem in the medieval period.

The direct comparison of monstrous beings with the human race shows the problems they pose: how far can such beings be considered as human? How rational are they? In what ways do they threaten humanity? Monstrous beings, particularly those of a hybrid nature, containing both human and animal parts, are at times presented as fearsome unnatural beings but also, according to Augustine and Isidore, as a divine creation. They are in fact a cultural creation and embody popular fears and anxieties. Therefore, as Jeffrey Cohen argues, these monstrous beings provide 'a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender'.[33] They present problems of categorisation, morality, spirituality, as well as gender and sexuality, and they highlight cultural concerns and both question and help to define humanity.

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[31] Augustine, 1968, 49, quoted in Mary Kate Hurley, 'Monsters', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 2: fundamental aspects and conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 1170; Latin taken from *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Episcopi De Civitate Dei Libri XXII iterum recognovit B. Dombart, vol II, Lib. XIV-XXII* (Lipsiae: In aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1877), p. 137, lines 27-29.
[32] Hurley, 'Monsters', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 2*, pp. 1167-1183.
[33] Cohen, 'Monster Culture (7 Theses)' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, quoted in Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, p. 2.

Humanity is most easily defined through articulate speech, and the mouth is both a conduit for speech as well as often integral to beauty and associated assumptions on purity and morality. With the manipulation of the mouth, monstrous beings do not conform to such definitions of humanity and rationality and therefore are subversive forces to human civilisation and authority.

Medieval Travel Writing

In the creation of monstrous beings, it is the facial features, and particularly the mouth, that are often targeted. The mouth is an important part of the body for defining humanity, particularly through speech and the ability to articulate morality and rationality. As Kathryn Perry argues: 'human superiority and uniqueness are asserted through the agency of speech'.[34] Through the manipulation of this vital body part, 'kynde' is disrupted and an unnatural, monstrous being is created. It is the manipulation of the body to create monstrosity that causes 'humans to consider what it means to be Western, what it means to be Christian, and, indeed, what it means to be human'.[35]

Monstrous beings, and their fantastical appearances are reflected by their locations: such beings are found in far-off exotic lands and as such are described in travel literature. In the medieval period, there was an increase in exploratory voyages into the East. With the expansive Mongol Empire extending from China to eastern Europe, there was greater connectivity across continents.[36] This travel literature not only provides information about other peoples, and other cultures, but is full of fantastic beings and practices. As Romedio Schmitz-Esser points out, the inclusion of the fantastical should not allow for such texts

[34] Kathryn Perry, 'Unpicking the Seam: Talking Animals and Reader Pleasure in Early Modern Satire', in *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed. by Erica Fudge (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 23.
[35] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality,* p. 125.
[36] Romedio Schmitz-Esser, 'Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 3: fundamental aspects and conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 1700.

describing voyages to be condemned as completely fictional: such elements were 'an integral part of late-medieval accounts, even first-hand accounts.'[37]

In the manipulation of the body, one important effect is upon the speech or vocalisations of monstrous beings, and this is often a key element that is highlighted as demonstrative of monstrosity, and a consequent lack of civilisation and authority. Speech is an important element of defining humanity, and as Perry asserts, 'Speech is liminal; it marks the threshold of humanity',[38] the alteration of normative speech in monstrous utterances marks such beings as outside of humanity. In *Mandeville's Travels*, there is a description of the Isle of Tracoda where there are monstrous beings who utter sounds akin to the hissing of snakes:

> …an yle þat is clept TRACODA, where the folk of þat contree ben as bestes & vnresonable & duellen in caves … And þei eten flessch of serpentes & þei eten but litiłł & þei speken nought but þei hissen as serpentes don[39]

The first striking aspect of the description in *Mandeville's Travels* is the lack of speech that these monstrous beings possess. Their vocal utterances are like the hissing of snakes, and through this lack of human speech they cannot demonstrate their rational thought, civilisation or claim to equality with humanity. This hissing marks them out as being closer in nature to animals than to humans. There is also the juxtaposition of their diet of snakes and their hissing, implying that what enters their mouth has a direct impact on the noise that emerges from the mouth.[40] In the medieval period 'the moral properties of food were imbricated with its ingestion.'[41] The implication here is that the diet of snakes that these monstrous beings live on has a detrimental effect on their vocalisations which further subordinates them to the supposed superior authority of humanity.

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[37] Schmitz-Esser, 'Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, p. 1701.
[38] Perry, 'Unpicking the Seam', p. 23.
[39] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, pp. 129-130, lines 35-37, 3-5.
[40] Alan S. Montroso, 'Dwelling Underground in *The Book of John Mandeville*: Monstrosity, Disability, Ecology', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, ed. by Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 300.
[41] Laura Kalas Willliams, 'The *Swetenesse* of Confection: A Recipe for Spiritual Health in London, British Library, Additional MS 61823, *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, vol 40, (2018), p. 159.

In the text it is made explicit that these monstrous beings are lacking in rationality: they are described as 'vnreasonable', being without reason. This adjective is juxtaposed with the description of them as 'bestes', as well as the fact that they 'duellen in caves.' There appears to be a direct connection between these three aspects: they are beasts and therefore lack reason; they lack reason because they live in caves, and perhaps they live in caves because they are beasts. Alan S. Montroso argues that 'their bodily deviance corresponds to their ecologies in a way that suggests that their flesh is coterminous with their subterranean environments'[42] The text shows an understanding of the connection between environment, diet, speech and the lack of rationality of these hissing beings.

Their hissing vocalisations further present an allusion to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, the animal who tempted Eve which resulted in Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden. This association with the snake and by association with Eve, highlights the dangerous, subversive nature of women, and therefore the equally dangerous nature of these monstrous beings. The evil power of the snake in the Garden of Eden could be mirrored in these hissing monstrous beings. There are therefore, competing and opposing elements to these hissing beings: they are lacking in speech and consequently in rational thought, but by an association with the snake in the Garden, they embody a potentially dangerous and threatening power.

Further monstrous utterances are made by another set of beings called the Cynocephali, a group of monstrous beings with the heads of dogs. These are some of the most infamous monstrous beings in the medieval period and are recorded by many different writers, although there are varied accounts of their behaviour, society, and even their rationality. As monstrous beings they are particularly complex to define because, in the description by Mandeville they are reasonable and intelligent beings, which under Augustine and Isidore's definitions would define them as human.

The Cynocephali are described briefly in the work of Isidore of Seville:

> The Cynocephali are so called because they have dogs' heads, and their barking indeed reveals that they are rather beasts than humans

[42] Montroso, 'Dwelling Underground in *The Book of John Mandeville*', p. 287.

> [Cynocephali appellantur eo quod canina capita habeant, quosque ipse latratus magis bestias quam homines confitetur][43]

The Cynocephali are described in more detail in *Mandeville's Travels*:

> After þat yle men gon be the see occean be many yles vnto an yle þat is clept NACUMERA þat is a great yle & good & fayr. And […] all the men & women of þat yle han houndes hedes and þei ben clept CANOPHOLOS & þei ben fulle resonable & of gode vnderstondynge, saf þat þei worschipen an ox for here god […]And þei gon alle naked saf a litylle clout þat þei coueren with here knees & hire membres. Þei ben grete folk & wel fyghtynge […] And ȝif þei taken ony man in bataylle anon þei eten him. The kyng of þat yle is fulle riche & fulle myghty & righte deuot after his lawe[…][44]

These monstrous beings are also described by Marco Polo in his travel literature composed in the vernacular, in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (1254-1324):

> The people are without a king and are idolaters, and no better than wild beasts. And I assure you all the men of this island of Angamanain have heads like dogs, and teeth and eyes likewise; in fact, in the face they are all just like big mastiff dogs! They have a quantity of spices; but they are a most cruel generation, and eat everybody they can catch, if not of their own race. They live on flesh and rice and milk, and have fruits different from any of ours. [45]

It is striking, in comparing these three accounts of the Cynocephali, that it is only Isidore that specifically mentions their barking and associates it with revealing their closer affiliation with animals. Isidore's description appears to be taken almost verbatim from Augustine's *De civitate dei*, but interestingly in Augustine's work, the comment about the Cynocephali is followed by Augustine's definition of humanity, 'that is a rational mortal creature, however strange he may appear to our senses',[46] and however unusual their bodily form, or motion, or sound. The definition of humanity should allow for the inclusion of the Cynocephali but

[43] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book XI.iii.15, p. 245; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.iii.15.
[44] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, p. 130, lines 11-25.
[45] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, vol II, ed. and trans. by Henry Yule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 reprint), Book III, Ch. XIII, p. 251.
[46] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, quoted in Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 3-4.

Augustine and Isidore clearly position them as monstrous, bestial, and 'other', due to their physical appearance and barking.

Marco Polo, although not specifically mentioning the vocalisations of the Cynocephali, does provide details of their heads, in particular their teeth and the shape of the head. The implication, through the clear distinction of their dog-like heads, is that this shape would prevent normative human speech. Such speech problems challenge the rationality and intelligence of the Cynocephali. John Mandeville, on the other hand, highlights the fact that these monstrous beings are 'full resonable & of gode vnderstondynge.'[47] This is in direct contrast to the animalistic description provided by Marco Polo, who highlights the cruel, uncivilised aspects of the Cynocephali and their monstrosity. He also focuses on their lack of king, their idolatrous nature, and their habit of eating 'everybody they can catch.' Marco Polo pinpoints several items of concern to Western culture, including social hierarchy and religion. Their lack of a physical human head is mirrored by the lack of a socio-political governing head, and again, through the metaphor of the body politic, this disordered body denotes a disordered society. This disorder is visible through the manipulation of the head and the mouth: the Cynocephali lack rational speech and display frightening monstrous behaviour through eating people. They are as a society without rules, organisation, social hierarchy, or speech, presented as threatening to Western medieval culture.

The description given by John Mandeville is very different from this and presents the Cynocephali as intelligent, rational, and contained in an ordered social structure, despite their physical differences. Their positive attributes are highlighted, and they are not simply placed as inferior beings to humans. Their valour in battle is praised, and in direct opposition to the work of Marco Polo, they are described as having a kingly leader. They are therefore presented as being an almost 'normal' group of monstrous beings. Mandeville is also the only authority cited here that highlights the presence of gender, specifying that there are both 'men & women'.[48] This is one of the few times where monstrous beings are assigned genders, and particularly defined as having two genders within the social group, rather than the more common idea of unidentified or ungendered beings, such as the hissing monstrous beings.

[47] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, p. 130, lines 15-16.
[48] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, p. 130, line 14.

Such a description indicates a closer association with humanity than either Isidore of Seville or Marco Polo would allow. Furthermore, in a similar way to the human social and biological structure that presents men as the stronger, more perfect creation, Mandeville's description proceeds to describe the impressive 'masculine' traits of the Cynocephali, but not any information on the female members. He praises the bravery of these monstrous beings but the females 'are invisible in Mandeville's account of a regulated homosocial society'.[49] Specific genders are not always visible in the descriptions of monstrous beings which perhaps deliberately avoids questions of reproduction, or it may highlight the further monstrous idea that for the medieval viewer, these beings are so fantastical and Other that their gender is impossible to define with accuracy.[50]

The Cynocephali are beings that seem to obey a human social structure, with a king at the top, which, in the body politic metaphor, is represented by the head. However, with the altered physicality of their heads the strength of the society of the Cynocephali is called into question. Their monstrous heads therefore imply that there may be something monstrous about the society, and specifically the authority at the head of that society. Equally, the eyes, ears and mouth are representative of the 'judges and governors of provinces',[51] and with the Cynocephali, these body parts have been manipulated into something bestial, and therefore the judgment within the social structure is also manipulated and perhaps bestialised.

The Cynocephali are one of the groups of monstrous beings with the most varied descriptions, and their appearance across genre shows the invasiveness of monstrous beings. The Cynocephali, and other hybrid monstrous beings, or beings with a recognisably human physicality, highlight the idea that Cohen termed 'intimate strangers'.[52] It is the containment

[49] Sarah Salih, 'Idols and Simulacra: Paganity, Hybridity and Representation in *Mandeville's Travels*', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages* ed. by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 129.
[50] Defining gender among monstrous beings is often difficult, and a similar confusion occurs in relation to intersex people: hermaphrodites. See Leah de Vun, The Shape of Sex: Nonbinary Gender from Genesis to the Renaissance (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021)*;* Eva Hayward, "More Lessons from a Starfish: Prefixial Flesh and Transspeciated Selves," Women's Studies Quarterly 36 (2008): 64-85; Stacy Alaimo, Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010) and Stacy Alaimo, "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature," in Material Feminisms, eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008): 237-264.
[51] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus.* Book V, ch.2, p. 67.
[52] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. xi. This is the title of Cohen's introduction but is referred to throughout his work.

within one being of something 'strangely foreign', and yet 'disturbingly familiar',[53] which makes such beings difficult to categorise and accurately place outside of human society. They 'embody cultural tensions that go beyond the idea of monster as uninhabitable, unintelligent 'Other'.'[54] Such monstrous beings 'show the instability of the categories and organizational principles that drive human societies',[55] and through this they are fearsome forces that may threaten those human societies and the authority not only of such societies over monstrous beings, but also the authority figures within society.

Cynocephali have many varied descriptions, from their bestial physical appearance and vocal utterances that make them closer in nature to animals than humans, to their intelligence, rationality and social order. There is a blurred line between the human and the monstrous within these descriptions of the Cynocephali, and this blurring is further exacerbated by the move of these beings into religious literature and the popularity of Saint Christopher Cynocephalus. The movement of the monstrous being from the genre of travel literature into that of hagiography illustrates an interesting bridge and demonstrates that medieval culture allowed such movement between discourses. They are not separate entities but, just as the monstrous beings resist categorisation and threaten the boundaries and functioning of human society so too do they perform the same function between genres, refusing to be categorised into one genre, spilling from the fantastical travel literature into the more serious hagiographical literature. Scott Bruce argues that the representation of Saint Christopher as a Cynocephalus demonstrates the universality of Christianity and its ability to influence people across the world.[56]

Saint Christopher (d. circa 250AD), in the early medieval period, was depicted as a cynocephalus, one of the dog-headed beings. Although the origin of the legend of Saint Christopher Cynocephalus is in the early medieval period, it was a concept that was repeated

[53] Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 180.
[54] Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing the Monstrous', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages* ed. by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 32.
[55] Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010), p. 6.
[56] Weinreich, 'How a Monster Means', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, pp. 182-183.

throughout the Middle Ages.[57] The *Old English Martyrology*, a ninth century work detailing saints' lives alongside other non-hagiographical information, states:

> He had the head of a dog, his locks were exceedingly thick, his eyes shone as brightly as the morning-star, and his teeth were as sharp as a boar's tusk. In his heart he believed in God, but he could not speak like a man. When he prayed to God to give him human speech, a man in a white robe stood near him and breathed into his mouth; after that he could speak like a man.[58]

The *Passio* (BHL1766) also states that he was 'by origin one of the dog-like ones [genere Canineorum]'.[59] His monstrous visage is highlighted and repeated, such as 'terrifying was his aspect [mirabilia, quae adhuc nullus potuit videre],[60] to confirm that St. Christopher is one formed against 'kynde', which then makes his miracles and conversions of many people all the more marvellous.

In the *Old English Martyrology*, it is striking that the central part of this story is focussed on St. Christopher's ability, through God, to 'speak like a man'. As Sarah Salih has pointed out in investigating different versions of the legend of St. Christopher, sometimes his conversion to Christianity is marked by 'an acquisition of language, so that 'the horror of his monstrosity [is] dispelled'.'[61] St. Christopher may still have the appearance of a Cynocephalus, but he no longer produces the barking vocalisations that mark him as truly monstrous: he now communicates with human language. With this acquisition of language, Saint Christopher moves away from the fleshier, feminised monstrous beings, to a spiritual, masculinised being.

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[57] Weinreich notes, and uses a fifteenth-century Irish hagiographical source, the *Leabhar Breac*, referencing 'The Passion of St. Christopher', trans. J. Fraser, *Revue Celtique*, 34 (1913): 309-325.
[58] 'The Life of Saint Christopher' translated by Susan M Kim, in *Primary Sources on Monsters: Demonstrare,* Volume 2, edited by Asa Simon Mittman and Marcus Hensel (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), p. 103.
[59] Translation by Spencer J Weinreich, 'How a Monster Means', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, p. 184; Latin taken from 'Passio ex MS. nostro membranaceo Fuldensi satis antique, auctore anonymo conscripta', in *Acta Sanctorum Julii, ex Latinis & Graecis, aliarumque gentium Monumentis, servata primigenia veterum Scriptorum phrasi, Collecta, Digesta, Commentariisque & Observationibus Illustrata a Joanne Bapt. Sollerio, Joanne Pinio, Guilielmo Cupero, Petro Boschio, e Societate Jesu Presbyteris Theologis. Tomus VI, quo dies vicesimus quintus, vicesimus sextus, vicesimus septimus & vigesimus octavus continentur, cum Tractatu praeliminari historico-chronologico De Liturgia Mozarabica auctore Joanne Pinio.* (Antwerp: Jacobus du Moulin, 1729), 146-149.
[60] Translation by Spencer J Weinreich, 'How a Monster Means', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, p. 184; Latin taken from 'Passio ex MS. nostro membranaceo Fuldensi satis antique, auctore anonymo conscripta', in *Acta Sanctorum,* 146-149.
[61] Sarah Salih, 'Idols and Simulacra: Paganity, Hybridity and Representation in *Mandeville's Travels*', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages* ed. by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 128. Salih quotes from Lionarons, 'From Monster to Martyr: the Old English legend of Saint Christopher', in *Marvels, Monsters and Miracles*, pp. 167-82.

The references to speech in this example use the phrase to 'speak like a man', and Saint Christopher first of all cannot do this and then is divinely gifted it. This may refer both to his gendered physicality, his acquisition of a vital human quality, and the authority that he now wields through his speech. Also, his 'masculinity', and speech, implies an affinity with humanity, and reduces his fearsome status as a potentially invasive and subversive force for human society, to a participant within that society.

Despite the conversion of Saint Christopher and his acquisition of human speech, most of his miracles and conversions occur through the sight of him rather than the sound. 'It is the saint's body that does the preaching', and therefore it is the monstrous part of him rather than the human that has the positive, spiritual impact. His conversion may have been signified by a reduction in his monstrous features, but his impact as an instrument of God and the Christian faith is entirely dependent on his monstrous nature. St Christopher Cynocephalus shows a positive purpose of a monstrous being, yet one that required alterations, in the form of human speech, to be able to be included within human society. His speech, no longer the barking vocalisations described by Isidore, allows for a lessening of his monstrosity, without altering his physical appearance, and his authority is increased with the removal of his feminised monstrosity.

Excluding the miraculous St Christopher, the physicality of the Cynocephali determines the animalistic vocalisations that they produce, and the combination of the dog head and barking designates them as monstrous beings, and therefore threatening to the 'natural' human society, and is potentially subversive of human authority. With other monstrous beings, it is not the vocalisations that they produce that are monstrous, but the physicality of their facial features that prevents any kind of vocal utterance. The Blemmyae, evident in the opening quotation and image are one of these monstrous races. The Blemmyae are monstrous beings with their faces in their chests, believed to live in Libya. They were not new and unknown monstrous beings, providing new threats to human society; they had been detailed by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies*:

> People believe that the Blemmyans in Libya are born as trunks without heads, and having their mouth and eyes in their chest, and that another race is born without necks and having their eyes in their shoulders.

> [Blemmyas in Libya credunt truncus sine capite nasci, et os et oculos habere in pectore. Alios sine cervicibus gigni, oculos habentes in humeris][62]

The most notable feature, both in the description and the image, is that these monstrous beings are without heads. This is of importance because the head is of great symbolic, and physical value, being at the pinnacle of the human body and governing it.[63] Jack Hartnell argues that these beings 'were marked out as distinctly unhuman: monstrous, physically inferior creatures, robbed of the body's primary quarter'.[64] This removal of the head and placement of the facial features in the chest raises the question of whether they are able to articulate, and more importantly whether they are possessed of human speech. The question is never answered as the description given by Mandeville lacks any mention of their vocalisations. The absence of a head is the feature that Mandeville's description, and other descriptions focus upon. The work of Augustine, Isidore of Seville, and the *Wonders of the East*, a short text appearing in several English manuscripts between the eleventh and twelfth centuries,[65] all contain brief descriptions of these monstrous beings and all focus of the lack of head and placement of the facial features. Augustine's description is brief, outlining the placement of the facial features and nothing else: 'Certain men without necks have their eyes in the shoulders'.[66] Isidore makes very similar observations, but he explicitly highlights the absence of any head: 'People believe that the Blemmyans in Libya are born as trunks without heads, and having their mouth and eyes in their chest' [Blemmyas in Libya credunt truncus sine capite nasci, et os et oculos habere in pectore.][67] The *Wonders of the East*, again follows the same physical tropes as other descriptions but adds a little more: 'Then there are other islands south from Brixontes on which exist people without heads. They have their eyes and mouth

[62] English translation taken from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), Vol 2, XI.iii.18, p. 245; Latin from *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* (Oxonii: e Typographeo Carendoniano, 1911), Vol 2, XI.iii.18.
[63] Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: making monsters in Medieval art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 47.
[64] Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Profile Books, 2018), p. 32.
[65] Asa Simon Mittman '*The Wonders of the East'*, in *Primary Sources on Monsters: Demonstrare,* Volume 2, edited by Asa Simon Mittman and Marcus Hensel (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), p. 67.
[66] 'St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* – Selections (XVI. vii-ix; XXI. vii-viii)' Translated by Gwendolyne Knight, in *Primary Sources on Monsters: Demonstrare,* Volume 2, edited by Asa Simon Mittman and Marcus Hensel (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018), p. 56.
[67] English translation taken from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), Vol 2, XI.iii.18, p. 245; Latin from *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* (Oxonii: e Typographeo Carendoniano, 1911), Vol 2, XI.iii.18.

on their breasts. They are eight feet tall and eight feet broad'.[68] In this final description the monstrosity of the Blemmyae is not restricted only to the absence of a head but extends to the enormous proportions of their bodies.

The head is also a vital part of the body, and, in the twelfth century *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury (1115/1120-1180), which developed the popular body politic metaphor, the parts of the body were likened to the structure of the political hierarchy:

> 'The position of the head in the republic is occupied, however, by a prince subject only to God and to those who act in His place on earth, inasmuch as in the human body the head is stimulated and ruled by the soul. The place of the heart is occupied by the senate, from which proceeds the beginning of good and bad works. The duties of the ears, eyes and mouth are claimed by the judges and governors of provinces.'[69]

In this body politic metaphor, the human head is the prince of the body, and it is consequently gendered masculine. The body, and by the gendering of the body politic, the masculine body is ordered, controlled and works to a strict hierarchy, however with the Blemmyae this ordered hierarchical body has been disfigured and its functionality is flawed. The superior part of the body is missing, and its sensory functions are questionable. Furthermore, through the implicit feminisation of monstrous beings, their fleshy, uncontrollable bodies, the anatomy of the Blemmyae represents a feminine subversion of the controlled and ordered masculine body politic.

Furthermore, as the seat of the soul, the lack of a head in the Blemmyae questions whether these monstrous beings actually have a soul. The location of the soul within the head, and more specifically within the brain, was first advocated by Plato in the fourth century BC but was reiterated by later authors including Galen (129-c.210) and Avicenna (980-1037).[70] An alternative theory placed the soul within the heart. Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272) within his encyclopaedic work, *De proprietatibus rerum*, explained the placement and

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[68] '*The Wonders of the East'*, Translated by Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, in *Primary Sources on Monsters: Demonstrare,* p. 68.
[69] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus. Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), Book V, ch.2, p. 67.
[70] Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, p. 34.

purpose of the soul: 'þe soule abidinge in þe middle of þe herte withoute spredinge of hitself ȝiueþ lif to alle þe body and gouerneþ and ruleþ meuynges of alle þe limes'.[71] Bartholomew makes a further interesting point that 'it is iknowe þat þey þe soule be oned to a body, hit may noȝt be i-oned to al maner a body but onlich to a kindeliche body þat haþ lymes and is first kyndeliche disposed to fonge a resonable soule'.[72] Bartholomew here defines a body with a soul as being one that is natural, 'kynde', and by association a body that is formed in opposition to kynde, such as these monstrous beings, are not disposed to have a soul. Chapter five of the third book of Bartholomew's work links together the soul, 'kynde', and divine creations because, 'By þe soule man is þe image of God'.[73] This very idea is an echo of the work of Isidore of Seville that 'the human being, due to his mind, is said to be the image of God' [homo secundum mentem imago Dei dicitur], and that this is 'adjoined to the soul' [adiuncta sunt animae].[74] The very presence of the soul is what defines humans in relation to the divine and is key to defining them as a superior species. Without a soul these monstrous beings are not in equality with humans, and therefore humans can exert a level of authority over monstrous beings: they possess a soul and are made in the image of God.

The significance of the head as one potential location of the soul, and as governing the body, means, as Debra Higgs Strickland argues, 'it was the part of the body most often deformed in order to express monstrosity', and as shown in many examples here it is the mouth that is chiefly manipulated in pursuit of monstrosity.[75] In the deformation of the Blemmyae anatomy the facial features are forced lower down the body. This undermines the medieval model of the human as a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm of the universe, which aligns the head with the heavens and man's upright posture, which places the head at the top, with vision and intellect, in a close association with the Divine.[76] For the Blemmyae the facial features are forced lower down the body, further from Heaven, and God, as well as physically closer to both the genitals and the ground. Through moving lower down the body, the association of the mouth with the 'offensive lower body', is made more explicit as it physically moves

[71] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, Volume 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 92, lines 3-6.
[72] *On the Properties of Things,* p. 92, lines 11-14.
[73] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 94, line 30.
[74] Isidore of Seville, Book XI.i.12, p. 231; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.i.12.
[75] Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews*, p. 47.
[76] Walter, *Middle English Mouths,* pp. 47-51.

closer to the genitals, and further undermines the lack of authority and rationality of these monstrous beings.[77] The lack of head displayed by these Blemmyae, therefore calls into question their ability to control their bodies, as well as whether they have a soul; are capable of salvation; are able to function within moral boundaries, or indeed whether they are sufficiently developed to work within a structured hierarchical social formation.

Furthermore, with their facial features in their chest it is unclear how the Blemmyae will eat or speak. This difficulty with oral functionality is directly linked to rationality and understanding of morality, which are both expressed through the mouth in speech. Without the ability to express rationality, they are unable to be classified alongside humanity and their existence poses a potentially threatening and subversive force for human society which is governed by the rationality and human quality of speech. The movement of the mouth and lack of head highlights the subversive, potentially threatening nature of these monstrous beings through a direct comparison with human oral functionality.

The implication is that the Blemmyae are not rational, moral, or thinking beings, and that their feminisation presents them as potential threats to human, male-oriented civilisation. In medieval philosophy, stemming from classical and patristic writing, there were 'equations between femininity and carnality, and between masculinity and the mind or spirit…to justify the subordination of women to men.'[78] This is not a strict divide in medieval philosophy, but rather, these 'gendered constructs are grounded in the broad notions of gender differentiation…they are predicated of the other sex as well…Thus "manly" stands for a set of qualities derived from the notion of an ideal natural man.'[79] These monstrous beings, which are without heads, therefore appear to lack a brain, intelligence and therefore the higher spiritual nature of men, and masculinity. They seem to lean more towards the fleshy nature of women and the feminine: their implicit feminine qualities are juxtaposed with the superiority of masculinity and the associated superiority of humanity.

[77] Walter, *Middle English Mouths,* p. 47.
[78] Sarah Kay, 'Women's body of knowledge: epistemology and misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose*', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, edited by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), (211-235), p. 211.
[79] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages,* p. 205.

In opposition to the description by Mandeville, the image in British Library, Harley MS 3954 ascribes gender to these beings, even depicting the figure on the left as male and therefore suggesting his capability of reproducing. According to Dana Oswald, a creature that is capable of reproduction is a great threat because to 'possess a frightening body is terrifying, but to use that body to make more monsters is far more dangerous'.[80] It is this ability to reproduce, to grow as a social community, potentially grow economically and invade the boundaries of the human world that is potentially undermining for human authority.[81] The invasive, undermining quality of these reproductive monstrous beings is distilled by Oswald into the 'idea that bodies are no longer under control'.[82] Controllability, and particularly the lack of control, is a central theme in descriptions of ugliness, as seen in Chapter Two. The inability of monstrous beings, or even the uncertainty of their ability, to function and to have control over their bodies; to distinguish right from wrong, carries with it a sense of fear of what these beings are capable of. This uncertainty, highlighted by their altered physiognomy with the placement of the mouth in the chest, inspires, according to Richard Godden and Asa Mittman, 'simultaneous repulsion and attraction'[83]; they frighten, threaten the boundaries of society, and defy the norms of bodily construction, but at the same time they fascinate, potentially amuse, and question the very definition of humanity, authority, and salvation. In the imagery of the Blemmyae, their overall physicality is recognisably human, and this shows both a projection of 'natural' humans onto these beings, as well as being able to clearly distinguish how they differ from humans. Such monstrous beings reflect 'broader medieval ideas of what a 'normal' body should be' and 'remind humans of what it means to be human'.[84] Monstrous beings therefore appear to fulfil, extend, and explode the defining features of human ugliness, and it is the altered placement of the mouth that denies them a definition as human Therefore, not only are such beings ill-formed and 'of cursed kynde', as well as threatening to the boundaries of human society, but they are ugly, or in Mandeville's words, 'of foul stature'. [85]

[80] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality,* p. 12.
[81] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality,* p. 12.
[82] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality,* p. 13.
[83] Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman, 'Embodied Difference: Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman', in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, ed. by Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 5.
[84] Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, p. 31; Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality*, p. 3.
[85] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, p. 133, lines 33-34.

In a similar way to the Blemmyae, the physicality of the 'Pygmeyes', casts doubt on their vocalisations and consequently their morality and rationality:

> And in anoþer yle þer ben littyll folk as dwergħes & þei ben to so meche as the PYGMEYES & þei han no mouth, but in stede of hire mouth þei han a lyttyll round hole. And whan þei schull eten or drynken þei taken þorgh a pipe or a penne or such a þing and sowken it in, for þei han no tonge & þerfore þei speke not, but þei malen a maner of hissynge as a nedder doth & þei maken signes on to anoþer as monkes don, be the whiche euery of hem vnderstondeth oþer[86]

The Pygmeyes lack a mouth, or what the author of *Mandeville's Travels* would describe as a mouth, as well as a tongue. Therefore, they lack the physical ability to communicate through speech and even to eat their food properly: they must suck their food in. This image, and the verb 'sowken', thereby infantilises the Pygmeyes and reduces them to babies lacking in speech, knowledge or moral understanding, and so places the Pygmeyes as socially and authoritatively inferior to human civilisation. This description bears a striking resemblance to a set of monstrous beings outlined by Isidore of Seville:

> …some with mouths grown shut, taking in nourishment only through a small opening by means of hollow straws. Some are said to have no tongues, using nods or gestures in place of words.
>
> [Aliis concreta ora esse, modico tantum foramine calamis avenarum pastus haurientes. Nonnulli sine linguis esse dicuntur, invicem sermonis utentes nutum sive motum.] [87]

The description in *Mandeville's Travels* implies a level of understanding and communication between these beings although it is clearly inferior to the communication of humanity. They produce a hissing sound, in a similar fashion to the hissing beings on the Isle of Tracoda, and although there does not appear to be an environmental or dietary association for the Pygmeyes, there is once again a connection with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. These are therefore more monstrous beings that directly link with The Fall, with the subversion of human social authority, and with dangerous femininity. Furthermore, for these beings that use

[86] *Mandeville's Travels*, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, p. 134, lines 9-17.
[87] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book XI.iii.18, p. 245; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.iii.18.

gestures to communicate, there is a sense that they confuse or unbalance the traditional hierarchy of the microcosm: the body. If the hierarchy of their body is unbalanced, and the correct functioning of all parts of the body is disorganised then the functioning of the body as a whole is questionable, as well as the functioning of the society that their body politic implies.[88]

The travel writings explored so far have all been, supposedly, to distant lands, often the East, where the exotic, bizarre and monstrous is expected to reside: on the edges of the known world; far away from Western society. Mary Kate Hurley argues that monsters highlight the 'presence of difference within or between communities and the threat that such differences pose', and the placement of such beings 'at the far reaches of the world, shrouded in shadow and mystery, imply the exile such difference imposes'.[89] These monstrous beings inhabit the edges of the world, but they also inhabit the edges of the texts they illustrate and the edges of the maps: they are marginalised both in written literature and in art. Their placement in exotic lands pushes the threat they pose to as great a distance as possible and this is reflected most clearly in *mappa mundae*, where they are drawn inhabiting the edges of the world. One famous example is the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*, produced around the year 1300, on which are depicted several of the monstrous beings discussed in the travel literature. The Blemmyae and Troglodytes are both depicted on the far right of the map, while the Cynocephali are on the far left. They are visually and spatially exiled to the furthest reaches of the map, and in their marginalisation they take with them their monstrous bodies and behaviours.

