

**FROM *EADHREDIG* TO *GYNG*:
A FEMINIST RE-EVALUATION OF THE
LEGEND OF ST JULIANA**

by

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PREFACE

Spelling

The use of texts from a wide range of sources and over a number of centuries poses certain problems. Names, for example, may be rendered differently in various texts. In all cases, terms have been used as they appear in the text from which they have been quoted. Where names are discussed in the argument, a modernised spelling has been decided upon and then used consistently.

Primary texts and translations

Quotations from the medieval texts have been taken from the most authoritative source available: Krapp and Dobbie in the case of Old English texts, S. T. R. O. d'Ardenne's edition for the *Liflade*. Klaus Sperk (1970) has been used for the fourteenth-century versions. The Caxton text was found in a special edition by the Kelascott Press. Where a reasonable translation has been available, this has been supplied in order to render the argument more accessible to those unacquainted with the original Latin or Old and Middle English. The name of the translator of the Old English texts has not been included slavishly: it occurs when a different translation has been chosen for reasons of clarity or a more felicitous style. The later medieval texts – the *Seyn Julien*, Caxton and Medieval Scottish versions – do not have a translation. They are sufficiently close to modern English to be readily comprehended. Certain translations and/or editions of primary texts may not have been cited in the body of the dissertation but are listed in the bibliography. They have been consulted at some point in the process of writing. Where the original text and the translation have been obtained from different texts, the name of each is cited, except in the case of the Old English texts as constant repetition of the translator's name was deemed to be tautological.

Technicalities

Where it has been deemed necessary to emphasise that indented quotations are the actual spoken words of characters, quotation marks have been used. Certain medieval texts, such as *Hali Meidhad*, contain abbreviations. These have been rendered in as close a form as possible to the original, with an &t. The letter yogh is not available in computer script: this has generally been rendered as a g, and occasionally as a y, in order to reflect the pronunciation.

Where the original documents do not use capital letters at the beginning of sentences, the quotations have been rendered as the words appear.

Bibliography

Certain texts are mentioned in the dissertation but are not cited in the bibliography. Eileen Power's *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* is an important work but it is not readily available as it has been out of print for decades. Trotula's texts are not available in print, other than extracts such as those in Alexandra Barratt's *Women's Writing in Middle English*. I was unable to locate a copy of Metaphrastes' *Patrologia Graeca*.

PROLOGUE

The Legend of St Juliana

St Juliana is a legendary saint, whose actual existence is most improbable, although relics purportedly existed. The approximate date of her martyrdom is *c.* 305-310. According to the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, the facts of her story are very briefly as follows: her legend is set in the time of the Diocletian persecutions, when Juliana, daughter of Affricanus (a pagan) lived in Nicomedia. She was betrothed to Eleusius, an official of Nicomedia and a cohort of Maximian the emperor. When Eleusius enquired about the wedding, Juliana (already a convert) refused to marry him until he became a prefect. When he had achieved this promotion, Juliana now required his conversion to Christianity. First her father and then Eleusius tortured her. Upon being imprisoned, a demon attempted to trick her, but she foiled him and miraculously escaped further harm as an angel appeared to assist her. The tortures meant for her harmed many of Eleusius' soldiers, and others, impressed by her example, converted to Christianity and were immediately beheaded. Juliana, impervious to whatever hideous tortures had been devised for her, was beheaded. Sephonia/Sophia, a devout Christian woman of some material wealth, carried her body to Puzzeoli in Italy and buried it with ceremony. Meanwhile Eleusius and his soldiers drowned at sea and their bodies were eaten by beasts.

Cynewulf makes a number of emendations to this story, some in order to improve the character of the heroine, but he was clearly reliant upon the common source, which certainly ante-dated AD 568, when Juliana's remains were removed from Puzzeoli, an event which the source does not mention.

The first reference to her legend is found in a martyrology ascribed to Jerome (d. 420) entitled *Martyrologium Vetustissimum*. Bede includes a very short version in his Latin Martyrology, but the first vernacular English version of her tale is Cynewulf's *Juliana*, which was written in the ninth century. It is generally agreed that the source for Cynewulf's version is either the first of two Latin lives of St Juliana published in the *Acta Sanctorum* for February 16 by Bolland in the seventeenth century, or a version very close to it. Although

Bolland's compilation is a seventeenth-century work, the sources which he used were very much older. (Her tale is omitted from Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, as well as from Aelfric's *Lives of the Saints*.) The *Liflade* is a twelfth-century early Middle English version. *Seyn Julien* is a fourteenth-century Scottish version which is based on the *Legenda Aurea*, but the version from the *South English Legendary* is not.

Versions of the tale of St Juliana appear in Anglo-Norman, Irish, Italian (Peter, Archbishop of Naples 1094-1111), Swedish, Greek (Symeon Metaphrastes (d. 965). Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, prepared in the thirteenth century by a Dominican, is the basis for many of the versions, most certainly of Caxton's translation of 1483.

Her day is remembered on 16 February.

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CHAPTER ONE

FEMINISM AND MEDIEVAL TEXTS

This dissertation combines two disciplines which may at first glance appear to be uncomfortably yoked together. One discipline supplies the matter or material for the study, whereas the other provides the manner or method whereby those texts have been read. The first of these, the matter, is medieval studies as the texts range from Cynewulf's ninth-century poem *Juliana* to the entry for Juliana in Caxton's fifteenth-century translation of Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, published in 1483. The second of these, the method, is feminist literary theory, as the texts have been read through a feminist literary-critical lens.

The combination may well be viewed as problematic by certain critics who regard literary theory as a modern innovation which should be applied only to modernist or post-modernist texts.¹ Other scholars, such as conservative medievalists, prefer the field to remain in stasis and for texts to be read in a traditional manner.² Yet other critics regard feminist theory as problematic in itself, as it is a field fraught with both internal controversy and conflict as well as criticism from non-feminists.³ Thus there are many aspects of this study which may arouse disapprobation, disapproval or dismay, depending on the particular point of view of the reader.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to address the various issues arising from the contested matter and method of this dissertation. The thinking which informs the remainder of the dissertation will also be discussed, and those concepts from feminist literary theory which have been applied in this study will be explicated very briefly. This chapter does not attempt to critique or describe a coherent feminism.⁴ Instead, its aim is to inform the reader as to the methodological and literary-theoretical framework within which the reading of the texts has been rendered. In addition, problems and arguments surrounding the

application of a modern theoretical approach to medieval works will be articulated. Because several topics are discussed in this chapter, headings have been used to separate the discussion into sections in order to dispel the illusion that a coherent and conclusive argument is being formulated. The purpose of this chapter is to define the parameters and scope of this dissertation.

The conservative nature of medieval scholarship

Medieval scholarship has been, and continues to be, an extraordinarily conservative field.⁵ Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe (1997: 19) describes the early quasi-scientific philological approach (as exemplified by Henry Sweet) which was clearly influenced by positivism. Philology purported to be objective and scientific in its method but saw texts as language artefacts and remained the method of Anglo-Saxon studies until J. R. R. Tolkien's (1936) important address marked the move away from philology to a more literary and aesthetic approach. Stanley B. Greenfield (1972: 28) called for criticism to include a consideration of the context of the artefact instead of purely formalistic or New-Critical methods. Tolkien and Greenfield thus represent influential statements about the manner of the scholarly endeavour in Old English studies. Until recently, therefore, medieval scholarship has tended to err on the side of conservatism. Innovative studies, for example, have been greeted with concern, even hostility.⁶

Although there have been some extraordinarily prolific and influential female medieval scholars such as Dorothy Whitelock, Rosemary Woolf and Roberta Frank, their work is traditional in approach.⁷ (Norman Cantor [1991: 389]) surprisingly calls any female scholars feminist scholars, a clear muddling of terms, for while some of the early female scholars, such as Helen Cam, were feminists, many were simply female scholars.) The field has long been the preserve of heavy-weight male scholars. J. R. R. Tolkien, C. L. Wrenn, Kenneth Sisam and Peter Clemoes have dominated Old English studies while D. W. Robinson, David Aers and V. A. Kolve wrote highly influential works on Chaucer and Middle English studies. Medieval departments have tended to be the preserve of males: Dorothy L. Sayers's first aim was to be a medievalist, but she never received a permanent appointment.⁸ Cantor's survey of great medievalists of all disciplines discusses the popularist historian Barbara Tuchman in his introductory chapter but devotes only a portion of a chapter to one female scholar. This luminary is Eileen Power, who is accorded the following praise by Cantor:

Eileen Power is the only woman medievalist who belongs in the array of founders and shapers of our vision of the Middle Ages during the first seventy years of this century. ... [I]t is especially appropriate that Eileen Power was not only in the front rank of medievalists but a power of feminism in Britain as well.
(1991: 382)

Power's two most important works have suffered diametrically opposite fates: *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275-1535* has been out of print for decades, despite being one of "the first great work[s] of British feminist history and still the best book on the subject" (Cantor: 1991: 382). *Medieval People* has acquired popular status and is one of the best-selling books in medieval studies (Cantor: 383). Interestingly enough, Cantor does not discuss Power's important contribution to feminist studies, *Medieval Women* (1975). Until recently, there has been a general dearth of female and feminist scholars working in medieval studies, but the field is conservative in other respects as well.

There are strong signs, nevertheless, that medieval studies is beginning to concede the need for change. A recent and long overdue shift (admittedly in broadly European, and not English) medieval scholarship is described by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (1996). He recounts the history of the *Grundriß* in his article entitled "A Sad and Weary History: The *Grundriß der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*". This was an ambitious enterprise, which had as its aim the production of authoritative editions of European romantic literature of the Middle Ages, as well as an attempt to place all of this literature in a cohesive framework. Its founding fathers were Hans Robert Jauss (Heidelberg), Aurelio Roncaglia (Rome), Jean Frappier (Sorbonne) and Erich Köhler (Sorbonne) (all male), who commenced the enterprise in 1959. The conception and thrust of the *Grundriß* was male: its purpose was monolithically authoritative and logocentric, and its enterprise was to be carried out by male scholars. Unsurprisingly, the whole enterprise has foundered, having been ill-conceived from the start. Gumbrecht concludes his article by saying:

Who would be ready, under these circumstances, to spend a thousand hours editing manuscripts with text documentations, and who would be tempted to pay a thousand dollars for a book that promises to eliminate any surprise and any individual perspective in its presentation of a medieval genre?
(1996: 468)

Thus the massive task of the *Grundriß* is destined to remain, for the foreseeable future, unfinished. Gumbrecht concedes that the nature of the academic medievalist's task has altered. His essay is intriguing because he comments rather acerbically on the shocked rejection by Jauss of the services of a female academic who, Gumbrecht notes, has nevertheless gone on to an illustrious academic career. The *Grundriß* is thus symptomatic of an antipathy to both new methods.⁹ The fact that this fundamentally masculine (and I use that term in many senses) enterprise has failed suggests very strongly that new approaches, methods and attitudes are required in the field of medieval scholarship.

But more recent theoretically orientated publications such as Peter Baker's *Beowulf: Basic Readings* (1995) and O'Brien O'Keeffe's *Reading Old English Texts* (1997), indicate that theoretical approaches are gaining acceptance. More conservative (and traditional) medieval scholars such as Caroline Bynum have come under the scrutiny, and criticism, of feminists for not venturing into feminist analyses although their choice of subject matter appears to warrant a feminist approach.¹⁰

Until the nineteen-nineties, female scholars struggled to gain a foothold in medieval studies. Unsurprisingly, feminist studies of medieval works have been harshly criticised.¹¹ E. Jane Burns, Sarah Kay, Roberta L. Krueger and Helen Solterer state that:

We also face resistance within the institution of medieval studies, as traditionally constituted, where any avowedly contemporary theoretical or political position embraced by the critic is frequently rejected as "anachronistic."
(1996: 227)

The accusation of anachronism simply has to be addressed. It implies that one may only utilise a theory which is strictly contemporaneous with the text to which it is applied. Therefore, no Marxist reading of a pre-nineteenth century text can be permitted. Neither is a post-structuralist reading of Shakespeare nor a deconstructive reading of Bosman. Gothic texts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century cannot be read for their expression of repressed sexuality, for this involves a knowledge of Freud. Shakespeare can then be read only in the light of the Aristotelian theory of tragedy: new historicist or materialist readings cannot apply. Early feminist analyses of the images of women in say, nineteenth-century fiction, cannot then be valid.

Of course, this is absurd: the theories are simply a means of reading, of examining power structures, relationships and concepts within texts. Whereas the particular terminology inherent to a literary-theoretical approach may be modern, the texts themselves contain the structures and have embedded within them the ideological assumptions which theoretical readings can expose. The charge of anachronism is, therefore, a simplistic and reactionary attempt to control the field of medieval studies and to retain the *status quo* which is essentially based upon formalist close readings.

Furthermore, a fundamental tenet of the feminist reading which is applied in this dissertation is that the texts must be contextualised.¹² The reading thus emerges from the cultural, literary and historical context in which the texts are embedded. In fact, the purpose of the feminist reading applied in this dissertation is to uncover those power relations and structures which oppressed medieval women. Uncovering what was there, and what is reflected in the texts themselves, cannot be deemed to be anachronistic. (The matter of contextualisation will be discussed again later on in this chapter.)

Although some of the examples cited earlier concern continental scholarship, they are symptomatic of the issues which are deeply imbricated in medieval studies generally, and in feminist theory as applied to medieval texts in particular. Not only are female scholars reluctantly admitted to the field, but a feminist approach is also regarded with suspicion and scorn. Then the texts themselves have either been marginalised, misread, misinterpreted, or utterly neglected. An example of the mis-reading of a text occurs with Margery Kempe: her writings have been labelled as “hysterical” by many critics (Evans & Johnson, 1994: 10-13). Yet Julia Long offers a corrective to this view by applying a re-reading of the subject from a psychoanalytical and feminist point of view. Margery Kempe (1985) is not always given credit for having written the first autobiography in English. In fact, scholarship on Margery Kempe has tended to be highly critical of her literary enterprise.¹³

Current feminist medieval scholarship

Since the early nineteen eighties there has been a resurgence of scholarly interest in previously neglected texts, as well as re-readings of texts which had previously been studied in a traditional manner. The most popular choice for the application of feminist studies to medieval works has occurred in Chaucerian scholarship. This is because Chaucer’s texts are laden with female characters, which makes his writings “amenable to feminist or ‘woman-centred’ readings” (Evans & Johnson, 1994: 14). Amongst those working in the area are

Elaine Tuttle Hansen, Sheila Delany, Julia Long, and Lesley Johnson.¹⁴ But feminist medievalists are also scrutinising resistant texts such as the York *Crucifixion* pageant, from which female figures are markedly absent.¹⁵ Literary scholars working on texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries include Bella Millett, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Carol Meale, Alexandra Barratt, Louise Johnson, Ruth Evans and Judith Weiss and Julia Boffey.¹⁶ Accessibility to previously unpublished or out of print texts has been improved by the publication of new editions: examples of recently available texts which pertain to women's issues include Alexandra Barratt's *Women's Writing in Middle English* and Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's *Medieval English Prose for Women*. Historical circumstances for medieval women are addressed by Christine Fell in *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, which contains an extensive chapter by Cecily Clark and Elizabeth Williams entitled *After the Conquest*. Helen Damico and Gillian Overing are producing feminist readings of Anglo-Saxon texts. Carol Meale's work *Woman and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* examines the access to learning and opportunities which women had to read and write in the later Middle Ages, while Carolyne Larrington's *Women and Writing in Medieval Europe: A Sourcebook* provides access to useful original writings. This list is by no means exhaustive: it is therefore apparent that there is an upsurge of interest in the field of medieval studies by female scholars and, in particular, that scholars are applying a feminist grid to the reading of a wide range of texts. In addition, the publication of previously unavailable works in scholarly editions widens the opportunities for re-reading texts as well as extending students' and scholars' exposure to women's writing and to writing for women.

These contemporary scholars are highly critical of the conservatism of the medieval academy, as is attested by the following statement by Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson:

Our own practice, as editors and critics, is very much shaped by a broadly post-structuralist view of the relationship between power and knowledge, language and textuality. Such a view is still often regarded by recalcitrant medievalists as incommensurate with the traditional business of medieval scholarship, yet it *necessarily* involves close exploration of cultural and historical meanings.

(1994: 2)

The positioning of resisting medievalists as "recalcitrant" which is apparent in Johnson's and Evans's introduction ironically reflects the hitherto marginalised status of feminists in general and of medieval feminists in particular. But it also suggests that the impetus for re-

examining and re-reading medieval texts from a feminist perspective has been seized and is currently in the forefront of academic discourse.

Perhaps the feminist approach may contribute substantially to rescuing medieval studies from its relegation to minor corners of the curriculum and its marginalisation as a less necessary, irrelevant, esoteric and arcane field of study.

Resisting feminist practice

Feminist analyses of medieval texts have met with resistance and disapproval which has been ignored by its practitioners. But feminism itself has had to struggle to establish a foothold and receive recognition. Feminists state that the discipline is struggling to gain proper acceptance and respect within the Academy.¹⁷ The resistance from the Academy against feminist practice is deplored by Sandra M. Gilbert:

[E]ven the word “feminist” often evokes masculinist snickers or worse. Even if we are not seen as wanting to “throw out a thousand years of Westuhn culchuh,” we are perceived as self-indulgent, trendy, frivolous, polemical or marginal. Indeed where Bloomians, Derrideans, Marxists, or Freudians sometimes encounter the rage with which people respond to ideas that seem genuinely threatening (because truly important), we often meet with the kind of scorn that people reserve for notions they find boring or irritating (because merely trivial).

(1992: 36)

Caroline Heilbrun reiterates the hostility with which feminism is greeted.¹⁸ Sandra M. Gilbert quotes a medievalist male colleague as saying “Everything has to be done again” (1992: 36). Feminist readings are thus seen to be an interruption to, and disruption of, the matter of academic discourse.

Whereas feminist theory *per se* encounters resistance from the Academy, literary production by women is similarly excluded: Carolyn Heilbrun points out, with some acerbity, that the texts which constitute the Penguin Modern Masters series are exclusively male.¹⁹ The canonical debate as to what properly constitutes or ought to constitute the Great Tradition has raged with considerable intensity in English Departments since the nineteen sixties.²⁰ Much of what has been, and continues to be, taught, is from the canon of accepted

authors, with the same names appearing with monotonous regularity. Lilian Robinson (1992: 105-112) makes the point that the moral and didactic tenets and the aesthetic values of the canonical writings are absorbed unthinkingly and almost automatically by undergraduates. Her sentiments are echoed by Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn (1991: 4-5, 22-4) as well as Sydney Kaplan (1991: 38-40). It is clear that the texts taught at undergraduate level must reflect feminist and female writings if the present situation is not to be endlessly perpetuated in a Wittgensteinian regress.

The canonical issue is closely linked with current debates regarding aesthetics. Much women's writing, it is argued, simply does not attain the required standard of aesthetic value.²¹ However, as the texts which are the matter of this dissertation were probably written by male writers, this criticism cannot be levelled at them. Aesthetically, Cynewulf's *Juliana* and the *Liflade* conform to the rhetorical and poetic standards of the time, even though Cynewulf's text has received a rather harsh, even dismissive, evaluation from modern critics.²² (The later post-Conquest texts are not particularly meritorious poetically, of which more in chapter five.²³) But more importantly, for our purposes, the Juliana texts were created by writers whose aim was to support and defend the prevailing patriarchal hegemony. The Juliana texts are neither subversive of, nor do they contest, the values, norms and standards of male-dominated society. Instead, they are vehicles through which masculine constructs of feminine behaviour are disseminated and enforced.

Feminists reject male aesthetic standards as these reinforce and support the mores and values of the patriarchal hegemony, in a mutually supportive, reciprocal relationship.

What precisely is feminism?

Amongst the many charges made against feminism is that it is not a neat, self-contained and ordered theory, but rather chaotic, disordered, multifarious, much like the many-headed Medusa of classical legend. There are instead many "feminisms," which for traditionalists or single-minded literary critics is deplorable. Feminists prefer to valorise the multiplicity of concepts, trends, influences which constitute feminism as is explained below:

there is not one feminist "theory", but a plurality of feminist theories, wherein the politics of subject and gender identity, race, class, sexuality, and the body are hotly contested.

(Burns, Kay *et al*, 1996: 226)

When a feminist reading is applied to a text, the question therefore arises as to precisely what feminist theory has been used. This is because one of the most frequent accusations made about feminism is that it is theory which does not have a consistent aim or practice: feminism is eclectic and reactive (Driver, 1982: 211). Feminists counter this charge by asserting the multifariousness of the practice as an advantage. The monolithic, neat categories of New Criticism are eschewed in favour of a multiplicity of approaches, methods and aims – a synthesis of many ideas. Feminist practice ranges from the descriptive to the political, from the radical to the psychological, from the anecdotal to the post-structuralist. This variety renders any attempt to explicate feminism an extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, enterprise. Sandra Gilbert valorises this diversity of approach and method:

[T]hough all feminist approaches to literature are in some sense revisionary, our approaches to literature are also as various as those of our most scornfully masculinist colleagues: we are Marxists, Freudians, deconstructionists, Yale rhetoricians, and Harvard historians.

(1992: 40)

Caroline Heilbrun also celebrates the eclectic nature of feminism which, she asserts, is “able to combine structuralism, historical criticism, New Criticism, and deconstruction” (1992: 23).

In the light of the problem articulated above, for the purpose of this thesis, no attempt will be made to explicate, describe, argue for or discuss feminism as a holistic, unified literary theory. Rather, those concepts, terms and constructs from feminist theory which have been applied in the later chapters of this thesis will be discussed briefly. This chapter therefore does not attempt to offer a coherent, neat explanation or critique of feminist literary theoretical practice. It will articulate and explicate only those concepts which have been applied in the readings of the medieval texts. The explanation of each concept will be brief and summarising, as the intention is not to delineate the details of various feminist positions, but to distil arguments and provide a working definition (for the purpose of clarifying meaning) of those concepts which are used in the later chapters of the dissertation.

Also, in this dissertation, not only one feminist method or approach has been used: ideas and concepts from a variety of feminist critics have been used where they seemed to be appropriate and where the internal evidence within the text seemed compatible with a concept.

Juliana as a suitable text

The various versions of the legend of St Juliana which are the material upon which this study is based are eminently suitable for a feminist reading. The most obvious reason for this statement is that the central figure in these saints' legends is the figure of Juliana, a woman. The texts therefore provide material which can be analysed in order to construct an idea about perceptions about women, the manner in which they are gendered and socialised, and the roles and behaviours which are perceived to have been apposite and possible for women to accomplish and fulfil. A feminist reading thus allows for the analysis of power relations between the sexes. The second reason is that the genre of saints' lives, and in particular, saints' lives about virgin martyrs, were written as staple reading or listening material for communities of women. (The *Liflade* and its companion texts *Seinte Margarete* and *Seinte Katerine* fall into this category.) Therefore these lives served as an exemplar for women, a kind of training ground and didactic tool whereby choices for young girls were set before them. The Church was the originator of these stories: one of the few facts known about Cynewulf is that he was probably a Mercian in holy orders and the author of the *Liflade* is unlikely to have been a layperson.²⁴ Therefore, texts such as the *Liflade* and its companion texts, *Hali Meidhad*, *Sawles Warde* and *Ancrene Wisse*, can be interpreted as propaganda for girls, in which proper lifestyle choices are both prescribed and proscribed. The Church can therefore be understood to have played an active role in the socialisation of females. Furthermore, the Church constructed a particularly pejorative view of female sexuality and then attempted to encourage women to choose a celibate life for fear of their status in heaven. The earlier *Juliana* by Cynewulf, however, appears to have had a more liberal purpose: the saint is an example of an heroic woman in the tradition of Germanic warrior women. Her virginity gives her special powers and courage but she is seen to be powerful in her own right. The texts therefore illustrate the changing image and role of women from the early to the declining years of the medieval period. As each text occurs within a matrix of other related material which supports the argument of this thesis, the literary context is thus also evoked in order to support the argument.

Contextualising texts

An essential task for the feminist medievalist is thus to take account of history: the texts which are studied are not to be decontextualised. Dorothy Driver sees the movement towards contextualised discussions of the representation of women in literature (which began

to emerge in the last five years of the nineteen seventies) as a significant step forward in feminist practice:

The growing clarification of the social and historical frames within which the female image had been constructed and of the power relations between men and women both within and outside of literature, led to a study of the literary conventions and traditions that have entrapped women on various ontological levels: the woman writer – as personage, author or narrator – the female character, and woman in society. From mere cataloguing and finger-pointing, image-of-woman criticism had expanded into a sociology and psychohistory of characterisation

....

(1982: 207)

In fact, a fundamental premise of feminist criticism is that literature is “extrinsic or contextual: it views literature as a social institution which, in the main, reflects the values of the dominant male culture, and assumes that no literary criticism or theory can be politically innocent” (Driver, 1982: 205). The feminist approach used in this dissertation views the texts which are examined as occurring in a particular historical, literary and religious context. In fact, the contemporary context is regarded as being of vital importance.²⁵ Feminist practice generally takes account of the circumstances surrounding the text: nowhere is this more apparent than with black or lesbian feminism. A decontextualised method has been adopted by Annis Pratt in her analysis of archetypes, but her approach is rather anomalous.²⁶

Therefore, both the Old English text – Cynewulf’s *Juliana* – and the post-Conquest versions – from the *Liflade* to the Caxton translation – have an entire chapter devoted to sketching out salient and contemporary literary, historical, historiographical and religious writings. Once the argument turns to the Juliana texts themselves, the context in which the texts occur has therefore been explicated. Therefore, any conclusions at which the feminist reading arrives are based on not only the literary text but also an understanding of the contemporary mores of the time and the broader social context.

As twentieth-century readers we cannot hope to escape our perspective entirely and understand fully an era remote in time, physical distance, culture and perceptions. By endeavouring to uncover the contemporary matrix of thought, and therefore by situating the texts within a context, an attempt is being made at least to account for the alterity of the

middle ages and its difference from our time. Burns, Kay *et al* note the complexities inherent in this enterprise:

For the medievalist, this involves a radical critical investigation of both the objects of study in the past and of the critic's textual and professional enterprise. This gesture is a vertiginous one: the feminist writes from a destabilized position in the present to confront a *different* form of instability and *mouvance* in the past. Not wanting to lose sight of the women whose bodies, experiences, and actions were the sites of a historical difference, yet wary of essentializing that experience, the feminist medievalist does not abandon history but problematizes it, as she does her own moment in the present.

(1996: 225-6)

This distance from the texts, in terms of time and altered conditions (or the text's alterity), has the decided advantage that one's own position, in a different time and place, in completely different circumstances, is exposed.²⁷ The reading of the texts must be tainted or rather coloured in some respect by contemporary circumstances. The value of a feminist reading of a text, and of a medieval text in particular, is that one's own position as a reader and interpreter of the text is foregrounded: no attempt is made to offer an objective, neutral reading. Instead of this being a disadvantage, feminist critics such as Sydney Kaplan cite this as a necessary aspect of any feminist enterprise. Indeed, feminist criticism requires "an implicit repudiation of any critical stance which aims to be objective" (1991: 37). This dissertation thus foregrounds the theoretical approach which has been utilised.

Eclecticism

The theoretical approach is an eclectic mix of whatever concepts from the broad scope of feminist theory appear to be appropriate. No one theorist's particular method has been applied, but ideas and concepts from a variety of feminist critics' work have been utilised. Toril Moi offers her authority for this eclecticism:

It is my view that, provided they are compatible with her politics, a feminist critic can use whichever methods or theories she likes. There are, of course, different political views within the feminist camp. My point here is not to try to unify or totalise these differences, but simply to insist that recognisable feminist criticism and theory must in some way be relevant to the study of the social, institutional and personal power relations between

the sexes: what Kate Millet in her epochal study called *sexual politics*.

(1987: 204)

As part of the eclectic mix of concepts in this analysis, the calls of early feminists for a re-examination of neglected texts have been heeded. French feminist theory as well as post-structuralist models have been used in the definition of “self” and “other” to show how woman is marginalised by the dominant discourse, and how this poetry is a means of controlling woman. The concepts of authority and creativity as largely male constructs which are used in order to foster the aims of the dominant hegemony derive from Cixous’s theories.²⁸ A significant concept in the eclectic mix of feminist methods and concepts applied in this dissertation is the issue of history, the writing of history and women being written into, or excluded from, history. Earlier in this chapter, the requirement that a feminist analysis should be contextualised was mooted. A consideration of history and historiography therefore serves a double purpose.

Women’s texts and history

Historiographers such as Joan Kelly and their insistence on a rewritten history of women provide a context for understanding the paucity of historical references to women’s conditions. The premise upon which this dissertation is based is that the versions of the legend of Juliana which have been explicated demonstrate to varying degrees the exertion of male will and patriarchal power over females. This power is predicated upon the logocentricity of Western discourse.

Of course, amongst the difficulties which confront contemporary scholars of texts remote in time and removed in distance is their availability and also their representation in history. Feminist historiographers question the manner in which women have been represented in history.²⁹ Joan Kelly (1984) claims that women have been excluded from history. In *Women, History and Theory* she says:

Women’s history has a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women. ... Once we look at history for an understanding of women’s situation, we are, of course, already assuming that woman’s situation is a social matter. But history, when we first came to it, did not seem to confirm this awareness. Throughout historical time, women have been largely excluded from making war, wealth, laws, governments,

art and science. Men, functioning in their capacity as historians, considered exactly these activities constitutive of civilization: hence, diplomatic history, economic history, constitutional history, and political and cultural history.

(1984: 1-2)

Historical writing has tended to be the domain of male writers (perhaps this has something to do with the issue of authority, but also of genre: of which more later.) So ingrained is this perception that it has almost become a fact, as noted by Elisabeth van Houts:

The writing of history has long been thought to be the exclusive domain of male authors. So, in the many cases where anonymous works survive, the assumption was that men had written them.

(1992: 53)

Van Houts argues for the female authorship of certain anonymous medieval histories (1992: 53-86). Where the authors of medieval histories are known, they are invariably male. This is amply demonstrated by Antonia Gransden's very important survey of historical writings in medieval England, entitled *Historical Writing in England c.550-c.1307* and *Historical Writing in England c.1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century*. Neither text mentions any history of any note as having been written by women. There are some histories dedicated to eminent women, such as the history dedicated to Queen Emma, the *Encomium Emma Reginae* (1949). Incidentally, this text was re-named in the later Middle Ages as *Gesta Cnutonis Regis*, thus expunging the dedication to Queen Emma. There are other cases where women have been deliberately deleted: witness the treatment of Aethelflaed's achievements by her brother Edward's historians.³⁰ But the fact remains that women have not written history and have not generally been written into history. This absence presents a challenge for feminist critics. In itself, absence is a reflection of the power relations which occur in society, with the dominant power being present and the subordinate subject being absent. Joel T. Rosenthal (1990: vii) puts it bluntly:

Winners write history. They also determine the creation, the content, and the scope of the sources. ... If history reflects the winners' view, who, we are now prone to ask, were the so-called losers? What material was ignored, buried, and falsified in the sources that the winners were so careful to edit in their own favor, and to whom did it belong?

(1990: vii)

Jo Ann McNamara (1990) presents a powerful argument which demonstrates that a deliberate silencing of dissenting women occurred in thirteenth-century France. She concludes that “[w]hen we do hear their voices directly, these voices have been sculpted and shaped to serve the purpose of their recorders. Thus women who were once whole and complex appear to us only as broken images” (1990: 251-2). Judith M. Bennett (1988: 269-83) warns against interpreting information in a nostalgic, romanticised manner, which is what she considers some medievalists to have done. (This is, of course, one of the potential problems which arises because of our removal in time from the era.)

Fortunately, there is an abundance of meta-historical material for both periods which form part of this study. In particular, both periods are rich in intra-textual material which directly supports the feminist reading. The Old English *Juliana* is one of three highly significant texts which present female heroines, and much of the extant Old English literature depicts women in a positive, heroic light. The *Liflade* also has two contemporary companion pieces – the legends of *Seinte Margarete* and *Seinte Katerine* – as well as the didactic *Hali Meidhad*, the allegorical *Sawles Warde* and the guide for anchoresses, *Ancrene Wisse*.

“Gynocriticism” or the “feminist critique”?

Feminism calls for the re-discovery of neglected, lost and forgotten texts. Dorothy Driver insists that literary history should be revised, with the “rediscovery” of lost or neglected writers and the “reassessment” of undervalued ones (1982: 207). These calls derive from early feminist critics. Examples of texts by and for women which have had a chequered publishing history are those of the Brontë sisters, who first published their works under the names of Acton, Currer and Ellis Bell, as well as Mary Ann Evans, who published her novels under the male pseudonym of George Eliot in order to gain credibility and acceptance for her works. Dale Spender (1986) has shown that Jane Austen emerged from a tradition of female writing, which has not been given credence. Aphra Behn (1992) is seldom credited with having written one of the first novels in English – *Oroonoko*.

Elaine Showalter, the guru of early Anglo-American feminist criticism, developed a distinction between various kinds of feminist enterprise. Her preferred practice is *gynocriticism*, which she defines as “‘woman as writer’ – with woman as the producer of textual meaning, with the history, themes, genres and structure of literature by women” (1984: 25). “Gynocritics” is contrasted with the “feminist critique”, which is defined by Showalter as the reinterpretation or re-reading of male-authored texts or excavating lost or

forgotten texts. Instead, she asks for feminist critics to concentrate their efforts upon gynocriticism.³¹ Her call is problematic, for Adrienne Munich points out that Showalter seems to devalue or ignore women's critical writing about male-authored texts, as though this is a false or failed or useless enterprise.³² Showalter's point of view is thus inimical to the matter of this dissertation. But Showalter's reasoning is seriously flawed: she seems to ascribe a sort of biological essentialism to the act of writing, and reading, and criticism. Her point of view would place the purpose of this enterprise in jeopardy, as the texts which are being studied are not written by females. And Showalter's insistence on a match between the sex of an author and that of a critic is curiously naïve. It echoes the sort of racial essentialism which has figured in recent debates on who should properly be studying black woman's writing. This study rejects this essentialist point of view. It is therefore a feminist critique: it cannot claim to be a gynocritical study as at least two of the texts are known to have been authored by males: they are Cynewulf's *Juliana* and Caxton's *Golden Legend*, which contains a version of *Juliana*. (We know that Cynewulf, a male cleric, wrote the Old English *Juliana*. The authorship of the *Liflade* and the other texts of the Katherine group is anonymous. But we do know that the *Ancrene Wisse*, a companion text found in the same manuscript, was written by a male cleric as he names himself in the prologue.) Although the remaining texts, the *Liflade* and *Seyn Julien* are anonymous, it is probably fair to make an assumption that they are also male-authored. But they emphatically are women's writing, for they were written for women.

There are feminists who support the feminist reading of texts by males, or "the feminist critique". One such critic is Annette Kolodny who says of the re-reading of texts by male writers:

The ... result ... has been nothing less than an acute attentiveness to the way in which certain power relations, usually those in which males wield various forms of influence over females, are inscribed in the texts (both literary and critical) that we have inherited, not merely as subject matter, but as the unquestioned, often unacknowledged *given* of the culture.

(1992: 146-7)

Sandra Gilbert also regards feminist readings as not necessarily having to be confined to works written by women:

Rereading literature by both women *and* men, however, we learned that, though the pressures and oppressions of gender may be as invisible as air, they are also as inescapable as air, and like the weight of air, they imperceptibly shape the forms and motions of our lives. Assumptions about the sexes, we saw, are entangled with some of the most fundamental assumptions Western culture makes about the very nature of culture – that “culture” is male, for example, and “nature” female – and we decided that, at least until the nineteenth century, even apparently abstract definitions of literary genres were deeply influenced by psychosocial notions about culture.

(1992: 33)

The “feminist critique” is thus applied in this dissertation, in an attempt to expose the implicit assumptions operating in the texts.

Terminology

One of the dangers of a feminist approach is that one may essentialise femaleness, which is exactly why Showalter’s *gynocritics* is problematic. Hélène Cixous eschews this possibility as she calls for women to celebrate their femaleness or their bodily *différence* and write the *écriture féminine*:

Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal.

(1987: 225)

Cixous’s call is emphatically not applicable to the Juliana texts, for the heroines of all of the versions have their roles prescribed for them. They follow the mores of the patriarchal hegemony and reveal themselves to be completely subordinated to the patriarchy. Their texts are written for them. Cixous suggests that women should attain a kind of bisexuality which is not related to the “neutral” or “androgynous” position advocated by Virginia Woolf. Rather, she suggests that differences should be stirred up (Selden, 1989: 151). The result of celebrating *différence* is *jouissance* which “combines connotations of sexual orgasm and polysemic speech” (Selden, 1989:151). This kind of opposition is not seen in the Juliana texts. Rather than celebrating her *différence*, Juliana rejects her femaleness. This enables her to become an honorary male (according to the teachings of the Church) and thus attain an exalted spiritual status.

Where French feminism is particularly useful is in identifying the oppositional and binaric manner in which Western discourse is conceived. Woman is merely a relational sign to man. She is the Other, on the margins, while man is the One, in the centre. Cixous's work is influenced by Derridean philosophy. Her aim is to "undo logocentric ideology" (Moi, 1987: 211). Because the Saints' Lives are neither written by women nor resisting texts, this enterprise cannot be accomplished. Rather, the manner in which patriarchal power constructs operate in order to oppress and marginalise women will be examined.

French feminists have focused on language as the source of signifiers and thus the source of power. Western discourse is irrevocably logocentric and male-centred. Because it is male-centred it is phallogocentric. That is, the phallus is seen as the source of power, authority and speech (Moi, 1987: 211-14). One of the most frequent charges made against feminist criticism is that it is based on male theories and is therefore inevitably reliant on male language and logic – caught in the logocentric trap. Showalter herself complains:

In trying to account for these complex permutations of the female tradition, feminist criticism has tried a variety of theoretical approaches. The most natural direction for feminist criticism to take has been the revision, and even the subversion of related ideologies, especially Marxist aesthetics and structuralism, altering their vocabularies and methods to include the variable of gender. I believe, however, that this thrifty feminine making-do is ultimately unsatisfactory. Feminist criticism cannot go around forever in men's ill-fitting hand-me-downs, the Annie Hall of English studies

(1984: 37)

The texts which are the matter of this dissertation are not resisting texts. The later texts in particular exert control over the reader by offering an example to be followed: not necessarily martyrdom, but virginity. The texts themselves are not subversive of patriarchal logocentricity but are complicit within it. The aim of the analysis is thus to expose the oppression and marginalisation of women which is implicit in the texts. It is thus impossible to escape the logocentric nature of the discourse used in the texts: it can only be exposed.

In discussing the biological differences between male and female, as well as the socially constructed gender roles which dictate, confirm and constrain behaviour, there seems to be a meeting place, however tentative, between French feminism and Anglo-

American criticism. Both acknowledge the need to distinguish between biology and social construct. (Biology is the anatomical difference which results in the sex of the person, which is designated by the term male or female.³³) Both understand that society delineates and constructs norms of behaviour for both males and females. Both assert that the dominant force within society is exerted by males, and that the construction of norms is therefore male-centred. What is masculine is thus seen as the ideal, the positive, vigorous, logical, and so on. What is feminine is designated and defined by male discourse as not only oppositional to what is masculine, or the negative pole, but also according to concepts and constructs which are pleasing and acceptable to the patriarchal hegemony. Behaviours which are constructed are masculine and feminine, and, because they are constructs, they may change over time. In themselves, there is little that is inherently male or female about behaviours which are socially constructed. It is the perceptions of society which render them immutably male or indisputably female.³⁴ If Western society is based on binary oppositions, and the terms of these oppositions are defined, designated and controlled by the hegemony, it follows that femininity will be constructed in such a way as to create females who are subservient to, and compliant with, the norms of the patriarchal hegemony. The construct thus becomes a means for control, as a female who does not fit the norms of feminine behaviour can therefore be designated either as unacceptably unfeminine or as possessing feminine qualities to excess. The designation and construct of femininity is therefore narrowly confining for women. A female who is too emotional, for example, is dismissed as hysterical or mad.³⁵ The kind of terms which designate feminine behaviour are passive, fragile, emotional, nurturing, sensitive, intuitive, moody, weak. The positive masculine attribute for each of these is active, muscular, logical, protective, controlled, reasoning, balanced and strong. The masculine attribute is perceived as positive, is valorised and signifies a strength, whereas the feminine attribute is the negative, is marginalised and signifies a lack.³⁶

In this thesis I have thus used the post-structuralist terms “self” and “other” to describe the manner in which Western discourse derives from male-dominated language and to demonstrate how female has been marginalised by the dominant hegemony.

Freud’s admittedly masculine, patriarchal and sexist theories have been appropriated through Lacan by his erstwhile disciple Irigaray, thus prompting accusations that feminist theory cannot exist without recourse to male theory.³⁷ However, Irigaray’s development of Freud’s theories is of particular interest in this study as the psychoanalytic concepts allow for the discussion of important aspects of the texts. Particularly useful are the descriptions of gendering which psychoanalysis purports to define. Whereas French psychoanalytic

feminism is strongly derivative of Freud, more recent feminist psychoanalytic theory focuses on the mother and her influences.³⁸

One of the most basic quarrels regarding Freudian theory is its utterly sexist nature. Positing man and masculine as the norm, complete and entire, Freud developed his theories around the female lack of a penis. Freud explains female sexuality as a lack: a girl in the pre-Oedipal stage perceives herself as a “little man”. This is, of course, discovered by “seeing”. Toril Moi explains the *gaze* as follows:

Freud’s argument links the act of seeing to anal *activity*, which he sees as expressing a desire for *mastery* or for the exercise of *power* over one’s (libidinal) objects, a desire that underlies later (phallic or Oedipal) fantasies about phallic (masculine) power. Thus the *gaze* enacts the voyeur’s desire for sadistic power, in which the object of the gaze is cast as its passive, masochistic, feminine victim.

(1993: 180)

In *Juliana*, the gaze which Eleusius bestows upon Juliana is a sexual act which prompts desire for sexual possession. Instead of being able to exert his masculine power in this way, Eleusius exerts his authority by exposing Juliana’s naked virginal body to the fascinated gaze of the people. His power over her is expressed not in sexual terms but as sadistic torture.

The issue of sexuality and the body is central to the Saints’ Lives, as the body becomes the site of a struggle for mastery and control. Juliana, especially in the *Liflade* and the later texts, entirely suppresses her sexuality and sublimates it into a romantic spiritualised wish. This is problematic for women: whereas males are encouraged to act, to write, women are required to sublimate and suppress. I do not consider it too far fetched to draw a comparison between Virginia Woolf’s struggle for a gender-free space and the deliberate de-sexing of her desire by Juliana. Cixous’s more sophisticated description of a bisexual, joyous celebration of the body is not applicable in the Saints’ Lives, where sexuality is sublimated, indeed, effaced. Male control of female desire and the way in which they may express themselves, whether this is sexually, artistically, or in some other manner is at the centre of the Juliana texts. The Church encourages an sublimation of sexuality, but Eleusius’ desire is aroused by Juliana’s beauty: in both cases, Juliana’s body and her sexuality are the site of a struggle. The problem lies in that in order to transcend the position which is determined by (a male-dominated) society, women have to reject their sexuality and their unconscious urges. Men can continue to be male, to act on their desire, to speak and to write. The only way in which

Juliana can attain her desire is to sublimate her sexuality utterly into a romanticised and spiritual love for an idealised and remote partner.

Just as sexuality is controlled by the dominant hegemony, so is the act of writing, which is an expression of power and authority. One of the means of control in a hegemonic society is the apportioning of authority. As Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson point out in the introduction to *Feminist Studies in Middle English Literature*, one of the first texts which combined medieval studies and a feminist approach was that of Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards (1988) aptly entitled *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. (This is particularly apt, as pointed out by the Wife of Bath, who cites her experience of life as authority for her point of view.) Alexandra Barratt addresses the issue in the introduction to *Women's Writing in Middle English*. She points out that:

The concept of authority (*auctoritas*), in its theological, political and literary senses, was thoroughly male. The supreme and highest *auctor* (the Latin word from which "author" ultimately derives), the creator of the universe, the First Cause, was God Himself who in the middle ages was indisputably male.... In medieval Latin *auctor* also means "writer". But without exception, all the written *auctores* of medieval culture were male.

(1992: 6)

This is despite the fact that there were females who wrote texts: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Hildegard of Bingen, Juliana Berners.³⁹ The authority of the female writer was simply not recognised. Trotula was a twelfth-century female gynaecologist who wrote in the vernacular especially so that women would have access to her treatises on the female body.. One of the Trotula texts, excerpts of which appear in *Women's Writing in Middle English*, has suffered the fate of having been renamed in the masculine form. It is catalogued in the British Library as *Liber Trotuli*, the masculine form of the name.⁴⁰ The authority of writing has long been a male preserve. Sandra Gilbert says:

Again and again, as we explored such sexual poetics, we encountered definitions of cultural authority and creativity that excluded women, definitions based on the notion that (in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins) "the male quality is the creative gift." The treasures of Western culture, it began to seem, were the patrimony of male writers, or to put it another way, Western culture itself was a grand ancestral property that

educated men had inherited from their intellectual forefathers, while their female relatives, like characters in a Jane Austen novel, were relegated to modest dower houses on the edge of the estate.

(1992: 33)

Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar addressed the issue of authorship in their important text *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). They demonstrated how nineteenth-century female writers saw authorship “as a monstrous and unwomanly activity that transgressed cultural boundaries”(Showalter, 1992: 6). But this is not a modern phenomenon. Carol Meale points out that reading matter for young girls in the later middle ages was both “prescriptive” in nature and “culturally determined”(1993 :2). Despite these restrictions, there is strong evidence to suggest that women defied the requirements of the church and produced poetry and prose. There is also evidence that woman’s literary production was suppressed: it tended to survive in oral rather than written form, and was often not published or accorded canonicity.⁴¹ An example of a woman’s lost literary production is the English poetess called Muriel, none of whose work has survived.⁴²

Authority is an important issue in this dissertation because the texts were written for women, most probably by male writers, in an attempt to impose the mores of the patriarchal hegemony upon them.

The final issue which will be explicated briefly is the matter of the correct terminology regarding sex and gender. Kristeva has developed a sophisticated argument based on the binaric code which operates in Western discourse, but by taking the argument one step further. Instead of insisting that female is essentially different to male, she deconstructs the difference between masculine and feminine as a metaphysical difference. Toril Moi explains this as a difference of positionality:

Kristeva’s emphasis on femininity as a patriarchal construct enables feminists to counter all forms of biologistic attacks from the defenders of phallogentrism. To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine, as we have seen, is precisely the move which enables the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity, but all *women* as marginal to the symbolic order and to society.

(1987: 213)

The Saints' Lives are texts which insist on the difference between males and females: the only position which is valorised is a male one. In order for a female to be saintly, she has to become an honorary male, which is quite different from the deconstruction of the difference between male and female which is suggested by Kristeva.

Not all females find the gendered category of femininity either confining or restrictive: for many, the designation of what is feminine is an utterly natural and perfectly proper behaviour. Elaine Showalter discussed perceptions of these masculine norms. She demonstrated that many female writers, for example, merely reflect the norms as designated by society. These writers she described as feminine: examples are Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot, who assumed a male pseudonym in order to become an honorary male, so that her works would gain credence and authority in the eyes of the reading public. Feminists are those who contest and question the mores and structures of male-dominated society. Female writers write about women's experience.

Elaine Showalter appropriates the terms feminine, female, and feminist for her own purposes and applies them to different stages of woman's writing as novelists (1984: 34-6). Although Showalter uses the terms in a special way related to woman's literary production and the ideological assumptions which underpin that production, the meaning of the terms is essentially unchanged. "Feminine writing" is writing which conforms with male constructs and confirms these as valid; "female writing" is undertaken by women who aspire to be honorary males, and "feminist writing" is resisting writing.⁴³ The term "feminine" as used in this dissertation means the social construction of a woman as fragile, emotional, dainty, vulnerable. The Juliana of the *Liflade*, for example, is a feminine woman who has internalised the mores of the patriarchal hegemony.

Although Juliana opposes the patriarchy, she cannot be defined as a feminist heroine as she willingly accepts her subordination to another hegemony – the divine hegemony of the Church on earth and of her spiritual Father in heaven. The texts can therefore be read as manuals which reinforce patriarchal structures as they offer a spiritually compliant role model in Juliana's behaviour. And the behaviour which saints' lives seek to enforce has to do with a female's rejection of her own sexuality, as this is the only way in which true holiness and spirituality can be attained. This is particularly true of the later versions which occur in a web of intertextuality, all referring to the same issue: that only a virgin can attain the blessed second *aureola*.

The call of French feminists for women to celebrate their own sexuality is thus utterly rejected by the Saints' Lives, for they teach that only by being whole, untainted by sexual activity, can a woman be truly holy. Every other option: chastity, faithful marital relations, celibacy after having experienced sexual intercourse – all of these are decidedly second-best choices.⁴⁴ Whereas Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray urge that a joyful self-expression, self-exploration and sexual and sensual self-awareness should be a natural female act, the binaric code which operates in the Saints' Lives rejects such calls as blasphemous and obscene.⁴⁵ Woman's bodies and bodily functions are repulsive and sinful: they are a source of temptation and entrapment. The texts, and in particular the post-Conquest texts, which reinforce the notion of women's sexuality as evil very strongly, can therefore be read as a means of controlling female behaviour, gendering women as simultaneously feminine and a-sexual, and delimiting choices for women.

Thus Cixous's celebration of the 'othered' female and her subversion of the binaric codes by centring the female and feminine cannot be applied to these texts which are an unadulterated affirmation of male values and norms. The aim of the *Liflade* and *Seyn Julien* is to contain and constrain women and in particular their sexuality. The Cynewulfian text is a different case: the more powerful, radiant heroine reflects a different gendering of women.

This dissertation argues that the Juliana of the *Liflade* is gendered as passive, lovely, retiring, subservient. She acts only as a conduit for the demonstration of God's power. Juliana has therefore internalised the rules of male discourse and places herself utterly at the disposal of her heavenly father. The resistance in which she engages is not against male domination *per se* but because she has chosen a more powerful, more dominant patriarchal figure to whom she can submit herself. I therefore argue that the Juliana of the *Liflade* is not a feminist heroine at all. She subsumes herself totally to the will of her heavenly father: his will becomes her will. She perceives of no existence at all other than as his totally devoted minion. Any glory which she has is derived from his benign yet strangely demanding approval. The depiction of Juliana in the later versions simply reinforces the argument that the position of women had become more confined and restricted during the post-Conquest period than it had been during the Anglo-Saxon period.

In contrast to the Juliana of the *Liflade*, the Juliana of Cynewulf's much earlier text is an altogether more heroic and powerful figure, who has strength and ability in her own right. She is not so much a conduit for God's power as a powerful heroic warrior figure who

contests the earthly hegemony. She, too, is ultimately subject to a heavenly patriarchy, but Cynewulf's Juliana is not depicted as a weak, scared and feminine woman: power inheres in her, as with the legendary Germanic women described by Tacitus. Although the Saints' Lives which are examined in this dissertation are neither written by women, nor are they resisting texts, they are eminently suitable for a feminist analysis which will expose the manner in which medieval women are oppressed by the power structures of the dominant hegemony.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ The place of modern literary criticism in medieval studies is addressed later on in this chapter.
 - ² See my comments later on in this chapter regarding the attitude of medieval scholars towards modern literary-critical approaches.
 - ³ An example of such an attitude occurs in Raman Selden's text (written for the undergraduate student) entitled *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. The first sub-heading in his discussion of feminist theory is "Problems of Feminist Theory". Needless to say, the other chapters do not include such a sub-heading.
 - ⁴ There is, in fact, no such thing as "feminist theory", for feminists must always adopt a focus or philosophical or political or theoretical position.
 - ⁵ See William Paden's assessment of the state of Medieval studies (1994: vii-xiii). Suggestions for moving medieval studies forward are made by Joan M. Ferrante (1994: 145-63), where she discusses the need for interdisciplinary and "inter-sexual" studies. R. Howard Bloch identifies gender as "one of the strong bridges between the modern temper and the study of the medieval past" (1994: 176).
 - ⁶ Refer to the information in endnote 10. Also note the discussion about the inherently conservative, if not prescriptive, dictates of eminent medieval scholars such as D. W. Robertson (Evans & Johnson, 1994: 6-8).
 - ⁷ Ruth Evans and Carol Johnson (1994) provide a trenchant summary of the current state of feminist medieval scholarship in the introduction to *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature*.
 - ⁸ See Norman Cantor's chapter on female medievalists, interestingly entitled "Outriders", (1991: 371-411) in *Inventing the Middle Ages*. Elsewhere in the text he suggests that certain prominent medievalist departments actively practised anti-semitism in their choice of post-graduate students and in their hiring of staff up until the nineteen-fifties.
 - ⁹ A number of articles by feminists point out that feminist scholars are marginalised within departments, do not get tenure easily and are often fired (See Heilbrun, 1992: 24-6).
 - ¹⁰ See the introduction to *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and all her sect* by Evans and Johnson (1994: 1-21) where they discuss "the well-aimed attacks" on Bynum's methodology by feminists.

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- ¹¹ Sheila Delany's marxist-feminist analysis of the Wife of Bath's prologue and tale, entitled "Sexual Economics, Chaucer's Wife of Bath and *The Book of Margery Kempe*," (1994: 72-87) in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and all her Sect*, aroused extraordinary opposition. So did Mary Carruther's article, originally published in *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, entitled "The Wife of Bath and the painting of lions," (1994: 22-38), so much so that she published an "Afterword" (1994: 39-53) in which she addresses the vitriolic response evoked by the piece.
- ¹² Later on in this introductory chapter, the issue of contextualisation is addressed. In fact, each chapter of literary analysis is preceded by an entire contextualising chapter.
- ¹³ Much the same occurred with Aphra Behn, who is not generally given credence for her achievements. Ian Watt (1983), for example, ignores her. Dale Spender (1986) offers a corrective to Watt in *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen*. She argues that Jane Austen emerged from, and was nurtured by, a powerful and popular tradition of women's writing.
- ¹⁴ For a more complete survey of the state of medieval feminist scholarship concerning vernacular texts from the post-Conquest era, consult the introduction to *Feminist Reading in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and all her sect* (1994: 1-21).
- ¹⁵ See the following articles in *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and all her sect* (1994): the "Introduction," (13-14); Ruth Evan's article "Body Politics: engendering medieval cycle drama," (112-39); and Colette Murphy's article "Lady Holy Church and Meed the Maid: re-envisioning female personification in *Piers Plowman*," (140-64).
- ¹⁶ For a survey of female scholarship in the earlier post-Conquest period, see Carol Meale's introduction to *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (1993: i-vi). Also consult the introduction by Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson to *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and all her sect* (1994: 1-21). Alexandra Barrett examines the problems of literary production for medieval women, as well as the lack of available published medieval texts dealing with women's issues in the introduction to *Women's Writing in Middle English* (1992: 1-23).
- ¹⁷ Amongst the feminists who have complained about the lack of acceptance of feminist criticism and feminists themselves are Elaine Showalter in "Towards a Feminist Poetics" in *Women Writing and Writing about Women* (1989: 22-41), but especially pp. 22-4.
- ¹⁸ See "Bringing back the spirit to English Studies," (1992: 23-6).
- ¹⁹ For the details of her argument, see "Bringing the Spirit Back to English Studies," (1992: 22-3). Heilbrun points out that many of those male authors included in the "master" series are of dubious distinction, given the fact that women have been utterly excluded.
- ²⁰ Annette Kolodny (1992: 144-67) raises the issue of texts for teaching and re-reading, as does Gilbert (1992: 29-45). Many other feminists have commented on the composition of the curriculum.
- ²¹ Virginia Woolf (1963), for example, laments her lack of a classical education in *A Room*

of *One's Own*. Since classical works served as models for much poetry, its lack meant that women could never aspire to writing poetry which met the aesthetic requirements of a classical model.

- ²² The critical reception of Cynewulf's *Juliana* is discussed in pp. 65-7 of chapter two.
- ²³ For a discussion regarding the relative lack of poetic and literary merit in the later post-Conquest versions of St Juliana, see pp. 176-7, 213-6 of chapter five.
- ²⁴ Literacy was largely confined to clerics. For more information about reading and writing skills in the Middle Ages, and the extent to which women had access to them, see Carole Meale's *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, (1993: 1-4).
- ²⁵ Of course, the informing concept here is that literary works are artefacts which are produced in a particular context. They are read and understood within a particular context. As readers (or consumers) of texts remote from our circumstances, we must at least attempt to understand, or even just to foreground, the differences between the milieu of the text and our own.
- ²⁶ See Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Woman's Fiction* (1982) for examples of her de-historicised and de-contextualised approach. For commentary on her methods, see Sydney Janet Kaplan (1991: 45-8).
- ²⁷ Alterity means the otherness of the Middle Ages, its difference in relation to our time.
- ²⁸ See pp. 21-2 of this chapter. Phallogocentric discourse does, of course, ascribe authority to the male and the phallus.
- ²⁹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese (1982: 5-29) is a Marxist historian writing about more contemporary history, but she nevertheless poses important questions about the nature and purpose of woman's history. She concludes her article by saying:

The history we know has been written primarily from the perspective of the authoritative male subject – the single, triumphant consciousness. Much history has, in fact, rested upon the determination to deny ambiguity, conflict and uncertainty. It has served to provide worthy pedigrees for individuals, rising classes, nations, cultures and ideologies. Whatever their differences, women share the experience of having been denied access to an authoritative self as woman.

(1982: 29)

Gisela Bock (1991: 102-3) surveys the advances made over the last twenty years and concludes that enormous strides have been made in writing about women.

- ³⁰ The deliberate removal of Aethelflaed from the contemporary historical record is discussed in chapter two. See pp. 33-6.
- ³¹ For a detailed explication by Showalter of both the "feminist critique" and "gynocritics," see Showalter's article entitled "Towards a Feminist Poetics," (1989: 24-33).
- ³² See Adrienne Munich's article entitled "Feminist Criticism and Literary Tradition," (1991: 238-59). Specific references to Elaine Showalter's critical theory occur on pp.

242-4.

- ³³ Catherine Stimpson (1980: 174-91) discusses the correct use of terminology and the manner in which words are used by society to oppress women.
- ³⁴ Just as fashions for hair, body shape and clothing alter over time, so do ideals of masculine and feminine behaviour. In the eighteenth century, for example, upper class men wore elaborate curled and powdered wigs (still seen in the required head-dress for barristers and judges in British courts) donned cosmetics and elaborate ruffled clothing decorated with lace. A skirt is not in itself a feminine piece of clothing: witness the Scottish kilt or the Malay sarong.
- ³⁵ Note the etymology of the word "hysteria." It is derived from the Greek *hysteria* for womb. Excessive emotionalism is thus ascribed to the female organ, the womb.
- ³⁶ Hélène Cixous has described the binary codes in "The Laugh of the Medusa." See Jones, (1991: 81-3), where Cixous' binary oppositions are set out and explained.
- ³⁷ For a typical comment of this nature, which gleefully points out Irigaray's and Kristeva's reliance on male theory for the premise of their arguments, see Selden (1989: 152-3).
- ³⁸ See the work of Nancy Chodorow (1978), Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976) and Adrienne Rich (1976). A useful article which explains the developments is by Judith Gardiner, entitled "Mind mother: psychoanalysis and feminism," (1991: 113-45).
- ³⁹ Interestingly enough, both Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen had visions in which they saw God as a woman. For further information, consult D. Foss, "From God as Mother to Priest as Mother," (1986: 214-26), and E. Bruns (1973) *God as Woman, Woman as God*.
- ⁴⁰ Dr Shirley Cosman, who claims to be a descendent of Trotula, conveyed this information in a seminar held in 1991 at RAU. The cataloguing error (or deliberate alteration) is noted by Alexandra Barratt in *Women's Writing in Middle English* (1992: 27-9).
- ⁴¹ See Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan's article on woman's literary production in medieval Wales, entitled "Women and their poetry in medieval Wales," (1993: 183-201) in *Women and Literature in Medieval England*. Julia Boffey's article entitled "Women authors and women's literacy in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England," (1993: 159-82) in the same book is also useful.
- ⁴² We know about Muriel's work from references in various texts. See the article by J. S. P. Tatlock (1933: 317-21) which discusses her work.
- ⁴³ In an amusing aside, Showalter mentions that she considered naming gynocriticism "georgics" because of the frequent adoption of male pseudonyms by female writers wishing to acquire respectability (1989: 26).
- ⁴⁴ See in particular the discussion of *Hali Meïðhad* in chapter four, pp. 146-8, where the degrees of sexual chastity are designated with mathematical precision.
- ⁴⁵ For Cixous's comments on "writing the body" see (1992: 225-8); Toril Moi (1987: 231-3) explicates Cixous's position.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXTUALISING CYNEWULF'S *JULIANA*

Feminist literary theory and practice invariably has a political agenda, which may be to contest assumptions underpinning value judgements, recuperate neglected or disparaged work, rediscover lost or unpublished texts, re-read texts for fresh insights or even write a new literature.¹ The argument in this dissertation does not therefore purport to be an objective argument from a neutral point of view. Rather, the feminist agenda is foregrounded.

This dissertation regards an examination of the context – be it socio-political, literary, philosophical, or legal – as an essential component of the feminist reading of the vernacular medieval versions of the legend of St Juliana. In fact, whatever contextual factors are the most pertinent to a particular version of the legend should be examined.

Cynewulf's *Juliana* requires contextualisation in a number of areas. Besides the obvious socio-historical context, other important aspects include contemporary perceptions and teachings about the status of women and, in particular, the conflict between the Germanic tradition and the Church's teachings; contemporary texts with a similar theme; historiographic writings and testatory practices. The poem's critical reception, as well as the interpretative and ideological assumptions about the text by modern critics, also requires interrogation. Twentieth-century perceptions of *Juliana* have been shaped largely by the pronouncements of a number of influential scholars, and a feminist re-reading of the poem must of necessity contest some of these readings. This dissertation argues therefore that the context of *Juliana* includes the body of work produced in this century by modern scholars.

Furthermore, this study also requires that the context of the post-Conquest versions of the legend of St Juliana should be established. This is because the contention of this

dissertation is that perceptions of women, their social conditions and therefore, their literature were all profoundly affected by the consequences of the Norman Conquest in 1066. The discussion of circumstances, trends and literary writings after the Conquest appears in chapter four of the dissertation.

A broad survey of the social position of Anglo-Saxon women is required. This includes an examination of the perceptions of women, their role in society, and their status according to whatever sources can be garnered for information. Seeing that this study straddles some six hundred-odd years, it would be a grave error to assume that women occupied a fixed position during that entire period. In fact, I argue that the status of women underwent a radical shift as a consequence of the Norman Conquest. Therefore this contextualising discussion will attempt to paint a diptych or two-sided picture in broad brushstrokes of woman's status prior, and subsequent to, the Conquest. This chapter will cover the Anglo-Saxon period and chapter four will discuss circumstances subsequent to the Conquest.

A number of different sources suggest the circumstances of, and perceptions about, women during the Anglo-Saxon era. The material in both contextualising chapters does not, therefore, consist of a linear argument: rather, differing factors and circumstances will be discussed in turn, thus permitting each of the issues which are raised to contribute further insight to the overall picture.

As there is a vast amount of material available, and because contextualisation admits the possibility of using a huge range of material from a wide range of sources, the choices of material for discussion must of necessity be limited. The selected evidence garnered in the forthcoming discussion is, therefore, merely representative.