[88] Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about physical impairment during the high Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 52.
[89] Mary Kate Hurley, 'Monsters', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 2: fundamental aspects and conditions of the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 1167.

Fig 2. Hereford *Mappa Mundi*, with red circles highlighting the Troglodytes, Blemmyae and Cynocephali on the margins of the map. < https://www.themappamundi.co.uk/mappa-mundi/ >

Fig 3. Troglodytes on the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*

Fig 4. Cynocephali on the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*

Fig 5. Blemmyae on the Hereford *Mappa Mundi*

The travel writing so far explored and the *mappa mundae* show monstrous beings located on in far-flung exotic places however not all such beings are far away: some are closer than expected. Despite their proximity, they exhibit physical differences, especially of the mouth which highlights their inferiority to humanity through the lack of an ability to articulate morality, rationality and understanding. Gerald of Wales, (c. 1145-1223) claims to have found many aberrations of nature in his *The History and Topography of Ireland*, composed in the late twelfth century following two visits to Ireland.[90] One such monstrous being is a hybrid of human and animal and therefore causes confusion over its status as man or beast. This is the ox-man, which is confusingly described as 'a man that was half an ox, and an ox that was half a man'.[91] It appears that Gerald is unsure which part of this being is dominant: whether it is more man or more beast. Gerald immediately makes the point that 'an extraordinary man was

[90] 'Introduction', in Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, Translated with an Introduction by John J. O'Meara London: Penguin, 1982), pp. 13-14.
[91] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 74.

seen – if indeed it be right to call him a man'.[92] Despite the uncertainty of human or beast, it is clear that the ox-man is gendered as masculine. He, therefore, like the Cynocephali, has a greater affinity to humankind than ungendered monstrous beings, and this gendering, particularly of a hybrid being, blurs the boundary between the monstrous and the human. The physical description highlights the hybrid nature of the ox-man and the difficulty of separating the man from the ox:

> He had all the parts of the human body except the extremities which were those of an ox. From the joinings of the hands with the arms and the feet with the legs, he had the hooves the same as an ox…His face was flat as far as his mouth…He could not speak at all; he could only low[93]

It appears from this description that Gerald considers all human aspects of this being to be physically male, but not attractively so. For example, he has a face, but it is all flat, and Gerald also within the description refers to the being as 'disfigured with baldness'.[94] The ox-man is highlighting a key aspect of descriptions of human ugliness through lacking harmony of his body parts, significantly because they are belonging to two different species. As with other descriptions of monstrous beings the ox-man is an extension of the style of describing ugliness within humans.

There is a further significant problem that Gerald highlights which is the ox-man's vocalisations: 'he could only low'. Such bestial vocalisations, as with other more exotic monstrous beings questions the rationality and morality of this monstrous being which crosses between the human and animal world. The ox-man cannot communicate effectively within the human society in which he is placed because of the hybridised body, and the manipulation of the mouth to produce only bestial vocalisations. The failure to produce speech undermines the masculine gendering assigned to the ox-man, which is further obscured by his hybrid nature. This hybridisation is a clear disruption of 'kynde' as the ox-man is neither completely human nor completely animal, and this contravention of nature, particularly one so close to Western human society is potentially threatening to the order of that society.

[92] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 73.
[93] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 73.
[94] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 73.

Of significant threat is the habitation of such a being not only within Western human society but within a courtly setting. The ox-man 'attended the court of Maurice', referring to 'Maurice fitzGerald', (d. 1176), a prominent man in the 1176 conquest of Ireland who subsequently settled in Ireland.[95] It is not explicitly made clear whether this being was included into courtly society as a gesture of belonging or as a novelty, however he 'came to dinner every day and, using his cleft hooves as hands, placed in his mouth whatever was given him to eat'.[96] It would appear that the ox-man, despite his monstrous appearance and bestial vocalisations, possessed good table manners, however this description still demonstrates a disruption of 'kynde': an ox should not use his hooves as hands to feed himself. These two aspects of human daily life associated with the mouth, eating and speaking, have been manipulated and disrupted to highlight a being that is contrary to nature and therefore of potential threat to 'natural' Western human society. This manipulation and disruption of the mouth creates and denotes a creation of 'cursed kynde', a creation considered to be against nature and therefore a potential threat to the structured human social hierarchy.

The Mouth of Hell

A manipulation of the mouth is also used in the iconography of Hell in the Christian Middle Ages. Both artistic and textual representations highlight the fear medieval people had of entering such a place, as well as exemplifying the cultural attitude towards sin, crime, and justice.[97] It is set up in direct opposition to Heaven, whereby Heaven is 'up', and Hell is 'down', which may be mirrored in the human body and body politic metaphor whereby the upper parts of the body are higher up both physically and within the social and political structure. This binary opposition is extended with ideas of order and harmony represented by Heaven in direct contrast to the disorder of Hell. It is a similar binary opposition presented by

[95] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, p. 73; Dr. Bertie George Charles, 'Fitzgerald, Maurice (d. 1176) – one of the conquerors of Ireland', *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* < https://biography.wales/article/s-FITZ-MAU-1176> [accessed 21-02-2022].
[96] Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, pp. 73-74.
[97] Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: The British Museum Press, 1996), p. 178.

beauty in contrast to ugliness, as seen in Chapter Two, and indicates, according to Paul Binski, an 'aesthetic principle in medieval art'.[98]

The most common medieval expression of the entrance to Hell is that it is a gaping mouth. The imagery of the mouth of Hell developed in the fourteenth century to include 'glaring eyes, wide jaws, and sharp teeth'.[99] Sandy Bardsley argues, in respect of this representation, that 'everyone understood the metaphor: the mouth could be the site of evil, an entrance to Hell, just as speech could be a form of sin'.[100] Furthermore, just as the monstrous beings of travel literature highlighted cultural anxieties of threats to social structure and order, so too did the mouth of Hell 'because it resonated with deep-seated fears and anxieties over sin, decay, and the body'.[101] The image of the mouth of Hell focussing on its large teeth and fangs connects it to medieval iconography of the devil: Marie-Christine Pouchelle argues that 'Hell is the 'evil belly'…; there, man is devoured, dissolved and torn apart', and that 'the fall of the soul is represented as bodily annihilation and loss of identity'.[102] However, the mouth could also be a site of salvation, through prayer, confession and reception of the Eucharist.[103] The mouth, within Christianity, clearly contains both the means for salvation and damnation but the imagery associated with damnation is bestial, involving large teeth, an image connected with themes of devouring and consumption. This close association with consumption and eating highlights, as with descriptions of monstrous beings, an underlying femininity, one aspect of which is believed to be carnality. Femininity and eating are further associated with Eve eating the apple in the Garden of Eden: the dangerous, corrupting, and frightening nature of women, through Eve, subliminally runs through images of the mouth of Hell.

[98] Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 172.
[99] Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 26.
[100] Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues*, p. 26.
[101] Rachel Danford 'Cast Not to the Beasts the Souls That Confess You: Images of mouths at the Cathedral of St. Lazare at Autun', *Rutgers Art Review*, 29 (2013), p. 11.
[102] Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages*, translated by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 171.
[103] For more see Danford 'Cast Not to the Beasts the Souls That Confess You: Images of mouths at the Cathedral of St. Lazare at Autun', pp. 4-21; Walter, *Middle English Mouths*; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The religious significance of food to medieval women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987).

This connection between Hell, death, and eating, and by association femininity, was not only an artistic one, but also, according to Isidore of Seville, an etymological one:

> Death (*mors*) is so called, because it is bitter (*amarus*), or by derivation from Mars, who is the author of death; [or else, death is derived from the bite (*morsus*) of the first human, because when he bit the fruit of the forbidden tree, he incurred death]
>
> [Mors dicta, quod sit amara, vel a Marte, qui est effector mortium [sive mors a morsu hominis primi, quod vetitae arboris pomum mordens mortem incurrit].] [104]

There is not only an etymological link between death and biting, but also a biblical link with the entrance of death into the world through the biting of the fruit in the Garden of Eden. The biblical connection is also visible in a number of Hell-mouth images which take their inspiration from the Leviathan in the book of Job.[105] In the book of Job, the Leviathan is described in this way:

> Who are open the gates of his mouth? Terror dwells in those rows of teeth! ... From his mouth come fiery torches, sparks of fire fly out of it. His nostrils belch smoke like a cauldron boiling on the fire. His breath could kindle coals, so hot a flame issues from his mouth.[106]

Such frightening images of the mouth of Hell are often located in literary works, including books of hours, psalters, and as illustrations for the book of Apocalypse. Much of the primary evidence for this part of the chapter is pictorial, and shows images taken from medieval books of hours, as well as large painted images contained within churches. The audience for the images in books of Hours would be the wealthy elite of society as commissioning such texts with illustrations would be expensive. However, the audience for the illustrations within medieval churches would be more universal: visible to all levels of society regardless of status, wealth, or education. Both sets of images focus on the mouth, particularly a bestial mouth as the entrance to Hell, with large, ferocious teeth. Despite the difference in the intended audience of these images there is a uniformity in the visual tropes employed to

[104] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book XI.ii.31, p. 243; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay,* Vol 2, XI.ii.31.
[105] Danford 'Cast Not to the Beasts the Souls That Confess You,' p. 9.
[106] 'Book of Job', 41:6, 11-13 *Jerusalem Bible*, Popular Edition, ed. by Alexander Jones (London: Darton, Longman and Todd: 1974).

depict the mouth of Hell and the ubiquity of such images suggests a wide dissemination of these ideas.

Images of the mouth of Hell are often found in books of hours, and the following three images are taken from fifteenth-century examples. Each of these books belonged to wealthy individuals and therefore have a narrow audience of wealthy, learned people, however as the later examples demonstrate, the same images appear in churches across the medieval West. Therefore, these illustrations represent iconographical examples that feature in myriad cultural locations in the Middle Ages. The inclusion of such images within these texts demonstrates the importance of the idea of the mouth of Hell, particularly within Last Judgement imagery. Although each image of the mouth of Hell is distinctly different, they all contain some elements of continuity. They are all beasts; they all possess an impressive array of teeth, including fangs, and they all have fire issuing from their mouths, as in the description of the Leviathan, a ferocious sea serpent in the Old Testament, symbolic of an enemy. This continuity makes them instantly recognisable as images of the mouth of Hell.

Fig 6. *Bedford Hours*, British Library, Additional MS 18850, f. 157r

The first image is taken from the Bedford Hours (c. 1410-1430), a text commissioned for John duke of Bedford, and later presented to the young King Henry VI. The image is from the beginning of the Office of the Dead, and the main picture is of the Last Judgement. This visual depiction clearly shows the opposition of Heaven and Hell through the concept of Heaven being 'up', and Hell being 'down'. This binary opposition has some connection with the body politic metaphor, whereby the higher parts of the body represent parts of society with more authority and powers of judgment while the lower parts of the body represent less influential parts of society. There is a further reflection of the body as a microcosm influenced by the macrocosm, with the human posture demonstrating a closer affinity with Heaven, as well as the senses also being closely associated with Heaven and the Divine. Within this

microcosm, the mouth, being a sense organ high up the body and therefore close to Heaven, is then used and manipulated into a bestial mouth, used in the image of Hell, and therefore as far away from Heaven as it is possible to be. The mouth as being both physically close to Heaven and, in bestial form, the entrance to Hell: both high and low, may also be reflected in the understanding of women's bodies as having two mouths.[107] These two mouths, the physical mouth on the face, and the vagina, is often used to show women as gossips and more dangerously as devouring men during intercourse.[108] The placement of Hell, a large mouth with ferocious teeth to devour sinners is very interestingly reflected by the idea of the *vagina dentata*, the tooth-filled female genitals ready to 'devour' men during sex.

The image of the *vagina dentata*, encapsulates the 'severe castration anxiety among medieval men', highlighting the dangerous nature of women.[109] It is an image that is prevalent from the Classical period, through the Middle Ages, intertwining with mythology and folklore, and remaining present into the modern period as well.[110] Such fear of the female genitals is expressed in a passage from *De secretis mulierum (On the secrets of women)* an educational gynaecological work composed in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. In it is stated: 'For when men have sexual intercourse with these women it sometimes happens that they suffer a large wound and a serious infection of the penis because of iron that has been placed in the vagina, for some women or harlots are instructed in this and other ill deeds' [Ut cum vir est in coitu cum ipsis: accidit quandoque viris magna lesio et gravis infectio ex infecctione membri virilis per ferrum appositum per eas. prout quedam mulieres vel meretrices docte sunt in illa nequitia et in aliis similibus].[111] It is a fear that enters Christian imagery, being referenced in the mouth of Hell, and even, in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*, an image of the universe written in the first half of the twelfth century, as the Antichrist attacking Ecclesia, the Mother Church (see fig. 7).[112] This image, produced early in the

[107] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages*, p. 183.
[108] Miller, 'Monstrous Sexuality: Variations on the *Vagina Dentata*', pp. 311-328.
[109] Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*, p. 251.
[110] Miller, 'Monstrous Sexuality: Variations on the *Vagina Dentata*', pp. 3111-328; Solimar Otero, '"Fearing our Mothers": An overview of psychoanalytic theories concerning he *vagina dentata* motif', *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 56.3, (1996), pp. 269-288.
[111] Helen Rodnite Lemay, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 88, quoted in Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body*, pp. 58-59, 161 n. 21.
[112] For more work on Hildegard of Bingend's *Scivias* and the image of the Antichrist see Richard K. Emmerson, 'The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*: Image, Word, Commentary, and Visionary

period covered by this thesis, encapsulates the idea of the *vagina dentata*, a fearsome force that lurks deep within a woman's body, generally hidden from view, that may strike at any time. The image in *Scivias* demonstrates how ideas that appear in medical literature infiltrate other areas of medieval culture, here entering the world of religion. Even in its altered genre, the *vagina dentata* represents a fearsome, dangerous, attacking presence, in this instance appearing as the antichrist attacking *Ecclesia*, the Church, from within, rather than the more usual imagery of an attack on the Church from without, such as with the dragon (Satan) in the apocalyptic visions detailed in the Book of Revelation.[113] Not only does the monstrous head bare its teeth, but the legs of Ecclesia also appear to be torn and bleeding as if physically attacked by the monstrous head. Here the *vagina dentata* is not only a representation, or a metaphor, but is a physical, violent entity not only appearing in place of the female genitals to attack outwards, but actively attacking the body, its host, in this case, the Church. The *vagina dentata* remains a symbol of fear not only of women and the unknown interiority of the vagina, but of unknown evils more generally, including sin, the attacks of the antichrist, and the mouth of Hell.

Experience', *Gesta*, 41.2 (2002), pp. 95-110; Miller, 'Monstrous Sexuality: Variations on the *Vagina Dentata*', pp. 3111-328.

[113] Emmerson, 'The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias',* p. 98; 'The Book of Revelation 12: 1-9, *Jerusalem Bible*.

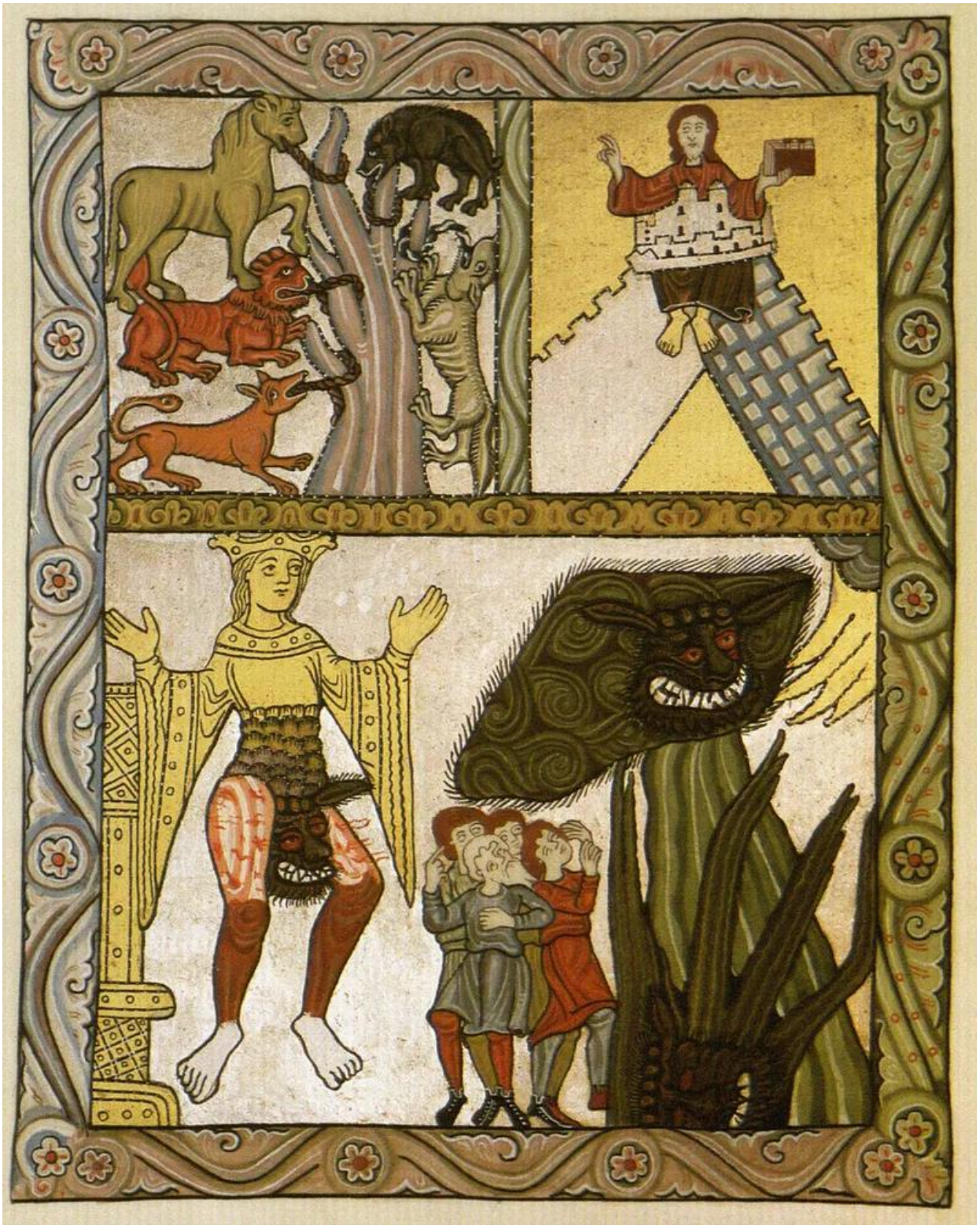

Fig. 7. Hildegard, *Scivias, 3.11, Eibingen, MS 1, fol. 214v, Vision of the Last Days*. Picture in Emerson, 'The Representation of the Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingen's *Scivias*, p. 100

The mouth of Hell, depicted in the Bedford Hours, is not only an open mouth, but strikingly it is gaping, wider than would seem physically possible for a mouth. This mouth that is perpetually open, ready to consume sinners demonstrates the grotesque mouth, as defined by Bakhtin. It is also a mouth lined with teeth and fangs, a sign that even if the mouth ever did close, the teeth would not meet to create a definite barrier and there would continue to be passage from inside the mouth to outside and vice versa. There are striking similarities with the images of ugly old women, discussed in Chapter Two, and in the case of Dame Ragnelle in *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, who possessed fangs that were a sign of her ugliness as well as a fear of her subversive nature. This perpetually open mouth of Hell with fangs is dangerous for its lack of control: it is always open and there is no way for either it, or humans, to control what goes in, and therefore it is beyond human authority or power. Further evidence of this uncontrollable nature is in the fire and demons that the mouth of Hell is emitting. As a mouth it both consumes and emits, and because of its perpetually open nature and large fangs there is no control over this movement. It is also clearly a bestial mouth, not a human one, and like the monstrous beings of medieval travel literature there is no knowledge of how it will behave: it is beyond human rules.

Fig 8. f. 34r 'The Last Judgement' from Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry, c. 1440s < https://chateaudechantilly.fr/en/collection/the-tres-riches-heures-du-duc-de-berry/ > <https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/iiif/22470/canvas/canvas-2045964/view >

The second image is taken from *Les Trés Riches Heures du duc de Berry* (c. 1440) and displays many of the same tropes as the image from the Bedford Hours. The large bestial mouth, complete with teeth, fangs, and emitting fire. It is striking with all these images that the mouth of Hell, is precisely as the name suggests, a mouth, but a mouth without a body attached. This in itself is a monstrosity. With monstrous beings often it is the altered placement of the mouth, or the way that mouth was used and the vocalisations it produced that create the monstrosity. However, with the mouth of Hell, it is the lack of an accompanying body that increases the monstrosity of these images and the terror that they can inspire. This fearsome monstrosity is defined both through excess and lack: a lack of a body attached, and an excessively large mouth with numerous teeth. Bakhtin's argument that the grotesque can be 'reduced to a gaping mouth',[114] has been taken to its extremes: the entrance to Hell is a mouth and nothing more. The monstrous can be, and in this case is, defined and manipulated through the mouth whether human, bestial or hybridised.

The final image (fig. 8) taken from books of hours is from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves (c. 1440). This image, accompanied by a deathbed scene, marks the beginning of the Monday Hours of the Dead.[115] The Morgan Library and Museum describe this image as showing 'purgatory, the place to which the dying man hopes to go. There his soul, like those depicted, will be cleansed of sin in expiating, if painful, fire'.[116]

[114] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 317.
[115] *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, MS M 917/945, p. 180 – f. 97r, The Morgan Library and Museum <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-catherine-of-cleves/115>
[116] *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves*, MS M 917/945, p. 180 – f. 97r, The Morgan Library and Museum <https://www.themorgan.org/collection/hours-of-catherine-of-cleves/115>

Fig 9. Cropped image of The Monday Hours of the Dead, in The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, MS M.917/945, f. 97r, Morgan Collection

Fig 10. The entrance to Hell, from the opening of the Office of the Dead, in The Hours of Catherine of Cleves, MS M. 917/945, f. 168v, Morgan Collection.

This is a difficult image to analyse with complete accuracy because it contains strikingly similar tropes to images of the mouth of Hell as shown in images of the Last Judgement, as well as the image of the gates of Hell from the opening of the Office of the Dead in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves. It has a large gaping mouth, teeth and fangs, and fire. The implication here is that purgatory, and the cleansing of sins, may be similar to the pains of eternal damnation, however unlike Hell, a person would only spend a finite length of time suffering in purgatory. Jennifer M. Feltman argues, with specific reference to the Last Judgement Porch at Lincoln Cathedral that there was a 'transformation in religious thought concerning the afterlife from the 13th to 16th centuries', and over this time 'the function of the Last Judgement iconography expanded as focus shifted towards the experience of souls in Purgatory'.[117] As this shift towards considerations of purgatory, 'the imagery and language used to describe Hell was transferred to the locus of Purgatory as it came to be conceived of as a physicalized place, first in popular imagination and later in doctrine'.[118] This shift in focus may help to account for the similarity in the iconographic tropes: purgatory, like Hell, can invoke fear because it is a place of pain and suffering. Furthermore, there still remains an implicit feminisation of such images through the carnality implied by the open mouth filled with teeth; the iconographic similarities between the mouth and the vagina and the fear associated with the *vagina dentata*. There is also the question of pain and suffering which can be more strongly associated with women's bodies through Eve who by her temptation in the Garden of Eden doomed all womenkind to the bodily pain of childbirth.

The iconographic tropes of the mouth of Hell, or indeed purgatory, are also visible in imagery present within churches, often as part of what are termed 'doom paintings.' Unlike the images in the books of hours, these images in churches would have been viewed by all members of society regardless of class, gender, or education. Doom paintings are visible in prominent parts of the church, most commonly over the chancel arch 'marking the transition between the 'Church Militant' and the 'Church Triumphant'.'[119] The placement and the size of these doom

[117] Jennifer M. Feltman, 'The Last Judgement Porch at Lincoln Cathedral over the *Longue Durée*: Iconography, Interaction, and Religious Thought' in *Devotional Interaction in Medieval England and Its Afterlives*, ed. by Elisa A. Foster, Julia Perratore, and Steven Rozenski (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), p. 105.
[118] Jennifer M. Feltman, 'Imagining the sorrows of death and pains of hell in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*', in *Binding the Absent Body in Medieval and Modern Art: Abject, virtual, and alternate bodies,* edited by Emily Kelley and Elizabeth Richards Rivenbark (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), (111-132), pp. 111-112.
[119] Jane Ashby, 'Medieval Doom Paintings in Oxfordshire Churches', *The Oxford Art Journal* (October 1979), (54-59), p. 54.

paintings, depicting the day of judgement, are easily visible to the congregation throughout their time in church. Two examples of doom paintings are taken from Holy Trinity, Coventry, and St. Thomas and St. Edmund's, Salisbury. The painting in Holy Trinity is above the tower arch, and the one in St. Thomas and St. Edmund's in above the chancel arch.

Fig 11. Doom Painting. St. Thomas and St. Edmund's Church, Wiltshire, late fifteenth century. Image by Phil Yeoman, taken from <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/future-looks-bright-for-a-doom-laden-church-masterpiece-in-salisbury-8rv2v33mk >

Fig 12. Doom Painting. Holy Trinity Church, Coventry, 1430s. Photograph taken by Paul Gardner, <https://medievalcoventry.co.uk/doom_painting/>

These images, like those that were within the Books of Hours, show the mouth of Hell as a bestial mouth with large teeth and fire. Both doom paintings show the rising of the dead on the right of Christ and the mouth of Hell on his left. As with the Last Judgment image in *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*, there is a clear division between salvation and damnation. The importance of such division and the attainment of salvation is highlighted in the prominent positions that these doom paintings were placed in in churches. The placement of such doom paintings within churches allows them to be viewed by a wide audience and a phrase from Gregory the Great has been used to explain such imagery as 'books for the illiterate'.[120] This idea was repeated throughout the Middle Ages and has influenced modern views on the purpose of medieval wall paintings.[121] However, Athene Reiss argues that such a view is too simplistic, and this phrase has been taken out of its original context, to be repeated and have its original intention altered through time.[122] Reiss argues that these images within churches were not intended specifically for the illiterate, or rather the unlearned: the wall paintings required knowledge and understanding to make sense and have impact.[123] 'Understanding these images requires a whole range of knowledge about the doctrine of salvation and damnation. Furthermore, …without familiarity with the representation of Heaven in the form of a walled city and Hell as a monstrous mouth, the images make no sense'.[124] The idea of wall paintings being for the illiterate also ignores the impact of such images on the learned. Wall paintings could have more, or less, meaning, or different meanings, dependent on one's educational background.[125]

The mouth of Hell is depicted as a terrifying bestial mouth that is perpetually open, ready to receive the bodies and souls of the damned. Its appearance, lined with large teeth, may invoke some fear in the viewer of the pain and suffering to be endured in Hell. In this way, as Kevin Lawson argues 'Wall paintings were a deliberate and powerful addition to the range of ways that the Church sought to teach its people, clarify the faith, and promote faithful living'.[126] In

[120]Athene Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate': Understanding English medieval wall paintings', *The British Art Journal*, 9.1 (Spring 2008), p. 4.
[121] Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate', p. 5.
[122] Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate', p. 7.
[123] Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate', p. 6.
[124] Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate', p. 6.
[125] Reis highlights the Middle English text *Dives and Pauper* as illustrating the integral role of images in affective devotion, Reiss, 'Beyond 'Books for the Illiterate', p. 8.
[126] Kevin E. Lawson, 'More than Silent Preaching: Didactic use of Wall Painting in the Middle Ages', *Christian Educational Journal*, 11.2, (2014), p. 331.

this way the use of the imagery of the mouth of Hell may be viewed as promoting the authority of the Church to aid in personal salvation: such savage images of Hell intended to inspire repentance and the Church's help in achieving salvation.

The images in wall paintings can also be viewed and interpreted on a more philosophical and medical level, a level of understanding available to the educated viewer. One consideration is of the use of a mouth to depict the mouth of Hell: a part of the human face that is central to defining humanity through its ability to articulate morality and rationality becomes in monstrous form the entrance to eternal damnation. These teeth, and fangs, inspire thoughts of devouring, tearing, and consumption: ideas both of pain and of humanity, previously the top of the food chain, becoming food for the mouth of Hell. Another consideration, which the educated viewer may understand, is the connection between the mouth of Hell, its placement, and the feminine. Particularly poignant in doom paintings is the placement of the mouth of Hell to the left of Christ, while the rising dead and Heaven are to his right. This reflects the right-left binary association of the masculine and feminine. Following Classical authors such as Hippocrates and Aristotle there was a traditional association of the right with the masculine and the left with the feminine.[127] This was commonly used in relation to the production of a male baby with the right side of the uterus and a female baby with the left.[128] An equally binary understanding could be applied to the right and left testes in the creation of a male or female baby. [129] This right/left binary was interconnected with the understanding of the hotter nature of men and the cooler nature of women: the 'right side of the womb, being warmer because of the proximity to the liver, tends to form male children, whereas the left side, being cooler because of the spleen's proximity, tends to cradle female children'.[130] This association of men with hot and dry qualities in opposition to women with cold and moist qualities is outlined in the *Book on the Conditions of Women*, in the *Trotula* ensemble.[131] This right/left, hot/cold, masculine/feminine binary also encapsulates the medieval understanding of the bodily, and often spiritual, superiority of masculinity to femininity, and in the doom paintings this is represented with Heaven being on the right, the masculine, and Hell on the left, the

[127] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages,* p. 33.
[128] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 131.
[129] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, pp. 63, 130.
[130] Cadden, *Meaning of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, p. 198.
[131] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 70-71; refer to Chapter One p. 55, (n. 57) for full quotation.

feminine. Therefore, there is a continued femininity associated with Hell not only with its placement to the left of Christ, but also in these doom paintings with the continued iconographic trope of the open, bestial, devouring mouth of Hell. The mouth of Hell imagery is implicitly feminised and now when added to doom paintings, its placement is further feminised perhaps highlighting the supposed inferiority of femininity to masculinity, or fears of the female body, its carnal lusts and the *vagina dentata*.

Apart from wall paintings depicting the Last Judgement, there are also windows and sculptures that use the same iconography for the mouth of Hell, focussing on its wide-open nature, large teeth and fangs, and consumption of the damned. In each of the following images, the mouth of Hell remains depicted to the left of the image, often the left of Christ, and is shown not only with open mouth, but actively consuming people. These teeth, and this monstrous mouth, are no longer just possibilities threatening to consume, bite and rip apart, but are shown as realities: the very process of eating the damned is depicted.

Fig 13. Nuremberg, Saint Lawrence Parish Church: Western Portal, c. 1340s
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:N%C3%BCrnberg_Lorenzkirche_-_Westportal_4b_J%C3%BCngstes_Gericht_H%C3%B6lle.jpg >

Fig 14. Hell Mouth, Bourges Cathedral, c. Twelfth Century (Public Domain)

Although these are only one example each of a depiction of the mouth of Hell in stone and glass, they are not the only examples of this kind. They demonstrate the universality of the iconography of the entrance to Hell, that an open bestial mouth with fangs, and often flames could denote Hell. Following the argument of Reiss, knowledge of the iconography of Hell must have been understood by viewers for these images to have meaning and an impact on their audience. Such frightening imagery highlights different forms of authority within the physical and spiritual world. The authority of Jesus to pass judgement and condemn sinners to enter this Hellmouth; the power of Hell to consume sinners; and on earth, the power and authority of the Church to help with the road away from the bestial Hellmouth and towards salvation.

Conclusion

Within the medieval imagination, the manipulation of the 'natural' human body, and particularly the mouth and its functions, is key to the creation of the monstrous. The monstrous mouth may be created through a rearrangement of the anatomy, such as with the Blemmyae, whereby the removal of the mouth to the chest raises questions as to the placement of the brain, the location of the soul, rational thought, and the ability of these beings to have oral functionality. Equally, a manipulation of the oral functionality through diet and speech creates a monstrous being. Every time the monstrous mouth both threatens and fascinates human society: monstrous beings' very deviance from the 'normal', from 'kynde', both attracts human curiosity and defines humanity. By recognising and defining the 'monstrous' and the 'unnatural', humanity defines what is 'normal'. It is through the mouth that 'normality' is most easily expressed and undermined. Most effective in separating the 'normal' from the 'abnormal' is speech: the absence of speech and the presence of bestial vocalisations highlights fundamental differences between humans and monstrous beings. It is the importance of speech for defining humanity through the expression of morality and rationality that makes it a perfect function for manipulation in the creation of the monstrous. Furthermore, there is a fearsome potential in a being who lacks spoken communication, or indeed a dismembered, fang-filled monstrous mouth delineating the entrance to eternal damnation.

In the fearsome monstrous beings, or monstrous mouths, there is an implied feminisation. Considering the subversive potential of women through uncontrollable, leaking, aging bodies, and the *vagina dentata*, it is unsurprising that femininity is present in the creation of the monstrous. The colder, wetter humoral composition of women, with associations of carnality and a connection to the left is presented in opposition to the masculine perfection of warm, dry, spiritual right. This binary opposition, although containing more nuances in medieval philosophy and medicine, allow the monstrous (feminine) to be juxtaposed to the human (masculine). Such juxtaposition is followed through into Christian doom paintings with Hell and the Hellmouth to the left of Christ and Heaven to his right. The most obvious interpretation is that monstrosity, and femininity, is to be viewed as inferior to the perfection of humanity and masculinity. Descriptions highlighting the 'abnormality', and 'cursed kynde', also supports such an interpretation with regard to monstrous beings. Furthermore, the inferiority of the nature of monstrous beings implies their lack of authority and power. However, turning the gendering upside down reveals the subversive power wielded by the monstrous mouth. Through its carnality, manipulation, and feminisation, the monstrous being, much in the same way as the *vagina dentata*, wields a power to attract, to frighten and to fascinate. This authority is not of the social hierarchy – the body politic – but of a more undermining nature. The implicit feminisation of monstrous beings then, appears to paradoxically deny and to promote authority.

Chapter 4

‘kysse here mouth. And then shal she turne agen into hure owen kynde and be woman’: The Transformative Power of the Healing Mouth

And ere that Lybeous wiste,
The worme with mouth him kyste
And clypped aboute the swyre.
And aftyr this kyssynge
Off the worme tayle and wynge
Swyftly fell hir froo:
So fayre, of all thinke,
Woman, without lesynge,
Sawe he never ere thoo;
But she was moder naked,
As God had hir maked[1]

In *Lybeaus Desconus,* a popular fourteenth century romance, the protagonist Lybeaus, a man on a quest to save ‘mi lady of Synadowne’,[2] successfully accomplishes his mission in this example, and, through a kiss, transforms this dragon lady back into her human form: importantly, that of a beautiful woman. However, against convention, it is not strictly accurate that Lybeaus kisses the dragon, but rather that the dragon kisses him. At first this may appear as a monstrous kiss between a dragon and a knight but, as Tara Williams points out, ‘that the worm kissed him “with mouth” reminds us of the hybrid nature of the creature and hints that we are witnessing a kiss between Lybeaus and the enchanted lady rather than a beast’.[3] It is therefore made clear that the mouth is particularly vital to this transformative healing episode, and I use the term ‘healing’ because the woman is returned to her original human form: she began life as a woman and following the kiss she is once again human. In addition to the descriptive phrase “with mouth”, in reducing the monstrosity of such a kiss is the identification of the dragon as having ‘a womanes face’.[4] This renders the encounter more acceptable, with two human mouths coming into contact, as well as highlighting the fact that the dragon is a transformed human rather than pure monster. Her humanity is made clear in

[1] *Lybeaus Desconus (Lambeth Palace, MS 306)*, edited by Eve Salisbury and James Weldon 2013, [online TEAMS edn] lines 2082-2092.
[2] *Lybeaus Desconus*, line 160.
[3] Tara Williams, *Middle English Marvels: magic, spectacle and morality in the fourteenth century* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018), p. 54.
[4] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2068.

the final line that she is 'As God had hir maked'.[5] Although it is a transformation, a complete outward change of appearance, she is healed as surely as any patient seeking the help of a physician to cure an illness: through a transformational kiss she is returned to a natural, healthy, and human state.

It is striking that this transformation is that of a monster into a woman, echoing many of the points highlighted in Chapters Two and Three about beauty and ugliness, and monstrosity, where women appear to operate within the binary zones of perfect beauty or ugly subversion. Also in this episode, a man, the 'superior' sex according to theological and medical discourse, is necessary for the completion of the transformation: it is the male mouth that is required for healing and therefore he appears to assert his valour, authority, and masculine perfection. However, the ability of Lybeaus' mouth to transform lies within his lineage as kin of Sir Gawain, and therefore his noble status, valour and honour: 'Tyll I had kissed Gaweyne, / That is doughty knight, certayne, / Or some of his kynde'.[6] Despite the appearance on the surface of a clear masculine – feminine, superior – inferior, divide, then, it is she, the dragon lady, that is the instigator of the kiss with Lybeaus that transforms her back into a human. However, the power of her mouth is also denoted by her position of nobility, and that mouth is the instigator of the healing kiss and reveals to Lybeaus his kin. The dragon lady demonstrates a level of power and authority that may appear subversive to masculine dominance but her social standing and return to naked innocence reveal her purity, beauty, and morality. This appears to subvert 'natural' masculine dominance and perhaps undermines some of Lybeaus' supposed heroism in completing his knightly mission. In her dragon form she is stronger, more powerful, and more dangerous than any human knight, however, in being 'healed' she becomes again the woman: wife and subordinate to her male protector. Williams highlights the work of Stephen Knight, in respect to this transformation, who 'focuses on the social ramifications of her transformation: "Released by the hero's courage, the lady turns from an enchanted serpent into a submissive wife. From the sexually hideous and threatening Lamia she becomes the ideal and property-bearing wife".'[7] Knight is accurate in the assessment of the transformation of the lady from fearsome monster into submissive wife, however, I

[5] *Lybeaus Desconus*, line 2092.
[6] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2106-2108.
[7] Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p. 52; Stephen Knight 'The Social Function of the Middle English Romances', in *Medieval Literature: criticism, ideology and History*, ed. by David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), (99-122), p. 108.

suggest here that he overestimates the courage of the hero Lybeaus. Throughout this episode Lybeaus is an impassive character: he does not make the move to kiss and transform the dragon lady but seems frozen in fear: 'Syr Lybeous swelt for swete / There he sate in his sete, / As alle had ben in fyre; / So sore he was agaste / Hym thought his herte tobraste'.[8] However, his incapacity does lead 'to establishing his identity as Gawain's kin and winning a wife and property'.[9] Here the mouth is presented as a conduit of transformative power, and through this transformation the mouth also reveals the gender binaries and the interrelated notions of power, authority, social position and morality active within medieval discourses.

This episode of Lybeaus highlights a key tenet of this chapter's argument: the centrality of the mouth as a conduit for healing, and as a point of transformation. In this episode, the mouth performs its healing through a kiss, whereby one mouth (Lybeaus') comes into direct contact with another mouth (the dragon lady). As a case of healing, the mouth is both the means of providing healing and receiving healing. Here, Lybeaus is the 'healer', and the dragon lady is the 'patient', and both in their separate ways are transformed through the kiss: the dragon lady undergoes a physical transformation, and Lybeaus a transformation in knowledge and social standing through the revelation of his knightly kin. The mouth as a point of healing is important because of its intrinsic value in defining humanity and rational thought, as well as marking the standards of beauty, ugliness and monstrosity. It has the power to define authority and subvert authority, and yet the mouth, a point of controversy, is chosen for transformational, healing power: the power to cure, to alter physicality, and the change lives. The human mouth is part of the creation of the monstrous, the beautiful and now has curative power through physical contact as with Lybeaus, and, as this chapter will further demonstrate, through ingestion, and the spoken word.

Within the gender binaries highlighted in the transformative healing power of the mouth, this chapter addresses a key theme of authority which is often supportive of masculine superiority but allows for limited feminine authority where it is not subversive of the supposed gender hierarchies. In this way feminine authority is visible but not harmful to social order or

[8] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2076-2080.
[9] Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales"*, quoted in Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p. 54.

masculine authority. Very often, as in *Lybeaus Desconus*, it is the male mouth that is the instrument of healing, or male writers that record and perpetuate the efficacy of healing through the mouth. Furthermore, the healing mouth expresses the authority of the 'healer', as well as the authority of whichever area of medieval culture is supported by the healing, be it medicine, religion, or literature. This male authority and dominance, displayed through the healing mouth, also supports medieval social hierarchy: man is not superior to woman per se, but rather, men of a certain moral and social standing are deemed superior. Social position, with an associated good moral standing, is therefore another key aspect of this chapter's argument, and it crosses from the temporal to the spiritual worlds to include the authority of the saints and the Virgin Mary.

The human mouth as a conduit for healing is investigated, in this chapter, through three different methods of healing: healing through kissing, healing through ingestion, and healing through speech. As the entrance to the human body, the mouth is important, as Heather Webb points out: 'potentially opening the way to two different systems, the spiritual system in the heart and the digestive system in the stomach and intestines.'[10] The mouth is also a pivotal point for healing, as Webb highlights: healing through the mouth can effect change within the physical body through the digestive system, and the spiritual body through the heart.[11]

The effects on the physical body of healing through the mouth rest on the medieval understanding of the nature of the human body as consisting of four humours that should remain in balance to maintain bodily health. These four humours – black bile, yellow bile, blood and phlegm – are assigned to the four ages of man, the four seasons, and the four

[10] Heather Webb, 'Cardiosensory Impulses in Late Medieval Spirituality', in *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage Fascinations Frames*, ed. by Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 276.
[11] For more on the senses see the Introduction to this thesis, and Annette Kern-Stähler, Beatrix Busse and Wietse de Boer, (eds.) *The Five Senses in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Leiden, Netherlands; Boston, Massachusetts: Brill, 2016); W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses from Antiquity to Cyberspace*, translated by James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005); Richard G. Newhauser, 'The Senses, the Medieval Sensorium, and Sensing (in) the Middle Ages', in *Handbook of Medieval Culture. Volume 3: fundamental aspects and conditions of the European Middle Ages*, edited by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 1559-1575; Stephen G Nichols Andreas Kablitz and Alison Calhoun (eds.), *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage Fascinations Frames* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008); C.M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); David Howes (ed.), *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005).

elements of the universe, which assign qualities to the humours. These connections are listed in the Middle English translation of Gilbertus Anglicus (c. 1180-1250), who defines the four elements of fire, air, water and earth, and 'so þer be iiij humours in euery leuyng body, as j be-fore seyd, Wyche humours han gret licnesse to þe iiij elementes be-fore namyd'.[12] Gilbertus goes on to further define other interconnected aspects of the world including the four ages of man, the four seasons, the four winds, the four parts of the world, and the four divisions of day and night.[13] Alongside this balance of four humours is the distinction in qualities between the male and female bodies, in which the male body is held to be hotter and drier in nature, whereas the female is colder and wetter.[14] However, in *On Treatments for Women* in the *Trotula* ensemble it clarifies this distinction by noting a variation in the heat of some women.[15] Evidently the distinction in the qualities of male and female bodies are not distinct binaries but are more fluid, allowing for some women to be hotter or drier than others, and equally for some men to be wetter and colder in nature, and the implication is that some women are more masculine and some men are more feminine.[16]

In medieval discourse the healing of this physical bodily system and the nurturing of the spiritual system are interrelated. Marie-Christine Pouchelle, Katie Walter and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa all highlight the ways in which medical, religious and literary discourses work together within medieval culture.[17] Yoshikawa notes the anachronistic nature of trying to consider these areas as separate entities 'for those discourses are inscribed within a far larger social and cultural context'.[18] The intersection of religion and medicine is visible in the concept of *Christus medicus*, or Christ the Physician, a further indication of the perceived

[12] Laura Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic (GUL MS Hunter 509, ff 1r-167v)* A Compendium of Medieval Medicine Including the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 39 (f. 1r, lines 11-13).
[13] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 43-46.
[14] This is an established understanding outlined in many medieval medical texts. One example is from the *Trotula* ensemble, from the *Book on the Conditions of Women*, *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine,* ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), [1], pp. 70-71, refer to Chapter One p. 55, n. 57 for full quotation.
[15] *The Trotula*, (2001) [132], pp. 116-117, refer to Chapter Two, p. 116, (n. 95) for full quotation.
[16] *On Treatments for Women, The Trotula*, (2001) [132], pp. 116-117.
[17] Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* trans. by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990; Katie Walter, *Middle English Mouths: Later Medieval Medical, Religious and Literary Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); *Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).
[18] Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', in *Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, p. 6.

connection between disease and sin.[19] Within this understanding Christ could effect spiritual healing, as well as physical healing through spiritual means, such as confession.[20]

The close connection between these discourses is further evident in the language that is shared, and taking the example of medicine and religion, 'If the vocabulary of medicine was pervaded by religious terminology, writing on penitence from the same period is equally full of medical metaphors'.[21] This crossover in language is explored in detail by Katie Walter whose work addresses the intersection between the literary and the religious; the metaphorical and spiritual aspects of the healing power of the mouth. Walter argues that the 'mouth is deeply enmeshed in medieval thinking about what it means to be human, and about sin and salvation', and she discusses the ways in which medical images appear in discourse concerning spiritual life, for example, the way in which the 'hygienic and surgical care of the mouth provides particularly close analogy with confession'.[22] The medical and religious are connected, but so are the body and soul, and therefore the healing effect of the mouth can be through physical means, or spiritual means effecting a physical change in the body.

Some medieval authors, however, preferred to separate the religious from the medical, and Pouchelle highlights this in relation to the *Chirurgie* of Henri de Mondeville (c. 1260-1320). Mondeville tried to separate medical and religious discourses; the temporal from the spiritual, and he 'makes clear that Art and Faith see things differently, and that he himself chooses Art rather than Faith, the doctor rather than the confessor, bodily health rather than spiritual wellbeing'.[23] However, despite his protestations of separating religion and medicine, and favouring the doctor over the confessor, he nevertheless cites a cure for wounds taken from his Bolognese master which involved not only a series of numbers with religious value, and the shape of a cross, but also the recitation of an incantation and a prayer.[24] Within the cultural climate where the religious and medical were interwoven, Mondeville, despite all his efforts, could not fully extricate them. The interwoven nature of genres within medieval

[19] Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', in *Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, p. 9. On this, see the Introduction to this thesis.
[20] Yoshikawa, 'Introduction', in *Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, p. 9.
[21] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages*, p. 54.
[22] Walter, *Middle English Mouths,* pp. 1, 145.
[23] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages,* p. 37.
[24] Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages,* pp. 52-53.

society will be evident throughout the many examples in this chapter that explicate how aspects of gender and authority are translated and adapted by different genres through the medium of the healing mouth.

I focus here on episodes of physical healing rather than spiritual healing, not only to distinguish from Walter's study of the analogies of the mouth that permeate from the medical to the religious, but also to extend our understanding of the power of the physical mouth to heal, and how this defines or questions humanity and authority, with a particular emphasis on the impact of gender on the cultural construction of the mouth. Physical healing highlights how the mouth can be used to effect a physical change in the body, whether transformational, as with the dragon lady, or via healing of a bodily ailment. This, however, does not seek to downplay the role the mouth played within aspects of spiritual healing or the power of the spoken word within the folklore tradition.

This investigation into the power of the mouth to heal through the kiss, ingestion, and speech is evident across literary and artistic genres, and demonstrates the ways in which the healing power of the mouth permeates different cultural and academic discourses. For consideration of the healing power of the kiss this chapter focusses on works of romance literature and travel literature, for within these there are episodes of transformational kisses, such as the opening passage from *Lybeaus Desconus*. These episodes involve person to person kisses rather than the more religious actions of kissing relics to gain spiritual or physical healing. Within the romance and travel literature examples there is a clear definition of the 'healer', and the 'healed', whereas in the kissing of relics for healing these two positions are more ambiguous. The healing power of the mouth through ingestion includes a large range of material as many medical treatments are ingested remedies, but the focus of this section will be on the use of breastmilk. Albeit a slightly unusual addition to healing remedies, breastmilk is also found in religious discourse, most notably in the so-called *Maria lactans* miracles, one example of which involved Saint Bernard receiving milk from the breast of the Virgin Mary. The very nature of breastmilk being produced by women makes this distinctly gendered but being produced by a nursing mother adds ideas of care, nourishment, and as it spills over into the religious world it is accompanied by the salvific nature of Mary's breastmilk. The final section of this chapter focuses on the healing power of speech which interacts with a variety

of genres, crossing from the medical, to the religious, and even the superstitious. Healing through speech focuses on miraculous healings and healing charms and incantations, some of which, although not strictly medical remedies, are included in well-known medical sources, such as the works of John Gaddesden (1280-1361) and Thomas Fayreford, a fifteenth-century medical practitioner. Other charms are appended to medical remedies, thereby weaving together different cultural discourses. In these healing charms and miracles, the focus is on the restorative power of speech in contrast to the examples in Chapter One that focus on the restoration of speech to the subject of the healing episode. The three areas of enquiry surrounding the kiss, ingestion, and speech, show a variety of literature across different genres that all attest to the power of the mouth as a crucial conduit for healing.

The use of material from multiple genres helps to illuminate the ways in which the mouth could be a powerful and ubiquitous conduit for healing. In previous chapters, this thesis has explored the centrality of the mouth in defining humanity through speech, functionality, and beauty, and the ways in which the mouth can be manipulated to create something monstrous and frightful. Now the mouth becomes a source of transformation and healing, present across medical, religious, and literary discourses, and permeating all areas of medieval culture, demonstrating the interwoven nature of different discourses within medieval society.

The Healing Kiss

The healing and transformative power of the mouth through a kiss is evident in the opening quotation from the Middle English romance *Lybeaus Desconus.* A kiss may function within different areas of society, as a social gesture, a sign of political significance, as well as being important within the sphere of religion.[25] Within religious activities there is the kiss of peace, as well as the act of kissing religious objects through reverence or in the hope of receiving some spiritual benefit. Walter explores the relationship between taste, touch and kissing and how ‘part of the power of touch as it is realised in a kiss…also derives from the natural

[25] For more on the gesture of the kiss, and its representations across history and culture see Karen Harvey (ed.), *The Kiss in History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

properties of the mouth'.[26] The mouth is situated at the 'threshold of the human';[27] it opens the way into the inner physical and spiritual body; it supports life through breath and nourishment, and it is the organ of speech. Through this part of the human body is enacted a kiss, a physical action that as Walter argues 'potentially involves a loss, a bodily transaction that is costly and deadly', as well as alternatively, and spiritually, mingling 'souls and minds'.[28] Walter develops this function of the kiss across religious and social situations in which it may be 'a marker of the affective, embodied register of medieval piety, as well as a social gesture or a sign in the social and political body'.[29] The physical action of a kiss has many possibilities across society, but this chapter will focus on its ability to be transformative and efficacious.

This exploration of the healing kiss will focus on two episodes: one from the Middle English romance *Lybeaus Desconus*, a popular text in the Middle Ages which featured in the opening quotation,[30] and the other an episode recorded within *Mandeville's Travels* (c. 1357). These two texts, from different literary genres, show one example of the ways in which themes and ideas may move between, and infiltrate, other genres. The centrality of a monstrous being in each episode develops from Chapter Three on monstrous mouths, and the feminising of monstrous bodies. The dragons in these following examples are both transformed women and therefore exemplify monstrous femininity and feminised monstrosity. Furthermore, in these two examples the power of the kiss is presented as transformational: in each episode the kiss has the potential to transform a dragon back into a human woman. I argue that this is an example of healing because in both cases the woman has been changed into a dragon as part of a curse, and therefore the kiss heals the woman back to her original form.

Lybaeus Desconus, a popular Middle English romance, is extant in six manuscripts and described by Tara Williams as a 'prototypical fair unknown narrative'.[31] The central themes of the fair unknown and the transformation are important within many episodes of this genre, such as the interaction between Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle, and strikingly, as Eve

[26] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 115.
[27] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, p. 115.
[28] Walter, *Middle English Mouths*, pp. 142-143.
[29] Walter, *Middle English Mouths,* p. 115.
[30] Tara Williams, *Middle English Marvels,* p. 37.
[31] '*Lybeaus Desconus:* Introduction' in *Lybeaus Desconus;* Williams, *Middle English Marvels*, p. 38.

Salisbury and James Weldon argue, with the Wife of Bath's tale of an 'unnamed knight errant', a possible variation of *Lybeaus Desconus.*[32] Within this romance, a young man aims to demonstrate his worthiness to enter the society of the knights of King Arthur, and in doing so he discovers his own knightly lineage. One of the ways he demonstrates his knightly qualities is in the episode concerning the lady of Synadoun, a noble lady transformed into a dragon by two necromancers. Lybeaus fights the two necromancers, killing one while the other flees. After this fight comes the following scene in which Lybeaus sees the dragon lady and the transformative kiss occurs.

> As he sate thus in halle,
> Oute at a stone walle
> A wyndowe fayre unfelde:
> Grete wondyr, withall,
> In his herte ganne falle
> And he sate and beheld.
> A worme ther ganne oute pas
> With a womanes face:
> "Yonge Y am and nothinge olde."
> Hir body and hir wyngis
> Shone in all thynchis,
> As amell gaye and gilte.
>
> Hir tayle was mekyll unnethe,
> Hir peynis gryme and grete,
> As ye may listen and lere.
> Syr Lybeous swelt for swete
> There he sate in his sete,
> As alle had ben in fyre;
> So sore he was agaste
> Hym thought his herte tobraste
> As she neyhid hym nere.
> And ere that Lybeous wiste,
> The worme with mouth his kyste
> And clypped aboute the swyre.
>
> And aftyr this kyssinge
> Off the worme tayle and wynge
> Swyftly fell hir froo:
> So fayre, of all thinke,
> Woman, without lesynge,
> Sawe he never ere thoo;
> But she was moder naked,
> As God had hir maked:
> Therfor was Lybeous woo.[33]

[32] '*Lybeaus Desconus:* Introduction' in *Lybeaus Desconus.*
[33] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2061-2093.

The dragon lady is in need of healing to transform her back into a woman, but also the line 'Hir peynis gryme and grete', suggests that she is also in physical pain. She is therefore in need of healing in two ways. There are certain specifications required for the healer, and in this episode the only hero who could possibly effect a transformation is a knight of the kin of Sir Gawain: 'Tyll I had kissed Gaweyne, / That is doughty knight, certayne, / Or some of his kynde'.[34] Such a man must surely be of good social standing, valour and good moral standing. It is striking that the method through which the lineage of Lybeaus is demonstrated is a kiss: his mouth is the means by which his parentage, his knightly status, is made evident. His valour could be expressed by other means but only through the sense of touch, of intimacy, and vulnerability can Lybeaus be revealed as truly the son of Gawain. The mouth, a direct point of contact between the inner physical and spiritual body, and the outside world, and the origin of speech, is chosen as the part of the body able to be transformative both for Lybeaus and the dragon lady. Lybeaus learns his knightly lineage and the dragon lady is returned to her human form.

Both key characters in this episode are of good noble status, however the superiority of the masculine to the feminine is evident in placing Lybeaus in the position of 'healer', physically transforming the dragon into a woman. However, the superiority of Lybeaus and his courage is questionable upon his facing the dragon: at this moment rather than approach the dragon and kiss it Lybeaus seems frozen in fear. On seeing the dragon 'Syr Lybeous swelt for swete / There he sate in his sete, / As alle had ben in fyre; / So sore he was agaste / Hym thought his herte tobraste'.[35] This is not the action of a brave knight in full control of the situation. However, the outcome of the situation justifies the means: the dragon is transformed, and it leads to Lybeaus 'establishing his identity as Gawain's kin and to winning a wife and property'[36]

[34] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2106-2108.
[35] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2076-2080.
[36] Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 191, quoted in Williams, *Middle English Marvels,* p. 54.

The masculine superiority, which Lybeaus has partially undermined with his lack of courage in failing to kiss the dragon, is further subverted by the dragon lady who implements some of her own noble status and authority. The dragon lady disrupts traditional notions of the passive lady in romance literature by actively kissing Lybeaus: she takes control of the situation whereby she can be 'healed'. At this point she is in her monstrous form: 'Hir body and hir wyngis / Shone in all thynchis, / As amell gaye and gilte. / Hir tayle was mekyll unnethe, / Hir peynis gryme and grete'.[37] A form which is so terrifying it causes Lybeaus to sweat in fear: 'Syr Lybeous swelt for swete'.[38] At this moment she represents the 'monstrous-feminine',[39] a potentially destabilising force that could subvert the ordered patriarchal society. Furthermore she, like the ugly old women discussed in Chapter Two, represents a character who requires 'transformation in order for marriage, consummation, and subsequent legitimization to occur'.[40]

The dragon lady is also subversive of Lybeaus' masculine authority and instrumental in revealing Lybeaus' lineage, thereby allowing him to take his place of power and authority within society. This revelation can be viewed as an example of the healing power of the kiss as much as the physical transformation of the dragon as it changes Lybeaus' prospects and 'heals' him of questions of his lineage. On the outset of his quest Lybeaus is unaware of his lineage, however following the transformation of the dragon lady she tells him the particular requirements connected to her healing, and in doing so reveals Lybeaus' familial relationship with Sir Gawain.[41] Her revelation is of importance for both Lybeaus and herself. It gives Lybeaus a good social standing and appears to compare him favourably with the courageous Sir Gawain, thereby lending Lybeaus valour and good moral standing. Although the TEAMS edition of this text translates 'kynde', as kin, suggesting that Lybeaus is related to Sir Gawain, as a Middle English term it could also refer to a person of the same nature as Gawain. A nature of knightly courage, morality, and importantly for these healing episodes across most romance literature, nobility. The mouth here is of dual importance: a kiss to effect the transformation, thereby allowing human speech through which the lady reveal Lybeaus'

[37] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2070-2074.
[38] *Lybeaus Desconus*, line 2076.
[39] Eve Salisbury, '*Lybeaus Desconus:* Transformation, Adaptation, and the Monstrous-Feminine', *Arthuriana*, 24.1 (Spring, 2014) (66-85), p. 67.
[40] Salisbury, '*Lybeaus Desconus:* Transformation, Adaptation, and the Monstrous-Feminine', p. 69.
[41] *Lybeaus Desconus*, lines 2106-2108; refer to p. 201 for full quotation.

knightly kin. Both characters are now revealed as noble lineage and therefore it shows the transformational power not only of the human mouth, but the noble human mouth.

Furthermore, at the moment of her transformation through a kiss, the dragon lady is naked. This draws a connection with the prelapsarian Eve who is innocent, pure and a perfect helpmate for Adam.[42] In the same way, the dragon is transformed back into her female form with no concealment, she is almost reborn as a perfect woman and helpmate for Lybeaus. Her nakedness demonstrates that there are no outward physical elements of the dragon remaining, as well as placing her in a vulnerable position before Lybeaus. No longer the woman of authority, revealing that Lybeaus is the kin of Gawain, she is now a vulnerable woman in need of the care and protection of a man: and the 'natural' order of society is restored.[43] The mouth has been placed centrally to each important outcome of this episode: it is through a kiss that the dragon lady is physically transformed, and Lybeaus demonstrates his masculinity, valour and authority, and through the power of speech that Lybeaus' noble bloodline is revealed. The mouth is therefore of healing and transformational power.

A similar episode is recorded in *Mandeville's Travels*, a piece of popular literature supposedly describing an exploration into the East.[44] Within the travels, among the islands off the coast of Greece is Lango[45] upon which dwells a dragon, the daughter of Hippocrates:

> And som sayn that in the ile of Lango is Ypocrasis doughter in maner of a dragon that is a hundred foot long, as men seyn, for I have hit nought seye…And men seyn that she shal dwelle so into the tyme that a knight come that is so hardy that der go to hure and kysse here mouth. And then shal she turne agen into hure owen kynde and be woman, and therafter heo shal nought lyve longe…[46]

[42] Salisbury, '*Lybeaus Desconus:* Transformation, Adaptation, and the Monstrous-Feminine', p. 70.
[43] In use of the term natural here, I refer to the perceived superiority of masculinity, following medical understanding of the humoral temperaments of male and female bodies.
[44] *The Book of John Mandeville,* ed. by Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), p. 1.
[45] Kohanski and Benson argue that the isle of Lango is probably the isle of Cos although the text refers to Cofos and Lango as separate islands; *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 166.
[46] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 29, lines 304-305, 309-312.

As with the dragon lady in *Lybeaus Desconus*, the daughter of Hippocrates has been transformed by a curse into a dragon, only to be healed by a kiss.[47] However, the credentials for the prospective healer are not as particular as in *Lybeaus*; here he must be a knight that 'is so hardy'. Even though this is not as specific, the healer must still be a knight, which carries with it the associated ideals of valour, morality and social standing: the power remains with a noble mouth. In these aspects the daughter of Hippocrates is not too particular: of the several potential healers described by Mandeville, the second is not a knight however the daughter of Hippocrates 'baad hym go ageyn to his felawes and make hym a knyght and come ageyn on the morghe'.[48] Despite his return newly knighted, his lack of true knightly qualities are revealed because when he sees the dragon 'he hadde so greet drede that he fleyghe to the shippe ayen'.[49] It appears that he is unqualified to heal the daughter of Hippocrates with a kiss. His nature is neither noble nor courageous enough to firstly face the dragon and secondly to effect a transformative kiss.

The daughter of Hippocrates demonstrates a dangerous aspect in her pursuit of the knight whose attempts at rescue fail for 'sithen hiderward myght no knyght se hure but he deyde anoon'.[50] Dana Oswald argues that such 'monstrous women's bodies reflect anxieties about the bodies of real women in medieval culture'.[51] There are two attempts to save the daughter of Hippocrates, as described by Mandeville. Neither of these attempts is successful and more pertinently, both knights soon after died. The knight of the first rescue attempt 'fled away', but the dragon 'folwed and took hym and bare hym maugre his teeth uppon a roch and cast hym into the see and so was he lost'.[52] The failure of the common mouth to heal results, rather dramatically, in death for the knights. Their lack of courage is made manifest in their inability to kiss and heal. This is in direct contrast to Lybeaus who did not flee, and therefore whose mouth kissed the dragon and transformed her into a woman.