Historiography – contemporary and modern

Chronologically, then, a summary discussion of the position of women in Anglo-Saxon England follows. For the purposes of the discussion, the Anglo-Saxon period will be delimited as AD 449 – 1066.² However, as the Cynewulfian poem *Juliana* was probably written in the late eighth or early ninth century,³ the status of women at roughly that time (that is, the middle centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period) will be examined. This is, of course, with the caveat that not all of the material available describes persons or conditions

precisely at that time. The argument rather aims to establish a broad general assessment of the conditions of, and perceptions about, Anglo-Saxon women.

It is difficult to establish the position of women in Anglo-Saxon England. For one thing, the country was not the orderly United Kingdom of modern times: the borders of the Anglo-Saxon heptarchy shifted with regularity, and kings issued edicts and judgments in each of those kingdoms. Then, too, no neat, contemporary “History of Women”⁴ exists. This is demonstrated in Antonia Gransden’s survey, entitled *Historical Writing in England c.550-c.1307*, which was published in 1974. So the evidence must be sifted from whatever sources are accessible – and those commentaries which are available must be regarded with some suspicion, particularly since there is the danger that the writer’s own preconceptions, ideology and assumptions may well colour the work.

Joan Kelly, the feminist historian, is one among a number of scholars⁵ who contend that history has been written from an entirely male perspective. She therefore calls for a shift in the way that histories are written.⁶ Kelly posits that “we [should] regard the social relationships of the sexes as a fundamental category of historical thought” (1984: xix). The contextualising of Cynewulf’s *Juliana* attempts to examine just that – the social relationship of the two sexes. And the first section of the examination will concern twentieth-century historians’ understanding of the social conditions of Anglo-Saxon women.

Recent historical and literary work on the position of women has been examined by Patricia Ann Belanoff: she concludes that “consensus about the status of women in Anglo-Saxon times does not exist” (1982: 9). Furthermore, the need for caution in leaping to conclusions about the status of women is sounded in the article by Mary P. Richards and B. Jane Stanfield entitled “Concepts of Anglo-Saxon Women in the Laws”, which warns that “any one source of information about the lives of women in Anglo-Saxon England is incomplete and should not be interpreted as fact...” (1990: 97). Bearing these cautionary remarks in mind, it is, however, necessary to try to establish a framework for the discussion, however tenuous and hesitant the conclusions might be.

What emerges is that the position of women in Anglo-Saxon England has been reported with varying degrees of attention, accuracy and research. The focus of Sir Frank Stenton’s influential history of Anglo-Saxon England is almost all male. Where females are mentioned, they are very much peripheral players on the stage of history.⁷ The point can easily be illustrated by referring to just one prominent woman, the abbess Hild, an important

figure in the intellectual and religious development of England. Stenton neglects to discuss Hild in any detail, although he acknowledges her as “the greatest of all English abbesses” (1943: 119). In fact, he generally mentions Hild in her role as a relative or mentor to male figures, such as Aidan, who influenced her to remain in England; King Oswiu, to whom she was related; Offfor, whom she taught and who later continued his studies at Canterbury under Theodore, and Caedmon, who was an oxherd on her land. The only time that her name is mentioned apart from discussions about Hild’s protégés, the entry is imbued with a tone of astonishment that “the personality of the great Abbess Hild dominated the whole life of a large congregation of men and women” (1943: 162). Stenton does concede, however, that Hild’s prowess as a scholar and teacher resulted in many of her (male) pupils attaining eminence. Stenton’s history is intriguing because he pays attention to the status, legal and economic, of *ceorls*, the bequeathing of land, types of farming and settlement – all issues distinct from the great sweep of kings and kingdoms, battles and treaties – yet he generally neglects the status of women, be they noble or peasant. His work is thus entirely conventional as it examines history exclusively from the perspective of an early twentieth-century male. Whereas twentieth-century feminists wish to write *herstory*, Stenton is representative of Western *history*. Stenton’s perspective is doubly interesting because its treatment of women compares unfavourably with the important contemporary history written by Bede, who devotes separate chapters of his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* to prominent women.⁸ Furthermore, Stenton himself was not unaware⁹ of the fairly favourable status of the Anglo-Saxon woman as he himself wrote an article entitled “The Historical Bearing of Place-Name Studies: The Place of Women in Anglo-Saxon History” in which he concludes that “there is no doubt that Old English society allowed to women, not only private influence, but also the widest liberty of intervention in public affairs” (1943: 1). Whereas Stenton knew of the status of women and published the above-mentioned article in the same year as the first edition of his book, he relegated his discussion of women to an article. This suggests more powerfully than the mere omission of women from his work would have suggested, that he had a particular view of history in which women did not play a significant role. The widely differing treatment of women in historical texts, as indicated by the discussion about Bede and Stenton, indicates that a variety of sources need to be consulted in order to establish a balanced idea about the status of Anglo-Saxon women.

The situation, in terms of the writing of general histories, has not altered substantially since either Palgrave or Stenton. Standard works, such as that by H.G. Koenigsberger and Asa Briggs (1981), bestow no particular attention on women in their histories. Peter Hunter Blair’s *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (1974) acknowledges his indebtedness to

Stenton, and, indeed, the work does not differ substantially from Stenton's with regard to the conditions, status and contribution of women. The second edition of Christopher Brooke's *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, which was originally published in 1964 and revised in 1987, does not revise the amount of space or importance he accords to the medieval woman at all. In another text by Brooke, entitled *From Alfred to Henry III 871-1272* (1961 rep. 1974), Aethelflaed, the Queen of Mercia, merits a scant five or six sentences. Richard Dale's *The Intellectual Life of Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (1992), which purports to be an examination of contributors to the intellectual debate, curiously omits figures such as Hildegard of Bingen, Hild of Whitby, Leoba, Hildelith and Eadburg.

Where the position of women is addressed, this is in histories written with the specific aim of investigating women. Doris Stenton's important work *The English Woman in History* (1957) provides a necessarily brief summary of the position of women. Eileen Power's *Medieval Women* (1975) is a brief but early example. Rosemary Thee Morewedge edited *The Role of Woman in the Middle Ages* (1975). Francis and Joseph Gies wrote *Women in the Middle Ages* (1978). Other texts include Derek Baker's *Medieval Women* (1978) and Angela Lucas's *Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage and Letters* (1983). Shulamith Shahar's *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages* (1983) suffers from a lack of documentary sources. Christine Fell's *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (1987) is a clearly written, detailed history. Edith Ennen's *The Medieval Woman* (1989) concentrates upon women in Europe. Helen M. Jewell's *Women in Medieval England* (1996) uses many original documents as the source of its information. These specialist histories fill in the lacunae left in the standard texts.

A distorted, incomplete or unbiased account of historical events is not a modern phenomenon. Any student of either English history or Shakespearian drama should be familiar with the unfair and probably inaccurate demonisation of Richard III in history and drama. Similarly, there is a contemporary example of the erasure of someone, predictably a woman, from the history books. Aethelflaed, the Lady of the Mercians, was an accomplished consort to her husband, Ealdorman Aethelred of the Mercians, and then, after his death in AD 911, Queen in her own right for eight years until her death in 918. However, her name is largely absent from some contemporary historical records.¹⁰ F.T. Wainwright has shown that Aethelflaed's brother, Edward, most probably had her name expunged from the West Saxon *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for purely expedient political reasons, as he needed to establish his own credibility as a ruler and unite the Mercians and the West Saxons under his rulership:

Her achievements, however, are pointedly ignored ... her death is recorded, and with it the statement that Edward thereupon occupied Tamworth and secured the submission of all her Mercian subjects. There is no word of her victories, no word of her share in the national program of fortress-building, no word of her high reputation in the north, and no word of her loyal and successful cooperation with Edward. It is clear that the blanket of official policy has kept her achievements out of the national record.

(1990: 44)

Yet Aethelflaed's achievements were considerable. Chief among them, perhaps, and directly indicative of the power which she possessed and the esteem in which she was held, is the fact that she was accorded the title of *Myrcna hlaefdige* or Lady of the Mercians. Wainwright points out that this is "the exact equivalent of *Myrcna hlaford*, the title by which Æthelred was known in Mercia". Furthermore, Wainwright concludes that Aethelflaed "succeeded without qualification to the position which he [Æthelred] had held" (1990: 46). A further recorded title for Aethelflaed (from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) is *seo hlafdige*, which is always directly translated as queen. The Victorian historian Sir Francis Palgrave states of Aethelflaed's daughter Aelfwina, that:

The Chroniclers notice the right of Elfwina so precisely, as to leave no doubt concerning her claim; and the fact is of considerable value, in shewing, that, contrary to the practice of other Teutonic nations, the sovereign authority amongst the Anglo-Saxons might descend to a female; or, according to the Anglo-Saxon expression, which the French have adopted, "fall to the *spindle side*."

(1989: 164)

The conclusion must therefore be that Æthelflaed succeeded to the leadership of Mercia because it was her sovereign right. Furthermore, her reign was as no mere figurehead. Palgrave praises her "sturdy valour" and "wisdom" and then proceeds to undermine his praise by calling her a "heroine of romance" (p. 163), thus relegating her to the world of fiction! Her achievements, as far as they can be gleaned from the partially silenced, partially fragmentary record, include: her cooperation with her brother Edward, in the quelling of the Danish armies; the building of a series of fortresses which allowed the English to engage in a war of attrition against the Danes; the capture of Derby by Aethelflaed and her troops; her grasp of strategy as she realised the implied threat of Irish-Norwegian settlement

in the west of England (and the action she took to secure the border); the formation of strategic alliances with the Picts and Scots and the exertion of force over Wales.¹¹ In short, much of her brother Edward's success can be directly attributed to her assistance and ability. After her death, Edward was able to unite his kingdom and hers after forcibly removing his niece, Aelfwynn, chosen sovereign of Mercia, from the throne. Edward thus paved the way for the integration of all of the kingdoms of England under the sovereignty of Wessex. In short, Aethelflaed's considerable contribution to her brother's success also meant that her voice had to be silenced, as Edward's goal was unification, not divisive nationalistic fervour. Because of Edward's broad political strategy, Aethelflaed has never enjoyed the recognition that she deserved.¹² But in her we see a powerful and capable warrior-queen figure whose achievements must be accorded the merit they deserve: in short, Aethelflaed's reputation must be recuperated. And we must not forget that Aethelflaed's name was expunged from the historical record not because she was a woman, but because she was so successful a leader that her exploits may have caused obstacles in her brother's path.¹³ And Aelfwine's removal by her uncle Edward signals that she was not as formidable a leader as her mother had been. Aethelflaed's erasure from the historical annals is a result of her ability and the threat which her exploits posed to her brother's desire to unite their two kingdoms. This is a perverse compliment to her considerable military and political acumen, and serves to confirm the highly influential role which she played.

A caveat must be uttered here. Although it seems that expedient political reasons to do with a long-term familial strategy of enlarging and consolidating the Alfredian royal base of power can be pinpointed as a reason for Aethelflaed's shabby treatment in the West Saxon Chronicles, a further reason must at least be considered as a possibility. England had been thoroughly Christianised by the late ninth century.¹⁴ Given the vigorously propagated and misogynistic teachings of the church about women¹⁵ it could be argued that these attitudes were finally beginning to have a significant effect on the status of women, especially as the patriarchal hegemony of the church became entrenched. Although this dissertation argues that the Norman Conquest had a most profound effect on the position of women – amounting to a paradigm shift – I contend that the patristic Fathers' teachings had begun to have an effect, in the same way that some scholars argue that the spoken Anglo-Saxon language had begun a process of simplification not recorded in the written texts. In short, during the tenth century the church's teachings were becoming more entrenched and the position of women was gradually worsening. There is, in fact, fairly general agreement on this point, as evidenced by Jane Schulenberg's words:

before the church became heavily institutionalized, more secure and right-minded, women had greater opportunities for prominence and power. ... [This] rather healthy situation reflected in fact a similar high status for women in Germanic society. In this environment they were looked upon as indispensable assets and true partners.

(1990: 128)

These attitudes could therefore account, to a certain extent, for the obliteration of Aethelflaed from the historical record. Kelly opens her chapter entitled "The Social Relation of the Sexes" with the following statement:

Women's history has a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women.... Throughout historical time, women have been largely excluded from making war, wealth, laws, governments, art, and science. Men, functioning in their capacity as historians, considered exactly those activities constitutive of civilization Women figured chiefly as exceptions, those who were said to be as ruthless as, or wrote like, or had the brains of men.

(1984: 1-2)

This view of history as belonging to men is confirmed by the examination of Stenton's and Palgrave's histories as well as the expunging of Aethelflaed from contemporary chronicles. However, glimmers of undoctored material from the Anglo-Saxon era remain, enabling a reconstruction of their position and status.¹⁶ A number of contemporary studies have drawn upon this material and have sought to redress the imbalance.

Even when the condition of women is addressed, the problem of objectivity¹⁷ is not solved. A glaring example of inaccuracy is found in this authoritatively worded statement by John Thrupp:

In contradiction to the generally received opinion, it may be said, that the Anglo-Saxon women were, at one time, sold by their fathers and always beaten by their husbands; that they were menial servants even when of royal rank; that they were habitually subjected to coarse personal insult; and that they were never addressed, even in poetry, in the language of passion or respect.

(Quoted in Fell, 1987: 7-8)

Thrupp's work, *The Anglo-Saxon Home*, was published in 1862, and the opinions which he denounces are those of Sharon Turner (1805) and John Kemble (1849). However, Thrupp does not cite sources (an astonishing oversight) for his seemingly authoritative statements, whereas Turner based his study, entitled the *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, on his examination of a wide variety of sources: Turner's arguments should therefore be given more credence. He crystallises his discussion of the Anglo-Saxon woman as follows:

[T]he female sex [has been exulted] to that honour, consequence and independence, which European laws studied to uphold. As the education of youth will always rest principally with women ... it is of the greatest importance that the fair sex should possess high estimation in society; and nothing could more certainly tend to perpetuate this feeling, than the privilege of possessing property in their own right, and at their own disposal.

(Quoted in Fell, 1987: 7)

Similarly, John Kemble posits a high status for Anglo-Saxon women, using terms such as "higher nature" and "akin to divinity" in his somewhat florid prose. In this he echoes a very much earlier source, the Roman historian Tacitus, whose *Germania* is the source of much information about the early Germanic tribes. Henry Osborne Taylor, a philosopher and historian, clearly using Tacitus as a source of information, states that a husband presents to his wife as part of her *morgenabe*, "oxen, a horse, and shield and lance [which] make up the husband's *morgenabe* to his bride: she is to have part in his valor" (1966: 139).

Although Tacitus was not a disinterested historian,¹⁸ and his writings must be viewed cautiously,¹⁹ it appears that there may be some credence to his statements. Christopher Brooke claims that although Tacitus described the Germanic people of the first century in his *Germania*, the cultural remnants of the customs and mores described by Tacitus can be seen right through to the twelfth century (1974: 47-8). Together with other compelling evidence, then, his work adds substance to the argument of this dissertation. Tacitus himself describes perceptions about Germanic women as follows:

inesse quin etiam sanctum aliquid et providum putant, nec aut consilia earum aspernantur, aut responsa neglegunt.

(Tacitus, 1894: 54)

(They even believe that the sex has a certain sanctity and prescience, and they do not despise their counsels, or make light of their answers.)

(Hadas, 1942: 713)

Tacitus adds more about woman's legal and economic status:

Dotem non uxor marito, sed uxori maritus offert. intersunt parentes et propinqui ac munera probant, munera non ad delicias muliebres questita nec quibus nova nupta comatur, sed boves et frenatum equum et scutum cum famea gladioque. in haec munera uxor accipitur, atque in vicem ipsa armorum aliquid viro adfert: hoc maximum vinculum, haec arcana sacra, hos coniungales deos arbitrantur. ne se mulier extra virtutum cogitationes extraque bellorum casus putet, ipsis incipientis matrimonii auspiciis admonetur venire se laborum periculorumque sociam, idem in pace, idem in proelio passuram ausaramque.

(Tacitus, 1894: 71)

The wife does not bring a dowry to the husband, but the husband to the wife. The parents and relatives are present and pass judgment on the marriage-gifts, gifts not meant to suit a woman's taste, nor such as a bride would deck herself with, but oxen, a caparisoned steed, a shield, a lance, and a sword. With these presents the wife is espoused, and she herself in her turn brings her husband a gift of arms. This they count their strongest bond of union, these their sacred mysteries, these their gods of marriage. Lest the woman should think herself to stand apart from aspirations after noble deeds and from the perils of war, she is reminded by the ceremony which inaugurates marriage that she is her husband's partner in toil and danger, destined to suffer and to dare with him alike both in peace and in war.

(Hadas, 1942: 717-8)

Legally speaking, the manner in which marriages were contracted in the Anglo-Saxon period is, I contend, a fundamental factor in assessing their status. For it is quite clear that the *morgenabe*, or morning gift described above, meant that the woman possessed material goods in her own right.²⁰ The implications are enormous: it meant that the Anglo-Saxon woman was perceived to be a legal entity, with the power of effecting a contract. Stenton asserts that "There is no doubt that Old English society allowed to women, not only private influence, but also the widest liberty of intervention in public affairs" (1990: 79). Stenton's assertion is based upon his study of wills, charters and edicts, and he is confident that the surviving information confirms that women enjoyed legal and economic freedom:

Documents from the century before the Conquest, and especially the wills and narrative charters which are characteristic of this age, show large numbers of women possessed of land by virtue of grant, bequest, or inheritance. They also show that these

women were able to dispose of their landed property with a freedom which was not permitted to their successors of the feudal age.

(1990: 80)

Pauline Stafford concurs with this point of view, and offers evidence that four remarkable queens (Eadgifu, Aelfthryth, Emma and Edith) wielded considerable influence in tenth- and eleventh-century Wessex (1990: 56-78).

There is even a well-known case of a woman who disinherited her son in favour of a female relative – a situation which would have been untenable in post-Conquest England!²¹ There is some evidence that efforts, especially in West Saxon areas, were made to keep land on the spear and not the spindle side, according to King Alfred, but he himself adds that he was free to will his holdings as he pleased, to either male or female heirs (Stenton, 1990: 80).

The laws also suggest that a certain freedom was enjoyed by the Anglo-Saxon woman. Richards and Stanfield declare that the Anglo-Saxon woman, whether she was wife, widow or nun, was relatively independent. They state that

these were legally recognized states that separated women from the control of their own families and enabled them to act independently to a degree – that is, the written laws suggest that women were able to make certain decisions concerning their lives and were not fully ruled by men, their own families, or the religious establishment.

(1990: 93)

It also appears that although there were some transactions and business-like bargaining around marriage, the woman did have a discretionary voice, and that she had the power to leave her husband. This was the case with Asa, who did so, and took, on leaving, her possessions and her land holdings with her: they were not forfeit to either her husband or her father.²² Furthermore, it is quite clear that women had the power to refuse a proposed marriage, as stated in King Cnut's law:

[N]either widow nor maiden is to be forced to marry a man whom she herself dislikes, not to be given for money, unless he chooses to give anything of his own free will.

(Jewell, 1996: 28)

Furthermore, there is evidence that women had legal power and status in the middle Anglo-Saxon period. Law 25 of King Ine (d. after 726) specifically makes provision for abbots or abbesses to receive half of the specified *wergild* if a foreigner under his/her protection was killed. This suggests that the legal standing of an abbot or abbess was not affected by the sex of the ruler of the house.

What does appear to be correct is that the Anglo-Saxon woman enjoyed legal rights and privileges that far surpassed her rights in post-Conquest England. This conclusion is drawn by Doris Stenton, as she contemplates the change in status which accrued to English women after the Norman Conquest:

The evidence which has survived from Anglo-Saxon England indicates that women were then more nearly the equal companions of their husbands and brothers than at any other period before the modern age. In the higher ranges of society this rough and ready partnership was ended by the Norman Conquest, which introduced into England a military society relegating women to a position honourable but essentially unimportant. With all allowance for the efforts of individual churchmen to help individual women, it must be confessed that the teaching of the medieval Church reinforced the subjection which feudal law imposed on all wives.

(1957: 348)

Belanoff concurs with Doris Stenton and asserts that the “majority of scholars do seem to agree ... that the status of Anglo-Saxon women was superior to that of post-Conquest English women” (1982: 9). Rt. Rev. Browne (1919) reaches the same conclusion, as the title of his book *The Importance of Women in Anglo-Saxon Times* indicates. Joel T. Rosenthal (1990: 259-84) constructs a witty and speculative argument which re-examines the available material and concludes that women did enjoy a high status, most particularly during the early years of the Anglo-Saxon era. It appears, therefore, that there is considerable contemporary evidence for the argument of this dissertation.

Literary sources

Undoubtedly, the best source of information about the Anglo-Saxon woman will not be modern writers, but surviving documents and records of the actual era, even though the information may be incomplete and fragmentary.²³ Such information, in its raw state, offers a view of the times, unblurred by the distorting lens of modern perceptions. The largest

body of contemporary writings consists of Anglo-Saxon prose and poetry. (It is estimated that approximately 30 000 lines of poetry are extant, as well as a variety of prose texts, including the various historical chronicles, gospels, sermons and homilies.) In particular, a fair number of poems offer insight into the lives and social condition of women as well as perceptions about the Anglo-Saxon woman. Because poetry is the most literary of written material, it is from selected items from the poetic record that evidence of a literary nature will be garnered.

For ease of discussion, the secular woman will be discussed first. There are a number of reasons for the distinction between the secular and the religious woman, chief among them being the complicating fact of the celibate status of Juliana, the heroine, and the special circumstances of the religious woman. As a whole body of very early literature survives which addresses the issue of virginity and femaleness, this must be considered in detail.

The more secular Anglo-Saxon poems are probably of a relatively early origin. Even a cursory glance at poems such as *Beowulf*, *Widsið* and *Waldere* will reveal that the subject-matter concerns the heroic era prior to the arrival of St Augustine on his proselytising mission in AD 597.²⁴ *Beowulf*, for example, refers to historical figures from the third to the sixth centuries;²⁵ *Widsið* conflates reigns and personages over a period exceeding 200 years;²⁶ while *Waldere* discusses the exploits of an historical figure from the fifth century.²⁷ Of course, the fact that figures from the fourth and fifth centuries are mentioned does not imply that the poems can be dated as early as that: I contend, however, that these poems are not the latest in the Anglo-Saxon poetic *oeuvre*, as the interests and concerns which they reflect accord with the heroic *comitatus* ethic, which was clearly disintegrating by the tenth century, as evidenced in the cowardly flight of Offa during the battle of Maldon in AD 991.²⁸ Karl Wentersdorf (1981: 502-8) argues that *The Wife's Lament* refers allusively to a pagan sanctuary, thus placing this poem's origins in the pre-Augustinian era, or at the latest, very early in the seventh century.

Beowulf, the Germanic counterpoint to classical epic, is fundamentally a poem about the quintessential hero who embodies all the ideals of the *comitatus* ethic.²⁹ However, for a poem about heroic exploits and the rising and setting of kingdoms,³⁰ the women who do appear are remarkably powerful and important figures, known for their wisdom, insight and moral strength. This is often in contrast to the male figures, who are weak, hesitant, foolish and rash by turns.³¹

The *Beowulf*-poet does not appear to harbour misogynistic ideas about feminine qualities, for Queen Wealhtheow's femininity is extolled as a virtue and is depicted in the poem as a necessary attribute for her role as the cup-bearing Queen. John F. Sklute (1990: 204-10) examines the terms *freoðuwebbe*, *friðuwebbe* and *friðusibb* and concludes that:

[The terms are] a poetic metaphor referring to the person whose function it seems to be to perform openly the action of making peace by weaving to the best of her art a tapestry of friendship and amnesty. The warp of her weaving is treasure and the woof is composed of words of good will. ... Although a peace-weaver is not the sole securer of good will, her presence and her actions help the lord at his task.

(1990: 208)

Indeed, Queen Wealhtheow "thinks of herself as having power" (Belanoff: 38) and she does not hesitate to use her influence. Belanoff's analysis of the cup-bearing scenes implies that Wealhtheow's circuit of the room with the cup, from which all present drink, and lastly the hero Beowulf, ritualistically symbolises the bonds of loyalty which Wealhtheow weaves.³² And when Beowulf accepts the cup from Wealhtheow, he accepts his heroic identity from her (Belanoff, 1982: 44-9). Besides all of the gracious queenly qualities and ceremonial adroitness which would be expected of a woman of her rank, Queen Wealhtheow possesses spirited intelligence or "mode gepungen" (Dobbie, 1953: l. 624). She also offers insightful advice or "wis-fæst wordum" (l. 626), particularly in relation to courtly intrigue and looming danger for her sons from their uncle Hrothulf. Her concern is not merely motherly anxiety, but a deeper, more statesmanlike quality – a quality which her husband, Hrothgar, appears to lack. Gillian Overing chooses to read Wealhtheow's words, largely in the imperative, as "ambiguous" and takes issue with other critics such as Damico, who have interpreted Wealhtheow in a positive light (1995: 236-48). Overing seems determined to read Wealhtheow as a rather pathetic, hopeless figure moving automatically through ceremonies at court. She also fails to consider the wisdom and plain common sense of Wealhtheow's words, which are clearly contrasted with Hrothgar's sententious yet meaningless words, especially in his sermon.³³ Furthermore, Wealhtheow wisely chooses a public forum in which to raise the issue of succession as the combination of powerful guest, Beowulf's entourage, the assembled court, as well as the dangerous figure of Hrothulf, constitute a formal gathering of witnesses and allies. Therefore, "Wealhtheow is airing the matter publicly in order to prod her passive husband into awareness and positive action" (Walsh, 1991b: 60). Furthermore, the fact that Wealhtheow's diplomacy fails is not a failure on her

part, but an inevitable outcome of a feuding, violent society. Hrothgar clearly lacks the will to act decisively enough, despite having been warned by his wife, either to appease his nephew's ambitions or to safeguard his sons' future: he is therefore culpable. Wealhtheow is a woman who acts forcefully and speaks forcefully: in fact, Damico (1984: 17-40) demonstrates that she possesses heroic qualities. These are "soberness of mind, nobility of birth [and] courage in action" (1984: 27). Wealhtheow contributes to our understanding of the influential role which Anglo-Saxon women played.³⁴

Exactly the same kind of error on the part of males may be seen in the Finn episode in *Beowulf*. Violent, festering hatred characterises the brooding males, whereas the women attempt to keep the peace, as their role as *friddowebbe* suggests. The *scop* clearly criticises the destructive, senseless violence of the male aggressors, whose actions tear apart the fabric of society. Hildeburh suffers the loss of her husband and son in the violent feud. Overing argues that her weaving around the hall before the bloody fight as well as her lack of speech either before or after the feud epitomises her subjugated *différence*.³⁵ Quite clearly her role as *friddowebbe* fails, but the failure is not hers alone. The primary responsibility for the failure of her peace-weaving efforts must reside in the whole vengeance-hungry society which fosters and encourages revenge as a sign of masculinity and honour.³⁶

Deor, an allusive poem, probably of a very early date, also mentions sorrowing women: Beadohild and Maethild. James Boren offers a typically male reading as he contrasts these women's "passivity in misfortune" (1975: 268) with Weland's strong-minded, or *anhydig*, reaction. However, Boren fails to perceive that all of the figures mentioned in the poem suffer and that at least as many males as females are described as suffering sorrow. Furthermore, Boren has chosen the strongest possible interpretation of *anhydig*, which can simply mean "steadfast, stubborn or self-willed", while apportioning the weakest possible motivation to the women.³⁷ The conclusion, therefore, is that *Deor* offers a lament about the misfortunes of man, without distinguishing between male and female suffering: rather, all within the mercenary feuding society suffer the misfortunes of fate – and those misfortunes, too, will eventually pass. No particular information about special conditions appertaining to women alone can therefore usefully be gleaned from either the Finn episode of *Beowulf*, or from *Deor*. Men are seen to precipitate suffering because of rash action, uncontrolled hatred and unchecked aggression.

On the other hand, the intriguing, quasi-historical panegyric of an aptly named, if impossibly long-lived fictional *scop*, Widsith (literally, wide-travelling one), contains one or

two fragments of useful contemporary, and complimentary, information about women. Firstly, Widsith mentions Ealhild, daughter of Eadwine, king of the Angles, as a particularly noble, gracious and generous gift-giver, an example to all. She is a “fæle freopuwebbe” (Krapp & Dobbie, 1936: l. 6) or “beloved peaceweaver” and “goldhrodene cwen giefe bryttian” (l. 102) or “a queen ornate with gold, bestowing gifts” (Bradley, 1982: 339). Her name is mentioned twice in Widsith’s catalogue, and she is contrasted with her husband Eormanric, who is curiously announced as yet another “wraþes wærlogan” (l. 9) or “cruel troth-breaker”, albeit “gode dolhte” (l. 89) or “graciously kind” (p. 339) to the *scop*. Unlike her husband, Ealhild is consistently kindly and generous.

But what is perhaps more interesting in this investigation than the brief, if luminous, words about Ealhild’s appeal to Widsith, is the meaning of her name, for it accords with a statement about the status of, and perceptions about, Germanic women made by the Roman historian Tacitus, in the second century. *Ealh*, according to Bosworth and Toller’s dictionary, means “temple”, while *hild* means “battle” or “war”. “The two [words] thus combine the ‘holy’ or ‘prophetic’ aspects of a woman’s character with the ‘valorous’ ones” (Walsh, 1991a: 5). Ealhild’s name³⁸ encapsulates the highly positive beliefs about, and status of, Germanic women as described by Tacitus and discussed earlier in this chapter.³⁹ Archaeological evidence also attests to the holy or mystical nature of women, as crystal balls of apparently symbolic religious import have been found in female immolations in England and Europe of the pagan period (Meaney, 1990: 158-73).

A fascinating reversal of the traditional binary opposites occurs in *Beowulf*, for what is valorised is female and embodies careful deliberation, in contrast to careless male action. This reversal of what is the norm (to our modern minds) implies that women enjoyed a higher status than in later periods. The example to which I alluded concerns the king and queen of the Geats, the kingdom later ruled by the heroic and honourable Beowulf himself, and then only because of the rash behaviour of Hygelac who ignored his wife’s sage advice. Hygd is a name which is quite obviously contrasted with that of her husband Hygelac. Their behaviour confirms their names: Hygd represents thought, wisdom, and deliberation, and she counsels her husband to act with restraint. Instead, Hygelac acts rashly, heedless of his wife’s sound advice: his kingdom is lost as a result. Of course, in an ideal world, Hygd should then have ruled as she had displayed qualities of perspicacity and wisdom ideally suited to rulership. However, a feuding society requires brute force of arms rather than wisdom to survive: patriarchal norms will therefore dominate, and the woman’s role remains sidelined, her advice often unheeded, as in the case of Hygd and Wealththeow.

The superior insight of these women is recognised and honoured. But what is clear is that Hygd possesses, in her own right, the authority to decide upon the succession.

There are three early poems which probably have female narrators: they are *Waldere* (a fragment), *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament*.⁴⁰ The first of these depicts a woman in the heroic mould, as Hildegyth is generally thought to be the narrator of the fragment. Again, as with Hygd, her name symbolises certain attributes exhibited by her in the poem, for Bosworth and Toller's dictionary glosses *hild* as "war" or "battle" and *gyth* in exactly the same manner. And indeed this tautologous name indicates a courageous warrior-like nature, for Hildegyth exhorts her betrothed, Waldere, to stand and fight. Her peroration is stirring and filled with ringing rhetoric:

Ætlan ordwyga, ne læt ðin ellen nu gy[.]
gedreosan to dæge, dryhtscipe (feallan!)
[...] is se dæg cumen
þæt ðu scealt aninga oðer twega,
lif forleosan oððe l[...]nge dom
agan mid eldum, Ælfheres sunu!

(Dobbie, 1942: ll. 6-11)

(Do not you, a soldier of Atilla's vanguard, yet awhile allow your courage to falter, nor your dignity today. Son of Alphere, the day is now come when you must simply do one of two things: let go your life or have everlasting fame among men.)

(Bradley, 1982: 511)

There can be no doubt that Hildegyth is a formidable figure, imbued with the heroic spirit. In my discussion of the depiction of secular women, I state that "Hildegyth's powerful speech, calling for courage and caution, while also offering comfort, and hope of victory, is masterful" (1991: 3). But what is even more intriguing is the contrast, pointed out by Michael Swanton, between the Hildegyth in the earlier Latin version, who is a "shrinking, tearful girl", and the battle-ready figure in the Old English version (1987: 44). This type of contrast, reinforced over and over again, strengthens my contention that the Anglo-Saxon woman enjoyed a high status and an honourable position.

Wulf and Eadwacer and *The Wife's Lament* are clearly poems set in the context of feuding, exile and warfare. Audrey L. Meaney contends that both of these women (the putative narrators) have incurred the wrath of society because of an extra-marital liaison, whether probable (as in *Wulf and Eadwacer*) or only speculative, as in *The Wife's Lament*.⁴¹

This message, ostensibly carved upon a wooden staff, is politely formulated as a request, to which the addressee apparently has the freedom of choice in terms of her response. Peter Orton comments upon “the slight note of uncertainty on the man’s part about the continuing strength, for the woman, of their old promises”(1981: 51). The inference is therefore clear: women were not chattels of their husbands, to be commanded and ordered about. Shirley Kossick reaches the same conclusion after analysing the Gnostic maxim entitled *The Frisian Wife*, where the harmonious domestic scene is one of “intimacy and love” (1965: 67).

According to James Anderson (who has been mentioned in endnote twelve as having a negative view of the position and status of the Anglo-Saxon woman) the Gnostic verses from the Cotton Vitellius manuscript both condemn women’s sexuality and simultaneously depict them as the “sexual toys” of men. However, his analysis is rather idiosyncratic and far-fetched, according to Belanoff (1982: 22), and has no real credence. Edith Williams also contests this [mis]reading. She asserts that:

When we clear away all preconceived notions of lewdness and examine them carefully, particularly with a view toward discovering what we can about women’s functions and women’s feelings in the sexual area, two points emerge distinctly: (1) sexual pleasure clearly lay within the province of women; (2) there was no sanction against this pleasure since women are not portrayed as degraded nor exploited in this context.

(1990: 138)

The Anglo-Saxons delighted in riddles, and many of the riddles which are extant are sexually allusive and may be interpreted as being crude, according to modern taste. Those Gnostic verses which are sexually allusive are therefore also likely to be frank and crude. Sexual pleasure was considered to be a part of the heroic existence.⁴⁴ The Gnostic verses regard both men and women as enjoying their sexuality, with few, if any, pejorative statements made about sexual activity (Belanoff, 1982: 185-255).

For the sake of academic rigour, it may be important to juxtapose these favourable descriptions of women, and evidence of noble behaviour on their part, against two dangerous women. The first is the mother of Grendel, characterised by her biological function, but forever nameless: an ironic reduction to function over individuality. By her very nature,

Grendel's mother is an outcast – the family are designated as “the descendants of Cain”; she is called the “ides, aglæcwif” (Dobbie, 1953: l. 1259) or monster woman; or the she-devil or she-wolf. But what is intriguing about the behaviour of Grendel's mother is that she usurps a male role, for it is her son who sought out the hall of Hrothgar and inflicted upon it a series of devastating raids for a period of twelve years. It is only after Grendel has met more than his match in the mythically powerful warrior Beowulf, who mortally wounds Grendel by wrenching off his arm⁴⁵ at the shoulder, that Grendel's mother, grieving over the loss of her son, attacks Heorot. In terms of the rules of the feuding society, male relatives are required to exact revenge for the death of a relative. As Grendel appears to have no living relative other than his mother, the task of avenging his death falls to her. Kevin Kiernan understands Grendel's mother to be an heroic figure, but ironically so, for he detects the *scop's* indictment of mindless blood feuds, as perpetrated by the kin of Cain for centuries.⁴⁶ And Grendel's mother proves to be a more formidable adversary against Beowulf the mighty hero than her son: for Beowulf gains ascendance in the battle with her only after he espies, and then uses, a magical sword or “eald sweord eotinisc” (Dobbie, 1953: l. 1558) hanging on the wall of the subterranean cave. Eroticism colours the fight scene, as Jane Chance demonstrates authoritatively in the chapter entitled “The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: The Problem of Grendel's Mother” (1990: 248-61). The adversaries straddle one another: they grapple and clutch. Grendel's mother stabs Beowulf, hacking away, and he is saved only by the chain mail armour which he wears. She is eventually beheaded with the phallic magical sword, the blade of which then melts. Chance suggests that “the poet exploits the basic resemblance between sexual intercourse and battle to emphasize the inversion of the feminine role of the queen or hall-ruler by Grendel's mother” (p. 253). But the point is that this monster-woman is a formidably powerful opponent for Beowulf, the hero, who is the victor only because he espies a magical sword.

Thryth (incorrectly given the name Modthrytho by an early editor⁴⁷) similarly assumes a violent, aggressive role for herself, and thus attracts the only condemnatory or critical comment directed specifically at womanly behaviour in *Beowulf*:⁴⁸

Ne bið swylc cwenlic þeaw
idese to efnanne, þeah ðe hio ænlicu sy,
þætte freðu-webbe feores onsæce
æfter ligetorne leofne mannan.

(Dobbie, 1953: ll. 1940-44)

(Such was not a queenly custom for a woman to follow, even if she is unmatched in beauty, that the peace-weaver should exact the life of a

dearly esteemed man on account of an imagined
insult.)

(1982: 462)

She is an elusive character in *Beowulf*: her name⁴⁹ occurs only once, in a short episode – and then there has been considerable debate about whether this section is an interpolation or not.⁵⁰ In fact, the most sensible explanation for a difficult and allusive section may well be that of Chambers, who suggests that lines containing the actual name of this violent queen have been lost (1972: 542). Thryth might actually have been Queen Cynethryth of Mercia, who was notoriously proud. According to Chambers (1972: pp. 539-43), the compound noun *modþryðo* means “violence of character” or “pride of spirit”. Thryth’s behaviour is egregious because she orders the death of a number of men:

... þæt hire an dægēs eagam starede,
ac him wælbende weotode tealde
handgewriþene; hraþe seopðan wæs
æfter mundgripe mece geþinged,
þæt hit sceadenmæl scyran moste,
cwealmbealu cyðan.

(Dobbie, 1953: ll. 1935-40)

(Whoever looked into her eyes in broad daylight
could count on the garotte, the death-bonds
prepared, woven by hand, an arrest, and
thereafter the charge quickly settled with the
edge of a sword: the sharp shadow-pattern
would suddenly fall, make known its death-evil.)

(Chickering, 1977: 161)⁵¹

Unlike any of the males in *Beowulf*, Thryth is capable of change, for she transforms once she is married and becomes a good, famous and virtuous queen to Offa:

... ðær hio syððan well
in gumstole, gode, mære,
lifgesceafta lifigende breac,
hiold heahlufan wið hælep brego ...

(Dobbie, 1953: ll. 1951-54)

(There she used well the days of her life, famous
for goodness upon the high-seat, kept noble love
toward the leader of heroes ...)

(Chickering, 1977: 163)

Thryth therefore becomes subject to her husband: he obviously has the necessary strength and force of character to command respect from her. But an important question remains: what is it that causes Thryth to behave in this aggressive manner? A possible

explanation of why she requires the death of the males who gaze upon her is because she refuses to be objectified.⁵² This counters the claim made by Belanoff that “Modthrytho’s actions in *Beowulf* are far more arbitrary than those ... of Grendel’s mother” (1982: 70). Her reaction is extreme – ordering death for staring – yet Thryth may have had good reason for her actions. The entire passage is so obscure and allusive that the original circumstances surrounding the story, which may have illuminated its meaning for a contemporary audience, have been lost to us. However, what is clear is that aggression in a woman is undesirable, and that such a woman must be “tamed” (Belanoff, 1982: 71), which is what marriage to Offa seems to do to Thryth.

Gillian Overing offers another explanation for Thryth’s behaviour: she reads her as directly confronting the patriarchy by turning the male gaze upon itself (1995: 248-53). She is therefore both the heroine and the victim of her own behaviour. In fact, Overing calls Thryth “truly mysterious, perhaps eventually unthinkable She escapes, however briefly, the trap of binary definition” (p. 252). Overing concludes her discussion of Thryth as follows:

Modthryth ...reveals the trace of something that we know cannot exist in the world of the poem: the trace of a woman signifying in her own right. Her initial gesture is strikingly alien, incomprehensible, until translated into the binary language of the masculine economy.

(1995: 255)

Thryth, for Overing, thus fails in her attempt to disrupt the binary categories of the patriarchy, although she does “jolt the narrative”. But, whereas I read Thryth as an anomaly because her reasons for acting so aggressively are not clear, Overing sees her as a more overt would-be feminist heroine. Overing also reads the other women in *Beowulf* as feminine stereotypes, a reading which I reject.⁵³

Having discussed selected examples depicting women and their role in society from secular poetry, it is now necessary to examine selected examples from religious poetry. Given the church’s control of manuscripts through the *scriptoria*, it is not surprising that religious works predominate in the Old English *oeuvre*. Rather, what is perhaps more surprising is the number of secular works which have survived.

Religious poetry

Especially important in terms of later developments in the depiction of women is the poetic portrayal of both Mary and Eve, biblical prototypes of sinning and saintly women. Both of these figures are the protagonists in poems, Mary featuring in *Advent* (sometimes called *Christ 1*) and Eve in *Genesis B*. Mary does appear in other poems,⁵⁴ but as *Advent* presents the most extensive Marian sections, comments will be confined to this poem.

The most significant of the terms used to describe Mary in *Advent* are *mægð*, *fæmne*, *geong*, *mæden*, *moder*, *bryd*, *wifes*, *cwen* and *cwene*. These terms collectively embody seemingly contradictory roles which can only ever be simultaneously fulfilled by Mary, thus encapsulating her unique role. Chance states that “Mary epitomizes not only the perfection of all womanhood (impossible for other women to attain) but also the fulfillment of all womanly roles” (1986: 18). Mary of the *Advent* poems is:

no longer the “best” of women, she is the “best” of humans.
Mary’s offering of her virginity to God makes her superior to
all men as well as to all other women.

(Belanoff, 1982: 328)

Aldhelm in *De Virginitate* also describes Mary’s various roles, the possession of which elevates her to nonpareil status. She is “the perpetual virgin ... the daughter-in-law of her Father, the mother and sister of the Son and at the same time his bride and blessed handmaid, the mother-in-law of holy souls, the queen of the heavenly citizens” (Lapidge and Herren, 1979: 106-7). As the queen of heaven, *Advent*’s Mary is also gold-adorned, like the pagan queens of the heroic poems. But all of this hinges upon Mary’s chastity, as Belanoff points out: “The *Advent* poet does glorify chastity and glorifies Mary because she is chaste” (1982: 334).

There is a common misconception that Mariology developed relatively late in the medieval period, whereas its roots date from the third century.⁵⁵ Reverence for Mary’s holiness, which is predicated upon her virginity and sinless perfection, must be understood as underlying references to her during the Anglo-Saxon period. Ælfric, the eleventh-century bishop, expounds upon an aspect of Mariology in his sermon *De Assumptione Beate Mariae*. This sermon confirms the esteem in which Mary was held:

Be ðissere heofonlican cwene is gecweden gyt þurh ðone ylcan Godes Gast: he cwæð, “Ic geseah ða wlitegan swilce culfran astigende ofer streamlicum riðum, and unasegendlic bræð stemde of hire gyrlum; and, swa swa on lengctenlicere tide, rosena blostman and lilian hi ymtrymedon.”

(Of this heavenly queen it is yet said by the same Spirit of God, “I saw the beauteous one as a dove mounting above the streaming rills, and an ineffable fragrance exhaled from her garments; and, so as in the spring-tide, blossoms of roses and lilies encircled her.”)

(Aelfric, vol. I, 1983: 444-5)

Ælfric furthermore interprets these words for his audience: he explains that the red roses symbolise martyrdom⁵⁶ and the white lilies “mid heora hwitnysses getacniad ða scinendan clænnysse ansundes mægðhades” or “by their whiteness betoken the shining purity of inviolate maidenhood” (pp. 444-5). Mary is clearly the Queen of Heaven, adored, perfect and utterly incorruptible. In a later sermon also celebrating the feast of the assumption of Mary, Ælfric calls for “þa ðe gymað þære heofenlican lare, ða geefenlæcað Marian” or “those who treasure up heavenly lore, [to] imitate Mary” (Aelfric, vol. II, 1983: 444-5). Clearly, Mary is the example of spiritual perfection who should be emulated.

Mary is, of course, contrasted with Eve in both prose writings and poetry. Jane Chance refers to a direct comparison between Mary and Eve which occurs in a passage from the *Blickling Homily* (1967) entitled *Annunciato S. Mariae*. The metaphor is childbirth, and Eve’s motherhood is characterised by *firenlust* or “lust”, *tearas* or “tears”, *sare* or “pain” and *synnum* or “sin”, whereas Mary’s motherhood brings forth *ecean* or “joy”, is *clæne* or “pure” and *unbesmitenan* or “undefiled” (Chance, 1986: 15-6). It is clear that these two figures are thought of as a contrasting pair, and that the mention of the one brings forth the attributes of the other.

Eve, the other half of this irrevocably yoked pair, appears in *Genesis A*, *Genesis B*, *Advent*, *Guthlac*, and *Christ and Satan*. For the sake of space, only Eve’s depiction in *Genesis B* will be discussed. This is also the most interesting of the poems to include Eve.

Biblical texts, and the Church’s teachings, label Eve as the *sine qua non* of evil. The following words from St Ambrose present Eve as the architect of our misfortune:

Eva nos damnari fecit per arboris pomum, Maria absolvit per
 arboris domun; quia et Christus in ligno pependit, ut fructus.
 (Eve made us to be damned by the apple of a tree, Mary
 absolved us by the gift of a tree: because Christ also hung upon
 the tree, as if fruit.)

(Quoted in Chance, 1986: 69)

Despite Eve's sin, her depiction in *Genesis B* is strangely complimentary. This has been noted by many critics, who have struggled to account for it.⁵⁷ Alain Renoir says of *Genesis B*'s Eve: "The poet has portrayed her in an obviously sympathetic light and assures us that the fatal trespass was done with the best intentions in the world" (1990: 264). In fact, Renoir contests conventional readings of the words *wifes wac gepoht* or "the woman's weak mind" which compare Eve unfavourably to Adam. He asserts that Eve's mind is weaker than Satan's, not Adam's, basing his argument on a closer reference to Satan in the text, and concludes that:

In this light, Eve's superior but merely human intelligence must necessarily be outclassed by the Tempter's superhuman brain power and accordingly prove no match for his infernal arguments.

(1990: 269)

In fact, Eve emerges relatively unscathed from her depiction in the various poems. Belanoff points out that there are only two comments heavily critical of Eve⁵⁸ in those poems which describe her actions in the garden of Eden. This is surprising, given the existence of contemporary sermons condemning Eve's role in bringing sin into the world.

Amongst the religious poetry, three of the longest poems have female heroines. *Juliana* is one: the other two are *Elene* (also signed by Cynewulf) and *Judith* (a tenth-century text). In itself, the existence of three important, and lengthy, religious poems about women points to a significant role for the Anglo-Saxon woman.⁵⁹ Although *Judith* is incomplete and of a later date than the Cynewulfian poems, a number of critics have noticed profound similarities between the poems.⁶⁰ Of particular interest is the fact that this trio of poems together provide a role model of each of the three states of chastity. *Juliana* is the consecrated virgin; *Elene* the married but sexually inactive woman and *Judith* the chaste widow.

Neither *Elene* nor *Judith* will be examined in detail because a comparison is not the intention of this dissertation. What is of significance, and has been noted by a number of

scholars, is the existence of three major Christian poems with female heroines. And there is also one term, *eadhreðige*, or “blessedly triumphant” which is used only of these three heroes – Judith, Juliana and Elene – thus providing a link between them. The particular use of the term suggests that these three women achieved spiritual victory of notable blessedness. A further similarity in the depiction of the three women as powerful warrior-women has been detected by Damico:

[T]here is a close correspondence in the treatment of Elene, Judith, and Juliana. Similarities in their mental qualities and their emotional and physical traits point to the possibility that each heroine is a particularized rendering of a character type, the warrior-woman. Their attributes, moreover, closely resemble those of the valkyries of the heroic lays. The Nordic and Anglo-Saxon characters are parallel in their physical appearance, in qualities, status, and, in part, activity. These likenesses suggest that both the pagan and the Christian warrior-maids may be related to the same conventional stock character – the Germanic warrior-woman.

(1990: 183)

Heroic and war-like qualities abound in *Elene*. This is an important poem for two reasons: its existence reveals that Cynewulf was particularly interested in stories about heroic and saintly women, and Elene is a chaste married woman. Elene is depicted in strongly Germanic language, with heroic terms such as “*guðcwen*” (Krapp, 1932: ll. 254, 331), “*sigecwen*” (ll. 260, 997) and “*þeodcwen*” (l. 1155) characterising her depiction. Elene is the only woman in Anglo-Saxon poetry of whom these terms are used (Belanoff, 1982: 506). In fact, Alexandra Olsen is of the opinion that the Germanic heroic ethos must be evoked if we are to understand Cynewulf’s *Elene* properly. Olsen also states that “Cynewulf heightened the portrait in his Latin source to make Elene the strong, autonomous figure that she is” (1990: 224-5). Confirming the importance of the Germanic warrior ethos in *Elene*, is the description of the troop of soldiers which Elene leads on the quest for the cross. They are anachronistically Anglo-Saxon, loading armour, shields and spears onto the boat. The narrator marvels at the splendour of the troop:

Ne hearde ic sið ne ær
 on egstreame idese lædan,
 on merestræte, mægen fæggerre.
 (Krapp, 1932: ll. 240-2)

(Neither before nor since have I heard
of a woman leading a finer looking
force on the ocean-tide on the sea-road.)
(Bradley, 1982: 171)

Elene thus possesses earthly power as a queen with soldiers under her command: she is the only Anglo-Saxon woman who leads a troop into battle. She is also adorned with gold and jewels: she is *gold gehyrsted* or “decorated with gold”, and clothed in *geatolic guðscrud* or “magnificent battledress”. Elene’s quality of mind is marked by the words *þrist on gepance*, meaning “bold in thought”. The words *eadig* or “blessed” and *eadhreðige* or “blessedly triumphant” perhaps best describe Elene’s spiritual strength. *Eadhreðige* is also used by Cynewulf to describe Juliana, his heroic virgin martyr, and the strength and power of the term encapsulates the highly positive attitude of Cynewulf to his two female heroes as well as the generally favourable attitude to women in the Anglo-Saxon era. Perhaps the most telling word used to describe Elene, though, is *arwyrðan*, meaning “venerable” or “worthy of honour”.⁶¹ Belanoff finalises her detailed analysis of *Elene* by concluding that the queen is “a regal, powerful, noble female dispatched by her superior (and son) the Emperor Constantine to lead a band of warriors on a mission” (1982: 548). Elene is not entirely autonomous though: she remains subject to the will of her son, and, ultimately, to God, throughout. This parallels Juliana’s situation as she willingly submits herself to the hegemony of God. Belanoff points out that Elene’s heroic image seems to fade away towards the end of the poem, but cannot account for this phenomenon. Perhaps this is related to the fact that Elene, unlike Juliana, is not martyred. Unlike Belanoff, Chance views the ending of *Elene* as triumphant: she reads the battle as having been won (1986: 52). Elene is therefore the *sigecwen* or “queen of victories” rather than the *guðcwen* or “battle queen” which she was at the outset. Chance sees all three of the poetic Anglo-Saxon female protagonists (Juliana, Elene and the later Judith) as providing “models for Anglo-Saxon women who themselves strove to be chaste, holy – and heroic” (1986: 52). The fact that there are three such heroic, powerful and radiant women in Anglo-Saxon poetry points to an esteemed position for women in Anglo-Saxon England generally.

Judith, the latest of the three poems, is a fragment (350 lines) of a longer tenth-century poem related to the Apocryphal story.⁶² Although the story is from the Old Testament, Judith is conceived of by the poet rather anachronistically as a Christian hero, for references to God’s grace frame the poem, and she also prays to the trinity. There have been suggestions that *Judith* was written to honour Aethelflaed, earlier mentioned as an important

warlike queen active in the early tenth century at the time of the Danish incursions.⁶³ Other critics, both contemporary and modern, have suggested that *Judith* is primarily an allegorical rendition of the Church Militant.⁶⁴ Whatever the impetus for the writing of *Judith*, what remains is an artefact in which a woman is the central figure.

Critics are at loggerheads regarding the degree of emphasis placed on Judith's beauty and seductiveness. Chance, for example, reads the poem as accentuating Judith's beauty as a means of her achieving her purpose (1986: 38-9). Michael Swanton concurs with Chance, saying that:

Aldhelm and Aelfric alike emphasize Judith's chastity or "loyal widowhood" rather than her beauty. The Old English poet, on the other hand, stresses her beauty and, although speaking of her as wise, prudent, holy even – nowhere mentions her chastity.
(1987: 159)

Belanoff, on the other hand, regards the text as de-emphasising Judith's beauty, so that Judith's femaleness, and femininity, are downplayed (1982: 438). The first reference to her appearance is the description of Judith as the "ides ælfscinu" (Dobbie, 1953: l. 14) or "elf-fair lady". *Ælfscinu* clearly has connotations of the other-worldly, supernatural, the mysterious or fey. In fact, Heather Stuart (1972: 23-5) has questioned the usual interpretation of *ælfscinu* as describing beauty and suggests that it may denote inspiration instead. Swanton notes that the word has connotations of other-worldliness and danger (p. 161). Judith is also described as *torhtan* and *beorht*, both of which could be related to *ælfscinu* and its radiance. The final reference to Judith's appearance has to do with her *wundenlocc* or luxuriant hair. Belanoff has shown, however, that *wundenlocc* are depicted in the poem as an attribute of all of the Hebrews (1982: 459-62). It appears, therefore, that Judith's beauty has been over-emphasised by modern critics and that other attributes are more significant.

According to most critics, Judith's chastity is strongly evident:⁶⁵ she is called "eadigan mægð" (l. 35) or "blessed maid"; "torhtan mægð" (l. 43) or "noble maiden"; "Scyppendes mægð" (l. 78) or "the Lord's maiden"; "searoðoncol mægð" (l. 145) or "cunning maiden"; "beorhte mægð" (l. 254) or "lovely maid"; "halgan mægð" (l. 260) or "holy maid", and "mægð modigre" (l. 335) or "courageous maid". The interpretation of *mægð* solely as maiden is inaccurate. The dictionaries of Bosworth and Toller and Sweet gloss the term as "maid, virgin, girl, maiden, woman". Seeing that Judith is a widow, she cannot be a virgin.

In fact, if the fuller range of terms for *mægd* is accepted, and the most appropriate term applied to her, Judith's chastity is not particularly important in the poem.

Rather, Judith's sanctity appears to be of more importance, for this is what enables her to act so effectively. Marie Nelson states that:

[the] references to [Judith's] blessedness, her holiness, and her relationship to God strongly suggest that Judith, as far as her representation in this poem is concerned, deserves to be considered a saint, at least according to one of the common definitions of sainthood. Judith led an exemplary life. And her actions ... show she was a fighting saint.

(1991: 33)

Judith's most significant attributes, other than her sanctity, are her wisdom, bravery and heroism. Nelson contrasts Judith's unwavering intentions with the hero of *Andreas*, who will undertake his deed only once he has been assured that he will succeed (1991: 44). Judith is certainly the most heroic of the Old English women as she literally enters into battle with the drunken Holofernes. But what is most characteristic of Judith is the fact "that she acts and her actions are the source of all other actions in the poem" (Belanoff, 1982: 433). Judith is also much more militant than any other Anglo-Saxon literary heroine: she therefore assumes the heroic gloss and splendid aura of a typical warrior.

The religious poetry which depicts women certainly confirms the argument of this dissertation as the women who figure in the major poems are generally imbued with favourable, even reverent, characteristics. They are powerful, heroic, radiant, victorious, bold and honourable. Even Eve is given a fair representation, which is surprising considering the Church's teachings about her. The reason for the positive portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon religious woman has its origin in the favourable position of women in early Anglo-Saxon society. These beliefs conflicted with the Church's stance on women. Many of the Church's teachings, which will be discussed in the following section, were misogynistic and repressive. These teachings eventually contributed to the reduced status, freedom and opportunities for women in the later medieval period. Thus we see that during the Anglo-Saxon period, two differing views of women and their role operated simultaneously. The poetry, both secular and sacred, reflects the more positive view of women.

Religious teachings about women

Having established that a generally favourable view of women existed in Anglo-Saxon England, especially in secular life, it is necessary to compare women's secular status with the prevailing religious views. What is of particular interest is the special case of the avowed virgin, seeing that Juliana's vow of chastity prompts the action against her by Eleusius and Affricanus.

It is rather anomalous, and yet also curiously fitting, that female virginity bestows supernal power upon its possessor, because the understanding of, and teaching about, femaleness in medieval times was derived by means of an extraordinarily convoluted argument primarily from early Patristic anti-feminist beliefs. This phenomenon – extraordinary blessedness and profound repugnance – merely represents the polar extremes of a long-standing fear of, and loathing for, women's sexuality and bodily functions – her *morphe*.⁶⁶

At the risk of over-simplifying a complex debate, the position may be briefly summarised as follows: although there is still some uncertainty and debate, it is generally accepted that from the very earliest days of Christianity, sexuality was linked with original sin.⁶⁷ Thus, the closest that any Christian (male *or* female) could approach the pre-lapsarian state was to remain sexually celibate for life. The tradition of writers who espoused these ideas includes the most prominent Church Fathers.⁶⁸ But, also from the very earliest times, women's sexuality was regarded with particular abhorrence. Marina Warner states that “When Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome endorsed virginity for its special holiness, they were the heirs and representatives of much current thought⁶⁹ in the Roman empire of their day. And in this battle between the flesh and the spirit, the female sex was firmly placed on the side of the flesh” (1976: 57). Leaving aside non-Christian arguments, the train of logic went as follows: woman was cursed because of her role in the garden of Eden; the curse included the pangs of childbirth and the signs of fecundity; any child carried the stain of original sin; *ergo*, the results of sexuality as manifested in the female were a sign of sin and evil. An axiomatic extract from Warner's study summarises this type of thinking: “Woman was womb and womb was evil ...” (p. 57).⁷⁰ However, misogynistic thinking went even further than mere abstract ideas: it resulted in active dislike of femaleness and established a climate which enabled emotive, hectoring statements to be made, such as the following acerbic tirade about women's inherent evil which was written by Tertullian, the Montanist Latin theologian, early in the third century:

“Do you not realize that Eve⁷¹ is you? The curse God pronounced on your sex weighs still on the world. Guilty, you must bear its hardships. You are the devil’s gateway, you desecrated the fatal tree, you first betrayed the law of God, you who softened up with your cajoling words the man against whom the devil could not prevail by force. The image of God, the man Adam, you broke him, it was child’s play to you. *You* deserved death, and it was the son of God who had to die!”
(1959: 138)

If a woman aspired to true spirituality, she was required to shed her femaleness and become sexless, in fact, practically manly. St Jerome (d. 420), the influential translator of the Bible, explains as follows:

As long as a woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman, and will be called man.

(quoted in Daly, 1968: 43)

Here the argument has proceeded one step further: femaleness, female sexuality, fecundity are regarded as so evil that only masculine qualities are holy. The association of holiness with masculinity by St. Jerome is not an isolated aberration: similar statements were made by Methodius of Olympus (d. c. 300) – “the enlightened spiritually receive the features and image and manliness of Christ” in their struggle to free themselves from “feminine passions and immorality” (1962: p. 113); St Ambrose – “She who does not believe is a woman and should be designated by the name of her sex, whereas she who believes progresses to perfect manhood, to the measure of the adulthood of Christ. She then dispenses with the name of her sex, the seductiveness of youth, the garrulousness of old age” (quoted by Daly, 1968: 43).

Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinsser (1989: 78-82) describe the repugnance with which the female body and its functions was regarded. Vern Bullough (1973: 485-501) demonstrates that assumptions about female bodily and moral inferiority which date back at least as far as Aristotle were incorporated into medieval medical practice.

A short aside into the etymology of the word *virtue* (moral excellence, uprightness, goodness) reveals that the word is derived from the Latin word *vir*, meaning “man”.⁷² The belief in manly virtue runs very deep: our language is conceptualised in a logocentric manner, which logically renders talk of female virtue oxymoronic: an apparently impossible concept.

Ironically, for a female to aspire to holiness or virtue, she has to eschew actively her nature. Her biology (physical sex and all its manifestations) and her gender (socially constructed persona) must be stripped of its female and feminine aspects.

These arguments about beliefs, choices and practices amount to no more than a gendering of women. Here, the gender roles which are assigned are defined, constructed and imposed by the prevailing hegemony – which is a male hegemony, Church-centred and influenced by the teachings of the misogynistic Church Fathers. Hence the ideal image of holiness for women is a defeminised one, stripped of sexuality, indeed, rendered androgynous.

How, then, is such a creature able to achieve spiritual blessedness, or even attain any kind of spirituality at all, if her very being is so base and sinful? The answer is two-fold. Firstly, it devolves upon a particular aspect of female virginity, namely, the intactness of the hymen. Besides this physical proof of virginity being easily ascertainable, virginity was understood to be an image of “a new, incorrupt, untainted world [which] had been created by the Incarnation and the Redemption” (Warner, 1976: 59). Sexual knowledge was thus seen as a corruption of the perfect whole. Indeed, Ambrose asserted that a girl losing her virginity was akin to a defacement of God’s work of creation. And wholeness and incorruptibility were signs of holiness.⁷³ (Indeed, so obsessed was the later medieval church with the concept of holiness, that a bizarre (to modern tastes) fascination for examining saints’ immolations developed.⁷⁴) In the early Christian era, writer after writer⁷⁵ emphasised the peculiar and particular importance of the virginal state for females.⁷⁶

An important caveat to consider is that, although there is considerable evidence (as enumerated above) that anti-feminist views were propagated in the early middle ages (and here we mean the Anglo-Saxon period) there may be a disjunction between the theory and the practice. This point is made by Christine Fell who contends that “what is important is not whether such theories existed, or even how often they were repeated, it is the extent of their actual application within society as a whole, both secular and ecclesiastic” (1987: 13).

The position of religious women

In early years after the Christianisation of England, it is clear that women in the ecclesiastical world enjoyed a certain prominence and power. Examples include the abbess Hild (d. 680), who was the female head of a double monastery and who actively mentored

male students – five of whom went on to become bishops;⁷⁷ Leoba, whose letters reveal an extensive knowledge of, and fluency in, Latin – and whose counsel was sought by Boniface; Hildelith and the nuns at Barking monastery, to whom Aldhelm dedicated his work *De Virginitate*. Other prominent religious women are: Cuthswith (who owned an Italian manuscript of Jerome’s commentary on Ecclesiastes); Eadburg (the learned abbess of Thanet); Bucge (adviser to Boniface); Hygeburg (who wrote biographies of Willibald and Wynnebald); and Behrtgyth (who was exceptionally learned).⁷⁸

Bede accords Hild the highest respect, praising not only her organisational ability and the quality of her leadership, but also her spirituality and her wisdom. Furthermore, Hild’s vigour, energy and industry are admired. The following extract from Bede’s chapter on Hild catalogues some of her achievements:

[Hild] carried out this appointed task [the founding of another monastery] with great energy. She established the same regular life as her former monastery, and taught the observance of righteousness, mercy, purity, and other virtues, but especially of peace and charity. After the example of the primitive Church, no one there was rich, no one was needy, for everything was held in common, and nothing was considered to be anyone’s personal property. So great was her prudence that not only ordinary folk, but kings and princes used to come and ask her advice in their difficulties and take it. Those under her direction were required to make a thorough study of the Scriptures and occupy themselves in good works, to such good effect that many were found fitted for Holy Orders and the service of God’s Altar.