[47] The text specifies: 'she is changed fro a damysel to dragon thorgh a goddas that men callen Diana', *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 29, lines 308-309.
[48] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 30, lines 326-328.
[49] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 30, line 336.
[50] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 30, lines 339-340.
[51] Dana M. Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2010), p. 127.
[52] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 29, lines 315, p. 30, lines 317-318.

The case of Hippocrates' daughter, as a dangerous female force, is further complicated as she can shift shape between dragon and human form, however cannot remain in human form. In the encounter of the second possible 'healer', who was not originally knighted, he 'saw a damisel and kembid hure heed and lokyde on a myrrour'.[53] Hippocrates' daughter, in her human form is beautiful and alluring, so much so that the second man to visit her believed her to be a prostitute, 'a comyn womman that dwellid ther to kepe men to dele with here'.[54] At this point her mouth must be so beautiful that the man wants to kiss it and is willing to return the next day, having been made a knight, in order to kiss her. However, the next day she appears in her dragon form and her body, and mouth, is so repulsive that the newly knighted man cannot kiss her and flees. Hippocrates' daughter embodies some of the fear of monstrous beings discussed in Chapter Three, and she 'has infiltrated the human community of readers, forcing readers to reconsider the nature of monstrosity and the permanence of human identity, as well as the stability of their communities'.[55] The daughter of Hippocrates is dangerous as a beautiful woman, a fearsome dragon, and a shapeshifter.

The daughter of Hippocrates, as far as Mandeville is aware, is not kissed, or returned to her human form. Indeed, if she is to be kissed and 'healed' there exists another problem because when she is kissed, she will return to being a woman completely, but her life will be cut short.[56] This poses several challenges. If her fate is to die upon her transformation, then she will be unable to fulfil society's expectations of her place within what Oswald terms the 'marriage market'. [57] Within this 'marriage market', women are classed as commodities to be exchanged among men, underpinning the social and cultural patriarchal order, for 'women's bodies – through their use, consumption, and circulation – provide for the condition making social life and culture possible'.[58] Through this exchange system women move from 'pure exchange value', of the virginal woman to the 'private property' of wife and mother by which she is removed from the 'market' of exchange.[59] Considering her fate upon transformation, perhaps it is of some advantage to the daughter of Hippocrates to remain outside of this mechanism of exchange, however from the account given by Mandeville, it appears that she

[53] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 30, lines 320-321.
[54] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 30, lines 322-323.
[55] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 121.
[56] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 29, lines 310-312; refer to p. 203 for full quotation.
[57] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 127.
[58] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 171.
[59] Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, pp. 185-186.

does desire to be 'healed'. In the case of the second potential 'healer', she sends him away to become a knight before returning to kiss her. Mandeville openly acknowledges that his account is not of first-hand knowledge, 'for I have hit nought seye',[60] and therefore I suggest that this desire for healing displays more of the author's, and the reader's, desire to see the monster removed and the woman restored, than the feelings of the daughter of Hippocrates. Within a society where masculinity is dominant, and men control the exchange of women and their function within society, it would be important to demonstrate that when women deviate, they should be restrained and returned to a 'safe', marriageable, form. This return is achieved through the human mouth. Masculine authority, as shown in the speech chapter, is demonstrated through the mouth in speech, and here it is further demonstrated with a kiss.

In both episodes the dragon is a transformed woman and this portrayal of women as the transformative monster is a popular motif, and Oswald has investigated the occurrence of four different transformative monsters within *Mandeville's Travels*, and notes that 'in each case the monstrous and transformative body is female'.[61] The two episodes discussed here highlight what Oswald has described as raising 'questions of marital and reproductive circulation for these monstrous bodies'.[62] Through the transformation of these monsters back into their human form, they are not only healed physically, but also socially: they are able to take their place within human society; to marry and bear children. This role within society is carefully laid out for women, and it is a role that places them within the control of men: 'Rarely in control of their own bodies, women are subordinated to men who exchange them, namely their fathers, brothers, and husbands'.[63] Outside of this, women threaten the stability of the masculine system, 'disrupting patriarchal order as well as the order of humanity',[64] and so even within this literature where transformations occur, women are returned to this system of exchange. Oswald, in discussing the episode of Hippocrates' daughter in *Mandeville's Travels* highlights that 'because of its own concerns with population and social striation, the Mandeville author's cultural milieu was concerned with practices of marriage, and especially the ways in which women's bodies functioned as commodities in the marriage market'.[65] In

[60] *The Book of John Mandeville,* p. 29, line 305.
[61] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 121.
[62] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 121.
[63] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 127.
[64] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 127.
[65] Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature*, p. 127; see also Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*.

the case of Hippocrates' daughter she remains a dragon, however the dragon lady in *Lybeaus* is 'healed' and returns to human society to fulfil her role as a wife. Romance literature provides the social expectation of a successful outcome: the threat is gone, and both Lybeaus and the lady are 'healed'. Humanity remains stable, authority is vindicated and the genders, albeit of high social status, maintain their 'correct' roles within society's expectations. When they function within the proper social order, women are controlled and ordered, but outside of that they are potentially subversive, and the alteration of their physicality in these two examples highlights the dangerous nature of women outside of the 'marriage market'. The transformation of these monstrous women is effected by the touching of the same part of two bodies, the mouth, where a level of equality appears to exist as it takes two mouths for the kiss. However, the mouth has also been used, in the transformation, to return the characters to the perceived social and authoritarian hierarchy with masculinity restored to apparent superiority over femininity. However, important caveats to masculine authority are imposed, including a certain nobility of mind, morality and social status: characteristics that can be expressed through the mouth, and in this case the healing power of the kiss of a noble knight.

Healing through Ingestion

The healing power of the kiss requires intimate physical contact between 'patient' and 'healer' to effect transformation. Healing through ingestion is one step removed from that because the healing remedy to be ingested makes contact with the mouth of the patient but there is no physical contact required with the healer. The mouth is a key entrance to the body, and healing through ingestion requires the remedy to spread from the mouth into the rest of the physical body to produce a healing. As an entry point the mouth is one way into and out of the body and therefore acts as a gatekeeper of the body, guarding against harmful things entering, or indeed leaving the body. As a guarded entrance, the mouth was highlighted in Chapter Two where the teeth were shown as guardians, and denoted a controlled, ordered body. Here, the mouth is the entrance for ingested healing and is the main method employed by medical practitioners, through diet or designated edible remedies. The variety of remedies available in the Middle Ages that can be classed as ingested is almost endless and contains an equal variety of ingredients including herbs, minerals, imported ingredients, as well as some

more unusual additions.[66] One of these more unusual additions which forms the focus of this discussion is breastmilk: a product that is 'always a gendered product simply because it is produced only by females'.[67] It is however also interesting because its primary purpose is to feed a baby, and yet it crosses over into the healing tradition both through medical literature and religious iconography. Furthermore, the healing power of breastmilk demonstrates one facet of the female body as being a source of healing and nourishment, rather than the fearsome aspects highlighted in Chapters Two and Three. In this way, the power and authority of the female body is demonstrated, however, it is a power wielded only by a certain type of woman. This would have to be a woman who had given birth, and therefore had produced breastmilk, and in certain remedies there is a specification for the gender of the child born. Such a woman has the role of care and nourishment of the baby; roles which are highlighted by the caring, and by extension healing, nature of medicinal remedies.

In the female body, it was understood that during pregnancy and after the birth there was no menstrual flow because the blood was first redirected to feed the unborn baby, and then later blood was converted to milk in the breasts to further feed the baby after birth. Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272), in his encyclopaedic work, *De proprietatibus rerum*, explains this transformation: 'For aftir þe burþe of a childe ȝif blood is not iwastid wiþ fedinge, it comeþ by a kynde wey into þe pappis and waxiþ whit by vertu of ham and takeþ þe qualite of melk'.[68] Bartholomeaus' explanation of the transformation of blood to milk is described as taking place in a 'kynde wey'; it is a natural process within a woman's body. Guy de Chauliac (c. 1300-1368), in his major surgical work, makes a more direct connection between breastmilk and menstrual blood saying that 'Ypocras saide mylke to be a broþer to

[66] Some further reading on medicine in the Middle Ages: *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death,* ed. by Luis García-Ballester, Roger French, Jon Arrizabalaga & Andrew Cunningham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Faye Getz, *Medicine in the English Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Michael R. McVaugh, *Medicine before the Plague: practitioners and their patients in the crown of Aragon, 1285-1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in medieval and Early Modern England* ed. by Jennifer C. Vaught (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010); Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* trans. by Rosemary Morris (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); Carole Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997); Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
[67] R. A. Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', *Neophilologus*, 96, (467-485), p. 473.
[68] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, Volume 1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 233, lines 28-31.

menstrues'.[69] It is evident that 'blood and subsequently milk…are viewed as a life-force, functioning to sustain and nourish life. Woman's milk, then, becomes associated with power and strength and nourishment'.[70]

Pouchelle, in her work on Henri de Mondeville's unfinished surgical text also highlights Mondeville's continuation of this connection between menstrual blood and milk, while highlighting the importance of the white colour of the milk: 'As milk is necessarily white, because it is the residue of the nutrition of the breasts which are white'.[71] Pouchelle further highlights how this transformation from menstrual blood to white milk mirrors the 'miraculous transformation of the blood of martyrs'.[72] This transformation of blood to milk appears both to be a physical transformation as well as a transformation in its properties: it changes from a red coloured waste product into a white nourishing baby food, and also one that contains healing properties.

Within medieval religious culture, the female body was not always as dangerous and fearsome as the monstrous depictions within *Mandeville's Travels* and *Lybeaus Desconus*, and those discussed in Chapter Three, might suggest. The female body could also be harnessed as a power for healing, particularly in relation to the Virgin Mary. The nature of breastmilk in physical and medical terms as necessary food for babies to help them grow, is clearly mirrored in the religious aspects of Mary's breastmilk which nourished Christ the infant, and, through his body, the whole of the Church on earth. The importance of the breastmilk of the Virgin Mary is made clear in the image, both literary and pictorial, of *Maria lactans*. In the later Middle Ages, the cult of the Virgin Mary grew, as did an emphasis on her breasts and milk.[73] The devotion to Mary was profound, and Sue Niebrzydowski has explored this through Marian drama and argued for the connection created between the female life cycle of medieval viewers and the life cycle of Mary on stage, for there 'existed a different

[69] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac* p. 67, lines 32-33.
[70] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 476.
[71] Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages,* p. 156.
[72] Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages,* p. 156.
[73] Pouchelle, *The Body & Surgery in the Middle Ages*, p. 156. Pouchelle quotes from the work of Louis Réau and G. Cohen, *L'Art du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1951).

and appropriate manifestation of Mary for each significant moment in a woman's life'.[74] This connection between the life cycle of the Mother of God and the life cycle of ordinary women created a powerful image. The power of this image of the nursing mother, a sign of care and protection, and later redemption, was so great that alchemists of the later Middle Ages pretended to create a potion termed *lac virginis.*[75]

The *Miracle of Lactation,* a legend of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, which is depicted in numerous works of art, is one example of the devotion to the breasts and milk of the Virgin Mary. This is a popular image in which Saint Bernard receives milk from the breast of the Virgin Mary. Such iconography first appeared in 'late thirteenth-century Catalan art but experienced a sudden boom between 1470 and 1530 in Northern art'.[76] According to legend, the miracle occurred when Saint Bernard was 'praying "Ave Maris Stella" in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary. When he reached the phrase "monstra te esse matrem" ("show yourself to be a mother"), the statue became animated and placed three drops or jets of milk into Saint Bernard's mouth'.[77] Jutta Sperling indicates the importance of the 'milk theme' which appears at the beginning of Saint Bernard's sermon on the Song of Songs 'reiterating Saint Paul's maxim of offering milk to his audience instead of solid food', and argues that 'milk is identified as the essence of Christian teaching that nurtures the believer in the infant stages of their devotion'.[78] Therefore it would appear that the Virgin Mary is providing milk to nourish the devotion of Saint Bernard: he is the child of the faith who requires spiritual food. Eleanora Cianci argues that the 'idea and the vision of the nursing mother became slowly a symbol of protection and of redemption'.[79] The Virgin Mary, in feeding Saint Bernard, is

[74] Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Secular Women and Late-Medieval Marian Drama', in *Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 43, (2013), 121-139 (p. 130). On Mary, see also Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Marian Literature', in McAvoy, L. H. & Watt, D. (eds.), *The History of British Women's Writing: 700-1500: Volume One*. 2011, p. 112-120; Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Mary in the Middle Ages: A Woman for All Women', in *Women in Christianity in the Medieval Age: 1000-1500*, ed. Laura Kalas and Roberta Magnani (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming).
[75] Eleanora Cianci, '*Maria Lactans* and the Three Good Brothers, the German Tradition of the Charm and its Cultural Context', *Incantatio 2*, (2012), 55-70 (p. 61).
[76] Jutta Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk: The Lactation of Saint Bernard and the Flemish *Madonna Lactans* (ca. 1430-1530)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 71 (2018) (868-918), p. 894.
[77] Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk', p. 894, Sperling also references James France, *Medieval Images of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2007).
[78] Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk', pp. 897-898.
[79] Cianci, '*Maria Lactans* and the Three Good Brothers, the German Tradition of the Charm and its Cultural Context', p. 59.

offering multiple benefits: physical nourishment, spiritual nourishment, and in alignment with Cianci's argument, protection and redemption as well.[80]

Two images depicting the *Miracle of Lactation* featuring Saint Bernard, are important examples of the rise in devotion to the Virgin Mary, her breasts, and her milk, and demonstrate a popularity of the miracle as it moves from written to visual source material. Both images date from the later Middle Ages; one is contained within MS Douce 264 in the Bodleian Library and the other is a panel which originated in the Cistercian monastery of Nuestra Señora in Benifazá (Castellón).

[80] Spiritual healing: Laura Kalas, *Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine: Suffering, Transformation and the Life-Course* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020).

Fig 15. MS Douce 264, Bodleian Library, f. 38v.

Fig 16. Our Lady of the Milk Between Saint Bernard and Saint Benedict, Museo del Prado

These two images are examples of the more common depiction of the lactation miracle as drops of milk, or a spray of milk, but occasionally it is shown as a ray of light.[81] Sperling argues that 'the representation of milk as light was supposed to remind the beholder of the potential for receiving interior visions'.[82] This demonstrates a direct connection with the viewer of the image and the 'interactive nature of much of medieval religious imagery and its specific aesthetic promise to become animated'.[83] The connection to rays of light is also often used in imagery of the Holy Spirit, particularly in images of the Annunciation, used to depict divine conception.[84] Saint Bernard is here not only being physically and spiritually nourished but receiving perhaps a type of divine rebirth through the light and milk of the Holy Spirit and Mary. Both images of the Lactation of Saint Bernard are demonstrative of the style of depicting the Virgin's breastmilk as a jet of milk rather than the drops of milk, and they clearly show the milk directed at the mouth of Saint Bernard.[85] This episode is of a miraculous nature and is not available to all, but rather directed for a privileged few. In this way Saint Bernard is singled out as being deserving of the same milk that nourished Christ. This milk, as Cianci argues, has a redemptive quality, and in this way I argue it has healing properties in the *maria lactans* miracles: the recipient, in this case Saint Bernard, is healed of all earthly misdemeanours to be made ready for salvation on Judgement Day. The mouth is central to Saint Bernard receiving the redeeming milk from Mary: this is the way that it physically and spiritually enters the body. As discussed by Heather Webb, the mouth opened the way to both the digestive system and the spiritual system, and so the milk of Mary can behave as both food and healing redemption in this miraculous episode.[86]

In both of these images only one breast is exposed, and in these cases the Virgin lactates from her right breast. This has some spiritual significance in the right-left binary as well as

[81] There are similarities here with other episodes of religious visions which are manifested in shafts of light, including the visions of Mechthild of Hackeborn. See Laura Kalas, 'The Matter of Devotion in Mechthild of Hackeborn's *The Book of Gostley Grace*', in *Materiality, Embodiment, and Enclosure in Late Medieval Religious Culture (1080 – 1530)*, ed. by Michelle Sauer and Joshua Easterling (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, forthcoming); 'Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, and Female Spirituality', in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval English Literature*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Sif Ríkharðsdóttir (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2023), pp. 321-331.
[82] Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk', p. 872.
[83] Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk', p. 872.
[84] Laura Saetveit Miles, *The Virgin Mary's Book at the Annunciation: Reading, Interpretation, and Devotion in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020), p. 1.
[85] In later fifteenth century images, the milk/rays of light are more often aimed at Saint Bernard's eyes than his mouth, Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk', p. 898.
[86] Webb, 'Cardiosensory Impulses in Late Medieval Spirituality', p. 276.

reflecting the right/left, masculine/feminine, good/evil binary in Chapter Three with regard to the placement of hellmouths in relation to Christ. Here, the right breast, the masculine side is lactating. It is also to the right of Christ that those who are saved go to on the Day of Judgement, while the condemned go to the left (Matthew 25:33). This emphasis on the right connects with the redemptive power of the breastmilk of the Virgin Mary to indicate a miraculous healing and salvific episode for Saint Bernard; an episode that centres around him receiving the breastmilk in his mouth.

It is striking that this miraculous encounter with the Divine, places Saint Bernard at a distance from the Virgin Mary: he is never shown suckling from her breast. There is no physical contact between his mouth and the body of the Virgin Mary. He receives divine nourishment and healing redemption, but not as a baby, by suckling, but as a supplicant, at a distance from the divinity of the Virgin Mary. Furthermore, in both images there is also a book present: in the first image it is closed and discarded on the floor, and in the second image Saint Bernard has it open but is not paying attention to it. This has a strong resemblance to Annunciation imagery where Mary often has a book. Laura Saetveit Miles investigates the trope of a book in Annunciation imagery and offers a multi-layered interpretation, relating the book to the reading of Old Testament Prophecies of the Incarnation, as well as Christ as the Word of God and Mary conceiving the Word of God.[87] In the Saint Bernard images, the presence of a book could indicate the continued presence of Christ, the Word of God, in all miraculous events, and the close connection of Christ, his mother Mary, and Saint Bernard. It may be assumed that these texts are of a religious nature and therefore important to the spiritual growth of Saint Bernard, however the healing he is receiving through his mouth is of greater benefit than all the written learning which is cast aside. This further highlights the mouth as an important part of the human body for spiritual healing, nourishment and redemption.

Both of these images are intended for wealthy, well-educated audiences. The first is contained within a text which the Bodleian library lists as containing 'Private prayer and devotions, in Latin and French'.[88] The private nature of this text indicates the wealth and presumed

[87] Laura Saetveit Miles, *The Virgin Mary's Book of the Annunciation*, p.2.
[88] MS Douce 264, Bodleian Library, f. 38v, < https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/4eb290ef-8a15-41b5-9046-ce355dede25e/ > [Accessed 27-07-2022].

education of the commissioner and owner and would suggest that such a person could appreciate the legend of Saint Bernard as well as understand some of the implications of receiving the nourishing breastmilk of the Virgin Mary: a physical nourishing as well as a spiritual nourishing. The nourishing effects may be perceived as a type of healing, or rather a measure for the maintenance of good spiritual health. The second image is taken from a Cistercian monastery and is described as being part of a 'triple homage to Mary.'[89] It appears to be part of the growing devotion to Mary in the later Middle Ages, as well as including Saint Bernard, a man instrumental in the spread of the order across Europe, and therefore, this miraculous vision would have been of great importance to the Cistercian Order. As with the first image, this panel would have been viewed by monks who would have known the legend of Saint Bernard and understood the nourishing effect of the iconography. As with the doom paintings discussed in Chapter Three, the full meaning, and indeed more subtle aspects, of these images requires a level of status, wealth and education to appreciate.

The breastmilk of the Virgin Mary has further religious associations, most importantly with the blood of Christ, and by extension the nourishment of the church community. Cianci draws a striking connection between milk and blood as it pertains to the life of the church community which 'is fed by the sacred milk of Jesus' words and body as Jesus was fed by his mother's milk'.[90] All of this feeding is occurring through the mouth. Sometimes it is through the mouth by ingesting the milk of Mary or the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, or through the mouth by someone speaking the words of the Bible. In this way the mouth is central both to nourishment and healing in the redemptive power of Mary's milk, Jesus' body, and the words of Scripture.

The healing power of breastmilk, which in the *maria lactans* episodes manifests more as spiritual redemption, is in evidence in medical textbooks of the Middle Ages. Here, the medical and religious worlds collide with breastmilk being efficacious in both instances. Within medical remedies breastmilk is not a very common addition; it is included in a

[89] 'Our Lady of the Milk Between Saint Bernard and Saint Benedict', < https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/our-lady-of-the-milk-between-saint-bernard-and/9b376cb9-cb0b-4fb1-80c2-12da1fdd09f6 > [Accessed 27-07-2022].
[90] Cianci, '*Maria Lactans* and the Three Good Brothers', p. 59; see also Laura Kalas, *Margery Kempe's Spiritual Medicine: Suffering, Transformation and the Life-Course* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2020).

relatively narrow set of ailments.[91] It is perhaps unsurprising that it is the ailments of women that are more commonly treated with breastmilk, as it is naturally intended for babies rather than adult ingestion. Such female ailments that it is included in remedies for include birthing difficulties, breastfeeding difficulties, and afflictions of the womb. Further to these, breastmilk also appears in some treatments for ailments of the eyes and ears. Two medical texts that contain several treatments which make use of breastmilk are the *Trotula* ensemble and the Middle English work of Gilbertus Anglicus. The *Trotula* ensemble is a set of texts dedicated to the care of women and therefore it is unsurprising that it harnesses remedies that make use of breastmilk. However, of the several treatments for such ailments as when 'the womb is distempered by hotness', and 'hardness of the womb and its inversion and swelling', only one treatment, for delivery of a delayed or dead foetus, is an ingested remedy. In the text *Conditions of Women*, part of the *Trotula* ensemble, it states:

> [100] But if birth is up to now still delayed or if the fetus is dead inside her and she is not delivered of it, let her drink "a. ii. L. c. r. z. py. De," the milk of another woman and immediately she will be delivered.
>
> [Quod si adhuc tardet partus uel si fetus mortuus est in ea et non liberator, bibat a. ii. i. c. r. z. py. di. lac alterius mulieris e statim liberabitur.][92]

The 'healing' quality of this example is its efficacious and potentially lifesaving aspect, allowing successful delivery of the baby and hopefully saving the life of the mother. This remedy highlights the importance of women and the ability of one successful mother to help another through a bodily fluid that symbolises that mother's successful delivery. Success in this case may be defined as a mother delivering a healthy baby and producing the milk necessary to nourish that baby, but it may also be implying a success within the marriage market. She has taken her place within society as a wife and mother, with security, purpose and protection within a masculine dominated society.

In contrast to the remedies located in *Conditions of Women* in the *Trotula* ensemble, the Middle English translation of the *Compendium Medicinae* of Gilbertus Anglicus does not contain any treatments containing breastmilk that are specific to either women or women's

[91] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 476.
[92] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine,* ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), [100], 102-103. The meaning of the letters in this remedy are unclear but may be related to measurements of the breastmilk.

ailments. It does however contain several treatments containing 'woman's milk' which are specific to the eyes and ears. Strikingly none of these remedies are intended to be ingested: they are all washes or ointments. This may be suggestive of some concern over the effect of adults ingesting breastmilk: a substance that is intended to nourish babies. This concern may also relate to the origin of the breastmilk as menstrual blood, a substance indicative of the leaky and uncontrolled nature of women's bodies, and a contaminating substance.

Apart from the treatments for the eyes and ears there is one additional treatment, Gilbertus' work which specifically requires the 'milk of a woman þat fedeþ a mayd-chyld', which when combined with 'popilion' and the 'iuys of singrene', is made into a plaster for the forehead.[93] This is the first of the treatments considered in this chapter that is specific on the gender of the baby that is being breast-fed, and presumably the gender of the baby that the woman delivered. The plaster is a treatment for a condition that Gilbertus lists as 'Frenesi', which 'is a brennyng posteme in þe forþere party of a mannus brayn oþer in þe skynnes of þe brayn…And comyn signes þat folewen þis sicnesse is: myche waking, and lackyng of good wyt, wraþþe and woodnesse, and sodden risyngus up, and sodeyn fallynges doun'.[94] This remedy specifically contained milk that feeds a female child and although it is an external treatment it is clearly for an internal complaint, importantly a mental disorder. Such an ailment requiring breastmilk is suggestive of the healing qualities assigned to breastmilk: that it must be particularly efficacious to effect a change in the brain.

Furthermore, there is an interesting detail on the gender of the baby, suggestive of a difference between breastmilk feeding a male child and breastmilk feeding a female child. There are distinct differences between the humoral balances of the male and female bodies, with the male body being of a hotter and drier nature, while the female body is colder and wetter. There is gender significance here with the milk being obtained from a woman who is feeding a female child. It is further striking that this feminised treatment is for a condition of the mind: 'Frenesi', which appears to be a type of insanity, madness, or frenzy.[95] In medieval

[93] Laura Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic (GUL MS Hunter 509, ff. 1r-167v)* A Compendium of Medieval Medicine Including the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 74, lines 4-6.
[94] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, p. 72, lines 19-20, 22-25.
[95] MED s.v.: 'frenesie n. (a) Insanity, delirium, madness, mental derangement, irrationality [attrib. to an excess of certain 'humors' in the brain, etc.]; also, a fit of madness, a frenzy…'

understanding there was a distinction between the masculine and feminine which the former associated more with rationality and the latter with the flesh. Following this process, it may be supposed that the milk for a boy child would be imbued with more 'rational' giving properties to counteract a mental disorder such a 'Frenesi'. Despite this, it is clear in its uses within remedies that breastmilk is associated with efficacy, healing, and nourishment, in similar ways to the breastmilk of the Virgin Mary in miraculous cases of *maria lactans.* These examples of medical remedies and *maria lactans* miracles therefore encapsulate the medieval confluences of medicine and religion.

Excepting the few remedies specific to women's problems within which breastmilk is consumed, most of the treatments that require breastmilk, albeit for specific ailments, are not ingested. However, a few other remedies spread across other early and late medieval sources attest to a small selection of ingested remedies containing breastmilk. Some are of a similar nature to those in the *Conditions of Women*, including a recipe for 'a woman having difficulty breastfeeding', which contains a surprising instruction concerning the knowledge of the patient:

> And for a woman having difficulty breastfeeding, crystal is ground, mixed with the milk of another woman, and then given the patient to drink, although the woman must not be told what milk it is.[96]

It is striking in this remedy that the patient should not be told what milk it is that she is drinking, and R. A. Buck suggests, by this warning, that 'the healer should anticipate some resistance'.[97] This shows a 'brief glimpse of how women…respond to these recipes constructed by the medical healing tradition'[98]: female resistance to a remedy devised, written and recorded by a masculine medical healing tradition.[99] Although Buck does not specify the exact nature of the text it does contain 'medical recipes written in Middle English

[96] Recipe quoted in Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 481. Buck gives the reference to W. R. Dawson (Ed.) *A leechbook or collection of medical recipes of the fifteenth century: The text of MS. No. 136 of the medical society of London together with a transcript into modern spelling* (London: Macmillan, 1934).
[97] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 482.
[98] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 482.
[99] Monica Green explores the fate of women's medicine in the medieval period and the monopoly of male authorship for women's medicine in her book *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

around 1444 that are based heavily on much earlier Latin and, ultimately, Greek sources',[100] source material that owes much to the work of male academic authorities. There is also perhaps some suggestion of what might be termed mind over matter: that the knowledge of the nature of the milk should interfere with the healing of the patient. The only other ingredient contained with this remedy is the slightly unusual addition of a crystal. Here is a combination of two unusual ingredients to ease what should be a natural female process. As with milk, crystal is of the same white colouration if perhaps clearer, and in medieval lapidaries there is a distinct connection between crystal and production of breastmilk. Crystal is commonly described in lapidaries as being efficacious in helping women to produce milk,[101] and so in the above remedy there is a double attempt to help, firstly through the breastmilk and secondly through the crystal.

In other ingested remedies containing breastmilk there are other combinations with unusual ingredients: snail foam, and a hedgehog. These remedies appear to be for significant illnesses, which would suggest that ingestion of breastmilk is only in the case of a dangerous illness rather than a treatment for a simple illness. Two of the treatments are for a fever, the third is for 'the falling evil', commonly categorised as epilepsy, and the final recipe is for the restoration of speech.

> For fever: take a snail (or slug) and clean it and take the clean foam; mix with woman's milk; give to eat; he will soon be better[102]
>
> For the treatment of fever, only three drops of milk from a woman who has borne a male child are placed in a soft egg and given the patient to eat, but a complete stranger to the patient must present the prepared sick dish to the patient[103]

[100] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', pp. 480-481.
[101] The MED provides some references to lapidaries on crystals: I have recently found these references in looking at the Middle English Dictionary. 'a1450 Dc. 291 Lapid (Dc. 291) p. 37: Cristalle is frost harde,. & the olde Auncestres made þerof poudre & yaue hit to drynke to norisces, & hit helpeth to haue þe more mylke,' and 'a1500 Peter b. Lapid. (peter b 33) p. 76: Cristallus is a stone…make pouder þerof, gif it to þe nurse to þrynke, & it schal increse her mylke… Also cristal haþ þat vertue [etc.]'.
[102] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 471. Buck references E. Pettit (Ed, and trans.), *Anglo-Saxon remedies, charms, and prayers from British Library MS Harley 585:* The Lacnunga (Vol 2) (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2001).
[103] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 481. Buck references H. Larson, *An Old Icelandic medical miscellany: MS Royal Irish Academy 23 D 43 with supplement from MS Trinity College* (Dubline) L-2-27 (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1931).

> For an illness called "the falling evil," a hedgehog is roasted until it becomes powder and then this is put in the patient's food: the patient should also drink the milk of a woman who is nursing her first child.[104]
>
> For the patient who has lost the ability to speak, a crystal bead is ground, mixed with the milk of a woman who has borne a male child, and given the patient to drink[105]

Each of these treatments has an unexpected element: three of them contain one other ingredient alongside the breastmilk, but each is an unusual ingredient to find in a medical remedy. The first contains the foam of a snail, the third a hedgehog, and the last a crystal bead. This may demonstrate a folkloric origin to some of these treatments or point to the significant nature of the illnesses to be treated. Buck has further suggested that this crystal bead, included in the last treatment, may in fact be a rosary bead,[106] which would add a semi-religious nature to the treatment, evidencing the close relationship between medical and religious discourses.

Each of these illnesses treated is of a serious nature and there is a suggestion only for serious ailments is there recourse to ingesting breastmilk, which is otherwise restricted to a few conditions specific to women. There would appear to be emphasis on restricting the ingestion of breastmilk, a fluid intended to feed a baby, to ailments of expectant or new mothers, and a few exceptional other cases. Also, the more obscure nature of the ingredients in these remedies may carry with them a pseudo-magical element, thereby drawing a connection between magic and medicine. Women's bodies carried with them a certain amount of uncertainty, hence such texts as *De secretis mulierum (The Secrets of Women)* and this may help to account for the reticence with which medical remedies chose to make use of breastmilk, and yet from these women is produced a fluid of powerful healing. This healing power combined with the other unusual ingredients creates remedies with almost as much mystery as the healing power of charms.

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[104] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 480. Buck references G. Henslow, *Medical works of the fourteenth century* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899).
[105] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 480. Buck references G. Henslow, *Medical works of the fourteenth century* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899).
[106] Buck, 'Woman's Milk in Anglo-Saxon and Later Medieval Medical Texts', p. 482.

The Healing Power of Speech

'Spekynge is aproprid to mankind.'[107] In these words Bartholomew the Englishman, a thirteenth-century encyclopaedist summarised an important medieval understanding of the distinction between mankind and animals. In Chapter One, the ability to articulate in the spoken word is shown to be a characteristic of humans, and Bartholomew the Englishman details the clarity and strength of a praiseworthy voice.[108] In Chapter One I argued that the ideal voice could demand authority, and demonstrate rationality, reason, morality and through these things, humanity. The miraculous healing examples in the speech chapter focussed on the person whose speech was restored, and the importance for the individual of the restoration of this key human function. However, here I focus on the power of speech to be transformative, restorative and healing. The following section focusses on the efficacious nature of speech and how its projection onto another human being can have healing power.

The power of speech to heal is recognised across different genres: the medical, the philosophical, and the religious. Speech, as an ability specific to humanity is also key to defining humanity as it allows a person to demonstrate their rationality and understanding of morality; without speech these characteristics that separate humanity from animals cannot be articulated. Rationality and morality stem from the human soul, and it is this connection between speech, the rational soul and humanity that Roger Bacon (c. 1214/1220-1292) highlights in his *Opus Tertium* as central to the healing power of words:

> But we must consider that words have great power; and nearly all the miracles performed since the beginning of the world have been performed through words. And the most important work of the rational soul is the word, in which there is the most joy. And therefore when words are pronounced with deep thought and great desire, and right intention, and with strong confidence, they have great virtue. For when these four come together the substance of the rational soul is greatly excited to work its form and strength on the body and things external, and in its works, and especially in words, which are formed from within; they therefore will receive more of the virtue of the soul.
>
> [Sed considerare debemus quod verba habent maximam potestatem; et omnia miracula facta a principio mundi fere facta sunt per verba. Et opus

[107] *On the Properties of Things,* p. 212, line 16.
[108] *On the Properties of Things*, p. 213, lines 8-16, refer to Chapter One, pp. 44-45 for full quotation.

> animae rationalis praecipuum est verbum, et in quo maxime delectatur. Et ideo cum verba proferuntur profunda cogitatione et magno desiderio, et recta intentione, et cum forti confidentia, habent magnam virtutem. Nam cum haec quatuor contingent excitatur substantia animae rationalis fortius ad faciendum suam speciem et virtutem a se in corpus suum et res extra, et in opera sua, et maxime in verba, quae ab intrinsecus formantur; et ideo plus de virtute animae recipient.][109]

Bacon declaims the power of the word and its intrinsic connection to the rational soul, and the virtuous soul, as well as its relationship to the performance of miracles. The rational soul is a vital element of a human being, and its connection to the spoken word helps define why speech is a key element in humanity and, in Bacon's view, when words are combined with good intention and virtue, they have power. If words have power when performed in the correct way and for the right reasons, it therefore stands that they also have healing power on earth as well as through miracles. Due to this connection between the soul and the power of words, it is clear that there is an implied meaning in which only humans can effect this power of healing through speech as they are the only earthly beings to possess the power of speech and a rational soul. Bacon further highlights the necessity of confidence and great virtue, two characteristics that create a human character of authority. Therefore, as this chapter will argue, a rational soul, virtue, and confidence may all be combined together to effect healing.

The power of the spoken word, as detailed by Bacon, has the ability to effect healing. Within the form of charms and miracles it is the speech of the healer that has an efficacious effect on the sufferer. As discussed in Chapter One, only humans have the ability to produce speech: the functioning of the tongue, teeth and lips combine to create speech. It is a function that sets humanity apart from animals and large parts of the monstrous world, not only physically through being able to speak, but also mentally and spiritually by communicating the understanding of morality. It is therefore significant that this function, and the mouth as the centre of the function, is singled out as having healing and transformative power. However, by itself speech is not necessarily healing: according to Bacon it must be combined with good intention and virtue. In the case of many charms recorded by medical writers, speech is combined with literacy and healing authority, and for miracles speech is accompanied by

[109] Fr. Rogeri Bacon, *Opera quaedam hactenus inedita, volume I containing Opus Tertium, Opus Minus, Compendium Philosophiae*, edited by J. S. Brewer (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1859), chapter XXVI, p. 96. The translation is my own.

spiritual authority. Therefore, the mouth as the conduit for spoken healing expresses more than healing; it expresses virtue and authority which are necessary to effect the healing power of speech.

Within the healing power of charms 'language functions as a medium of medical therapy alongside the traditional categories of herbs, minerals, and animals'.[110] Charms, most commonly the very popular ones, often find themselves recorded in medical texts or remedy collections, and here they 'function as prescriptions, which were to be recited in a patient's presence'.[111] Two of the main types of spoken healing are charms for specific ailments, such as the Three Kings charm for epilepsy which 'has to be spoken in the ear of someone who has fallen in a proxysm',[112] and short spoken passages which are embedded into, or appended to, medical remedies. Within these charms the medical and the spiritual collide; the most common additions to remedies are Christian prayers. One such example occurs within the Medieval Welsh Medical Texts, [113] in which it states 'If a person's liver sticks to his rib, in the morning when the sun rises, while singing your Paternoster, take liverwort and put it with new beer and give it to the patient to drink in a bath for nine days' [O glyn avv dyn wrth y assen, kymer y boreu pann gyfoto heul gan ganu dy bader y gyglennydd, a tharaw ar gwrwf newyd, a dyro y'r klaf o'e yuet ymywn enneint naw nieu].[114] This form of healing is not strictly a form of spoken healing which will be investigated in detail below, but it is an example of one of the ways in which medicine incorporated religious elements. Although the most common form of charms is as a spoken remedy, they are not restricted to this medium; they may be 'written on the body, on food or drinks, or on amuletic objects, or parchment carried by the patient'.[115] The line between medical and spiritual is further blurred in

[110] Lea T. Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in medieval Medical Theory and Practice', *Social History of Medicine*, 16.3 (2003), p. 356.
[111] Lea Olsan, 'The Marginality of Charms in Medieval England', in *The Power of Words: Studies on charms and charming in Europe*, ed. by James Kapaló, Eva Pócs and William Ryan (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), (135-164), p. 155.
[112] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 353.
[113] The recipes used in this edition are taken from four manuscripts dating from the end of the fourteenth century and beginning of the fifteenth century. These manuscripts are British Library Additional 14912 (BLAdd), Cardiff 3.242 (Hafod 16, Card), Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson B467 (Rawl), and Oxford Jesus College 111 (The Red Book of Hergest, RBH). Diana Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts, Volume One: The Recipes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020).
[114] Luft, M*edieval Welsh Medical Texts*, 6/22, p. 174, Welsh on p. 175. This remedy is contained within Book 6 of Luft's edition and the collection of remedies in books six 'is found in British Library Additional 14912 (BLAdd), Cardiff 3.242 (Card), Oxford Bodleian Rawlinson B467 (Rawl) and Oxford Jesus College III (RBH)'. Luft, *Medieval Welsh Medical Texts*, p. 163.
[115] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 349.

prescriptions such as ‘Communion wafers inscribed with holy words’, taken for three days to relieve fever, a remedy in Thomas Fayreford’s medical work.[116] Fayreford is described by Peter Jones as ‘a provincial practitioner with no university qualification or status as a retainer’,[117] however his book containing several shorter treatises includes remedies that he presumably used and believed were efficacious. Lea T. Olsan has speculated that ‘Fayreford recorded the collection of remedies for his own use and to establish a record of successful cures’, which gives an insight into the more common uses of certain remedies than is clear in strictly academic texts designed for university education.

Within the genre of medical literature these spoken remedies are recorded in written form. In this, the performative aspects of the spoken healing are lost. As with herbal remedies that do not record exact measurements of ingredients, so too these charms do not record the way in which they must be administered: when to say them, where to say them, or how to say them. The day-to-day application of these charms is lost to the modern reader however, what is apparent in many examples is the authority that the speaker, the healer, channels through their speech over the ailment of the patient.

Although the inclusion of charms is relatively widespread across medieval medical literature it is by no means universally accepted. Guy de Chauliac condemns the use of charms, empiric remedies, and the practitioners that employed them. Guy specifically refers to Gilbertus as one author who condones and includes such cures in his work: ‘I haue taken litel of emperykes and of charmes, of the whiche þinges plente is founden in Gilbertyn and in Thesauro Pauperum’.[118] Guy is more scathing of the work of John Gaddesden (1280-1361), an English surgeon and author of the *Rosa Anglica*: ‘Now laste rose vp an vnwise Rose of Engelond, þe whiche, to me sent and seþen I trowed to fynde þerin þe smell of swetenesse, and I fond þe tales of Yspane, of Gilbert and of Thedryk’.[119] Olsan singles out this phrase as being Guy’s condemnation of ‘Gaddesden’s *Rosa Anglica* for its inclusion of empirical

[116] Olsan, ‘Charms and Prayers in medieval Medical Theory and Practice’, p. 358.
[117] Peter Murray Jones, ‘Thomas Fayreford: An English Fifteenth-Century Medical Practitioner’, in *Medicine from the Black Death to the French Disease*, edited by Roger French, Jon Arrizabalaga, Andrew Cunningham, and Luis Garćia-Ballester (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), (pp. 156-183), p. 157.
[118] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, edited by Margaret S. Ogden, Volume 1, EETS o.s. 265 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 533, lines 31-32, p. 534, line 1.
[119] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 9, lines 15-17.

remedies, which he labels 'mere tales' (*fabulas*).'[120] Guy makes his feelings about empirical remedies and practitioners clear in yet another passage in his work where he lists groups of practitioners and their practices that 'in þe processe of this book beeþ reproued, þei are lefte out of þis present work,' and among those listed are 'emperiqes or charmers,' those that 'helen alle woundes wiþ coniurisouns,' and 'wommen and of many ydeotis or foles, þe which remitten seke men for all manere of sekenesse onliche to seyntes'.[121] As Guy makes his point more than once in his work, he appears to be emphasising it to his readers, a number of whom would be medical and surgical students; the next generation of practitioners. Furthermore, Guy appears to argue for the separation of medicine from magical or empirical remedies in a similar way to Henri de Mondeville's arguments for the separation of medicine from spirituality. In condemning the work of empirics and the efficacy of charms Guy extends the views of Mondeville on the separation of medicine and religion and proposes a view contrary to many medical and philosophical writers by denying any peculiar abilities of the mouth through the function of speech to effect healing.

Despite the reservations expressed by Guy, charms are a common addition in medical literature of the Middle Ages. Charms have a widespread healing capacity and are not restricted to one part of the body although they are commonly assigned to particular ailments. One popular narrative charm of the Middle Ages, which is intended for the healing of wounds, is the Three Good Brothers charm. In this narrative charm there is an association between the wounds of the patient compared with the wounds of Christ.

> Three good brothers were walking along the way and the Lord Jesus Christ appeared before them and said: "Three good brothers, where are you going?" They replied to him: "Lord, we go to the mountain to gather some herbs for wounds, bruises and pains." And the Lord said: "Come with me and swear to me on the crucifix and by the milk of the Blessed Virgin that you will not reveal the secret nor sell it. Go to the Mount of Olives and take some olive oil, soak some wool in it, and place it on the wound, speaking thus: 'Just as the soldier Longinus pierced the side of the Lord, and it neither bled nor felt bad nor was painful nor swelled nor festered nor was burning, similarly this wound that I enchant will neither bleed nor fester nor will be painful nor will swell nor will be putrefied nor will have an inflammation. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.'" Amen.

[120] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 349.
[121] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, p. 10, lines 1, 18-19, 22-24, 27-28.

> [Tres boni fratres ambulabant per unam viam et occurrit illis dominus Ihesus Christus et ait: 'Tres boni fratres, quo itis?' Dicunt ei: 'Domine, imus ad montem colligere herbas plagationis, percussions et doloris.' Et dixit dominus: 'Venite mecum et iurate mihi per crucifixum et per lac beate Virginis, ut non in abscondito dicatis, nec mercedem inde accipiatis. Sed ite ad montem oliveti et tollite inde oleum olive, intingite in eo lanam ovis et ponite super plagam et sic dicite: "Sicut Longinus miles latus salvatoris aperuit, non diu sanguinavit, non rancavit, non doluit, non tumuit, non putruit, nec ardorem habuit, sic plaga ista, quam carmino, non sanguinet, non rancet, non doleat, non tumeat, non putreat, nec ardorem tempestatis habeat. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.'"] [122]

This charm is deeply embedded in religion; in fact, it has far more in common with religion than with medicine. The encounter of the three brothers is with Jesus Christ; they are called to swear on the crucifix and the milk of the Virgin Mary, the place they must travel to is the Mount of Olives; there is a mention of the wounds of Christ, and the charm ends with reference to each member of the Trinity. This charm follows, as Edina Bozóky describes, 'the general theme of an encounter', which is applicable to a number of charms. In this way there is a confrontation of the patient with the supernatural, commonly of a religious nature, alongside the physical encounter of the healer with the patient.[123] Bozóky further categorises the types of narrative charm and identifies the Three Good Brothers charm as a 'special category of direct mediation', for even 'if the name of the sick man is not specified in the charm, it seems to concern him directly, the Lord acts and speaks for him'.[124] The power of words is not only to heal but in these narrative charms it even seems to be able to cross supernatural boundaries and involve the patient, and the healer within a mythic narrative. The power of words is further harnessed by the healer who places himself in the role of the Three Good Brothers, 'adding words – those that Christ uses in the charm – to his other ministrations', and thereby 'the charm speaker commands infections and other bad outcomes of wounds through the 'virtue' of Christ's wounds'.[125] The healer reciting this charm carries authority through words: the charm specifically uses the phrase 'this wound that I enchant', which demonstrates the power of the healer, through the spoken word, over the wounds.

[122] Both quotations from Bozóky, 'Medieval Narrative Charms', *The Power of Words: Studies on charms and charming in Europe*, edited by James Kapaló, Eva Pócs and William Ryan (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2013), pp. 103-104. Bozóky gives the reference to Ms Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, 73, fol. 142v.
[123] Bozóky, 'Medieval Narrative Charms', p. 105.
[124] Bozóky, 'Medieval Narrative Charms', p. 112.
[125] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 360.

Apart from the obvious centrality of the mouth as the origin of the words of the spoken charm, there is another significant connection particular to this charm between the ailment, the wound, and the mode of healing, the mouth. There is both a direct and intimate connection with the wound of Christ, his pain and suffering which brings healing, just as this charm is intended to heal. Also, the physical image of a mouth with lips, and a wound as a mouth with lips, whereby with the opening of the 'natural' one, the mouth, the 'unnatural' one, the wound, is closed and healed.

This charm is a popular one of the Middle Ages, having significance within German, English and Irish history.[126] Some of the English medical authorities that include this charm are Gilbertus Anglicus, John Gaddesden and Thomas Fayreford.[127] These are clearly educated male practitioners that are repeating, recording, and thereby spreading this charm as medically efficacious. It is their own reputations as practitioners and authorities that is at stake through including such remedies that lack a basis in the medical science of medieval England. Fayreford even goes so far as to recommend this charm as 'a good *empiricum* proven on the poor [*Empiricum bonum expertum in vulneribus pauperum*]'.[128] Olsan provides several explanations for this appellation: that it is evident of Fayreford's work among the poor; evidence of his successful cures; or indeed evidence of the popularity of such a charm with the poor.[129] Perhaps more cynical but convincing is the suggestion that 'for some practitioners *empirica* probably recommended themselves because they were easy to apply and cost nothing to dispense'.[130] This works both ways: it is cheap and easy for the practitioner to dispense, but equally it is affordable for a wider number of people, and had the added attraction of its religious associations. In its academic recording and Fayreford's claim of efficacy in the poor this charm appears to be a form of healing that crosses social boundaries, as well as the physical and supernatural boundaries. Moreover, in the recording of this charm it appears to be centralised on the men in society: it is educated men that are

[126] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', (343-366); Cianci, '*Maria Lactans* and the Three Good Brothers, the German Tradition of the Charm and its Cultural Context', (55-70); Ilona Tuomi, ''As I went up the hill of Mount Olive' The Irish Tradition of the Three Good Brothers Charm Revisited', *Studia Celtica Fennica*, XIII (2013), (69-94).
[127] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 360.
[128] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 351.
[129] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 351.
[130] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 351.

recording the charm in texts to be read by other educated men, and presumably to be performed by men. Through this the charm may demonstrate the authority of men, specifically educated men, within society to heal through the power of words, but also to define what is considered as healing, through their writing. As with the healing power of the kiss, the mouth is able to heal when combined with social status, and here also academic authority.

The Three Good Brothers charm has a connection to the mouth not only through spoken healing but through the nature of the ailment. The wound to be healed is an unnatural entrance into the body, and is, significantly, healed through the medium of a natural entrance into the body, the mouth. Another popular charm is the *Supra petram*, a charm for toothache, and in this case, it is a part of the mouth that is healed through the medium of the spoken word, coming from another mouth: the mouth of the healer is efficacious on the mouth of the patient. Like the Three Good Brothers charm, the *Super petram* charm places the patient within a mythic narrative. Although it appears of a similar narrative nature to the Three Good Brothers charm, Bozóky categorises it slightly differently: 'Past and present, *historiola* and reality are equally interwoven'.[131] The encounter in the charm between the patient, Saint Peter, and the healer, Christ, is translated by 'a skilful transposition of reality', to substitute the actual patient into the position of Saint Peter, and therefore 'the sick man is integrated into mythic time'.[132]

There are a variety of healing charms for toothache, for example the works of Gaddesden and Fayreford list four and six verbal cures respectively for toothache.[133] However the *Supra petram* charm is the most popular; appearing in several variants. It is most often a conversation between Christ and Saint Peter, however it also appears as a narrative charm featuring Saint Apollonia, and also a version featuring Abraham.

> St. Peter sat on a marble block and put his hand to his head; he was miserable, exhausted by toothache. Jesus appeared before him and said: "Why are you sad, Peter?" "Lord, the worm of migraine is eating up my teeth." Jesus said then: "I adjure you, O worm of migraine, by the Father,

[131] Bozóky, 'Medieval Narrative Charms', p. 112.
[132] Bozóky, 'Medieval Narrative Charms', p. 112.
[133] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 362.

> Son, and Holy Ghost, that you leave .N., the servant of God, and that you never again hurt him"
>
> [Sanctus Petrus cum sederet super petram marmoream misit manum ad caput, dolore dentium fatigatus tristabatur. Apparuit autem ei Jesus qui ait: "Quare tristaris, Petre?" "Domine, venit vermis emigraneus et devorat dentes meos." Jesus autem ait: "Adjuro te, emigranee, per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum, ut exeas et recedes a famulo dei .N. et ultraeum non ledas."][134]

There are variations of this charm, featuring Saint Peter, across the Middle Ages, for example one appears in the *Lacnunga*, an Anglo-Saxon collection of herbal remedies, charms and prayers, which is more detailed in calling upon 'the Father and Son and the Holy Ghost, and by heaven and earth, and by the twenty orders of angels, and by the sixty prophets, and by the twelve apostles', to remove the worm from the teeth.[135] This version also appears in an almost identical Middle English form in British Library, Additional MS. 33996. This same charm appears in several other variants across the Middle Ages, including a substitution of Saint Apollonia for Saint Peter, or Saint Columba or Abraham instead of Saint Peter. These charms are spread geographically, with the example featuring Saint Apollonia originating in Brittany, and the version of the charm featuring Abraham originating in the Scottish Highlands.[136] These charms for toothache were not localised charms but their variations spread, suggesting that the call for such healing was a popular one.

> Saint Apollonia was sitting on a marble stone. Our Lord, passing that way, said to her: 'Apollonia, what dost thou there?' – 'I am here for my head, for my blood, and for my tooth-ache.' – 'Return Apollonia. If it is a *goutte* of blood, it shall fall, if it is a worm, it shall die[137]

> Abraham said to Jesus Christ
> As they walked on the slope of Bethris:
> 'I have not the power of walking
> Or of riding because of the toothache.'
> Said Jesus Christ to Abraham:
> 'Toothache will not be in that head;

[134] Edina Bozóky, 'Mythic Mediation in Healing Incantations', in Sheila Campbell, Bert Hall, David Klausner eds., *Health, Disease and Healing in Medieval Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), (84-92), pp. 86-87. Bozóky cites the reference for this charm as Vienna MS. 2817, fol. 28r (14thC), ed. A. Schönbach, "Segen" *Zeitschrift für deutschen Altertum: N. F. 15* (1883), 308.
[135] Wilfrid Bonser, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England* (London: The Wellcome Historical Medical Library, 1963), p. 244. Bonser cites the reference for the charm from the Lacnunga as 'Lacn. 100 (CLXVI)'. Bonser also references another variant of this charm as an 'unpublished thirteenth century Latin charm', from 'Brit. Mus., MS. Sloane 1580, f. 44b-45a'.
[136] Bonser, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 244, 279.
[137] Bonser, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 244. Bonser cites the reference for this charm as 'L. F. Sauvé, 'Charmes de la Basse-Bretagne', Rev. Celtique, 1883, vi. 74'.

> Out the toothache! Out the toothache!...
> Known to thy King is thy disease,
> Toothworm and toothache to be placed under the earth[138]

There are clearly variations of the charm for toothache, of which these examples are but a few, however they do show the different saints who could be invoked for aid. Saint Apollonia was commonly called upon by sufferers of toothache due to the nature of her martyrdom, in which her 'teeth and jawbone had been broken by the Romans before she was burnt'.[139]

> Thus she offered her devout soul to God and handed over her most chaste body to the persecutors to be tortured. The executioners, cruelly wreaking their wrath upon her, first beat out all her teeth. Then they piled up wood and built a huge pyre, telling her they would burn her alive…[140]

Here, the virgin Apollonia's body is tortured before her execution. Her torture is centred on her mouth. This is firstly a central and very visible part of the human body, but furthermore it holds a connection with the vagina, as discussed in Chapter Three, which in this torture is important as Apollonia is a virgin martyr. Martha Eastman points towards the way that imagery of the vagina connects to the mouth through Fabliaux where the vagina could speak, and also through imagery of the vagina as the entrance to Hell.[141] This torture of Apollonia's mouth suggests a sexualised attack: while the vagina remains untouched, the corresponding orifice of the mouth is assaulted, a sexualisation synonymous with the image of the virgin-martyr in medieval hagiography. Within virgin-martyr hagiographies there is often a brutal, physical and sexualised torture which has been described as both 'pornographic', but also a test of faith, often miraculous, and resulting in a burgeoning of virgin-martyr cults.[142] Through her physical torture, Apollonia became synonymous with healings associated with ailments of the mouth.

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[138] Bonser, *The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 244. Bonser cites the reference for this charm as 'A. Macbain, 'Gaelic Incantations', Trans. Gaelic Soc. Inverness, 1892, xvii. 255'.
[139] Rawcliffe, *Medicine and Society in Later Medieval England*, p. 96.
[140] 'Saint Apollonia' (Chapter 66), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, translated by William Granger Ryan; with an introduction by Eamon Duffy (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 268-269.
[141] Martha Easton, 'The Wound of Christ, the Mouth of Hell: Appropriations and Inversions of Female Anatomy in the Later Middle Ages', in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander. The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, Art and Architecture*, ed. by Susan L'Engle and Gerald B. Guest (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 395-414.
[142] Ruth Evans, 'Virginities', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Of the three versions quoted, only the one featuring Saint Peter involves the physical patient within the mythic narrative; the other two versions make no reference to the individual patient. All three examples share an encounter with Christ who is the ultimate healer, and the Saint Peter, and Abraham charms show a command to the toothache, or worm, to be gone from the teeth. These imperative elements of Christ as healer may be translated to the physical healer as well: they gain a level of authority through their knowledge of, use of, and presumably success with, such charms. Further to the centrality of the mouth in delivering the healing charm is the importance of the mouth for the oral tradition to which it belongs. Olsan suggests that the 'relatively small number of illnesses for which charms or prayers are found and the predictability of motifs for specific problems suggest that memory and oral circulation are integral to the genre'.[143] This oral circulation may account for the lack of information in textual examples regarding the specific usage of charms: such information was either closely guarded by practitioners, or so generally known that it did not need to be recorded. The mouth is central here to the performance of charms, their healing capacity, and the transmission of the charms.

Another popular narrative charm that appears in several different versions is the Veronica charm, which is used in cases of chronic bleeding, and most commonly for menstrual problems, 'since the narrative recalls the woman who was healed of a 'flux of blood' by touching the hem of Christ's garment'.[144] The following two examples are attributed to John Gaddesden and Thomas Fayreford respectively.

> Write this name Veronica on the forehead of the patient with his-her blood and say this prayer: God who deigned to cure the woman presented with a flux of the blood with only the touch of the hem of your garment, we humbly entreat, Lord Jesus Christ, who alone heals illnesses, such as the flux of blood of this person, for whom (man or woman) we pour out prayers. Cause it to staunch and stop by extending the right hand of your power in compassion. In the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit Amen. With a Pater Noster and Ave Maria
>
> [Scribe hoc nomen *Ueronica* in fronte pacientis cum sanguine eius et dic orationem istam. Deus qui solo tactu fimbrie uestmenti tui mulierem in fluxu sanguinis constitutam sanare dignatus es te suppliciter exoramus

[143] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 360.
[144] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 361.

> Domine Iesu Christe qui solus langores sanas ut fluxum sanguinis istius pro quo uel pro qua preces infundimus. restringere et sistere facias dextera tue potencie pietatis extendendo. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti amen. cum pater noster et aue maria.] [145]

> 'For stopping menstrual flow. To stop a flux of blood. In the name of the Father + Son + and Holy Spirit Amen. Ve[r]onica suffered a flux of the blood + she touched the hem of Christ's garment + she was thus cured. + May this woman, N[ame], be healed of a flux of blood through our Lord Jesus Christ. Holy. Holy. Holy. Let it be spoken three times and he gospel where it reads: 'She is healed who suffered a flux of blood.' Read over her the most certainly proved case and that she may be healed, the next to last gospel before advent.'

> [Pro fluxu menstruali restringendo. Ad fluxum sanguinis restringendum. In nomine patris + filii + spiritus sancti amen. *Sancta Vetonica fluxum sanguinis paciebatur + tetigit fimbriam vestimenti Christi + sanata est sic + mulier hac N. sanetur a fluxu sanguinis per nomen domini nostri jesum christi Agyos. Agyos. Agyos.* Ter dicatur et evangelium ubi legitur: sanata est qui fluxum sanguinis paciebatur. Lege super eam certissime probatum et quod sanetur evangelium penultimum ante adventum.] [146]

These charms display more signs of a deep embedding within religious practice and devotion than the previous charms for toothache. The first example from the work of Gaddesden appends Christian prayers, a Pater Noster and Ave Maria, to the end of the charm, and as with the Three Good Brothers charm, there is reference to the Trinity, which in Fayreford's version is accompanied by the sign of the cross. Also, as with the Three Good Brothers charm, there is reference to a biblical event, in this case the healing of Veronica when she touched the hem of Jesus cloak. This is quite different from the form of charm of the *Supra petram* which translated the patient into a mythic narrative. These charms for chronic bleeding show how sometimes charm and ritual actions work together. The example from Gaddesden specifies that the name of Veronica is written in blood on the head of the patient. The words of healing are not efficacious only through speech but also through being written down. Olsan argues that 'religious devotion on the part of the patient and the physician is required', and also that the literacy and education of the physician is demonstrated two-fold; through his speech and through his writing.[147] The authority of the practitioner is extended in these charms that

[145] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval Medical Theory and Practice', p. 361. Latin and Translation taken from Olsan's work. Olsan provides the following reference: 'Gaddesden in BL, MS Sloane 1067, f. 19v '.
[146] British Library, MS Harley 2558, fol. 115v. Transcription and translation from Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval medical Theory and Practice', pp. 361-362.
[147] Olsan, 'Charms and Prayers in Medieval medical Theory and Practice', p. 362.

require both speech and writing, as well as their connection with the saint in question. They appear to hold authority both as a healer and a mediator between saint and patient.

Each of the charms discussed are significant not only for the centrality of the mouth as a conduit for the healing power of speech but in each case for a double significance of the mouth. In the Three Good Brothers charm it is the significance of the wound as an unnatural entrance to the body that is healed through the mouth, a natural entrance to the body. The *Supra Petram* charm highlights the ability of the mouth to heal an ailment of the mouth, and the Veronica charm emphasises the connection both physiologically and metaphorically between the mouth and the vagina in a highly gendered form. Furthermore, charms have an oral tradition and so this spoken healing is not only efficacious through the human mouth but is shared and perpetuated through that same medium.

Charms also highlight one of the ways in which religion and medicine overlapped in the course of healing, and indeed a way that medical practitioners could use religious authority through saintly intervention to provide healing. Within a more strictly religious setting healing could also be achieved through miracles, and in some of these miracles healing is achieved through the spoken word. In such cases the agent of healing is miraculous speech which can only be effected through the mouth: this miraculous speech could not exist without the mouth as a conduit. In the following examples miraculous speech is produced by the mouth of a servant of God, a saint. Such healing miracles cover a number of different ailments and can be seen as demonstrations of the 'Church's curative power', and are 'the most striking testimony imaginable to the superior effectiveness of religious over secular healing'.[148] Saint Augustine argued strongly for the efficacy of miraculous healing over secular healing saying that miracles 'provided emphatic and detailed accounts of the previous failure of skilled physicians to cure those subsequently healed by supernatural means'.[149] There are a wide variety of ailments cured by miraculous speech, however I will focus here on two of the most popular: the restoration of speech, and the removal of demons.

[148] Irina Metzler, 'Responses to Physical Impairment in medieval Europe: between magic and medicine', in *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte* ed. by Robert Jütte (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), (9-35), p. 31; Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine: an introduction to knowledge and practice*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 9.
[149] Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine,* p. 9.

First are two miracles restoring the ability to speak. Both miraculous healings were discussed within the chapter on speech, however here the focus is less on the importance of speech for a person within society and more on how it denotes authority for the healer. Within the chapter on Saint Sebastian, included in *The Golden Legend,* is an account of Sebastian healing a woman through his speech:

> Now Zoe, the wife of Nicostratus in whose house the two holy young men were kept under guard, fell at the saint's feet and begged forgiveness, nodding and gesturing because she had lost the power of speech. Sebastian said: "If I am Christ's servant, and if all that this woman has heard from my mouth and has believed is true, may he who opened the mouth of Zechariah his prophet let her speak!" Immediately the woman's speech returned and she said: "Blessed be the words of your mouth, and blessed be all who believe what you have said! For I have seen an angel holding a book before you in which everything you said was written."[150]

In the chapter on John the Almsgiver, there is the story concerning a tax collector named Peter, who turned his life around; followed the Christian faith and became a slave. In it a deaf-mute is healed by a two-fold miraculous occurrence, consisting in one part of a spoken command, and secondly in a flame from the healer's mouth that touched the deaf-mute. [151]

Both miracles display how the restoration of speech demonstrate something more transformational: the power of the saints as agents of God and their ability to channel God's healing. The mouth holds authority over bodily ailments, but importantly this authority is edifying through the medium of speech, a function particular to humans. Furthermore, it is authority that is wielded by saints, people of good moral standing and a heavenly status far surpassing human social status. Therefore, as with the healing through the kiss, the 'healer' is only able to wield power and authority through the mouth if it is accompanied by status and morality.

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[150] 'Saint Sebastian' (Chapter 23), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, translated by William Granger Ryan; with an introduction by Eamon Duffy (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 99.

[151] 'John the Almsgiver' (Chapter 27), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* pp. 114-115; refer to Chapter One, p. 88 for full quotation.