(1990: 244)

The usually fairly austere Bede quite obviously esteemed Abbess Hild. Bede mentions that she was affectionately called Mother “because of her wonderful devotion and grace” (p. 245). His admiration for Hild includes an ungrudging acknowledgement of her considerable achievements. The Venerable Bede does mention that Hild was overseen by Bishop Aidan, but the spirit of the visits is described as such: “Bishop Aidan and other devout men, who knew her and admired her innate wisdom and love of God’s service, often used to visit her, to express their affection and offer thoughtful guidance” (1990: 244). There is a considerable measure of mutual regard and intellectual equality implied in Hild’s dealings with the patriarchal church establishment: in no sense is Hild subjugated in any way.

Intellectually, these Anglo-Saxon women were clearly considered to be on a par with male scholars, even those as accomplished as Aldhelm, whose Latin prose has been described as stylistically convoluted and abstruse in vocabulary. Fell (1990: 110) notes that Aldhelm “takes it for granted that the nuns for whom his book was written can cope” with its demands upon the intellect. Indeed, Aldhelm’s correspondence with women such as Hildelith, as well as his preface to *De Virginitate* (1979: 1-5), reveal a respect for the learning and intellectual powers of these female monastics. Christine Fell notes that the tone of Aldhelm’s prefatory words and the list of intellectual accomplishments of the nuns of Barking are in no sense patronising or avuncular. Instead, she states that:

The manner in which Aldhelm and other male ecclesiastics in this early period write to nuns and abbesses is rarely that of instructor to pupil, it is that of brother to sister, and this is true of the tone of the letters as it is of the formal words of greeting.
(1987: 111)

As a counter to possible claims that hasty conclusions are being drawn from scanty evidence, there is additional documentation which reveals that Boniface, the eminent monastic English scholar, in exile in Germany, corresponded frequently with a number of English abbess-scholars.⁷⁹ The matter of the correspondence is generally about religious affairs and spiritual advice, but in particular, about Boniface’s acquisition of various texts, whereas the manner is one of reciprocated respect. Fell finds that “indications of friendly cooperation between men and women in religious communities would have seemed so unlikely in the post-Conquest period” (1990: 31-2). When Boniface required a fine manuscript of the letters of St Peter to be prepared, he not only provided the gold leaf for the illuminations, but he also commissioned the *scriptorium* at Thanet, ruled by the abbess Eadburg, to prepare the work. The manner of his request, as cited by Fell, is humble yet confident that the finished product would be of the highest order of craftsmanship.

Indisputable evidence from the Boniface correspondence confirms that female abbesses in the seventh and eighth centuries enjoyed considerable prestige and power. For example, the laws of King Ine of Wessex regarding the payment of *wergild* make it perfectly clear that an abbess had the same legal right to be declared a *hlaford*, or protector, as either a man of prestige or an abbot.⁸⁰ That this occurrence is not merely speculative is proved by the fact that the circumstances are mentioned in a letter from three young men, named respectively Lull, Denehard and Burghard, to an abbess called Cyniburg:

We also wish it known to your care and wisdom that if any of the three of us should visit Britain we should not seek to put ourselves in obedience to the government of anyone else, but only in subjection to your benevolence, for in you we have complete confidence.

(quoted in Fell, 1990: 33)

Fell concludes that the “whole letter implies no small degree of power and legal responsibility resting in the position of the abbess” (p. 33).

There is yet more evidence from within the Anglo-Saxon religious community that women were highly regarded: there are a few eulogistic poems inscribed to particular women. That austere scholar, The Venerable Bede, included a song to the saint Etheldreda of Ely in his *Ecclesiastical History*. A portion of the abecedarian song reads:

Our age at length in triumphs such as these
Partakes through ETHELDREDA'S victories.
Queenly by birth, an earthly crown she wore
Right nobly; but a heavenly pleased her more.
Scorning the marriage bed, a virgin wife
Twelve years she reigned, then sought a cloistered life.
Unspotted to her heavenly spouse she came,
Virgin in soul, her virgin robe and frame,
When sixteen winters they had lain entombed,
Xrist willing it, still fresh and unconsumed.
Yea, from their touch Eve's Tempter flees dismayed,
Zealous for evil, vanquished by a maid.

Ah bride of Christ, bright fame on earth is thine.
More bright in Heaven thy bridal torches shine.
Exultant hymns proclaim in glad accord:
No power henceforth may part thee from thy Lord.
(1990: 240).

It is perfectly clear that Bede's eulogy to Etheldreda is inspired by her virginity, consecrated to God and steadfastly maintained, despite an orchestrated campaign on the part of her second husband.⁸¹ Fascinatingly enough, Bede's song sees glory as having accrued to contemporary England (“our age”) because of Etheldreda's steadfast consecration, for the earlier virgin saints mentioned in the unquoted lines (Agatha, Eulalia, Thecla, Euphemia, Agnes and Cecilia) originate from the continent and not from England. The association of radiance and virginity is clear: Etheldreda has “Heavenly torches” lighting her union with Christ; Hild is described as a blazing jewel, found in her mother's robes and gushing forth

light. Although the special powers accruing to saintly virgins are celebrated here, what is lacking is the vilification of femaleness or simple essentialist biologism which characterised the writings of the Church Fathers.

Aldhelm, a prolific correspondent, also wrote a poem in praise of a religious woman, another Bucege, the daughter of Centwine, King of Wessex. The focus is on her material achievements – the founding of a magnificently appointed church.

It may be argued that the assertion above regarding seventh- and eighth-century perceptions of women as honourable, learned colleagues is a special case, because all of the examples cited above refer to religious women. These women have consecrated their lives to God and therefore fall outside the invective of the early writers (Jerome, Tertullian, Ambrose) as they have discarded their womanliness in favour of a sexless dedication to God as consecrated virgins. However, the kind of regard which is accorded Hild, Bucege, the nuns at Barking, and so forth, is not to do with their chastity or vows of dedication. Rather, that which is expressly admired is the nuns' learning, astute intelligence, wise counsel, organisational ability, and so on. The nuns are seen by the early pioneering Christians as honourable and esteemed colleagues – peers, in actual fact. Granted, their consecrated state is a given. But only in the case of Bede's panegyric to Etheldreda is there any hint that approbation from male clerics towards their female counterparts is directly related to a special sexless status. In fact, Hild is affectionately accorded the appellation of Mother, which implies a warm emotional nature. Therefore, it can be contended that female religious figures in the seventh and eighth centuries in England enjoyed a high status, despite the fact that misogynistic writings by earlier clerics abounded. The inescapable conclusion which can, I think, be quite fairly arrived at is that the Church Fathers' misogynistic teachings, although they were known and read, did not affect the position of the Anglo-Saxon religious woman in reality, in the early centuries after the Christianisation of England. The hard facts of recorded correspondence make this indisputable: there is a measure of regard and esteem in the exchanges.

A fair amount of evidence from a wide range of sources has been amassed in the preceding discussion. The picture which emerges of the Anglo-Saxon woman is intriguing and also tantalisingly elusive. She was esteemed (by tradition, and in the literature); protected (by law and social practice); revered (for her holiness and sanctity); but also vilified (by the church, for her biology and association with Eve). The overwhelming weight

of evidence suggests that the Anglo-Saxon woman occupied a rather better place in society than did her counterpart after the Norman Conquest.

Modern critical assessments of *Juliana*

In order to establish a more complete context for the examination of Cynewulf's *Juliana* in chapter three, a brief survey must be made of the critical reception of the poem. The first aspect which will be discussed is the poem's critical reception in modern times, as this will establish a sense of *Juliana*'s aesthetic status according to modern critics.

Until comparatively recently, the general consensus of critical opinion on the Old English poem *Juliana* was not particularly favourable. Belanoff says that "Critical estimates of *Juliana* have never been high" (1982: 628). S. A. J. Bradley, who translated a number of Anglo-Saxon poems, considers that Cynewulf "seems barely fired emotionally or imaginatively by his heroine who, compared with Judith, is assigned little charisma" (1982: 302). C. L. Wrenn assigns *Juliana* to Cynewulf's youth after comparing it unfavourably with *Elene*:

With [*Elene*] ... *Juliana* is in several ways in marked contrast. Its relative prosaicness or lack of poetic quality and its less original handling of its Latin source may suggest that it was the work of a much younger Cynewulf.

(1967: 125)

Stopford A. Brooke (1898), in his history of early medieval literature, concedes that *Juliana* has "some care for unity of feeling and form," (p. 167) but his overall assessment is dismissive of poetic merit:

There is some tentative art in the poem, but art and work are both poor. Abrupt changes, crude dialogue, tiresome repetition, disfigure the poet's recast of the legend.

(1898: 167)

The poem has therefore suffered almost a century of critical disapprobation and aesthetic second-class status. However, Brooke's assertions need to be accepted cautiously as he confidently claims insight into Cynewulf's psychological state at the time of his composition of *Juliana*. For example, he says that the poem was "written by a man wearied of himself or weary of his subject" (p. 167). This assertion appears to be rather unfounded as Cynewulf

has expanded on the original source at certain points. This is not what one would expect of a weary poet. There are a number of other worrying inaccuracies in Brooke's work which cast aspersions on his critical judgement,⁸² but the point is that this kind of negative response has characterised critics' writings about *Juliana* since the nineteenth century.

Consider, for example, the following assessment of the poem's poetic effectiveness, written by Charles W. Kennedy in 1943:

The poem, estimated as a whole, is not distinguished composition. This is particularly felt in the long debate between *Juliana* and the fiend, the subject matter of which is more likely to evoke the interest of a theologian than of a poet. The first and final sections of the poem, because of the nature of their material, are freer from the wearisome repetitions of pattern which characterize the central section.

(1971: 213)

Kennedy cites the poem's early date in Cynewulf's *oeuvre* as the reason for the immaturity of its poetic powers (1971: 213). But given the fact that the original manuscript is not extant, the order of composition by Cynewulf can only remain speculative. Some twenty years later, critical assessment of the poem had not altered, for Stanley B. Greenfield agrees with Kennedy's judgement of the poem's relatively poor artistic merit. In fact, Greenfield condemns the poem with faint praise by assenting with Rosemary Woolf (1966) that the reason for *Juliana* being the "least impressive [of the Cynewulfian group is because of a] comparative lack of ingenuity ... [as well as] uninspired competence" (1965: 110). Sisam is also of a similar opinion: he finds that critics in general "have not found much merit" in *Juliana* (1967: 7).

Thus it is clear that the poem has suffered from a generally unfavourable reception from modern critics. This is not to imply that the poem has been found to be totally lacking in poetic merit: rather, sections of the poem have been dismissed as being repetitious and conventional (Kennedy, 1971: 213). Other sections, however, particularly the extended metaphor "in which Cynewulf elaborates the concept of the invasive power of evil in terms of a military storming of a stronghold" (Kennedy, 1971: 211) receive more favourable comment. The general consensus of opinion, however, is that the poem is not of the highest order of craftsmanship.

Evaluation of *Juliana's* poetic and aesthetic merit by twentieth-century critics has clearly found the poem to be lacking. Feminists, however, warn that the criteria upon which such judgements have been based are questionable because they reify male-dominated positions and practices, and therefore automatically exclude female writers and writing.

Generic considerations

The argument in this dissertation contends that a vital aspect which must be considered, and addressed, when examining medieval poems, is the historical, literary, and ideological context in which the poetry was produced.

One of the vexed issues in medieval studies is foregrounded by the sample of critical responses above: that is, one may easily overlook the fact that medieval texts are far removed from our world. Early medieval texts arose from an oral poetic tradition, and even when written, they were produced laboriously in *scriptoria*. Furthermore, the audience had different expectations from the text. A powerful didactic element probably dictated the choice of material as well as the manner in which it was written. Rosemary Woolf (1966) points out that the nature of the genre must be taken into account when reading a saint's life:

The saint's life is a highly conventional form, and it must never be measured by the criteria which would be relevant to a modern biography. We should no more look to it for historical or psychological truth than we would to a medieval romance. In origins it is part panegyric, part epic, part romance, part sermon, and historical fact dissolves within the conventions of these forms.

(p. 40)

Woolf's cautionary statement has not been heeded by modern critics. Both Greenfield and Belanoff, whose evaluations of the poem have been cited above, concede that the criteria by which the poem is being judged are not those criteria which concerned the poet. Greenfield avers that the subject matter "may to modern taste be a poor one" (1965: 111). Changed taste in itself acts as a distancing mechanism, in all probability affecting critical judgements. Consider the following disparaging assessment made by Kenneth Sisam, an acknowledged authority on Old English poetry:

To a modern taste the subject is a poor one: the stock torments – imprisonment, hanging by the hair, scourging, a wheel set with

swords, fire, molten lead – are eked out by St. Juliana’s long
 dispute with a fiend who is too miserable to be interesting.
 (1967: 7)

Sisam’s complaint about the poem is two-fold: he takes issue with the appropriateness of the subject-matter, and he also finds the antagonist to be uninteresting. Sisam fails to consider either literary genre or his own ideology when he assesses *Juliana*. This [male] critic, clearly unimpressed by the lurid subject matter, unconsciously reveals his own bias as he reduces Juliana’s opponent from formidable Machiavellian plotter to whinging creature. He thereby diminishes considerably the achievement of Juliana in subjugating the fiend: it is not her will and holy lustre which have vanquished the demon and spoiled his plans, but the fiend’s own weakness. The date of Sisam’s criticism, cited above, signals the tradition in which he wrote: he is a product, and proponent, of the white male gentleman scholar school. Therefore *Juliana* does not conform to his modern taste. And neither does it conform to his ideology. Sisam is old school.

Seeing that the feminist analysis propounded in this dissertation announces its ideology, it is as well to expose the unconscious ideological assumptions which have characterised the harshest critical assessments from which this poem has suffered. By doing so, as well as by revealing the agenda behind this particular analysis, this reading is more transparent.

What most twentieth-century critics have ignored until comparatively recently is the fact that *Juliana* does not simply fall into the broad category of poetry, but that it is a saint’s life.⁸³ Saints’ Lives were perhaps the most popular genre in Europe, and in England, in the eighth to the thirteenth century. Robert Bjork discusses the importance of Saints’ Lives as a genre in the Old English era, and also shows that a good deal of stylistic, intellectual and rhetorical sophistication is evident in the genre. He concludes that Saints’ Lives have been neglected and relegated to the periphery because modern readers do not generally possess the appropriate intellectual resources, knowledge of rhetoric or understanding of allegory, in order to appreciate these works properly (1985: 1-23). Patrick Zettel explains that hagiographic writings formed an integral part of daily life and worship, with the days of certain saints commemorated as ordered by the king (1982: 22). As modern readers we must not neglect to remember the significance of martyrologies to the religious life of the community.

When the poem has been reconsidered, or re-read, from a perspective more in accord with its socio-historical and literary context, its reputation has been redeemed. Consequently, the problem lies not with the poor poetic quality of Cynewulf's *Juliana*, but with the way in which the text has been read by twentieth-century readers – those readers, that is, who have not attempted to peel away the layers of alterity which separate our time and the poem's.

A cogent example of an approach to *Juliana* which attempts to read the poem in a more contemporary manner, is that of Bjork. He surveys recent work done on the Saint's Life as a specific literary-religious genre and demonstrates how a reconsideration of works from this perspective has produced positive results. Furthermore, he himself reads the poem through the lens of the rhetoric employed by the protagonist, Juliana, and her antagonists. Bjork demonstrates that each of Juliana's tempters assail her with increasingly sophisticated language. The effect is described as follows:

The gradual heightening of the persecutors' linguistic sophistication in the face of the saint's consistently sophisticated use of language largely accounts for our simultaneous perception of two states: Juliana's achieved sainthood and the process through which she must move to reach it.

(1985: 45)

Bjork's work clearly demonstrates that *Juliana* is not "hack work" or "undistinguished composition". Neither is it filled with "wearisome repetitions". Rather, a reading of *Juliana* from a perspective informed by contemporary attitudes and scholarship results in a fresh perception of merit in the poem, as demonstrated by Bjork with regard to the dialogues between Juliana and the demon. Alexandra Hennessey Olsen has an ambivalent response to Bjork's analysis of *Juliana*, and towards other modern critics. She states that:

they have shown readers in the twentieth century that Cynewulf's poems are of intrinsic literary merit, [but] I believe that they have gone too far; they dehumanize the heroines, and, more important, they limit – even negate – the literary effect of the poems.

(1990: 224)

Olsen's reservations are a valid criticism of certain modern methods. The feminist reading of *Juliana* redresses past neglect and scorn without dehumanising the heroine: in fact, the text is placed within a socio-literary context.

More recently, there has been a shift away from the rigidly condemnatory assessments of the past. For example, Belanoff points out that the recent trend of scholarship on the poem is to take cognisance of the different aims of the ninth-century poet:

Most modern critics, aware of the likelihood that judgments such as those above [i.e. those that denigrate the poem's poetic effectiveness] are based on criteria to which Cynewulf never intended to adhere, eschew such conclusions ... [R]ecent commentaries on *Juliana* have focused on allegorical analyses and on word choice and images.

(1982: 629)

The major error made by twentieth-century critics is that they have ignored the socio-cultural context of *Juliana*. It is therefore clear that there is a need for a re-reading of *Juliana* because earlier critics assessed the poem using criteria which derive from conventional twentieth-century standards as evinced in works generally accepted as belonging to the Leavisite canon. Formal practical criticism which examines a poem as an artifact complete and entire in itself, and mines it for gems of poetic imagery, felicitous expression, rhetorical figures and so on, has been applied to the poem and it has been found, like Nebuchadnezzar, wanting.

An important recent study of *Juliana* which aims to avoid exactly the error which besets this century's earlier critics, that is the decontextualised new critical approach, is the work done by Chance (1986) in *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*. Her analysis of *Juliana* is not, strictly speaking, a feminist approach, but it does constitute a re-evaluation of the poem. According to Chance, the poem *Juliana* should be interpreted as a complicated allegory in which three sections of the poem correspond to three types of medieval allegory. These are identified as follows:

The moral or tropological level is primarily developed in its first section, to line 236, during which Juliana resists both Heliseus' offer of marriage and her father's arguments in support of the union by demanding his prior conversion to Christianity. The allegorical level is primarily developed after she is cast into prison when, as a saint and *miles Christi*, she battles the Devil in

a heavily heroic passage (to line 557). The anagogical level is primarily developed after she is released from prison: as an Ecclesia-figure, she delivers a homily, before she is beheaded, on the need for protecting the house of the soul (to the end, line 731).

(1986: 14)

Furthermore, Chance explains that the allegory continues even into the famous epilogue in which Cynewulf asks Juliana to intercede on his behalf for mercy from God. Again, all three allegorical tropes occur. The penchant for allegorising in medieval writings has been well documented.⁸⁴ It is apparent that Jane Chance views *Juliana* much more favourably than earlier critics, as is proved by the following summarising quotation in which she states that the poem “distributes the three levels [of allegory] among three different sections to underscore its structural as well as thematic unity” (1986: 41).

The point, however, is that when the poem is read correctly, its apparently inferior poetic quality is revealed to be a problem of reading: that is, *Juliana* must be read from a point of view that accords more closely with the aims, outlook and perceptions of the poet, Cynewulf, and the interpretative expectations and practices of the audience of the time.

However, Jane Chance’s arguments must not simply be accepted uncritically. An allegorical reading of *Juliana* is, indeed, interesting and illuminating, as well as contemporaneous. Nevertheless, the acceptance of the allegorical interpretation alone does not answer important questions about the role of women in Anglo-Saxon society. If Juliana is the Church, her womanhood is largely incidental, and her motives and those of her oppressors are therefore rendered less significant in terms of an understanding of the context of the times other than those aspects of the Church’s teaching and experience which are encoded within the allegory.

Furthermore, Bjork’s analysis of the rhetorical technique, and its complexity, means that another reading of *Juliana* is possible. And the acceptance of any one interpretation as the correct one hearkens back to the somewhat rigid Richardian practical criticism of the thirties. It will therefore be argued in this chapter that each interpretation or insight which is made is simply another perspective on the poem. Together, they will add up to something more significant than one monolithic interpretation.

The feminist reading of *Juliana*, *De Liflade ant te Passiun of Seint Iulienne* and the later fourteenth-century versions of the story therefore add another perspective to our

understanding of this legend as poetry: it does not claim to be an ideologically free reading, but makes its agenda apparent, and it also refuses to claim completeness as a reading.

Having surveyed a sample of critical reactions to *Juliana*, and having found the work on the poems to be sadly judgemental as well as generally lacking in a proper awareness of its generic qualities and the contemporary context, it is apparent that a re-reading of the poem is required. And seeing that the matter of the poem concerns a woman asserting herself against a patriarchal society, and given the fact that the contextualising discussion in the earlier sections of the chapter has established a strong case for a relatively high status for women in Anglo-Saxon England, as well as an ability to exert influence, hold positions of power and act independently in society, a feminist re-reading of this tale in its various incarnations is long overdue.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Terry Eagleton (1986: 194-217) discusses the political nature of feminist criticism. Showalter (1992: 1-16) summarises a number of feminist approaches. Moi (1987: 204) argues that feminists can use whatever method they deem appropriate.
- ² These dates are merely convenient cut-off dates. The first, AD 449, is cited by Bede (1990: 62-4) in *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* as signifying the arrival of the mercenary tribes, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, in England. The second date does indicate an abrupt and swift transition, as the Norman conquest heralded in an era of enormous and profound social, linguistic, and economic change in England. For further information, see Cecily Clark and Elizabeth Williams (1987: 148-71).
- ³ Cynewulf is presumed to have been born in the latter part of the eighth century, but he wrote in the early ninth century. There is general agreement that his work dates from this time. For a discussion of the probable date of his work, see Stanley Greenfield (1968: 108-9); Charles Kennedy (1971: 198-208); Kenneth Sisam (1967: 1-8). There is no serious contention about the date.
- ⁴ In chapter one, the issue of "Women's History" is problematised. See pp. 13-15 for a full discussion of the notion of women's history.
- ⁵ Feminist historians who have called for histories to be rewritten are discussed in chapter one, pp. 13-15.
- ⁶ Helen Jewell points out how "changing historiographical approaches are dictated by the changing interests of subsequent generations" (1996: 2). Her point merely confirms the need to re-examine the position of women. Pauline Stafford (1978: 79-100) warns that contemporary historical accounts may well have been influenced by courtly intrigues, especially if the woman concerned was forceful and powerful.
- ⁷ In this regard, Stenton is following in the footsteps of earlier eminent historians. One such example is Sir Francis Palgrave whose *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1876) is called

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- “full” and “authoritative” yet fails to discuss the position of women in any detail at all. When women are mentioned, it is usually in connection with their husbands.
- ⁸ Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1990) is clearly favourably disposed towards women. See Peter Hunter Blair (1970) for a general introduction to Bede’s life and works. Joan Nicholson (1978: 15-29) cites numerous contemporary examples which support the favourable and influential position of women.
- ⁹ Stenton’s wife, Doris, wrote an important historical survey entitled *The English Woman in History*, in which she attests to the relatively high status of the Anglo-Saxon woman, as opposed to her position in later centuries. This work was, however, published in 1957, and the point that I make is that Stenton’s own research had enlightened him as to the position of women but that this is not reflected even in the revised text of *Anglo-Saxon England*.
- ¹⁰ For this information on Aethelflaed, I am indebted to F. T. Wainwright, and in particular, the article entitled “Æthelflaed, Lady of the Mercians” (1990: 44-55).
- ¹¹ Aethelflaed is discussed by William of Malmesbury (1968: 136) who was favourably disposed to her. Wainwright (1990: 44-55) discusses her achievements as does Fell (1987: 91-9).
- ¹² As has been pointed out earlier in the argument, even modern historians do not generally accord Aethelflaed the credit which she deserves.
- ¹³ What might have, or would have occurred had Aethelflaed been a male remains, of course, entirely speculative.
- ¹⁴ For information on the Christianisation of England, the primary source is, of course, Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (1990: 1-97). For a full contextualised discussion, consult *The Beginnings of English Society* (Whitelock, 1952). *The Audience of Beowulf* (Whitelock, 1951) considers the issue of Christianisation in the light of the poetic evidence. *Beowulf and Christianity* (Parker, 1987) has a detailed discussion. Also consult Chaney (1967: 67-80) for a comparison of pagan and Christian practices.
- ¹⁵ This is discussed in some detail further on in this chapter, in pages 58-60.
- ¹⁶ Note that there are contrary opinions to those which I have forwarded here. However, the weight of the evidence does favour my contention. For some dissenting views, see *Strange, Sad Voices: The Portraits of Germanic Women in the Old English Exeter Book*. (Anderson, 1978); *Female Characterization in Old English Poetry*, (Klinck, 1977); *The Making of Early England* (Kirby, 1968); “Pre-Feudal Women,” (Buck, 1971: 46-51); “Early Anglo-Saxon Penitentials and the Position of Women,” (Meyer, 1990: 47-61); Nitzsche (1980: 139-48). Reynolds (1988: 715-8) points out that evidence must be very carefully examined before hasty conclusions are drawn, such as that of Morris Landiss (1982: 13) who makes the erroneous statement that “only two female characters are delineated” in Anglo-Saxon literature.
- ¹⁷ Modern theory sees the very concept of objectivity as being inherently flawed. There is no such thing as an ideologically free position. The problem with the historians who are being critiqued here, lies in the fact that their histories purport to be reliable, true accounts of facts.

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- ¹⁸ Warnings about the unreliability of Tacitus as a source emanate from John Wallace-Hadrill (1971: 2) in *Early Germanic Kingship in England and on the Continent*. I am indebted to Belanoff for this information.
- ¹⁹ Edith Ennen (1989: 24-7) points out that the organisation of later Germanic groups had altered considerably since the first century tribes which Tacitus was describing. Any evidence which is thus used from Tacitus' *Germania*, should be viewed as supplementary to other, less problematic, evidence and not as proof in itself.
- ²⁰ Ennen (1989: 34-7) shows that the custom of the *morgenabe* or *dos* persisted as a custom well into the high medieval era.
- ²¹ The unnamed woman willed her lands to her kinswoman, Leoflaed, and explicitly disinherited her son. The reference occurs in Fell (1987: 78).
- ²² cf. Frank Stenton (1990: 85-6) where he mentions the case of Asa and her claim to land as well as the subsequent legitimate ownership of that land by her heir, as recorded in the *Domesday Book*.
- ²³ The critic R. M. Wilson (1968: 64) estimates that a considerable number of documents were lost, particularly during the Viking raids of the tenth and eleventh centuries.
- ²⁴ For a detailed discussion of the dates of the poems, see my article (1991a: 1-7).
- ²⁵ Amongst the historical figures mentioned in *Beowulf* are: Finn; Eormanric and Hygelac (d. c. 525). I was unable to discover exact dates for Finn and Eormanric. Eormanric apparently lived to the age of 110 years.
- ²⁶ Widsith mentions Eastgota (third century), Eormanric (fourth century), Attila the Hun (fifth century), Hrothgar (sixth century) and Aelfwine (late sixth century). The catalogue of kings and countries mentioned in the test is wide-ranging, in terms of time and geography.
- ²⁷ *Waldere* concerns the well-known exploits of Walter of Aquitaine as he escaped from the custody of Attila the Hun, whose dates are c. 406-453.
- ²⁸ The *comitatus* ethic (originally described by Tacitus in the *Germania*) is discussed by Stenton (1967: 298-303); Whitelock (1951: 3-12, 26); Whitelock (1952: 37-8); Lee (1972: 12-13); Niles (1982: 236); Wormald, (1991: 10-11). The tragic events described in *The Battle of Maldon* indicate that the *comitatus* ethic was weakening in the tenth century. Ritchie Girvan (1951: 85-97) provides a brief general account of the context of Anglo-Saxon poetry, while Haldeen Braddy (1973: 27-46) provides a brief historical overview of early English society.
- ²⁹ I do not intend to rehearse the oft-repeated arguments about the poem's status as an epic or elegaic lay. For a discussion of *Beowulf* as an heroic figure, see R. E. Kaske (1975: 118-31).
- ³⁰ This is a reference to the view of the poem expressed by J. R. R. Tolkien (1936) in the influential work *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*. Kenneth Sisam takes issue with this designation in *The Structure of Beowulf* (1965: 20-8). Kaske (1975: 118-31) posits *sapientia et fortitudo* as the "governing theme" of *Beowulf*.

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- ³¹ For a full discussion of the depiction of women in *Beowulf*, albeit not from a feminist point of view, see Walsh (1991b: 58-68). I have obviously drawn upon my earlier work.
- ³² Gillian Overing takes issue with Helen Damico's reading of Wealhtheow as a powerful Valkyrie figure, and reads her speech acts as "ambiguous, formless babble" (1995: 238-48).
- ³³ Hrothgar's sermon to Beowulf (ll. 1687-1784) is laden with irony as he, a once-great king, has lapsed into passive inactivity.
- ³⁴ See the article by Belanoff (1989: 822-29) as well as the debate which followed in a later issue of the journal (1990: 533-34).
- ³⁵ Overing describes Hildeburh's cup-bearing scene as: "Her affirmation of connection, of the ties of kinship, between the life-severed bodies of her kinsmen, [and] prefigures the eventual paradox she embodies and exposes, and provides a reported trace of her presence as a weaver of *différance*." (1995: 235). Joyce Hill (1990: 235-47) reads the tragic women in Old English poetry as a contrast to, and a revelation of the consequences of, the violent heroic code. The poetry therefore gives women "a position of ethical and imaginative importance" (1990: 244).
- ³⁶ The culmination of the whole tragic episode (found in ll.1069-1159) occurs because Hunlaf's son, a tribesman of Hengest, having been housed and fed at Finn's court over winter, symbolically places the sword called *Hildeleoma* in the lap of Hengest as they embark upon leaving the court of Finn. Hengest's troops then double back and attack the hall, killing Finn in the process. The widowed Queen is then carried back to her own people. For a discussion of the Finn episode as well as the poetic fragment, see J. R. R. Tolkien (1982: 21-141).
- ³⁷ The entry in Bosworth and Toller's dictionary reads: "One - or single minded, steadfast, firm, constant, stubborn, self-willed" (p. 43).
- ³⁸ For further discussion of Ealhild's name, and her significance in the poem, see Kemp Malone's edition of *Widsith* (1936: 136-7).
- ³⁹ See pp. 37-8 of this chapter for Tacitus' actual words.
- ⁴⁰ Note that I am aware that the fragmentary, de-contextualised and allusive nature of a number of the shorter Old English poems renders interpretation problematic. However, I do think that there is strong evidence within these poems which supports my interpretation.
- ⁴¹ See Meaney (1990: 158-75) for a useful discussion. John Fanagan (1976: 130-37) offers an ingenious, but plausible solution to the allusive references in the poem.
- ⁴² For information on *frauenlieder* see Belanoff (1990: 193-203); Malone (1963: 106-17) and Clifford Davidson (1975: 451-62). Marilyn Desmond (1990: 572-90) argues convincingly for the female authorship of a number of anonymous Anglo-Saxon elegies, but most particularly *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*.
- ⁴³ The Germanic languages have no natural future tense. Perhaps this indicates a lack of belief in an assured future.

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- ⁴⁴ Sexual pleasure is mentioned specifically in *The Seafarer* (l. 45) as a pleasure which must be sacrificed while the heroic warrior journeys on the sea.
- ⁴⁵ Beowulf displayed a body-part trophy of his battle with Grendel. This is retrieved by Grendel's grieving mother, and Beowulf subsequently returns to Heorot with Grendel's head, a further grotesque reminder of his victory. Perhaps, in view of the fact that Hrothgar has promised Beowulf a substantial reward for success against Grendel's mother, a physical sign is necessary.
- ⁴⁶ cf. Kevin Kiernan (1984: 13-33). For a view of Grendel's mother as a Valkyrie figure, a terrifying, powerfully strong warrior-woman, see Damico (1990: 178-80).
- ⁴⁷ For an explanation of this error, which has been repeated without question by later scholars, even by Fr. Klaeber in his edition of *Beowulf*, see R. W. Chambers (1972: 540-3).
- ⁴⁸ I contend that when Grendel's mother is criticised, it is not for womanly behaviour but because she is behaving precisely as the males in feuding societies do.
- ⁴⁹ C. L. Wrenn (1972: 540-3) discusses the semantic problems about Thryth's name in his supplement to Chambers's *Beowulf: An Introduction to the study of the poem*.
- ⁵⁰ See A. Bonjour (1950: 54-5) for a discussion of the interpolated nature of the story. Wrenn (1972: 540-2) sees the episode as an awkward addition.
- ⁵¹ As Bradley's translation is not entirely accurate at this point, an alternative has been used.
- ⁵² Ironically, she is objectified by a twentieth-century critic, Kemp Malone, who says:
- The moderate, reasonable, reflective Hygd wins favor with all,
while the reckless, impulsive Thryth brings down upon herself
general condemnation, in spite of her beauty and magnetic
personality.
- (1941: 357)
- The text makes no mention of Thryth's beauty. Malone supposes it.
- ⁵³ The discussion in the previous pages of this chapter should have made my reading of the women in *Beowulf* apparent.
- ⁵⁴ Belanoff lists Mary's appearance by name as occurring in *Christ and Satan*, *Andreas*, *The Dream of the Rood*, *Elene*, *Christ II*, *The Descent into Hell*, *Judgement Day II*, *The Menologium*, *A Summons to Prayer*, and *The Creed*, as well as in two charms (1982: 296). All of these texts are, of course, in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.
- ⁵⁵ Marina Warner discusses the doctrine of the Assumption and Mary as *Regina Coeli* (Queen of Heaven) (1976: 81-117).
- ⁵⁶ Mary did not literally experience martyrdom, but is classified as having done so, because her "sawul wæs swiðe geangsumod mid micelre þrowunge" or "her soul was sorely afflicted with great suffering" (Aelfric: 1983: 444-5), because she had to watch her son die on the cross.

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- ⁵⁷ See Kennedy (1971: 168); Woolf (1963: 196); Greenfield (1968: 156); Chance (1986: 74-5). All of these critics agree with the reading of Eve as less intelligent than Adam.
- ⁵⁸ The comments critical of Eve occur in *Advent* and *Christ and Satan*. They are discussed by Belanoff (1982: 337-77).
- ⁵⁹ The existence of three significant poems featuring women is what prompted Patricia Belanoff's study.
- ⁶⁰ Amongst them are Belanoff (1982: 655-65); Chance (1986: 31-3); Woolf (1966: 64).
- ⁶¹ Note that my argument here is informed by Belanoff's exhaustive analysis of all the terms used to describe the women in Old English poetry (1982: 498-571).
- ⁶² Although only 350 lines remain, opinion varies as to the poem's relative completeness. Some critics posit a complete length not much greater than the extant portion. These include Woolf (1955: 168-72); Greenfield (1965: 164-5) and Bernard Huppé (1970: 136-7). Chamberlain (1975: 135-59) suggests that the original length approximated 800 lines.
- ⁶³ See Greenfield (1968: 166) for commentary on the inspiration for *Judith*. Swanton (1987:162) suggests that the poem could have been written in praise of Aethelflaed, the Lady of the Mercians. The discussion on Aethelflaed's historical importance occurs on pp. 33-36 of this chapter.
- ⁶⁴ For readings of *Judith* as allegory, see Chance (1986: 31-40) and Swanton (1987: 155-59).
- ⁶⁵ Greenfield (1972: 96-100) for example, uses supposition about the missing lines of the poem to support his view that Judith's chastity is emphasised.
- ⁶⁶ Authority for these statements will be clarified as the discussion in succeeding paragraphs unfolds.
- ⁶⁷ See Pollard (1980: 10-34) where she discusses this phenomenon. Although the issue has not been conclusively settled, the linking of sexuality with original sin is probably an accurate reflection of contemporary beliefs.
- ⁶⁸ It is not my intention to summarise the contribution of each of the figures, amongst whom number such influential writers as St Paul, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. To do so would be to re-plough well-tilled soil. Suffice it to say that certain particularly telling statements will be examined in order to glean a fair idea of the prevailing ethos towards sexuality, and female virginity in particular.
- ⁶⁹ The intellectual, and strongly ascetic, teachings which so strongly influenced Paul and later writers or groups such as Plotinus, Augustine, the Manichaeans and the Essenes, had in turn been influenced by Platonism. Since a central tenet of these ideas was a concern about the nature of the relationship between the ideal and the real worlds, in which the here and now was perceived to be but a poor reflection of the ideal, and which also foregrounded reason over passion, it is not surprising that the eventual result was that spirituality was equated with a separation of the fleshly from the spiritual.

- ⁷⁰ A superficial glance at the word woman might lead one to suppose that the word derives from womb and man, but this is not so. Its derivation is from Old English *wif-mann*, meaning, "lady-man". Old English *mann* meant "human being" as well as "man".
- ⁷¹ Incidentally, Eve became so closely associated with the serpent that eventually artistic renderings of the serpent gave it womanly form. An example from Renaissance times is the detail in the Sistine chapel ceiling depicting the Fall, where the serpent has the torso of a voluptuous female.
- ⁷² Months after having written this paragraph, I came across Bullough's article (1973: 489-90) in which he cites Isadore of Seville (d. 636) whose argument is essentially the same as mine, although his conclusions are, of course, different.
- ⁷³ cf. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966: 186-7) where Mary Douglas argues that a virginal body symbolises the Church, whole and intact, resisting the attacks of a hostile world.
- ⁷⁴ Examples of such disinterments include St Cuthbert. He died in AD 687 and was disinterred in 698. Bede describes the events as follows:

Divine Providence guided the brethren to
exhume his bones. After eleven years, they
expected to find his flesh reduced to dust and
the remains withered, as is usual in dead bodies;
.... when they opened the grave, they found the
body whole and incorrupt as though still living
and the limbs flexible, so that he looked as if he
were asleep rather than dead.

(Bede, 1990: 262)

Bede makes the correlation between holiness and lack of bodily corruption clear. He says: "The miracles of healing that take place from time to time at the tomb bear witness to the holiness of them both" (p. 263). (Bishop Eadbert was buried in Cuthbert's old coffin and the two were reinterred at the same site.)

Etheldreda, the twice-married queen who nevertheless retained her virginity was also disinterred, some 16 years after her death. Not only was her body uncorrupted, but a scar left by surgery during her mortal illness had also healed. This was attested to by the physician who had lanced a tumour on her neck. Bede concludes: "For the miraculous preservation of her body from corruption in the tomb is evidence that she had remained untainted by bodily intercourse" (1990: 236).

- ⁷⁵ Amongst those who wrote about female virginity in particular are St Methodius, Ambrose and Jerome.
- ⁷⁶ Male virginity is not written of in the same way. Presumably this is because there is no discernible physical sign which proves or disproves virginity, or sexual purity.
- ⁷⁷ For a detailed contemporary discussion of Hild's achievements, and in particular, her successful pupils, see Bede (1990: 243-47). The five who became bishops are: Bosa, Aetla, Offor, John and Wilfred.

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- ⁷⁸ Fell (1986: 109-28) discusses the literary and polemical debate in which these women engaged with the major figures of the ecclesiastical world, in the chapter entitled "The Religious Life."
- ⁷⁹ Amongst Boniface's correspondents were Bucge (properly, Haeaburg), Eadburg, Leoba (properly, Leobgyth) and Eangyth. Christine Fell (1990: 29-43) discusses the extant letters in detail in the chapter entitled "Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondence". Patrizia Lendinara (1991: 264-81) refers to the high level of learning evident in the letters of Boniface's female correspondents.
- ⁸⁰ Fell (1990: 80-85), having examined the laws of King Ine and King Aethelbert, proffers evidence that women were protected. Lyon (1974: 197-209) demonstrates that a woman's status, as reflected by her *wergild*, remained unaffected by marriage.
- ⁸¹ Etheldreda's husband, King Egfrid, had pleaded with Bishop Wilfrid to persuade Etheldreda to consummate the marriage. In turn, Wilfrid was promised substantial material reward in the form of lands and wealth, should his persuasive powers be successful. This episode is reported in Bede (1990: 236-9).
- ⁸² For example, Brooke assigns a number of unsigned poems to Cynewulf, such as *Crist 1* and *The Dream of the Rood*. Brooke's rather categorical claims have been dismissed by modern scholars.
- ⁸³ See the introduction to *The Old English Verse Saints' Lives* (1985: 1-4) in which Bjork surveys recent work on the specific genre of Saints' Lives. Bjork calls saints' lives "insistently didactic". See also Michael Lapidge (1991: 243-63) for a useful discussion of the genre.
- ⁸⁴ Pamela Gradon (1971: 32-99) provides a thorough discussion of allegory in medieval English texts, including Old English. Her discussion demonstrates clearly that polysemous narrative is not restricted to the later middle ages. We must be very cautious, however, of presuming (as have certain eminent scholars) that there was a long unbroken tradition of allegorical thought from classical times onwards. Rather, allegory experienced a flux in popularity at various times in the middle ages. See also Sheila Delany (1990: 42-60) for a Marxist analysis which accounts for the varied fortunes of allegory. Joseph Wittig (1996: 147-69) does an analysis of "figural narrative" in Juliana.

CHAPTER THREE

CYNEWULF'S *JULIANA*

As chapter two of this dissertation has argued, a feminist re-reading of *Juliana* is long overdue. The re-reading has been based upon the following three principles. Firstly, contemporary contextual material has been garnered and discussed in chapter two. The material discussed, and the conclusions reached, in chapter two form a context for the discussion in this chapter. The material in chapter two is integral to the argument in this chapter: they therefore form a unit. Secondly a conceptual/analytical text-based argument has been constructed in chapter three. Thirdly, the polemic has been intertwined with feminist principles, as discussed in chapter one. Those aspects of the argument that have required attention at a particular point have been foregrounded, but ultimately, all three aspects form one argument. The same structure is repeated in chapters four and five, with chapter four discussing context, and chapter five the text-based analysis which is informed by feminist theory.

(It may be contended that the construction of my argument imitates the interlaced, woven structure which is so quintessential a part of pictorial and decorative Anglo-Saxon art. Incidentally, John Leyerle detects the same structure in *Beowulf*, arguing that the audience of the time would have been aware of the pattern.¹) As has been discussed in chapter one, this is in keeping with feminism, which itself is a multi-faceted set of positions and arguments, and therefore a 'simple' structure would not properly reflect either the nature of the work being discussed or the theory foregrounded in the argument. A double 'cultural' and 'theoretical' complement of sorts occurs, therefore, in the structure of the dissertation.

A complicating factor is the question of Juliana's virginity and the special status which this state accords her. Having perused the textual evidence for Juliana's powers and status, therefore, the argument shifts to a synopsis of contemporary attitudes (as outlined in chapter two) in an attempt to account for the highly charged, glowing portrayal of this saint. Finally, and briefly, a melding of two disparate, and apparently inimical traditions and views of women – the pagan Germanic, and the Christian – is posited as the reason for the positive portrayal of Juliana.² Thus, it is argued that the Juliana of the Old English poem at one and the same time resists patriarchal domination, reflects a reverent attitude towards women (dating nostalgically to the pre-Christian era) and accords with misogynistic Christian attitudes which honoured only sexually chaste women. This contradictory conglomeration of attitudes is possible because the writer of the tale – Cynewulf – unites disparate traditions within himself. His name is clearly Anglo-Saxon; he was almost certainly a Christian monk, and he was attracted to tales about women.³ John Hermann (1984: 263-81) discusses the effect of Cynewulf's monasticism on his portrayal of Juliana and concludes that "the graft of traditions" such as "the warlike ethos of the Old English poetic [and the Christian]...is used for ideological reinforcement."

Having broadly outlined the structure of the ensuing argument, the discussion of the Old English poem *Juliana* will now commence. The informing theoretical approach is feminist, and the object of the analysis is to read Cynewulf's poem from a feminist perspective in order to uncover evidence of the status of women in ninth-century England.

* * * * *

There are three initial issues at stake in a feminist analysis of the Old English poem *Juliana*. These are: patriarchy, together with issues of power and control, domination and subordination, marginalisation and the centre; sexuality – desire, difference, and gender; and phallogocentrism. We must not, however, fall into the mistaken idea that the issues in the text are clear-cut, or to use a modern photographic metaphor, as sharply defined as black and white images.

Patriarchal oppression underpins the story of Juliana, the virgin saint. The confrontation between Juliana, the protagonist, and her two male antagonists is precipitated because Juliana refuses to be the bride of Eleusius. Thereafter, Eleusius, Juliana's erstwhile suitor, and Affricanus, her father, unite in the adversarial struggle to persuade Juliana into marriage.⁴

Eleusius is a man of power. Besides his military prowess, which is the ordinate source of his puissance, Eleusius' authority derives from three sources: his lineage – he is of noble race or *æþeles cynnes* (Krapp & Dobbie, 1936: l.18); his position – he is a prefect of high rank or *rice gerefa* (l. 19); and his wealth, for he has stored up possessions or *hordgestreon* (l. 22). A particular effort is made by the poet to emphasise the extent of Eleusius' jurisdiction and supremacy as after naming Eleusius, Cynewulf states that Eleusius had authority and great power – *hæfde ealdordom / micelne ond mærne* (ll. 25-6). But it is clear that evil deeds, wealth, status and power (for both Maximian and Eleusius) are inextricably linked, in a neat reciprocal relationship: military power supports and maintains wealth and status.⁵ In the Saint's Life *Juliana*, these worldly forces are ranged against the Christian force of morality and goodness.⁶ A desire for material wealth, the prestige afforded by rank, and the benefits of power are inimical to Christian values. Peter Clemoes (1995: 354) argues that Juliana rejects pagan materialism in favour of a spiritual existence.

Furthermore, Eleusius is an officer in the army of Maximian, which has subjugated many peoples and enacted the most terrible tortures upon Christian believers.⁷ A list of the verbs used to describe the actions of Maximian's minions will suffice to prove the ruthless violence with which his army has subjugated territories, and most particularly, Christians. Maximian has killed Christians – *cwealde Cristne men* (l. 5); defiled churches – *circan fylde* (l. 5); shed saints' blood – *geat ... haligra blode* (ll. 6,7); established enmity – *feondscype rærdon* (l. 14); killed saints – *halge cwelmdon* (l. 15); destroyed the learned – *breatun boccræftge* (l. 16); burned the chosen – *bærndon gecorene* (l. 16); and finally, he has tormented God's soldiers with spear and fire – *gæston godes ceman gare ond lige* (l. 17). In later versions of this saint's legend, the brutal subjugation of dissenters within Maximian's realm is not mentioned at all. The most brutal actions of the pagan patriarchy are strongly emphasised by Cynewulf, most probably in order to stress Juliana's great courage in defying Eleusius and inviting his retribution.

The contrast between the violent persecutions enacted upon Christians by Maximian and his cohorts, and the passive, acted upon stance of the Christian victims has been demonstrated by Lucretia Pollard (1980: 46-8).⁸ In contrast to the marauding pagans who impinge upon Christian practices, the Christians defend their faith when it is attacked. In the same way, Juliana lives

quietly as a Christian and takes a stand only when her solemn vow to remain a virgin is threatened.

Yet, what must not be overlooked is the fact that this Juliana, the heroine, engages her patriarchal adversaries in what Nelson (1991: 98) calls “a struggle for power”. This conflict is described as follows:

[*Juliana's*] basic structure consists of a series of dramatic scenes in which a female hero, Juliana, first opposes her father; then opposes her suitor who, his wishes denied, becomes her persecutor; then engages in confrontation with a devil who comes to her in prison; and then, once again, stands before her persecutor. Juliana presents the story of a woman who wins her battle with a man to whom her father, a figure of patriarchal power, gives her, and who also triumphs over an emissary sent by Satan to win her immortal soul.

(Nelson, 1991: 98)

What we have, then, in the Saint's legend *Juliana*, is a proto-feminist heroine squaring up to, and defeating, a number of powerful patriarchal figures, supported by huge reserves of military and demonic might. Both Maximian's and Eleusius' cruel suppression of Christianity have already been discussed: there is no doubt that Juliana's opposition to the patriarchy will evoke a crushing response.

Thus, there can be no doubt that patriarchal power of the worst kind – not even disguised by a benevolent paternalistic mask, but power enforced by means of rampant aggression and brute force – is in control of the city of Nicomedia and all its inhabitants. Because King Maximian exerts control through violence, intimidation and fear, it is to be expected that his governor, Eleusius, will see fit to exert control in precisely the same manner if his will is thwarted.

Not only does Juliana live in a hostile patriarchal society in which the norm of governing and dealing with any form of opposition, particularly ideological opposition, is through brute military force, but she is also subject to the will of her father, Affricanus. It is apparent that Affricanus has the legal power to enter into a contract on his daughter's behalf: “*Ða wæs sio fæmne mid hyre fæder willan / welegum biweddad*” (ll. 32-33). (Then this virgin, at her father's will, was pledged to the wealthy man) (Bradley, 1982: 303). The use of the past participle –

biweddad – here, is apt as Juliana herself has no say whatsoever in the transaction. Although Juliana is the object of Eleusius’ desire, and is his proposed marriage partner, she is completely marginalised in the transaction. Eleusius, the powerful governor, and his desires, are placed in the centre. Affricanus acts as the broker, assured as he is of the certainty of his patriarchal control over his daughter. For Affricanus, what he decides and what his daughter wishes appear to be inseparable. He has no conception, then, that Juliana has an opinion of her own to offer, and he thus enters into the contract in the bland assurance that she will accede. Not only is Juliana marginalised, but she is also rendered almost invisible: her father enters into a contract for her (about which he does not consult her) and he simply assumes that she will agree.⁹ The fact that he did not consult her is apparent as the text describes Juliana’s feelings about marriage and material wealth as follows:

. wyrd ne ful cuþe,
 freondrædenne hu heo from hogde,
 geong on gæste. Hire wæs godes egða
 mara in gemyndum, þonne eall þæt mappumgesteald
 þe in þæs æpelinges æhtum wunade.

(ll. 33-37)

(... he was not quite aware of the situation, how in her spirit the young girl despised the conjugal state. To her mind the fear of God was greater than all the treasure which lay among the nobleman’s possessions.)

(1982: 303)

Indeed, for this particular father, the “mappumgesteald” (l. 36) or wealth (usually literally translated as “treasure”) is an alluring reason for the match. Furthermore, Affricanus clearly has in mind the strategic advantages which would accrue to him if the match between his daughter Juliana and the governor Eleusius were successfully concluded. These concerns are evident in Affricanus’ reply to Eleusius, when he mentions his hope for continued favour from Eleusius even though his daughter has embarrassed him by refusing such a paragon of a match:

“Ic þæt geswerge þurh soð godu,
 swa ic are æt him æfre finde,
 oþþe, þeoden, æt þe þine hylðu
 winburgum in, gif þas word sind soþ,
 monna leofast, þe þu me sagast,

þæt ic hy ne sparige”

(ll. 80-5)

“I swear it by the true gods – so may I always meet with grace from them, and from you, my lord, your favour in your luxurious courts – if these words which you tell me are true, most esteemed among men, that I shall not spare her”

(1982: 304)

This quotation makes Affricanus’ main concerns abundantly clear. He is worried solely about his own social position, and he is seeking above all else to exact some kind of undertaking from Eleusius that Juliana’s stubborn behaviour will not affect his position in any way. Affricanus’ words reinforce the ingrained phallogocentrism of western discourse: although the issue is to do with Juliana, the discussion does not centre on her feelings, actions, wants or desires.¹⁰ This is precisely the implication of phallogocentrism as discussed by Ann Jones in her article entitled “French theories of the feminine” (1991: 83). She summarises her discussion of Lacan’s statement that “Woman does not exist” by stating that:

In a psycholinguistic world structured by father-son resemblance and rivalry and by the primacy of masculine logic, woman is a gap or a silence, the invisible and unheard sex.

(1991: 83)

Juliana is not even given a forum to explain herself. She is, indeed, invisible and unheard. Rather, it is the males who are jockeying for position and favour with one another. Male (Eleusius and Affricanus) is the One, the speaker, the addressed and the addressee, while female (Juliana) is the Other, the silent, talked about but not allowed to speak for herself. In actual fact, the centre upon whom all concern and attention is focused is Eleusius, presumably since he is at the pinnacle of patriarchal power in Nicomedia. Furthermore, the encounter between the two males is described in military terms:

Reord up astag,
siþþan hy togædre garas hlændon,
hildeþremman

(ll. 63-5)

(The clamour of voices rose up when they,
warlike men, leaned spears together.)
(1982: 303)

The two men clearly trust each other as they “lean spears together” – a sign that they are happy to be armed in each other’s company. They are in league. But to return to an examination of Affricanus’ actual words to Eleusius: Affricanus sycophantically refers to Eleusius as *peoden*, or lord, and then loads his address with the superlative form “monna leofast” (l. 84) or “most beloved among men”. (In fact, although Affricanus may well be uttering these terms in the utmost sincerity, in the context of Eleusius’ tyrannical and oppressive behaviour, as well as the tinge of fear in Affricanus’ own tone, they are highly ironic.) Affricanus’ third reference to Eleusius’ rank is written in parenthesis, which indicates its essential redundancy to the sense of the argument: it is therefore inserted to mollify Eleusius’ angered pride, by emphasizing Affricanus’ humility and Eleusius’ exaltedness. This emphasis on rank is a typically hierarchical patriarchal device.¹¹ Naturally, the order is rigid, with men of all ranks first and then women, as is revealed in the order of persons addressed in the speech. The final clauses of Affricanus’ declaration to Eleusius run as follows:

... þæt ic hy ne sparige, ac on spild giefe,
peoden mæra, þe to gewealde.

(ll. 85-6)

(... that I shall not spare her but I shall resign her to
destruction, famous lord, at your disposal.)

(1982: 304)

Affricanus appears to have no interest whatsoever in his daughter’s point of view. Before even hearing her explanation for her refusal of Eleusius, he already places her ultimate fate in the hands of the spurned suitor, who may “Dem þu hi to deaþe, gif þe gedafen þince, / swa to life læt, swa þe leofre sy.” (ll. 87-8). (“Sentence her to death, if you think it fitting, or grant her life as may be more fitting to you”) (1982: 304). In her father’s eyes, Juliana is a disposable commodity which can be passed from his governance and possession to that of her erstwhile suitor.¹² In fact, Juliana is so disposable that the spurned lover may, with the father’s express permission, have her killed. Silencing through death, the negation of personhood, is the ultimate form of marginalisation. Clearly, patriarchal power is enforced by a twisted moral authority.

Again, when Affricanus finally confronts his daughter, he speaks of the disputed match with Eleusius in materialistic and social terms. Affricanus describes the rejected bridegroom as follows:

... se is betra þonne þu,
 æþelra for eorþan, æhtspedigra
 feohgestreona. He is to freonde god.

(ll. 100-103)

(... he is a better person than you, of higher
 birth in the world, wealthier in riches. He is
 good to have as a friend.)

(1982: 304)

Apparently, there are three reasons why Affricanus is so eager to have Eleusius as a son-in-law, and none of them is particularly relevant to Juliana's chosen course. The reasons are rooted in the threefold source of Eleusius' appeal: status, wealth and power. Nicomedian society is thus quite obviously a strictly hierarchical one, with finely graded ranks attained according to one's possessing or lacking the attributes enumerated above. The point here is that patriarchal societies are grounded upon these carefully stratified hierarchical distinctions, according to which women attain the status of their husbands.¹³ Eleusius' rank fails to impress Juliana, which indicates that she stands outside this pyramidal patriarchal class structure, possibly because Juliana is well aware that the class/wealth/rank /power structures of the society are male-ordered and male-centred. Furthermore, this class structure is supported and maintained by means of a love of material possessions. This is, of course, in direct contrast to the spiritual focus of Juliana's love, and this difference in focus is concomitantly a comment on the relative moral and spiritual standing of Juliana, Eleusius and Affricanus.

In contrast to Juliana, her father, Affricanus, is obviously desperately eager to improve his own status (and monetary worth) within Nicomedian society by means of his daughter attaining the most advantageous match possible for a young woman of Nicomedia.

At this juncture it is important to interrupt my argument in order to clarify my position. I am not proposing that Cynewulf, the poet, was a ninth-century male feminist. What I do argue, however, is that the story of Juliana is an ideal vehicle through which two conflicting, and yet bizarrely compatible, views of women are expressed. It is a well-attested fact that early Germanic

women enjoyed a special prominence and esteem.¹⁴ Conversely, the early Christian Fathers instituted a perniciously misogynistic view of women, from which only the most saintly females were exempt.¹⁵ Perversely, then, a saint's tale enables the poet to remember nostalgically the ancient Anglo-Saxon traditions about women, which were well celebrated in poetry,¹⁶ as well as fulfil the rubric of the church's teaching about women.¹⁷ The tradition of misogynistic writings about women dates back to the founding of Christianity, but virgin saints, in particular, were accorded a special exemption. For this reason, two completely antithetical traditions are united, in contest, in *Juliana*.

Affricanus, Juliana's father, represents the misogynistic view of woman-as-commodity as he attempts to exert his patriarchal authority over his daughter by reminding her of the benefits of a relationship with Eleusius. But there is something more ominous hinted at in Affricanus' words to his daughter. Although the words "He is to freonde god" (l. 102) or "he is good to have as a friend" (1982: 104) appear, on the surface, to be a statement about the advantages of having well-placed and influential friends, what remains unstated at this particular point is the corollary of this maxim. Eleusius might, indeed, be a good friend to have, but the implied threat behind this statement is what kind of enemy he would make. Later in his dialogue with Juliana, Affricanus is more open about the danger inherent in offending Eleusius:

"Micel is þæt ongin
 ond þreaniedlic þinre gelican,
 þæt þu forhycge hlaford urne."
 (ll. 127-9)
 ("For you to slight our lord is a great
 and disastrous course of action for
 such as you.")
 (1982: 305)

We know, of course, that Affricanus is really more concerned about his own standing with Eleusius than with his daughter's fate, for it is he who offered his recalcitrant child to Eleusius for either punishment or mercy. Given the portrait of Eleusius which has been painted thus far, the outcome of the father's offer is in little doubt: punishment, not forgiveness, will follow for Juliana because her erstwhile suitor is so very evil.

The Eleusius of the Old English legend is, it is generally agreed, a more sinister, evil character than his counterpart in the Bollandist¹⁸ legend, whereas Juliana herself is rendered as a better, less manipulative character.¹⁹ The moral distance between the antagonist and protagonist is therefore increased, at the expense of psychological realism. (What must not be forgotten, however, is that the genre of the tale does not require psychological realism. We must not import twentieth-century perceptions, and then criticise the poem for failing to meet those artificially imposed criteria.) The effect of the widening of the moral distance between Juliana and Eleusius is to increase the glory of Juliana's saintly triumph, as the battle between the two enters the cosmic realm.²⁰

Ironically, the demonising of Eleusius and the concomitant glorification of Juliana into peerless status, effectively serves to render the position of ordinary Anglo-Saxon women, by far the vast majority, a poor second in terms of ability and status. This duality of perception about women in Anglo-Saxon England arises as the Saint's achievement is so peerless and remarkable that even for an ordinary woman to imagine that she could attain the same status is hubristic. There is, however, a possible route for aspiring saints: this involves emulation. An ordinary young woman could embark on the first step towards possible glory by vowing to remain a virgin. In Juliana's case, this is what provokes the confrontation with the patriarchy. The sacred vow becomes both the cause of her suffering and the means whereby Juliana has the strength to overcome the harshest punishment.

Patriarchal intimidation of Juliana begins as unconscious assumptions about her disposability by her father, as well as Eleusius' unthinking merging of his desires and hers as synonymous, moves on to verbal threats against her, and culminates in physical violence, which ultimately results in her execution. The choice before Juliana is vividly contrasted: she can please her father (and fulfil his own social ambitions) and thereby become the first lady in Nicomedia, presumably pampered and cosseted. The alternative for Juliana is to reject the proposed marriage and thereby become the cynosure of all, subject to the most hideous degradation.

Ludically, we notice that choices, opportunities, positions and camps are stringently divided into strictly opposed groups: the good and bad, the acceptable and the unacceptable, the pagan and the Christian, the fêted wife or the despised virgin, and so on. The values operating within Nicomedian society are inverted, where what is normally perceived to be evil is venerated.

Naturally, the narrator of the poem (who could possibly be equated with Cynewulf himself) rejects the positions venerated by Nicomedian society – i.e. pagan, brutal, mercenary.²¹ Quite unconsciously, the narrator and Cynewulf valorise the female Otherness of Juliana's position. This can be understood by readers as an attempt to disrupt the traditional categories upon which Western discourse is based.²² While the disruption may be momentarily successful, it cannot succeed fully. Although Juliana revolts against the Nicomedian patriarchy, she does not contest her subordinate position within the heavenly, spiritual patriarchy. The poem itself is therefore only apparently subversive of the patriarchy, because it is irreducibly trapped within the binary code of patriarchal discourse. I do not, however, assert that Cynewulf was a proto-feminist, overtly advocating feminist principles in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England. What I do suggest is that two opposing traditions, each of which perceives women very differently, unite in this story of a virgin's confrontation with the pagan patriarchy of Nicomedia.²³ And Cynewulf, a Christian religious of Anglo-Germanic origin, combines his native Germanic veneration of women with the Christian tradition of revering virgin sainthood. Furthermore, an important caveat is that, as a Christian monk, Cynewulf would rank the status of a Christian as higher than that of any pagan; being chaste or sexually pure as higher than being sexually active or experienced; but still, male as higher than female. The exception occurs with a martyred female virgin, who attains a higher heavenly status and a position beside Christ. This phenomenon is, of course, problematic in itself. The feminist reading of this legend will therefore reveal a pervasive suppression of the female: it is only because Juliana has chosen to eschew her own sexuality that she is capable of achieving veneration and sanctity.

Indeed, it has been noted by certain critics that the contrast between good and bad, virtue and evil, holy and demonic, is so marked in this poem that *Juliana* calls for an allegorical interpretation.²⁴ The grotesquely exaggerated binary oppositions upon which the world of the poem is constructed opens the poem to the feminist critique of this thesis. Hélène Cixous, for example, states that “binary oppositions are heavily imbricated in the patriarchal value system” (1982: 211). Exposing the oppositions helps to uncover the oppressive mechanisms operating in society and reflected in the poem. Also, perversely, the binary opposition is reversed as female is aligned with ‘good’ ‘virtuous’ ‘logical’ and, ultimately, ‘powerful’. Conversely, male is aligned with all that is ‘bad’ ‘immoral’ ‘emotional’ and, eventually, ‘weak’. (In fact, I am anticipating the end of the poem, with the victim having become the victor and the ultimate victim being the pagan patriarchy as represented by Eleusius.) The very structure of the poem, therefore, which

requires that one party has to attain victory over another, is thus inherently patriarchal, as opposed to Kristeva's post-structuralist call for a celebration of both categories in the opposition, both the symbolic and the semiotic.²⁵ It is therefore clear that the tenth-century *Juliana* does not invite a dynamic and radical reading, as the oppositions are not repositioned but merely inverted. And what is even more conservative is that the saintly heroine, having achieved a great deal of power as a result of her resistance, ultimately surrenders her power and subsumes herself to another, albeit heavenly, hierarchy. The poem is therefore complicit in validating certain types of patriarchal power, authority and hierarchy, as it never violates the basic principle of binary opposition. This means that this reading of the poem must, forever, remain "inside patriarchal metaphysics" (Cixous, 1982: 212). The locus of control shifts from ungodly to godly, from one patriarchal system (the pagan) to another (the Christian). The protagonists are positioned according to their relationship to Christian ideology, which is a masculine, logocentric ideology.