In the second episode, speech's healing power is accompanied by the visual representation of a flame from the mouth of the healer: a direct manifestation of the *power* of speech as capable of igniting or animating transformation. Such colourful images of supernatural power are vital to the purpose of the *Golden Legend* which was 'as an aid for busy priests and preachers', providing 'anecdote, instruction, and edification to bulk out their sermons and catecheses'.[152] It is clear that such miracles, which can be repeated and taught to Christian communities, demonstrate and perpetuate the power and authority of God. This authority is one that supports and upholds the authority of the Church on earth, that is demonstrated and repeated through the mouth. The power is in the mouth and the repetition of the miracles within preaching is a further centralisation of the mouth within these miracles and medieval culture.

Although in each miraculous case the healing power is clearly wielded by the saint concerned, this heavenly power, by association, supports the authority of the Church on earth as a vital point of healing. It is an authority which on earth is guarded by, recorded by, and repeated predominantly, by men: the Church, and certainly most of the centres of writing, is governed by wealthy, educated men of a good social status. These miracles therefore support a social structure which is created by, and perpetuated by wealthy, educated men, in a similar way to the medical practitioners who recorded and repeated the narrative charms.

Apart from the miracles restoring speech, another type of miracle commonly requiring healing through the power of speech is the expulsion of demons. This demonstrates a real power of spoken healing effected through the mouth, because in each case it is not healing from a physical ailment but from a supernatural ailment, one that medicine would be unable to cure. In each of the following three examples the demon is commanded to leave the afflicted. Each of the examples are taken from the *Golden Legend*, from the chapters for Saint Bartholomew; The Annunciation of the Lord; and Saint Cyriacus and Companions, respectively.

> These people spent two days looking for the apostle but never caught sight of him. Then a man who was possessed of the devil cried out:

[152] Eamon Duffy 'Introduction to the 2012 Edition', Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, p. xi.

> "Bartholomew, apostle of God, your prayers are burning me!" The apostle: "Be still, and get out of that man!" And the man was freed at once.[153]

> When the knight heard this, his astonishment knew no bounds. He prostrated himself at the feet of the man of God, begged forgiveness for his sins, and thereafter mended his ways. The holy man then said to the evil spirit: "I command you, demon, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to leave here and infest some other place where you may not presume to harm anyone who invokes the glorious mother of God!" The demon vanished…[154]

> Shortly thereafter a messenger came from the king of the Persians, with the request that Diocletian send Cyriacus to him, because his daughter was possessed of a devil. The emperor asked Cyriacus to go, and the saint, taking Largus and Smaragdus with him, embarked in a well-provisioned ship and happily went off to Babylonia. When he came to the young woman, the demon called out through her mouth, saying: "Are you tired, Cyriacus?" "No, I'm not tired," said Cyriacus, "but wherever I go, I am governed by God's help!" "Yet I made you come where I wanted you to come!" said the demon. //Now Cyriacus said to the evil spirit: "Jesus commands you to come out!" And the demon, coming out at once, said: "Oh, that dread name! It forces me to go!" So the girl was cured, and the saint baptized her and her father and mother and a number of others[155]

As with the restoration of speech miracles, the oral expulsion of demons here support and perpetuate the authority of the Church on earth. However, the striking difference with these last three examples is that they show the authority of God, and therefore the saints, and by extension the Church, over supernatural evil. The restoration of speech was power over earthly ailments, but the expulsion of demons represents a power over a different dimension. Such authority is carried out through imperatives, a forceful and commanding type of speech, often made clear in translation through the use of exclamatory punctuation. However, the words of the miracles display a commanding speech in the use of imperatives: 'Be still', 'get out', 'come out', and the second example states clearly 'I command you'. Not only is authority displayed in the action of expelling the demon, but also through the language used to effect the exorcism.

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[153] 'Saint Bartholomew' (Chapter 123), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* p. 496.
[154] 'The Annunciation of the Lord' (Chapter 51), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* p. 202.
[155] 'Saint Cyriacus and Companions' (Chapter 116), in Jacobus De Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* p. 448.

Within both charms and miracles the mouth plays a double role, firstly as the conduit for healing, and secondly as the mode of transmission and perpetuation of the power of the mouth. In the case of charms, they are part of an oral tradition and therefore the mouth is the means of transmission, and miracles may form part of sermons given in church which are spread and repeated by speech, through the mouth. In their written form, to which the source material attests, both charms and miracles are spread by men within two areas, medicine and the Church, which are governed by men. The nature of the source material available therefore disguises the roles of women within society in the transmission of these mouth-centred healing episodes, and therefore, in their written form, miracles and charms support the authority of wealthy, educated men. In the performance of the charms and miracles, as was evidenced in the healing power of kiss, the authority of the mouth is not exclusive to men but importantly it must be accompanied by status, whether social or heavenly, and morality.

Conclusion

The healing power of the human mouth is evidenced in kissing, ingestion and speech, however in each case the mouth cannot heal by itself. It is firstly the conduit for healing, a medium through which healing power is expressed, and secondly it is accompanied by common motifs of status, morality, and education. In the healing kiss the status and morality of the heroic knight was paramount for the success of his mission, and in the miracles, charms, and the *maria lactans* miracles, all the key characters are saints who automatically carry a divine status and spiritual morality. Status and education are evident in the medical literature which is recorded, repeated, and perpetuated by male university-trained practitioners. In a similar way, miracles, religious art, travel literature and romance literature are also recorded by educated men, who appear to uphold the organised patriarchal society, both temporal and religious.

On the occasions that femininity emerges it takes on a number of different roles. Within *Lybeaus Desconus*, and *Mandeville's Travels*, the dangerous and unpredictable nature of women is evidenced by their outwardly hideous appearance as dragons. Whereas later in

Lybeaus, the dragon lady displays her authority through kissing Lybeaus, and revealing his kin. Her authority is returned under masculine control by the end of the romance because she participates in the marriage economy and becomes Lybeaus' wife: as a danger she has been tamed and controlled. The dragon lady shows another aspect of femininity in her transformation where direct contrasts can be drawn with the prelapsarian Eve, a naked, pure, and innocent woman. Femininity, in the uses of breastmilk takes on a nourishing and healing quality, although one that is treated with care, and only for serious illnesses. However, through *maria lactans* miracles the nourishing and healing power of breastmilk takes on a spiritual nature as well as a physical one, and perpetuates, along with miracles, the superior healing power of the Church. To effect the true healing power of the human mouth through speech, the kiss, or ingestion several caveats must be added: the subject's morality, status, education and, quite often, masculine authority. These caveats to the healing mouth demonstrate an important aspect of the mouth which is its centrality to humanity. Its importance lies within the focus on the mouth as a conduit for an action as vital as healing; the demonstration of healing through authority; and the emphasis on moral virtue. In this way the mouth can be used to denote authority, status, wealth, and education; it can impose the dominance of masculinity over femininity, humanity over animality, and power over bodily ailments. Through all of this the mouth is central to defining what it means to be human and to wield authority.

Chapter 5

‘with an hye voys and clere’: Transcending the Mouth Through the Power of Song

> Sothly she bygan to synge with an hye voys and clere, and cecyd not the space of three dayes and three nyghtes to louve God, to do thankeynges, and to sette togedir a ful swete cantelene.[1]

The singing of Marie d’Oignies, a holy woman from the diocese of Liège, (1177-1213), detailed in her *Life* written in the thirteenth century by Jacques of Vitry, occurs continually for three days and nights shortly before she dies. Marie demonstrates deep spiritual devotion made manifest through two aspects: the first is her beautiful singing voice, and the second is the ‘cantelene’ which she sings. A ‘cantelene’ is a sacred song,[2] and this intrinsically connects her beautiful singing with her religious devotion and with the divine intervention required for such prolonged singing. Through her singing she wields a heavenly power and authority, importantly shared through the medium of human vocal song. The singing of this miraculous episode centres around an action that emanates from the mouth, a part of the human body that is central for defining humanity, expressing humanity, and expressing authority and power. Singing, a modulation of the voice most often accompanied by words is, like speech, a function particular to humans, and therefore it is significant that song, as an extension of the spoken word, is used to demonstrate both Marie’s religious authority and the divine intervention which makes possible the miraculous nature of her continual singing.[3] Although sharing some similarities with speech, singing differs in two ways: first through its musical nature and second through being a very physical action. Bartholomew the Englishman (d. 1272) in his encyclopaedic work, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, highlights both the musical nature of song and its centrality to the explication of religious writings: ‘For music, by þe which acorde and melody is yknown in sowne and in song, is ful needful to knowe mistik

[1] ‘The Middle English Life of Marie d’Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II’, in Jennifer N. Brown, *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeck, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d’Oignies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), (121-190), p. 177, lines 1254-1256.
[2] MED s.v. Cantelene.
[3] The Life of Marie d’Oignies was written by Jacques de Vitry, a friend of Marie, who ‘saw her as a model of a new type of lay piety’, and who intended the book ‘to help in the church’s conflict with Catharism’. Carol F. Heffernan, ‘The *Vita* of Marie d’Oignies and Late Medieval England’, *Neophilologus*, 105 (2021), 137-145, at pp. 139-140.

menynge of holy wryt'.[4] It is the musicality of song that enables the meaning of words to be fully communicated, and therefore song, and particularly the vocal song explored in this chapter, holds a power to communicate, to influence, and to teach. Further to the musical nature of song, there is also a physical element, and Isidore of Seville, an influential encyclopaedist, in his seventh century *Etymologies,* describes the modulation of the voice as a movement from a combined effort of mind and body.[5] This physical exertion sets singing apart from speech and adds a further superhuman level to Marie's singing: not only could she produce beautiful vocalisations for three days but they were vocalisations that required physical labour. The beauty of Marie's singing thus demonstrates strong resonances with Chapter Two which argued for the interconnection of purity and morality with, especially, female beauty. Singing is also deeply imbricated with emotion and, in a religious context such as Marie's, with devotion. Furthermore, in a similar way to speech, there are associations of attraction with singing: when beautiful, singing is aurally attractive, but when ugly, it is aurally abhorrent. Singing therefore unites several facets of this thesis, combining ideas about beauty with a development of the spoken word through melody, as well as the transformative power of song, and touching on aspects of monstrosity through the case study on the sirens.

Marie's singing voice is described as 'hye', and 'clere'. These are, according to Isidore of Seville, the characteristics of a perfect voice. Isidore lists ten variations of singing voice, and the pinnacle of these is the perfect voice which Marie epitomises. Her voice, in its purity, is evidence of the connection with God and the miracle that he works through her, as well as demonstrative of the internal spiritual purity that Marie expresses through song. Marie's singing is of an almost inhuman duration and yet Marie is described as producing a 'swete cantelene'. Her song, although presumably tiring, is a joyful exercise in praise of God and therefore God supplies the strength needed for Marie to complete this superhuman task. Indeed, later in the passage, it is detailed that 'whanne she hadde al daye cryed vnto nyghte, here chekes were hade hose, soo that in the begynnynge of the nyghte vnnethes she myght put forthe any voys'.[6] However, the power of God intervened for Marie because, 'atte morne

[4] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*,* Volume I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 1386, lines 3-5.
[5] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville,* trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), III.xix.1, p. 96.
[6] 'The Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II', p. 177, lines 1265-1267.

oure tymbrere bygan to harpe hyer and clerer than byfore, for oure Lordes aungel that nyghte didde aweye alle hosenesse fro hir throte, puttynge into hir brest enoyntement of wonder soupilnesse'.[7] The importance of the music and the musician is highlighted in the way in which Marie is described as a 'tymbrere', which the Middle English Dictionary very simply defines as 'a timbrel player'.[8] Marie is not simply a person enjoying singing a song, but she is a musician in full charge of her instrument, her voice, using it to great effect, making it sing 'hyer and clerer'. This episode demonstrates a high level of musicality in Marie's singing which expresses her skill, as well as highlighting the divine nature of the song through its beauty. However, it also highlights a negative aspect to the physicality of singing: the exhaustion that prolonged singing can create, for here Marie's voice goes hoarse after a day of singing. Hoarseness is part of the description given by Isidore, in which he details that a 'harsh (*asperus*) voice is hoarse, and uttered in brief irregular beats' [Aspera vox est rauca, et quae dispergitur per miutos et indissimiles pulsus].[9] Such a voice is therefore inappropriate for the divinely inspired singing of Marie d'Oignies, a concern that is echoed in the text as the Prior considers what people would think on Sunday when they arrive at church and 'herde hir synge withouten cecce, with so sharpe and smale voys', Marie 'myghte be sclaunderid thereby and counte hir as a fole'.[10] It appears that the awe inspired in others by Marie's singing 'withouten cecce', without ceasing, could have been marred by the mode of the singing. Marie's voice is matched to the subject she is singing: she sings a divine song and therefore her voice imitates that in its clarity and pitch; if hoarseness interferes then her song loses its divine quality, and by extension Marie loses her authority for expressing divine matters in her song. In the circumstances of singing on her deathbed, Marie's hoarse voice may also have a purpose reflecting and indicating her state of dying; demonstrating her passage from life to death.

Through the miraculous nature of Marie's prolonged singing; her physical labour in singing, and importantly in the content of her song, Marie's religious authority and knowledge are

[7] 'The Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II', p. 178, lines 1277-1280.
[8] MED s.v. tymbrere.
[9] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.13, p. 96; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* (Oxonii: eTypographeo Carendoniano, 1911), Vol 1, III.xx.13. (Although I have referred to the same Latin text edition as Barney et al., there appears to be some discrepancy between the location in the text in the English translation and this Latin edition. This occurs in other passages quoted in the chapter, but the citation will be listed, showing this discrepancy).
[10] 'The Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II', p. 177, lines 1269-1271.

made evident. As she sings, ‘oure pryour and the holy wommans mayden abode in the chirche, but they myghte not vnderstonde many things that she seyde of heuenly priuatys, and summe they undirstode, but – woo – the while they helde not a fewe’.[11] It is clear that Marie has a special connection with God and therefore is privy to a particular kind of understanding of the divine mystery, one that her companions, including the Prior, are not privileged to enjoy. Marie’s singing is a medium through which her knowledge, and spiritual authority, are made evident.

Marie’s lifestyle and piety make her a suitable conduit for divine revelation, and an inspirational woman, who is referenced in *The Book of Margery Kempe* as an exemplary holy woman.[12] In the second book of his *Life of Marie d’Oignies*, the author, Jacques of Vitry, devotes seven chapters to her character, each one dedicated to a gift of the Holy Spirit detailing how Marie used that gift to the glory of God. Marie’s deep belief and her unfailing dedication to the faith supported the suitability and believability of her selection as a recipient of divine knowledge. Furthermore, this specific divine revelation occurs through a song that Marie sings when she is close to death, and through this episode she is fulfilling a socio-religious ritual of dying well, *ars moriendi*.[13] Death is inevitable but the *ars moriendi* functions ‘to make the fact of death productive, comprehensible, and tolerable’,[14] and Marie’s singing adds a joyful, emotional element as well. It further offered a ‘model of heroism that women might emulate without violating the dominant sexual ideology’.[15] Through this episode Marie can demonstrate a feminine authority and exercise her right to a good death without undermining the established masculine dominated Church and society. Her beautiful singing is a central component of her good death, and seeks to bridge this world and the next, but does so in an emotive manner as Marie heralds her joy at the prospect of mortal death and her entry into Heaven. Although taking place at the end of Marie’s life, her beautiful singing

[11] ‘The Middle English Life of Marie d’Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II’, p. 178, lines 1283-1286.
[12] Heffernan, ‘The *Vita* of Marie d’Oignies and Late Medieval England’, p. 139.
[13] For more on death, the life cycle and *ars moriendi* see Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); David Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Mary Ellen Lamb, ‘The Countess of Pembroke and the Art of Dying’, in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986).
[14] Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540*, p. 3.
[15] Lamb, ‘The Countess of Pembroke and the Art of Dying’, in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives*, p. 3.

voice is a powerful force: sharing divine knowledge, joyful emotion, and linking the mortal world with the next world, preparing a good death for a deeply religious woman.

Singing is an important aspect of humanity, as a mode of expression, entertainment, and form of spiritual practice. The act of singing combines human speech with physical effort and melody and infiltrates all areas of human experience in the Middle Ages. This chapter argues for the powerful nature of the human singing voice, centring on the melodious nature of singing, both as a force for good and a force for evil. More so than the human spoken voice, singing has the power to control and to influence. In each case study explored in this chapter, the combined physical action of speech and melody to create singing has a profound effect on the singer themselves, the listener, and sometimes on both. This effect may be spiritual, physical, or socially and morally defining. This chapter further argues that singing can bridge the gap between the earthly and the divine, whilst also defining the earthly, the corruptible, and the 'other' within human society. Many of the examples in this chapter also focus on the gendered aspects of singing; the voices of women, and the feminised singing voices of men, and highlight the ways in which female authority can be expressed through the medium of song. This authority frequently appears in two extremes: firstly, in the form of spiritual exegesis expressed in the singing of religious women like Marie d'Oignies, and secondly in the form of moral corruption epitomised by sirens. The 'othering' quality of singing is explored in two main forms in this chapter. First, the definition of people through derogatory descriptions of singing which help to define their level of perceived civilisation, morality, and in many cases, inferiority, to the describer. Through this the singing voice is used to demonstrate social and moral levels of human civilisation, and the authority that is expressed by the narrator in the definition of the 'other' singing voice and the singer as inferior. Second is through the description of feminised singing by men; their definition as eunuchs, and the authority that they may still wield through their beautiful, if unusual, voices. The recurring theme of power and authority expressed through the singing voice, and the striking number of examples of female singing and female authority, both good and evil, illustrate how the capacity of the human mouth to produce song is perhaps the most transcendent, and powerful, of all the mouth's functions.

Singing and individual authority are intrinsically linked in many of the examples explored in this chapter. Through singing, an ability particular to humans, a power is wielded. In some cases, this is a spiritual power where either spiritual knowledge is expressed, as with the example of Marie d'Oignies at the start of this chapter, or the song can effect a spiritual change such as produce visions or more emotionally, to raise the mind and soul to heavenly matters. Marie's singing experience highlights other positive powers of song, in bridging the earthly world and the divine; stirring emotions both within herself and the listener; as well as being a method of communicating knowledge.

Equally, the same singing can be of a dangerous nature, both physically and spiritually. In the life of the enclosed religious, the rigorous daily schedule of rising, praying and singing can have a weakening effect on the physical body, and within spiritual praise the beauty of the singing may be beguiling and distracting from the importance of the words and prayer. This was a particular concern expressed by Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in his *Confessions*, who both appreciated the spiritual power of singing as well as its ability to detract from its religious purpose.[16] Further developing the potentially dangerous side of singing, this chapter also explores the notorious sirens of mythology; female beasts that lured sailors, through their beautiful singing, to wreck their ships on the rocks, before murdering them. The sirens are, further, used allegorically to define the morally corrupting danger of prostitutes. Whether real or metaphorical, the power of sirens, expressed through their singing voice, focuses on their ability to control and effect the moral corruption of men, and therefore places them among the subversive women threatening the ordered patriarchal society, one built on noble, moral masculinity. The final aspect of singing that this chapter considers is the use of singing to define and often denigrate other people. The human singing voice, emanating from the human mouth, is an important element in defining humanity, and is used in a similar way to speech: to label and define subjects. This includes definitions of how people from different countries sing, such as the Tartars, who supposedly bellow like bulls, or how eunuchs sing with feminine voices. Each description carries with it a definition of the Other, the labelling of which lends authority to the labeller as they define what is 'normative'.

[16] Judith Ann Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 40. Peraino quotes from Augustine's *Confessions*, 10.33.

Defining Singing in Medieval Culture

In his seventh-century encyclopaedic work, *Etymologies*, Isidore of Seville describes singing within a section on music, listing vocal song as one of its three divisions. He says 'For sound is emitted either by the voice, as through the throat' [Nam aut voce editur sonus, sicut per fauces][17] thereby locating the origin of the sound. Isidore then goes on to describe this first division of music, to which vocal song belongs, 'which is called harmonic (*harmonicus*)' [quae harmonica dicitur][18], in detail. He describes it as 'the modulation of the voice' [modulation vocis], and furthermore as a physical action: 'This makes a movement that comes from the mind and body together, and the movement produces a sound, and from this is formed the music that in humans is called 'voice' (*vox*)' [Haec ex animo et corpore motum facit, et ex motu sonum, ex quo colligitur Musica, quae in homine vox appellatur].[19] Isidore then relates this back to the voice and the formation of words as well as the fact that 'Properly, voice is a human characteristic' [Proprie autem vox hominum est].[20] This emphasises that the human singing voice is set apart from the songlike sounds created by other animals, in a similar way to human speech being different to the vocal sounds of animals.[21] Isidore's specification that the movement that produces sound 'comes from the mind and body together' highlights not only the physicality involved in singing but also its cerebral element; the need for rational thought, a key part of humanity, to be involved in the production of singing. This combination of the physical with the rational sets human singing apart from the melodic vocal production of animals, since animals do not possess rationality, which is evidenced, according to Aristotle in his *Politics*,[22] by their lack of speech. As with

[17] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xviii.2, p. 96; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III. xix.2.
[18] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville,* III.xix.1, p. 96; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.1.
[19] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.1, p. 96; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.1.
[20] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.2, p. 96; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.2.
[21] Isidore does discuss the singing of some animals, for example the 'The *cycnus* (i.e. *cygnus*, another word for swan, borrowed, in fact, from the Greek kukvos just cited) is named for singing (*canere*) because it pours our a sweetness of sing with its modulated voice…People say that in the Hyperborean regions, when musicians are singing to citharas, swans come flocking in large numbers, and sing with them quite harmoniously'. 'Cygnus autem a canendo est appellatus, eo quod carminis dulcedinem modulates vocibus fundit…Ferunt in Hyperboreis partibus praecinentius citharoedis olores plurimos advolare, apteque admodum concinere. *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, XII.vii.18-19, p. 265; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, XII.vii.18-19.
[22] On this, see Introduction, p. 14, and Chapter One pp. 43-44, 48 of this thesis.

speech, humanity and rationality appear to be intrinsic to human singing, however singing requires a further physical element.

In a similar way to the descriptions of different types of speaking voice that Bartholomew the Englishman details in *De Proprietatibus Rerum,* which culminate in the voice that is good and praiseworthy,[23] Isidore propounds the different types of singing voice, through sweet, clear, delicate, rich, high, hard, harsh, blind, charming, and finally perfect.[24] The last quality, of perfection, is also evidenced in the singing of Marie d'Oignies, whose voice is 'hye' and 'clere'.[25]

> A perfect (*perfectus*) voice is high, sweet, and distinct: high, so that it can reach the high range; distinct, so that it fills the ears; sweet, so that it soothes the spirits of the listeners. If a voice lacks any of these qualities, it is not perfect.
>
> [Perfecta autem vox est alta, suavis et clara: alta, ut in sublime sufficiat; clara, ut aures adinpleat; suavis, ut animos audientium blandiat. Si ex his aliquid feruerit, vox perfecta non est][26]

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[23] On this, see Chapter One of this thesis.

[24] Full details in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.10-14, pp. 96-97. '10. Sweet (*suavis*) voices are refined and compact, distinct and high. Clear (*perspicuous*) voices are those that are drawn out further, so that they continually fill whole spaces, like the blaring of trumpets. 11. Delicate (*subtilis*) voices are those that have no breath, like the voices of infants, women, and sick people, and like plucking on strings. Indeed, the most delicate are the strings of musical instruments, which emit light, refined sounds. 12. Voice are rich (*pinguis*) when a great deal of breath is sent forth all at once, like the voices of men. A high (*acutus*) voice is light, and elevated, just as we see in the strings of musical instruments. A hard (*durus*) voice is one that emits sounds violently, like thunder, or like the sound of the anvil, when the hammer strikes on the hard iron. (p. 96) 13. A harsh (*asperus*) voice is hoarse, and uttered with brief irregular beats. A blind (*caecus*) voice is one that stops short a soon as it is emitted, and being stifled is not prolonged any further, like the sound of clay utensils. A charming (*vinnolus*) voice is soft and flexible; and it is so named from *vinnus*, that is 'softly modulated.' 14. A perfect (*perfectus*) voice is high, sweet, and distinct: high, so that it can reach the high range; distinct, so that it fills the ears; sweet, so that it soothes the spirits of the listeners. If a voice lacks any of these qualities, it is not perfect.' [Suaves voces sunt subtiles et spissae, clarae atque acutae. Perspicuae voces sunt, quae longius protrahuntur, ita ut omnem inpleant continuo locum, sicut clangor tubarum. Subtiles voces sunt, quibus non est spiritus, quails est infnatium, vel mulierum, vel aegrotantium, sicut in nervis. Quae enim subtilissimae cordae sunt, subtiles ac tenues sonos emittunt. Pingues sunt voces, quando spiritus multus simul agreditur, sicut virorum. Acuta vox tenuis, alta, sicut in cordis videmus. Dura vox est, quae violenter emittit sonos, sicut tonitruum, sicut incudes sonos, quotiens in durum malleus percutitur ferrum. Aspera vox est rauca, et quae dispergitur per minutos et indissimiles pulsus. Caeca vox est, quae, mox emissa fuerit, conticescit, atque suffocate nequaquam longius producitur, sicu test in fictilibus. Vinnola est vox mollis atque flexibilis. Et vinnola dicta a vinno, hoc est cincinno molliter flexo. Perfecta autem vox est alta, suavis et clara: alta, ut in sublime sufficiat; clara, ut aures adinpleat; suavis, ut animos audientium blandiat. Si ex his aliquid defuerit, vox perfecta non est'. *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.10-14.

[25] 'The Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II' in Brown, *Three Women of Liege,* p. 177, line 1254.

[26] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.14, p.97; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.14.

The perfect singing voice claims three distinct characteristics: those of being 'high, sweet, and distinct'. The best type of speaking voice, according to Bartholomew, is clear, strong and sweet, demonstrating virtue and goodness.[27] Such characteristics are evident both in the singing voice of Marie d'Oignies and in her religious life as well: she epitomises the combination of spirituality and musical perfection. There are similarities between the perfect singing voice and the ideal speaking voice, too; the most striking of which is their clarity and sweetness. For Bartholomew, these characteristics are indicative of the internal purity of the speaker, however, in Isidore's description the importance is placed on how such voices affect the listeners. The characteristics of speaking and singing voices are similar but imbue an internal-external divide: speaking is related to the internal spirit, and singing has an outgoing, external, and, importantly, emotive effect on others.

It may at first appear that a perfect voice is most likely to belong to a female singer or a child, whose voices are naturally high, however, Isidore classified the voices of women and children differently, listing their voices as 'delicate':

> Delicate (*subtilis*) voices are those that have no breath, like the voices of infants, women, and sick people, and like plucking on strings.
>
> [Subtiles voces sunt, quibus non est spiritus, quails est infantium, vel mulierum, vel aegrotantium, sicut in nervis][28]

The classification of the voices of women alongside the children and the sick, whose voices would be quiet and weak, perhaps reflects the cultural idea of how women should sound; that they should not be loud but have voices that demonstrate the traditional patriarchal view of women as submissive. Furthermore, this distinction may reflect the human life cycle and the humoral balances of women, children, the sick, and perhaps by extension, the elderly. In medieval understanding of the humoral balances of humans, women were considered generally to be of a colder and wetter humoral temperament than men, and in the tetradic system of the life cycle, closely aligned with the cosmological system, children were warm

[27] *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's translation of* Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum, Volume I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 213, lines 8, 13, 14-16; refer to Chapter One, pp. 44-45 for full quotation.
[28] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.11, p.97; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.11.

and moist, and the elderly were cold and moist.[29] A short treatise at the beginning of the manuscript GUL MS Hunter 509, which also contains the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus, aligns with this tetradic system describing the four stage of the human life cycle and the ages and complexions that align with each stage.[30] Women, children, and the elderly all have a moistness in common in their humoral balance, and this similarity may cause a similarity in the sound of their voices. Furthermore, there is a link between the beginning of the life cycle and the end: the humoral balance becomes wetter in both, and their voices are, according to Isidore, of a more delicate nature.

In medieval texts, distinguishing between references to the speaking voice and references to the singing voice can be difficult. In the work of Isidore of Seville, it is quite clear that he is referring to the singing voice as it is placed in the section concerning music, however the references to the voice within Bartholomew's work are a little more nebulous in their distinction between the speaking voice and the singing voice. In the section on the voice, Bartholomew sometimes refers specifically to singing, or to speaking, and sometimes more vaguely refers to 'voys'. In discussing the tongue, Bartholomew says that it 'isette to meue esiliche, [to schap] speche and voys'.[31] Whether 'voys' here is referring specifically to the speaking voice or the singing voice is not made clear, but as it is used elsewhere in relation to music it is likely that 'voys' can be used interchangeably, and that Bartholomew recognises that the tongue is instrumental in both the speaking voice and the singing voice. This lack of distinction can make it difficult to separate out the singing voice and the speaking voice. These two modes of expression are nevertheless intimately connected through their emanation from the human mouth, allowing communication, connection to the divine, and by defining the characteristics of perfection.

[29] Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval interpretations of the life cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 9, 13.
[30] Estaban-Segura, *System of Physic*, pp. 43-44, lines 26-27, 1-5; refer to Chapter Two, p. 96 for full quotation.
[31] *On the Properties of Things,* p. 208, line 20.

Efficacious Singing

The miraculous extended singing of Marie d'Oignies, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, is one example of the authority of holy women as instruments of divine knowledge. Through her song, which is importantly beautifully sung, Marie imparts a deep understanding of the divine mystery that others within the community can barely grasp and understand. In her singing Marie covers a great variety of religious doctrine from the 'holy trinity', through 'summe things of holy writte, and wondirly expownynge of the gospelle', as well as 'the manhede of Cryste, fro thens to Oure lady, fro thennes pronouncynge many things of holy aungels, of the apostils and othere seyntes'.[32] Marie's deep revelation of these heavenly matters is made clear in the limited understanding enjoyed by the rest of her community: 'oure pryour and the holy wommans mayden abode in the chirche, but they myghte not vndirstonde many thinges that she seyde of heuenly priuatys'.[33] Through her singing, Marie exercises religious authority that very explicitly shows the connection that singing can make between earth and Heaven, bridging the human and the divine. Singing has a central place within religious worship and as John Potter and Neil Sorrell argue 'belief systems based on the divine creation of life also tend to believe that music is a divine gift, most directly put to use in singing'.[34] Music, and singing, therefore play a key role in religious observances and in inspiring religious visions.