Juliana's confrontation with patriarchal power begins gradually. She is completely omitted from the negotiations, as has been noted before. The fact of the proposal, and its acceptance, by suitor and father respectively, is presented to her as a *fait accompli*. The impetus and desire for the marriage stems from the two men. Eleusius' desire is primarily sexual, as is made clear in the following lines:

þa wæs se weliga þære wifgifta,
goldspedig guma, georn on mode,
þæt him mon fromlicast fæmnan gegyrede,
bryd to bolde.

(ll. 38-41)

(So the wealthy, gold-abounding man yearned in his mind for the marriage, longed for the virgin to be made ready for him as urgently as possible, as a bride for his house.)

(1982: 303)

There is no sense of a mutual contract or desire here: the assumption appears to be that what Eleusius wishes is normally accomplished. The bride must be made ready for him but there is no indication that he requires preparation.

The first indication that Juliana is, surprisingly, not of the same mind about the marriage as her father and Eleusius is when she offers a verbal rebuff to the plans: "Heo þæs beornes lufan /

fæste wiðhogde” (ll. 41-2). (She steadfastly rejected the man’s love) (1982: 303). Her refusal, at this stage, is conditional upon a change of religious allegiance on the part of Eleusius. If he loves the true god, she will submit to him: “ ‘Gif þu soðne god / lufast ... ic beo gearo sona / unwaclice willan þines” (ll. 47-50).

There is an ambivalence in Juliana’s response here, for she is resisting what appears to be a patriarchal dictum in which she is supposed to be a pawn moving as she is bidden by her father. Juliana appears to be negotiating on her own behalf by enunciating the conditions upon which she is prepared to accept Eleusius’ hand. Yet Juliana is also apparently a player in the patriarchal chess game as she talks of submitting herself *unwaclice* or “strongly” (literally, un-weakly or un-meanly) to Eleusius’ will if he fulfils her religious requirements. Her assertions about accepting Eleusius if he changes religious allegiance are no more than bluff, for the poem states unequivocally that in her heart “Heo þæs beornes lufan / fæste wiðhogde” (ll. 41-2). (She steadfastly rejected the man’s love) (1982: 303). Juliana challenges Eleusius by offering him an untenable choice, knowing full well that he is unlikely to accept her proviso.²⁶ If Eleusius wishes Juliana to be his wife, he has to convert to Christianity and reject the pagan gods whom he has been worshipping. However, the choice is not clear-cut and simple, for the introduction to the poem stresses the context of Maximian’s rule and his subordinate’s power: Maximian’s soldiers actively pursue a campaign of destruction against all that is Christian. As Eleusius is not only a subject of Maximian, but also a powerful commander and regional ruler of his forces, Juliana requires him to defy the very tenets upon which his patriarchal power is vested.

Juliana has imposed a requirement upon Eleusius that is impossible for him to fulfil, for then he would presumably encounter the full wrath of King Maximian, the zealous persecutor of Christians. Juliana presumably realises this when she refuses Eleusius’ hand. We see, therefore, that Juliana not only presents ambiguous reasons for refusing Eleusius, but also that her act of refusal similarly presents a dilemma as she simultaneously defies the patriarchy and then also apparently mouths suitable words about submission to a man’s will. Furthermore, she reveals herself to be complicit in a patriarchal notion of the godhead, to which Juliana, all saints, the whole of Christendom and creation are ultimately subordinate.²⁷

The argument of this dissertation is that Juliana’s confused messages – her apparent concurrence with, and simultaneous defiance of, patriarchal systems – signal a similar dilemma

facing the women in Anglo-Saxon England in the ninth century. Thus, Cynewulf's *Juliana* incorporates prominent fault lines. A notion of the veneration attached to holiness, as best evinced by a virgin martyr, together with a nostalgic remembrance of the holy Germanic woman of early Anglo-Saxon England, have been subsumed and amalgamated within this particular tale.²⁸ Here it is necessary to invoke the discussion in chapter two regarding the broader social conditions operating in England at the time of writing. While one is not arguing that ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England was a matriarchal society – that would be untenable – what is clear from the poetic record, other historical writings and the general social context, is that the Anglo-Saxon woman enjoyed a relatively high status: higher, that is, than after the Conquest.²⁹ But other forces (including the views of the Church) were already at work which would ultimately force women firmly into the margins. And the examination of the post-Conquest versions of the legend of St Juliana certainly bears out this contention, for the texts reveal a much more muted position and portrait of the virgin martyr.

An example of the uncomfortable compromise which is inherent in the portrayal of Juliana by Cynewulf, is in the description of Juliana's confrontation with her spurned suitor, for, ironically, as she is othered by evoking Eleusius' anger, she moves closer to acquiring a privileged position in the centre as one of God's martyrs. Ironically, whatever glory Juliana does attain is bestowed by a hierarchical and patriarchal hegemony, not from without the system at all. Juliana achieves a modicum of approval because she conforms exactly to the requirements of Christian sainthood, but as this is defined and regimented by the patriarchal Church. She can only achieve approval by defying the negative mirror-image of God and his saints. Juliana does this by imposing conditions upon her acceptance of Eleusius.

These conditions evoke immediate anger from Eleusius: he is described tautologically as being "yrre gebolgen" (l. 58), or "angered with rage" (my translation). Juliana's clash with the prevailing hegemony (in other words, with the patriarchy) is now unavoidable. The two men who seek to control Juliana's destiny consult with each other, and they are united in their displeasure towards her. Once again, woman is the Other, the outsider, marginalised and silenced.³⁰ Whereas the text abounds at this point with words that express the men's rage because their neatly devised plan has foundered on the rocks of Juliana's faith, there are no words for Juliana to speak.

Eleusius is described as being “hreoþ ond hygeblind” (l. 61) or troubled or wild and blind in thought; “frecne mode” (l. 67) or dangerous/ terrible/ wicked in mind; he feels that Juliana’s conditions are “fraceðu” (l. 71) or insults. Affricanus, her supposedly loving father, is “geswearc” (l. 78) or “suffused with a dark angry colour” (my translation); he is also “anræd yreþweorg, yre gebolgen” (l. 90) or “single of purpose and evilly disposed, swollen with fury” (1982: 304). The male antagonists act irrationally as they allow emotion, pride and ego to cloud their (supposedly logical) judgement. Ironically, both Affricanus and Eleusius, the archetypal patriarchal figures, reveal via their reactions to an unfavourable situation, the very ‘emotional’ ‘hypersensitive’ ‘unreasoning’ qualities which are characterised by the patriarchy as being ‘feminine’ perquisites, and one of the chief reasons for relegating woman as a generic group to the sidelines. Whereas Cixous would celebrate these so-called ‘feminine’ qualities, here they are displayed by the pagan males in order to prove their shameful evil.³¹ Feminine qualities are thus othered wherever they occur. In contrast to the volatile and emotional pagan males, whose behaviour is emotional, irrational and therefore feminine, Juliana has figuratively de-sexed herself by vowing to remain a virgin. By becoming a neuter she is genderless and therefore not prone to the fallibilities of her gender. However, Eleusius and Affricanus, being embroiled in evil, are subject to the type of ungovernable hysterical emotion which is usually attributed to women.³²

Affricanus’ mad rage towards his daughter is described as follows:

Da wæs ellenwod, yrre ond reþe,
frecne ond ferðgrim, fæder wið dehter.
Het hi þa swingan, susle þreagan,
witum wægan, ond þæt word acwæð:

(ll. 140-4)

(Then the father was mad with rage, furious and incensed, menacing and savage-minded towards his daughter. He ordered her to be flogged, to be put under torture, to have torments inflicted upon her, and he spoke these words ...)

(1982: 305)

Juliana’s father orders her to be flogged – an extreme punishment. Patriarchal colonisation of Juliana has increased in intensity from the initial attempts to intimidate her. Initial efforts to win her over alternated verbal aggression and compliments. Logic decrees that such ploys be deemed

manipulative and fickle. Once again we notice that these terms are often used by males in order to characterise and denigrate women, yet here these behaviours are engaged in by the outsiders: those who do not worship the Christian god. The margins are therefore occupied by these thoroughly evil men, who thereby assume the epithets and behaviours usually assigned to women.

Affricanus' bizarre Jekyll and Hyde vacillations in his interaction with his daughter become evident when the opening words of two successive speeches are juxtaposed. The first begins:

“Ðu eart dohtor min seo dyreste
 ond seo sweteste in sefan minum,
 ange for eorþan, minra eagna leoht,
 Iuliana!”

(ll. 93-6)

(“You are my daughter, the dearest
 and sweetest to my heart, you alone
 in the world, the light of my eyes,
 Juliana!”).

(1982: 305)

If this speech is taken out of its context, it would appear to be a sincere and loving declaration of true fatherly affection. Superlatives are used in the description: Juliana is the “sweetest” and “dearest” as well as the “light of [his] eyes”. However, in the very next reply offered by Affricanus to Juliana's explanation for refusing to marry Eleusius, he says:

“Ic þæt gefremme, gif min feorh leofað
 gif þu unrædes ær ne geswicest
 þæt þu ungeara ealdre scyldig
 þurh deora gripe deaþe sweltest,
 gif þu geþafian nelt þingrædenne
 modges gemanan.”

(ll. 119-27)

(“I shall see to it, if my life lasts, that if you
 do not soon stop your foolishness, ... then
 before long, being deemed to have forfeited
 your life, you shall suffer death through
 savaging by wild animals.”)

(1982: 305)

Juliana, apparently so beloved by both her father and her suitor, is now promised the ultimate form of patriarchal aggression, which is physical torture, leading to a savage and painful death. That there is no correlation at all between the mildness of her offence and the severity of the punishment offered to her appears to be of no consequence. There is a reason for this: Eleusius is furious that Juliana's demands have brought him "onwyrðu" (l. 69) or ignominy. His manly pride has been injured. Eleusius specifically refers to his shame at having been humiliated in front of other people in his initial speech to Affricanus:

"Me þa fraceðu sind
on modsefan mæste weorce,
þæt heo mec swa torne tæle gerahte
fore þissum folce"

(ll. 71-4)

("To my mind these insults are painful in the
extreme, in that she so grievously assailed me
with blasphemy in front of these people.")

(1982: 304)

Eleusius' anger thus appears to have little to do with actually losing the hand of Juliana as he is not distraught with love-lorn grief. His ego has been deflated in front of his people. For this offence, he cannot forgive Juliana. The refusal to marry him is forgotten: Juliana is to be punished for blasphemy, a convenient excuse whereby Eleusius can assuage his wounded manly pride.

Affricanus, meanwhile, is angered because his own standing with Eleusius is endangered. Both men therefore act from an entirely egocentric, phallogocentric position. Affricanus and Eleusius assume logocentric control over Juliana as they exchange words and enter an agreement about her future. Juliana is notably absent, missing, lacking in the negotiations. This is possible only because woman is distinguished within a patriarchy by lack, absence and therefore marginalisation. By virtue of the fact that Affricanus and Eleusius are men, that is, they each possess a phallus, and they live in a patriarchal society, the very language which they use is phallogocentric. The assumption upon which they operate is that their utterances are right, central and therefore acceptable. It is unthinkable that their decisions should be rejected or even questioned.

When Juliana raises objections to the marriage, she is immediately accused of “onwyrðu” (l. 69), or of bringing “ignominy” upon, or of being “vituperative” towards Eleusius. Furthermore, she is, according to Eleusius, guilty of “tæle” (l. 73), which can be translated as “fault-finding”, “censure” or “blasphemy”. In typically phallogocentric manner, Eleusius uses words to turn Juliana’s objections to the proposed marriage into an accusation of fault against her. At one stroke Juliana is transformed from a desired marriage partner into a sinner. Manifestly, Eleusius’ ego has been wounded by Juliana’s conditional answer to what he thought was a *fait accompli*. Male desire, male words, focused on the phallus, are utterly central to Eleusius’ thinking: he perceives his desire for the marriage as, inevitably, Juliana’s. That she might think otherwise is never considered by him. So marginalised is Juliana by Eleusius’ appraisal that she ought to have acquiesced. In essence, Eleusius and Affricanus regard Juliana as silent; they are astonished that she has any opinion of her own on the topic of marriage. Indeed, the automatic silencing of Juliana is so noticeable that it is remarked upon by Judith Weise Marsh in her non-feminist analysis of *Juliana*. She states that “he [Affricanus] thinks Juliana’s own counsel is the same as no counsel at all” (1971: 60). Words, negotiations, decisions and objections, belong to those who are central: the word (*logos*) and the male (phallus). Female words are inconsequential, because they are disallowed – as in the marriage negotiations – or they evoke anger when they are uttered although they are not asked for – as in Juliana’s response to the marriage plans. Juliana’s answer was intended to be a mechanical one, a pre-ordained yes to the plans made by, and for, the males. Ironically, Juliana wrests language away from her later contender, the disguised demon, as she uses words in order to confound him. Although Juliana is complicit in accepting her subservience to a patriarchal system (that of God and the Church) she is able to use words – *logos* – to expose and defeat the demon because she has rendered herself powerful by denying her womanliness and sexuality.

The unarticulated assumption of logocentricity is that the male word will be obeyed. Juliana challenges that assumption because she does not accede to the terms of the contract which have been decided for her. Therefore, Juliana resists the mores of the society in which she lives. As readers, we, too, must resist the blatant allure of phallogocentrism just as Juliana does, by refusing to collude unthinkingly with its assumptions.

Juliana’s sexuality, or her *morphe*, is the reason for Eleusius’ initial interest in her. Her attractiveness causes desire to take him by storm or “hine fyrwet bræc” (l. 27). Eleusius is

described as yearning or being anxious in mind or “georn on mode” (l. 39) for the marriage to take place as soon as possible, or “fromlicast” (l. 40). Eleusius obviously finds Juliana to be sexually appealing. Scopophilia, or man’s love of looking, which arouses Eleusius’ desire for Juliana and provokes his need to possess her, also ironically limits his perception of her to nothing more than a sexual object.³³ Along with her objectification by Eleusius, goes a concomitant need to control and dominate her.

Having seen Juliana, and having been attracted to her, and having been refused sexual possession of her, Eleusius’ desire for her transmutes into a desire for mastery and sadistic power. Juliana’s sexual *différance* seizes Eleusius’ notice but it simultaneously provokes his contempt.³⁴ Eleusius desires Juliana, but she is not worthy of negotiating with him. Neither, it would appear, has she any say in the matter. It is as though, having had the temerity to titillate his appetite, she had better assuage it.³⁵

Besides the patriarchal dominance so clearly demonstrated by means of the absence of Juliana from negotiations which will materially affect her life, and her faith, a more sinister misogyny is also evident. This is borne out by the extremes in the appellations accorded to Juliana. She is either completely in favour or an absolute cynosure. There is no comfortable middle ground available for her to occupy. Ironically, the extreme positions which Juliana performs occupies, are a product of, and simultaneously reinforce, the patriarchal hegemony which she defies, because of the binary, oppositional nature of Western discourse. Toril Moi, in her discussion of Hélène Cixous’s arguments challenging patriarchal binary thought in *Sexual/Textual Politics*, explains as follows:

Cixous ... goes on to locate *death* at work in this kind of thought. For one of the terms to acquire meaning, she claims, it must destroy the other. The “couple” cannot be left intact: it becomes a general battlefield where the struggle for signifying supremacy is forever re-enacted. In the end, victory is equated with activity and defeat with passivity; under patriarchy, the male is always the victor. Cixous passionately denounces such an equation of femininity with passivity and death as leaving no positive space for woman: “Either woman is passive or she doesn’t exist”.

(1993: 105)

Thus Juliana is in an inimical position, for by resisting her placement by the patriarchal ruling order, by refusing to be silent, marginalised and Othered, Juliana figuratively throws down the gauntlet, and declares war against the patriarchy, which, according to Cixous, requires passivity or death from a female. Paradoxically, however, by the act of speech, she enters into a language which is inevitably patriarchal, binary and phallogocentric. Behind her words, however, is a symbolism which prefigures speech: her vow of virginity, her wish to keep herself whole and not possessed sexually by a male. By not acceding to the mores, assumptions and values of the patriarchy, Juliana invites the physical assault which is to follow. There is one caveat, though: Juliana is in a special category. Although physical death does, indeed, result, the ultimate victory is seen to be hers. Destruction of Eleusius follows, not so much because he is a male, but because he is a wicked pagan who persecutes a holy maiden. Again, and paradoxically, patriarchal binary thought triumphs in Juliana's death, with Christian good seen to win the ultimate victory. This accords with Juliana's rejection of an earthly binary (pagan evil) but her complete submission to its heavenly opposite (Christian sanctity). Therefore, Juliana's feminist confrontation with the patriarchy is inevitably doomed to failure: her protest will be won or lost on patriarchal terms.

Juliana's holiness adds a further gloss to the events, as well as complicating the interpretation: her victory cannot simply be read as a victory for women and feminism as it occurs because of her special status. Female virginity and its ramifications have been discussed in detail in chapter two. The context of Christian teachings about virginity and the holiness which inheres in virginity must not be forgotten. In the meantime, however, the discussion will return to the textual evidence for the nature of the confrontation between Juliana and the patriarchy.

The Bollandist source for Cynewulf's version includes further questioning from both Affricanus and Eleusius of why Juliana refuses the match, but this is omitted by Cynewulf. Presumably the omission is in accordance with Cynewulf's more extreme portrayal of both good and evil (Lanford, 1975: 78). Eleusius' behaviour on hearing Juliana's adamant refusal to marry a pagan is excessive. He is described as being "frecne" (l. 184), literally "greedy", but frequently translated as "savage" or "fierce". He utters "beatwordum" (l. 185) or threats, because he is "bealg hine swiþe" (l. 185), or "strongly angry". *Beotwordum* is the term used to describe the heroic warrior Beowulf's boasts when he is required to prove his worth in the face of a challenge. The same connotations accrue with Eleusius, whose manly pride has been humiliated in public

because of Juliana's rejection. He therefore has to assert himself and re-establish his credentials. The passage runs as follows:

Ða for þam folce frecne mode
 beotwordum spræc, bealg hine swiþe
 folcagende, ond þa fæmnan het
 þurh niðwræce nacode þennan,
 ond mid sweopum swingan synna lease.
 (ll. 184-8)

(Then in front of the people, in savage mood, he
 uttered threats; the people's ruler violently worked
 himself into a passion, and in spiteful punishment
 he ordered the virgin to be stretched out naked
 and, guilty of no sin, to be flogged with whips.)
 (1982: 306-7)

There seems to be an unmistakable connection between Eleusius' desire for Juliana and the punishment which he prescribes, which is in complete accord with the theory of the *gaze* as being simultaneously sexual and sadistic: in fact, an issue of mastery and power. Eleusius' reaction to Juliana's conditional refusal to marry him is extreme, in fact, it is almost irrational. His vacillating response at first consists of sweet lover's addresses such as:

"Min se swetesta sunnan scima,
 Iuliana! Hwæt, þu glæm hafast,
 ginfæste giefe, geoguðhades blæd!
 (ll. 167-9)

("Juliana! Sweetest incandescence of the sun
 to me! Look what radiance you have, what abundant
 endowment of the splendour of youthfulness!)
 (1982: 306)

The hyperbolic comments above are countered immediately by threats of "wraþe geworhtra wita unrim/ grimra gyrna" (ll. 172-3) or "untold torments cruelly performed ... fierce pains" (Gordon, 1976: 168). If Juliana does as Eleusius wishes, that is, if she effaces herself by marrying him, and by becoming his sexual partner, she will be adored. But if she refuses him, and denies him sexual gratification, she will be cruelly tortured and finally killed. There is an intensity and passion to both alternatives, both of which require submission on Juliana's part. If sexual yielding is not forthcoming via marital obligations, sado-sexual mastery will be attained through physical torture.

Cynthia Smith Lanford argues cogently that Eleusius' final ultimatum to Juliana makes his own agenda perfectly clear (1975: 88-91). When Eleusius' speech is analysed carefully, it initially appears that Eleusius threatens Juliana with hideous tortures because she refused to love the true gods "þæt þu soð godu/ lufian wolde" (ll. 194-5). Upon more thorough examination, Lanford argues, it becomes apparent that Eleusius and the gods are conflated in his mind:

At the end of his initial speech to Juliana, however, Helisius offers her the ultimatum: Worship heathen gods, or suffer untold tortures. If only she will worship his gods, Helisius tells her, they in their great mercy will protect her from torments; in other words, if Juliana will consent to obey him, he will not torment her (as he says explicitly in lines 191b-195a).

(1975: 89)

Lanford's thesis examines the poem from a structural point of view and the argument above is situated in the midst of an analysis of the parallels between Eleusius' and Affricanus' speeches, but the import of her observation for the feminist argument being posited here is obvious: unwittingly, Eleusius identifies his desires with those of his gods. They are one and the same. It is therefore apparent that Eleusius speaks from a privileged (male) position.

Although the issue of blasphemy towards the pagan gods of Nicomedia is offered as the reason for the punishment of Juliana by torture, it is clear that frustration at being rejected is on the basis of Eleusius' anger. His eagerness for the marriage and the consummation are transformed into a desire to have physical pain, humiliation and suffering inflicted upon Juliana. He devises tortures which include the embarrassment of public exposure of her body as well as physical pain. He wishes to inflict humiliation, psychological suffering and physical pain upon Juliana.

Furthermore, Eleusius boasts of seizing "ealdordom" (l. 190), which can be translated as authority, dominance or mastery. (Gordon translates the term as the adjective "triumphant" but this is really very loose.) By whatever means possible – marital or martial – Eleusius will have control over Juliana. Indeed, the confrontation between the pair seems more like a formal military tribunal than a meeting between equals who are discussing marriage. The two men "togædre garas hlændon,/ hildeþremman" (ll. 63-4) which means that "the warriors leaned spears together." Eleusius is seated on his "domsetle" (l. 162) or judgement seat. Juliana is not taken to

a meeting: she is “ageaf on feonda gewæld” (l. 159) which means “given to the dominion of [her] enemies.” The disagreement between the suitor and his erstwhile bride is no longer a private matter: by refusing Eleusius, the governor, Juliana has provoked the wrath of the state. A single young female is opposed by the full might of Nicomedia’s hegemonic military power. The development is not surprising: just as Eleusius’ desire and Juliana’s are assumed to be the same (because, as a female, she is subsumed into him) so his quarrel with an individual means that that person has incurred the wrath of the state. Eleusius’ power is irrevocably linked to his status as a prefect of Nicomedia and the military might concomitant with this position. His words are therefore supported by force, rendering his power monolithic.³⁶

The actual punishment which is initially meted out to Juliana is no fleeting matter: she, the avowed virgin, is exposed to the voyeuristic gaze of the people, who are described as being riveted by her radiant beauty: “Duguð wafade/ on þære fæmnan wlite, folc eal geador” (ll. 162-3). The word *wlite* can be translated as brightness, beauty, splendour, appearance or form. It is therefore clear that exposing Juliana to the *gaze* of the populace – to all and sundry – has a deliberately sadistic, and sexual, motive. If Juliana will not surrender herself to Eleusius, he will have her form exposed to all, thus contemptuously mocking Juliana’s avowal of purity. In effect, by exposing Juliana in this manner, Eleusius invites the populace to share in his mastery of her.

As Gilbert and Gubar (1979) demonstrate in their text *The Madwoman in the Attic*, incarceration is the fate of women who dare to oppose the patriarchy. Annis Pratt has also discovered a persistent imprisonment or enclosure myth in literature about resistant women (1982: 30-37, 45-51). Predictably, this is the next step in the subjugation of Juliana:

He bi feaxe het
 ahon ond ahebban on heanne beam,
 þær seo sunsciene slege þrowade,
 sace singrimme, siex tida dægges,
 ond he ædre het eft asettan,
 laðgeniðla, ond gelædan bibead
 to carcerne.

(ll. 227-34)

(He ordered her to be hung and hauled up on a high gallows by her hair where she, dazzling as the sun, suffered a beating and extremely savage treatment for six hours of the day: and he, odious

oppressor, ordered her to be taken down directly and instructed that she be taken to prison.)

(1982: 307-8)

Once in prison, however, Juliana is not depicted as a suffering martyr, powerless, and, effete, but as an intellectually astute, morally courageous and physically powerful opponent to the demon who visits her there. Whereas her human opponents assume mastery over her (at least, temporarily, and only on the earthly realm, as the ending of the poem makes clear) Juliana subjugates the unearthly/hellish demon completely. Her victory is more complete. Juliana masters an other-worldly being, thus winning a spiritual triumph more awesome than the wicked deeds of her earthly opponents. Her victory is therefore not an unequivocally feminist victory, as she is a representative of God and her strength ultimately enables holy forces to win a battle against pagan and demonic forces.

There is, however, a distinct and powerful difference in the portrayal of the Cynewulfian Juliana and her incarnation in the later English legends: Cynewulf's Juliana is depicted as having power and strength within herself, whereas Juliana of the *Liflade* is merely a vehicle through which God's power and strength is channelled. Furthermore, Cynewulf's Juliana does contest gendered readings of women as she is powerful, brave, resilient: an altogether formidable opponent. She is by no means a feminine woman. In fact, she closely resembles the heroic Judith, determined Elene or wise Wealhtheow. Patricia Belanoff concludes, after comparing the depiction of Judith in the Old English poem and in the Apocryphal version, that Judith's femaleness is de-centred (1982: 437-8). In fact, Judith is most like the heroic protagonist Beowulf in her courage; Juliana in her saintliness; Elene in her power and Wealhtheow in her wisdom. Interestingly both James Doubleday (1971: 123) and Belanoff (1982: 558) detect incongruities (i.e. her dominance and passivity, saintliness and power, and so on) in the diction used to describe Elene as well as her actions. Belanoff's explanation for these incongruities and ambiguities is that this uneasy portrayal "allows [Elene] to represent males and females" (1982: 558). Victory and empowerment is therefore not the preserve of feminine women, but can be achieved only after a de-sexing has taken place.

Juliana's first action upon encountering the demon and hearing his message of surrender is to use her intellect. (This is in marked contrast to Juliana's earthly male opponents, who, as has

been pointed out earlier on in this argument, react emotionally to her refusal. Their emotionalism is a result not of their masculinity, but because they are pagans. And Juliana's coldly reasoning logic is a result of her Christian faith and her sacred vow, not an outcome of her femaleness.) Juliana requires proof of the disguised demon's identity in order to verify his message. This is because she finds a logical disjunction between the demon's message (as a purported angel, or messenger from God) and her beliefs. The demon's fair appearance and his message of release from suffering, welcome as these may be, are not enough to deter the saint from fulfilling her goal, which is to remain true to her beliefs, no matter what the consequences. She therefore prays for elucidation:

“Swa ic þe, bilwitne, biddan wille
 þæt þu me gecyðe, cyninga wuldor,
 þrymmes hyrde, hwæt þes þegn sy,
 lyftlacende, þe mec læreð from þe
 on stearcne weg.”

(ll. 278-82)

(So I will pray Thee in Thy purity,
 Glory of kings, Guardian of splendour,
 to reveal to me who this servant is who
 flies in the air, who in Thy name urges
 me to an evil path.)

(Gordon, 1976: 169-70)

There is an implied contrast between the irrationality of Juliana's spurned lover, who reacts emotionally because he is so angry, and Juliana's cool, level-headed appeal for information. She does not allow emotion to cloud her judgement and therefore reveals herself to be superior in restraint and intellect to all those listed by the unmasked demon as his previous victims. The binary opposites of reason/ emotion are inverted. Reason is not the domain of males: the position has been seized. Unfortunately, patriarchal binaries have not been shattered or even contested by this action, for Juliana moves into the centre as an honorary male, having shed her female identity and assumed instead the role of God's chosen, on the side of right as opposed to might. The victory for feminism is thus muted, complicit, incomplete.

In the first two sections of the poem, patriarchal logocentricity dominates as the males agree on Juliana's future without her input. Now, logocentricity is turned on its head as Juliana commands the demon to speak. Juliana is not, however, contesting the patriarchy or binary constructs, for the language which she uses is not Kristevan semiotic but logocentric.³⁷ Juliana is

using patriarchal discourse against the demon because he is now the other, the marginal, not the one of whom Juliana as a confessed Christian is a representative. Language, or words, comes pouring out of him in a torrent of self-condemnatory confession. Ironically, it is with words that the demon tries to deceive Juliana initially. He flatters her, calling her God's "dyreste" (l. 247) or dearest, and "weorþeste" (l. 248) or most worthy [one]. The demon in angelic guise offers Juliana an escape from her dilemma, a tempting solution. Now it is with words that he condemns himself as he reveals his own history of duplicitous, blasphemous acts. Whereas both Eleusius and Affricanus have used language to control Juliana, now her spiritual power over the demon is demonstrated as she forces him to confess. However, Juliana's power is still within the paradigm of Western thought and the male hegemony. Her ability to wrest words, abject, whining words, from the demon, is merely an inversion of binaries: here Juliana represents Christian good. Juliana as a female is not centred, but Juliana as a Christian is able to move into the centre.

Because of her steadfast holiness, Juliana has a special power with words. What is especially interesting is her use of a patriarchal construct to subvert (from within) a patriarchal paradigm. Her words hold the demon in thrall to her will. He is described as being "forhtafongen, friþes orwena" (l. 320), or "afraid, pinioned, without hope of truce" (Bradley, 1982: 310). The gentle virgin pursues the demon with words until he is completely subjugated to her will. The verbal contest between Juliana and the demon includes the following instructions from her: "þu scealt furþor gen ... secgan" (ll. 317-8) (You must tell still more) (1982: 310); "þu me furþor scealt / secgan ..." (ll. 347-8) (You shall further tell me) (1982: 310); "Saga, earmsceapen, unclæne gæst," (l. 418); ("Tell me, miserable sullied spirit ...") (1982: 312); "þu scealt ondettan yfeldæde ma, (l. 456) ("You will have to confess more evil deeds ...") (1982: 313). An examination of the words reveals a preponderance of words in the imperative tense, such as *saga*, or words expressing compulsion, such as *scealt*. Juliana is not offering a choice to the demon. Neither is she passive. She is in control, commanding the demon to speak. Jane Chance points out that the verbal encounters between the demon and Juliana abound in martial imagery, which echoes both the imagery of Ephesians chapter 6 and Aldehlm's *De Virginitate*. Furthermore, Chance shows how Juliana proves to be the superior warrior, who earns the unbounded admiration of the demon for her prowess (1986: 40-6).

It should be noted that my argument about Juliana's active stance is diametrically opposed to that of most critics, who insist on Juliana's passivity. Selected references to received critical

opinion on Juliana's perceived passivity are noted below.³⁸ It is not my intention to debate the issue any further. Suffice it to say that I disagree with these critics. In any case, it could be argued, as a further counter to claims of Juliana's passivity, that she subverts certain patriarchal ploys by being passive.

In contrast to Juliana's commanding, imperative orders, an examination of the demon's responses to Juliana's instructions reveals his obedience to her: he simperingly assures the "ead mæg" or "blessed virgin" that he will "yfla gehwylces/ or gecyðe" (ll. 352-53) (reveal ... each of the evils ...") (1982: 311). After each confession from the demon, Juliana coerces further revelations from him, until the demon avers that her instructions – which he calls her eloquence – is what has forced him to confess. The forcefulness of Juliana's instructions has rendered him subject to her, as he confesses below:

“Nu ic þæt gehyre þurh þinne hleoþorcwide,
 þæt ic nyde sceal niþa gebæded
 mod meldian, swa þu me beodest,
 þreaned þolian.”

(ll. 461-64)

(“Now from your eloquence I can hear that,
 forced by these afflictions, I must of necessity
 declare my mind as you command me, and
 suffer the pain of punishment.”)

(1982: 313)

The word *gecyðe* has connotations of testifying or vowing: it is not a straightforward statement, but a more solemn testimony, a promise. Once the demon's duplicity has been revealed, he is forced to speak the truth to the virtuous maiden. Indeed, it seems that it is the holiness of Juliana which is so compelling because her words are called *hleoþorcwide* which has connotations of harmony and strength of tone. The demon stands accused – *meldian* – by his own words; his will is subjugated to hers. Juliana's holy strength of will has rendered her attacker a victim.

It is necessary to clarify certain medieval beliefs about the nature of good and evil, as a misunderstanding of these beliefs – a failure to account for the alterity of the remote past – has bolstered traditional critics' beliefs in the relative insignificance of Juliana's victory over the demon.³⁹ The distinction between sinfulness and sanctity was marked: for example, laymen were

thought to be sullied by the necessity of having to earn a living. Their only hope of sanctity lay in the intercession of the saints (Lynch, 1992: 132). If mere utilitarian work presented a danger to the soul, then sin was much more dangerous, and thereafter evil itself. Juliana has therefore achieved an enormous success by cowing this demon, the epitome of manipulative evil. Lanford painstakingly points out the vast distinction which is drawn in Cynewulf's text between the holiness of Juliana and the thorough evil of both Affricanus and Eleusius, and, of course, the demon. She shows how the very structure of the poem, with its repeated episodes of confrontation, punishment (of Juliana) and failure (of the punishment) culminate in the final episode where Juliana is rewarded with eternal bliss and Eleusius with eternal ignominy (1975: 128-52). Thus, the polar opposites of good and evil are depicted, and the respective fate of good Christians – bliss in heaven – and evil pagans – torment in hell – is foreshadowed by the fact that the torture of Juliana is inefficacious.

The demon does try to engage Juliana in a verbal sparring match, because he attempts to shift the focus from his own infamous history which he is being forced to recite, to an explanation of Juliana's extraordinary powers:

“Þu me ærest saga,
 hu þu gedyrstig þurh deop gehygd
 wurde þus wigprist ofer eall wifa cyn,
 þæt þu mec þus fæste fetrum gebunde,
 æghwæs orwigne.”

(ll. 430-4)

(“First tell me how you, emboldened by your
 deep resolve, became thus daring in battle
 beyond all womankind, that you have me utterly
 impotent, bound fast with fetters in this way?”)

(1982: 312)

The demon, wily devil that he is, may well be trying to focus attention elsewhere than on his own infamy, but genuine puzzlement is evident. After all, the saintly Juliana has succeeded in unmasking the demon and subjugating him, whereas much more worldly-wise characters have failed. Included in his list of victims is the notorious Nero, the experienced statesman Pilate, the expedient ruler Herod, and so on. But Juliana has proved more astute, more steadfast and more strong-minded than any of them. She is not only more daring than any other woman, but has also surpassed the demon's male opponents.

Juliana, however, is not to be diverted from her purpose, which is to extract a full confession from the demon. She remains in control. The demon continues his recital, which is a horrifying account of malignity, in which his victims have been assailed either with physical torment, psychological traps, or spiritual darkness. According to this account, the demon is no “miserable creature” as Sisam (1967: 7) suggests, but a truly evil Machiavellian figure whose efforts have consigned countless souls to perdition. By labelling the demon as pathetic and an unworthy, unchallenging adversary, Sisam diminishes the demon, but also Juliana’s achievement in cowing her adversary with words. This is yet another misreading. Juliana’s subjugation of the demon points not to the demon’s inanity but to her glorious spiritual power, combined with a nostalgic reminder of the veneration accorded to Germanic women. Furthermore, the poem must be read with at least an acknowledgement that its genre has been considered, for as a Saint’s Life, it had a specific Christian didactic purpose.⁴⁰ Juliana’s achievement must not be diminished. It is formidable, as is made clear by the demon’s panegyric to Juliana:

“Ne wæs ænig þara,
 þæt me þus þriste, swa þu nu þa,
 halig mid hondum, hrinan dorste,
 næs ænig þæs modig mon ofer eorþan
 þurh halge meajt, heahfædra nan
 ne witgena. Næs ænig þara,
 þæt mec þus bealdlice bennum bilegde,
 þream forþrycte”

(ll. 510-20)

(“There was none of them who dared lay hands
 on me as confidently as you, a saintly woman,
 do; nor was there anyone on earth so
 courageous by virtue of divine power, not one
 of the patriarchs nor of the prophets. There
 was none of them who so boldly loaded me with
 shackles and trod me under with rebukes”)

(1982: 314)

Furthermore, the repetition of phrases such as *ne wæs ænig þara*, *næs ænig þæs*, and *næs ænig þara* reinforces the notion of Juliana’s nonpareil status, as no-one has rivalled her achievements. Juliana’s elevated status, as described by her victim, is of immense significance, for the hierarchical structures which prevail have been inverted. Evil has been vanquished by holiness; demon by saint; male by female; oppressor by oppressed; attacker by victim. A new ordering of binary opposites has been created, in which what was previously marginalised is now

ordering of binary opposites has been created, in which what was previously marginalised is now centralised. (But this new ordering is merely a shift from an earthly and pagan locus of patriarchal mastery to a heavenly and Christian locus. Male/female positions have not really been contested as Juliana has eschewed her sexuality and thereby achieved holiness.) Juliana is thus a representative of a heavenly order, in which she figures prominently because she has rejected her sexuality. Nevertheless, her subjugation of the demon is impressive, given his long history of proselytising. The completeness of Juliana's victory over the demon is epitomised by the following 'testimonial' from the demon:

“Ic to soþe wat,
 þæt ic ær ne sið ænig ne mette
 in woruldrice wif þe gelic
 þristan geþohtes ne þweorhtimbran
 mægþa cynnes. Is on me sweotul,
 þæt þu unscamge æghwæs wurde
 on ferþe frod.”

(ll. 547-51)

(“I know for certain that neither early nor late have I met any woman like you in the worldly kingdom, more confident of purpose or more stubborn, among womankind. It is clear to me that you have come to be blameless in every respect and wise in spirit.”)

(1982: 315)

Juliana's subjugation of the demon surpasses his vanquishing of both his Christian and heathen victims: she has attained psychological, spiritual and physical mastery. This is obvious because the demon has no will to resist her commands: “þæt ic nyde sceal niþa gebæded/ mod meldian” (ll. 462-3). The words *gebæded* and *meldian* reveal that the demon is compelled, irresistibly, and against his own will, to confess to Juliana. She therefore has psychological mastery over him. The demon also realises that the basis of Juliana's power is spiritual as he constantly refers to her holiness, as in the following examples: “halig” (l. 512); “þurh halge meahht” (l. 514). As a result of Juliana's psychological and spiritual mastery over her demonic adversary, she is also able to intimidate him physically. She does this by seizing hold of him and dragging him along with her to a further interview with Eleusius:

Heo þæt deofol teah,
 breostum inbryrded, bendum fæstne,
 halig hæþenne.

(ll. 534-36)

(She dragged the devil along – she inspired within
her breast, he fast in fetters; she holy, he heathen.)
(1982: 315)

The demon himself states: “Hwæt! þu mec þreades/ þurh sarslege!” (ll. 546-7), which translated means “Look, you have punished me with a painful beating” (1987: 315). The final proof of his abjection occurs when he has to beg the “hlæfdige min / Juliana” (ll. 539-40) or “my lady Juliana” to release him, in order to prevent yet more humiliation being heaped upon him. Although a reversal has occurred, no radical shift or opposition to the patriarchy has, in reality, transpired. This is because Juliana, as a spiritually pure, physically intact Christian virgin, has taken on the status of an honorary male.⁴¹

In other versions of the legend (such as the *Liflade*, *Seyn Julian* and Caxton’s *Golden Legend*) Juliana flings the demon into a stinking cesspit at this point. This event has been omitted by Cynewulf, for reasons about which we can only conjecture, although Pollard (1980: 96) suggests that Cynewulf generally omitted sensational or prurient material.

Cynics, determined not to perceive the efficacy of the admittedly muted feminist arguments being postulated in this piece, might seek to counter the assertions which are discussed above. The argument could contend that the released demon, having claimed to have been totally humiliated by Juliana, returns later as an adversary, hoping to whip up further punishments for her:

“Gyldað nu mid gyrne, þæt heo goda ussa
meaht forhögde, ond mec swiþast
geminsade, þæt ic to meldan wearð.
Lætað hy laþra leana hleotan
þurh wæpnes spor, wrecað ealdne nið,
synne gesohte!”

(ll. 619-24)

(Now pay her back with evil because she mocked
the might of our gods and utterly unmanned me
so that I turned tale-bearer. See to it that she gets
her unwelcome desserts through the weapon’s
wound: beleaguered by sin, take vengeance for
old persecution.)

(1982: 317)

This sally by the previously chastened demon does not, however, bolster arguments against the feminist reading. In fact, Juliana has succeeded in subjugating and humiliating him so thoroughly that the demon is seething with vicious resentment. The demon's behaviour in wishing to see Juliana suffer physical torments is psychologically apt. There is no reason to suppose that a perfidious being would not behave as he does: his wounded pride would be partly assuaged if his tormentor is in turn tormented.

This is a final, and ultimately powerless, sally from the demon for all that is required to quell him is a look from Juliana:

þa seo eadge biseah
 ongean gramum, Iuliana,
 gehyrde heo hearm galan helle deofol.
 Feond moncynnes ongon þa on fleam sceacan,
 wita neosan

(ll. 627-31)

(Then the blessed Juliana looked towards the
 fulminating creature and listened to the hell-fiend
 crowing abuse. Then mankind's enemy scuttled
 off in retreat, to return into torments)

(1982: 317)

All it takes is a look: no words, no physical threat, merely a look, pregnant with inference. Once again traditional, and intimidatory, actions have been overturned by the heroine. Whereas Juliana was initially intended to be punished and humiliated by being hung by her hair from a gallows and subjected to the gaze of the voyeuristic onlookers who were fascinated not only by her radiant beauty but also by her exposed nakedness, she eventually turns the ploy of the *gaze* against her assailants. For example, Eleusius' *gaze* infuriates him, rather than gratifying his lust for revenge against Juliana. Furthermore, the demon is belittled by Juliana's gaze as this renders him powerless and cowering. However, Juliana's gaze differs from Eleusius' sexually inspired gaze. Her gaze originates from her holiness and purity, and therefore functions like a searchlight, exposing evil and rendering it impotent. Juliana's *gaze*, therefore, is powerful and searching, even searing, as the demon's powerlessness against her holiness is made abundantly apparent to him. A tactic of patriarchal possessive and objectifying control has been used against patriarchal figures to great effect. This is an example of feminine empowerment, but, unfortunately, within the constraints of a patriarchal construct, which has accorded power to Juliana but only because

she has fulfilled the mores of the Christian hegemony not only by resisting evil but also by subjugating herself absolutely to the dictates of the Church.

Juliana has, indeed, attained mastery over the demon. Through his own words, he admits that he is ruined:

“Wa me forworhtum! Nu is wen micel
 þæt heo mec eft wille earmne gehynan
 yflum yrumþum, swa heo mec ær dyde.”
 (ll. 632-34)

(“Alas for me! I am ruined! Now there is a great
 probability that she will again shame wretched
 me with evil humiliations, just as she did to me before.”)
 (1982: 317)

The demon has been utterly vanquished. Indeed, at this point he vanishes entirely from the scene, an abject failure. Although Juliana is dispatched from the earthly realm and is thus physically punished by Eleusius, the ultimate spiritual victory remains Juliana's. The demon has not succeeded in coercing Juliana into committing a spiritual solecism. All that remains is for the demon to flee, howling, to the nether region from which he was dispatched on a mission to trick Juliana into an easy act of expedience – the propitiation of a sacrifice to pagan gods.

Ironically, the demon (in his guise as an angel) had predicted that Juliana would be *eadhreðig* (blessedly triumphant) if she does concede to him by sacrificing to pagan gods. However, because she fails to succumb to this temptation, she is, indeed, in the completest possible way, *eadhreðig*. This powerful accolade is accorded her because she is able to overcome physical torture and psychological testing through her own spiritual strength.

Juliana's punishment, in the extant portion of the text, includes exposure, whipping, incarceration, ordeal by fire, and immersion in boiling lead. (It is possible that the missing portion contains descriptions of torture by stretching on a wheel, seeing that this was a favoured method of torture which was also intended for Catherine. Legend also has it that Juliana was tortured in this fashion. But, as a portion of the tenth-century Exeter manuscript has been lost, this aspect of her sufferings will be omitted from the discussion.) As the torture has increased in severity and cruelty, so has Juliana's ability to withstand the ordeal: Juliana is described as suffering blows “slege þrowade” (l. 229); once imprisoned in the dark dungeon, she lies with

Christ's faith securely bound in her heart "Hyre wæs Cristes lof/ in ferðlocan fæste biwunden" (ll. 233-4); furthermore she is not alone in her imprisonment, as the Holy Spirit is with her "Hyre wæs halig gæst/ singal gesið" (ll. 241-2). Once Juliana is assailed by fire, the merely spiritual comfort of the Holy Spirit has been transmuted into actual intervention by an angel in order to prevent undue suffering for the heroine:

Ða cwom engel godes
 frætwum blican þæt fyr tosceaf,
 gefreode ond gefreoðade facnes clæne,
 leahtra lease, ond þone lig towearp,
 heorogiferne, þær seo halie stod,
 mægþa bealdor, on pam midle gesund.
 (ll. 563-8)

(Then came the angel of God gleaming
 with adornments and thrust aside the fire and
 freed and protected the woman pure from
 blemish and devoid of vices, and extinguished
 the deadly voracious flame where the saintly
 paragon of virgins was standing unharmed in
 the midst.)

(1982: 316)

Juliana had been unharmed by the flames, but nevertheless, the angel, who is depicted as a Germanic warrior covered with armour or adornments (the word *frætwa* can be translated as ornaments, trappings, armour or treasures) extinguishes the flames and rescues Juliana from further danger. It is perfectly clear that Juliana has, in effect, rendered the tortures ineffective because of her innate holiness, as the following appellations are used of her in the midst of the description of the angel's heavenly intervention: Juliana is "facnes clæne" (l. 565) or clean of sin; "halge" (l. 567) or a saint; and, most interestingly "mægþa bealdor" (l. 568) literally, prince (usually translated as chief) of virgins. The masculine term used accords with the special position of chaste females who thereby surrendered their femaleness and became honorary males.⁴² Also, although a heavenly angel does intervene, this is merely to extinguish the flames – "þæt fyr tosceaf" (l. 564) – because Juliana has been unharmed by the fire – "seo halge stod/ ...gesund" (ll. 567-8). Given the Anglo-Saxon penchant for riddles and punning, it does not seem unlikely that the word *gesund* can be read as meaning both uninjured physically **and** spiritually sound, for it is as a result of her spiritual state that she is physically unharmed by the flames.⁴³ The angel's presence is not necessary: it is a confirmation that Juliana has acquired powers beyond the mundane. She has become extraordinary, and therefore heavenly signs of acceptance occur.

I contend that the depiction of the angel as a battle-decorated Germanic warrior, gleaming with adornments (presumably awarded for valour in battle, as was the practice in Anglo-Saxon culture) foregrounds an anachronistic, and nostalgic, hearkening back to the past glories of the Anglo-Saxon warrior tradition. The reciprocal ties of loyalty, service, shelter and reward, within the *comitatus* of pagan, pre-seventh-century England have been described in detail by many writers.⁴⁴ Therefore, without repeating their assertions, it can be stated, with a fair degree of authority, that the *comitatus* operated according to strict vows of fealty, public (and material) reward for bravery, mutual support between lord and retainer, as well as death before dishonour. (Admittedly the poem, as best as can be ascertained, probably dates from the ninth century⁴⁵ – long after England had been Christianised, and long after the *comitatus* ethic had begun to disintegrate.⁴⁶ However, nostalgic recall of past pagan practices is found in other Christian works, such as *The Dream of the Rood*, which dates to the early eighth century, where pagan beliefs and practices are re-cast in a thoroughly Christian ambience.⁴⁷) Furthermore, Belanoff sees indisputable evidence of Germanic elements in *Juliana, Judith and Elene*.⁴⁸ The angel who assists Juliana is clearly a battle veteran operating under orders from his Lord, and Juliana in turn is a warrior engaged in battle (Belanoff, 1982: 669-71). Juliana, the saintly heroine, can be read as a militant Christian warrior. Further connotations accrue to the heroine because there is a glimmer of nostalgia for past Anglo-Saxon warrior glory. And directly alongside (not behind) the image of the ferociously brave, fatalistic Anglo-Saxon warrior is that of the equally brave, powerful and venerated Germanic woman who was thought to have mystical spiritual power, as has been discussed in chapter two of this dissertation.⁴⁹ There is a direct correlation between pagan Germanic heroines and Juliana, the Christian saint. The first connections are moral, which in Juliana's case cause her to be described as radiant, shining and bright. Next, is the extraordinary, mystical power of women. That Juliana has acquired something other than her own strength of purpose and steadfast adherence to her vows of chastity is evinced in the following torture which is planned for her, as no angel figure appears to either comfort her or to rescue her from the deadly heat of the fire. The mysterious explosion of the devilish cauldron must therefore be attributed to her power.

The penultimate torture meted out to the heroine before her execution consists of being thrust into a cauldron of boiling lead: “Het þa ofestlice yrre gebolgen/ leahtra lease in þæs leades wylm/ scufan butan scyldum” (ll. 582-4). Once again, the contrast between the sinless (or,

according to Bosworth and Toller's dictionary, faultless) saint, whose demeanour is utterly serene and the evil tormentor is marked, for he is "yrre geboigen" (l. 582) or "swollen with fury".

Whereas at all times the saint remains unmoved and perfectly composed, Eleusius is prompted not only to more and more savage tortures, but he also becomes less rational. Furthermore, whereas Juliana has the comfort of heavenly, angelic intervention, Eleusius now consorts with the defeated demon who advises on the manufacture, with evil incantations – "Biwyrcañ het wundercræfte" (l. 575) – of a special cauldron for the following torture. Threats and coercion have failed to alter Juliana's dedication; public exposure and flogging have left her unmoved; incarceration has resulted not in derangement but in succour; fire has not harmed her. What remains are devilish spells – the defeated demon and the tormentor are now in league. Eleusius has clearly lost his reasoning faculties: he is so emotionally twisted by thoughts of revenge and regaining lost esteem that he fails to heed the warning signs not only of impending failure but also of eternal damnation for himself.⁵⁰ A foreshadowing of this occurs when the molten lead intended for Juliana does not harm her but instead burns seventy-five of the heathens:

Ða toscaden wearð
lig tolysed. Lead wide sprong,
hat, heorogifre. Hæleð wurdon acle
arasad for þy ræse. Ðær on rime forborn
þurh þæs fires fnæst fif ond hundseofontig
hæðnes herges. Ða gen sio halge stod
ungewemde wlite. Næs hyre wloh ne hrægl,
ne feax ne fel fyre gemæled,
ne lic ne leoþu.

(ll. 584-92)

(Then the fire was riven and scattered and the lead exploded wide, hot and deadly voracious. People were terrified and fear-stricken in the face of its onrush. Seventy-five in number of the heathen host were scorched up there by the blast of the fire: yet still the saint was standing with beauty unscarred. Not her hem nor her robe, neither hair nor skin were blemished by fire, neither body nor limbs.)

(1982: 316)

The tools of punishment are miraculously, and in spite of devilish incantations, to inflict suffering upon the pagan onlookers instead of harming Juliana. This is a heavenly sign of affirmation for Juliana's stance. Thus, Juliana enjoys more than protection from danger and evil now: harm befalls bystanders, whereas she remains untouched. She is therefore touched by God.

All present should therefore heed the sign of God's hand upon her, and the significance of her chaste dedication is not to be underestimated. The implication is clear: sanctity and virginity are interwoven. As is discussed later in this chapter, it is perfectly clear that Juliana, by rejecting the worldly patriarchy of Nicomedia, has voluntarily placed herself under the auspices of another patriarchy, albeit benign.

From this point onwards, the somewhat leisurely pace of the poem shifts, for in a mere sixty lines after the departure of the demon, the matter of the poem (but excluding Cynewulf's epilogue) is rather peremptorily concluded. It seems as though, having proven Juliana's spirituality and holiness, and thus set our saint up as an example to Anglo-Saxon womankind, the rest (of the poem) is merely a formality. In particular, the narrative itself is extremely brisk and concise. Of the conclusion, some twenty-eight of the sixty lines – almost half of this penultimate section – consists of Juliana's final exhortation to the wicked people of Nicomedia. The continued emphasis on Juliana contrasted with the summarily dismissed saint's tormentors (appropriately enough into everlasting perdition) suggests that the story was not written with the primary aim of representing evil as punishable (although this does, in fact, occur) but in order to recognise and glorify saintly behaviour.⁵¹

In the extremity of her situation, Juliana is depicted as an active and crusading proselytizer for the faith. Juliana states her own purpose to be:

Forþon ic, leof weorud, læran wille,
 æfremmende, þæt ge eower hus
 gefæstnige, þy læs hit ferblædum
 windas toweorpan. Weal sceal þy trumra
 strong wipstandan storma scurum,
 Leahtra gehygdum.

(ll. 647-52)

(Therefore, dear people, I wish to teach you,
 in fulfilling the law, to make fast your house
 in case the winds should wreck it with sudden
 blasts. A strong wall shall more stoutly withstand
 the onslaughts of storms, the thoughts of things
 vicious.)

(1982: 318)

These are the people who have vicariously and voyeuristically participated in her suffering, but Juliana's concern is not with revenge, rebuke or fulmination, unlike the spiteful demon. Her holiness is demonstrated to be thorough as she seeks to win the pagan populace to the service of God. Her final speech is couched in metaphorical words of comfort, shelter and protection which vividly contrast with her own exposed vulnerability. Yet the listening populace could not but be aware that the "strong walls" of which Juliana speaks provide spiritual succour and strength, and by no means physical comfort, for the heroine is indeed in a perilous situation. Juliana's spiritual virtue provides her not only with the attributes mentioned above, but also with sweet grace as the final words which she utters before being despatched from the earthly realm are a blessing, a wish for peace: "Sibb sy mid eowic,/ symle soþ lufu" (ll. 668-9). ("Peace be with you and true love for ever") (1982: 318).

The marked contrast between Juliana's piety and grace on the one hand, and her oppressor's malevolent vindictiveness on the other, which has been drawn so vividly from the start of the poem, is epitomised in two further ways: Juliana suffers punishment and torture which increases in horror and cruelty, yet she acquires an increasing ability to fend off the consequences of the sufferings imposed upon her. Therefore, Juliana quite clearly increases in stature and power, while Eleusius, as a symbol of patriarchal control, diminishes in prestige as his supposedly terrifying tortures are rendered ineffectual. Ironically, as the powerful ruler's desire to torment his victim increases, his attempts become ever more futile as Juliana's power increases. Eleusius' power over her therefore diminishes in effect. Concomitantly, Eleusius' power over his subjects is thwarted as a wholesale conversion follows after the death of the saint. The effect of the conversion is described as sincere and lasting: "þær siððan wæs/ geara gongum godes lof hafen/ þrymme micle oþ þisne dæg/ mid þeodscipe" (ll. 692-5). "This day" which is referred to in the poem is obviously the time of Cynewulf, some hundreds of years after Juliana's martyrdom. And the wholesale (and sincere) conversion of Nicomedia to Christianity is a body-blow to a kingdom which had been founded, and maintained, on pagan ritual and practice.

Ironically, Eleusius' evil is what enables Juliana to win her saint's halo, and the stubborn exertion of his power over a seemingly hapless victim is what leads to the rejection of his power-base and a negation of the system of belief upon which his rule is based. However, whilst evil patriarchal power is what is defeated by the virgin's sacred vow and the spiritual strength with which this arms her, Juliana's victory over patriarchy cannot be trumpeted as a feminist one *per se*. For, although we have a lone woman's spiritual and moral victory over an evil leader and his

cohorts, Juliana is ultimately physically vanquished (although it can be argued that she desired this martyrdom). And, although Juliana does defeat the pagans who desire to bend her will and worship to their practices, her victory occurs not because she is a woman, but because she denies her female sexuality expression. It is subverted and androgynised into a passionless dedication to Christ. Only by denying her femininity and her femaleness, and only by undergoing a metaphorical consummation and initiation into the ranks of the saints – by being beheaded – is a woman able to defeat the patriarchy. And then the patriarchal system which Juliana contests is, by its evil nature, already subservient to a greater and ultimately more powerful patriarchy.

Juliana willingly submits to the stroke of the sword. Indeed, she welcomes the news of her imminent death as a joy and release:

Ða wearð þære halgan hyht geniwad
 ond þæs mægdnes mod miclum geblissad,
 sibban heo gehyrde hæleð eahtian
 inwitrune, þæt hyre endestæf
 of gewindagum weorþan sceolde,
 lif alysed.

(ll. 607-12)

(For the saint, hope was renewed then, and
 the virgin's heart was greatly cheered when
 she heard the man devise that spiteful counsel,
 that for her it was to be the end of her days of
 strife, that her life was to be set free.)

(1982: 317)

Juliana's beheading is, for her, a sort of consummation: the cruel death which she suffers at the hands of her tormentors is what gains her a martyr's crown and her place at the side of God. In terms of the feminist argument, what is significant about this particular section is that Juliana, who should ostensibly have been a quivering victim, has defied all attempts by her enemies to suppress, trick and subdue her. Hers is the ultimate victory here, for not only has she triumphed unscathed over the most sadistic physical tortures possible, but she has also attained victory over a formidable spiritual adversary, the personal emissary of Satan himself.

Having vanquished the demon, and having remained spiritually impervious thus far to the hideous tortures inflicted upon her by Eleusius and his cohorts, it only remains for Juliana to receive the ultimate punishment – death. Her execution is concluded in a startlingly brisk manner

and is characterised by a matter-of-fact tone. One simple sentence describes her execution by beheading: “Ða hyre sawl wearð/ alæded of lice to þam langan gefean/ þurh sweordslege” (ll. 669-71). This final aspect of her sufferings under Eleusius is not couched in sexual terminology at all. This is despite the rather blatant sexual elements evident in Eleusius’ attraction to her, and upon rejection, the sexually titillating nature of her initial torture by means of exposure, as well as the sado-masochistic whipping which she endures.⁵² Other beheading scenes in Old English literature are fraught with sexual connotations. (Chance (1990) does point out, however, that although erotic descriptions of battle scenes between male and female protagonists exist, these are not particularly common in Anglo-Saxon Literature.⁵³) An example from a literary text includes Judith’s decapitation of Holofernes which is a ‘consummation’ by death ushered in by means of the phallic sword. Judith becomes the aggressor, overpowering the drunken Holofernes who had himself intended to possess Judith sexually.⁵⁴ In *Beowulf*, Grendel’s mother’s decapitation of Aeschere, and the deadly battle between the hero and the *ides aglæcwif* or monster-woman, and the subsequent severing of Grendel’s head by Beowulf are erotically charged.⁵⁵

In *Juliana*, the only tortures undergone by the heroine which actually result in harm for her, are the first (being strung up and whipped) and the last (her execution by beheading). Strangely enough, it is these tortures which are sexually allusive. The significance of the first has already been discussed.⁵⁶ Beheading has obvious sexual connotations, and is of particular significance in the case of a virgin martyr. For it is by being beheaded by a phallus-shaped instrument that the avowed virgin achieves her aim of complete dedication to Christ, as an unsullied whole. Although Juliana’s death is a welcome release for her from her earthly torments, in feminist terms it cannot be seen as a victory. For only by sublimating her own sexuality and dedicating herself completely to chaste worship of God, can she achieve holiness. Juliana resists the Nicomedian patriarchy as represented by her father and her erstwhile suitor, Eleusius, but she replaces that hegemony with the massive hierarchical and patriarchal structures of the church, which was from the earliest times, strongly misogynistic. Note, however, that Juliana engenders this choice entirely at her own volition. Whereas the oppression of the Nicomedian patriarchy is foisted upon her, she wholeheartedly accepts the strictures of the church’s teachings on what constitutes holiness. Juliana is not resisting or rejecting patriarchal domination: she is a compliant female as she accepts her subordinate position within the Christian patriarchal hegemony. It is therefore apparent that the text equivocates in its feminist resistance to the patriarchy. This feminist reading is therefore only partially successful.

However, given the muted terms of Juliana's escape from one form of patriarchal oppression into another, it is quite clear that she attains a three-fold victory – surely a significant number.⁵⁷ Firstly, her earthly adversary, Eleusius, and a goodly band of his retainers, are horribly drowned:

Ðær XXX wæs
 ond feowere eac feores onsohte
 þurh wæges wylm wigena cynnes,
 heane mid hlaford, hroþra bidæled,
 hyhta lease helle sohton.

(ll. 678-82)

(There the life of thirty of the warrior sort
 and four besides was exacted by the welter
 of the wave; deprived of comforts, destitute
 of hopes, they headed for hell.)

(1982: 318)

It is perfectly clear that Eleusius' death is not accidental: it is divine retribution for his evil deeds: "Swylt ealle fornom/ ... þurh þearlic þrea" (ll. 675-8) or "Death destroyed them all ... by way of severe punishment" (1982: 318). In true Anglo-Saxon warrior tradition, gift-giving is mentioned, but here in a pejorative sense, as these particular warriors receive not gifts but eternal torment for their deeds in the service of Eleusius.

Secondly, Juliana's triumph consists of a spiritual victory as her saintly witness results in the mass conversion of the townsfolk. Sainly testimony is, of course, one of the purposes of martyrdom. Veneration and emulation are what should follow. Juliana's witness results in both heavenly and earthly honour. The dignified burial given to her decapitated corpse is sharply contrasted with the unheralded and unmourned demise of Eleusius and his warriors beneath the waves:

Ungelice wæs
 læded lofsongum lic haligre
 micle mægne to moldgræfe,
 þæt hy hit gebrohton burgum in innan,
 sidfolc micel. Ðær siððan wæs
 geara gongum godes lof hafen

þrymme micle of þisne dæg
mid þeodscipe.

(ll. 688-95)

(In different fashion was the body of the saint escorted by a great throng to the grave with songs of praise when a great multitude, they brought it inside the city ramparts. Since then, with the passing of the years, God's praise has been exalted there among that nation with great splendour up to this day.)

(1982: 319)

Juliana's victory is a very sweet and complete one, for thousands of would-be pagans are now fervent Christians, so much so that the nation is now (at the time of Cynewulf's writings) known as a devout one – a complete *volte-face*. Furthermore, the conversion of Nicomedia is not temporary, according to Cynewulf, as some six-hundred years later the country still worships God with *þrymme micle* or “great glory” until the time of writing the poem.

Thirdly, Juliana's victory consists in an eternal reward. Juliana achieves success not only in worldly terms but also in the eternal spiritual realm. Although Juliana is dispatched from this life by the brutal slash of a sword, her death is presented not as a victory for her persecutors, seeing that this is their last resort in a fruitless battle to overpower her spiritual defences, but as a victory for her:

Ða hyre sawl wearð
alæded of lice to þam langan gefean
þurh sweordslege.

(ll. 669-70)

(Then her soul was dispatched from her body into lasting bliss by the stroke of a sword.)

(1982: 318)

That Juliana's death is not a defeat but a triumph is proved by her reward, which is *þam langan gefean* or “everlasting bliss”. Thus, instead of an earthly sexual consummation, and deflowering or beheading, Juliana is punished by being beheaded by a phallic sword, whilst retaining her virginal intactness. Earlier, Juliana had been designated as “Criste gecorene” (l. 605). Bosworth and Toller offer “the elect” or “the chosen” as acceptable translations for *gecorene*. Furthermore, Belanoff glosses this term to mean, additionally, “agreeable, acceptable, pleasing”.⁵⁸ The ultimate accolade for Juliana, and proof that her actions have proved pleasing to God, is the fact that she is

designated as Christ's elect. There can be no higher reward for a Christian: Juliana's is as a result of resisting the invitation to impurity which marriage to Eleusius would require (although it must be noted that Pollard does not detect a resistance to marriage *per se* in the text). Yet virgins were thought to earn a special designation of honour – the *aureola* – which is specifically mentioned in *Hali Meidhad*.⁵⁹

The manner of Juliana's execution bears comment. Earlier, the sexual element evident in Eleusius' desire has been discussed. Ironically, Juliana's torture and ultimate martyrdom allows her to satisfy the criteria for elevation to the sainthood. Her earthly sufferings, instituted by her erstwhile suitor Eleusius, have actually smoothed her path into heaven. According to medieval beliefs about salvation, time was spent in purgatory, which as the derivation of the word suggests, was a time in limbo between the earthly and heavenly realm, during which accumulated, unconfessed sins were purged. Many medieval manuscripts depict saints, popes and the likes bypassing purgatory. Thus, for Juliana, the more horrible, unjust and malicious the earthly sufferings inflicted upon her, the quicker and greater her eternal reward. Ironically, Eleusius succeeds in achieving nothing but punishment for himself and extraordinary rewards for his victim.

Having established a counter-argument to the usual claim that Cynewulf's Juliana is passive, and demonstrated her three-fold victory over both the demon and Eleusius, it is now necessary to investigate the reason for and source of Juliana's powers.

It cannot be disputed that Juliana enjoys nonpareil status among women. But why is it that a simple girl, daughter of a minor official in Nicodemia, has such a peculiarly elevated position and resultant power over the demon, who himself has so easily overcome multitudes of victims? Does Juliana truly possess remarkable strength of character or is there another reason for her prowess and power?

An examination of the appellations used to describe Juliana reveal a preponderance of terms describing her virginity. As Belanoff (1982: 653-61) has demonstrated, Juliana's holiness is the primary characteristic which singles her out from other women. This holiness is premised largely upon her virginity. This implies, of course, that Juliana is only able to achieve her deeds by rejecting her femaleness. The choices available to her are therefore limited and proscribed by her

gender. Specific words which refer to her virginal state are: *fæmne* (virgin), *mæg* and *mægden* (maiden), and *mægðhad* (maidenhood). Juliana is *bealdor mægða* or chief of maidens. Although *bealdor* introduces a military image, those of whom Juliana is characterised as chief, are maidens. Belanoff says:

Juliana is thus, through this epithet, categorized among very powerful leaders, pagan and Christian. We must not forget, however, that she is *bealdor* only of *mægða*, "maidens".

(Belanoff, 1982: 582)

Furthermore, Cynewulf's "portrayal of his heroine reveals that, in his mind, she was primarily pure, saintly, strong and shining. In addition, he shows minor interest in Juliana's wisdom and youthfulness" (Belanoff, 1982: 582). 'Shining' is associated with saintliness, hence the radiant halos which surround medieval saints' heads.

Juliana's purity, which is obviously associated with her avowedly virginal state, will be discussed next. (In Old English poetry, only the Virgin Mary rivals Juliana in terms of her purity.) Understanding Juliana's purity is probably crucial to understanding her depiction in this poem as well as the motivation behind such a depiction. Juliana's purity is described by the following terms: *facnes clæne* (pure of wickedness); *clæne* (clear, pure, free from); *unscamge* (lacking shame); *butan scyldum* (without guilt, shame); *synna lease* (sinless); *leahtra lease* (without blame, corruption) and *grondor lease* (without sin/ innocent). Belanoff points out that most of these terms elucidate what Juliana lacks rather than what she possesses.⁶⁰ In feminist terminology, our (fe)male protagonist is being characterised by a lack, an absence, a lacuna, an elision, a difference. Ironically, in this instance, the lack is positive. Juliana is valorised because she lacks guilt, shame, blame, and/or sin. The sin or guilt which she so lacks is clearly sexual in nature because of the number of adjectives and abstract nouns describing Juliana's virginity. She lacks sexual experience, and eschews all thought of becoming sexually active. Juliana thus refuses to be either *gesinigan* (married), *bryd* (a bride) or *ides* (a woman). Once again, Belanoff has investigated each of these terms and their occurrence in the *oeuvre*.⁶¹ Her argument (1982: 579-81) concludes that all three of these terms refer to married, that is, sexually active women. Juliana, then, has purposefully chosen purity or virginity. Maidenhood, for her, is not a temporary state to be ended upon her marriage: she has chosen to remain virginal in order to consecrate herself completely to the service of God.

As Juliana is a devout Christian, it must be asked whether her power derives from this fact in itself. Clearly, however, other devout Christians have fallen prey, as we have discovered, to the demon's powers. Belief *per se* does not therefore bestow amazing willpower, strength and blessedness upon the believer. Juliana's power must therefore derive from an additional source, and this additional constituent of Juliana's Christian persona is her virginity, and her solemn avowal to remain untouched. Logically, therefore, this fact must be the crux of the issue, as Juliana's virginity is precisely what distinguishes her from all of the other victims of the demon. Clearly, therefore, virginity maintained and dedicated to God is seen as bestowing extraordinary powers upon the possessor, particularly if the state of virginity has been voluntarily chosen.

It is rather anomalous, and yet also curiously fitting, that female virginity accrues supernal power upon its possessor, because the understanding of, and teaching about, femaleness derives via an extraordinarily convoluted argument, primarily from early Patristic anti-feminist beliefs. This phenomenon – extraordinary blessedness and profound repugnance – merely represents the polar extremes of a long-standing fear of, and loathing for, women's sexuality and bodily functions, her *morphe*. The Church's teachings about sexuality, virginity and the link to spirituality has been explicated in chapter two.

As a result of Juliana's virginal purity, connotations of holiness accrue to her. Words such as *halig* (holy), *eadig* (blessed, perfect, happy), *domeadig* (a compound Anglo-Saxon word, meaning glorious), and *ferðgeblissad* (blessed in spirit) are used to describe her holiness. These terms are not only applicable to Christians: it must not be forgotten that the Germanic tribes regarded women as being particularly spiritual beings. Juliana combines the qualities of a valiant Germanic female warrior and a saintly Christian virgin battling evil on behalf of her Lord.

But of all the terms which characterise Juliana's holiness, the most significant is *eadhredig*. The term is listed in Sweet's dictionary as meaning "happy", "blessed" and "triumphant". Bosworth and Toller give the compound term the meaning of "happy, blessed". If each of the terms is examined separately, the following meanings are listed: *ead* means "rich, wealthy, blessed or happy", and *hred* means "glory, fame, triumph, honour". The combination of the terms should therefore have a more powerful meaning than the individual words. A further compound word which can be formed from the two is *hredædig*. The meaning of this term is listed by

Bosworth and Toller as “glorious”, “noble”, “triumphant”, and even “famous”, and the examples cited in the dictionary are all to do with military prowess or feats of strength. Belanoff list the following possible meanings: “rejoicing in prosperity, triumphant, blessed”; “blessed”, and finally settles upon “in triumph blessed” (1982: 456) and “blessedly triumphant” as the most apt translations of the word. The choice is felicitous as it encapsulates the idea of victory or the vanquishing of an enemy (as evinced by the word “triumphant”) as a result of spiritual virtue (as evinced by “blessedly”).⁶²

The reason for Juliana’s power and success against formidably terrifying adversaries, is vested in her sexual innocence and purity. This provides her with the strength and will which lead to her victory. Although Juliana successfully confronts the Nicomedian patriarchy and refuses to accede to the demands of either her father or her suitor, she is not intent upon subverting patriarchal structures or concepts. Rather, Juliana is the faithful representative of the heavenly patriarchy, to which she has submitted herself completely. She therefore identifies utterly with the hierarchical structures within the patriarchy. She also aspires to a high rank within the spiritual realm, and in order to attain that rank, she is determined to maintain her virginity and suffer martyrdom. Juliana is willing to deny herself in order to serve the heavenly patriarchy. The feminist reading of the text therefore discloses that Juliana identifies with the heavenly patriarchy and that her resistance is not a feminist resistance but a struggle against an evil earthly patriarchy. Cynewulf’s Juliana is not without strength and power. She closely resembles, in her self-confidence, power and radiance, the Germanic warrior women or Valkyrie figures of legend. Juliana’s strength emerges from herself and is not provided by God or some external source. Cynewulf has therefore created a saintly, virginal heroine who combines the Christian virtues with the innate power and fearlessness of the Germanic heroine.

ENDNOTES

¹ See John Leyerle (1975: 158-71) where he presents a detailed argument for his contention that the interlace structure in *Beowulf* was a deliberate stylistic convention which imitated the well-known interlace design which appears in manuscripts, carvings and other artefacts. Admittedly Cynewulf’s poetry does not adopt this complicated design, but is remarkably linear in structure, but the pervasiveness of this design structure in Anglo-Saxon poetry renders the structural compliment valid.

² The pagan Germanic view of women is discussed in chapter two, pp. 37-50.

- ³ Cynewulf's known corpus of work, that is, works which can undoubtedly be attributed to him, consists of: *Juliana*, *Elene*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, and *Christ II*. (These four poems are unusual in the Old English poetic corpus because they are signed with a cryptic runic signature as well as calls for the reader to pray for the poet.) Given the fact that the two poems featuring female heroic protagonists are together approximately twice as long as the other two, it appears that female heroines were particularly interesting subjects for Cynewulf. There are other poems from roughly the same period which are said to be at least of the "Cynewulfian school", but it is impossible to assert that these works were written by him.
- ⁴ Note that *Juliana* is perfectly conventional in this respect: the unwilling bride, who has vowed to remain a virgin, being paired off by a family in liaison with the (usually pagan) suitor, as well as the fact that the match is considered to be socially and financially advantageous. Lucretia Pollard (1980: 8-10) discusses the conventional story line of the Anglo-Saxon saints' legends in "*Swa Icweme to Godd*": A Study of the Use of the Virgin Martyr Legend in Medieval English Literature with Particular Reference to Cynewulf's *Juliana* and *Pe Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iuliene*."
- ⁵ See Pollard (1980: 46-9) where she analyses the depiction of both Maximian and Eleusius, and concludes that "vice and status are so persistently linked throughout the poem that the implicit relationship [between evil deeds and worldly success] is impossible to ignore."
- ⁶ Marie Nelson neatly summarises the dilemma in *Juliana* as "a story of the conflict of might and right" (1991: 102).
- ⁷ Historically, Maximian, together with Diocletian, perpetrated the most vigorous persecution of Christians. However, there is little or no historical basis for the numerous saint's legends which purportedly date back to this time. See J. W. Pearce (1892) for information as to whether *Juliana* ever existed.
- ⁸ Those critics who persistently refer to *Juliana* as "passive" have simply failed to notice that Christians in general are shown throughout this poem to be "steadfast". Activity is generally hostile, attacking, military and evil (See Pollard, 1980: 46-8). Nelson (1991) in her translation with explanatory Afterwords, entitled *Judith, Juliana and Elene: Three Fighting Saints*, contends that Old English saints' lives do not fit the mould of forcing passivity upon the martyr. *Juliana*, in particular, is active: "... the *Juliana* of the Old English poem, then, [is not] a passive saint" (1991: 99).
- ⁹ Rosemary Woolf has traced the story of *Juliana* to Metaphrastes' *Patrologia Graeca* (1966: 13). In this source, Affricanus and Eleusius arrange the betrothal when *Juliana* is only nine years old. The Old English poem, however, makes no mention of a time delay between the arrangement and *Juliana*'s refusal. Rather, it seems as though the betrothal and *Juliana*'s response are closely linked in time. Therefore, the patriarchal assumptions of exclusion and silence are even more telling as the adult *Juliana* is assumed to have no interest in her own fate. See Kennedy's (1906) translations of both the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon versions for a comparison of the alterations.
- ¹⁰ I am not making a 'nice' distinction here between fourth century Nicomedia and tenth

century Anglo-Saxon England. It is a well-attested fact that medieval writers and artists had a different concept of history and the past to that espoused today. A concrete example is the use of anachronistic fashions in Biblical paintings, rather than an attempt to depict authentic costumes. It is crucial to the argument espoused in this thesis that this fact is understood. I argue that Cynewulf's depiction of Juliana is a reflection, not so much of purported events in Nicomedia in the fourth century, but of prevailing mores, beliefs and practices in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England.

- ¹¹ See the discussion concerning the typically hierarchical nature of all Western discourse in chapter one of this dissertation, on pages 17-19. See also Jones (1991: 81-3).
- ¹² I deliberately used 'which' here to match the non-human word commodity, instead of 'who' which signifies humanity. Juliana has been reduced.
- ¹³ See Furman (1991: 59-79) where she discusses the vexed status of women as a "relational sign" between men. Women are defined according to their relationship to, and the status of, men, and not according to their own abilities or rank.
- ¹⁴ Please refer to my own argument, as set down in pages 37-50 of chapter two, in which I discuss the matter at some length.
- ¹⁵ This assertion has been discussed in pages 58-60 of chapter two.
- ¹⁶ The nostalgic nature of much Anglo-Saxon poetry is extremely well-attested. *Beowulf* is set in the remote past and conflates several centuries; *The Husband's Message*, *The Wife's Lament* and *Waldere*, amongst others, all depict the heroic ethos. Alvin Lee (1972) demonstrates the nostalgic and mythic nature of much Old English poetry in *The Guest-Hall of Eden*.
- ¹⁷ Virgin saints, and their status, are discussed in chapter four, pp. 152-4. For the sake of the clarity of the argument, however, the high status of virgin saints is mentioned here.
- ¹⁸ Many critics attribute a direct influence from the Bollandist version of the tale to the Old English Cynewulfian version, but more recent scholarship has cast doubt on these claims.
- ¹⁹ Any number of critics have pointed out these differences in depiction. A few examples include Lanford (1974: 36-38); William Strunk (1904: xxxii); Olsen (1990: 223-228); Woolf (1966: 15). John Hermann understands Cynewulf's alterations to his source to be a deliberate strategy of "strengthening oppositions, eliminating whatever might mitigate the violent exclusions upon which the text's dualities are founded" (1984: 278). Also see Schaar (1968: 27-31).
- ²⁰ Woolf explains that "[The] struggle is clearly between good and evil, and Eleusius is made as deliberately wicked as Juliana is good. By this means a greater sense of ultimate importance is gained, whilst ordinary psychological probability is lost" (1966: 15). The ultimate importance of the struggle in which Juliana is engaged is of cosmic, not earthly, significance.

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- ²¹ The tenor of the argument is that Christian right must triumph over pagan might, Christian spirituality over pagan evil, the heavenly over the earthly.
- ²² For a discussion of binary oppositions and their use as a tool of oppression, see chapter one, pp. 17-24.
- ²³ The Germanic tradition is explicated on pp. 37-39, and the position of secular Anglo-Saxon women is discussed in pp. 39-40. Religious women are discussed in pp. 60-65.
- ²⁴ Some of those who have either called for, or done, an allegorical interpretation of the poem are: Lanford (1975, 36-41, 44-46); Chance (1986, 40-46). Bjork (1985: 46-61) prefers a rhetorical and stylistic analysis and Olsen (1984: 88-112) applies speech act theory. D. G. Bzdyl (1985: 165-75) rejects allegorical and rhetorical approaches and prefers instead to concentrate upon the Christian message which Cynewulf intended to convey.
- ²⁵ cf. Nelly Furman's discussion of Kristeva's explanation of the symbolic and semiotic orders in her article entitled "The Politics of Language" (1991: 72-5).
- ²⁶ Incidentally, it is upon this very point that Juliana in other versions is considered to be less than truthful. It is clear that Cynewulf improved the character of Juliana, just as he rendered Eleusius as a more despicable character. Bzdyl (1985: 165-75) argues that the polarisation of the relative moral positions of Juliana and her persecutors is a deliberate strategy through which Cynewulf plans to make his point more forcibly.
- ²⁷ Marina Warner (1976: 285-9) discusses the supreme power and authority of God-the-Father. Mary and the other saints may only intercede on a sinner's behalf: they may not grant mercy or forgiveness themselves. That final authority and power is vested in God the Father alone. However, Mary's prayers, and the prayers of virgin martyrs, have especial efficacy.
- ²⁸ The amalgamation of thoroughly Germanic and utterly Christian themes has been noted and discussed by Lee (1972) in *The Guest-Hall of Eden*. See especially the discussion of *The Dream of the Rood* in pages 60-66.
- ²⁹ cf. The discussion in pp. 37-40 of chapter two, and especially the important summatory quotation by Doris Stenton on the relatively high status of the Anglo-Saxon woman.
- ³⁰ Refer to my discussion of these concepts in pp. 17-20 of chapter one.
- ³¹ Cixous's calls for a celebration of the body are briefly discussed on p. 17 of chapter one.
- ³² The etymology of this word is a telling example of the logocentric ordering of language. It is derived from the Greek word *husteros*, meaning womb, thus implying that the seat of excessive emotional disturbance derives from the womb and can therefore only be suffered by women.
- ³³ *Scopophilia* is discussed by Toril Moi (1993: 132-5) and also on p. 20 of chapter one.
- ³⁴ *Différance* is a term derived from Derridean philosophy. It is related to the binary structure of Western discourse. See Moi (1993: 104-110) for a detailed explication.

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- ³⁵ Contemporary opinion has not changed: witness the December 1996 debate in the letters page of the *Star*, blaming women who are raped for their predicament because of provocative dress.
- ³⁶ Although post-structuralists have revised this view of power, seeing it as shifting, not monolithic, it seems tenable in this particular circumstance.
- ³⁷ See my very brief discussion of the Kristevan semiotic in chapter one of this dissertation, pp. 22-3. As the Saints' Lives collude with patriarchal constructs, I have not chosen to utilise the more radical ideas espoused by French feminists.
- ³⁸ Belanoff (1982: 627-630) is amongst those critics who have characterised Juliana as passive. This is the standard point of view. Olsen (1990: 222) critiques the patriarchal perspective from which critics invariably tend to pronounce Anglo-Saxon women as passive.
- ³⁹ The sort of critic to whom I am referring is Sisam (1967: 7). The logic works in an inverted way. If the demon is miserable and pathetic, then Juliana cannot be so powerful.
- ⁴⁰ The standard definition of hagiography is Gordon Hall Gerould's: "The saint's legend is a biographical narrative, of whatever origin circumstances may dictate, written in whatever medium may be convenient, concerned as to substance with the life, death, and miracles of some person accounted worthy to be considered a leader in the cause of righteousness; and, whether fictitious or historically true, calculated to glorify the memory of its subject." (1916: 41). See also Olsen (1980: 407-29) and Julia Smith (1992: 69-76). A useful general introduction is by David Rollason, (1989) *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England*.
- ⁴¹ See the discussion on holiness, virginity and the loathing of a woman's form, in chapter two, pp. 58-65.
- ⁴² See my earlier explanation about women and sexuality in chapter two, especially pp. 58-60. Chapter four contains a detailed examination of attitudes towards sexuality.
- ⁴³ For an account of the importance of riddles and puns in Anglo-Saxon literature, see Greenfield (1968: 204-9); Kossick (1965: 70-6). Aldhelm, for example, wrote riddles and *aenigmata*.
- ⁴⁴ References are cited in endnote 28 on page 74.
- ⁴⁵ *Juliana* is a ninth-century text. The arrival of St Augustine in 597AD, on a mission to proselytise England by the express order of Pope Gregory, is documented by the Venerable Bede (1990: 74-89) in *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.
- ⁴⁶ For a discussion of the *comitatus* ethic, see C.L. Wrenn (1967: 74-77); Lee (1972: 12-13) Stenton (1967: 298-303); Whitelock (1952 37-38).
- ⁴⁷ See Lee's *Guest-Hall of Eden* (1972: 60-66). And other critics have seen an infusion of thoroughly Germanic elements in Christian poems.

- ⁴⁸ There are too many references to heroic attributes and the Germanic warrior ethos in Belanoff's chapters on *Judith*, *Juliana* and *Elene* to list them all. A typical summary statement will have to suffice: "The *Judith* poet, by chance or genius, borrowed from both traditions, the Germanic and the Christian, elements which he was able to harmonize effectively" (Belanoff, 1982: 562). Nelson (1991) also emphasises the heroic, warrior-like ethos of the three poems, as the title of her text suggests.
- ⁴⁹ See pp. 37-40 of chapter two for an explication of the status of Germanic women.
- ⁵⁰ Failure to heed such warnings is a frequent literary trope. An hilarious example from the fourteenth-century *Canterbury Tales*, occurs when the Pardoner, having preached against cupidity, and having revealed his methods to the pilgrims, then attempts to extort money from them. He is soundly, and humiliatingly, chastised by the Host.
- ⁵¹ Chance (1986: 40-6) sees *Juliana* as a typological witness of Christ's salvation; Nelson (1991: 98-110) emphasises the struggle for power; Pollard (1980: 1-4) stresses the increasing emphasis being placed on the sharing of the hagiographic tradition not only with the monastic orders but also with lay people; Olsen (1990: 222-33) calls for an understanding of the autonomy and heroism of Juliana. Underpinning these interpretations is the assumption that Saints' Legends were primarily didactic tools.
- ⁵² This is discussed in an earlier part of this chapter.
- ⁵³ Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* (in *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 1979) and *Aelfric's Lives of the Saints* (1966) contain further examples of sexually charged battle scenes. (Cited by Chance, 1986: 104).
- ⁵⁴ For a detailed reading of the death of Holofernes in sexual terms, see Chance (1986: 39-40, 103-5). Chance shows how Holofernes' lecherousness and excessive libidinousness is strongly contrasted with Judith's 'virginity' even though Judith is a widow, and has therefore had sexual relations in the past. According to Chance, both Judith's physical beauty and her wisdom are emphasised, and her success in her venture is clearly attributed to her sexual chastity. However, Judith assumes a male role in order to kill the emasculated, effete Holofernes, who has lost his ability to perform because of the excessive consumption of alcohol.
- ⁵⁵ Chance (1986: 102-5) offers an erotic reading of the fight between Beowulf and Grendel's mother, as well as a much more detailed discussion in her essay entitled "The Structural Unity of *Beowulf*: The Problem of Grendel's Mother" (1990: 248-61). Extrapolating from the fact that, in order to avenge the death of her son at Beowulf's hands, Grendel's mother had to become an honorary man, I read her penetration of the hall and beheading of Aeshere in sexual terms.
- ⁵⁶ The sado-masochistic nature of Juliana's first torture, an exercise in the exertion of sexual desire, is discussed in pp. 100-102 of this chapter.
- ⁵⁷ Amongst those who have noted that not all women oppose patriarchal strictures are Showalter (1992: 137-9) and Greene and Kahn (1991: 1-36). A significant proportion of women happily embrace patriarchal mores.

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- ⁵⁸ Belanoff analyses the semantics and connotations of every appellation applied to women in Old English poetry. The discussion is, understandably, lengthy and detailed. Suffice it to say that her analysis supports the argument which is constructed above, namely, that Juliana's great power is vested within her largely because of her virginity. See Belanoff (1982: 577-626) for a word-by-word analysis.
- ⁵⁹ The double crown or *aureola* is awarded to virgin martyrs as a sign of their intactness and physical purity. The material sign of purity is confirmed by the sweetness, radiance and incorruptibility of a virgin's body.
- ⁶⁰ Incidentally, *clæne* can also be said to describe a lack rather than a positive attribute as the term can be translated as "free from, e.g. guilt".
- ⁶¹ Note once again that Belanoff (1982: 588-90) has discussed these words in detail. As her work concentrates on refining and defining the meanings of words as they appear in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, it is used to lend semantic support to the feminist argument of my thesis.
- ⁶² See Pollard (1980: 10-34) where she discusses this phenomenon. Although the issue has not been conclusively settled, the linking of sexuality with original sin is probably an accurate reflection of contemporary beliefs.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTUALISING JULIANA AFTER THE CONQUEST

“LICKING HONEY OFF THORNS”

The academic context

The linguistic, stylistic and didactic significance of the Katherine Group of texts has been acknowledged by influential critics, such as Tolkien and Chambers (Millett, 1983: 100-8). It is clear from what Millet calls the “internal evidence of the texts themselves” (1990b: 128) that the works “were written for private reading for women in the religious life, particularly recluses” (1990b: 129). (The *Ancrene Wisse* was, we know, written for three sisters from a genteel family, who probably formed the core of a group of recluses.¹) In fact, the community in question has been fairly positively identified by Dobson as a group of recluses living separately around Limebrook in the West Midlands, a loose gathering of anchoresses who had not even joined a house by the end of the third decade of the thirteenth century (1976: 157-69). It has also fairly conclusively been established that a second, wider audience was also intended. The argument for this assertion is fairly complicated: Millett’s conclusions are that the texts have both written (cf. the epistolary style of *Hali Meiodhad*) and oral elements; they serve the purpose of addressing both a small, exclusive and particular audience and a wider, more general audience; they show evidence of some sophistication and gentility on the part of the intended audience; while women, and virginity, are the main topics being addressed, men cannot be completely excluded as members of the intended audience of all of the texts.² Millet asserts that the texts, including the Katherine Group Lives, contain internal evidence which suggests that they were intended to be read to a church congregation.

The texts which are the focus of this chapter fall into a different category, for they are women’s texts – they were written with a specific (female) audience in mind, and for the

particular purpose of propagating the Church's teachings about and for women. The saint's tales, and in particular the Katharine Group, which includes *Hali Meidhad* and its sanctions against sexuality, offers certain solutions to the feminist issues which were raised in chapter one, for they are specifically women's texts, and women and their concerns predominate.³

Simultaneously, texts such as *Hali Meidhad* and the virgin saints' tales offer problems of their own, for they were most expressly written neither from a resisting or questioning perspective, nor with any medieval feminist ideology informing them, but from the Church's point of view. And the Church's point of view was formulated and enforced by (usually) celibate monks whose own opinions had been influenced by the acerbic and sometimes vitriolic writings of the early Church Fathers. As readers, we need to be aware of this hugely influential and prescriptive context:

Readers today must always reckon with the vast output of "official" Church writing which the Wife of Bath so wittily debunks. However, while the Wife can gleefully reject the Church's teachings on virginity, it is not so easy for feminist medievalists to reject the large corpus of virginity literature produced under the aegis of the Church. This is "woman-centred" literature *par excellence*, about women and for women, but it is largely the product of a male clerical élite ostensibly anxious to promote the Church ideal of celibacy but also deeply troubled by their own feelings about sexuality, which are thence projected onto women.

(Evans & Johnson, 1994: 15)

Despite the ideal woman-centred nature of the later vernacular versions of the tale of Juliana and her companion virgin martyrs, Catherine and Margaret, comparatively little research from a feminist perspective has, as yet, been undertaken on these tales. One study, Lucretia Pollard's thesis entitled "*Swa Icweme to Godd*": *A Study of the Use of the Virgin Martyr Legend in Medieval English Literature with Particular Reference to Cynewulf's Juliana and Be Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulienne*, does examine the earliest two versions. The informing approach, however, is not feminist but is a genre study. *Be Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulienne* has not yet been the subject of a detailed feminist analysis, although Jocelyn Wogan-Browne Millet has discussed the three saints' lives of the Katherine Group from a feminist theoretical stance in her article entitled "The Virgin's Tale" (1994: 165-94). Susan Withycombe (1991) has written an informative article on *Seinte Katerine* entitled "'O mihti meiden! O witti wummon!': the early English Katherine as a model of sanctity," which touches on some feminist concepts. To date no comparison of the vernacular English versions of St Juliana – Cynewulf's *Juliana* and the anonymous *Liflade* – from a feminist perspective has been undertaken. The later versions – which include *Seyn Iulienne* and the Scottish version entitled *Sanct Julyane* – have not

been the subject of scholarly analysis. Whereas these versions of the tale of St Juliana are of a debased form and lack literary merit, they are worth investigating as their very debasement speaks to the conditions and educational status of their putative audience. This dissertation thus seeks to combine a feminist theoretical perspective with an analysis of the alterations in the depiction of the heroine Juliana from the ninth to the late fourteenth century. This affords the opportunity to trace the alteration in perceptions of women and the decline in their status which occurs during the five-hundred odd years which this study spans. This chapter contextualises the post-Conquest texts, and the texts themselves are discussed from a feminist perspective in chapter five.

Historical contextualisation

The first requirement in a feminist analysis is the contextualisation of the era from which the texts emerge.⁴ This chapter therefore broadly repeats the pattern and content of chapter two, but with the aim of sketching an outline of apposite conditions in post-Conquest England. The focus in this chapter is therefore on social and legal circumstances, literary trends, and writings about and for women which are considered to be salient, and pertinent, to the feminist reading of selected versions of the legend of St Juliana from the post-Conquest period until Caxton printed his *Golden Legend* in 1483.

There is probably no more easily remembered date in English history than that of the Norman Conquest following the battles of Stamford Bridge and at Battle near Hastings in November and December 1066. This resulted in the crowning of William, the bastard son of Robert I, Duke of Normandy, thereafter known as William the Conqueror. William of Normandy's victory resulted in the most profound, drastic and fundamental alteration to the lifestyle, social conditions, language and land ownership in England ever to have occurred.⁵ In particular, the status of women appears to have suffered a major decline.⁶

The drastic shift in the position of women following the Norman Conquest has been noted by luminaries such as Doris Stenton. Her assessment of the greatly diminished status of women subsequent to the Conquest has already been discussed in chapter two.⁷ This point of view is shared by Patricia Belanoff who says that "the majority of scholars do seem to agree ... that the status of Anglo-Saxon women was superior to that of post-conquest English women" (1982: 9). Judith Weiss concurs with this conclusion and offers a detailed list of the superior freedom which the Anglo-Saxon woman enjoyed:

Noblewomen in post-Conquest Britain appear to have enjoyed less political and economic power than either Anglo-Saxon women or their counterparts in France. In pre-Conquest England, women of the property-owning classes would seem to have had comparatively greater independence, education, status and freedom of choice in marriage. They would control an often substantial *morgengifu* after marriage; they could leave a marriage unpleasing to them, with their children and half the property; and their goods were not regarded by the courts as held in common with those of their husbands. They could have a say in choosing a partner and were not repudiated if their marriage proved childless. The evidence from the relatively few surviving wills is that both wives and daughters could inherit, control and bequeath property independently of their fathers and husbands.

(1993: 7)

In comparison to the pecuniary freedom and the degree of individual choice available to the Anglo-Saxon woman, Weiss then lists the restrictive practices which curtailed freedom, proscribed choices, and which ultimately indicate that women were oppressed after the Conquest:

By contrast, post-Conquest women in England saw their freedom curtailed and their rights eroded. No married woman could now make a valid will without her husband's consent. She could inherit land, if there was no male heir in the family, but if she married, her husband had to control it; even if he died and she remarried, her new husband would do the same. It was rare for her to make charters and rare to witness those by other women. The nobler she was, the more her choice of husband was controlled by others, concerned with questions of land, money and rank – and this despite the attempted insistence by canon lawyers that she should give her full and free consent to a match. The gradual lessening in female public activity in the Middle Ages is, in short, pronounced in post-Conquest England.

(1993: 8)

Robert C. Palmer (1984: 42-67) demonstrates that wives were subordinate to their husbands in the eyes of the law, especially in property matters. In fact, a married woman was *sub virga et potestate* or “under the rod and in the power” of her husband. Wife-beating seems to have been a common occurrence although litigation very rarely ensued: Palmer believes that this indicates the general acceptance of the practice. This points, of course, to the oppression and subordination which married women endured.

Antonia Gransden, writing about historiography in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries (prior to the Norman Conquest) and in particular about Aethelweard's chronicle (which was dedicated to his cousin Matilda, the abbess of Essen) comments as follows:

Æthelweard's chronicle has some features in common with the royal biographies of the Anglo-Saxon period. As with two of the biographies (the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and *The Life of King Edward*), he addressed his work to a woman. The dedication of these works to women is symptomatic of the respected position of women in Anglo-Saxon society.
(1974: 45)

The weight of the available evidence thus supports the argument of this dissertation, that the Norman Conquest caused a decline in the status and freedom of women. The discussion in chapter five will demonstrate that the decline in women's status is reflected in the literature.

Legal documentation

The kind of far-reaching changes which occurred as a result of the Norman Conquest included the dispossession of the lands of Anglo-Saxon lords;⁸ the appointment of Normans to bishoprics in the church;⁹ the control of the judiciary by the Normans; the institution of the dowry in place of the Anglo-Saxon *morganabe* and the imposition of the feudal system, together with its concepts of land tenure and patrilineal inheritance. The result of all of these changes was a rapid decline in the power, freedom and respect that women had generally enjoyed, especially in the early years of the Anglo-Saxon period.

The first ominous sign of a marked change in status for women is the fact, commented upon by historians, that documentation pertaining to women is largely absent (Clark & Williams, 1987: 148). This is despite the Anglo-Norman tendency to record, thus necessitating a "formidable bureaucracy, of which many products survive" (Clark & Williams, 1987: 148). The gap, or silence, in the record, suggests that women have been marginalised: their strictly defined roles – wife, daughter, mother, widow – are usually based on a woman's relationship with a man. Clark and Williams explain as follows:

When a medieval theorist divided society into three orders – those who fight, those who till the earth, and those who pray –

he explicitly omitted women, noting their role simply as “to marry and to serve” the fighters and the workers.
(1987: 148)

Millet and Wogan-Browne concur that possible roles for women in the post-Conquest era were limited. This is confirmed by their categorisation of women as either “wives, widows or virgins” in the introduction to the text *Medieval English Prose for Women*. Compared to the centrality of the Anglo-Saxon woman, who is thought of as a partner having to stand beside her man, and an entity in her own right, the woman in post-Conquest England has been relegated to the margins, and her role is largely confined to watching the real work of the menfolk from the periphery.¹⁰ A woman’s status is defined according to either her relationship to a male partner or her sexual abstinence. Clearly, the categories do not make allowances for other roles, groups or choices for women. When Clark and Williams discuss the position of women in post-Conquest England, they point out that entering the cloister was often the only possibility for a woman who was “disinclined for trade or service” (1987: 160). Nevertheless, there was a greater demand for the cloister than existing facilities could fulfil. David Herlihy (1975: 1-22) posits that as the life expectancy of women was enhanced because of improved nutrition and so on, their numbers increased, an oversupply arose, and their position and negotiating power declined. He concludes that the cloister therefore became an attractive alternative for women in an increasingly healthy, yet unwelcoming environment (1975: 1-22).

The one place where there are records pertaining to women is in civil and canon law, for it is here where the conduct of the ordinary affairs of life is regulated, and therefore documented.¹¹ And it is civil and canon law which often rules on matters pertaining to marriage and inheritance, areas which explicitly included women, from a position of power or negotiation. These two law codes – the secular and the sacred – were frequently in conflict. Whereas civil law served the interests of the king and nobility, and was therefore pragmatic, canon law upheld the teachings of the church, and therefore had a spiritual bias. The Church insisted, for instance, that “a precondition for a valid marriage [was] full and free consent from both parties” (Clark & Williams, 1987: 151). We are admonished to remember that:

[C]anon law was not a liberalising force. Theology alleged women to be essentially inferior to men and in need of constant male tutelage. ... The tighter the grip of canon law grew on secular affairs, the further women’s already limited rights were eroded, always under the pretext of affording their weakness a necessary protection.

(Clark & Williams, 1987: 154)

James Brundage (1990) shows that the only area where women had equal rights to men in canon law, was in the sexual rights of a married woman. Brundage concludes that canon law rulings on sexual equality in marriage precipitated “a grudging recognition that equity requires that men and women be treated equally in other spheres of life as well” (1990: 72). His conclusion conflicts with that of Clark and Williams. Brundage’s argument hinges on his interpretation of the clerics’ views of sexuality as being “an essential attribute of marriage” (1990: 72). The mass of evidence presented later on in this chapter contradicts this assertion: sexuality, even within marriage, was a necessary evil.

In terms of marriage contracts, the most fundamental alteration was the imposition of the dowry, as opposed to the *morganabe* of the Anglo-Saxon era. (The Anglo-Norman equivalent of the *morganabe* was the dower.) The dowry differed in that the woman passed from the protection of her father or (male) guardian to the sovereignty of her husband, in whose safekeeping rested her material possessions (Clark & Williams, 1987: 163-4). The woman had no power to contract, will, bequeath or sell. She therefore had no economic independence, except for the dower, and that gift from her husband reverted to her ownership only upon widowhood. Again, the difference from the Anglo-Saxon woman is marked.

The dower did provide a measure of pecuniary security for women: the practice consisted of the husband pledging at least a third of the lands which he held in *seisin* at the time of marriage, to his wife. In reality, the husband usually administered the landholdings and stock, and he occasionally pledged those lands as payment for debts, resulting in complicated legalities upon his death, for often several claimants pressed their cases: the heir, the dowered wife, the creditor.¹² Clearly, the husband often incorporated dowered lands into his own holdings.

In terms of inheritance practices, a long-standing penchant for patrilineal inheritance became even more established:

Alfred, Aelfheah and Wulfgar also demonstrated a preference for the male line in inheritance At the end of the ninth century the two factors which strengthened a claim were being of close kinship (*gesibbre*) and of the male sex (*wepnedhadnes*). Maternal kin inherited, though normally the males among a mother’s relatives. Women could and did inherit. They were often of closer kinship than other heirs, and fathers exercised choice in their favour. But their inheritance was often a life interest, its future destiny frequently controlled in the father’s

will. The tenth- and eleventh-century kin was already strongly patrilineal and male dominated.

(Stafford, 1989a: 164)

These trends reflect the influence of the already long-established *Lex Salica* from Europe. Jewell (1996: 22) states that “the eldest daughter was totally ousted as an heiress as soon as she had a brother.” This accounts for Stafford’s finding that there are relatively few female landowners listed in the Domesday book. But she does sound a warning that there are particular reasons why this might be so, thus contesting a simplistic over-generalised conclusion from the facts (1989b: 75-94). By its very nature, the feudal system (with its emphasis on retaining large landholdings intact) reinforced and affirmed the already common practice of patrilineal descent, and then inheritance was confined to the eldest son (Clark and Williams, 1987: 149). Indeed, they state that “Post-Conquest society was based upon, indeed obsessed with, land-tenure” (1987: 149). Whereas the effect of such customs was to secure the rank and position of eldest sons, it meant that younger sons often had to seek their fortunes elsewhere, and that daughters were almost entirely reliant on either marriage or the cloister for sustenance and shelter. In both cases, their relative degree of comfort and security depended upon the amount their father or oldest male relative was prepared to offer as a dowry. Seeing that the dowry passed into the hands of a woman’s spouse, and that the dower could often be entailed, offered as surety for debts or even disposed of by her husband, it is quite clear that a married woman’s degree of pecuniary independence depended to a large extent upon the prudent fiscal management of her husband, not herself, and also upon his goodwill towards her. Clark and Williams explain:

When an heiress married (not “if”: no woman of property was likely to be left single) her husband acquired for as long as the marriage lasted full control of her properties and, if he fathered a live child, retained it all his life. A widow’s remarriage likewise conveyed all her holdings, including the “dower” due from her late husband’s estate, to her new one.

(1987: 149)

It is also clear that only a widow who had successfully acquired her intact dower had any real financial independence. And then, too, it must be remembered that wealthy widows were candidates for the king’s gift.¹³ In such expedient marriage arrangements, the woman would have had little or no say in the proposed match. Young girls, particularly heiresses, had no say in the choice of husband. There is evidence that widows who did not wish to remarry could obtain permission to remain unmarried by paying a substantial fee.¹⁴ A register of rich widows and orphaned heirs and heiresses, entitled the *Rotuli de Dominabus et Pueris et Puellis* (1913) was

compiled in 1185 and was used to administer fees and fines. The lives and financial affairs of wealthy women of all ages were quite clearly very carefully regulated by officials acting at the king's behest.

Although surviving documents suggest that due attention was paid to the proper care of wives and widows, it is also perfectly clear that women enjoyed only a very limited degree of financial independence. Women of the upper classes enjoyed comparatively little freedom of choice: they were always subject to the will of another – an administrator, a brother, a father, husband, the king or even their own son. Rowena Archer and B. E. Ferme show that many women did enjoy the trust of their husbands because they were appointed as executrices of wills (1989: 3-34). This suggests that notwithstanding public oppression, in the private sphere women often enjoyed the esteem and respect of their husbands. This assertion is confirmed by Caroline Barron's finding (about women in London c. 1300-1500) that although under the law women did enjoy certain legal privileges, and that some enjoyed economic independence, this failed to translate into political power or positions of influence (1989: 35-58).

Sacred writings

This section of the contextualising discussion consists of a brief overview of the typical literature of the later Middle Ages.¹⁵ As the era spans roughly four and a half centuries, some generalisations will, of necessity, have to be made. However, the weight of the evidence for a generally misogynistic, even vituperative, attitude towards women (and in particular, sexually active women) is overwhelming. Certain versions of the legend of Juliana which will be discussed in chapter five either pre- or post-date texts which are used in this discussion in order to provide evidence for late medieval antifeminism. In the interests of fluidity and in order to avoid a clumsy (and probably specious) one-to-one correspondence between contextual evidence and the literary examples, the discussion which follows aims to sketch the prevailing climate of ideas at the time.

The early Church Fathers' misogynistic writings about women have been discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, thus establishing a powerfully antifeminist intellectual tradition from the early Christian era.¹⁶ Strangely enough, the effects of the church's misogyny were, I argued, slow to have an impact on perceptions about women in pre-Conquest England. Such a tradition, so powerfully fostered and supported scripturally by Paul, for example, eventually predominated. The didactic and misogynistic texts of the later Middle Ages are of huge

importance for this study, as they confirm the church's teachings about women, virginity and the requirements for holiness.

In the later (i.e. post-Conquest) Middle Ages, teachings about the wickedness, sexual voraciousness and designing, manipulative nature of women proliferated. In addition, a good deal of proselytising about the desirability of virginity was practised. An influential example from relatively early in the post-Conquest period, is the famous sermon preached by Archbishop Stephen Langton,¹⁷ his *Sermo de Virginibus*.¹⁸ Since medieval times it has been generally agreed that Archbishop Langton's sermon is a rhetorical masterpiece of the art of preaching which skilfully blends New Testament biblical exegesis and sustained allegorical interpretation (Roberts, 1987: 104-6). Langton concludes his allegorical sermon by asserting that the *sponsa*, or bride (for that, read, young Christian woman), is offered three gifts by the Virgin Mary:

De donariis Beate Marie. Mater misericordie tria donaria cuilibet presentat, videlicet zonam auream castitatis, cerothecas caritatis, peplum siue capellum humilitatis. Certe si repudiales munera alicuius matrone, pro malo haberetur. Sic si donaria Beate Uirginis non recipis, ipsam inimicam tuam constituis. Recipias ergo zonam uarem casitatis qua renes tuos constringas; recipias cerothecas caritatis ut argentum quod gentes ardet manus tuas non comburas. Usu / rarii camsores digitos suos frequenti numeratione pecunie nigros habent et aclausos. Hoc contingit quia cerothecas caritatis non habent in manibus. Item si habeat peplum uel capellum humilitatis, contra aurm uane glorie et ceteris uirtutibus fueris ornata. Rex celorum brachiis dilectionis amplectitur te et osculo salutis osculabitur te.

(*Sermo De Virginibus*, 14.11.1-13)

(The mother of mercy grants three gifts, namely the golden belt of chastity, the gloves of charity, and the robe or hood of humility. Surely, if you were to repudiate the gifts of some great lady, it would be considered for ill. If you do not accept the gifts of the Blessed Virgin, you make her your enemy. Accept, therefore, the golden belt of chastity to bind your loins; receive the gloves of charity lest you burn your hands with the silver that dazzles people. Usurious money changers have black, closed fingers from the frequent counting out of their money. This happens because they do not wear the gloves of charity. Further, if one wears the robe or hood of humility, one would be adorned with other virtues against the flattery of vain glory. The King of Heaven embraces you with loving arms and bestows upon you the kiss of salvation.

(Roberts, 1987: 109)

The wording is salutary: a refusal of the gifts offered by the Virgin Mary is designated as a deadly insult, which results in instant and complete enmity. Therefore, any woman who refuses to remain chaste simply cannot profess to love and honour the Virgin Mary. If, however, the

golden zone of chastity is accepted, the result is affirmation by the King of Heaven, signalled by an embrace and a kiss, which is described as the “kiss of salvation”. The three virtues being encouraged, namely chastity, poverty and humility, are thus given an extraordinary status, akin to the differentiation between the saved and the unsaved. Furthermore, the golden tint of the girdle, or belt, which symbolises virginity reflects the belief that virginity symbolised intactness, completeness and a lack of bodily corruption, just as gold is a metal which does not tarnish.

Extraordinarily enough, this sermon, which is addressed to virgins and is in praise of virginity, bases not only its text, but also its allegorical imagery upon the idea of marriage and a following consummation. Langton’s text, from 2 Corinthians II:2 – “Despondi enim uos uni uiro uirginem castam exhibere Christo” or “For I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband” – merely uses the marriage concept as a picture of the consecrated virgin as affiliated to Christ, the marriage presumably consummated on death. Further into his sermon, however, he uses the *Song of Songs* extensively as source material. Of all the books of the bible, this one is the most erotic and sensual, albeit within a marriage relationship. Terms such as “embrace”, “beloved”, “love” and “ravish” abound. And this tension between rigorous chastity (on earth) and a promised glorious consummation (in heaven) underpins the sermon. It seems as though sexuality is sublimated and channelled into the worship of Christ, in the hope of a better and more rewarding fulfilment in heaven.

Roberts assesses the aims of Langton’s peroration as follows:

The instant sermon of Stephen Langton is representative of the traditional exposition on the Church’s view of Virginity: the veneration of the virginal state and its embodiment in the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Church, moreover, did more than extol virginity as a state of perfection. By providing the institution of the cloister and by encouraging women to take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the Church offered women a practical alternative to marriage and a means of attaining the aspired goal of the virginal life.

(1987: 103-4)

The cloister, then was a viable alternative for the medieval woman. It offered not only a holy life and enhanced spiritual status, but also a degree of choice. This was especially attractive to upper-class women for whom the chance of a reasonably independent life outside marriage was severely limited. Women in possession of any form of wealth were regarded as being in the king’s gift and could be ordered to marry whatever suitor suited the king’s strategic alliances. And, as can be deduced from Archbishop Langton’s sermon, the church actively

fostered the cloister as an option. To this end, there was a great deal of didactic literature which encouraged either the cloistered or eremitic lifestyle. Chief amongst these are *Sawles Warde*, *Ancrene Wisse* and *Hali Meidhad*.

These texts are representative of a vast body of didactic literature written for the express purpose of forwarding the teachings of the church.¹⁹ *Hali Meidhad* (or *Holy Virginity*), as the name suggests, is a series of perorations which exhort virginity as the proper, and preferable, state. The texts, however, go much further than that: they not only urge young women to preserve their virginal intactness but also claim that the alternative, that is, sexual experience, results in spiritual alienation and a permanent exclusion from the possibility of attaining the highest order of spirituality. Many of the images, ideas and concepts in the Katherine Group as a whole, are not new or fresh. The same ideas recur in a number of texts. This in itself, while being generally characteristic of medieval writings,²⁰ further serves to illustrate my point, for it proves that the oppression of women by means of the overt control exerted by the church on their sexuality, and the proscribed choices which resulted from this, was, by the thirteenth century, a well-established practice.

Hali Meidhad can be dated fairly accurately to 1230. It is found in MS Bodley 34 and is of anonymous authorship. Furthermore, its audience, other than virgins, is unspecified, for its contents could apply equally well to consecrated virgins already in the cloister, and to those still undecided. An examination of its content reveals a macabre and morbid fascination with the results of sexual activity, notably, for the female. Indeed, the “coarse and repulsive” language of this text so horrified the Reverend Oswald Cockayne, a Victorian scholar, that he bowdlerised the text by inserting Latin terms in the place of what he perceived to be offensive language. (See the introduction to *Medieval English Prose for Women*, 1990: xv). To modern taste, the text is oddly voyeuristic and graphic.

Hali Meidhad is an extremely important text, for it reveals an abhorrence of sexuality, especially female sexuality. Its subject matter is therefore of direct import for this study. Furthermore, the fact that the text is didactic in nature and exhortatory in style indicates that the *Hali Meidhad* was probably used not only to confirm avowed virgins in their choice of vocation, but also to persuade young girls to enter the cloister. The text even has a message for married women, in that they are exhorted not to remarry upon widowhood, but to redeem their spiritual standing by living a celibate life. Even more tellingly than the sister pieces to the *Liflade*, such as the Saints’ Lives of St Margaret and St Catherine, *Hali Meidhad* provides a revealing context of the prevailing mores of later medieval society. Given the persuasive and graphic nature of the

Hali Meiohad, as well as its intimate connection to the *Liflade*, this text merits detailed discussion.

Hali Meiohad is of particular significance as this text itself refers to a number of saints by name: St Catherine, St Margaret, St Agnes, St Lucy, St Cecilia and St Juliana. It is apparent, therefore, that a cluster of religious and devotional material formed an integral part of the usual reading matter of the readership (or audience) of this text (Millett & Wogan-Browne, 1990: 151). An intertextual reading context is thus implied as the names of these six saints are mentioned in such a manner as to evoke their stories and their glorious reward in heaven immediately:

þenç o Seinte Katerine, o Seinte Margarete, Seinte Enneis, Seinte Iulienne, Seinte Lucie, ant Seinte Cecille, ant o þe opre hali meidnes in heouene, hu ha nawt ane ne forsoken kinges sunes ant eorles, wið alle wordliche weolen ant eorðliche wunnen, ah þoleden stronge pinen ear ha walden neomen ham, ant derf deað on ende. þenç hu wel ham is nu, ant hu ha blissið peruore bituhe Godes earmes, cwenes of heouene. (Think of St Catherine, of St Margaret, St Agnes, St Juliana, St Lucy, and St Cecilia, and of the other holy virgins in heaven, how they not only renounced the sons of kings and noblemen, with all worldly riches and earthly pleasures, but suffered cruel tortures rather than accept them, and a painful death at last. Think how happy they are now, and how they rejoice accordingly in the arms of God, as queens of heaven.)

(*Medieval English Prose for Women*, 1990: 40-1)

In the pre-eminence given to virginity, *Hali Meiohad* resembles Langton's *Sermo de Virginibus*. Where it differs is in its vigorous emotive peroration against sexuality, which the *Sermo de Virginibus* delicately skirts around. Indeed, the *Sermo* is in all respects rather refined and delicate: it is an erotically charged, but primarily intellectual, argument. In contrast, the sort of statement in the more graphic *Hali Meiohad* which provoked such a typically Victorian response from the Reverend Cockayne is:

“þi folc” he cleoepð, Dauioð, þe gederunge inwið þe of fleschliche þonkes, þe leaðieð þe ant dreaiet wið hare procunges to flesliche fulðen, to licomliche lustes, ant eggioð þe to brudlac ant to weres cluppunge, ant makieð þe to þenchen hwuch delit were þrin, hwuch eise i þe richedom þet þeos leafdis habbeð, hu mucche god mahte of inker streon awakenin.

(“Your people” are what David calls the carnal thoughts which crowd into your mind, which incite you and draw you on with their goadings to carnal filthiness, to physical desires, and urge you towards marriage and a husband's embrace, and make you think what pleasure there would be

in them, what comfort in the riches that these ladies have, how much that is good might come from your children.)

(1990: 2,3)

Sexuality is consistently described in pejorative terms:

þet unþeaw þet streonede þe of þi moder – þet ilke unhende flesches brune, þet bearninde geohðe of þet licomliche lust biuore þet wleatewile werc, þet bestelich gederunge, þet scheomelese sompnunge, þet ful of fulðe, stinkende ant untohe dede.

(That sinful act through which your mother conceived you – that indecent heat of the flesh, that burning itch of physical desire before that disgusting act, that animal union, that shameless coupling, that stinking and wanton deed, full of filthiness.)

(1990: 8,9)

In fact, even a cursory glance at the text reveals terms which characterise sexuality in terms of filth, dirt, defilement and soiling. Examples include: “fleschliche fulðen” or “carnal filthiness” (pp. 3-4, 8-9, 12-13, 40-41); “fulðe fenniliche” or “casts foully into filth” (pp.8-9); “fuleð” or “defiles” (pp. 10-11); or “þet ful of fulðe, stinkende ant untohe dede” or “that stinking and wanton deed, full of filthiness” (pp. 8,9); “in hare wurðinge ...forroteden” or “rotted in their filth” and “ant liueð in wurðinge” or “lives in filth” (pp. 8,9); “Þeos walewið i wurðinge ant forrotieð” or “those wallow in filth and rot in it” (pp. 12,13); “flesches fulðe” or carnal filth (pp. 20,21); “Al þet fule delit is wið fulðe aleid as þu turnest þin hond” or “all that foul pleasure is sated with filthiness in the space of a moment” (pp. 22,23); “Ant mon, ... folheð þet fulðe in eauereuch time” or “man ... pursues that filthiness at all times” (pp. 22,23). Sexual relations within marriage are likened to “i leifen deope bisuncken” or “being deeply sunk in mire” (pp. 28,29). Furthermore, a woman’s “flesch wið þet fulþe ituket” or “flesh is at once defiled with that filth” (pp. 30,31).

Sexuality is seen as harming both the body and the soul: “ah þis is sunne, ant te uncumelicheð þe ant unwurðgeð þi bodi, suleð þi sawle ant makeð schuldi towart Godd, ant fuleð þi flesch ec” or “but this is a sin, [which] also disfigures you and dishonours your body, defiles your soul and makes you guilty in God’s sight, and pollutes your flesh too” (pp. 30,31). Furthermore, sexual relations (even within marriage) are said to cause offence “gultest o twa half: wreaðest þen Alwealdent wið þet suti sunne, ant dest who to þe seolf, þet tu al willes scheomeliche tukest” or “on both sides: you anger the Almighty with that filthy sin, and do harm to yourself, mistreating yourself quite voluntarily in such a shameful way” (pp. 30,31). Finally, sexual relations within marriage are described as “ne of hare werc se wleatful þe ha wurcheð imeane” or “the disgusting act they take part in together” or (pp. 32,33).

The constant repetition of these highly charged terms conveys the impression that sexual relations are regarded with repugnance and loathing by the writer. There is no sense of a curiosity or repressed interest in sexuality. Instead, sexuality is understood to be a base animalistic desire.²¹ Yet the writer explains that beasts are to be forgiven their urge to copulate because this is infrequent and, according to the writer, based on a life-long partnership: “Ah lease þen beastes yet; for þeos doð hare cunde, bute wit þah ha beon, in a time of þe yer Moni halt him to a make, ne nule efter þet lure neauer neomen oþer” or, “But [sexually active people are] less than animals, even; because animals mate naturally, although they lack reason, at one time of the year. Many confine themselves to a single mate, and after losing one will never take another” (pp. 22, 23). The loathing of human sexuality is borne out by the following cluster of terms, in which animal imagery describes marital relations. The sex act itself is described as “þet bestelich gederunge” or “that animal union” (pp. 8, 9). A sexually active married couple are described as “eaueres” or “beasts of burden” (pp. 12, 13), and a wife as entering “into beastes liflade” or “the life of an animal” (pp. 20, 21). The proper translation for “eaueres” is draught horses, a sense which is made clear in the description of fornicators as “þe ilke sari wrecches þe i þe fule wurðinge vnwedde walewið beoð þe deofles eaures, þet rit ham ant spureð ham to don al þet he wule” or “those miserable wretches who wallow unmarried in that unclean filth are the Devil’s cart-horses, and he rides them and spurs them on to do all that he wants” (pp. 12, 13). Millet and Wogan-Brown point out that this devil/cart-horse metaphor is frequently encountered in medieval descriptions of sexuality (1990: 151). Freud would have been intrigued by the use of horses as a symbol of sexuality! Mankind in general is thought to have a “bestes bodi” (p. 10), and a human can only nearly approximate the angels by absolutely eschewing his/her body’s yearnings.

It is therefore clear that sexuality and holiness are mutually exclusive: only married couples are permitted to indulge in sexual relations, and then this results in a fall from a more perfect state. In one instance marriage is punningly described as a “bed of his lahe” or “bed of [God’s] law” (pp. 18, 19) and a “wedlakes heuel bedd” or “mattress of wedlock” (pp. 18, 19). In the context of this metaphor of marriage as a bed or mattress, the marriage-bed is visualised as a net or soft landing which catches the wedded couple as they plunge downwards towards a horrible fate – in this case, being “þet al ham is tolimet, lið ba ant lire” or “torn all to pieces, limb from limb” (pp. 18, 19). Just as a person having to jump from a burning building onto a safety net spread out below would prefer not to have had to jump at all, so is it made abundantly clear that the God-ordained laws of marriage are merely a rescue net for weak humans who cannot eschew their bodily desires. This extended metaphor is furthermore typically literal in

terms of medieval iconography as the holy, virginal state is up (near heaven) and the sinful, sexually experienced state is down (near hell).²² The gradation of relative holiness and sinfulness (or purity and corruption) is designated with mathematical precision:

Yet of þes þreo hat – meiðhad ant widewehad, ant wedlac is þe þridde – þu mahte bi þe degrez of hare blisse icnawen hwuch ant bi hu muchel þe an passed þe opre. For wedlac haueð hire frut þrittifald in heouene; widewehad, sixtifald; meiðhad wið hundretfald ouergeað baþe. Loke þenne herbi, hwa se of hire meiðhad lihteð into wedlac, bi hu monie degrez ha falleð dunewardes. Ha is an hundret degrez ihehet towart heouene hwil ha meiðhad halt, as þe frut preoueð; ant leapeð into wedlac – þet is, dun neoðer to þe þrittuðe – ouer þrie twenti ant yet ma bi tene. (Yet of these three states – virginity and widowhood, and marriage is the third – you can tell by the degrees of their bliss which one is superior to the others, and by how much. For marriage has its reward thirtyfold in heaven; widowhood, sixtyfold; virginity, with a hundred-fold, surpasses both. See then from this, whoever descends from her virginity into marriage, by how many degrees she falls downwards. She is raised a hundred degrees towards heaven while she keeps her virginity, as the reward proves; and leaps into marriage – that is, right down to the thirtieth – over three score and yet more by ten.)

(1990: 20, 21)

That sexual activity involves a fall is emphasised again and again in the text, for virginity is metaphorically described as bestowing an especially superior position on its possessor: “ant meiden stont þurh heh lif i þe tur of Ierusalem. Nawt of lah on eorðe, ah of þe hehe in heouene þe is bitacnet þurh þis, of þet Syon ha bihalt al þe worlt under hire” or “and the virgin stands through her exalted life in the tower of Jerusalem. Not from low on earth, but from the height in heaven which is signified by this, from that Zion she sees all the world below her ...” (pp. 4, 5). Not only is the virgin high hierarchically, she is also promised a charmed life, far removed from the woes and cares of the world: she is “i Syon, þe hehe tur of heouene, freo ouer alle from wordliche weanen” or “if in Zion, the high tower of heaven, incomparably free from worldly troubles” (pp.4, 5). Millet and Wogen-Brown point out in the introduction to *Medieval English Prose for Women* that:

The image of virginity as a high state of life becomes a major structural metaphor ... in which *Hali Meiðhad* concentrates less on the virgin’s power of contemplating God from her exalted position than on establishing that the sole direction in which one can move away from virginity is downwards. The virgin can only leave her tower to descend, by way of physical desire, to marriage or worse.

(1990: xviii)

The perception that the only alternative to virginity, that is, sexuality, automatically results in a diminished status for erstwhile virgins, is oppressive. A young girl is faced with only two possible choices: avowed virginity and the concomitant special status which goes along with this, or sexuality in any form (that is, sanctioned within marriage, or extra-marital) and vastly diminished spiritual possibilities. The virgin is required to repress any sexual urgings whatsoever, for even the merest glimmer of such notions will result in the “blossom” of virginity withering: “ah þah ha falewi sumchere mid misliche þonkes, ha mei eft grenin neauer þa leatere” or “but though it may wither sometimes through indecent thoughts, it can grow green again nevertheless” (pp. 10, 11). Indeed, so deep was the loathing of concupiscence in general, and women’s sexuality and physique in particular, that this kind of teaching led to excessive fasting, anorexia and amenhorrea.²³

Then there is a group of images which characterise the sexually active female as a slave, drudge, thief, or someone completely unable to withstand temptation. Examples include: “flesches þrealles” or “slaves of the flesh” (pp. 2,3); “flesches lustes ant feondes eggunge” or “carnal lusts and the fiend’s temptation” (pp. 4,5). The maiden is urged to “do awei þe þonkes þe prokieð þin heorte þurh licomliche lustes, ant leaðieð þe ant eggieð towart þullich þeowdom for fleschliche fulðen” or “put away the thoughts which stir your heart through physical desires, and incite and urge you on towards such slavery through carnal filthiness” (pp. 8, 9). This view of women as sexually voracious and rapacious is misogynistic and oppressive.

Maidens are warned that husbands are foul-mouthed, crass and violent. This perception is derived from patristic thought, where the married state is predicted to be one of misery or *molestiae nuptiarum*.²⁴ A woman who marries moves from the protection of God and “deð hire into drecchunge” or “gives herself up to drudgery” (pp. 4, 5). Furthermore, anger, anxiety, revulsion and despair are the predominant emotions for a married female:

Hwen he bið ute, hauest agein his hamcume sar care ant eie. Hwil he bið et hame, alle þine wide wanes þuncheð þe to nearewe. His lokunge on ageasteð þe; his ladliche nurð ant his untohe bere makeð þe to agrisen. Chit te ant cheoweð þe ant scheomeliche schent te, tukeð þe to bismere as huler his hore, beateð þe ant busteð þe as his ibohte þrel ant his eðele þeowe. Þine banes akeð þe ant ti flesch smeorteð þe, þin heorte wiðinne þe swelleð of sar grome, ant ti neb utewið tendreð ut of teone.
(When he is out, you are filled with anxiety and fear of his homecoming. While he is at home, all your wide halls seem to you too narrow. His attention makes you nervous; his detestable clamour and his ill-bred shouting frighten you. He rails at you and scolds you and abuses you shamefully, treats you disgracefully as a lecher does his whore, beats you and thrashes you like his bought slave and his born serf. Your bones

ache and your flesh smarts, your heart within you swells with violent rage, and your outward countenance burns with anger.)

(1990: 26, 28, 29)

This extract depicts a married woman as being at the mercy of her husband's ill-temper and bad behaviour. The man, no matter how boorish, is the dominant partner.