Singing is central to Christian spirituality and plays a key role in the medieval liturgy. The Mass was sung, as were psalms and antiphons, and religious musicality spread into the composition of songs and the association of miracles with the sung liturgy. Within religious singing, Joseph Dyer argues that in 'the medieval Office the singing of psalms was far more than a musical exercise', because each monk supplied 'a private exegesis of the sacred text'.[35] Within a religious community then, singing was both a collective operation and a private one, providing group praise and individual prayer. Singing also played an important part in the

[32] 'The Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II', in Jennifer N. Brown, *Three Women of Liège:* pp. 178-179, lines 1283-1285.
[33] 'The Middle English Life of Marie d'Oignies by Jacques of Vitry, Book II', in Jennifer N. Brown, *Three Women of Liège:* p. 178, lines 1289-1290, 1292-1294.
[34] John Potter and Neil Sorrell, *A History of Singing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 16.
[35] Joseph Dyer, 'The Singing of Psalms in the Early-Medieval Office', *Speculum*, 64.3 (July 1989), 535-578, at pp. 535, 538.

religious events of the year, providing the music for feast days, Christmas, Easter, and the ceremony of the 'Churching of Women', where the soundscape of male-sung psalms underscored a belief in the 'necessity to cleanse the pollution of the female body after childbirth', as Sue Niebrzydowski has shown.[36] Religious singing then, provided the musical score for the Church's year and people's lives, heightening prayer, praise and also the miraculous.[37]

One holy woman who, like Marie d'Oignies appears to have epitomised a beautiful singing voice, is Mechthild of Hackeborn (c.1241-1298), who experienced many visions, quite often accompanied by music, both earthly and divine. Mechthild of Hackeborn's visions are recorded in *The Booke of Gostlye Grace* (*Liber specialis gratiae*), a text written towards the end of her life, initially by her fellow nuns but eventually approved by Mechthild herself.[38] The book was a collaborative work, written for the most part by Mechthild's fellow nuns who recorded details of her visions and revelations, which Mechthild spoke about while she was ill. The community of nuns at Helfta, where *The Booke of Gostlye Grace* was composed, are an important group, encompassing other visionaries such as Mechthild of Madgeburg (c. 1210 – c. 1285) and Gertrude the Great (c. 1256 – c. 1302).[39] Barbara Newman describes Helfta as presenting 'an oasis of confident, theologically informed female spirituality', which placed emphasis on 'lively hope, joy in the risen Christ, an affirmation of the body and its senses', and general pleasure in the divine mystery.[40] *The Booke of Gostlye Grace* was widely disseminated and translated in the later Middle Ages, and a testament to this are approximately three hundred manuscripts preserving some part of Mechthild's book.[41]

[36] Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Asperges me, Domine, hyssop: male voices, female interpretation and the medieval English purification of women after childbirth ceremony', *Early Music,* 39.3 (August, 2011), 327-333, at p. 332.
[37] For more on singing and its relation to the Christian West see Christopher Page, *The Christian West and its Singers. The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Potter, and Sorrell, *A History of Singing*.
[38] Barbara Newman and Richard Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2017), p. 16; Barbara Newman, 'Annihilation and Authorship: Three Women Mystics of the 1290s', *Speculum*, 91.3 (July 2016), pp. 591-630, at pp. 595-596.
[39] Newman and Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace*, p. 18.
[40] Newman and Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace*, p. 23.
[41] Newman and Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace*, p. 28.

The Booke of Gostlye Grace describes Mechthild's singing voice as one of the gifts of God with which she was blessed that were important to her vocation to the religious life:

> Oure lorde also so plenteuoslye fufyllede here with grace and weth geftes of nature beside gostelye gyftes that sche hadde þat in kunnynge ande vnderstandynge, in syngynge ande fayrenesse of voyce sownynge, ande in alle thynges that langede to here relygioun sche was fulle experte ande fulle profytabylle to the qwere ande to the cloystere insomoche that hitt semydde here plenteuoslye vysitede with alle oure lords gyftes.[42]

Mechthild's singing voice is described in terms of its 'fayrenesse', and indeed it must have been pleasing as she was, among her other duties, the chantress of the abbey at Helfta.[43] Such a role proved her great musicality and Gertrude of Hackeborn refers to Mechthild as 'the nightingale of Christ'.[44] It was often in moments of singing, which Mechthild did with great fervour, that she experienced ecstasies and visions.[45] The music and her intense singing had a profound physical and spiritual effect upon Mechthild. Unlike Marie's miraculous singing, through the words of which she imparted great spiritual understanding, Mechthild's experience is of a visionary nature. Her own singing, as well as the singing of her fellow nuns, is often a catalyst for Mechthild's visions.

> Also when þis response: Benedic, schulde be songgene, sche sawe alle the vertues whiche were nempnede þare in lykenes of virgyns stonde before God.[46]

> Afore þis whyles þay sange atte tierce owre: Veni creator spiritus, this maydene sawe the Holy Goste in lykenes of an egle fleynge þorowe the qweere ande fro his herte comme furth as manye sonnebeemys as were persons in þe qwere, and to eche sunnebeeme mynystrede a thowsande aungells.[47]

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[42] Mechtild of Hackeborn, 'The Booke of Gostlye Grace', edited by Theresa A Halligan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979) p. 73, lines 5-12.
[43] Barbara Newman, 'Annihilation and Authorship: Three Women Mystics of the 1290s', p. 592.
[44] Rosalynn Voaden, 'Mechtild of Hackeborn', in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c. 1100-c. 1500*, edited by Alastair Minnis and Rosalynn Voaden (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 431-451, at 432.
[45] Newman, 'Annihilation and Authorship: Three Women Mystics of the 1290s', p. 594; Ann Marie Caron, 'Mechtild of Hackeborn, Prophet of Divine Praise: To Sing God's Praise, To Live God's Song', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 36.2 (2001), pp. 145-161, at pp. 147-148; see also 'Introduction', in Barbara Newman, and Richard Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2017).
[46] Mechtild of Hackeborn, 'The Booke of Gostlye Grace', edited by Theresa A Halligan, p. 296, lines 17-19.
[47] Mechtild of Hackeborn, 'The Booke of Gostlye Grace', edited by Theresa A Halligan, p. 228, lines 5-9.

These are two examples of visions that Mechthild experiences during devotional singing at Helfta. In many cases, including these two, the responsory that is being sung is carefully recorded in the text.[48] This highlights the importance of the words being sung for Mechthild's vision. This singing, religious or liturgical, seems to temporarily narrow the gap between the earthly and the divine. Singing, in a way that is different from speech, effects a profound change in Mechthild. In Marie's singing, she shares her divine revelations with the community, but Mechthild's visions are, until the creation of the *Liber specialis gratiae,* a personal experience. In both cases, sung religious music acts as a connection to the divine, and as with the healing episodes in Chapter Four, singing has a transformational effect: in Marie her singing is elongated to three continuous days, for Mechthild it inspires visions which denote her privileged connection to the divine.

It is striking that this singing should be centred on a female religious community and be so central in a text which was exceptional as it 'names no male confessor, scribe, or patron'.[49] It therefore 'belonged entirely to the nuns'.[50] Rosalynn Voaden, referring to Mechthild, argues that the 'scribes of the *Liber* endow her with traditionally masculine roles, comparing her to a preacher, teacher and prince of the community'.[51] As with Marie, Mechthild's visionary experiences, in which music and singing so often played a central role, raises her to a level of religious authority that is more commonly masculine. Singing not only transcends earthly matters but also transcends gender for both Mechthild and Marie, allowing them the vocal authority to teach and to mediate between Heaven and earth.

Religious singing is not only a conduit for the very holy to either impart knowledge or experience visions, but plays a key role within church services, and is just one way in which

[48] Aside from the two examples quoted above, there are other visions that occur related to specific sung responses including 'while the response: Amo Cristum; was songgene', and 'in Paske weke att masse whan thay sange: Venite benedicti', Mechtild of Hackeborn, 'The Booke of Gostlye Grace', edited by Theresa A Halligan, pp. 129-130, 364.
[49] Newman and Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace*, p. 21.
[50] Newman and Kieckhefer, eds., *Mechthild of Hackeborn and the Nuns of Helfta. The Book of Special Grace*, p. 21.
[51] Voaden, 'Mechtild of Hackeborn', in *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c. 1100-C. 1500*, p. 440.

'sensory delights were important to…Christian worship'.[52] Mark Smith develops this claim with reflection of the 'spiritual significance of sound', as 'reflected in the acoustic architecture of early Christian churches'.[53] The centrality of religious singing, more so for the listener, is also evident in architectural choices. Isidore declaims the power of song to effect a change: '…and the latter sing to kindle the spirits of their audience to compunction' [isti canunt ut excitant ad conpunctionem animos audientium],[54] and in his *De ecclesiasticus Officiis*, he says 'the divine words more readily and ardently stir our mind to piety when they are sung than when they are not'.[55] Christopher Page connects this view of Isidore's back to the writings of Niceta and Augustine who 'both assume that the outstanding value of adding music to a psalm lies in the way the beauty of musical sound can affect the human person more deeply'.[56] Here the mouth, through singing, behaves in a similarly transformative way as with Marie and Mechthild: it effects a change, most commonly a spiritual change.

However, religious singing is not efficacious in all cases and Isidore stipulates the importance of charity for harmonious singing within a choir:

> 5. A choir (*chorus*) is a multitude gathered for sacred rites, and it is called a choir because in the beginning they would stand around an altar in the shape of a crown (*corona*) and thus sing. Others say the word 'choir' is from the 'concord' (*concordia*) that exists in charity, because without charity it is impossible to sing responses harmoniously.
>
> [Chorus est multitude in sacris collecta; et dictus chorus quod initio in modum coronae circum aras starent et ita psallerent. Alii chorum dixerunt a concordia, quae in caritate consistit; quia, si caritatem non habeat, respondere convenienter non potest.][57]

Singing within a group setting, according to Isidore, requires more than just a physical participation; it requires a charitable attitude to achieve real harmony. It is ambiguous as to whether this harmony refers to musical harmony or social harmony, or indeed both. To

[52] Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching in history*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p. 43.
[53] Smith, *Sensing the Past*, p. 43.
[54] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, VII.xii.24, p. 171; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, VII.xii.24.
[55] Quotation taken from Page, *The Christian West and its Singers*, p. 40.
[56] Page, *The Christian West and its Singers,* p. 196.
[57] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, VI.xix.5, p. 147; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, VI.xix.5.

achieve musical perfection though it would appear that group singing both requires and produces harmony, and Page refers to 'what Niceta calls a *psallens fraternitas*', 'a chanting brotherhood', through which the 'surrender of the individual voice to the common chorus testified to the unity of the church'.[58] Potter and Sorrell in their history of singing support this argument for the empathetic qualities of group singing for 'if everyone is singing the same thing in a way they cease to be individuals'.[59]

Group singing, and particularly religious singing, can therefore have a profound effect, both spiritually and physically. The community of nuns at Helfta, of which Mechthild of Hackeborn was one, were shaped by their daily devotions in the Divine Office. They believed unequivocally in their ability to have an effect on the saints and to provide succour to those in purgatory.[60] Furthermore it is often during times of communal singing that Mechthild experiences her visions. Sometimes these visions involve interaction between Heaven and all nuns of the choir. In one vision, while they sing 'Amo Cristum', Mechthild sees Christ in the middle of the choir and from his face comes a light that illuminates all in the choir, and then the same light comes from each of her sisters and shines on God.[61] The community at Helfta was a close, strong and vocal one.

On a personal level, singing was very important to Mechthild in her role as chantress and leader of the choir. 'Oure lords also so plenteuoslye fulfyllede here with grace ande…in syngyne ande fayrenesse of coyce sownynge',[62] and through her singing she increased the power of the religious texts. As Anne Marie Caron argues, Mechthild's 'exercise of her office

[58] Page, *The Christian West and its Singers,* p. 196.
[59] Potter and Sorrell, *A History of Singing*, p. 19.
[60] Anna Harrison, '"Oh! What Treasure is in this Book?" Writing, Reading, and Community at the Monastery of Helfta', *Viator*, 39.1 (2008), pp. 75-106, at pp. 97-98.
[61] Mechtild of Hackeborn, 'The Booke of Gostlye Grace', edited by Theresa A Halligan, p. 129, lines 8-22 p. 130, lines 1-3 - 'In the same feste atte matyns tyme while the responce: Amo Cristum; was songgene, oure lorde Ihesu apperede to this same maydene ande hadde Saynte Agneys beclyppede vndere his right arme. Ande both oure lorde ande Saynte Agneys hadde lyche clothynge, ande þat was rede. In Saynte Agneys clothynge was wryttene the goode holye words whiche sche spake in the tyme of here martyrdome [as it were with] lettres of golde. Ande the wordes whiche were in Saynte Agneys clothynge made wordes þat were in our lordys clothynge both clere ande schynynge þorowe a streme of lyght þat come fro oure lorde lyche to a sunnebeeme, so that þay gaffe a schynynge into God, ande so furth þay lyghttenydde alle þo þat stode in the qwere. Also sche sawe howe a lyght lyke to a sunnebeeme wente fro eche herte of the sustrenne that deuoutelye ande ententiflye sang thare into the herte of Gode, whiche sunnebeme moreouere þorowe the herte of God went into the herte of Saynte Agneys as hitt hadde bene a fulle softe lyquoure.'
[62] Mechtild of Hackeborn, 'The Booke of Gostlye Grace', edited by Theresa A Halligan, p. 73, lines 5-6, 8.

and her gift of music allowed this woman of prayer to bring out in the melodies of solemn prayer her informed spiritual insight and understanding'.[63] Through her singing Mechthild also engaged with the rest of her community and very personally experienced God through her visions. Her singing clearly had several very profound effects.

The singing of Marie d'Oignies, Mechthild of Hackborn, and singing within church services and as a group, are described in terms of potentially having a physical, as well as spiritual effect on the singer and the listeners. The beauty of the singing voices is praised and, certainly in the cases of Marie and Mechthild, it raises these women to positions of spiritual authority as conduits for divine revelation. However, all these examples take place within the confines of a religious environment: in the church, nunnery or other religious house. In some accounts, religious singing can be equally efficacious outside of these confines. In the following example, concerning Peter, the abbot of Cava in Campania (d. 1123), the singing of plainsong has a physical, and very visible effect. It may also be described as having a healing quality, not dissimilar to the casting out of evil spirits explored in Chapter Four, whereby the spoken word had a profound physical effect on the sufferer as well as highlighting the power and authority of the Church not only on earth but also over supernatural powers.

The episode, as detailed in the *Vita* of Saint Peter, abbot of Campania, is of the power of religious singing which Saint Peter's biographer describes thus: 'we know that psalmody softens the ferocity of evil spirits and puts them to flight'.[64] Saint Peter heard that a local seigneur was harassing the workers on the monastery estates and, along with some monks, went into the fields and sang plainsong, which affected the lord and softened him to the point of penitence.[65] This is an interesting example of how the effects of religious singing could be as active outside the church walls as within. The power of the singing voice, particularly one singing psalms, is transformative, even possessing a healing quality, wielding a spiritual authority. Such spiritual power seems to be channelled by both men and women but carries with it a divine authority that works through the singer, and a consequent purity, goodness,

[63] Caron, 'Mechtild of Hackeborn, Prophet of Divine Praise: To Sing God's Praise, To Live God's Song', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, p. 148.
[64] Page, *The Christian West and its Singers,* p. 394; Page references the Latin in *Vita Sancti Petri abbatis Cavensis, AS Martii, i, 332*.
[65] Page, *The Christian West and its Singers,* p. 196.

and, even as Isidore requires of group singing, charity. Singing, in a similar way to healing through the mouth and speech, cannot be truly effective for good purposes without a sense of morality and nobility of heart.

Dangerous Singing

Singing, like speech and beauty, has two sides; it can be highly efficacious and miraculous but can also be dangerous. This section focuses on a case study of mythological sirens as epitomising the dangerous nature of singing. The sirens are part of a long-standing mythology, appearing in Homer's *Odyssey*, and even in some translations of the Bible.[66] It is in the *Odyssey* that their power through their singing is most noted, requiring Odysseus' crew to stop up their ears to prevent them being seduced by the sirens' song. Through their mouths, sirens wield a dangerous power: they are both beautiful and alluring while also being frightening and subversive, using their power to subjugate masculinity. The sirens demonstrate the interactions of different genres of literature and art in the medieval period, and how these dangerous, female monstrous beings permeated society. Sirens appear in encyclopaedic literature, as central characters in morality tales, in bestiary literature, as well as visual imagery. The image of the siren is ubiquitous in medieval literature and there are a large number of examples, for example in bestiary literature alone there are over one hundred references to sirens.[67] In most examples, their femininity is highlighted as well as their male victims, and the soporific effect of their beautiful singing, sometimes compared to heavenly music, which precludes a violent death for the victims. The power of the sirens is centred on their singing and its aural allure, but is supported by their physical beauty as well, and is always a powerful force for evil.

Furthermore, sirens distort the medieval alignment of beauty with morality and ugliness with sin since they are beautiful and murderous. This positions them as a disturbing force within

[66] Sarah Kay, 'Siren Enchantments, or, Reading Sound in Medieval Books', *SubStance*, 49.2 (2020), 108-132, at p. 109. Sarah Kay makes reference to a mistranslation of Isaiah 13:22 which is repeated in some bestiary entries for the sirens. For a broad historical examination of the Sirens see Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*.
[67] The following website lists all the bestiary manuscripts known to have references to sirens. Many, but not all refer to the monstrous, half woman and half fish/bird that is discussed here although there are some references to a type of snake that can also be called a siren, [https://bestiary.ca/beasts/beastmanu246.htm].

society and endows them with a frightening power. In their physicality, sirens are beautiful but alluring and as Ben Lowe argues, female beauty 'was evil if its attraction was sexual and external'.[68] However, the beauty of the song they produce problematises this paradigm because, in the examples in the 'Efficacious Singing' section above, beautiful singing is an indicator of authority, purity, and even a close connection with the divine. When Augustine discusses beauty he says, 'Things are not beautiful because they please, but "please because they are beautiful"'.[69] The sirens' singing is certainly beautiful, and John Gower (c. 1330-1408), in his late fourteenth century poem, *Confessio Amantis,* even aligns it with heavenly music, but it does not support the consequent associations outlined in Chapter Two concerning beauty and moral virtue. The idealisation of the female body which Lowe argued maintained patriarchal power through its very unattainability is exactly the same ideal that the sirens use to undermine patriarchy. Through their disruptive physical and aural beauty they attract and destroy men, and this is achieved completely through their mouths, both through singing, devouring and sex.

Sirens, in visual imagery if not always in many written sources, are depicted as naked women from the waist up. This imagery of the naked woman is different from the nakedness of the lady in *Lybeaus Desconus* whose naked transformation demonstrated her purity, vulnerability and connection with the prelapsarian Eve. Rather, the sirens have more in common with the corrupting Eve who ate the apple and offered it to Adam. Female anatomy, shown so explicitly in the images of the sirens, is very important both for understanding the dangerous nature of the monstrous beings but also for the morals that accompany the descriptions. Although they are hybrid monstrous beings, the sirens are an extension of the disruptive female body as was discussed in Chapter Two. In my discussion of beauty, I explored the underlying concern with the deterioration of the beautiful, fecund, young female body into the morally corruptive old hag. The sirens combine both elements, being both beautiful and morally corrupting, and therefore are even more of a subversive force. The sirens flaunt their femininity and sexuality, yet their singing is the more dangerous element. Their mouths are therefore deemed more powerful and more detrimental than their nakedness. Not only is it from their mouths that the alluring and soporific singing is emitted, but it is also with their

[68] Ben Lowe, 'Body Images and the Politics of Beauty: Formation of the Feminine Ideal in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in *Ideals of Feminine Beauty: Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, ed. by Karen A. Callaghan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 21-36, at p. 23.
[69] This is partially quoted by Baker and partially paraphrased. Baker, *Plain Ugly*, p. 13.

mouths that they 'eteþ his fleisshe'.[70] The mouth, and specifically the female mouth, is typically viewed as the cause of the downfall of humanity, via Eve in the Garden of Eden, and in this case too, visible in the sirens' slaying of the sailors. This mirrors a common fear within medieval Christian society of the sexual and appetitive nature of women. Such examples, then, reveal a longstanding anxiety about women's mouths and their oral potentialities.

[70] *On the Properties of Things,* p. 1248, line 27.

Fig 17. Cambridge Bestiary, Cambridge University Library II. 4. 26 f. 93r

Fig 18. Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 764, f. 74v

Fig 19. Queen Mary Psalter, British Library, Royal 2 B VII, f. 96v

Fig 20. Queen Mary Psalter, British Library Royal B VII, f. 97

The first image here, taken from the *Cambridge Bestiary*, MS Ii.4.26, an early thirteenth century text, composed originally in Latin, (see fig. 16) accompanies a written description of sirens and clearly shows a female anatomy. There is some confusion evident concerning the remaining physicality of the siren, which here is shown as having features of both a bird and a fish. The same lack of certainty is evident in the other examples: MS. Bodley 764 (fig. 17) shows the bottom half of the sirens' bodies to be fish, but the Queen Mary Psalter, British Library Royal B VII (figs. 18 and 19), allows for either possibility. In every visual example the sirens openly flaunt their beautiful female anatomy and sexual allure.

Each of the images focus on the visual appearance of the sirens yet seem to assign little importance to the mouth and their singing. What is evident, however, is the effect of the sirens' singing: in the second and third images (figs. 17 and 18) the soporific nature of the sirens' song is shown by the sleeping sailors. The powerful effect of the singing, if not the singing itself, is clear in the visual imagery. The second of the images, taken from the Queen Mary Psalter (fig. 19) is one of the few images to show what happens after the sailors have fallen asleep: the sirens attack the sailors, murder them, and in this image, devour them. The behaviour and physicality of the sirens denotes their monstrous nature. Sirens, along with the monstrous beings discussed in Chapter Three demonstrate a subversive and potentially threatening force. They are violent, enticing, and strikingly they are very clearly gendered. In the monstrous beings previously discussed in Chapter Three there was often an ambiguity with assigning a gender to their physicality, although within the texts we saw an underlying feminisation. In the sirens example, that feminisation is more overt, and they are physically, and sexually, dangerous, subverting the 'natural' social hierarchy and corrupting moral codes. Within that monstrous nature, however, it is the mouth, and its song, that holds the power to immobilise and control their male victims. It is striking that the mouth from which their power for evil and corruption originates is the same orifice that is capable of expressing morality and humanity.

Sirens are not confined to visual imagery but appear in multiple literary genres. In *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills argue that 'monstrosity is not simply a phenomenon confined to particular visual, literary or philosophical genres', and they problematise the 'assumption that monsters can be located within a clearly demarcated range

of contexts and functions'.[71] This lack of demarcation is evidenced by the wide range of sources within which sirens appear and the multiple functions they perform: they are monstrous beings; licentious and alluring 'women' capable of corrupting male morals; they epitomise the distractions of beautiful music within a religious environment, and they even extend to signify any type of corruption, and also within Christian theological discourse act as an allegory of the lure of the devil with beautiful promises. Sirens spread throughout medieval culture and as such demonstrate that 'if monsters are significant for our understanding of medieval culture, they are by no means monolithically so'.[72]

The siren is, according to medieval encyclopaedic and bestiary literature, a creature that is half woman and half fish or half bird, who sings to lure sailors to shipwreck. Bartholomew the Englishman includes the following description, conflating sirens and mermaids into one category, and quoting extensively from earlier sources:

> The mermayde hatte *sirena*, *sirene*, and *hec siren*, *sirenis*, and is a see beste wonderliche yschape and draweþ schipmen to perile by swetnes of songe…Þe glose seiþ *super Isaiam xiii⁰. s.* þat *serene* ben serpentes with crestes [and wynges]. And some men seyn þat þey ar fishes of þe see in liknesse of women… And [f. 298^{vb}] Isidorus seiþ *libro xx^{o}.* þere he treteþ of wondres in þis wise: some men seyn þat þer ben þre *sirene*, somdel maydens and somdele foules wiþ clawes and wynges; and oon of hem song wiþ voice, and anoþer wiþ a pype, and þe þridde wiþ an harpe; and pleased so schipmen wiþ liknesse of songe þat þey drowen hem to perill and to schippebreche…
>
> And Physiologus sepkeþ or *sirena* and seiþ it is a beste of þe see wonderly schepen as a mayde from þe nauel vppeward and as a fisshe from þe nauel dounward. And þis wonderful beste is glad and mery in tempest and elenge and sory in fayr weder. Wiþ swetnesse of song þis beste makeþ schipmen to slepe. And whanne he[o] seeþ þat þey ben aslepe he[o] goþ into þe schappe and rauysscheþ which sche may and takeþ wiþ hire; and bringeþ him into a drye place and makeþ him firste ligge by hire and do þe dede of leccherye; and if he wil not or may not þanne sche sleeþ hym and eteþ his fleisshe. But þe soþe is þat þey werne strenger hoores þat drowen men þat passeden by hem to pouert and to mischief, and it is yfeyned þat þey brouȝt hem to schippbreche.[73]

[71] Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing the Monstrous', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages* ed, by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 13-37, at p. 17.
[72] Bildhauer and Mills, 'Introduction: Conceptualizing the Monstrous', om *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, pp. 17-18.
[73] *On the Properties of Things*, pp. 1247-1248, lines 37-38, 1, 2-5, 6-14, 19-27.

Bartholomew describes the most well-known view of sirens as female beasts who use music to destroy sailors.[74] He highlights the variations of sirens who are hybrids of women and fish, as well as hybrids of women and birds. He situates the mouth, as the part of the body from which singing emanates, and the vocal production itself, as the centre for the corruption and moral downfall of humanity. Through its articulation of rationality and morality, the mouth is key to the definition of humanity. Paradoxically, it is this same body part that undermines that rationality and morality through the medium of singing.

The sirens' danger is apparent not only in the power of their music to act as a soporific but the violence that ensues thereafter. According to Bartholomew, these monstrous female beings are both seducers, rapists, and murderers. As discussed in Chapter Three, monstrosity is both threatening and alluring: the curiosity of the observer to know how a monster looks or behaves makes monstrous beings attractive. These sirens are attractive through the same form of curiosity for they are described as physically beautiful women, but also they have an aural allure through their beautiful singing.[75] Indeed, Judith Peraino argues for the 'mass appeal' of the siren's music, for its power was heightened when Odysseus survived listening to it for 'his survival has made us all wonder about what he heard'.[76] This displays a dangerous and frightening side to the beautiful voice that through Marie and Mechthild lifted the mind and spirit to the divine.

The overt association of sirens with a sexual encounter, as described by Bartholomew, is not evident in all their literary depictions, but it does highlight a particularly frightening aspect. Their physical beauty and singing disguise a monstrous nature, one that destroys their prey both through sex and murder. They hold a power that exaggerates, but nonetheless mirrors, fears within medieval society of the enticing and licentious nature of women intent on the

[74] This is a trope that reappears through history. The sirens as a myth and moral allegory are repeated many times over, and a similarly dangerous beast is created in the form of the Lorelei of the Rhine, a legend created in the nineteenth century, who lure fishermen to death on the rocks through singing. Potter and Sorrell, *A History of Singing*, p. 20.
[75] Sarah Kay, 'Siren Enchantments, or, Reading Sound in Medieval Books'. *SubStance*, p. 109.
[76] Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, p. 2.

moral corruption of men. This fear is made clear within Bartholomew's text when sirens are directly compared with 'hoores', a very real corruption within society, importantly aimed, like the sirens, at the corruption of men. The sirens physically demonstrate their sexual passions, mirrored in the moral association with 'hoores'. Here, their other mouth, the vagina, is also complicit in the denigration of male morals, and in the subversion of masculine authority. Therefore, the mouth is pivotal in the accounts of the sirens as monstrous, as well as in the moral allegory, as powerful but also evil, enticing, morally subversive, sexual and importantly female.

Bartholomew's passage on sirens almost exactly follows the information produced by Isidore of Seville in his *Etymologies*. Isidore is one of the major sources for Bartholomew's work and is referenced throughout *De proprietatibus rerum*. Isidore first of all clarifies that sirens are 'fabulous human monstrosities…which do not exist but are concocted to interpret the causes of things' [hominum fabulosa portenta, que non sunt, sed ficta in causis rerum interpretantur].[77] In this way Isidore sees the image of the siren as allegorical, a fictionalised way of describing the dangers of female sexuality. He provides the following detailed description:

> 30. People imagine three Sirens who were part maidens, part birds, having wings and talons; one of them would make music with her voice, the second with a flute, and the third with a lyre. They would draw sailors, enticed by the song, into shipwreck. 31. In truth, however, they were harlots, who, because they would seduce passers-by into destitution, were imagined as bringing shipwreck upon them. They were said to have wings and talons because sexual desire both flies and wounds. They were said to have lived among the waves because the waves gave birth to Venus.
>
> [Sirenas tres fingunt fuisse ex parte virgins, ex parte volucres, habentes alas et ungulas: quarum una voce, altera tibiis, tertia lyra canebant. Quae inlectos navigantes sub cantu in naufragium trahebant. Secundum veritatem autem meretrices fuerunt, quae transeuntes quoniam deducebant ad egestatem, his fictae sunt inferre naufragia. Alas autem habuisse et ungulas, quia amor et volat et vulnerate. Quae inde in fluctibus conmorasse dicuntur, quia fluctus Venerem creaverunt.] [78]

[77] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, XI.iii.28, p. 245; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 2, XI.iii.28.
[78] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, XI.iii.30-31, p. 245; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 2, XI.iii.31-32.

A similar explanation appears in the *Cambridge Bestiary*, MS Ii.4.26, alongside the image in figure 16, which first describes their appearance and then, like Bartholomew, assigns a moral lesson. The *Cambridge Bestiary* is just one example from a popular genre of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, evidenced by the large number of extant manuscripts.[79] A bestiary is set out in a similar way to many encyclopaedic texts, containing information about the etymology of an animal's name, its physical appearance and behaviour.[80] The sirens, therefore, are categorised here as non-human beasts:

> The sirenae, so Physiologus says, are deadly creatures who are made like human beings from the head to the navel, while their lower parts down to the feet are winged. They give forth musical songs in a melodious manner, which songs are lovely, and thus they charm the ears of sailormen and allure them to themselves. They entice the hearing of these poor chaps by a wonderful sweetness of rhythm, and put them to sleep. At last, when they see that the sailors are deeply slumbering, they pounce upon them and tear them to bits.[81]

The *Cambridge Bestiary* highlights the beauty and alluring nature of the sirens' singing, as well as a sense of compassion and empathy with the sailors who are described as 'poor chaps'. The power of the singing of the sirens results in a complete lack of self-restraint or self-control for the sailors; they are entirely helpless with no possible chance of escape from the siren's song. The power over mind and body of this music, commonly of a sung nature is evident.

Following the opening description, the remainder of the *Cambridge Bestiary* entry is devoted to a moral association with the creature, aligning sirens and their singing not only with sexual corruption but also with any kind of ostentation or excessive pleasure. This moral aspect, and in this case a secular moral aspect is poignantly 'something entirely new and unseen in the

[79] Lisa Verner, *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1976), pp. 91, 93.
[80] Verner, *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages*, p. 95.
[81] T. H. White., trans. and ed. *The Bestiary: a Book of Beasts*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954), p. 134.

source material'.[82] The end of the *Cambridge Bestiary* entry on the siren has the following moral element:

> That's the way in which ignorant and incautious human beings get tricked by pretty voices, when they are charmed by indelicacies, ostentations and pleasures, or when they become licentious with comedies, tragedies and various ditties. They lose their whole mental vigour, as if in a deep sleep, and suddenly the reaving pounce of the Enemy is upon them.[83]

Here the moral aspect relates to any kind of moral corruption which seems to include overindulgence, ostentation, as well as licentiousness. In each of these three examples there is an emphasis placed on the moral lesson assigned to the sirens as perversions sent to corrupt and destroy by means of the singing mouth. The sirens, in a similar way to the potential dangers of shape-shifting monstrous beings, discussed in Chapter Three, who threaten society by their nature of passing through it unseen, are unlabelled, nebulous corruptors within society. Their singing, which is soporific in the traditional image of the siren, is then associated with any form of enticement, often of a vocal nature. The attraction of their singing makes sirens, in both a monstrous and allegorical sense, dangerous, because the danger is unknown until it is too late. It is perhaps, as Sarah Kay argues, the unknown but certainly beautiful that is attractive and dangerous in its physical and aural attraction.[84] The sirens' singing therefore is evocative of the power of the voice to attract, seduce and ultimately to corrupt.