Then there is a cluster of images which depict sexuality as corrupting or rotting the flesh. Some examples have already been quoted earlier. Typical of these statements is the following: fornicators have "þet ha in hare wurðinge as eaueres forroteden" or "rotted in their filth like beasts of burden" (pp. 12, 13). Corruption is not only confined to those who indulge in sexual activity without being married: man's very nature is said to be "merden" or "corrupted" (pp. 8, 9) by sexual knowledge. Bodily corruption is the result of sinfulness, most particularly, sexuality, but sexual purity results in bodily preservation, a belief which dates back to the earliest writings of the Church Fathers, as discussed at some length in chapter two.²⁵ These images of rotting and corruption are therefore directly contrasted with the concept of intactness and preservation. The following explicit statement exemplifies this belief:

Bis is yet þe uertu þe halt ure bruchele ueat, þet is, ure feble flesch, as Seinte Pawel leareð, in hal halinesse, ant as þet swote smirles ant deorest of opre þet is icleopet basme wit þet deade licome þet is þerwið ismiret from rotunge, alswa deð meidenhad meidenes cwike flesch wiðute wemmunge. Halt also hire limen ant hire fif wittes – sihðe ant herunge, smechunge ant smellunge ant euch limes felunge – þet ha ne merren ne ne mealten þurh licomes lustes i fleschliche fulðen þe Godd haueð þurh his grace se mucche luue ivnnen

(This is, furthermore, the virtue that keeps our frail vessel, that is, our feeble flesh, as St Paul teaches, in complete holiness; and as that sweet ointment, more costly than any other, which is called balm protects the dead body which is anointed with it against corruption, so virginity preserves a maiden's living flesh without defilement. Likewise it keeps her body and her five senses – sight and hearing, taste and smell, and sensation in every limb – so that those to whom God has granted so much love through his grace do not perish or grow corrupt in carnal filthiness)

(1990: 10-13)

The theological reasoning behind the elevation of chastity and especially virginity, refers to our creation in God's image.

Besides the powerfully sustained clusters of pejorative imagery which rhetorically denounce sexuality, a number of sharply contrasting pairs of images occur, thus starkly setting out the polar choices for a young girl. These binary pairs reinforce patriarchal constructs and thought. Personification of sexuality (described as flesh, but meaning really sexual desire) as the enemy – “Vre flesch is ure fa, ant heaneðus ant hearmed ...” or “our flesh is our foe, and oppresses and harms us ...” (pp. 10, 11) is contrasted with the personification of virgin flesh as a friend – “ah yef ha wit hire wiðute bruche cleane, ha is us swiðe god freond ant help of treowe hine” or “but if it keeps itself pure and intact, it is a very good friend to us and gives us help as a faithful servant” (pp. 10, 11).

A further pair of contrasting images once again involves personification, this time of “Lechery” and “Virginité”, who are, respectively, the Devil’s and God’s children. Lechery is associated with the bestial part of man’s nature, and Virginité with reason, the godly attribute:

Ant loke wel hweruore: vre licomes lust is þes feondes foster; vre wit is Godes dohter; ant ba beoð us inwið. Forþi her is aa feht, ant mot beon aa nede; for ne trukeð neauer mare, hwil we her wunieð, weorre ham bitweonen. Ah wel is him þat folheð Wit, Godes dohter, for ha halt wið Meiðhad, þet is hire suster; ah þi wil, on oðer half, of þet licomliche lust halt wið Leccherie, þet is þe deofles streon as heo is, ant Sunne hire moder.

(And observe carefully why: our physical desire is the Devil’s offspring; our reason is God’s daughter, and both are within us. So here there is always conflict, and must always be of necessity, because fighting between them will never cease while we live in this world. But it is well for whoever follows Reason, God’s daughter, because she sides with Virginité, who is her sister; but, on the other hand, your desire for that physical pleasure sides with Lechery, who is the Devil’s offspring as she is, and Sin her mother.)

(1990: 14, 15)

We notice here the correlation of reason and concomitant purity.²⁶ Taken to its extreme, this concept requires the abnegation of the physical, bestly part of man’s nature if the godly aspect of reason is to remain unbesmirched. Indeed, it goes back further to the doctrine of the separation of the body and the soul. Occasionally, some scholars assert that there was a belief that women had no soul but this view is not accorded general credence.²⁷

Sexual experience is characterised as inevitably disappointing and bitter. Two striking images convey this idea. The main idea is the promise that the world (and for world, in this treatise, read sexual experience) promises much and delivers little. The still-popular folk-wisdom proverb of “Nis nowher neh gold, al þet ter schineð” or “It is nowhere near gold, all that

glitters there” (pp. 6, 7) sums up the bitterness of the false allure of sexuality. The vivid description of the false treasure encapsulates the treasure-seeker’s hope, and then bitter disappointment, upon discovering the worthlessness of the treasure for which much has been sacrificed: “Al is þet tu wendest golt I wurðe to meastling” or “Everything that you thought was gold has turned to brass...” (pp. 6, 7). Finally, a most telling and vividly concrete image for the disappointment, pain and suffering caused by sexual knowledge, is the assurance that the virgin should:

Easke þes cwenes, þes riche cuntasses, þeos modie leafdis of hare
liflade; soðliche, gef ha biþencheð ham riht ant icnawlecheð soð, Ich
habbe ham to wnesse, ha lickið honi of þornes. Ha buggeð al þet swete
wið twa dale of bittere ...

(Ask these queens, these rich countesses, these proud ladies, about their
way of life; certainly, if they give it careful thought and admit the truth, I
have them as witnesses, they are licking honey off thorns. They pay for
all that sweetness with twice as much bitterness...)

(1990: 6, 7)

There is a consolatory tone to this part of the argument which serves to quell envy arising from a longing for the apparently comfortable life of a married woman of noble status. Even if queens look grand their lives are bitter in secret.

A further development of the idea outlined above, occurs with the pair of contrasting images of the maiden being under attack by an envious devil who “... scheoteð niht ant dei his earewen, idrencte of an attri healewi, towart tin heorte to wundi þi wið wac wil, ant makien to fallen, as Crist te forbeode!” or “night and day he shoots his arrows, dipped in a venomous potion, towards your heart, to wound you with the weakness of will and cause you to fall, which Christ forbid!” (pp. 12, 13). The impact of the “feondes flan” or “Devil’s arrows” (pp. 12,13,14,15) on the maiden will fail “Hwil þi wit edstont, ant chastieð þi wil, ... ne hearmeð hit te nawiht, ne suleð þi sawle, for wit is hire scheld under Godes grace. Hwil þe scheld is ihal – þet is, þe wisdom of þi wit ... þes feondes flan fleoð agein alle on himseoluen” or “While your reason stands firm and controls your will, ... it does not harm you at all or defile your soul; for reason is its shield, under God’s grace. While that shield is intact – that is, the wisdom of your reason, ... the Devil’s arrows all rebound again on himself” (pp. 12, 13, 14, 15). However, the poor maiden cannot rest content in her heightened status as a virgin, for the text makes it quite clear that the potential for her destruction is lodged within herself. This is because her very nature, her own yearnings, plot to overthrow her reason: “fleschliche þonkes...[is] Babilones folc, þe deofles here of helle, þet is umbe for te leaden into þe worldes þeowdom Syones dohter”

or “carnal thoughts ... [are the] people of Babylon, the army of the Devil of hell, who are plotting to lead the daughter of Zion into the world’s servitude” (pp. 2, 3).

The belief in the inherent wickedness of the virgin’s innate being, and the teaching that she has to wage a continuous struggle in order to be able to defeat the cunningly waged strategies of her own nature, which is seen as devilish, is incredibly oppressive. Even if she is pure, the possibility of a fall is never absent. The only certainty rests in the absoluteness of the teaching that once she has fallen, she can never attain the spiritual vantage point of purity again. Therefore, her continued perfect status is never assured. Indeed, only death as a virgin, in other words, expunging the physical altogether, ensures that special, extra crown, called the *aureola*. Therefore, earthly self-effacement, an erasure of the body, results in a special reward, the special radiant golden circlet. But this reward is heavenly, awarded only after death, and after all possibility of physical expression has ceased. Presumably to counteract the yearnings of the body, and the restriction of earthly choice, the eternal reward for dying *virga intacta* is superb: virgins are promised that they will be awarded special sumptuary status, placement near God, the special gold circlet and other, unnamed privileges:

... hare aturn se briht ant se schene biuoren alle oþre, þet ha gað eauer nest Godd hwider se he turneð. Ant alle ha beoð icrunet þe blissið in heouene wið kempene crune; ah þe meidnes habbeð upo þeo þe is to alle iliche imeane a gerlondesche schininde schenre þen þe sunne, *aureola* ihaten o Latines ledene. Þe flurs þe beoð idrahe þron, ne þe gimmes þrin, te tellen of hare euene nis na monnes speche. Þus feole priuileged schawið ful sutelliche hwucche beoð þer meidnes, ant sundrið ham from þe oðre wið þus feole mensken world buten ende.

(... their robes are so bright and shining above all others, because they always walk next to God wherever he goes. And all who rejoice in heaven are crowned with a victor’s crown; but the virgins have, over and above what is common to all alike, a circlet shining brighter than the sun, called *aureola* in Latin. As for the flowers which are engraved on it, and the inset jewels, no one could find the words to describe what they are like. So many privileges show very clearly which are virgins there, and distinguish them from the rest with so many honours to all eternity.)

(1990: 20, 21)

In contrast to the repulsion, horror and disgust which characterise all references to sexuality in *Hali Meiohad*, virginity is described in highly charged metaphoric language as a most precious state:

Meiðhad is þet tresor þet, beo hit eanes forloren, ne bið hit neauer ifunden. Meiðhad is þe blostme þet, beo ha fulliche eanes forcoruen, ne spruteð ha eft neauer (ah þah he falewi sumchere mid misliche þonkes, ha mei eft grenin neauer þa leatere). Meiðhad is þe steorre þet, beo ha eanes of þe est igan adun i þe west, neauer eft ariseð ha. Meiðhad is þet yeoue iyettet te of heouene; do þu hit eanes awei, ne schalt tu neauer nan oðer al swuch acourin. For meiðhad is heouene cwen, ant worldes alesesndnesse þurh hwam we beoð iborhen, mihte ouer alle mihtes ant cwemest Crist of alle.

(Virginity is the treasure which, if it is once lost, will never be found again. Virginity is the blossom which, if it is once completely cut off, will never grow again (but though it may wither sometimes through indecent thoughts, it can grow again nevertheless). Virginity is the star which, if it has once travelled from the East to sink in the West, will never rise again. Virginity is the one gift granted you from heaven; if you once dispose of it, you will never regain another quite like it. For virginity is the queen of heaven, and the world's redemption through which we are saved, a virtue above all virtues, and most pleasing of all to Christ.

(1990: 8-11)

Treasure, blossom, star, gift, queen: all of these are precious and beautiful. The words of *Hali Meiðhad* are designed to evoke an emotional response in the reader, and the argument is so constructed as to manipulate the reader's final decision. Choices are stark, sharply contrasted and definite: either opting for the blissful rewards of consecrated virginity, beginning with a carefree earthly existence, lived in the smug certainty of being pure, whole and therefore holy, or choosing the defilement and corruption of a sexually active life, even if this occurs within a church-sanctioned marriage. The second choice results in a perpetual second-class status for women, as the text emphasises the loss of perfection which even one sexual encounter involves. Both choices are ultimately repressive for women: a maiden must remain imprisoned in her tower of chastity, for ever guarding against lecherous thoughts or cunning strategies from the devil, or fall from this special place to a forever more lowly position. And the text makes it quite clear that a female's loss of virginity is much more ruinous than a man's as this involves the destruction of the maidenhead, a physical alteration which is seen as besmirching God's perfect creation. A sexually experienced woman is no longer whole and perfect as she had been created by God. Female sexual experience is thus seen as a deliberate undermining of God's perfect ideal.

Hali Meiðhad is thus a text which constructs and prescribes choices for females. These choices are limited and proscribed. The route of holiness, which can only be retained properly by remaining virginal, requires an abnegation of the self, a loathing for a female's own body, and an endlessly deferred heavenly consummation. Within the framework of expectations erected by

texts such as *Hali Meidhad*, women are instructed to deny themselves and their bodies, and offer themselves as a sacrifice to God. Any fulfilment they may have is either vicarious or deferred. Women are forced either to abjure their bodies or to suffer a permanent loss of spiritual worthiness.

Unlike *Hali Meidhad*, *Sawles Warde*, or the *Custody of the Soul*, does not deal specifically with the issue of virginity and its special virtues. Rather, *Sawles Warde* is a sustained allegory of the body as a house, under attack by the devil. Within the context of didactic literature for females, the devil's attacks upon the female are likely to be interpreted as the incitement of lustful thoughts and carnal curiosity. *Sawles Warde* is therefore an important part of the religious and literary context of the post-Conquest period. The treatise is based on the biblical proverb (in Latin) which heads the text:

Si sciret paterfamilias qua hora for uenturus esset, vigilaret utique et non sineret perfodi domum suam.

(If the head of the household knew at what time a thief would come, he would keep watch and not allow his house to be broken into.)

(*Medieval English Prose for Women*, 1990: 86-7)

Extremely illuminating from a feminist point of view is the fact that the male attribute of "Reason" is the head of the household and needs to subdue, dominate and control "Will", which is seen to be a disorderly, undisciplined female:

Inwið, þe monnes wit i þis hus is þe huse-luered, ant te fulitohe wif mei beon Wil ihaten, þet ga þet hus efter hire, he diht hit al to wundre, bute Wit ase lauerd chasti hire þe betere ant bineome hire ofte muchel of þet ha walde. Ant tah walde al þet hird folhin hire oueral, gef Wit ne forbude ham, for alle hit beoð untohene ant rechelese hinen, bute gef he ham rihte.

(1990: ll. 8-13)

(Inside, man's reason is master in this house, and Will can be described as the unruly wife, who, if the household follows her lead, reduces it to chaos, unless Reason as master disciplines her better, and often deprives her of much she would like. And yet all that household would follow her in everything, if Reason did not forbid them, because they are all undisciplined and careless servants unless he corrects them.)

(1990: 86-7)

In contrast to the supporting literature of the Anglo-Saxon period, a pervasive misogyny underpins thought in the later Middle Ages. The stereotypical view of woman as shrewish, shrill, greedy and lacking in discipline and control is readily apparent: she needs to be contained,

controlled and ordered by the disciplined, wise and thoughtful male. Female is equated with insatiable appetite, chaotic misrule, carelessness and misuse of power. Male, however, is controlled, careful, masterful. Furthermore, the female is depicted as plotting actively against God and his will:

Inwið beoð his hinen in se moni mislich þonc to cwemen wel þe husewif
agein Godes wille, ant swerieð sometreadliche þet efter hire hit schal
gan. Ðah we hit ne here nawt, we mahen felen hare nurð ant hare untohe
bere, aþet Wit cume forð ant ba wið eie ant wið luue tuhte ham þe
betere.

(1990: ll. 19-22)

(His inner servants plot in all kinds of ways to please the housewife
against God's will, and swear with one voice that things shall go as she
wants them to. Although we do not hear it, we can feel their din and
unruly disturbance, until Reason intervenes and, with both fear and love,
disciplines them better.)

(1990: 86-7)

In direct contrast to unruly female "Will" in the household which is being assailed by Satan, there is the panoply of female virginal saints. These are, of course, females who have surrendered their will entirely to God and to his service. Thus the only way a female can escape the unruliness of her sex and her natural predilections, is to offer herself to God and make his will hers.

Unlike *Sawles Warde*, which could have applied to either male or female readers, *Ancrene Wisse* is a text written specifically for a female readership and then even more specifically for female religious recluses or anchorites.²⁸ The prologue of the book states that it was specifically written as an instructional tool: its didactic purpose is overt. Furthermore, the name of its author is supplied. Revealingly, the authority on rules for anchoresses is a male, named John. Once more, the contrast with the intellectual authority of Hild, Leoba and Berhtgyð is vivid: by the later Middle Ages, authority rests with the male and the female is relegated to the role of pupil, the instructed.²⁹ Whereas the earlier women were a part of a vigorous intellectual debate, their later sisters are clearly lower on the ladder, receiving instruction, instead of formulating arguments. And what is even more telling is that the instruction which they are receiving has to do with being a female religious. There is no sense here of a sisterhood sharing ideas and experiences, or groping for the solution to problems together: the women are being instructed by an author, a male authority on existence as an anchoress. Women are silenced receivers of instruction.

Besides *Hali Meiðhad*, *Ancrene Wisse* and *Sawles Warde*, there are other religious works which form part of the intertextual reading context for the *Liflade*. Just as Cynewulf's *Juliana* is not an isolated example of a text depicting a heroic woman, the *Liflade* likewise has several companion pieces. The two texts which are the most closely related to the *Liflade* are the saint's lives, *Seinte Katerine* and *Seinte Margarete*. The three texts appear in the same manuscript and may, in fact, have been prepared for three noble sisters who lived as anchoresses.³⁰ The subject-matter and didactic message of all three of these Saints' Lives is similar: they reinforce and confirm each other.

Seinte Margarete is "a work with special relevance for virgins" (Millett & Wogan-Browne, 1990: xxv). There are many more direct references to virginity as the source of Margaret's success than there are in the *Liflade*, and much of the imagery used in the life is similar to that used in the *Hali Meiðhad*. The inter-textual nature of the saint's lives, *Hali Meiðhad*, and similar texts, especially with regard to the issue of virginity, is pointed out by Millett & Wogan-Browne:

In its presentation of heroic virginity *Seinte Margarete*, like its sister legends, exemplifies the strength of will required to resist parental and societal pressures towards marriage and aligns this with spiritual strength against temptation. In this way it makes a good companion-piece for *Hali Meiðhad*.

(1990: xxv)

Millett and Wogan-Browne then refer to the words addressed directly to the reader which remind her to remember the earthly suffering and heavenly reward of a number of saints, who have been discussed earlier in this chapter.³¹ It is therefore clear that a matrix of texts which all preached a similar message formed the required reading for Christian women. Each text confirms and therefore strengthens the teachings of the others. Together these texts form a web of inter-connections that are fundamental for the proper understanding of any of the single texts. A careful scrutiny of the Katherine Group reveals a strongly didactic, fixed and dictatorial attitude with regard to the position and role of women. This is considerably more limited and constrained than that of the Anglo-Saxon woman. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne makes the following comments regarding the similarities between the three Saints' Lives in the Katherine Group:

The Katherine Group lives share their themes and narrative morphology to some extent with other virgin lives, but seem to have been collected together and written into the same stylistic *koine* as a deliberate exploitation of the possibilities of repetitive formulaic reading. Here

hagiography's characteristic intertextuality is heightened in a miniature female legendary....

(1993: 173)

Seinte Margarete, as has been mentioned above, contains much information about virginity, more so than either the *Liflade* or *Seinte Katerine*. A selection of the kinds of statements made about virginity and the need for its preservation which are made in *Seinte Margarete* now follows. The first statement is a call to listeners³² to heed and understand the message of this tale:

Hercneð, alle þe earen ant herunge habbeð, widewen wið þa iweddede, ant te meidnes nomeliche lusten swiðe geornliche hu ha schulen luuien þe liuierende Lauerd ant libben i meiðhad, þet him his mihte leouest, swa þet ha moten, þurh þet eadie meiden þe we munneð todei wið meiðhades menske, þet seli meidnes song singen wið þis meiden ant wið þet heouenliche hird echeliche in heouene.

(Listen, all those who have ears to hear, widows with the married, and maidens above all should attend most earnestly to how they should love the living Lord, and live in virginity, the virtue dearest to him, so that they may, through that holy maiden we commemorate today with the honour due to virgins, sing that blessed virgins' song together with this maiden and with the heavenly host eternally in heaven.)

(1990: 44,5)

Quite clearly, the tale is meant to be an exemplar for women, whether they be widows, married or virgins, but it has particular relevance for virgins, as it offers a kind of reification of their vows, or aims to persuade young girls as to the proper path. At best, the choice should be an entirely virginal life: second best is vowing chastity upon widowhood.

A horror of sexuality is clearly evident in this tale: Margaret prays to stay free from "flesliche fulþen" (p. 46) or "carnal defilement" (p. 47) and "licomes lust" (p. 48) or "fleshly lust" (p. 49). The demon also mentions in his forced confession that he causes people to "ferliche falleð ant fenneliche i flescliche fulðen" (p. 70) or "they take a terrible fall into the foul and muddy mire of carnal filthiness" (p. 71). These words refer reflexively to many of the statements made about human sexuality in *Hali Meiðhad*.³³ Olibrius promises Margaret both rank and wealth if she leaves her faith and worships his idols, but this is just an excuse to persuade her to "merren hire meiðhad" (p. 50) or "corrupt her virginity" (p. 51). The loss of virginity is thus seen as a corruption of an ideal: this idea reflects the teachings of Augustine, Ambrose and so on, who taught that the created body was perfect and sexual activity not only

destroyed the perfection of the body but also, like sin, caused corruption to enter the world.³⁴ And the fact that Olibrius wishes to barter “rank and wealth” in exchange for sexual favours reveals that he feels that women are greedy, rapacious, materialistic and easily persuaded from a chosen course: all the clichéd ideas about women are assumed to be true by Olibrius. This view probably reflects prevailing beliefs about women in general.

In contrast to the repugnance which is expressed towards human sexuality, virginity is described in glowing terms of approbation. Margaret, for example, often refers to her virginity as though it is a prize which needs to be guarded jealously. She uses imagery to explain how precious her virginal state is to her:

Ich habbe a deore gimstan, ant Ich hit habbe igeue þe – me meiðhad I
mene, blostme brihstest I bodi þe hit bereð ant biwit wel.
(I have a precious jewel – my virginity, I mean – brightest of blossoms
in the body that bears it and guards it well.)
(1990: 48,9)

This mixed metaphor depicts virginity as both a jewel and a blossom, both terms which are used in *Hali Meiðhad* in order to describe the precious and delicate nature of virginity.³⁵ Perhaps the intention with the two comparisons is to indicate the difficulty of retaining virginity because of unrelenting pressure from society – hence the comparison to a “blossom”, which is delicate, fragile, and easily destroyed, whereas the comparison to a “jewel” may refer to the lasting heavenly prize which awaits virgins. This link is, indeed made by Margaret. She says:

Mi Lauerd haeð mine limen sunderliche iseilet, ant haeð to mi gimstan
þet Ich gettede him igarket and igeue me kempene crune.
(My Lord has put a seal on each of my limbs, and in return for the jewel
that I gave to him has prepared and granted me a victor’s crown.)
(1990: 74,5)

Virginity is also seen as a means of bestowing power upon its possessor. Margaret clearly believes that her virginity is what causes God to be particularly pleased with her:

Sende me þi sonde i culurene heowe, þe cume me to helpe, þet Ich mi
meiðhad mote wite to þe unwemmet; ant lef me yet iseon, Lauerd, yef þi
wil is, þe awariede with þe weorreð agein me; ant cuð þi mahte on me,
almihti Godd, þet Ich him ouercume mahe, swa þet alle meidnes eaer
mare þurh me þe mare trusten on þe.
(Send me your messenger in the shape of a dove to come to my help, so
that I may preserve my virginity undefiled for you; and, Lord, if it is
your will, let me see before I die the accursed creature who is attacking

me; and show your power through me, almighty God, that I may overcome him, so that all virgins ever afterwards may put their trust in you more through me.)

(1990: 54,5)

Margaret also believes that she will be granted special strength to overcome the demon because of her virginity, as do all three of the young woman as they face their various tortures. Catherine, for example, remains unafraid and calm as she faces the horrible torture upon a wheel similar to the one which dismembers Juliana. In Catherine's case, her holiness and the heavenly sanction of her resistance to pagan threats is underscored because the horrible implement of tortured is shattered on the command of an angel, instead of shattering her body. This of course, foreshadows the saint's eventual complete triumph over the forces of evil.

An implied contrast between the Virgin Mary and sinful Eve is evoked whenever the special benefits of virginity are mentioned. Tertullian's well-known invective railing against Eve would possibly be remembered.³⁶ Sharon Farmer states that the clerical reforms of the eleventh and twelfth centuries resulted in intensified arguments against women:

Clerical authors became increasingly inclined to represent woman as Eve, the temptress. She was not a mere pawn, but an active, negative force, a source of disorder in society: she enticed men into the material realm of sin just as Eve had enticed Adam. Men who aspired to the spiritual life should avoid women altogether ...

(1986: 519)

Images of women became increasingly polarised as either Eve or Mary figures. Clayton remarks upon "the great upsurge of interest in Mary which accompanied the Benedictine Reform in England in the second half of the tenth century and continued throughout the following centuries" (1986: 422). *Seinte Margarete* emphasises the special link between all virgin saints, and Margaret in particular, with the supreme example of spotless virginity, namely Mary. The interest in Mary, and her particular merit, resided in her spotless virginity, which is described as the means whereby mankind was saved from sin:

For Jesu Crist, Godes bern, wes of meiden iboren, ant þurh þe mihte of meiðhad wes moncun iboren.

(For Jesus Christ, son of God, was born of a virgin, and through the virtue of virginity mankind was saved....)

(1990: 72-3)

Finally, virginity enables its possessor to don the coveted *aureola*, which is awarded to Margaret even before her death:

Eadi were þu, meiden, þa þu chure meiðhad, þe of alle mihtes is cwen;
forþi þu schalt aa bruken in blisse buten ende crunene brihtest.
(You were blessed, maiden, when you chose virginity, which is queen of
all virtues; therefore you shall enjoy for ever in endless bliss the
brightest of crowns.)

(1990: 76-7)

The *aureola* is mentioned in *Hali Meiðhad* as the coveted symbol of virginity, an outward and visible sign of the wholeness and purity of the physical body of the saint who wears it.³⁷ The *aureola* thus becomes for a virgin saint what a wedding band is to a married woman: a sign of her ownership by a patriarchal figure, and her promise to be faithful and true to him. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne explicates the complex relationships operating in the tales between pagan/ Christian, earthly lover/ heavenly husband, secular/ spiritual as follows:

In all three Katherine Group lives, the heroines' refusal of marriage or concubinage entails revealing their Christian loyalty to a spiritual bridegroom, so that sexual socialisation and submission to paganism parallel and underwrite each other in a literal and spiritual underplay. Just as enforced betrothal to a pagan figures attempted ravishing of the virgin's will to faith, so marriage – sexual involvement with literal men – becomes positioned as potentially pagan preferment of fathers and suitors over God and Christ.

(1993: 176)

All three of the saints in the Katherine Group choose to defer their submission to a husband until they can be united with their preferred suitor – a heavenly bridegroom. But they submit themselves to his will and to his domination, sublimating physical sensuality and substituting it with an ethereal courtly romance.

The authenticity of a tradition of courtly love (as described in modern times by Gaston de Paris and later, C. S. Lewis) has been questioned recently.³⁸ What is certain is that Andreas Capellanus (1941) wrote *De amore (The Art of Courtly Love)* in 1180, and that his work was widely read. Elements of the courtly love tradition are evident in the manner in which Margaret speaks of her relationship with Christ: instead of being a remote god whom she worships, she talks of Christ as though he was her affianced husband, the man whom she loves above any other in the world. Again, this is similar in the *Liflade*.³⁹ Margaret “ches him [crist] to luue ant te

lefmon" (p. 46) or "chose him as love and as suitor" (p. 47). Christ is described by Margaret in rather lover-like terms such as "mi gleo ant mi gledunge" (p. 46) or "my joy and my delight" (p. 47). Margaret also compares any other man unfavourably to her chosen love, Christ: he is "a leouere þet Ich nulle for nan leosen ne leauen" (p. 50) or "a dearer lover I would not lose or leave for any other man" (p. 51). In one of her prayers, Margaret asks to be cleansed from sin by being "wið þes ilke weattres wesch me" (p. 76) or "with the same waters wash me within" (p. 77). All this is in preparation for her heavenly marriage. Before her death, Margaret is honoured to receive an assurance that her prayer has been answered not just from heaven but in particular from Christ:

Cum nu, for Ich kepe þe, brud to þi brudgrume. Cum, leof, to þi lif, for Ich copni þi cume. Brihtest bur abit te; leof, hihe þe to me. Cum nu to mi kinedom, leaf þet leode se lah, ant tu schalt wealde wið me al þet Ich I wald ah.

(Come now, for I am waiting for you, bride to your bridegroom. Come, beloved, to your life; I long for you to come. The brightest chamber is ready; beloved, hasten to me. Come now to my kingdom, leave that lowly race, and you will rule with me all that I possess.)

(1990: 80-1)

This message is couched in the familiar imagery of the virgin bride marrying her courtly lover. And the tortures and sufferings which Margaret has undergone are but a means towards the attainment of her long-awaited goal, which is being united in a heavenly marriage with Christ.

Twelfth-century medieval ideals of feminine beauty are discussed by Joan Ferrante in *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature* (1975: 1-7). The ideal is a somewhat androgynous, slender, gentle, hairless figure. In fact, angels and even Christ were somewhat feminine, and females lacked pronounced breasts. In the *Liflade*, Juliana is a gentle, feminine and fragile figure.⁴⁰ Similarly, in *Seinte Margarete*, Margaret is also a very feminine woman: she is the "meokest alre milde" (p. 46) or "meekest of the mild" (p. 47); she is the "mildest and meidene meokest" (p. 50) or "the gentlest and humblest of maidens" (p. 51). Even when she is confronted by a fiend in the form of a dragon, she is described as a "meoke meiden" (p. 58) or "meek maiden" (p. 59). Her actions in besting the demon are completely contrary to her gentle nature: before she seizes the dragon's brother demon, her gentleness and delicacy are emphasised: "þet milde maiden Margarete grap þat grisliche þing, þet hire ne agras nawiht ..." (p. 62) or "The gentle maiden Margaret seized that frightful creature, who frightened her not at all ..." (p. 63). Margaret's nature is naïve, innocent, fragile and feminine: the words which epitomise her depiction in *Seinte Margarete* are that she is a "seli meiden" (p. 46) or an "innocent maiden" (p. 47).

Margaret fulfils the late medieval feminine ideal of beauty. Olibrius is attracted to Margaret when he sees her tending the sheep in the meadow because her beauty is so radiant: “þe schimede ant schan al of wlite ant of westume” (p. 46) or he “was dazzled by the beauty of her face and figure” (p. 47). She has “yuheþe ant semliche schape, of þi schene nebschaft” (p. 50) or “youth and your comely figure, of your beautiful face” (p. 51). As she undergoes torture and suffering, Margaret’s beauty undergoes a transformation as she becomes ever more radiant. Shortly before her execution, she is described as being “ase schene ase schininde sunne” (p. 76) or “as bright as the shining sun” (p. 77). This is after she has been awarded “briht as þah ha bearnde, a guldene crune” (p. 76) or “a golden crown, as bright as if it burned” (p. 77). Margaret’s physical beauty, that which attracted the unwanted attentions of Olibrius, is transformed into a fiery spiritual radiance. This all emanates from her virginity, without which true holy beauty was simply not possible.

Even the demon notices her comely form as he calls her “lufsume leafdi” (p. 64) or “lovely lady” (p. 65) and “brihte burde” (p. 72) or “beautiful lady” (p. 73). Margaret’s body is described as a “leofliche bodi” (p. 74) or “lovely body” (p. 75) which is the cause of a considerable degree of voyeurism as people stream in to see how her body is to be tortured.

Olibrius requires Margaret’s submission to him, and her failure to do so is what seems to anger him more than the fact that she is a Christian: “Hwet bihalt, maiden, þet tu ne buhest to me Ah nu ant bei to me ...” (p. 54) or “Why is it, maiden, that you will not submit to me ... submit now to me and do me homage ...” (p. 55). Olibrius quite obviously perceives himself to be in an authoritarian position relative to Margaret: he therefore is the One and Margaret the Other. This attitude of ownership, entitlement and power is all too evident as Olibrius’ instant reaction upon first seeing Margaret in the fields is that he wishes to possess her. The tortures which he inflicts upon her are a twisted expression of his sexual desire for her, but they provide no satisfaction. His frustration, anger and the impotence of his actions become more and more evident. Olibrius is rendered ineffective because Margaret willingly submits herself to the dictates of a far more powerful patriarchal figure than her earthly tormentor.

St Catherine, the third virgin martyr in this unique group of saints’ lives, is a martyr who suffers death because she purposefully seeks out her lord and witnesses publicly to her faith. She is therefore unlike either Margaret or Juliana because she deliberately confronts a pagan lord with her faith. In all essentials the three tales are so alike that Jocelyn Wogan-Browne provides a summary of the narrative path along which each tale progresses. Because the three tales are

similar in their essentials and identical in their purpose, the story of *Seinte Katerine* will not be discussed. This decision does not signify that the tale is insignificant or unimportant: rather, it demonstrates that the issue of virginity and its profound links with spirituality was of material interest to the audience of the tales. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon era, where widely varying types of women are depicted in a positive manner, the ideal role model for young women has become the virgin martyr. This phenomenon further supports the argument of this thesis: that choices for women became more restricted, limited and confined after the Norman Conquest.

As with the story of Juliana, the legends of St Catherine and St Margaret underwent several incarnations, appearing in the *South English Legendary* as well. Their popularity as a debased form probably indicates that the sentiments occurring in these saint's lives represent popular thought, as opposed to ground-breaking innovative ideas.

Secular texts

All of the texts which have been discussed thus far in this contextualising discussion are of a religious nature. During the later Middle Ages, there was a proliferation of texts written in English. Some of these, such as Layamon's *Brut* (1189), and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* (1136), were probably written with a nationalistic and anti-Norman sentiment⁴¹ and therefore have a completely different focus to the argument in this dissertation. These texts constitute the major contemporary historical (or quasi-historical) writings. There is a huge group of Arthurian legends, allegorical works such as *Pearl* (1377) and *Piers Plowman* (1377), and also the vast corpus of Chaucer's works.

Clearly, with such a huge number of secular works upon which draw, it is necessary to be highly selective. I have chosen, for the sake of brevity, to limit my discussion of the literary influences to those aspects which are central to my thesis. Late medieval secular literature requires attention to be paid to the concept of courtly love. A brief overview of this flawed and problematic trend will ensue. Thereafter, a selection from the misogynistic writings of the twelfth to the fifteenth century will be examined. The chapter ends with a reference to *querelle des femme*, or the women's response to the increasingly virulent misogynistic texts.

Arthurian and other romantic literature of the later middle ages was immensely influential. A particular image of women as lovely, fragile and feminine was cultivated. In much of the secular literature, for instance, women are invariably either temptresses (such as Morgan Le Fey or Bertilak's wife) remote beauties (such as Emelye in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*) or fragile

damsels requiring rescue in the Arthurian romances. The image of women in these texts is thus eminently readable from a feminist perspective. The amount of literature of this kind, however, is vast. Space constraints unfortunately require this discussion to gloss over the genres of courtly, romantic, allegorical, historical and Arthurian secular literature, except for a brief discussion on courtly literature, its origins and contemporary interpretations of courtly literature.

Highly respected scholars continue to misinterpret the facts about the conditions and circumstances of women. Norman Cantor, in *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, writes as follows:

The romantic literature also instructed the aristocracy that the sensibility that had hitherto been regarded as a mark of feminine inferiority was now made into a virtue practiced by heroes, such as Lancelot, Parsifal and Tristan. By making feminine qualities heroic, the romantic poets enhanced the dignity of woman and made her a being with distinctive and valuable qualities. The teaching of the fourth-century church fathers on sex and marriage was the first and very modest stage in the emancipation of women in western civilization. The romantic ethos of the twelfth century marked the second and more important stage.
(1994: 354)

The first error which he makes is in calling the writings of the third- and fourth-century Church Fathers (which have been discussed in detail in chapter two⁴²) a cause of the improvement in the status of women – he even credits these writings with the “emancipation” of women. This is true, but only in a limited sense. The circumstances and practices from which women were liberated by the writings of the Church Fathers were those that had obtained in the Roman empire. There, women were frequently misused sexually and they had no recourse or protection. The sanctions and restrictions placed on sexual behaviour by the Church Fathers therefore served to protect women from exploitation. Hand in hand with their teachings about the proper place for sexual relations only being within church-sanctioned marriage, however, went a deep mistrust of women’s sexuality and, indeed, a woman’s very nature, which was thought to be inherently flawed.⁴³ Ironically, Germanic women (from tribes who were categorised as barbarians by the Romans) were not subject to the same degradation as women under Roman civilisation.⁴⁴

The second error which Norman Cantor makes is in ascribing to the idealised imagery and flowery romanticism of a twelfth century literary *topos* an advancement in the status of women. Although the so-called courtly love convention (to which Norman Cantor is alluding) does offer an idealised version of womanhood, and posits an adoration of the remote, unattainable lady, in

reality it prescribes a restricted and stultifying role for women. The ideal is simply not a possible role which the real woman can attain. And the courtly love convention relied ultimately upon a binary opposition for its inspiration – that of the perfect, ever virginal Mary, and the sinful, rapacious, manipulative Eve. The outcome is clear: no earthly woman can sustain an image of perfection: inevitably, she will fail. If the role models are so ineluctably polarised, a real woman has no middle ground in which to operate. If she is not perfect, like Mary, she must then be flawed and sinful, like Eve.

Courtly love as a literary notion has been, and continues to be, hotly debated.⁴⁵ Opinions are diametrically opposed as to the extent, purpose and effect of the courtly love tradition. In fact, some scholars doubt whether the “game of love” was played at all. Moi (1986: 16) quotes D. W. Robertson as saying that “The subject [*i.e.* courtly love] has nothing to do with the Middle Ages, and its use as a governing concept can only be an impediment to our understanding of medieval texts.” Contrariwise, J. Huizinga is firmly of the opinion that the “courtly code [was] applicable to life” (1982: 118). Its modern re-invention commenced with Gaston Paris who invented the term (as *courtly* love) in 1865⁴⁶ but it was most fully and influentially described by C. S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love*, published in 1936.⁴⁷ The primary source of contemporary information is Andreas Capellanus’ thirteenth-century Latin text entitled *De amore*, which was itself influenced by Ovid’s text, the *Ars Amatoria* (1968). It is from Capellanus’ text that C. S. Lewis extracted the well-known tenets of the tradition:

The sentiment, of course, is love, but love of a highly specialised sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love. The lover is always abject. Obedience to his lady’s slightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust, are the only virtues he dares to claim.

(1958: 2-3)

Whatever the characteristics of courtly love, and whether it was actually practiced, what must be conceded is that the convention (as described by Capellanus) is ultimately extremely restrictive, constricting, prescriptive and oppressive for women. Courtly love is no more than the benign face of an oppressive patriarchal system which can only flourish in a society which is deeply misogynistic.⁴⁸ For the purposes of this dissertation, a knowledge of Capellanus’ text and its possible influence is essential as courtly and romantic elements are readily discernible in the *Liflade*.

During later medieval times, blatantly misogynistic literature flourished. P. J. P. Goldberg states that “[t]here is a considerable body of medieval antifeminist literature which constructs women as idle, spendthrift, prone to gossip, and wanton” (1995: 27). In vernacular English literature, the most detailed and sustained context in which literary misogyny occurs simply must be in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*. In the frankly confessional *Prologue* to her tale, a number of male authors, some predating Christianity, who railed against women, are mentioned:

He hadde a book that gladly, night and day,
 For his desport he wolde rede alway.
 He cleped it Valerie and Theofraste,
 At which book he lough alwey ful faste.
 And eek ther was somtyme a clerk at Rome,
 A cardinal, that highte Seinte Jerome,
 That made a book agayn Jovinian;
 In which book eek ther was Tertulan,
 Crisippus, Trotula and Helowys,
 That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys;
 And eek the Parables of Salomon,
 Ovydes Art, and bokes many on,
 And alle these were bounden in o volume.
 (1989: ll. 669-81)

Although the *Wife of Bath* laughingly refers to her marital battles for supremacy with her fifth husband, Jankin, it is clear that the *Book of wikked wyves* which he reads in order to provoke her, was representative of a powerfully, and popular, antifeminist male voice.

One of these misogynistic writers who is mentioned by name in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue* is Theophrastus (371-287 BC), a Greek philosopher of the school of Aristotle. Although his work *On Marriage* has not survived in the original Greek it is included in translation in Jerome’s work *Against Jovinian*.⁴⁹ This work is deeply misogynistic, and characterises women as grumbling, nagging and greedy shrews:

There are many things which women require – fine clothes, gold, jewels, money, maid-servants, all kinds of furniture, litters, and gilded coaches. And then there is the ceaseless chatter and grumbling all through the night – “So-and-so has smarter clothes to go out in than I do. Everyone admires *her*, but when I meet other women they all look down on me, poor thing. Why were you looking at the girl next door? What were you saying to our serving girl? What did you bring me from the market?
 (1989: 327)

Theophrastus has created the original nagging shrew here. All of the clichéd accusations regarding the nature of women are depicted. In its context in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, Theophrastus' words have an ironically truthful resonance, for Alisoun is loud, domineering, materialistic, greedy and rapacious. But the problem is that Theophrastus' words are applied to all women in a generalising way, thus unfairly judging and condemning all females.

Walter Map, the archdeacon of Oxford, wrote an acerbic *Letter of Valerius to Ruffinus, against Marriage* circa 1180. His name is not mentioned by the *Wife of Bath*, but the name of the fictional writer of the letter, Valerius, is given. This secular tirade is written entirely from a man's point of view and it offers an amusing contrast to the *molestiae nuptarum* which appear in *Hali Meïðhad*. The type of complaint which Walter Map makes against women is:

After the first creation of man the first wife of the first Adam sated the first hunger by the first sin, against God's command. The sin was the child of disobedience, which will never cease before the end of the world to drive women tirelessly to pass on to the future what they learned from their mother.

(1989: 344)

This comment quite obviously relates all women to Eve and the first sin. It also implies that women will deliberately and viciously seek to spread disobedience and corruption till the end of time. This general comment is followed by specific complaints against women as Walter Map makes a number of aphoristic references to women and their inherent evil. Included amongst these are statements such as: "Friend, if you are not wiser than Solomon – and no man is – you are not too great to be bewitched by a woman. Open your eyes and see" (p. 344). "Friend, would that you had experienced marriage, but were not married, so that you would know what an impediment it is to felicity!" (p. 345). Map quotes Cato of Utica as saying: "If the world could exist without women, our company would not differ from that of the gods" (p. 346). He then cites specific examples of treacherous women:

Livia killed her husband whom she hated greatly; Lucilia killed hers, whom she loved to excess. The former intentionally mixed poison, the latter was deceived and poured out madness as a cup of love. Friend, these women strove with opposite intentions, but neither was cheated of the end of female treachery, that is, their natural evil. Women walk by varying and diverse paths, but whatever the paths they wander, whatever the by-ways they take, there is one result, one finishing-post for all their routes, one head and point of agreement of all their ways – mischief. Take the example of these two women as evidence that woman, whether

she loves or hates, is bold in everything – crafty, when she wants to do harm (which is always), and when she tries to help frequently gets in the way, and so turns out to do harm even unintentionally. You are placed in the furnace: if you are gold, you will come out gold.

(1989: 346-7)

Walter Map cites many other examples of women, from both Biblical and classical sources, who led men into disaster. Examples include Deianeira, Bathsheba, Delilah and Lais of Corinth. He also recounts cases where men managed to overcome the wiles of women and therefore demonstrated their superior moral and mental abilities. These paragons of male perspicacity are Metellus, Sulpicius, Valentinus, Demosthenes and Cicero. In sad comparison to those who successfully rejected involvement with women, are the tragic histories of those males who failed to resist womanly wiles and suffered as a result. Some of these unfortunate figures are Solomon, Hercules, Samson and David. Walter Map's letter intends to persuade men neither to marry nor to have any commerce with women. It is a deeply misogynistic text, with women being uniformly depicted as manipulative, wily, deceitful and troublesome. Any involvement with women is purported to result in disaster or distress for men. Men are depicted as either the unfortunate victims of female wiles, or fortunate and wise individuals if they remained unentangled.

Trotula is also mentioned in the *Book of wikked wives*. She was a thirteenth-century female gynaecologist who wrote her treatise entitled *The Knowing of Woman's Kind in Childing* specifically for the edification and assistance of women (Barratt, 1992: 27-35). In particular, she wrote so that women could have access to a reference work that would enable them to heal their own sicknesses without recourse to male physicians. (Ironically, Trotula's text is not easily available today. Barratt's work therefore supplies a lack.) Sections of Trotula's text were probably included in the *Book of wikked wives* because she describes the physical and spiritual differences between men and women. Trotula ascribes the engendering of life to the male seed, and the woman merely as an incubator of the seed:

Oure lorde God, whan he had storid the worlde of all creaturs, he made manne and woman a resonabull creature, and badde hem wexe and multiply, and ordende that of them two schulde come the thurde and that of the man, that is made of hote and drye mature, schulde come the sede and that the woman, that ys made of cold matyre and moyste, schulde receyve the sede, so that by the tempure of hote and colde, oyste and dry, the chylde schulde be engendyrde, ryht as we seen treys, cornys and herbys mou not growe without resonabyll tempure of the foure.

(Barratt, 1992: 29-30)

Besides the more powerful and essential role which she ascribes to the male seed, Trotula seems to indicate that women are physically inferior to men:

And forasmoche as whomen ben more febull and colde be nature than men been and have grete travell in chyldyng, ther fall oftyn to hem mo diverse sykenes than to men, and namly to the membrys that ben longynge to gendrynge.

(1992: 30)

Trotula also ascribes her writing of the text in the vernacular to the fact that women, if they are able to read, are ignorant of Latin and can only read their mother tongue. This suggests an inferior education:

Wherfore, in the worschyp of Oure Lady and of all Sayntys, I thynke to do myn ententyffe bysynes forto drau oute of Latyn into Englysch dyverse causis of here maladyes, the synes that they schall knou hem by, and the curys helpynge to hem, afture the tretys of dyverse mastrys that have translatyde hem oute of Grek into Latyn. And because whomen of oure tonge kunne bettyre rede and undyrstande thys langage than eny other, and every whoman lettyrde may rede hit to other unlettyrd and help hem and conceyle hem in here maledys, withowtyn scheuyng here dysese to man, I have thys drauyn and wryttyn in Englysch.

(1992: 30)

Carol Meale confirms Trotula's assertion about the state of education for women in the later middle ages. It was considerably inferior than in the heyday of monasteries such as Whitby which was headed by the learned abbess Hild in the ninth century.⁵⁰ But Trotula's text also suggests that a sisterhood of women existed, who assisted and supported each other.

Trotula voices her concern that her text could fall into the hands of an unsympathetic male and thereby used as ammunition against women. She urges male readers to treat the text with circumspection:

And yf hit fall any man to rede hit, I pray hym and scharge hym in Oure Lady behalve that he rede hit not in no dyspyte ne sclandre of no woman, ne for no cause but for the hele and helpe of hem....

(1992: 31)

Trotula's concerns are borne out by the facts: her treatise, written for the express purpose of assisting women and providing them with knowledge about their own bodies, knowledge which has been unavailable to them, is used by an amused male in order to provoke his wife.

Bartholomeus Angelicus is not mentioned in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*. We do know, however, that his work was read during the later Middle Ages.⁵¹ His work provides yet another example of the proliferation of misogynistic texts. He is not quite as fulsome in his dislike of women as Walter Map, for he does consider that there is the possibility of a happy marriage with a good woman: "No man hath more welthe than he that hath a good womman to wif" (Kolve & Olson, 1989: 408). But he does somewhat undercut this statement by proceeding to list those undesirable female qualities which make men unhappy:

Ne no man is more wrecche nothir hath woo and sorwe than he that hath an yvel wif, crienge, jangelinge, chidinge and skoldinge, drunkelew and unstedefast and contrarye to hym, costlew, stoute and gay, envyous, noyful and lepinge ouer londes and contreys, and mychinge, suspicious, and wrethful.

(1989: 408)

When Bartholomaeus Angelicus does list the qualities of a good woman, they are clearly confined to a restricted, feminine realm of service and domesticity:

In a goode spouse and wif nedeth thes condicions: that sche be busy and devoute in goddes servyse; meke and servisable to here husbonde, and faire spekinge and goodlich to here meyne; merciabile and good to wrecchis that beth nedy; esi and pesible to here neighbors; redy, ware, and wys in thinges that schal be I-voided; rightful and pacient in soffringe; besi [and] diligent in here doinge and dedis; manerliche in clothinge; sobre in movinge; ware in spekinge; chast in lokinge; honest in beringe; sad in goynge, schamfast among the puple; meri and glad with here housbonde, and chast in privete. Such a wif is worthi to be i-preised, that fondith more to plesse here housbonde with heer homliche i-wounde than with heer gailiche i-pinchid, and i-wrolled more with vertues than with faire and gay clothinge. Sche usith the goodnes of matrimoni more bicause of children than of fleischliche likynge, and hath more likinge in spousehod in children of grace than of kynde.

(1989: 408-9)

A good woman is a server, a nurturer and is subordinate to her husband. She is socialised to accept that good behaviour involves a patient and quiet demeanour, an agreeable manner, modesty, conservative and inconspicuous attire, and bearing rather than enjoying matrimonial duties. The realm of the woman is clearly in the home and she is required to be feminine, modest and quiet.

A feminist backlash to the tradition of medieval antifeminism is seen in the famous *Querelle des femme*, which is best epitomised by the works of Christine de Pisan and her early feminist text, *The City of Ladies*. Neither this French text nor the concept of the *querelle des femme* will be considered here as the Katherine Group texts are explicitly not a reply to antifeminism and misogyny. Rather, they accept the mores and dictates of the Church unquestioningly.

Conclusion

The evidence for a severe decline in the status of women after the Norman Conquest is incontrovertible. The legal position of women was severely curtailed, as was their freedom of choice in marriage. A woman, except for an independently wealthy widow who had paid a fee in order to remain single, was always under the guardianship of a male figure. The Church asserted its power by disseminating didactic and moralistic literature which preached about the pitfalls of sexuality, and offering as role models for young girls, and older consecrated virgins, the virgin martyr saints. Secular literature abounds with profoundly and repugnantly anti-feminist tracts. This plethora of oppressive practices, prescriptive propaganda and frankly pejorative utterances all combine to confirm the premise of this dissertation – that the status of women declined after the Norman Conquest.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ We know this because the Nero manuscript refers specifically to the sisters and their circumstances.
 - ² For a complete discussion, see Millet (1990b: 130-148).
 - ³ Amongst the earliest enterprise carried out by feminist scholars was the re-evaluation of texts, the re-reading of texts, and then the recovery of lost or neglected texts.
 - ⁴ For a discussion about the importance of contextualisation in a feminist analysis, see chapter one, pp. 10-12.
 - ⁵ Norman Cantor (1993) avoids making generalised comments about the Norman Conquest and its effect, but he does demonstrate how profoundly Norman overlordship altered the political institutions of England. See especially pp. 209-11, 277-88.
 - ⁶ See Clark and William's discussion of circumstances for women in post-Conquest England in "After 1066: The Factual Evidence," (1987: 148-71).

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- ⁷ See Stenton's words on p. 40 of chapter two.
- ⁸ Although only one unfortunate, and rebellious, Anglo-Saxon named Waltheof was executed – after an unsuccessful rebellion against William – fairly harsh measures were adopted, including the devastation of lands. Seaman describes the Norman's assertion of power as “an awesome exercise of intelligent and disciplined violence.” For a discussion of William's assertion of power over the English, see Seaman (1981: 55-62).
- ⁹ So swift and complete was the dispossession of Anglo-Saxon clerics that by 1072 the only remaining cleric of Anglo-Saxon descent still in a relatively powerful position was the formidable Bishop Wulfstan. He died in 1095.
- ¹⁰ Refer to pp. 36-58 of chapter two and the discussion of the superior role and status of the Anglo-Saxon woman.
- ¹¹ P. J. P. Goldberg (1995) has assembled and translated a wide range of sources pertaining to every aspect of a woman's life in late medieval England.
- ¹² For a detailed discussion of the legalities surrounding dower, and the manner in which husbands very frequently either pledged lands, ostensibly their wife's dower, to creditors, or willed these to their (male) heirs, thus leaving their widows no option but to engage in litigation in order to secure some measure of financial independence, see Loengard's extensively researched article entitled “‘Legal History and the Medieval Englishwoman’ Revisited: Some New Directions” (1990: 210-36). Further information which specifically pertains to dower can be found in Loengard's “‘Of the Gift of her Husband’: English Dower in the year 1200” (1987: 215-55).
- ¹³ The king retained the right to award an heiress or widow in marriage to a loyal follower. See Clark and Williams (1987: 149-53) for a discussion of this practice and some examples of actual cases.
- ¹⁴ These fees and fines were often substantial and were accordingly resented by the nobility, and the penalty for widows wishing to remain unmarried was removed by the *Magna Carta* in 1215. For further information, see Clark and Williams (1987: 149-53).
- ¹⁵ By literature I mean, of course, all kinds of writing, homilies, sermons, didactic writing, saint's lives, and so on.
- ¹⁶ Refer to chapter two, pp. 58-60, for information about the long-standing misogyny against women. Stephen Nichols (1988: 42-60) demonstrates how the wording of Genesis chapters two and three provided the basis for the misogyny of Paul, Augustine, and subsequent medieval exegetes.
- ¹⁷ Stephen Langton was an ordained clergyman who rose to the rank of Archbishop at Canterbury where he served from 1207 to 1228. Inadmissible as anecdote may be as proof, I have heard (from a person who claims descent from Langton) that he had a mistress and fathered several children. If there is truth to this story, it highlights the disjunction between the Church's teachings and the lack of adherence to its principles.
- ¹⁸ The text of the sermon is included as an appendix to Phyllis Roberts's article as it is not otherwise available (1987: 110-18).

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- ¹⁹ Some texts which discuss the topic are: John Bugge (1975) *Virginitas: an Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal*; George H. Tavard (1973) *Women in Christian Tradition* and Jo Ann McNamara (1976) "Sexual equality and the cult of virginity in early Christian thought."
- ²⁰ This point is well understood by medieval scholars: a writer's *auctorite* derived not from the originality of the material, but from the manner in which it was handled. An excellent example is Chaucer, who rarely, if ever, invented the stories in the *Canterbury Tales*. Indeed, borrowing material from another writer added *auctorite* to one's own work. A woman, however, had no authority because of her association with Eve (Farmer, 1986: 519).
- ²¹ This belief almost antedates the Christian era in the sense that these sentiments are found in the writings of Pliny who wrote in the first century AD. The church fathers reiterated Pliny's ideas.
- ²² Even an introductory text on medieval art will make plain the iconography: more important = larger, holier = higher, evil = lower, and so on. Hence the use of such literal ideas is not surprising.
- ²³ Jerome, for example, commanded Eustochium to fast and to seek as companions women who were pale and thin with fasting (Warner, 1976: 73-6, 372-3). Constant fasting may lead to amenhorrea. As the menses were regarded with repugnance, their absence would have been welcome. See also Anderson and Zinsser (1989: 78-82).
- ²⁴ Again, this is not a new idea. Millet and Wogan-Brown (1990: xiv-xx) trace the source of the *molestiae nuptiarum* to Jerome, and, ultimately, to Paul and in particular, 1 Corinthians 7:28, which reads (in the King James version) "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not to be bound." However, they do point out that this thinking attained a fresh impetus and vigour in the twelfth century.
- ²⁵ Refer to the discussion on pp. 58-64 in chapter two, where this matter is debated at length.
- ²⁶ This idea is related to the association of sexuality with the bestial nature of man.
- ²⁷ At the medieval conference held at Unisa in April 1994, under the auspices of UMA/SASMARS, Christina Landman of the department of Church History made this assertion. Sheila Delaney refuted this idea.
- ²⁸ I use the term reader advisedly here, as the *Ancrene Wisse* specifically uses that word: "Of þis boc redeð hwen ye beoð eise euche dei leasse oðer mare" (Part 8 l. 9). (Read some of this book in your free time every day, whether more or less) (1990: 148-9).
- ²⁹ Note the comments made in the introduction to *Women's Writing in Middle English*, (1992: 6-16) where the authority of writing is described as a masculine act from which women were automatically excluded by virtue of gendered socialisation:

How then could women write, become "authors", without offending their societal norms and appearing to infringe male prerogatives? In practice, medieval women evolved a range of strategies. They could substitute an alternative for earthly authority, derived from their own religious experience; they could give up the unequal struggle

altogether and lapse into silence; or they could appropriate authority as translators, adaptors and compilers.

(Barratt, 1992: 8)

- ³⁰ This has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, in pp. 132-4. The most extensive work on the audience of the Katherine Group and *Ancrene Wisse* has been done by Millet (1990a: 41-54); (1990b: 127-55) and Dobson (1976).
- ³¹ Refer to the discussion earlier in this chapter, where the saints are mentioned by name and their fate is discussed in the analysis of *Hali Meiohad*. See pp. 143-5.
- ³² This reference to “alle þe earen ant herunge habbeð” (p. 44) or “all those who have ears to hear” (p. 45) suggests that this saint’s life was intended to be read to an audience. The ideal situation for this to occur would be, of course, in the cloister.
- ³³ Refer to the discussion earlier in this chapter, in pp. 144-7, where the imagery used to describe human sexuality in *Hali Meiohad* is discussed in detail. In fact, some of the images and actual words used are identical. This indicates an extremely close relationship between the texts. Readers/listeners encountering these concepts in the one text will be reminded of the other, and *vice-versa*.
- ³⁴ For detailed references and discussion, refer to chapter two, especially pp. 58-60 where the early Church Father’s beliefs about the corrupting nature of sexual experience is discussed.
- ³⁵ The images of a blossom and a jewel are used to describe virginity in both *Hali Meiohad* and *Seinte Margarete*.
- ³⁶ Tertullian’s words are quoted in chapter two, on p. 59.
- ³⁷ See the discussion earlier in this chapter, especially p. 152.
- ³⁸ Toril Moi (1986: 11-33) discusses J.F. Benton’s repudiation of the “courtly love tradition,” as well as D. W. Robertson’s reading of *De Amore* as a repudiation of earthly love in favour of the church. Her article certainly raises questions about the problematic nature of the concept and the difficulty of reading Capellanus’ text, as one’s interpretations will shift if the various books are taken at face value or interpreted ironically.
- ³⁹ Concepts emanating from the courtly love tradition appear in the *Liflade*. Juliana thinks of Christ as her lover, and she addresses him as such.
- ⁴⁰ The Juliana of the *Liflade* is a feminine, gentle creature, not at all like the powerful Juliana in Cynewulf’s poem.
- ⁴¹ The editors of Layamon’s *Brut* (1989: x-xxv) are unequivocal in their assertion that both the *Brut* and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia* were written with a secular and Anglo-Saxon bias.
- ⁴² Consult pp. 58-60 in chapter two, where the teachings of the early Church Fathers on women and sexuality is discussed.
- ⁴³ See the statements quoted in chapter two regarding the inherent evil of women, especially those discussed in pp. 58-60. See also Paul Remley (1989: 1-14) where he discusses the

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- depiction of women as *muscipula diaboli*, or “the devil’s mousetrap”. Such a cognomen characterises women as conniving, manipulative and deceitful.
- ⁴⁴ See the conclusion to the contextualising discussion of chapter two, especially pp. 64-5 and 71-2.
- ⁴⁵ Note my earlier comments in endnote 38 about the debate surrounding the courtly love convention.
- ⁴⁶ cf. David F. Hult (1996: 192-224) where Gaston Paris’ practice and motives and their highly problematic nature are discussed in detail. Hult concludes that “In this regard, ‘courtly love,’ in Gaston Paris’s formulation, surfaces as an emblematic appropriation of the feminine on behalf, once again, of the advancement of the male” (p. 224).
- ⁴⁷ For a full discussion, see the chapter entitled “Courtly Love”, in *The Allegory of Love* (1958: 1-43). Toril Moi (1986: 11-33) provides a most illuminating summary of the concept as well as the critical debate surrounding it.
- ⁴⁸ Moi quotes Andrée Blumstein, who says: “The courtly code of love and most especially the idealization of women in the romance are in many respects a *covert* form of misogyny; chivalry is but one more method by which what has been called the ‘great patriarchal conspiracy’ is perpetrated and perpetuated in our culture” (Moi, 1986: 31). My summary sentence is more strongly worded but the sentiment is the same.
- ⁴⁹ For this information on Theophrastus I am indebted to Kolve & Olson (1989: 326). The translation of Theophrastus’ text is derived from Kolve & Olson as well.
- ⁵⁰ Refer to chapter two, pp. 60-5 and the discussion about learned female monastic scholars in the Anglo-Saxon period.
- ⁵¹ For this information on the Dominican Bartholomew Angelicus, I am indebted to Antonia Gransden (1974, vol. II: 47, 283).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LATER JULIANA: AFTER THE CONQUEST

The post-Conquest versions of the legend of St Juliana have not attracted much critical attention, but have suffered from a disdainful neglect, relegated to the dusty shelves of libraries. A small number of editions have appeared over the years. The earliest editions include Rev. Oswald Cockayne's 1872 edition, d'Evelyn and Mill's 1956 edition of *The South English Legendary*, and S.R.T.O. d'Ardenne's 1936 edition (reprinted in 1961) for the Early English Text Society. d'Ardenne also prepared *The Katherine Group* (1977) which contains comparisons of the various texts of the *Liflade*. Klaus Sperk edited *Medieval English Saint's Legends* (1970) which contains a number of Saints' Lives. The legend has been omitted from Millet and Wogan-Browne's 1990 edition of selections from the Katherine Group and the *Ancrene Wisse*, entitled *Medieval English Prose for Women*, as well as Alexandra Barratt's 1992 selection of texts entitled *Women's Writing in Middle English*. A survey of the MLA register of studies reveals that very few scholarly studies have been conducted on the *Liflade*.¹ The most substantial work is Lucretia Anne Pollard's dissertation entitled "'Swa Icweme to Godd': A Study of the Use of the Virgin Martyr Legend in Medieval English Literature with Particular Reference to Cynewulf's *Juliana* and *De Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Iulienne*," which consists of a purely text-based analysis of the two Lives.

Despite the text's relative obscurity nowadays, the fact remains that in the twelfth century, *De Liflade ant te Passiun of Seinte Juliene* was undoubtedly a highly significant text.² Together with its companion tales, the legends of Saint Catherine and Saint Margaret, as well as *Hali Meiodhad*, *Sawles Warde* and *Ancrene Wisse*, these texts probably formed the staple reading for communities of nuns.³ The Katherine Group texts have a further distinction: they are amongst the earliest vernacular English texts written after the Norman

Conquest.⁴ The fact that a number of manuscripts have survived points clearly to the popularity of this group of texts and that its use was relatively widespread in the West Midlands at least. A number of translations, adaptations and compilations were made during the later thirteenth century, further confirming the continued popularity of these texts.⁵

Three main thirteenth-century versions of the legend of St Juliana are extant. Although the saint's life was probably prepared between 1190 and 1210, the original manuscript has not survived (Millet, 1990b: 127). The earliest extant manuscript is Bodleian MS 34, which can be fairly authoritatively dated to c. 1220-5. (Klaus Sperk does give a date as early as 1210 in his edition of *Medieval English Saint's Legends*, but he does not state whether he believes that to be the date of the composition of the text, or the date of the manuscript.) The next oldest manuscript, dated c. 1220-30, is the British Library MS Royal 17. A. xxvii. A third, slightly later version, is the British Library Cotton MS Titus D. xviii. This manuscript has been dated to c. 1250.⁶ Of these manuscripts, Bodleian MS 34 has enjoyed favour with editors: it is the main source of most composite editions of the text.⁷

These thirteenth-century versions of the legend of St Juliana are not merely translations of the ninth-century Cynewulfian poem. Rather, they are "freely translated" from a Latin version of the lives of the saints.⁸ This Latin source of the Middle English St Juliana is not extant. The Royal and Bodleian manuscripts, although they are thought to have been derived from the same source, "are markedly different from each other in wording and length" (Millet, 1990: 138-9). Differences include, for example, the postscript of the Bodleian MS 34, in which the translator calls for the intercession of the saints and prayers for his soul. A further difference occurs in that the Royal manuscript is considerably shorter than the Bodleian text, and Millet asserts that the Royal MS is derived from "a version of *Iulienne* which had been memorized, presumably for more effective public delivery to a large audience" (1990: 139). The differences, however, are not so marked that these manuscripts should be treated as distinct versions. Rather, they appear to be closely related variants of the same tale, derived ultimately from a common source, since lost. Given these similarities between the versions and the theoretical tenor of the analysis in this chapter, the Bodleian text (as published by d'Ardenne) will be used as the source of information for analysis, unless otherwise noted.

The twelfth-century version places Eleusius once more in an enviable position: he is depicted as the favoured minion of the great and fearsome King Maximian: "Þes mihti maximien luuede au eleusium biuoren monie of his men" (d'Ardenne, 1970: ll. 26-7)⁹ or,

“this mighty Maximianus loved one Eleusius before many of his men” (Cockayne, 1872: 5).¹⁰ Eleusius is not only a favourite of a powerful king, but he is also of a good family, wealthy and still young in years: “Akennet of heh cun. &t swiðe riche of rente &t junge mon of yeres” (ll. 28-9) or “... born of a high race, and very rich in revenue, and a young man in years” (p. 5). Whereas Eleusius’ great cruelty is emphasised in the earlier version, this is not the case here. Also unlike the Cynewulfian version, where Affricanus’ rank is clearly established as being subordinate to that of Eleusius’, the two men are depicted as boon companions, with Eleusius being a frequent visitor to Affricanus’ household. We are told, for instance, that Eleusius “hefde iunne feolahschipe to affrican” (ll. 30-1) or that he “had close fellowship wip Affricanus” (p. 5). The effect of these alterations is to moderate and improve the depiction of the two male protagonists: the Bodleian Affricanus is not as needy in terms of rank and prestige as the Cynewulfian Affricanus, and Eleusius is not initially as innately cruel and oppressive as the Cynewulfian Eleusius. The fact that these two males are righteously aggrieved by Juliana’s capricious and apparently wilful behaviour permits a misogynistic reading of Juliana’s character. She is emotional, changeable, difficult, thoroughly feminine and therefore inherently flawed. In contrast to Juliana’s capriciousness, the perception that Affricanus and Eleusius are basically honourable people is created. It will be demonstrated later that while the text invites the reading of these two figures as pagans, unredeemed by Christian enlightenment, there is no critique of male behaviour, perceptions or assumptions. The oppositions in this text are not male and female but Christian and pagan: female is understood to be innately inferior to male, and thus subordinate to him.

Eleusius’ attraction to Juliana is based upon her striking physical beauty, which is described as being exceptionally feminine and ladylike: “As he hefde en chere bihalden swiðe georne hire utnunme feire” (ll. 33-4) or “As once he had very earnestly beholden her exquisitely fair and ladylike youth” (p. 7). Juliana is thus gendered as being feminine.¹¹ A woman’s attractiveness is based on her fulfilling the ideal which consists in her being dainty, pretty, graceful and young. Along with this perception of the ideal woman goes the understanding that woman is more frail, more vulnerable and less powerful than man. Juliana clearly fulfils the ideal image of a feminine woman, outwardly at least. Where she deviates from the ideal is in the secret inward resolve to remain a consecrated virgin. This does not mean that she aspires to equality: the Juliana of the *Liflade* is devoted to her lover-lord, and submits herself utterly to him. Everything she does is in his name.

This difference in the gendering of the Juliana of the *Liflade* as opposed to the Cynewulfian Juliana has been noted by Pollard, who states that “In the *Liflade*, Juliana ... is

depicted as a more feminine character who is, at least initially, more human than the Old English heroine" (1980: 152). Pollard also sees the Juliana of the *Liflade* as being more "romantic and fragile" (p. 152) than the Old English heroine. This poses a problem for understanding the achievements of this dainty heroine in resisting the later blandishments of both her earthly tormentors and her devilish one. Pollard asserts that the text is quite clear on this point:

Not only does the author indicate that the strength of virginity lies in the meekness and mildness appropriate to virgins, but he takes pains to make it clear that all Juliana's power is derived from Christ. The heavenly voice which succinctly instructs the saint in the Old English poem is replaced in the *Liflade* by an angel which gives Juliana detailed advice, making it clear that her treatment of the devil is divinely inspired and controlled.
(1980: 152)

Along with the feminising of the Juliana of the *Liflade* goes a concomitant diminishment of her own inherent strength. Whatever power she does have must come from a source external to herself. And the source of that power derives from Juliana's heavenly affianced husband, Christ. Without Christ as her affianced husband, Juliana would possess no strength at all, whether it be moral or spiritual. It is thus apparent that Juliana is not a feminist heroine, unlike Cynewulf's crusading warrior-saint, but that she has chosen to supplant the earthly patriarchy of Nicomedia with the heavenly one of Christ. (Of course, Juliana reflects the perceptions of her (re)writer and the discursive system to which he belongs.) In both the earthly and the heavenly patriarchies, Juliana is subject to a higher and stronger power than her own. In both, her favour depends on the degree to which she accedes to the rules of the hegemony. In both, Juliana's status depends on her attaining the standards of beauty and perfection which are valorised. In the earthly kingdom of Nicomedia, the requirements are femininity, beauty and youth. However, in the heavenly kingdom, the requirement is for *hali meidhad* or holy, consecrated virginity.

Eleusius' attraction to Juliana is depicted very much in courtly love terminology, where he is wounded suddenly and inexplicably by love:¹²

As he hefde en chere bihalden, swiðe georne hire utnunmne feire. Yt freoliche guheðe; felde him iwundet in wið in his heorte wið þe flan of luue fleoð. Swa þat him þuhte þet ne mahte he nanes weis wið ute þe lechnunge of hire luue libben.
(1970: ll. 33-8)

(As once he had very earnestly beholden her exquisitely fair and ladylike youð; he felt himself wounded wiþin his heart, wiþ the arrow which flieð from love, so þat it seemed to him, þat he could nowise, wiðout þe medicine of her love, live.¹³)

(1872: 7)

Lucretia Pollard has also noted that in the *Liflade*, “Christ is often treated as the Lover-Knight” (1980: 151). However, here we have the pagan suitor being cast in the role of the romantic courtly lover. The portrayal of Eleusius is a deal more sympathetic than in the Old English *Juliana*, as traditionally a lover who has been wounded by the arrow of love is quite helpless in the face of his passion.¹⁴ Eleusius has been transformed from a tyrannical figure (who plans his marriage to Juliana much as he conducts the rest of his military life: he issues orders, and it is done) to a romantic suitor, impatiently anxious to consummate a union based, in his case at least, on love. The man has been humanised: he has been given emotions.

The marriage negotiations are undertaken without any reference to Juliana at all. (This is not unusual in courtly love literature. Examples include Emilye in *The Knight's Tale*, who is blissfully unaware that the two knights Palamon and Arcite are in love with her, and who is later instructed by Theseus that she will marry whichever of them wins the tournament.¹⁵) As in the Cynewulfian version, Juliana is completely marginalised from the discussion. There is no sense at all of any sort of discussion or agreement between her erstwhile suitor and herself. Eleusius sees Juliana. He makes up his mind to have her. He discusses the matter with her father. The deal is concluded.

Affricanus' upward shift in rank, in comparison with the Cynewulfian version, is readily apparent during the marriage negotiations. Firstly, Eleusius does not merely instruct Affricanus as to his wishes: he “bisohte him georne” (ll. 40-1) or “besought him earnestly” (p. 7) while also assuring Affricanus that he “hire walde menskin wið al þat he mahte. As þe þing i þe world þat he meast luuede” (ll. 41-2) or “would grace her wiþ all þat he was able, as þe þing in þe world, þat he most loved” (1872: 7). There is a sense of emotional commitment here, as opposed to a mere transaction. Affricanus, too, is shown to cast a more fatherly eye over the suitability of Eleusius and his daughter for each other than is the case in the earlier version, where he appeared to be more concerned about the privileges and benefits which would accrue to him as a result of the match. Affricanus is said to have decided that the match was suitable because he “wiste þat he wes swiðe freo iboren. Ant walde wel bicumen him a freo iboren burde” (ll. 43-5) or that he “knew þat he was very gently born,

and þat a gentleborn bride would well suit him” (1872: 7). Affricanus, who is depicted at this juncture as a benevolent and wise father figure, therefore grants his permission for the marriage because he perceives the two to be of equal rank and finesse.

What is intriguing about the marriage negotiations is that, although the two men (but in particular, Eleusius) have definitely been improved in character compared to the Cynewulfian version, there is little change in the attitude of either towards Juliana. True, she is not so much of a commodity as she was in Cynewulf’s version, but she is once more completely excluded from the negotiations. The use of the passive tense epitomises her position at this point: she is powerless to do things herself. Instead, matters have been decided for her: “Ha wes him some ihondsald þah hit hire unwil were” (ll. 46-7) or “She was soon hanselled to him, þough it were against her consent”(1872: 7). The use of the passive is particularly significant as this post-conquest Juliana takes on the attributes of a lady: she is both more delicate and more feminine than the earlier heroic Juliana. Pollard, for example, says:

In the *Liflade*, Juliana also assumes a more courtly aspect. She is depicted as a more feminine character who is, at least initially, more human than the Old English heroine. Because of her romantic and fragile femininity, the *Liflade* Juliana’s vigorous punishment of the devil seems more incongruous than that performed by the supra-human and otherworldly saint in *Juliana*. Not only does the author indicate that the strength of virginity lies in the meekness and mildness appropriate to virgins, but he takes pains to make it clear that all Juliana’s power is derived from Christ.

(1980: 152)

Pollard argues that Juliana’s strength is not a “militant, active force” but “the strength of meekness: the virgin martyr is willing to endure torment for the sake of her virginal state, in order to preserve her special relationship with Christ” (p. 154). Juliana’s avowed wish is to remain a virgin or: “ha mahte witen hire meiðhad from mones man vnwemmet” (ll. 52-3) or “how she might preserve her maidenhood from mans commerce unstained” (1872: 7). At this point, her wishes are unknown to the two men who have decided her fate without consulting her.

A further highly significant alteration from the Cynewulfian Juliana is the heroine’s reversion to deceitfulness. (Juliana in the *Acta Sanctorum* is deceptive and untruthful.) So whereas Cynewulf deliberately improved the character of the heroine,¹⁶ this later heroine is

blame-worthy, for she purposely obfuscates and offers an untruth when Eleusius presses her to explain her reluctance to formalise the marriage contract. An excuse is offered – that this was a ploy to buy her some time – but the fact remains that Juliana is not, initially at least, honest about her feelings regarding the marriage. This is despite the fact that this later version of the villain Eleusius appears to be a much more accommodating man than Cynewulf's villain. For our purposes, however, it is notable that there has been an evening out of character, with Juliana of diminished virtue, and Eleusius and Affricanus, initially at least, more worthy characters than in Cynewulf's version.

The effect of Juliana's enjoinder to her betrothed that he should be the most important man in Maximian's kingdom and attain the prefecture before she will marry him, is ultimately to diminish her moral stature as she appears to be capricious and wilful when the (partial) truth about her reluctance to marry is revealed. Once again, Juliana's gendering confirms stereotypical medieval views about women: that they are manipulative and deceitful.¹⁷ One's sympathy must surely lie with the besotted suitor who does everything possible to please her. And it should be remembered that Juliana's requirement is not modest but grandiose! Moreover, Juliana's request tallies with the patriarchy's valorisation of importance, rank and prestige: Juliana is colluding (deceptively, we know) with these perceptions. Indeed, in answer to her requirement, Eleusius obtains permission from the emperor to be paraded about:

&t lette as me luuede þa leaden him i cure up o fowr hweoles.
&t teon him yeon te tun þron from strete to strete. Al þe cure
ouertild þat he wes itolien on: wið purpres &t pelles. wið
ciclatuns &t cendals &t deorewerðe claðes. As þe þat se heh
þing hefde to heden. ant se riche ref schipe to rihten &t to
readen.

(ll. 63-70)

(he was led about in a chariot upon four wheels, and drawn
þrough þe town from street to street. All þe chariot was over
awned, in which he was drawn, wið purple and palls, wið
ciclatoun and sindon and precious cloðs, as one that had so high
þings to take heed for, and so mighty an office to direct and
advise in.)

(1872: 9)

Furthermore, it is clear that the proviso she places on Eleusius – that of improved status and a highly visible public presence – actually invites Eleusius to react with fury to her later confession of the truth. For she has insisted that Eleusius' pride be bolstered by means of the pomp and splendour of the procession. It is only natural that his pride will suffer when she

finally admits her true feelings and rejects him out of hand. In this power play, it is Juliana who behaves the worst morally.

Juliana's demands of Eleusius can also be understood, according to Pollard, (1980: 163-4) as belonging to the courtly love tradition, in which the lady tests the fealty and devotion of the lover by setting him tasks, often of a daunting nature.¹⁸ There is therefore an unhappy deception occurring here, because Juliana in no wise intends to accept Eleusius as a prospective suitor: the demands are in reality nothing more than a simple delaying tactic, based upon her own fear as to the consequences of the discovery of her hitherto secret faith.

The Juliana of the *Liflade*, it is clear, is a rather more timid character than the Cynewulfian Juliana, for we are told that when she finally decides to admit to a partial truth about her faith and her reasons for delaying the marriage, she has to "balde hire seoluen" (l. 74) or "make herself bold" (1872: 9). This suggests that her nature is not confrontational, and that assertiveness is not natural to her. In fact, this behaviour reinforces her portrayal as a typically feminine woman: gentle, timid and generally acquiescent.

Whereas it is clear that fear of the consequences is one of the reasons for her deceptive request of Eleusius, it is also evident that she is finally able to bolster up her courage and announce her faith as the reason for her objection to marriage. But it must be remembered that even now she does not reveal the true extent of her intentions, which are to remain a consecrated virgin. For Juliana now states that:

for nawt þu hauest iswech te. wreaðe se þu wreaðe. Do þat tu do
wult nule ich ne ne mei ich lengre heolen hit te gef þu wult
leauen. Ðe lahen þet tu liuest in ant leuen igodd feader. &t in
his deowurðe sune. &t iþe hali gast folkene froure. an godd þat
is igret wið euches cunnes gode: Ich chule wel neome þe. &t gef
þat tu nult no: þu art windi of me: to oðer luue sech þe.

(ll. 76-84)

(for nought hast þou toiled, be as wrað as þou may, do as þou do
wilt; I will not, nor can any longer conceal it from þee: if þou
wilt leave þe customs þat þou livest in and believe in God þe
Fæder, and in his precious Son, and in þe Holy Ghost, þe
Comforter of the world; One God þat is magnified wið good of
every kind, I will readily take þee, and if þou wilt not do þat, þou
art quit of me, and seek anoþer love.)

(1872: 9,11)

That Juliana has presented Eleusius with an impossible demand is readily apparent. Maximian's High Reeve simply cannot challenge his emperor who has accorded him the honour, by eschewing pagan practices and publicly professing Christianity, the outlawed religion. The result simply has to be a headlong conflict with Eleusius. And, in terms of his position as the High Reeve, Eleusius has to punish Juliana for disobeying a precept of the state which he governs: Christianity is outlawed; therefore its practice must be punished. What is ironic is the fact that Juliana will be punished and tortured for her faith, while her true reasons for denying the marriage are never revealed to her father or her suitor.

What is also highly ironic is that the heroine has provoked the coming attacks upon her person as she has been deceptive, misleading Eleusius with facile demands, to which he has readily acceded in order to please her. In fact, Juliana could be accused of having entered into a contract with Eleusius by demanding his promotion and the parade of honour, and then changing the terms of that contract once it has been fulfilled. Whereas the Cynewulfian Eleusius' wrath is depicted as being instant, excessive and irrational, the *Liflade's* Eleusius becomes angry because he, quite justifiably, has argued that "hire wil he hefde iwraht" (l. 71-2) or "he had wrought her will", and that "Nu his ha schulde wurchen" (ll. 72-3) or "and now she should work his" (1872: 9). His request for a concomitant reciprocation from Juliana is not an unreasonable one.

The subsequent exchange between father and daughter is characterised by reasonable questioning on his side at first, uttered in a fatherly, benign way. Indeed, Affricanus appears to be rather bewildered by the turn of events: he "feng on earst feire on" (ll. 94-5) or "wondered at it much" (1872: 11). Although Affricanus addresses Juliana in an affectionate manner, calling her "mi deorewurde dohtor" (l. 96) or "my precious daughter" (1872: 11), it must not be forgotten that he has already vowed to hand her over to Eleusius if the news of her perfidy is confirmed:

&t [Affricanus] bigon to swerien. bi þe ilke godes þat me is lað
to gremien. beo hit soð þat tu seiist: to wraðer heale. he sehð
hit. ant ich wulle o great grome al biteachen hire þe. &t tu do
hire. al þat tu wilt.

(ll. 89-93)

(and [Affricanus] began to swear, "By þe same gods, whom it is
grief to me to anger, be it true as þou sayest, to her sorrow she
saið it, and I will in great anger altogeþer hand her over to þee,
and do þou to her all þat þou wilt.")

(1872: 11)

Quite manifestly, Juliana is perceived by her father to be in his possession, as was discovered vis-à-vis the marriage negotiations, from which she was excluded. Affricanus has already decided on a course of action which involves the handing over of his daughter to a man to whom she is not yet formally bound by any promise other than a third-party betrothal agreement, even before he has consulted her about Eleusius' accusation. This indicates where his fealty lies: not with his family but with his gender. The calls of a male, Eleusius, and the redressing of his grievances have a prior claim to Affricanus' loyalty.

Affricanus' apparently benign approach to his daughter indicates that he possibly regards the matter as a misunderstanding that simply needs clarification. It is inconceivable to him that Juliana could consider forfeiting what he himself holds dear: rank, prestige and wealth. Affricanus appears to be genuinely puzzled:

sei me hwi þu forsakest. Ði sy &t ti selhðe? þe weolen &t te wunnen. Ðe walden awakenen. &t waxen of þe wedlac þat ich reade þe to: hit nis nan eðelich þing. þe refschipe of rome. ant tu maht gef þu wilt. beon burhene leafdi.

(ll. 96-100)

("tell me why þou abandonest þe triumph and happiness, þe felicity and joys, which would spring up and grow out of þe wedlock þat I advise þee to. Tis no contemptible þing þis prefecture of Rome, and þou mayest, if þou wilt, be lady of þe town, and of all þe lands þat belong þereto.")

(1872: 11, 13)

Here the literary context of medieval hagiographical literature must be evoked, for Affricanus' words about the joys of marriage will remind every reader of the *Liflade* of the "woes of marriage" passages in texts such as *Hali Meiðhad*.¹⁹ For an avowed virgin like Juliana, we know that marriage, was regarded as an unrewarding trial, not worth the fall from sanctity that it involved.²⁰

Affricanus, sees the marriage as a highly prestigious and materially profitable enterprise for his daughter. Again, the Affricanus of the *Liflade* is an improved version on the Cynewulfian father, for he seems to be concerned not about any improvement to his own circumstances but also about his daughter's comfort. In itself, this benign patriarchal concern about his daughter's station in life and the degree of luxury, ease and comfort which

will result, is indicative of the inferior status of women who are not defined on their own terms but according to the circumstances of their closest male relative.

And now, for the second time in the *Liflade*, Juliana is accorded the appellation “eadie” (l. 103) or “blessed” (1872: 13). She has passed a further milestone, or test, of her own, as her faith is no longer secret. She has taken a stand for her faith against the pagan patriarchy. And she reiterates her desire only to be married to a Christian. This provokes a dire warning from her father, a promise of hideous tortures if she does not retract her objections to the marriage:

“for þe drihtfule godd apollo mi lauerd. &t mi deore leafdi þe
deorewurðe diane þat ich mucho luuie. gef þu haldest her on.
ich schal leote wilde deor to luken &t toteora þe &t geoue þi
flesch fode to fuheles of þe luftē.”

(ll. 107-111)

(“Before the lordly god Apollo, my master, and my dear lady, þe
precious Diana, whom I much love, if þou holdest to þis, I shall
make wild beasts lacerate and tear þea, and give þy flesh as food
to fowls of þe air.”)

(1872: 13)

Her father’s initial conciliatory words have not proved to be efficacious. The benign face of patriarchy not having been effective, the threat of force and violence therefore has to be evoked. And the alternative to happy wedded bliss for Juliana, according to her father, is nothing less than being savaged to death by wild animals. The switch from benignity to cruelty is sudden and severe, but not yet entire, for Juliana is offered another chance to retract. The tactic is interesting, for it reveals that the patriarchy will offer comfort and ease to women, as long as they conform to its requirements. However, underlying that promise is an implicit threat: opposition to the requirements, mores or instructions of the patriarchy will result in the most savage repression.

Juliana retains that femininity which is a fundamental characteristic of the heroine of the *Liflade*. Even at this moment of heightened drama and tension, and after this hideous threat of a terrifyingly painful death has been meted out to her, she answers her father “softeliche” (l. 112) or “softly” (1872: 13). This is despite the powerful tenor of her own reply, which is adamantly steadfast in its conviction. Here, too, the point of her devotion becomes apparent as she now openly admits her particular devotion to Christ:

Ne lef þu nawt leoue feader þat tu offeare me swa; ich swerie
again. Þe ihesu crist godes sune. þat ich on leue. &t luuie as
leoflukest. &t lufsumest lauerd. Ðah ich cwic beo forbearnd
baþe lim &t lið ileitinde leie. Nulle ich þe her onont. þreate se
þu þreate buhe ne beien.

(ll. 112-17)

(“Believe not, dear faþer, þat þou canst terrify me so; I swear on
þe oþer hand; by Jesu Christ, Son of God, on whom I believe,
and whom I love as loveliest and lovesomest lord, þough I be
quite burnt up, boð limb and joint in gleaming flame; I will not,
as regards þis, bend nor bow to þee, ðreaten as þou mayest.”)

(1872: 13)

The language used by Juliana is, rather strangely, the language of courtship and love, as she refers to Christ as “leoflukest” (l. 114-5) or “loveliest” (1872: 13) and “lufsumest” (l. 115) or “lovesomest” lord (1872: 13). She claims to be “iweddet” or betrothed to him (1872: 15). There is an ironic reversal here: whereas the traditional roles in the courtly love tradition assign adoration to the male partner, and remote disdain to the unattainable female, in the *Liflade* they are reversed. Here, Juliana yearns for her remote and perfect suitor, Christ, with whom consummation is endlessly deferred.

The tactic now espoused by Affricanus is flattery. The use of this technique is intriguing, for it reveals a belief that women are inherently greedy, rapacious, and seeking for the gratification of the senses. Her father tries to persuade her to alter her decision by offering her anything at all that she might desire: “Þat ne schulde ha lihtliche wilni na wunne; þat ha ne schulde wealden” (ll. 121-2) or “Þat surely she should not easily desire any pleasure, þat she should not obtain” (1872: 15). Women, it seems, will be rewarded by the males in their lives if they do what is required of them. If they do not, no rewards, but punishments, accrue. Therefore, comfort, security and so on, are always conditional for women, whereas men perceive these as rights inherent upon their status as males. The key words here are “wið þen an” (l. 122) or “provided þereby” (1872: 15).

Juliana’s reply reveals her understanding of the contrasting fates awaiting her: she mentions “weole ... wunne” (ll. 132) or wealth and joy (concomitant upon her acquiescence) or “wa ... wontreaðe” (ll. 132-3) or woe and misery (as a result of her refusal). Ironically, the teachings of the Katherine Group, and especially the *Hali Meidhad*, consider that marriage may bring status and wealth to a woman but that many married women are merely “licking honey off thorns”.²¹ To Affricanus and Eleusius, the choice which Juliana ought to

make is blindingly obvious. But for Juliana, selecting a life of earthly ease, status and comfort, will result in a permanent loss of sanctity and heavenly rank.²² Her options are stark and extreme, and both options are based on the requirements of a dominant male figure. There is no middle ground or negotiated compromise possible for Juliana. But Juliana's requirements for Eleusius also suggest that she will not accept anything less than she requires. This implies that there is no comfortable middle ground within a patriarchal system: one party or the other must shift their position to a subordinate one. Juliana has accepted wholeheartedly the mores of sainthood as devised and dictated by the Christian church, even if this requires a complete effacement of the self.²³

Once Affricanus realises that his promises of wealth, luxury and ease for his daughter have not been efficacious, his anger resurfaces. Affricanus' language reveals that his perspective is single-mindedly male, for he is annoyed that Juliana has rejected what and whom she should, or ought to, love. The key words in his somewhat sarcastically phrased reply are: "þat tu letest lupal. of al þat tu schuldest luuien" (ll. 137-8) or "þat þou carest little for al þou shouldest love" (1872: 15). The word *should* expresses Affricanus' will or intention and thus implies an understood duty, something which Juliana ought to do automatically and without question. Juliana is subject to the mores of her society, which are ordered and controlled by the patriarchy.

As in the Cynewulfian version, the escalation of animosity and alienation is remarkably swift: Affricanus moves from flattering promises to verbal anger as in "wreaððin swiðe ferliche" (l. 134) or "getting wroð very strongly" (1872: 15) to the harshest of threats:

"þe schal laðin his luue. for þu schalt habbe þrof hearm & t
scheome baðe & t nu þu schalt on alre earst. as on ernesse swa
beon ibeaten wið bittere besmen. þat tu were wummon of
wummene bosum to wraðerheale eauer iboren iþe worlde."

(ll. 147-53)

("þou shalt loape his love, for þou shalt have of it harm and
shame boð, and now þou shalt first of all, by way of earnest, be
so beaten with bitter birches þat þou [shalt lament] þou wert
ever born into þe world, woman of womans bosom ...")

(1872: 17)

The phrasing of the final part of Affricanus' threat to his daughter calls to mind the well-established belief that sin entered mankind through birth: that there was something inherent in a woman's body that was evil and contaminating (Warner, 1976: 50-67, 77). Indeed, "wummon of wummene bosem" or "woman of womans bosom" (1872: 17) reads like a crass

insult. Juliana, however, sees the promised punishment as an opportunity for aggrandisement, as the more severe the physical torment she suffers, the more her lover will love her: “ich beo him þe leouere. se ich derfre þing for hif luue drehe” (ll. 153-4) or “I shall be to him the dearer, as for his love I suffer more pain ...” (1872: 17). Understood simply in the Christian sense, this does not appear to be so bizarre, but in purely human terms, it depicts a bizarre relationship wherein the woman is required to submit proof of her devotion in order to win the reward of his love. And the proof required is nothing less than suffering physical torture. Any relationship so depicted must surely be classed as exploitative and not liberating but requiring submission and subsuming of the self: there is no sense here of equality of partnership at all. Woman must always, the text suggests, subsume herself to a more powerful male partner.

Affricanus announces his plans for Juliana’s first tortures, in a spirited and almost joyful manner. The three adverbs which describe his speech are “bliðeliche ant swiðe heatterliche” (l. 155) or “blithely and very savagely” (1872: 17). Seeing that the tortures which Affricanus is about to prescribe are sado-sexual in nature, it does not seem to be too far-fetched to suggest a perverted angry arousal on the part of Affricanus, her father. Certainly, the tortures to be meted out to Juliana are a substitute for the rituals and sexual obligations of marriage to her suitor. Instead of participating in a status-filled marriage ceremony, Affricanus is officiating at another public ceremony:

“strupen hire steort naket. &t leggeð se luðer liche on hire
leofliche lich: [þat] hit liðeri o blode.” Me nom hire &t dude
swa þat hit yeat adun of þe yerden.

(ll. 155-9)

(“Strip her stark naked, and lay on so hard on her lovely body
þat it laðer in blood.” She was taken and so treated þat þe blood
ran down off þe rods)

(1872: 17)

That the *Liflade* is indebted to the *Hali Meidhad* can hardly be questioned, for Juliana’s response to her first tortures is related in spirit and wording to that text.²⁴ Juliana now makes a specific reference to the reward which she hopes for in heaven. And for her, it is a very tangible, visible sign of her holiness and steadfast faithfulness to the lover whom she has never yet seen. Furthermore, Juliana herself mentions her longed-for and special reward in the context of a hierarchy which God rules, thus once again admitting her sublimation of self to the higher authority of the patriarchal church:

“Ye quoð þis meiden þat mei godd welden. Ne mahe ye nawt do me bute þet he wule þeauen &t þolien ow to donne to mutli mi mede &t te murhðe þat lið to meiðhades menske. for eauer se ye nu her mearreð me mare: se mi crune schal beon brihttre ba &t fehere. for þi ich chulle bliðeliche &t wið bliðe heorte drehen eauer euch derf. for mi leofmones luue þe lufsume lauerd &t softe me bið euch sar in his seruise...”

(ll. 172-80)

(“Yea,” quoð þis maiden, “þat God can rule; nor are ye able to do aught to me, except he will to permit and endure so do to enlarge my reward, and þe joy þat belonged to þe grace of maidenhood: for in whatsoever measure ye mar me þe more in þat same shall my crown be boð brighter and fairer. Therefore I shall blithely and wiþ gay heart sustain every hurt for my lemmans love, þe lovely Lord, and soft to me is every sore in His service.”)

(1872: 19)

Juliana cannot, therefore, experience *jouissance* of her own volition.²⁵ She cannot celebrate her own body: all her joy is sublimated and related to a longed-for consummation with a distant, yet demanding lover, who requires of her the ultimate test of her devotion and faithfulness. And the consummation for which she so ardently longs has naught to do with her body and her femaleness, but rather with her eschewing her femaleness and becoming an ungendered neuter. This consummation for which she yearns appears to be centred on the reward which will be offered to her as an unblemished virgin martyr – the special crown which will signify particular holiness in heaven.²⁶

Affricanus, who is described as being “bitterliche iteonet” (l. 192) or “bitterly vexed” (1872: 21), now hands Juliana over to her erstwhile suitor as he sits in state issuing judgements and exerting his patriarchal authority. The scene is public: Juliana has not only offended the private man, but also the powerful public figure, the ruler of Nicomedia. For the first time in the *Liflade*, a critical appellation is accorded Eleusius. He is described as “luðere” (l. 193) or “vile” (1872: 21). The focus now shifts to Eleusius and his first encounter with Juliana after his having been spurned by her. The text here is radically altered from the Cynwulfian version, for here Eleusius is depicted as a heartbroken lover, quite smitten by the peerless beauty of the lady:

As he beseo &t biheold hire lufsume leor lilies ilicnesse &t rudi ase rose. &t under hire nebscheft al se freoliche ischapat; weorp a sic as a wiht þat sare were iwundet. His heorte feng to heaten &t his meari mealten þe rawen rahten of luue þurh euch lið. of his limes. &t inwið bearnde of brune swa &t cwakede as of calde....

(ll. 195-202)

(When he viewed and beheld her lovely complexion, in likeness of a lily and ruddy as þe rose, and all below her visage, so ladylike shapen, he drew a sigh, as a wight þat was sorely wounded. His heart began to beat and his marrow to melt, þe fine þreads of love reached þrough every joint of his limbs, and he burned wiþin wiþ heat so, and quaked as if wiþ cold)

(1872: 21)

This extract is heavily reliant on the conventional imagery of the courtly love convention. Not only is Juliana's beauty compared to the traditional flowers of the pure white lily and the red rose, thus symbolising both purity and passion, but Eleusius himself is also cast in the role of the wounded, despairing and helpless lover, smitten with an unrequited passion for a remote and unattainable lady.²⁷ There is therefore an interesting love triangle in the text: Juliana is in love with her lovable lord, who is remotely unattainable, unseen and not present; Eleusius desires Juliana, who has spurned him, and the lord returns Juliana's love, but only as long as she is devoted and faithful to him. But it is also very clear that Eleusius' attraction to Juliana is based on her sexuality. The text mentions not only her facial beauty, but also "al se freoliche ischapel" (ll. 197-8) or her "so ladylike shapen" (1872: 21), or, as the Royal manuscript puts it more unambiguously, "hire leofliche schape" (ll. 142-3) or "her lovely shape" (1872: 20). Eleusius' reaction is instant and extreme: not only does he "sigh", but he is also "sorely wounded" which is typical of the behaviour of a lover, as described in the *Ars Amatoria*.²⁸ The description of Eleusius' reaction to the sight of Juliana, when his "heorte feng to heaten" (l. 199) or "heart began to beat"; "his meari mealten" (l. 199) or "his marrow to melt"; "bearnde of brune swa" (l. 201) or "he burned with heat"; "cwakede as of calde" (ll. 201-2) or "quaked as if wiþ cold", all suggest a state of extreme sexual arousal. The rather coy wording at the end of the description of Eleusius' reaction to the sight of Juliana's naked, but bloody, body, is a euphemism for sexual possession:

þet him þuhte in hes þonc. þet ne bede he iþe worlt nanes
cunnes blisse. bute hire bodi ane. To wealdien hire wið wil
efter þat he walde.

(ll. 202-4)

(so þat it seemed to him in his ðought, þat he could pray in þe
world for bliss of ne sort, except only her body, to deal
wiþ her wiþ his will according as he pleased....)

(1872: 21)

The wording suggests that Eleusius desires mastery over Juliana: he wishes "to wealden hire wil efter þat he walde" (l. 204) or "to deal wiþ her wiþ his will according as he pleased"

(1872: 21). There is no sense here of a mutual contract at all, but rather, of the female being in the power of the male and submitting to his will.

The pattern established by Affricanus, the primary male in Juliana's life, is upheld by Eleusius. The first approach to Juliana is through sweet persuasive words, for Eleusius attempts to cajole and flatter her: his words are filled with "swotnesse" (l. 205) or "sweetness" and are uttered in a gentle "soffte" (l. 206) or "soft" voice.²⁹ Juxtaposed against his desire to make her do his will, these sweet, softly-spoken words are revealed to be a ploy whereby Eleusius intends to cajole Juliana into submitting to his will. Juliana should not be deceived by this approach, for this kind of gentle manipulation is merely another method used to subjugate the insubordinate one, who is promised certain benefits if the will of the father is done. But no real negotiation is envisaged: Juliana is required to shift her position, whereas Eleusius simply will not alter his. (The earlier compromise which Juliana first offered to Eleusius, that he should attain a higher rank, requires no shift on his part: presumably, higher rank and prestige is what he himself desires.) The rewards which are promised to Juliana represent the benevolent face of the patriarchy: those who toe the line are granted largesse. Those who do not, are savagely punished. And these promised rewards are now dangled before Juliana like a lure before a fish. They include promises of "alle wunne iwurden" (l. 153) and "neauer of þi wil ne schal þe nawt wontin" (l. 153) or "it should become well wiþ þe wiþ all joy" and "naught of thy will shall ever be wanting to thee" (1872: 22). But a more sinister tone becomes evident towards the end of this speech when Eleusius sneeringly refers to the impossibility of Juliana alone having the wisdom to question the customs and mores of her people. His words "ne wen þu nawt þe ane wið þi wisdom to ouerstihen ham alle" (ll. 156-7) or "Suppose not that thou alone with thy wisdom surpassed them all" (1872: 22), suggest that both might and right belong to him, and that whatever ideology is espoused by Nicomedia (for that, read himself) simply must be the correct one. This monolithic approach is typically patriarchal.

Juliana then proceeds to sermon Eleusius by contrasting the "king þat is ouer alle kinges" (l. 159) or "the king who is above all kings" (1872: 24) with the "cwife deoulen" (ll. 162-3) or "living devils" whom the Nicomedians worship. Furthermore, she promises not eternal joy, but "wandreðe" (l. 166) or "misery" (1872: 22) and bitter pain to those who worship devils. Juliana appears to have been empowered by the beating which she suffered at the behest of her father because the timid maiden who was terrified before, now offers a proselytising message of conversion to none other than the High Reeve of Nicomedia, and in his public court of appeal, which ironically is a place where Eleusius' power is constantly

reinforced. Strangely enough, Eleusius is still not furious with Juliana, as he refers to her as “Me leof” (l. 170) or “my dear” (1872: 24). He also reveals his reasons for not converting. This would result not only in the loss of his office “warpen ut of mine wike” (l. 172) but also a death sentence “demen me to deaðe” (ll. 172-3). It is therefore perfectly clear that Eleusius understands the workings of the patriarchal system which he espouses: one supports its ideology, or one suffers the consequence. There is no negotiated space.

It is only when Juliana questions the logic of the choices which the two of them face, which involve loyalty to, or betrayal of, their respective lords, that Eleusius finally loses his temper and issues orders for her to be tortured. His anger appears to have been evoked because the logic of her response is unanswerable. Juliana asks:

yef þu dredest so muchel an dedlich mon þe liueð al agein lay
 on his schuppent scheome. &t art offruht swa to leosen his
 freontschipe. schuldich þenne for saken ihesu crist godes sune
 þe is ort ant ende of al.

(ll. 173 -77)

(If thou darest so much a mortal man, who lives quite against
 the law ... and art so affrighted to lose his friendship, should I
 then forsake Jesus Christ, Gods son, who is beginning and end
 of all that ever is good...?)

(1872: 24)

Eleusius' response indicates that Juliana has struck an emotional chord for he “rudnin” (l. 210) or “reddens” (p. 27), and then angrily orders her punishment.³⁰ He appears to have undergone a sudden *volte-face*. One moment he was the ardent suitor, the next he is her tormentor. The punishment has sado-sexual overtones as Eleusius' guards are instructed to:

strupin hire steort naket. &t streccheð oþer eorðe. &t hwil þat
 eauer six men mahten idrehen beaten hire beare bodi. þat ha al
 were bigoten of þe blode.

(ll. 211-215)

(strip her stark naked, and stretch her on þe earð, and as long as
 six men could hold out, beat her bare body, so þat she should be
 all suffused wiþ þe blood.)

(1872: 27)

The punishment is really like a rape: Juliana is physically tormented; she is naked; her assailants are male, the implement with which they beat her is a rod; the visible sign of the beating is blood. And, as with rape, the reason for the torture includes the exertion of power

over another. That will is involved, is clear in the incantation shouted at Juliana by the six torturers as they beat her: they threaten greater punishment if she “nult to ure wul buhen &t beien” (l. 219) or “wilt not bow and bend to our will” (p. 27). (Our will here assumes that the interests and loyalties of Eleusius are utterly assumed by his cohorts. There is no will other than his, and this is Juliana’s offence. She has presumed to have her own will.) The narrator interjects at this point to comment on the wicked treatment being meted out to Juliana, but in particular, to “freoliche flesch” (ll. 228-9) or “ladylike flesh” (p. 27). Again, this suggests that a particular paternalistic view of women is espoused, for females are seen as delicate, vulnerable, helpless: feminine in fact. And when Juliana does not capitulate tearfully, or beg for mercy, her torture is intensified, for now she is “teon biþe top up” (l. 237) or “draw[n] ... up by the hair of her head” (p. 29). Her body is open to the gaze of all: that there is an element of sexual titillation in the described sight is evident as her “leofliche lich” (ll. 240-1) or “lovely body” (p. 29) is mentioned.

What is clear from Juliana’s prayer is that she accords her endurance and strength by no means to herself but to God, for she says: “for nam ich strong of ne þing buten of þi strengðe” (ll. 246-7) or “for I am not strong of anyðing but of þy strengð” (p. 29). In this respect the Juliana of the *Liflade* is less powerful than Cynewulf’s Juliana, who is an altogether more warrior-like and powerful figure. This alteration is entirely in accordance with the *Liflade*’s more feminine gentle and lovely heroine, who is sharply contrasted with the more autonomous, crusading figure of the Old English version. The *Liflade* Juliana therefore appears to reflect the effects of gendering females differently. Whereas the Anglo-Saxon era redounds with strong powerful women, in the later era the women are more delicate. What strength they have must come from an external source, not from within.

Eleusius now plans to “anan ut of dahene” (l. 255) or “put her anon out of light of day” (p. 31) which is glossed as “put her to death” in the Royal manuscript. This leader would now prefer to obliterate her and her opposition – to wipe her out, to expunge her from the earth. There has been no trial, no tribunal, no hearing. It is enough that she refuses him. Eleusius seems intent on not only killing Juliana, but also on destroying her “leofliche lich” (l. 258) or “lovely body” (p. 31) because he orders molten brass to be poured over her, from her head to her toes:

&t bed biliue bringen forð brune walliede bres. &t healden hit
se wal hat hehe up on hire heaved. þat hit urne endelong hire
lefoliche lich adun to hire healen.

(ll. 255-59)

(and bad forðwiþ bring forð fiery glowing brass, and hold so
glowing hot high up on her head þat it should run along her
lovely body down to her heels.)

(1872: 31)

This ceremony is a gross parody of the medieval rhetorical figure of *descriptio*, whereby the beauty of the lady is described in an orderly fashion, from the top of her head to the tips of her toes. Here, however, Juliana's beauty is to be hideously disfigured and then destroyed as the molten metal consumes her flesh. Unfortunately for Eleusius' plans of revenge, the boiling brass is not efficacious: Juliana's prayer for strength to bear the pain of torture has been miraculously answered. She has been accorded a sign from God that her faithfulness has been noted, as she is now protected from the attacks of evil men. Indeed, Juliana has been elevated to the status of such luminaries as John the Baptist, who, according to apocryphal legend, was tortured by boiling oil but emerged unscathed.³¹ The ability to withstand such a torture is quite clearly derived from sexual purity, as is discussed in chapters two and four.³² The attainment of holiness is, however, at a price – the abnegation of sexuality, a denial of the self.

All that Eleusius is able to do with such stubborn and inexplicable resistance is to bundle Juliana out of his sight. Juliana then utters a prayer for protection. She casts herself upon the mercy of the Lord. Her prayer confirms that she places herself completely into the benign hands of God: she has no belief in her own strength or powers at all, for once more Juliana reiterates that: “for al mi trust is on þe. Steor me &t streng me for al mi strengðe is of þe” (ll. 275-77) or “for all my trust is in þee. Rule me and strengðen me for all my strengð is from þee” (p. 33). Juliana submits herself to the benign patriarchy of God, from whom she has won this particular protection, but only after she has undergone the most hideous suffering. In a perversely masochistic way, she reads the events and the Lord having saved her from a horrible death by burning, as a sign of his loving kindness, for in her prayer she calls him “luuiende lauerd” (l. 283) or “loving lord” (pp. 33, 35). She also stresses her own frail helplessness or “helpleses heale” (l. 305).

By admitting her own weakness and reliance on a higher power, Juliana is awarded the gift of perspicacity and discernment. She suspects that the angel who materialises in her prison cell is but an emissary from hell, but this is confirmed only after a further hasty and silent prayer during which she again casts herself upon the mercy of God. It appears that this visitation had been but a further test of her devotion. In fact, Juliana's prayer, her reliance

on the higher authority of the Lord, places her in a submissive role to a patriarchal figure, even though her devotion has cost her pain and suffering.

It is this very pain and suffering, as well as her continual reliance on the guidance and wisdom of God (to which she refers in her prayer), that wins her the appellation of “eadie” (l. 331) or “blessed” (p. 39) but once again this is in the context of her self-abnegation. In her prayer she calls herself “þi wummon” (l. 328) or “þy handmaid” (p. 37). And Juliana receives a further confirmation that her devotion to Christ is reciprocated as he speaks to her. She is now given the task of “bearding the lion” and tackling the disguised demon. But it is made quite clear that the power which will enable her to do this fearsome task has been given to her by God. It is not hers, but is awarded to her, and she will now be acting under the direction of God himself:

ga nu neor &t nim him. &t wið þe bondes þat ter beoð bind him
heteuste. Godd al mihti yeueð þe mahte forte don hit.

(ll. 335-7)

(Go now near and take him and wið þe bonds þat be þere bind
him fast; God Almighty giveð þee power for to do it)

(1872: 37)

Juliana is therefore now possessed of a power delegated from God, in a typically hierarchical patriarchal fashion. Juliana is assured that the demon will be compelled “vnþonc in his teð” (l. 338) or “in spite of his teeth” (p. 37) to tell her whatsoever she commands him. And this the demon proceeds to do: he cannot help spitting out his history of perfidy and evil. This self-condemnatory history is apparently delivered at Juliana’s behest, pleasure and satisfaction. She, however, is an underling obeying her superior’s orders. The authority with which she speaks is a delegated authority.

Juliana’s extensive interrogation of the hapless demon in which she compels him to reveal the tricks and stratagems through which he leads God’s elect astray, can be read as a didactic tool, for thereby the audience of the tale will be alerted to his ploys and strategies and therefore prepared to resist them.³³ The demon does attempt at first to reveal the already known: the evil deeds of characters from the Bible, such as Cain and Nebuchadnezzar, the evil behind the torments of Isaiah, Job and Paul. However, Juliana forces a more and more uncomfortable and intimate confession from the demon. This confession reveals that the cohorts of hell are subject to the will of Beelzebub, who turns his wrath upon his minions if they so not succeed in their appointed task of spreading evil and deceiving the faithful.

Ironically, this strategy mirrors exactly the actions of Affricanus and Eleusius, in their treatment of Juliana.

The demon does mention the “laðlese meiden” (l. 421) or “blameless maiden” (p. 45) who is Mary, in the context of the mass, which is efficacious because Christ took on a human form through Mary. Clearly, Juliana is compared to Mary throughout this text: she is blameless and selfless in the service of her God, as was Mary. But above all, she is also sexually pure and intact of body. The implied comparison between Mary and Juliana is reinforced several times during the tale as, like Mary, Juliana is visited by an angel. A vivid contrast is drawn between the wickedness of the demon and his lord Beelzebub, as revealed by his confession, and the sanctity of Juliana and, by implication, her model, Mary. The confession of the demon provokes several references to the holiness of Juliana: she is called “eadi” (l. 426) or “blessed” (p. 46); “seli” (l. 428) or “holy” (p. 46) and “eadie iblescet” (l. 332) or (the saintly, blessed) (p. 37).

Juliana is provoked to her first physical action in the text after the demon has revealed how he attempts to turn the faithful to evil:

&t grap a great reketehe þat ha wes wið ibunden, &t bond
bihinden his rug ba twa his honden. þat him each neil &t
blakede of þe blode ... &t [heo] nom hire ahne bondes &t bigon
to beaten þen belial of helle.

(ll. 445-51)

(And she seized a great chain wip which she was ibunden, and
bound to his back both his two hands, so that him ached each
nail, and grew black from the blood ... [she] took her own
bonds, and began to beat the Belial of hell.)

(1872: 46,48)

When the demon, now roaring with pain, begs Juliana to leave him, he ironically accords her the highest esteem as he places her in the same category as the highest ranking Christian figures:

O mi leafdi iuliane quoð he. euening wið apostel patriarchen
ilich. &t leof wið alle martyrs englene feohale. &t archanlene
freonð frið ...

(ll. 454-56)

(Oh my lady. Leave me, Juliana, equal of apostle, like to
patriarchs, and dear to the martyrs, companion of angels and
friend of archangels)

(1872: 48)

That none of these figures who are mentioned is female, indicates that true spiritual leadership and blessedness is generally reserved for male figures. The only females who are admitted to the ranks of this august company are consecrated virgins. The special status of virgins, and the power which they have to contend with the devil, is ruled by the demon as he finally reveals the reason for Juliana's blessedness:

O þe mihte of meiðhad as þu art iwepnet to weorrin agein us.
 yet tu wurchest us werst of al þat us wadeð as þu dudedest eaure.
 Ah we schule sechen efter wrake on alle þeo þat te biwiteð. ne
 ne schulen ha neauer beo sker of ure weorre. we wulleð
 meidenes á mare heanen &t heatien &t þah monie etsterten us
 summe schulen stutten. O ihesu godes sune. þe hauest þin hehe
 seotel o meiðhades mihte. hire mucche menske, wa wurchest tu
 us þer wið. to wel þu witest ham þe treowliche habbeð hire in
 heorte forte halden. yes ha milde &t meoke beon as meiden deh
 to beonne.

(ll. 476-87)

(Oh þe might of maidenhood, as þou iweaponed to war against
 us! Yet þou treatest us worst of all þat do us woe, as þou ever
 didst. But we shall seek revenge on all þem þat protect þee, nor
 shall þey ever be clear of our war. Maidens ever more we will
 humble and hate, and þough many start away from us, some
 shall stand to us. O Jesu, Son of God! who hast þy high ðrone
 in maidenhoods might, to þeir great honour: woe þou workest us
 þereby: too well þou guardest þem, who truly keep þee to hold
 þee in þeir hearts, if þey be mild and meek, as a maiden ought to
 be.)

(1872: 51)

Maidenhood, that is, sexual purity and intactness, is what provides Juliana's peculiar spiritual strength. However, the demon is impelled to threaten revenge on all maidens because of Juliana's successes against him. Thus, the tale provides an implicit warning to all who hear, that virgins are a particular target of evil. The selection of meek, mild and gentle maidens in particular for protection by the Lord and as a special target of evil, epitomises the dilemma facing the twelfth-century medieval woman: if she is a suitably gentle and feminine lady as required by the socialisation and gendering of women, she is at once conforming to the required ideals, thus inviting special tender care from God, but she is also enticing attack from the devil.

Juliana's might against the demon is proved to surpass the ability merely to compel him to speak, for when she is summoned once more to the presence of Eleusius, Juliana

drags the fulminating demon along with her. The attentions of the crowd of attendants are fickle for a pecking order is established: the demon – characterised as a wolf – is now cruelly tormented by the crowd. Ironically, this powerful demon is momentarily at the mercy of the people who, being pagans, have already fallen prey to his wiles. Juliana’s power over him therefore cancels out his hold on the people of Nicomedia. But he is treated in traditionally the most degrading manner, the manner in which thieves and brigands were vilified by the populace:

&t heo leac him eauer endelong þe cheping chapman to huting.
 &t heo leiden to him sum wið stan. sum wið ban. &t fleatten on
 hum hundes. ant leiden to wið honden.

(ll. 505-8)

Yet she pulled him over along, for þe cheaping chapmen to hoot
 at, and þey laid on him, some wiþ stone, and some wiþ
 bone, and slot hounds at him, and laid on him wiþ þeir hands.

(1872: 53)

This episode is designed to bring the maximum humiliation possible to the demon, culminating in Juliana flinging him into a filthy pit or “&t weorp him forð from hire awei into a put of fulðe” (ll. 512-13). This is of course symbolic of the fate of all those who persecute Juliana, for, in vivid contrast to the now filthy, stinking and cowering demon, Juliana is unblemished and radiant, having acquired a holy glow through her sufferings:

com baldeliche forð biuore þe reue as he set on his dom seotle
 schiminde hire nebscheaft schene as þe sunne.

(ll. 513-15)

(Boldly she came before þe prefect as he sat on his tribunal, wiþ
 her face shimmering sheen as the sun.)

(1872: 55)

Juliana’s radiance – her “schene of þe sune” – is the outward affirmation of her having pleased God. This is the first time in the *Liflade* that such an appellation is accorded to Juliana, which contrasts with the Cynewulfian Juliana, who is described as radiant and shining by both her father, the narrator and Eleusius, before any torture or test of faith has been applied.³⁴ This therefore implies that the Cynewulfian Juliana is powerful and blessed within herself, whereas the heroine of the later *Liflade* has to win approbation and have blessing bestowed upon her by an approving benign father-god. This contrast has been pointed out by Lucretia Pollard (1980: 143). However, her discussion does not extrapolate

any further significance to the difference in description, whereas this argument contends that the difference in depiction, as signified by the use of these appellations, indicates a shift in the status of and perceptions about a woman's role. Quite clearly, the later Juliana is more gentle, more feminine and less personally powerful than the earlier Cynewulfian Juliana, who more nearly resembles the ancient Germanic warrior women.³⁵

In the confrontation which ensues between Eleusius and Juliana, he firstly accuses her of having practised "wicche creftes" (l. 518) or "witchcraft" (p. 54) as he cannot comprehend either her moral strength or her physical stamina.³⁶ The gulf between the two erstwhile lovers is now readily apparent as he addresses her as "edie" (l. 405, Royal) or "blessed" (p. 54) whereas she brazenly and defiantly calls him a "heaðene hund" (l. 521) or "heathen hound" (p. 54). Whereas Juliana has already become somewhat sanctified by her experiences, Eleusius has taken on bestial attributes. The metaphor used to describe him here may well have its origin in the kind of metaphorical language used in *Hali Meidhad* to describe sexual intercourse.³⁷ This metaphor also connects Eleusius to Belial the demon, whom Juliana describes as a "bull of hell" (p. 54) or "helles bulle" (l. 526). Juliana, however, is connected to the shining, shimmering angel which appears periodically in answer to her prayers. It is clear that there are binary oppositions at work, but these are not gender related. The opposition is between good and evil, heaven and hell, angel and demon, saint and sinner.

God's blessing of Juliana has increased from giving her moral courage, to physical stamina, to supernatural protection of her body from harm, to psychological power, to extraordinary physical strength. And once more, Juliana very clearly attributes her powers to God and not herself at all:

þe mihti mildfule godd þat ich áá munne. yef me mihte of
heouene

(ll. 531-2)

þe mighty mild God,... gave me power from heaven....

(1872: 55)

Furthermore, it is clear that Juliana has been commissioned by God to perform a task for him, which involves the "hearmin" (l. 532) or "harming" (p. 55) of Satan and "te forte schenden. &t makien to scheomien" (ll. 532-3) or "disgrace and bring[ing] to shame" (p. 55) for Eleusius. Such a blatant admission on Juliana's part will undoubtedly result in an

increase of harm and suffering for her.³⁸ This admission, coupled with the insults which she heaps upon the prefect as he sits in his seat of honour and power, for she calls him a “heaðene hund” (l. 521) or “heaðen hound” (p. 55), as well as her proselytising plea that he should “a reow þe seoluen” (l. 537) or “berue þyself” (p. 57), is certain to call forth further torture and suffering. Juliana has now bested Eleusius’ efforts to belittle her in terms of physical strength, spirituality and earthly power, as well as tarnishing his prestige, for which she has absolutely no regard. Juliana is God’s representative on earth and as he is engaged in a battle for both acolytes and precedence against Satan, she has no qualms about goading Eleusius into punishing her even more harshly. Ironically, the harsher and more stringent the torture which is heaped upon Juliana, the more her prestige and stature will increase, and the more vile and evil Eleusius will become.

In his anger, Eleusius decides to devise an even more devilish torture for Juliana. This is an horrific machine, bristling with knives and spokes, designed in such a manner as to both crush and cut the hapless victim. And indeed this terrible instrument does succeed in literally breaking her body into fragments:

he dude on eiðer half hire. fowre of hise cnihtes, forte turnen
 þat hweol wið hondlen imaket þron o þat eadie meiden se swiðe
 as ha mahten. &t het olif. &t oleomen swingen hit sweftliche.
 &t turnen hit abuten. &t heo as þe deouel spuredede ham to
 donne, duden hit unsperliche. þat ha bigon to broken al as þat
 isteledede irn strac hire in. ouer al. &t from þe top to þe tan. áá
 as hit turnde. to limede hire &t to leac lið ba &t lire. bursten
 hire banes. &t þat meari bearst ut imenget wið þe blode.

(ll. 554-64)

(He set on either side of her four of his servants to turn þat wheel, wið handles fixed þereon, upon þat blessed maiden, as strongly as þey could, and bad þem whirl it swiftly upon life and limbs, and turn it about. And þey as þe devil spurred þem to do, did it unsparingly so þat þey began to break her into fragments as þat steeled iron found its way into her; all over, from þe top to þe toes. Ever as it turned, it tore her limb from limb, and broke boð her joints and her flesh. Her bones cracked, and þe marrow burst out all mingled wið blood

(1872: 59)

That the successful torture is described in greater detail, in fact, almost with a gleeful relish, than the earlier, inefficacious attempts, signifies that the punishment meted out to Juliana is enjoyed vicariously and voyeuristically by the audience. This punishment is, of course, a

necessary ordeal for Juliana, as the achievement of sainthood necessitates grievous earthly suffering.³⁹

At the point of her extreme need, and at the moment when it seems that she has been mortally wounded by her horrific torture on the wheel, Juliana cries out to God, in the expectation that her spirit would now ascend to heaven. It seems, however, that Juliana has acquired a special status because of having suffered torture. A tangible heavenly sign of her blessedness becomes evident as an angel rescues her from the instrument of her torture, her body is restored to wholeness, and she is saved from imminent death:

se þer lihtinde com an engel of heouene. &t reat to þæt hweol
swa þæt hit al to reafde. bursten hire bondes: &t breken alle
clane. &t heo ase fischhal as þah be nefde nohwer hurtes ifelet.
feng to þonki þus godd

(ll. 567-72)

(þere came all lightening an angel from heaven, and reached out
to þæt wheel so þæt it fell all to pieces, and she, as sound as a
fish, as þough she had nowhere felt any hurts, began to ðank
God)

(1872: 59)

Wholeness, is, of course, one of the most often cited reasons for the preservation of virginity, which is also one of the reasons why virginal bodies were not thought to corrupt.⁴⁰ This is why Juliana's body is restored by the angel's intervention. The miraculously healed Juliana now offers a prayer of thanks to God. Juliana's speech includes a long peroration in which she testifies to the might and works of God on earth through the ages.⁴¹ Her speech ends with a call on God to protect her: "beo mi blisfule godd wið me. &t wite me wið þe deoules driueles. &t wið alle his creftes" (ll. 619-21) or "Be now with me, blissful God, and defend me against the devils drudges, and against all his crafts" (p. 64). Juliana is therefore clearly subservient to an authoritative and powerful patriarchal figure who is apparently more benign than the patriarchal figures to whom she has to answer on earth. The seeming benignity of her heavenly father must be questioned as Juliana receives direct acknowledgement from God only in the form of the miraculous intervention which restores her broken body to wholeness after she has suffered hideously. Her torture is performed at the behest of Eleusius, but it is a requirement for special recognition by her heavenly father. Evidently, suffering in the name of the father is indicative of devout allegiance. The patriarchy thus requires denial, subservience self-abnegation and obedience from females before they will be accepted.

Juliana's speech, in which she testifies about God's might, confirms the conceptual basis of the patriarchy. For patriarchal constructs are founded upon might, force and strength, and this is what Juliana emphasises in her speech. Juliana thus indicates that she has simply chosen to follow the more powerful male figure, God, instead of his opponent, the devil. Juliana's words confirm that she is acting in the name of the father and not independently: she is God's acolyte.

Juliana also calls on God to touch Eleusius' heart: "wurch yet swuche wundres for þi deorewurðe nome. þat ti reue rudni. &t scheomie wið his schucke" (ll. 621-3) or "Work thou such wonders for me, and for thy precious name, that the reeve may redder and be ashamed of his devil" (p. 64). Juliana's stand against Eleusius and her father is therefore also a means of witnessing for God and proselytising. The battle for Juliana's allegiance thus becomes a battle for the supremacy of one patriarchal figure or another. As Juliana has awarded her allegiance to God, she wishes her rejected suitor to abandon his master and submit to hers.

Whereas many male figures, such as Moses, David, Abraham, and so on, are mentioned as examples of God's enabling power by Juliana, only one female is mentioned by name. In the course of her testimony to God's works on earth, Juliana castigates Eve for bringing sin to the world: "ah he for gulte him anan þurh eggunge of eue" (ll. 577-8) or "But he made himself guilty anon through instigation of Eve" (p. 60). Thus, there is an implied contrast between Juliana, a virgin, and therefore a type of Mary, and Eve, the "instigator" of sin in the world. Mary is not mentioned by name, but as the "meare meiden" (ll. 599-600) or "tender maiden" (p. 62) through whom Christ came to be born. Mary is conceived of as feminine, dainty and gentle, attributes which are valorised as being proper for a good woman. Thus, the two types of woman are represented in the *Liflade*: the pure, gentle virgin, asexual and holy, and the mate of Adam, cunning and manipulative Eve. Neither of these alternatives offers a middle choice for the ordinary woman.

Juliana reiterates her unswerving devotion to God and names herself now publicly as Christ's beloved: "þi meiden an þat ich am. &t luuie þe to leofmon luuewende lauerd" (ll. 617-8) or "[I] am thy maiden alone, and love thee as leman, living Lord" (p. 64).⁴² The word "leofmon" means "beloved man, lover": Juliana therefore thinks of Christ in a romantic way as her beloved or her affianced husband, to whom she offers her unswerving devotion. Her

devotion to him is so extreme that she is willing to sacrifice herself in order to win his returned affection.

The result of Juliana's testifying prayer is the sudden mass conversion of not only the executioners but also about five hundred onlookers. These new converts say:

“Mihti lauerd is þe. þat Iuliane on leueð. Ne nis na godd buten he; we beoð wel icnawen. Reue us reoweð ure sið þat we se longe habbeð ileuet þine reades. ... luuewurðe wummon. we wendeð alle to þat godd. þat tu on trustest. forlore beo þu reue wið false bileaue. &t iblescet beo crist. &t alle his icorene.”

(ll. 626-33)

(“Mighty Lord is he on whom Juliana believed, nor is þere any God but he, we are well assured. Reeve, we are rueful for our course, þat we have so long believed þy counsels. ... Loveworðy woman, who convertest all to þat God, on whom þou trustest. Þou wilt be lost, *for ever*, prefect, wiþ þy false belief; and blessed be Christ and all his elect.”)

(1872: 65)

The conversion is depicted as a victory for God and his faithful representative on earth, Juliana, with God's opponent, the devil, and his cohort, Eleusius, losing the battle. In this battle between good and evil, the ordering binary construct is that of God and good, all that is heavenly and pure. Within this construct, pure women are merely a segment, an adjunct to the primary male order. Evil, however, is the other, into which sinful women are subsumed. Women therefore inherit the position adopted by the dominant male figure in their chosen sphere. There is no space that is theirs.

As Eleusius pursues his vengeful attack on her, he becomes a more and more pathetic figure who appears to have lost the faculty of reason. Eleusius fulminates, he rants and raves. He is firstly described as mad, gnashing his teeth in impotent anger:

Swa þe reue gromede þat he gristbetede wod he walde iwurðen.
&t sende o wodi wise to maximian.

(ll. 639-41)

(Þe reeve was so angered þat he ground his teeð, and would go mad, and sent in a mad manner to Maximianus.)

(1872: 67)

In his rage, Eleusius sends to Maximianus for advice. This indicates that he is subject to a higher authority, in typically patriarchal fashion. Just as Juliana is a representative of God

on earth, so is Eleusius a representative of his emperor and his ultimate master, the Devil. He follows Maximian's instructions and orders the dissenters to be beheaded.⁴³ Yet all that they have done is speak against Eleusius' rule and testify to a new allegiance. Patriarchal power therefore requires absolute obedience and allegiance: no opposition is permitted.

The martyred throng had taunted Eleusius with suggestions regarding various tortures which he could order them to suffer, all the while reminding him that he was merely the pawn of his superior, the devil:

do nu deadliche on us al þat tu do maht. make us reue anan riht
misliche pinen ontentd fur &t feche hweol. greiðe al þat [þu]
const grimliche bi þenchen. forðe al þi feaders wil þes feondes
of helle; to longe he heold us as he halt to nuðe. Ah we schulen
heonne forð halden to ihesu godes kinewurðe sune moncun
alesent.

(ll. 633-40)

(Do þou now all deadly deeds on us, which þou hast power to
do. Contrive for us anon, reeve, various pains; light up a fire;
fetch a wheel. Prepare all þat þou canst savagely ðink of; furþer
all þy fapens will, þa fiend of hell: too long he held us in
bondage as he holds þee now, But we, henceforð, shall hold to
Jesu, Gods Royal Son, Redeemer of mankind.)