It is the beauty of the sirens' physicality and song, both monstrous and allegorical, that is central to their medieval construction. Naomi Baker, in exploring the unattractive body in early modern culture, highlights the 'difficulty…of distinguishing ugly women from their beautiful counterparts', for 'women are likely to be inverted Sileni, their veneer of beauty

[82] Lisa Verner, *The Epistemology of the Monstrous in the Middle Ages*, p. 113. Lisa Verner has studied the genre of the bestiary and argues that this example conforms to her theory of the outline of most entries: that they contain 'description, spiritual moral and then secular moral', (p. 113). This final idea of the secular moral is something that sets the medieval bestiary apart from its earlier predecessors, such as the classical text the *Physiologus*, and is the last part of each entry in the text. Previously a moral had been drawn from the animal's behaviour, but in these medieval bestiaries 'the moral is not necessarily a spiritual one', and therefore 'the moral may be based on scripture, but just as often the moral applies equally to secular concerns' (p. 95).
[83] White., trans. and ed. *The Bestiary*, pp. 134-135.
[84] Sarah Kay, 'Siren Enchantments, or, Reading Sound in Medieval Books', *SubStance*, (108-132).

covering physical and moral deformity'.[85] The sirens are an interesting example of Baker's argument because the upper part of their body is that of a beautiful woman, and this beauty extends to their voices which are so beguiling as to have become dangerous, a danger mirrored by their female physicality and sexuality which is viewed as dangerous more broadly across medieval society. I argue that their voices are exemplars of this beauty, as veneers that cover something much more powerful and dangerous. The sirens' danger emanates from the soporific power of their song and the violence that ensues, a power that begins with the mouth through song, and devouring, but also through the secondary female 'mouth', the vagina, through the moral corruption of sex.

The sirens move even further across medieval genres, from encyclopaedias and bestiaries into Middle English poetry. The *Confessio amantis*, written by John Gower at the end of the fourteenth century, is described as a poem 'of consolation', in which 'the primary subject is the narrator's restless state of mind', and the 'plot is the narrator's…search for repose.'[86] Around this framework of a restless soul in confession, Gower places a number of different stories, one of which concerns the sirens:

> An othre thing, who that recordeth,
> Lich unto this ensample acordeth,
> Which in the tale of Troie I finde.
> Sirenes of a wonder kynde
> Ben monstres, as the bokes tellen,
> And in the grete se thei duellen:
> Of body bothe and of visage
> Lik unto wommen of yong age
> Up fro the navele on hih thei be,
> And doun benethe, as men mai se,
> Thei bere of fisshes the figure.
> And over this of such nature
> Thei ben, that with so swete a stevene
> Lik to the melodie of hevene
> In wommanysshe vois thei singe,
> With notes of so gret likinge,
> Of such mesure, of such musike,
> Wherof the schipes thei beswike

[85] Naomi Baker, *Plain Ugly: The Unattractive Body in Early Modern Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 5.
[86] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Volume 1, 'Introduction', ed. by Russell A. Peck with Latin translations by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2006). Online (without page numbers) at < https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/peck-confessio-amantis-volume-1>

That passen be the costes there.
For whan the schipmen leie an ere
Unto the vois, in here avys
Thei wene it be a paradys,
Which after is to hem an helle.
For reson may noght with hem duelle,
Whan thei tho grete lustes hiere;
Thei conne noght here schipes stiere,
So besiliche upon the note
Thei herkne, and in such wise assote,
That thei here rihte cours and weie
Forgete, and to here ere obeie,
And seilen til it so befalle
That thei into the peril falle,
Where as the schipes be todrawe,
And thei ben with the monstres slawe.[87]

In his description, there is no mistaking the beautiful monstrosity of the siren, and unlike the encyclopaedic and bestiary texts, Gower is very specific that the sirens are, in appearance, like beautiful young women. Their singing is compared to the 'melodie of hevene', which highlights the beautiful qualities of the voice, making sailors believe they are in paradise, like Marie d'Oignies singing herself to Heaven. It soon, however, becomes to them a hell. The melody that the sirens sing is of such beauty that it has a powerful, and deceiving quality: 'Wherof the schipes thei beswike'. This power is so strong 'That thei here rihte cours and weie / Forgete, and to here ere obeie'. Gower is explicit about the power of this singing to control the sailors who hear it, and highlights that it makes the sailors forget: it has a power over the mind. This parallels the power and control that men fear that women possess: the sexual allure which makes men forget their position, morality and nobility. Furthermore, the sailors lose their reason: 'For reson may noght with hem duelle'. Reason and rationality are intrinsic elements of humanity and are expressed through speech. The sirens have used their voices, of which there is no explicit information as to the speech element of their singing, to destroy the rationality, and by extension the humanity, of the sailors. Any authority these sailors possessed through their humanity, and indeed masculinity, is destroyed by femininity, monstrosity, and singing. It is perhaps paradoxical that one type of vocalisation, the sirens' singing, destroys the sailors' rationality and humanity: a humanity that is itself expressed through vocalisation, in speech. The end result of this encounter with the sirens is the

[87] Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, lines 481-514. < https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/peck-confessio-amantis-volume-1>

slaughter of the sailors. The sirens, feminine in appearance, have exerted power and control through their singing voices and brought about the complete destruction of the sailors through death. This destruction is moralised in the works of Isidore, Bartholomew, and the bestiary as the moral destruction of men caused by the allure of prostitutes, as well as extravagances of living.

As the sirens move across literary and artistic discourses they shift from real hybrid monstrous beings, through the allure of sexual pleasure and extravagance, and even infiltrate Christian iconography, where they are used to represent the devil and paganism. This shift into religious discourse occurs as the 'Christian religion struggled to define their religious practices and rituals against those of various pagan and Jewish cults'.[88] Peraino points out the work of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-ca. 215) who likened the song of the sirens to the lure of paganism, and the mast of the ship as Christ, to whom, like Odysseus, we should all be bound.[89] The subversive nature of the sirens as beauty without the concomitant morality, is evident in this Christian imagery, and the singing of the sirens, as in the moral of the bestiary, is alluring of all things evil. It may also be considered as soporific in its enticing and alluring effect intended to seduce the listener away from Christianity, and into the evil power of the devil. The evil alluded to has reached its zenith in the devil, encompassing all moral subversions.

In every genre the sirens are identified as morally corrupting and dangerous, pouring forth beautiful singing or enticing words to attract, deceive and destroy. They are always perceived in their feminine form, and reflect the behaviour of Eve, representing 'rampant sexuality and the corrupting body'.[90] Their corruption of morality is achieved through their mouths, openings that allow a flow between the inside of the body and the outside: the sirens use two 'mouths' to achieve this corruption. Their singing mouth as physical and aural allure emitting beautiful soporific singing, and their vagina to corrupt through sex. The power of these sirens

[88] Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, p. 37.
[89] Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, p. 37. For this Peraino cites Siegfried de Rachewiltz, *De Sirenibus: An Inquiry into Sirens from Homer to Shakespeare* (New York: Garland, 1987), pp. 71-73. This is one way in which mythologies and Classical traditions were adopted by medieval sources and religious sources. Such examples also include the nature of St Christopher as a Cynocephalus discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.
[90] Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, p. 45.

is centred on mouths, and it is a beautiful and alluring, yet frightening and subversive, power that subjugates masculinity. The sirens wield a strange and deadly power however they do not have an underpinning of a justifiable rationale to define a basis in authority. The sirens although lacking authority in themselves, their long-standing tradition across classical and medieval tradition and artistic and textual depictions therefore creates an authority for the power of the sirens.

'Othered' Singing Mouths

The singing mouth has been shown to bestow positive effects, stirring emotions and bridging Heaven and earth, as well as being a subversive force strongly aligned with dangerous female sexuality. The singing mouth can also be found in descriptions of 'othering': usually in denigrations of fellow human beings. This shares some similarities with the definition of people by their types of speech, as explored in Chapter One, however the singing voice has a deep association with an individual subject, as well as a social group. In some examples there are clear sign of racialised singing; of associating a style of singing with a racial group. Racialised descriptions in the texts under scrutiny must be considered in the light of critical race theory, which emphasises the ever-changing idea of race across geography and history. Race 'is a structural relationship for the articulation and management of human differences, rather than a substantive content'.[91] Although it is difficult to discuss either race or nationality in the context of the medieval period, there are clear examples that concern the geographical differences between people, and some of the following quotations demonstrate a racialised view of other cultures and their singing which is objectionable to our modern sensibilities.

The view of the medieval period as 'the wrong side of the rupture' of the Scientific Revolution and the formation of nations, that heralds the onset of the modern period, denies the conversation of cultural and geographical social identity. This form of identity clearly exists in the medieval and is used 'to demarcate human beings through differences among

[91] Geraldine Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages', *Literature Compass*, 8.5 (2011), 315-331, at p. 319.

humans…in order to distribute positions and power, differentially to human groups'.[92] Furthermore, 'the refusal of race de-stigmatizes the impacts and consequences of certain laws, acts, practices, and institutions in the medieval period, so that we cannot…bear adequate witness to the full meaning of the manifestations and phenomena they install'.[93] Geraldine Heng's argument highlights the importance of engaging with the medieval period through the lens of racial studies and it is through this lens that the following description of the Tartars will be viewed.

In his work, *Historia Tartarorum*, composed in 1247, Simon of Saint-Quentin details the singing of the Tartars, the Mongol invaders of Russia and Hungary. These Tartars were invaders from the East and as such were culturally very different from the Western people they conquered. The description provided by Simon of Saint-Quentin is only of the men and shows an image of uncivilised, unsophisticated barbarians whose singing is guttural and animalistic, therefore drawing attention to a masculinity that Simon, and others, object to. Within Western Christian medieval culture masculinity is associated with rationality and the spirit, and so these examples set up the Tartar men to be somehow less masculine and 'uncivilised'. The *Historia Tartarorum* details a specific Dominican mission, that Simon accompanied, to meet with the Mongols, and although the original text does not survive, it was partially copied into the *Speculum historiale*, an encyclopaedic text by Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1190 – c. 1264), from which the following translation is taken.[94] Their singing is described in one chapter of the text detailing the 'exterior qualities of the Tartars' [De exterior qualitate Tartarorum], and then repeated elsewhere in the text.

> Besides this, the Tartars, whether they are interrogating or whether they are shouting, speak from the bottom of the throat, rapidly and dreadfully. When they sing, they bellow like bulls or howl like wolves. They raise their inarticulate voices in song and chant "Alai! Alai!" in unison and very frequently
>
> [Preterea Tartari modo interrogative et clamoso loquuntur gutture rabido et horribili. Cantantes mugiunt ut thori, vel ululant ut lupi, voces

[92] Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages', *Literature Compass,* p. 324.
[93] Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages', *Literature Compass,* p. 323.
[94] Stephen Pow, Tamás Kiss, Anna Romsics, Flora Ghazaryan, 'Introduction to the Project: Why Simon of Saint-Quentin?' < http://www.simonofstquentin.org/project_intro.html> [accessed 17-03-2023].

> inarticulatas in cantando proferunt et hanc cantilenam “alai, alai” communiter ac frequentissime canunt][95]
>
> When they celebrate the first days of the month or festivities of their wombs,[96] they pass the time singing or rather howling, and drinking
>
> [Cumque kalendas aut festivitates ventrium suorum celebrant, cantui vel potius ululatui atque potacionibus vacant][97]
>
> …feasting and celebrating according to their custom – by the drinking of mare’s milk and singing, or rather howling.
>
> […festum et gaudimonium secundum morem suum in lactis jumentini potacionibus et in cantibus vel potius ululatibus eidem fecerunt][98]

Simon of Saint-Quentin demonstrates a form of racial denigration, a racism against the Tartars, describing their singing in terms of animals, referring to bellowing and howling like bulls and wolves. This highlights not only an intimation of their uncivilised behaviour, but also a suggestion of their lack of humanity, and consequently also their rationality and morality. It may furthermore indicate a supposed savagery in the Tartars that is threatening, especially considering their conquest of the area of Russia, which is equally threatening to other Western, European nations.

The singing of the Tartars is as far removed as it is possible to be from Isidore’s description of the perfect voice, and the beautiful sound produced by Marie d’Oignies, and even that of the sirens. In terms of the types of voices outlined by Isidore, the nearest to the singing of the Tartars is a ‘hard (*durus*) voice’, which ‘is one that emits sound violently, like thunder, or like the sound of the anvil, when the hammer strikes on the hard iron’ [Dura vox est, quae violenter emittit sonos, sicut tonitruum, sicut incudes sonos, quotiens in durum malleus percutitur ferrum.][99] It is clear that the comparison to bellowing and howling sets the singing of the Tartars apart from the examples of beauty and perfection above. It implies a lack of

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[95] Stephen Pow, Tamás Kiss, Ann Romsics, Flora Ghazaryan, *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, XXX, 71. Accessed at: <www.simonofstquentin.org>

[96] The notes accompanying this translation refers to the ambiguity of the reference to wombs, or whether it is to bellies.

[97] Pow et al, *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, XXX, 78.

[98] Pow et al, *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, XXXII, 50.

[99] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, III.xix.12, p. 295; *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX recognovit brevique adnotione critica instruxit W. M. Lindsay* Vol 1, III.xx.13.

authority; for even a woman, albeit a religious one such as Marie d'Oignies, displayed more authority through her singing voice, as did a deceitful and corrupting siren. Since the mouth, speech, and by extension, singing, is central for the expression of humanity, rationality and morality, the voices of the Tartars, regarded by Isidore as aesthetically less-than-perfect, are later combined with other 'uncivilised' behavioural attributes, implying an inferiority to the Dominican mission and 'civilised', Western society more generally.

Although their singing voices are clearly human, they are described in racist terms as animalistic, and carry with them associations of a lack of 'civilisation', and therefore an implied inferiority. The first description of their singing follows directly from a description of their speaking voices which is equally derogatory, and both vocal manifestations may be indications of the writer's perception of the Tartars' lower moral standing, lack of civility and, by association, a lower level of vocal authority. Descriptions of singing share a lot in common with descriptions of speech because the same principles apply: human singing is inclusive of human speech and so the associated concepts of rationality and morality still remain. As argued in Chapter One, speech, or rather, the lack of speech, has implications for a person's morality, rationality and even their humanity. Simon of Saint-Quentin's description of the 'animalistic' singing of the Tartars therefore questions the key concepts of humanity which are highlighted by their guttural speech and 'howling' singing. This direct association between vocalisations, in some cases singing, and animals, in textual descriptions, Jason Stoessel argues, is a common trope of the later Middle Ages.[100] Stoessel further argues, with specific recourse to this description by Simon, that 'Simon of Saint-Quentin judges Mongol singing negatively because it cannot possibly fit into his ethnocentric worldview of music as articulate and literate'.[101] Simon's view of the Tartar's singing demonstrates his biased view on music, judgements on civilisation, and racial prejudices against the barbarian invaders.

[100] Jason Stoessel, 'Howling like Wolves, Bleating like Lambs: singers and the discourse of animality in the late Middle Ages', *Viator*, 45.2 (2014), (201-236), pp. 202-203. Stoessel, in the appendix to his article offers several other references to associations of sociolinguistic groups with animal sounds. He references the *Ars scientiae musica* where the song of the Lombards is described as howling like wolves; an early fifteenth century text which says the Greeks describe Latins as barking like dogs which the Latins say the Greeks wail like foxes. Stoessel also references the *Theorica musice* which says that Germans howl and Genoese bleat like goats, p. 229.

[101] Jason Stoessel, 'Howling like Wolves, Bleating like Lambs: singers and the discourse of animality in the late Middle Ages', *Viator*, p. 227.

It is important that Simon of Saint-Quentin repeats this affirmation of the singing voices of the Tartars. He repeats it three times throughout his work, emphasising the animal qualities of the Tartars' singing, as well as the implied animal qualities of the Tartars' behaviour. Simon is vehement is his description, using violent language to make the point of the Tartar's animalistic qualities. They bellow and howl, producing their vocal sounds rapidly and dreadfully; in Simon's view proving their incivility through their own vocal articulations. Their singing is apparently entirely without the necessary melodic nature required, and it could therefore raise the question of whether, according to Western ears, it is really singing at all. The transcendent and powerful nature of singing then appears completely absent from the Tartars to Simon's Western sensibility.

The description is accompanied by other descriptions of their 'uncivilised' behaviour. Simon describes that 'In eating habits, they are the untidiest and dirtiest people' [Porro in victu sunt homines immundissimi atque spurcissimi], as well as describing their diet of enjoying horsemeat and readily getting drunk.[102] These elements, combined with their singing, denote the Tartars as different, as 'Other', and by association as socially inferior in their behaviour and expression, as well as lacking in authority. It is striking that in this mission all participants and recordings are male: this homosocial mission is of men seeking to meet other men, and Simon, a white, western European man, writes a description about the male Tartars. This is a gender biased description but more importantly it is one man commenting on other people of the same gender, defining them and perhaps unconsciously comparing them with other social groups. The Tartars described are the upper part of the hierarchy of their society and yet through a description of their behaviour and singing they are reduced to a state of inferiority, unreasoning, immoral animals. This argues for levels of authority, defined through behaviour and singing, which defines the superiority of one group of people above another. It is a clear form of racism, describing the Western, Christian white man as superior to the invading men from the East.

Singing, and particularly the language of singing as a signifier of superiority is evident across different literary genres and highlight that in many forms, racist ideas exist across the

[102] Pow et al, *Simon of Saint-Quentin: History of the Tartars*, XXX, 78.

medieval world. In the *Book on the Conditions of Women*, part of the *Trotula* ensemble, within the section 'On the Regimen for the Infant', singing in front of a child is mentioned with particular emphasis placed on refraining from using the words of the Lombards in the singing:

> [124] '…There should be different kinds of pictures, cloths or diverse colors, and pearls placed in front of the child, and one should use nursey songs and simple words; neither rough or harsh words (such as those of Lombards) should be used in singing in front of the child.'
>
> [Ante ipsum sint diuerse picture, panni diuersi coloris, margarite, cantilenis et facilibus uocibus utatur; ante eum non est asperis uocibus cantandum neque raucis, sicut lumbardis.][103]

The description of singing in front of a child and refraining from the use of 'harsh or rough words (such as those of Lombards)',[104] shows the potentially detrimental effect of such words on children but also denigrates the language of the Lombards (an early medieval Germanic tribe who, when settled, gave their name to a region of northern Italy, Lombardy, which was their stronghold) as used in singing. This focuses on the sounds that the language in singing produces, the harsh sounds, which presumably should be replaced with softer sounds for singing to children. Soft sounds, in a similar way to the soporific power of the sirens, may be used to relax the child and once again proves a power that may be wielded through singing, although not through singing the Lombard language.

In a similar way to the description of the Tartars, this description undermines and denigrates the Lombard language, and by extension speech, implying an inferiority in the language and therefore in the authority that it carries, with particular recourse to singing to children. This allusion to the Lombards further carries an implication of impurity, a lack of perfection, perhaps immorality, which may be detrimental to the child being sung to. This example shows the power of the singing voice to transcend the human body and affect another person. Such transcendence was clear in the religious singing of Marie d'Oignies whose voice, words, and pure joy were felt by the whole community. Where the singing of Marie was of a

[103] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), [124], pp. 108/109.
[104] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), [124], pp. 108/109.

positive nature, the singing here, using the Lombard language, appears of a negative effect although not in the truly frightening way of the sirens. The mouth here is not only a defining part of one human being, but through singing to a child it can have a profound effect on another human being. The mouth can be used both for personal definition and projected onto others to define them. Equally, human authority, often defined through the mouth, can be both personal and projected.

These racialised examples depict deep anxieties in the medieval western imaginary surrounding otherness, which situates racial otherness as a location of the fearful unknown. Gendered anxieties also permeate in relation to song, as in the example of the medieval eunuch. Castration before puberty has a profound effect on the voice of the developing man, and one of the most famous examples of this is the Pardoner in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The description given of the Pardoner in the 'General Prologue' is not as overtly derogatory as that of the Tartars, but it certainly sets the Pardoner apart, as being less masculine, and more effeminate.

> A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.
> No berd hadde he, he nevere sholde have;
> As smothe it was as it were late shave.
> I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare…
> But trewely to tellen atte laste,
> He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.
> Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
> But alderbest he song an offertorie;
> For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
> He moste preche and wel affile his tonge
> to wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;
> Therefore he song the murierly and loude.[105]

The Pardoner's voice is a key part of his description, combining with the lack of beard to denote him as a eunuch. His voice is high, 'smal', as a goat, 'goot', which indicates that his voice has more in common with the pitch of a female voice than a male voice. It further highlights his immoral nature as goats were associated with lechery, one of the seven deadly sins.[106] Gabriele Cocco reflects on the work of Derek Pearsall who 'views this physical

[105] *Riverside Chaucer*, 'General Prologue', ed. by L. D. Benson, Third Edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 34, lines 688-691, 707-714.
[106] Gabriele Cocco, '*I Trowe He were a Gelding or a Mare*. A Veiled Description of a Bent Pardoner', *Neophilologus*, 92 (2008), 359-366, at p. 361.

deficiency as a reflection of his spirituality'.[107] Later, in the 'General Prologue' portrait of the Pardoner, his singing is described, and praised, as the best of all. Here it appears that his physical form has a profound, but pleasing, effect on his voice, and the description is feminised but not derided. Elspeth Whitney has argued for his physical description being indicative of a cold and moist humoral complexion which denotes the Pardoner as 'a male phlegmatic, that is, a man with a range of "effeminate" or feminized characteristics, including various forms of nonreproductive sexuality'.[108] The Pardoner, through the feminisation of his voice, perhaps loses some of his potential masculine authority, however he seems to carry immense power in the way he reads and sings because through this he wins money, 'to wynne silver'. Although othered and feminised because of his voice, it is his voice, particularly his singing voice, that is praised, and therefore powerful. His voice may not display the masculine authority it should, but in a similar way to the sirens, it holds a beguiling power, which the Pardoner exploits to its full potential gaining control over other people's money. The Pardoner's voice defines him as a eunuch; feminises him; reduces his masculine authority, but his projection of that voice effects a change in others. It defines a type of control, an authority that is subversive of patriarchal society, but which exerts a power that the Pardoner exploits.

Singing as a transcendent power: emotive, persuasive, and controlling, is captured within the image of the Pardoner. He encapsulates the central arguments of this chapter in that the singing voice wields power and authority to influence others, as well as having the ability to define and categorise humanity. The Pardoner, like the Tartars, is defined by his voice; it labels him as different. In the Pardoner's case it emasculates him but allows for a power over the listener in contrast to the derision of the authority of the Tartars. Although sharing a similarity in the use of the singing voice to define and to 'other', the Pardoner and the Tartars are classified separately, and the descriptions given allow for different levels of authority to be expressed.

[107] Cocco, '*I Trowe He were a Gelding or a Mare*. A Veiled Description of a Bent Pardoner', pp. 361-362.
[108] Elspeth Whitney, 'What's Wrong with the Pardoner?: Complexion Theory, the Phlegmatic Man, and Effeminacy', *The Chaucer Review,* 45.4 (2011), 357-389, at p. 360.

Conclusion

Singing, defined by its melodic nature and physical exertion is, like speech, particular to humanity. It holds the power of authority expressed sometimes as personal authority, spiritual authority, as well as being projected outwards to control or define them as different. For Marie d'Oignies and Mechthild of Hackeborn, the singing voice bridges the earthly and the divine and allows them as women to express religious authority, imparting valuable knowledge and deep religious experiences. The sirens and their singing similarly bridge a gap, but this time it is between the human and the monstrous; the beautiful and the dangerous; the alert and the helpless. Rather than building a positive connection like Marie, the sirens are subversive female singers, threatening and destroying patriarchal authority. Female authority is clearly expressed through the singing voice, but importantly through a beautiful singing voice. The purity and clarity of the singing is vital for expressing authority, even when that authority belongs to the man-eating sirens. A beautiful feminine singing voice, and its additional power and authority, even extend to the Pardoner, whose physicality as a eunuch does not, paradoxically, prevent his expression of authority.

While much of the authority here is defined by the beautiful female, or feminised, singing voice, the male singing voice, such as in the example of the Tartars, is used to undermine the civility, morality, and authority of a social group. The animalistic qualities of their singing, connected to the inability of animals to articulate through speech and therefore lacking in rational thought, not only labels the Tartars as socially and morally inferior but, equally allows the author of the text to assert a superiority of mind and voice in their Western, Christian guise.

Singing has a transcendent quality, moving out from beyond the body, and it combines all of the tropes explored within the chapters of this thesis. The singing voice can carry authority, like the spoken voice; it can be both beautiful and pure as well as ugly and subversive; it can denote and frighten through the monstrous creature it belongs to, and it can be transformative like the healing mouth. The singing human mouth can be used to express myriad areas of human character, as well as be projected onto others; it is emotive and divine, and it opens

up, in more ways than speech alone, the execution of female authority both for positive and detrimental ends. In all its guises, the singing mouth is definitive of humanity, morality, divinity, and authorial control.

Conclusion

What, then, does the mouth mean in the socio-religious culture of the Middle Ages? The human mouth is a conduit to language, human expression, and sexuality. It is the principal method of human communication and interaction, and through theological, scientific and secular discourse, in the Middle Ages, it becomes a powerful mechanism for the definition of human authority. Furthermore, the mouth is presented in the medieval sources explored here, in Western culture c. 1100-1500, as a point of transcendence and transformation, effecting healing and a deeper connection with the divine. Paradoxically, it is also visualised as a dangerous entry point to the human body, closely associated with the female genitals, and key to the subversion of the very authority it helps to define. In this way, the mouth is also a problematic part of the human body, which throughout the chapters of this thesis, has been continually shown to imbue divergent meanings. The small, neat mouth of the *puella*, for instance, which creates a strong barrier guarding the body, metamorphoses into the gaping, uncontrolled, infectious mouth of the *vetula*. This alteration across the female life cycle is frightening, from the perfect beauty and consequent authority of fecund youth to the ugly old woman who uses her mouth to subvert authority. Added to this complexity are the sirens, whose physicality and singing is beautiful, but whose vocal power subverts the masculine authority of their victims. In contrast, the beautiful singing of Marie d'Oignies bridges the earthly and the divine to endow her with the authority to share her divine revelations. In revealing the meanings of the mouth, through five different facets of appearance and functionality in the chapters above, this thesis has argued for the centrality of the mouth in defining, denying and undermining human, gendered, authority.

It is through these myriad meanings of the human mouth that we reach a deeper understanding of the Middle Ages, of medieval views of the human body, and of communication, authority, and sexuality. The mouth appears as a point of transformation and healing, demonstrating the ability to effect a physical transformation in, for example, tales of dragons becoming women, and where health is restored to the sick. However, the mouth, altered and made monstrous, also becomes the entrance to Hell and eternal damnation in artistic representation, as well, where the altered physicality of monstrous beings reveals a deeper understanding of medieval views of 'normality' and 'humanity', in direct opposition

to ‘monstrosity’. The mouth, in all its guises, reveals more facets of the definition of what it means to be human, to be gendered, and to hold authority.

Speech and singing, two interconnected functions of the mouth, show a great aptitude for displaying authority in this thesis. Through speech, humanity, rationality and morality all can be expressed, just as Augustine described the ability to articulate moral understanding as key to the definition of the human. In this way, since the mouth demonstrates humanity, any impediment to its speech potentially undermines that humanity and the vocal authority that it carries. Speech may allow the articulation of humanity, but its counterpart, singing, has a more transcendent quality, moving outside of the body to express a myriad of human characteristics and emotions, as well as those being projected to others. It is emotive and divine, and more so than other oral functions, it bridges the earthly and divine, allowing for an expression of religious authority and deep religious experiences which are more often enjoyed by female subjects. These women, through their musical voices, are conduits for a female authority that is more often denied to women in the secular world where masculinity holds a ‘natural’ superiority. In both the spoken and singing voice, clarity and purity of tone is vital for expressing authority. It is through the associated understanding of interrelated notions of morality, rationality and internal purity associated with clarity of voice, that authority is commanded by the vocalist.

The concept of purity associated with a clear speaking and singing voice is mirrored by the physical beauty of the mouth, whose characteristics are encapsulated by the ideal perfection of the romance heroine. Her neat, white, even teeth are barriers, guarding one entrance into, and out of, the body. This barrier, when broken, however, allows a dangerous flow into and out of the body, epitomised by the leaking, uncontrollable body of the old woman who infects the world with her supposedly bad breath and language, as explored in Chapter Two. Equally dangerous is the unguarded, and open mouth of Hell, whose teeth are perpetually parted in a gaping maw, marking the entrance to eternal damnation. The mouth, therefore, when properly guarded, is beautiful, yet when the barrier of the teeth is breached the possibilities are frightening. In both guises, the mouth is a powerful symbol, on the one hand for purity and its associated human authority, and on the other, a subversive and evil power to damn souls to Hell.

Furthermore, this thesis has shown how the subversion of human authority expressed through the mouth is commonly portrayed as feminine, whether specifically associated with women, or, as in the case of the monstrous beings examined in Chapter Three, presented through their implicit feminisation. This enhances understandings of the use of gendering within medieval culture; in particular, the ways in which medical and cultural qualities of femininity are used in descriptions of phenomena often termed 'monstrous', or 'unnatural' to demonstrate inferiority. Conversely, conceptions of masculinity, set up in opposing terms to femininity, are reflected onto medieval notions of 'normality', in opposition to 'abnormality'. The implicit use of feminine 'qualities' in medieval texts and illustrations show cultural views and concerns relating to the dangerous female body. Often related to the cold and wet humoral nature of women, femininity is often presented as subversive to the hotter and drier masculine authority. Femininity is shown to be subversive in the singing of the sirens in Chapter Five, in the transformation of youthful beauty into the ugliness of old age in Chapter Two, and more implicitly in the feminisation of monstrous beings who encapsulate the carnality of women in Chapter Three. Within each of these arenas the dangerous and subversive female mouth is closely aligned with Eve in the Garden of Eden, whose own mouth is held responsible for the downfall of man, through Adam, and consequently the entire human race. Eve's mouth therefore epitomises the subversive and dangerous female mouth. Moreover, femininity is deemed dangerous through its secondary 'mouth', the vagina, which, combined with the associated fear of *vagina dentata*, is poised, ready to destroy the male penis during intercourse. This fearsome phenomenon wields a power to attract, to frighten and to fascinate, and through its placement low down in the body, still intimately connected with the mouth, acts to reduce the more spiritual qualities of the mouth and destroy both oral and masculine authority.

The human mouth transforms, too, being transcended through singing and bestowed with healing qualities. It thus displays its own authority over bodily and spiritual ailments as a conduit for healing through multiple methods: by kissing, ingestion and speech. To enable the true healing power of the mouth there are several caveats, however: morality, status, education, and often masculine authority. As a focus for healing power, the mouth is demonstrative of an authority which is imbricated with moral virtue. Across Western Europe

in the Middle Ages, the mouth plays a vital role, physically, spiritually, and symbolically, in demonstrating and defining humanity. Paradoxically, the very nature of the mouth's engendering of authority makes it an ideal vehicle for the undermining of authority too. While not exclusively undermined by femininity, the source material of this thesis highlights the dangers of the colder and wetter sex in a society whose texts are predominantly written and communicated by male writers. Where the female mouth does emerge with authority, it is accomplished through clear notions of purity and perfection, through the romance heroine, the female mystic acting as a conduit for divine revelation, and in the most perfect of women: the Virgin Mary.

This research, focussing on Western medieval culture c. 1100-1500, builds on and contributes to existing scholarship on the mouth as well as adding to the fields of gender studies, the body, medicine, literature, emotions, and monstrosity. In unearthing the myriad meanings of the mouth, we can understand more deeply the ways in which medieval culture understood itself and the role of the human body within that understanding. The interactions of a range of forms of writing and cultural production across medieval culture are explored through the role of medicine in religious discourse, the cultural fears exposed in travel literature, and the 'ideals' of gender performed in romance literature: all made manifest through the human mouth and its functions. The medieval mouth is inhered with meanings of paradoxical and transformative potential, based on the Christian premise of Eve's oral transgression in the Garden of Eden. Through the Reformation and beyond, the meaning of the mouth would shift away from the iconographical depths of the Hellmouth, and towards an emphasis on the spoken Word of God in Protestant theology. More work, therefore, is waiting to be conducted on the later periods, and from more globalised perspectives, which would shed further light on the vitality of the human mouth for our understanding of how we came to authorise, and to exist as cultural beings.

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