(1872: 65, 67)

Manifestly, the opposing binary forces operating in this tale are not those of the male and the female but of good and evil. The binary pairs contrasted here are good/evil; God/Satan; Juliana/ Eleusius; Christian male/ pagan male; Christian followers/ pagan followers. This indicates that the female is not even the other: she is simply labelled and categorised according to the male leader whom she follows. Her position is always subordinate, and she cannot speak with her own voice, but only the voice of her master.

Juliana's tortures continue: she does not suffer the same fate as the new converts, but remains in the power of Eleusius. He exercises that power by ordering her to be burned:

Eleusius þe hwile lette his men makien a mucche fur mid alle. &t
bed binden hire swa þe fet &t te honden. &t keasten hire in to
þe brune cwic to for bearnen.

(ll. 647-49)

(Eleusius, mean while, caused his men to make a very big fire;
and bad þem bind her, feet and hands, and cast her into þe fiery
heat, to burn her up alive.)

(1872: 67)

Juliana's reaction on being cast into the fire is to once again pray for assistance. Yet the words of her prayer reveal her absolute loyalty to God and concern for the image and prestige of her leader rather than for her own sake:

Ne forleaf þu me nawt nu i þis nede lauerd of liue. Mild
heortfule godd milce me þi meiden. &t mid ti softe grace salue
mine sunnen. ihesu mi selhðe ne warp þu me nawt ut of þin
ehsihðe. bihald me ant help me. &t of þis reade lei reaf &t
arude me. Swa þat tes unseli ne þurue nawt seggen. þi lauerd
þat tu leuest on. &t schulde þi scheld beon. hwer is he nuðe.
(ll. 652-9)

("Abandon me not now in þis need, Lord of Life: mild-hearted
God, be merciful to me þy maiden, and wiþ þy soft grace salve
my sins. Jesu, my joy, cast me not out of þy presence, regard me
and help me, and snatch me and rid me out of þis red flame, so
þat þis unseely one need not say, 'þy Lord on whom thou
believest, and who should be þy shield, where is he now?")
(1872: 67, 69)

This prayer reveals that Juliana is utterly loyal to her heavenly father. Whatever is best for him is what she desires. Juliana therefore identifies herself completely with her heavenly lord's concerns, although she does distinguish between God, whom she sees as a father-figure and esteemed leader, and Christ, whom she perceives to be her lover. She addresses Christ in lover's language, calling him her "joy". Even though she suffers on God's behalf, she calls him "mild hearted". The blame for her suffering must therefore lie solely with the wicked Eleusius and the Devil, whereas God, who requires her martyrdom in order for her to acquire real stature in his eyes, is completely exonerated from any blame. The tenor of her prayer indicates that a tournament or contest of some kind is being fought and that she desires God, her ruler and protector, not to suffer derision from the pagan onlookers. The tournament imagery is reinforced as Juliana refers to God as her "shield".⁴⁴ She concludes her speech by referring to God's "meinfule mahte" (ll. 661-2) and her desire that his name should be extolled "hihendliche iher me iheiyet. ihere áá on ecnesse" (ll. 661-2) or "þou extolled and glorified ever to all eternity" (p. 69). In this tournament, a symbolic joust of good versus evil is being fought with Juliana representing her lord and Eleusius the devil. The battle does not directly concern gender: in fact, only because Juliana has eschewed her sexuality and vowed to remain virginal is she enabled to participate on God's behalf. And Eleusius acts against Juliana, initially at least, as a means of sublimating his sexual desire for her, which operates with the desire for mastery and control.

Cynewulf's Juliana was described in terms related to radiance, glowing, shining and brightness.⁴⁵ These appellations are not used of the Juliana of the *Liflade*. They are reserved for heavenly creatures, such as the angel who is "briht as þah he bearnde" (ll. 664-5). Once again, this choice of description, and the difference between the Juliana of the *Liflade* and of Cynewulf, indicates that a quite different perception of Juliana is operating. Juliana is not brilliantly radiant within herself, but has achieved recognition from heaven because of her suffering. A sign of heavenly approval for her actions and motives occurs when her prayer is answered in a material and highly dramatic manner as an angel quenches the fire:

Hefde ha butte iseid swa þat an engel ne com se briht as þah he
bearnde. &t to þat ferliche fur. i þat lei lihte acwente hit anan.
eauer euch sperke.

(ll. 664-6)

(She had but so said, when an angel came, as bright as if on fire,
and alighted amidst þat perilous fire, in þat flame, and quenched
it anon, every spark of it.)

(1872: 69)

Juliana is standing "unhurt" (ll. 666-7) amidst the wood and straw. This so unnerves Eleusius that he first begins to quake with fear, then to grind his teeth in rage, and finally he turns his intense emotions against Juliana:

þe reue seh hit acwenct &t bigon to cwakien. se grundliche him
gromede. &t set te balefule beast as eauer ei iburst bar. þat
grunde his tuskes. &t fen on to feamin. gristbeatien grisliche
tien o þis meoke meiden. &t þohte wið hwuch mest wa he
mahte hire awealden.

(ll. 668-73)

(þe prefect saw it quenched and began to quake, so it angered
him to þe bottom of his soul, and þere sat the baleful beast, as
ever a bristly boar, agrinding his tusks, and beginning to foam
and grind his teeð grisly upon þe meek maiden and ðought how
wiþ most woe he could get upper hand of her....)

(1872: 69)

At the beginning of the *Liflade*, Juliana is a fairly cunning, deceitful, yet timid creature, whereas Eleusius is reasonable, willing to please his intended, and amenable to her initial demands. Now that Juliana has suffered for her faith and been accorded a sign of heavenly acceptance, she is extraordinarily blessed. Her prayers for succour and help are answered instantly by a heavenly messenger. Eleusius has, however, undergone a negative

transformation. As Juliana insists on remaining faithful to her vow, and as Eleusius becomes her tormentor, their paths diverge until they are diametrically opposed. Eleusius becomes a caricature of a man, taking on instead the attributes of a wild animal as he grinds his “tusks” and foams at the mouth. Given the fact that the Katherine group of texts probably formed a library which formed the staple reading material in the thirteenth century, the depiction of Eleusius as a wild boar at this point would be reminiscent of the pejorative descriptions of sexuality in *Hali Meidhad*.⁴⁶ There is apparently a close relationship between Eleusius’ desire for Juliana, her rejection of him, and the severity and brutality of the tortures which he devises for her, which are a substitute for the act of sexual possession and mastery. In contrast to Eleusius, Juliana has become the epitome of radiant sanctity, her earlier deceitfulness quite forgotten. Juliana has acquired holiness by sublimating her sexuality, whereas Eleusius proves the dissolute nature of devil-serving pagans because he desires power and control – either physical or sexual. In fact, Juliana’s subordination of herself is precisely what a patriarchal society requires, so Juliana is really conforming to the dictates of a patriarchal hierarchy as she submits herself utterly to God. But it must not be forgotten that Juliana herself is not the centre or norm: that position is held by God, of whom the professed Christian is merely a representative. It is not her will that predominates, but God’s. Eleusius, however, mirrors the hierarchical structures of the pagan patriarchy to which he belongs, by insisting on exerting power and control over Juliana, a female.

Eleusius’ descent even further into malevolent wickedness continues as he orders a further torture to be readied. He is not yet prepared to admit defeat and seemingly wishes to vent his feelings of rage and frustration on Juliana:

&t het fecchen auet, &t wið pich fullen. &t wallen hit walm hat.
&t het warpen hire þrin. hwen hit meast we re iheat wodelukest
weolle.

(ll. 674-76)

(and he bid fetch a vessel, and fill it wið pitch and heat it boiling
hot, and ordered her to be cast þerein, when it should be heated
hottest and were boiling most fiercely.)

(1872: 69, 71)

Predictably, this devilish torture is also ineffectual as Juliana is protected by her approving heavenly father immediately upon uttering a call to him. In fact, the bath of pitch is as refreshing to her as a warm bath: “hit coledde anan. &t warð hire ase wunsum as þah hit were a wlech beað” (ll. 678-80) or “it became as winsome to her as if it were a warm bath” (p. 71). Eleusius’ demonic torture ironically becomes a preparation, for Juliana, for her heavenly

marriage. But now those pagans who prepared this torture and who have therefore not yet heeded the import of the miraculous interventions on Juliana's behalf are consigned to oblivion as the vessel explodes and kills seventy-five onlookers. The two lords, and their attitudes to their followers, are contrasted by implication, for Juliana is protected from harm by her heavenly father. Eleusius' followers, however, are harmed because they follow his orders. This foreshadows the fate of pagans who, Juliana warns in her final testimony and prayer, can only:

&t reopen ripe of þat sed þat ye her seowen. Þat is underuo geld
of wa. oðer of wunne. efter ower werkes.

(ll. 728-30)

(reap a harvest from the seed you have sown: þat is to say, an open recompense of woe or of happiness according to your works.)

(1872: 75)

Unfortunately Juliana cannot be protected from all earthly harm by her lord. Just as she had to endure a certain amount of suffering in order to win a tangible sign of God's approval, she also has to be despatched from the earthly realm in order to be united with her lord. This is why she greets the news of her impending martyrdom with "utnume glead[nese]" (l. 689) or "excessive glad[ness]" (p. 71).

Eleusius refuses to accept that Juliana's lord is more powerful than his by transferring his allegiance – for the *Liflade* is not about a feminist heroine overcoming powerful enemies, but about which of two male figures is the more powerful – and instead he turns against his master, Satan, and curses him: "to fiten his feont. &t lastin his lauerd" (l. 684) "and he began to flite against his fiends (or mammals) and blasfeme his lord" (p. 71). This is again in contrast to Juliana who "herede god of heouene" (l. 688) or "glorified þe God of Heaven" (p. 71) on hearing of her imminent death. Ironically, although Eleusius curses his lord, he continues to do the will of his master, Satan, by ordering Juliana to be removed from his sight and then executed by: "ear þe buc of hire bodi. &t tet heauet liflese ligger isundret" (ll. 686-7) or "til þe trunk of her body lie lifeless from þe head" (p. 71). In the bizarre parody of a wedding ceremony which Juliana's torture, execution and death becomes, the beheading takes on a ritualistic significance. Juliana has to be beheaded on earth, instead of being married and having sexual intercourse, in order to become Christ's bride in heaven.

This action has the approval of Satan, for Belial, his representative, returns and crows in triumph at Juliana's defeat and to call for her execution:

þa com þe illke belial þat ha hefde ibeaten feorren to bihinden
&t bigon to geien. Astalewurðe men ne spearie ye hire nawiht.
ha haueð us alle scheome idon.

(ll. 691-4)

“þen came þe same belial þat she had beaten, far behind her, and
began to cry: “Ah! Stalwart men, spare her not, she hað done us
all shame”

(1872: 71-3)

Juliana’s power over the demon is undiminished, for she does not have to exercise physical prowess in order to cow him: as with the Cynewulfian Juliana,⁴⁷ she is able to quell his rantings with one steady gaze:

Ivliene þe eadie openende hire ehnen &t biheold towart him, as
he þus seide. &t tet bealie blencte. &t breid him ageinwart
bihinded hare schuldren. as for a schoten arewe.

(ll. 698-701)

(Juliana, þe blessed, opened her eyes and cast a look towards
him, as he þus said, and þe baleful one blenched, and jerked
himself backwards behind þeir shoulders as if at a shotten
arrow.)

(1872: 73)

The force of her gaze is as powerful as an actual physical jolt, for behind it rests a knowledge of the correctness of her actions and the superiority of her lord. Of course, she, too, wishes the execution to go ahead speedily, but she does not view her death as a punishment by Eleusius or appeasement of the devil: for her, it is the quickest pathway to sainthood and union with her beloved.

Juliana then offers a final testimony to the crowd who remain. This testimony is the most powerfully Christian of all the words which she utters in the tale, for she urges all present to convert their allegiance from the “þe stronge unwi” (l. 717) or the “strong evil one” (p. 75) to “te heouenliche lauerd” (l. 713) or “to þe Heavenly One” (p. 73). The tenor of Juliana’s final speech is that this world and its woes are but temporary and that her lord therefore offers a better choice as he offers eternal bliss. She points out that those who follow Satan will suffer both on earth and eternally. The focus in her final address is not so much on her achievements, but on the greatness of God, and her hope that he might reward her with sainthood. Clearly, all authority and power rests with him: she requests the reward of sainthood, but regards the decision as being in God’s hands. Juliana submits herself totally to his wishes.

Even at the point where Juliana is finally martyred the text is rather sparing with the appellations, in comparison with the Cynewulfian version. As she prepares for her death, she is called “Ivliene þe eadie” (l. 698) or “Juliana the blessed” (p. 73). This is somewhat more muted than “eadhreðig” or “triumphantly blessed” which is used to describe Cynewulf’s Juliana.⁴⁸ “Eadie” is also used to describe her after her death, at the conclusion of the narrative and just prior to the epilogue, where earthly sorrows are contrasted with heavenly joys:

Þys þe eadie iuliene wende þurh pinen. From worldliche
weanen to heoueriches wunnen.

(ll. 767-8)

(Þus þe blessed Juliana passed þrough pains from temporal
miseries to þe joys of þe kingdom of heaven.)

(1872: 79)

Binary oppositions are still clearly evident in the passage above: Juliana simply chooses to suffer on earth by rejecting an earthly suitor and a secular life, in order to be rewarded in heaven by attaining recognition from her heavenly bridegroom, Christ. The robes in which Sophie lovingly wraps Juliana’s decapitated body are as sumptuous as wedding robes. They are symbolic of the honour which Juliana receives, both from the faithful on earth, and in heaven, because she has so stoically adhered to her vow to remain a virgin: in death she becomes the virginal bride of Christ.

The first reference to the word saint is by implication, for Juliana requests that “Vnder ueng me to þe. &t dome wið þine” (ll. 738-9) or “receive me to þyself and place me wiþ þy saints” (p. 77). Cockayne has not translated literally here, for the word “þine” should be rendered as “thine”: he has embroidered on the wording. Juliana does recognise that as a virgin martyr she deserves a special place in heaven, for her final request of God is that she wishes to be: “i þat englene hird wið meidenes imeane” (ll. 739-40) or “in þe company of angels togeper wiþ maidens” (p. 77).⁴⁹ Her prayer is granted for immediately upon her death, her soul is accompanied to heaven by a host of singing angels:

wið [þat] ilke ha beide hire &t beah duuelunge adun bihefdet to
þer eorðe. ant te eadie engles wið þe sawle singinde sihen in to
heouene.

(ll. 742-5)

(Wip þat same she bowed and bent herself sinkingly down,
beheaded, to þe earð, and þe blessed angels wip þe soul
ascended singing to heaven.)

(1872: 77)

After her death and honourable burial by the woman Sophia, Juliana is finally accorded the title of saint:

þer letter Sophie. from þe sea a mile. setten a chirche. &t
duden hire bodi þrin ina stanene þruh heliche as hit deh halhe to
donne.

(ll. 753-5)

(þere Sofia had a church erected a mile from the sea, and placed
Julianas body þere in a stone coffin, as solemnly as it is fit to
deposit a saint.)

(1872: 77)

As a saint, Juliana has the power to intercede with God on a sinner's behalf, and the Bodleian manuscript ends with a request for intercession from both the male author and the scribe. This honour indicates the kind of recognition given by patriarchal structures to those who support their mores. But again, what power Juliana has, is a delegated power, still subject to veto from the ultimate authority.

In contrast to Juliana, Eleusius has an ignoble fate. He suffers death by drowning as he single-mindedly seeks to continue his persecution of Juliana, even after her death. And after his death his body suffers from the ignominy of being eaten by wild animals, which is ironically the fate which he planned for Juliana's body. Their posthumous fates – Juliana's soul being winged to heaven by rejoicing angels, there to unite in heavenly bliss with her bridegroom, Christ, and Eleusius' wretched, unlamented death and lack of any proper ceremony or memorial – reiterate the importance of choosing allegiance carefully. Juliana is the wiser of the two as she selects the more powerful master. The diametrically contrasting posthumous fates of Juliana and Eleusius confirm the argument of this dissertation that the binary oppositions operating in the *Liflade* are those of Christian and pagan, rather than male and female. Females are subsumed into the ranks of the male whom they follow. A female's position is thus always subordinate to a male: there is no space that can be hers.

Juliana's victory over the evil tortures to which she is subjected by Eleusius is not a feminist victory. She achieves a state of spiritual blessedness because she is meek, feminine,

gentle and reliant on strength from God. Juliana also subjects herself willingly to the requirements laid down by the Church and God for holiness: that she should reject earthly pleasures, deny her sexuality and wait for heavenly consummation.

The Juliana of the *Liflade* is thus a feminine, fearful and gentle creature, somewhat manipulative and deceitful at first, but increasing in stature as she endures ever more horrific persecution from Eleusius. However, her power derives from her sexually untouched state and is always depicted as being bestowed upon her by a sternly benevolent God, rather than emanating from within herself. The *Liflade*'s Juliana is also a romantic figure, blissfully anticipating her heavenly wedding with her absent fiancé, Christ. She therefore defines herself according to the dictates of her heavenly father and his son, her bridegroom, and anticipates eagerly her blessed and eminent position in heaven as Christ's consort. Above all, she longs to display the special crown reserved only for virgin martyrs, the *aureola*. The *Liflade*'s Juliana is always careful to attribute any power or glory to God or Christ: she sees herself only as a witness for her protector and champion. Thus, by the early thirteenth century, perceptions about women are markedly different from those of the ninth century. Cynewulf's Juliana is a radiant warrior with strong connections to other powerful women in Old English poetry, including the Valkyrie figures. When she acts, she does so using her own strength and wisdom. She is therefore a much more autonomous figure than the Juliana of the *Liflade*, although, like her, she does ultimately submit herself to the authority of a heavenly patriarchy.

Later versions of the legend of St Juliana are found in the Ashmole MS 43, and a very similar version from the *South English Legendary*, preserved in the MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 145. The *South English Legendary* dates from the early fourteenth century, according to Klaus Sperk in the introduction to his edition of *Medieval English Saint's Legends*, but Bella Millet assigns an earlier date, between 1270 and 1285. These two versions are written in rhyming couplets and both are only 228 lines long. Their form indicates their allegiance to a lower literary tradition than the earlier *Liflade*. This pseudo-literary tradition of later Saints' Lives has the following characteristics:

The Middle English saints' lives of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century seem to reflect the relatively low cultural level of this kind of audience. They are written in various types of rhyming verse, couplet or stanzaic, which at worst could be fairly described as 'rym dogerel', and even at best are usually workmanlike rather than elegant. ... As a rule they are fairly short, concentrate on the narrative elements of their material,

and make very modest demands on the intellectual resources of their audience.

(Millet, 1990b: 127-8)

The two versions of the legend are entitled *Seyn Julian* (the title given to the version from Ashmole 43) and *De sancta Iuliana virgine* (the title of the version in the *South English Legendary*) respectively. Both undoubtedly fall into the category of inferior literary merit: there is little poetic or rhetorical finesse evident, and the rhyme in the couplets is often forced and infelicitous.

Even without close textual examination, it is thus clear that these two texts must be closely related, even though the dialect and spelling differ. There are some textual differences, amongst them being the loss of the line ending for line six of the Ashmole manuscript, which reads “He wolde þat Julian to him iwedded scholde be” as opposed to “He wolde þat Iulian to him iwedded solde be[o] an alle wise” of the *South English Legendary*. This error was possibly not noticed by the scribe as a half rhyme still occurs with the word “elise” in line five. Other than this error, the two versions are so consistently similar that they can be treated as the same reinterpretation of the legend.

The question thus remains as to the effects of this thirteenth- or fourteenth-century reworking upon the ethos of the tale. This chapter will therefore now proceed to examine the depiction of Juliana from a feminist perspective. These doggerel versions rely not on any kind of exposition or interpretation but rather on narrative.

The *Liflade* is thought to be the source upon which the doggerel versions are heavily reliant.⁵⁰ They will therefore not be examined in detail: only certain differences which are significant for the feminist argument will be mentioned. The *De sancta Iuliana virgine* (from the MS Corpus Christi and as prepared by Klaus Sperk) will be used as the basis for this brief discussion.

De sancta Iuliana virgine is considerably shorter than the *Liflade*: the length of the latter is 799 lines, whereas the former has only 229 lines. All of the same actions are present: the tortures, the reappearance of Belial at the end, the angelic interventions on Juliana’s behalf, Sophie’s burial of Juliana’s body. Juliana’s speeches are considerably truncated. The silencing of Juliana is indicative of the inferior status of the late medieval woman: even when the action is initiated by a woman, she is not permitted to speak.

Juliana's discussions with her father and Eleusius, their attempts to persuade her to change her mind, her extensive interrogation of the demon in her prison cell, are all omitted. In fact, the demon, in his confession, utters more words than Juliana does in the entire piece. And those words which do appear are presented not in the immediacy of direct speech but as reported speech. The effect is to render the tale more abstract, more remote and less realistic. The emphasis appears to be on reciting a list of events and not on analysing motives.

In comparison to the Juliana of the *Liflade*, who was given a definite feminine personality and a powerfully Christian voice as she spoke on behalf of her Lord, or testified regarding his power, or urged people to convert, the Juliana of the *South English Legendary* is a rather colourless figure. Apart from having few words to say, no clear image of her is presented. She becomes an automaton, remote and rather inhuman. The demon, in fact, is presented with more vigour than she is.

The most common appellation used to describe Juliana in this text is the word "maide". It is used thirty-one times, and is occasionally preceded by the adjective "holy" or "holi". In fact, the term "maide" replaces her name, which appears only twice in the text, both times within the first eight lines. Thereafter Juliana (or, rather, Iulian) becomes almost facelessly anonymous. She is not perceived as a particular individual, but is discussed in terms of an attribute, her virginity. (According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *maide* does not necessarily mean virgin. The thirteenth-century entries list the meanings as "a girl", "a young unmarried woman" or a "virgin". The context in which the word is used determines the exact connotation.) The concept of virginity or "maidenot" is mentioned three times, in the context of the strength and power which maidenhood bestows upon its possessor. In contrast to Juliana's status as a "maide" in this version, Eleusius calls her "þis foule wicche" (1970: l. 169) when an angel extinguishes the fire. When she successfully resists being harmed by the container of boiling lead, he accuses her of having obtained her strength from witchcraft: "is youre strengþe inome/ Ssel a womman wiþ hure wicchinge" (ll. 181-2). He finally calls her a "hore" (l. 185) as he angrily orders her to be executed. The two positions which it is possible for late medieval women to occupy are thus illustrated very clearly in *De sancta Iuliana virgine*: she can either occupy the space of a type of Mary, a pure, holy virgin, or she must be a whore, a type of Eve.⁵¹ There is no middle ground possible. This perception is of course extraordinarily oppressive for women.

De sancta Iuliana virgine points to a hardening of attitudes towards women: their roles and choices seem to be even more proscribed than those depicted in the slightly earlier *Liflade*. The use of the word “hore” suggests that negative views about women predominate.

A further, and later, version, which is originally from the *Scottish Collection of Legends*, and which is dated to the late fourteenth century by Klaus Sperk (1970) in his collection of Saint’s Tales, is also written in unvarying rhyming couplets. The addition of a fairly regular rhythmic pattern of iambic tetrameter heightens the doggerel effect. Furthermore, this short (249 line) version (with one line probably omitted by the scribe at line seventy-three, thus accounting for the odd number of lines) also concentrates on narrative, not on speech or inward reflection. It can therefore safely be stated that the high intellectual tradition to which the *Liflade* belongs is not shared by the *XLVIII Juliana*. Neither, therefore, can the audience have been remotely similar, as this version is in all respects a debased one.

The late fourteenth-century version, the *XLVIII Juliana*, rattles through the events at a breakneck speed. The speeches have been drastically shortened and there is little or no reflection upon the events. An example of the rapid pace of the poem is the swiftness with which the narrative moves on to the first punishment, which seemingly occurs without any prior discussion or attempt by Affricanus to persuade Juliana:

& as hir fadire herd þat scho
 Vald nocht consent his wil to do,
 He gert dispoile hir but bad
 Of al þe clathis scho one had,
 & with wandis doungyne rycht Il
 Til hir spouse bad gif hir til.
 (Sperk, 1970: ll. 9-14)⁵²

Affricanus has traditional patriarchal expectations regarding filial obedience to parental wishes, as in the earlier versions, but his response to Juliana’s disobedience is much more immediate and instantly severe. He acts on gossip – “hir fader herd” (l. 9) – without either confirming the rumour or at least ascertaining his daughter’s reasons for refusing the match. The marginalisation of women, their silencing, is therefore more obvious than in the *Cynewulfian Juliana*. Affricanus gives Juliana no chance to speak: her voice is not heard until after her father has already had her punished and sent to be confronted by Eleusius.

No reasons for the attraction of the match between Eleusius and Juliana are provided. Again the impression fostered by the text is that emotion and attraction are not considered in a match. It should be enough that the match has been arranged. But the meeting between the spurned lover and Juliana is fairly perfunctory as it consists of only four interchanges. The swiftness with which Eleusius moves from posing a question to deciding upon punishment for Juliana is astonishing, for within twenty lines she has shifted from being his “lemane dere” (l. 15) to being strung up, whipped and having molten lead poured over her:

Par mene þane dange hir sare,
 Syne hangit hir be þa hare
 Half a day, & moltyne led
 He gert get a-pone hir hed.
 (1970: ll. 37-40)

Eleusius does not even seek to engage in any further verbal discourse with Juliana: once she has annoyed him, she is instantly *persona non grata*. She is now bound with “chenys of yrne”(l. 42) or chains and flung into “pressone” (l. 44) or prison, where she is described as being “alane”(l. 45) or alone. Juliana’s vulnerability and fragility are therefore stressed. Thus, she has to call upon God for help in discerning the truth about the angel who appears in her prison cell. And once he has confessed – incidentally, without any undue pressure from Juliana other than an instruction, Juliana grabs him and binds him in chains:

Þane Julyane hyme hynt in hy
 & vith þat chenze hyme band stratly
 Þar-with þa hir bundyne had,
 & fast dange one hyme but bad
 Þat al hir mycht ful increly,
 Til þat feynd fast cane cry
 (1970: ll. 106-111)

The Juliana of this Scottish version is a faceless entity, lacking any particular qualities including beauty of face or form, the power of the Cynewulfian Juliana or the femininity and heartfelt romantic yearning for the invisible bridegroom of the *Liflade* Juliana. She seems to act mechanically: no motivation or emotion attends her actions. Juliana here has been rendered sexless. Her only function is to act as a conduit for the will of the father.

In fact, the only occasion where any mention is made of Juliana’s sex is when the demon, having been cast into a foul cesspit by Juliana, laments that:

Nocht-pane scho drev hyme to þe tone,
 & in a depe gausk kist hyme done,
 Þat ves a ful foule pyt,
 Rycht vgly & ful ves It.
 Pane cane he rycht rudly rare
 & sad: he had schame fer mare
 Þat womane, þat þe kiynd wes
 Brukil bath of mynd & flesch,
 Had shamefully hyme ourcumyne pane,
 Pane it had bene ony mane

(1970: ll. 130-9)

The demon's greatest humiliation and disgrace lies not simply in the fact that he has been bested, but that his victor is a woman. The intensity of the demon's fulmination at this point suggests a woman has low status: to be overcome by a woman is therefore a disgrace, as the outcome of any contest should really be predictably pre-determined. The feminist struggle which was fought in the *Liflade* has been won: women have been totally subjugated and there is no place for argument.

An interesting variation introduced in this Scottish version is the mentioning at this juncture of the name of Eve. This is particularly significant because the only other woman who is mentioned in the text is the good woman Sophia who takes upon herself the task of burying Juliana's bones. And it was towards Eve that the worst medieval invective was directed. Eve's name therefore calls to mind her crime and the plight of sinful mankind requiring salvation because of her error. This version of the legend is therefore much less favourably disposed towards women than any of the earlier versions.

Once again Juliana faces Eleusius. And his question on this occasion has to do with the "craft" (l. 146) which he alleges that she practises. The persecution of woman herbalists for witchcraft is well documented: frequently women who were in possession of any medicinal knowledge were suspect. The Christian church led these persecutions, which began officially in the fourteen-eighties (Ozment, 1980: 205-7). (Joan of Arc was burned at the stake, having been accused of witchcraft, in fourteen thirty-one. The motive was, of course, political.) Juliana repudiates this accusation and credits God with having accorded her special protection:

Scho said: na craft it wes,
 ut god gef hir tholmodnes,

at of his paynis scho ne rocht –
 In god sa scho set hir thoct.
 (1970: ll. 148-51)

Eleusius sees this as a personal challenge, not against God, but between himself and Juliana. The male must win this battle of not only physical strength but will and supernatural powers. He says: “get þrowe sal we/ Gif þu ma ourcumine be” (ll. 152-3). Then follows the dreadful torture on the wheel, which does succeed in tearing her body apart:

A quhele þane he gert sone dycht
 Rycht awful to manis sycht,
 & one hit gert hir be done
 & stent hir par-one but hone
 With cordis stark one ilke syd,
 Til bath þe flesch raf & þe hyd,
 & syne hir banyas sa to-quassyt
 þat þe self merch out passyt.
 (1970: ll. 154-61)

God’s special interest in his faithful follower on earth is confirmed when an angel is sent to both destroy the dreadful wheel of torture and restore Juliana’s body to wholeness. And in keeping with miracles being a concrete sign of God’s outworkings on earth as discussed in Bede’s eighth-century work, miracles result in mass conversion.⁵³ The power and the miracle are not attributed to Juliana, but to God alone:

þane þai þat saw þis [þar]-aboute,
 Of godis aw had sic doute
 þat fele of þame þe feynd forsuk
 & to god & his treucht þaime tuk.
 (1970: ll. 166-9)

Those who convert as a result of this miracle are immediately martyred and further punishment is prescribed for the healed Juliana. Her silence in this version is intriguing: just at the point where a powerful proselytising sermon would presumably have had the most effective impact. Once again, the marginalised position of women in the later middle ages is apparently represented by this tale. Woman should not, and indeed does not, speak.⁵⁴

As a further punishment for being the cause of the mass conversion, but especially in order to appease Eleusius’ anger, a more terrible torture is devised, this time involving the immersion of Juliana in a huge pot of boiling lead. This, too, leaves her unscathed, and

merely results in Eleusius fulminating against the ineffectiveness of his tortures. And his rage is especially ardent because she is, after all, just a “gyng madine” (l. 187) or young maiden. The selection of this particular attribute as provoking his anger suggests that the patriarchy views females as being subordinate, inferior, weak and vulnerable, therefore the fact that a *gyng* maiden can defy his will and resist his blandishments is doubly infuriating. He therefore instructs his cohorts to execute her:

Yet thocht he nocht neisure-pe-les
 To fulfil þare wikitnes,
 & bad his tormentoris hir led
 A-way & strik of hire hed.
 (1970: ll. 192-5)

This proceeding is interrupted by the demon, in the guise of a young man, who calls on Eleusius to “gyf hir hir wargeld nov” (l. 204) which is an interesting reference to the practice in Christianised Anglo-Saxon England of assigning a monetary value to each person according to rank.⁵⁵ According to the humiliated demon, nothing less than death – obliteration – will repay his humiliation. Here Juliana is also strangely silent, for in the earlier texts, she testifies to the crowd, and here the text indicates that she speaks, but in actual fact we never hear her words:

Þane Julyane kyste vpe þe E,
 Quhat he þat vas, for to se,
 Þat to þe puple sa-gat spak
 & set one hir sa mekil lak.
 (1970: ll. 206-9)

Juliana indicates clearly her allegiance to a higher authority by casting her eyes heavenwards: she has never acted in her own strength, but subsumes herself totally to the rulership of God. The Juliana of this version is remarkably silent – indeed, almost astonishingly so – as compared to the Cynewulfian heroine, who is considerably more voluble. (The Scottish Juliana speaks only six times, the final time being some one hundred lines from the end of the poem. This Juliana seems to vanish long before Eleusius’ henchmen execute her.)

Instead of hearing the words which Juliana wishes to utter, the demon interrupts and yells in fear of being bound – “bynd” (l. 214) – and beaten – “bete” (l. 214) – by her again. Immediately thereafter, Juliana faces martyrdom by being beheaded:

Þane band þai hir in þat sted
 & in hast strak of hir heide.
 (1970: ll. 216-7)

The implications of a death by beheading have been discussed previously.⁵⁶ However, the metaphorical sexual implications inherent in the earlier versions are simply not applicable in this case, as the instrument of death is not even mentioned. The simple fact is all that is recorded. And even at the moment of her martyrdom, the words holy or blessed are not used. Neither the flight of her soul to heaven nor her attainment of the crown of martyrdom is recorded. What is mentioned, is the fact that her tomb becomes a shrine to which pilgrims travel to pray for healing:

Þar god wirkis for hir nov
 Ferlys fele, to gere mene trew,
 Of al seknes giffand remed
 To þame þat sekis in þat sted,
 Til worschipe god in entent
 & kene to quhame sic grace he lent.
 (1970: ll. 222-7)

Not Juliana, but God, is the provider of healing to those who pray at her shrine: this is a further indication of her less glowing portrayal than in the earlier versions.⁵⁷ No matter how subdued and matter-of-fact the portrayal of the virgin-martyr has been, conventions dictate that the pagan Eleusius must nevertheless be suitably punished for his cruel treatment of her, and this indeed occurs. Only thereafter, is Juliana accorded any title or cognomen other than the contemptuous *gyn*g which so annoys Eleusius. Only after her complete self-effacement through death is Juliana honoured or praised: for she is now accorded the title of saint:

Sanct Julyane, þat ourcome here
 Fele paynis in tholmod chere
 & ves neuir-þe-les seruand
 Leile to god, I take one hand,
 For þe desert þat þu cane ma
 To god, þat þe awansit sa,
 To god of hewine þu pray for me
 þat I ma sa worthy be,
 Ovt of þis lyf þat I ma twyne
 But schame, deit & dedly syne.
 (1970: ll. 240-8)

It is only at this point, when the narrator/ writer appends a personal epilogue in which he addresses the new saint by name and asks for blessing and that he may be worthy, that the protagonist ironically possesses some lifelikeness. Only by complete self-effacement, is this sort of recognition possible. And even then, Juliana is merely asked to be a conduit for the prayers of the narrator, thus confirming Juliana's secondary place firmly within a patriarchal hierarchy.

Interestingly enough, whereas no appellations regarding holiness or goodness or blessedness have been applied to Juliana in the poem (other than the one designation as "sanct") the mysterious voice which answers her prayer uses the term "wik" (l. 64) and then forces the "wicket spryt" (l. 67) to reveal his true identity. So whereas the living Juliana is never in this version accorded a truly blessed status, the demon is immediately designated as evil. Furthermore, the term "haly" (l. 94) or holy is used, never of Juliana, but rather of the church. These observations imply that Juliana cannot be holy in and of herself, but only as a result of martyrdom. Holiness does not inhere in her.

This Scottish version has made no particular mention of Juliana's avowal to remain virginal, and the threat of renewed attacks upon all virgins which the demon utters in the *Liflade* has been omitted. Ostensibly, the whole focus and intent of the legend appears to have altered. No longer is the issue virginity in particular, but a more abstract battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. The division is drawn quite simply between those who worship and honour God, and therefore do his bidding, and those who do not. The issue of woman's position is thus rendered redundant: there is no debate as the positions have been decided.

The most telling alteration in the Scottish legend is that the appellations according holiness, already fairly sparse (comparatively speaking) in *Seyn Juliene* and the Ashmole versions, have diminished even further. The major designation given to Juliana is that of youth – she is "gyng" (l. 187). Not once is any more positive attribute given to her. That is not so say that there are no attributes used in this version: they are sparse, but they consist mainly of designations such as "cristine mane" (l.83) and "Cristine mene" (l. 91) for clarity. The demon is given the attribute of wickedness "wik" (l. 64) and "wykit" (l. 67) but this is all. There is no contrasting glorification of Juliana. Even after her martyrdom when a costly church or "costliche kirk" is built in her memory at the site of her burial, and where people come to pray, no particular credence is given to her powers. The text states that God

performed miracles of faith and healing. Clearly, Juliana is thus merely a conduit for God's workings on earth. In and of herself, she has no particular blessedness at all.

The final version to which we shall refer in this chapter, is a translation of the Latin version found in Jacobus de Voraigne's *Legenda Aurea*, but as printed in English by William Caxton as the *Golden Legend*.⁵⁸ This particular version of the legend is significant as it occurs in one of the very first texts to have been printed in England. Caxton arrived in England as a trained printer in 1476. The first English text which he printed (in Belgium) was *The recuyell of the histories of Troye* whereas the first text which he printed in England was *Dictes and notable wise sayings of the philosophers* in 1477. The afore-mentioned text, and its printing history, offers useful external evidence about Caxton's own position on women. In an excellent article, Susan Schibanoff (1994: 221-45) reveals that Caxton restored a highly offensive, misogynistic section (which had been omitted by the original translator, Anthony Woodward, Earl Rivers) to the text. But Caxton did more than simply restore the passage: he engaged in banter with the (fe)male reader, inviting her to delete or deface the passage if it displeased her. Schibanoff rightly points out that:

Authorial apologies to the female reader for anti-feminist texts are, clearly enough, something other than heart-felt laments. They are attempts both to intimidate her and, borrowing from Judith Fetterley's term, to immasculate her. They warn her that the written traditions of anti-feminism have contemporary guardians and custodians who will not allow these texts to disappear. If the text is 'fixed' in this fashion, then the only solution to the otherwise irremediable problem of the hostile text is for the female reader to change herself: she must read not as a woman, but as a man, for male readers, according to the *topos*, are neither offended nor troubled by literary misogyny.

(1994: 223-4)

Schibanoff's remarks about Caxton's misogyny prepare the reader for the examination of his version of the story of Juliana.

Caxton prepared and printed the *Golden Legend* in 1483. This in itself is a significant milestone. But what is perhaps even more significant in the context of this study, is the fact that the legend of St Juliana, which had engaged the interest of artists and readers / audience for a few hundred years, marks its demise into relative obscurity with an already truncated text. In fact, Jacobus de Voraigne's text had suffered the same fate and lapsed into obscurity, after an initial popularity.

What had been in the Cynewulfian version a long and rhetorically rich text of over 700 lines (even with a leaf of the manuscript missing) has dwindled to a brief, terse and inartistic setting out of the facts pertaining to the legend of Juliana. In fact, the final version of the legend amounts to a little over two pages of script. In all respects, it is prosaic. J. M. Garnett, writing of the thirteenth-century Latin *Legenda Aurea*, says the “Life of St Juliana in that work is very brief, a mere epitome of the incidents” (1899: 286).

Caxton announces in the introduction to the *Golden Legend* that his English text was an amalgamation of three texts: French, Latin and English.⁵⁹ In fact, there is fairly compelling evidence that the hitherto unidentified original translator of the *Legenda Aurea* into English may well have been Osbern Bokenham, some time before 1438.

Caxton’s rendition of the legend of St Juliana is interesting as it has more in common with the *Liflade* than with the versions immediately preceding it date-wise. The contrast and contest in *The Lyf of Saynt Juliane* is not between male and female but pagan and Christian. The stock punishments – being stripped naked, whipping, being hung by the hair and beaten, having molten lead poured over her body, being bound in chains and imprisoned, torture on a wheel, being placed in a pot of boiling lead – are all included. The emphasis is on narrative and not on embellishment or characterisation.

Caxton’s Juliana is a singularly colourless figure. She possesses neither the heroic qualities of Cynewulf’s Juliana (although she is radiantly shining) nor the timid and gentle femininity of the Juliana of the *Liflade* (although she, too, is very beautiful). Her virginity is mentioned twice: once after her death, in the summatory sentence, and once by Elongius who laments that he has been thwarted by a maiden:

And the prouost cursid hys goddes by cause they might
not punyssh a mayde that so vanquysshyd them.
(1892: 401)

The tone of Elongius’ reference to Juliana’s virginity is contemptuous, akin to the tone with which Juliana was dismissed as being *gyng* in the Scottish version. It is implied that Juliana’s virginity does afford her protection from harm. But the unstated assumptions behind this assertion is that females who resist the patriarchy require punishment and subjugation.

Elongius is not as wicked as Cynewulf's vengeful suitor, nor is he as overcome with swooning desire as the Eleusius of the *Liflade*. He notices Juliana's "grete beaute" (p. 400) and this prompts courteous addresses to her such as "my most swete Julyane" and "Fair lady" (p. 400). He is susceptible to Juliana's beauty but he does not become suffused with desire in the same way as Cynewulf's more evil creation. Even after a night's incarceration, during which Juliana has interrogated the devil, her beauty has the power to affect his judgement as his attitude towards her softens a little:

On the morn the prouost comanded that saynt Julian
shold be brought to fore hym in jugement, and whan he
sawe her so wel guarissed and her vysage so fayr & so
shynyng, thenne said the prouoste to her, Julyane who
hath taught the and how mayst thou vaynquyssh the
tormentis?

(1892: 401)

Elongius is presented, initially at least, as a not altogether unreasonable man who becomes angry and unreasonable when he is thwarted in the exertion of his desire and power.

Caxton's Juliana is a rather one-dimensional character, a stock Christian figure. She is not duplicitous: her reason for not marrying Elongius is because he is a pagan, and she provides this reason without delay:

Saynt Juliane was gyuen in maryage to the prouste of
Nychomede, whyche was named Elongius, and he was a
paynem, and therfor she wold not assent to the maryage, ne
assemble wyth hym, but yf he wold first take the fayth of cryst
& be baptyssed.

(1892: 400)

Juliana accepts her punishment without complaint: Elongius noticed that her beating "greued her not" (p. 400). She does betray human weakness when she weeps upon being cast into jail and is confronted with the false angel: "Thenne she began to wepe, & made to god thys prayer" (p. 400). Juliana is a fragile, helpless creature who requires external support and succour. She is completely unlike Cynewulf's rather more self-confident, inherently powerful and resourceful heroine.

The battle is not to do with Juliana proving her strength and valour. She is the consort of Christ and his representative on earth, performing his will. Her purpose is to witness for her Lord and allow his power to be demonstrated through her. Juliana has thus become a stock figure who merely provides an example of exemplary Christian suffering. And in her witnessing speech to Elongius Juliana explicitly contrasts “My lord Jhesu cryst” and “Sathanas thy fader” (p. 402). What prompts Elongius to incarcerate Juliana is the fact that she directly contests his, and his emperor’s, patriarchal authority by contrasting the trustworthiness of an earthly pagan ruler and that of Christ:

And she sayd, yf thou doubttest so moche themperour,
whyche is mortal, why shold not I doubte myn emperour
Jhesu cryst whyche is immortal, doo what thou wylt, for
thou maist not deceyue me.

(1892: 401)

Juliana is not glorified at all: her actions are an example and a witness, but she is not particularly remarkable. She calls on God for succour and witnesses to his greatness, thus causing many to convert to Christianity. Caxton’s Juliana is merely a representative of her heavenly lord. Her most important accomplishment is in resisting the blandishments of the devil and in witnessing about her faith:

Juliane is a moche to saye as brennyng playnly, for she
brente her self ayenst the temptacion of the deuyll which
wold haue deceyued her, and she helped many other to
byleue in the fayth of our lord Jhesu Cryst.

(1892: 399)

Caxton’s Juliana is thus merely a witness to the glory of her God: she is not an interesting or powerful or radiant figure in her own right. What enables her to resist the blandishments of Elongius is the assistance which she receives from the angel. In all respects, Caxton’s Juliana is considerably less interesting than the Juliana in the *Liflade*, and certainly less powerful, radiant and heroic than the Juliana of Cynewulf’s text. Together with all the evidence which has been amassed in this dissertation, this confirms that the status of women declined from the early Anglo-Saxon period to the later Middle Ages. Patriarchal structures have succeeded in subjugating women to the will of the father, so much so that the mores and dictates of the prevailing hegemony, the Christian Church, have been internalised by women.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Besides Pollard's thesis, the following studies have been done on the *Liflade*: "The Textual Transmission of *Seinte Iuliene*" (Millett, 1990a); "The *Liflade of Seinte Iuliene* and Hagiographic Convention." (Jocelyn Price, 1986); "Desiring Narrative: Ideology and the Semiotics of the Gaze in the Middle English *Juliana*" (Margherita Gayle, 1990). An edition of *Juliana* and other tales has been prepared by Katherine McMahon (1986), but this is not available in published form.
- ² There are several reasons why this group of texts is significant. Firstly, the texts were written in the vernacular English instead of Anglo-Norman. A second surprising fact is the "comparative sophistication of [the *Lives*'s] style and content" (Millett, 1990b: 127). And thirdly, is the surprisingly early date of the texts.
- ³ There is evidence to suggest that relatively few nuns in the post-Conquest period were actually literate, although the full sense of "literate" meant that the person was able to read and write Latin fluently. A person such as Hildegard of Bingen was described as *illiterata* although she wrote in Latin which was later corrected by scribes. For a full discussion of the degrees of *litteratus*, *clericus*, *illiteratus* and *laicus*, see Millett's chapter entitled "Women in No Man's Land: English recluses and the development of vernacular literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," (1993: 86-103). In any case, texts were probably read to the community at certain specified times of the day.
- ⁴ Pollard (1980: 142) points out that the only known vernacular text of an earlier date than the *Lives*, and written with an audience of women in mind, is *Aethelwold's Rule of St Benedict*, which is a tenth-century text, more usually cited under its Latin name, *Regularis Concordia Angelicae Nationis* (1976). For more information on texts in the vernacular, see R. M. Wilson, (1968: 116-7) and Chambers, (1957: xcii-xciii). Katharina M. Wilson has a useful introduction in *Medieval Women Writers* (1984: vii-xxix), although the English writers who feature in her text all post-date the latest texts in this study.
- ⁵ For information about the textual history of the Katherine Group see Millett & Wogan-Browne (1992: pp. xxxix-xl); d'Ardenne (1961: 1-16); Millett (1990b: pp. 127-9).
- ⁶ For a detailed discussion regarding the contents of the various manuscripts, see Millett (1990b: 127-9). The introduction to *Medieval English Prose for Women*, by Bella Millett and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, does not provide much information about the various manuscripts but refers the reader to the Early English Text Society's edition, edited by d'Ardenne for information.
- ⁷ Although *De Liflade ant te Passiun of Seint Iuliene* is not amongst the texts which appear in *Medieval English Prose for Women*, Millett and Wogan-Browne state that they have used Bodleian MS 34 as the primary source of their edition. This holds true for d'Ardenne as well. Rev. Oswald Cockayne's 1872 (emended) edition for the Early English Text Society includes both the Royal MS 17 A. xxvii and Bodleian MS 34.
- ⁸ For a discussion about the various post-Conquest manuscripts of the legend of St *Juliana* which are extant, see the introduction to *The Katherine Group* (d'Ardenne, 1977: 1-16).
- ⁹ The text prepared by d'Ardenne (1970) and based on the unamended text of Bodleian MS 34 has been used for all references to the *Liflade*, unless otherwise noted.

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- ¹⁰ As there is no other translation available, the edition prepared by Rev Cockayne in 1872 has been utilised.
- ¹¹ See the discussion on p. 23 of chapter one, where the proper feminist usage of the terms female, feminine and feminist is explained.
- ¹² Refer to the discussion in p. 160 and p. 165 of chapter four about the early appearance of the courtly love convention.
- ¹³ Note that the translations have been rendered as they are presented in the text by the Rev. Cockayne, who retained the use of the þ and the ð when translating the Bodleian manuscript. His fellow editor, Mr Brock, who edited and prepared the Royal manuscript, preferred to revert to the modern 'th' when translating the Royal manuscript!
- ¹⁴ Here perhaps a later example may be permitted in explanation of the helplessness of a lover so afflicted: Note the sudden, inexplicable, intense and enduring passion which simultaneously wounds both Palamon and Arcite when they espy Emilye from the tower in which they are imprisoned, in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*.
- ¹⁵ Christina of Markyate was betrothed without her consent and punished severely when she demurred. The Paston letters (1989) contain correspondence referring to an obdurate daughter who was beaten into submission.
- ¹⁶ Not all critics agree on this point. Whereas Belanoff believes this to be true, Pollard is of the opinion that Cynewulf did not seek deliberately to ameliorate the character of Juliana by removing the episode involving her deceptive ploy, but that the source which he used lacked this information (1980: 163, 212). Also refer to endnote 19 in chapter three, p. 127.
- ¹⁷ Chapter four, pp. 166-70 refers to those male authors who railed against the manipulative, greedy and deceitful nature of women. Those discussed in chapter four are merely a selection.
- ¹⁸ C. S. Lewis uses the term *Frauendienst* (1958: 20-23) to describe the practice in which the lover serves the lady.
- ¹⁹ *Hali Meidhad* uses *molestiae nuptiarum* or "woes of marriage" as a persuasive device against sexuality and marriage. See pp. 148-9 of chapter four for my discussion. Also refer to the text for many more examples.
- ²⁰ Here refer to the section in chapter four, pp. 152-4 which details mathematically the difference in rank between virgin, wife and widow.
- ²¹ Here refer to chapter four, pp. 148-9, and the discussion about the woes of marriage.
- ²² Again refer to the discussion in chapter four, pp. 148-9 about the teachings in *Hali Meidhad*, especially those which contrast heavenly rewards for virgins with earthly sufferings for married women.
- ²³ Refer to p. 23 of chapter one, where categories of women and their degree of acceptance of, or resistance to, the patriarchy is discussed.

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- ²⁴ *Hali Meiohad* is analysed in detail in pp. 143-54 of chapter four because the moralising and didactic tone is so powerfully directed at women in an attempt to control their sexuality.
- ²⁵ *Jouissance* is a complex term with many meanings. Jones (1991: 108-9) explains its multifarious meanings. See also p. 17 of chapter one.
- ²⁶ In chapter four, see pp. 159-60 where the special *aureola* worn only by virgins in heaven is discussed.
- ²⁷ For a full discussion of Christ as a knightly lover and the lady as a stereotypical beauty, consult Woolf (1962: 1-16).
- ²⁸ See Lewis's distillation of the rules of the lover's game, as quoted in chapter four, p. 165.
- ²⁹ The Bodleian manuscript is damaged at this point, two folio sheets being missing, so the Royal MS is the source of information for the next two pages. As the two texts are fairly similar, the loss is not irreparable.
- ³⁰ Here the Bodleian text is restored. Subsequent references therefore refer to this text rather than the substituted Royal text.
- ³¹ There is an apocryphal story about John the Baptist being immersed in boiling oil and emerging unscathed. His imperviousness to this punishment is probably related to his virginity (See Pollard, 1980: 178-80).
- ³² Sexual purity as a requirements for God's particular blessing are discussed in chapter two, pp. 58-60 and in chapter four, pp. 152-4 and 159-60. See also Warner (1976: 52-66, 68-78).
- ³³ Bjork calls Saints' Lives "insistently didactic" (1985: 1). Albertson (1967: 25) accuses hagiographers of manipulating facts to serve their purpose, which was "to praise God and to instruct and edify men." Olsen (1980: 423-4) concludes that the extant Old English Saints' Lives are didactic in purpose, even though they may lack certain attributes which other Saints' Lives possess.
- ³⁴ These attributives and their implications are examined in chapter three, p. 95 and p. 100.
- ³⁵ Powerful Germanic women and their depiction in literature are discussed in pp. 40-50 of chapter two.
- ³⁶ Steven Ozment discusses the surge in supernatural practices which occurred late in the fifteenth century and identifies the first "official countermeasures" as having taken place in the 1480's, a "forshadowing of the later *maleficia* trials and mass witch-hunts" (1980: 205-7).
- ³⁷ Refer to pp. 148-50 of chapter four where the metaphors used for sexual intercourse in *Hali Meiohad* are discussed.
- ³⁸ It is at this point that the only extant manuscript of the Cynewulfian version of the poem is damaged. We must speculate that a similar torture by means of a spiked wheel is described in the missing sheets, for this torture is mentioned in all of the other versions

of the tale, and there is no reason to suppose that in this instance Cynewulf would have altered the existing legend.

- ³⁹ Warner identifies the connection between virginity and martyrdom and states that “the physical subjection of the body to the pains and ordeals of ascetic discipline was an integral part of sanctity” (1976: 70). The surest path to sainthood and canonisation was death while defending one’s virginity. Warner points out that “... the particular focus on women’s torn and broken flesh reveals the psychological obsession of the religion with sexual sin, and the tortures that pile up one upon the other with pornographic repetitiousness underline the identification of the female with the perils of sexual contact” (1976: 71).
- ⁴⁰ Bede refers to the opening of St Etheldreda’s tomb and quotes the testimony of the doctor who had removed the tumour on her neck during her mortal illness. Her body had not decayed and the wound had healed. Bede asserts that the “miraculous preservation of her body from corruption in the tomb is evidence that she had remained untainted by bodily intercourse” (1990: 236). Healing qualities are attributed to the relics of virgin saints, both male and female (Bede, 1990: 155-7, 263, 265).
- ⁴¹ Bede believed that miracles occurred as a sign of God’s hand in history. A saint’s ability to perform miracles is a demonstration of sanctity (Olsen, 1980: 409). Brown (1983: 9) shows that saints from the late Roman empire *became* Christianity for onlookers.
- ⁴² The text does not always distinguish clearly between God or Christ. But devotional literature and the Church’s teachings conceive of Christ as the bridegroom of consecrated virgins, hence the alteration in the terminology.
- ⁴³ There is a disparity between the two texts here. The Bodleian 34 manuscript indicates that five hundred men and women were beheaded, with one hundred and thirty of these pressing on eagerly to accept the martyrdom. The Royal MS 17 A: XXVII indicates that five hundred men and one hundred and thirty women were martyred, and all of them were eager to be martyred. Pollard (1980: 226-7) sets out a table comparing the numbers mentioned in each manuscript and concluded that there is in actual fact a remarkable congruency in the numbers.
- ⁴⁴ This imagery cleverly echoes the military imagery of Ephesians 6 while simultaneously evoking the chivalric world of jousts and tournaments, champions and ladies.
- ⁴⁵ Cynewulf’s Juliana is especially distinguished by the number of references to her radiance. The terms which describe her brightness are discussed in chapter three, pp. 95, 100, 122-3.
- ⁴⁶ See pp. 148-50 of chapter four and the discussion on sexuality in *Hali Meiohad*, and its association with bestial qualities.
- ⁴⁷ Cynewulf’s Juliana quells the rantings of the demon with just a look. For a full theoretical discussion, see Gayle’s article (1990: 355-74).
- ⁴⁸ *Eadhreþig* is discussed in detail in pp. 124-5 of chapter three.
- ⁴⁹ The special honours reserved for virgin martyrs are discussed in chapter four, pp. 159-60.

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- ⁵⁰ M. E. Wells (1942: 320-44) provides a detailed analysis of the development of the *South English Legendary*. Ragnar Furuskog (1946: 119-66) examines a collation of MS Bodley 34.
- ⁵¹ See pp. 166-70 of chapter four for contemporary opinions about women.
- ⁵² No translation of this version is readily available. However, the language of this late version is sufficiently close to early modern English to render it understandable.
- ⁵³ See the earlier references in endnote 42.
- ⁵⁴ Julia Long (1994: 88-111) analyses the controversies caused by Margery Kempe's insistence on speaking about her religious experiences and the many attempts that were made to silence her. Long concludes that patriarchal oppression conspired to silence Margery.
- ⁵⁵ For information on *wergild* in Anglo-Saxon England, see Blair (1974: 260-2); Whitelock (1951: 13-18). Stafford (1989: 151) states that *wergeld* still operated in the time of Henry I. The reference in the *Liflade* is not anachronistic.
- ⁵⁶ Death by beheading is discussed in chapter two, pp. 47-8, chapter three, pp. 117-20, and earlier in this chapter, p. 211.
- ⁵⁷ The intercession of saints on behalf of sinners does not have scriptural authority, but it was an established belief from relatively early in the Christian era (Warner, 1967: 293).
- ⁵⁸ For a detailed assessment of Caxton's debt to Voraigue's Latin text, or to another translation of it, see Sr Mary Jeremy's article entitled "Caxton's *Golden Legend* and Varaigne's *Legenda Aurea*" (1946: 212-21). Sr Jeremy concludes that "Caxton's version [is] ... a blurring of the original Latin. Although it should never be regarded as a precise translation of Varaigne's work, it may fairly be considered as a redaction which is not only adequate but interesting in its own right" (1946: 221).
- ⁵⁹ For a discussion of Caxton's probable sources, see Sr Jeremy's article entitled "The English Prose Translation of *Legenda Aurea*" (1944: 181-3).

CONCLUSION

The manner in which this dissertation has been organised means that the argument has developed with each succeeding chapter. The intention of the conclusion is not to re-hash the argument, but to summarise the conclusions. It will therefore be short and succinct.

In chapter one, a broad overview of the field of medieval studies, with particular reference to its relationship with feminist literary criticism is undertaken. The conclusion was reached that although there is resistance (from medievalists) towards applying contemporary theoretical methods to medieval texts, that medieval studies lends itself to such an approach. New and exciting work is being undertaken by feminist medievalists and there is scope for the re-reading of texts. Feminist theory, when applied to medieval texts, provides fresh insights. It may well give a new lease of life to a moribund and marginalised field of study. The feminist reading of *Juliana, Pe Liflade ant te Passiun of Seint Iulienne* and the later fourteenth-century versions of the story therefore adds another perspective to our understanding of this legend as poetry: it does not claim to be an ideologically free reading, but makes its agenda apparent, and it also refuses to claim completeness as a reading.

Chapter two surveys the position of Anglo-Saxon women. A good deal of evidence from a wide range of sources is examined. Germanic tradition esteemed women, and this honourable position is confirmed by the descriptions of women in both the secular and the sacred literature. The law protected and valued women, who enjoyed a fair degree of pecuniary independence. Women had a dignified and respected position and this is reflected in the literature, notwithstanding the influence of the early Church Fathers on perceptions about the inherent evil of sexuality and the association of women with the original sin of Eve. Despite these teachings, even the sacred texts depict women as powerful, radiant and honourable. Although some scholars have reached opposing conclusions, the overwhelming weight of evidence suggests that the Anglo-Saxon woman occupied a rather better place in society than did her counterpart after the Norman Conquest. The existence of two important

and relatively lengthy poems which also have female heroines who are brave, radiant and powerful provides further evidence about the importance of women in Anglo-Saxon England.

Until comparatively recently, Cynewulf's *Juliana* has not received much approbation from critics. Recently, scholars have begun reading the text in a manner more appropriate to its production. Thus, allegorical and rhetorical readings have confirmed the poem's artistic merit, according to the standards of the day. A feminist reading of the text has not yet been undertaken.

Chapter three examines Cynewulf's *Juliana* from a broadly feminist perspective. The reading confirms that Juliana resists subjugation by the earthly patriarchy, by which she is deemed to be the possession of her father and an object of desire by Eleusius. By refusing to accede to the demands of the patriarchal hegemony, Juliana invites punishment of the most degrading nature. The exertion of force by her father, Affricanus, is an expression of his power over her, whereas Eleusius' punishment is an expression of his frustrated sexual desire for her. Juliana escapes the brunt of the torture because she possesses an innate strength. In this, she resembles the powerful Valkyrie figures of Germanic legend. But because the poem was written in a Christian milieu, Juliana's bravery, miraculous power and psychological strength is attributed to her Christian faith. Even more important than her unshakeable allegiance to God is her virginity, which is what enables her to resist the evil blandishments of the demon as well as the physical tortures ordered by her earthly tormentors. Juliana cannot be designated as a feminist heroine because she submits herself, and actually subsumes herself utterly, to the will of her heavenly father, God. Juliana therefore allies herself with the will of a patriarchal hegemony, albeit a heavenly one. Her crusade and resistance is not a feminist resistance: she fights for what is right and good. Nevertheless, Cynewulf's *Juliana* is a radiantly powerful, heroic figure in her own right. Her strength is innate.

Chapter four contextualises conditions for women in the post-Conquest period. In every respect, conditions for women are shown to have deteriorated severely. Feudal laws of inheritance were patrilineal and meant that women were generally under the fiscal management of a male, be he father, or husband, or son. Only independently wealthy widows had any degree of financial freedom. The literary context is quite altered as instead of valorising women, the texts either vilify women or dictate the appropriate behaviour and lifestyle choices. Women are abjured to eschew their sexuality and submit themselves to the dictates of the Church. Role models for young girls are not heroic, powerful women but

virgin martyr saints who derive their strength from God and their holiness from their virginity. The existing documentation, whether it be legal, moral, didactic or literary, paint a bleak picture of a severe decline in the status of women, an increase of oppressive practices, and a curtailment of freedom, for women in the post-Conquest period.

In chapter five, the post-Conquest versions of the story of Juliana are examined. In the *Liflade*, Juliana is no longer the powerful, heroic and radiant figure we find in Cynewulf's version. She is feminine, fragile, timid and gentle. Courageous actions are not easy for her: she has to steel herself for confrontation. Her strength comes from God. Once she has suffered for God, her will and strength increase. This is because she knows that she has received affirmation from God and that her actions are pleasing to him. She is depicted as a romantic love-lorn figure, awaiting her marriage to Christ and the rewards of Christian martyrdom.

The heroine in the *Seyn Iulienne*, *The Lyf of Sanct Juliane* and the Scottish version of the legend confirms the subordinated status of women in the later Middle Ages. Juliana has become a conduit for God's power, and is merely a representative of his on earth. Caxton's version depicts Juliana as a rather one-dimensional figure, a mouthpiece for stock proselytising sermons. She is a weak feminine creature who weeps when confronted by the demon in disguise. Eleusius expresses disgust that he has been bested by a mere maiden. His contempt indicates that women were subordinated and usually unable to resist the patriarchy. It is clear that Juliana has internalised the mores of the patriarchy as her heavenly father's will is equivalent to hers.

The feminist re-reading of the legend of St Juliana confirms that the status of women declined from a position of esteem and honour during the Anglo-Saxon era to a subordinate and powerless position by the declining years of the Middle Ages. Juliana, once a powerful, valorous, radiant warrior-saint, *eadhreþig* or "blessedly triumphant", has become *gyng*, or merely "young", a naïve, youthful and foolish upstart. Instead of possessing power of her own, like Cynewulf's radiant saint, the later Juliana either acts as a conduit for God's power, or has an angelic messenger perform miraculous rescues. The analysis in this dissertation has demonstrated that the position of women declined severely from a high point in the early Anglo-Saxon period to a low by the end of the medieval period.

The feminist reading of the versions of the legend of St Juliana has yielded exciting information about the decline in the status of women over the Middle Ages. Much more

remains to be done. Yet more evidence for the high status of Anglo-Saxon women remains to be recovered, and similarly so for the oppressed post-Conquest women. Material which merits examination includes the Anglo-Saxon sermons and as yet unexplored Saints' Lives. Aelfric and Aldhelm, as Anglo-Saxon clerics, should have their sermons, homilies and martyrologies examined. Bede's writings require work, from a literary-theoretical rather than an historical perspective. Caxton's thinly disguised misogyny has been mentioned: given his prodigious output of works, there is a significant amount of material awaiting feminist scrutiny. The misogynistic literature should be examined more vigorously, as should women's voices beginning to speak, in response to the misogynistic writings which proliferated in the later Middle Ages.

Feminist analysis of medieval texts is an invigorating, fresh approach, in the forefront of studies. It remains for feminist scholars to accept the challenge and delve into the archives of medieval literature in order to enrich our understanding of the power relations operating during the Middle Ages.

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