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WANDERING WOMEN AND HOLY MATRONS:
WOMEN AS PILGRIMS IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES, 1300-1500 C. E.

A DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
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ABSTRACT

My dissertation is an examination of women's experience of pilgrimage between 1300 and 1500 C.E. I argue that women were able to find a place in the process of pilgrimage, although in order to do so they were required to work within both practical and social constraints, and to offer new interpretations of their own roles.

Late medieval literary sources voiced serious doubts about female pilgrims. They presented a stereotypical figure I have dubbed the Wandering Woman, whose pilgrimages were used as opportunities to indulge her natural vices. The authors of such works, which ranged from secular poetry to sermon *exempla*, feared that women who left the controlled sphere of the home would indulge in lechery, greed, and deceit.

Nevertheless, women did participate in pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints. Female pilgrims appear often in the miracle stories associated with such shrines, but they adopted a unique role. Women often approached a saint to request a miracle for someone else, rather than themselves. Thus, their role as the caretaker of the family's well-being became a justification for their physical mobility.

The penitential and devotional benefits of the pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem were not so easily transferred to another. Under these circumstances male
pilgrims rejected women, insisted they remain as invisible as possible, and even left them behind when they were overly vocal. But even in this worst-case scenario women were able to achieve their spiritual goal, by remaining as invisible as possible, traveling in groups, and acting as caregivers to their fellow-pilgrims.

I finish with a case-study of women's participation in the cult and pilgrimage of King Henry VI of England (d. 1471), who was buried at St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The author of Henry's miracles portrays these women, like the saint they sought out, as intercessors with the divine. In tandem with the churchmen who wrote down their miracle stories, the female pilgrims to Windsor created an image of their activities which opposed the Wandering Woman: the Holy Matron, whose faith and devotional behaviors had the power to heal.
For My Husband
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a tremendous debt to my adviser, Joseph H. Lynch, for his seemingly endless patience with me, his enthusiasm, and his generosity with his time, knowledge, and skills. In nurturing my work, he has given me a priceless gift. I am also indebted to other scholars who offered their time, expertise, and encouragement along the way, including Barbara Hanawalt, David Cressy, Eve Levin, Miri Rubin, Bruce Barker-Benfield, and Frank Coulson.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Felix Fabri, a German friar, went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1480. After his brief pilgrimage was completed, he felt dissatisfied; “the Holy Land and Jerusalem with its places appeared to me shrouded in a dark mist, as though I had beheld them in a dream; and I seemed myself to know less about all the holy places than I did before I visited them…” Because of this dissatisfaction with his first experience, he began to crave a second visit to the Holy Lands, but he worried about how his superiors would respond to such a request.¹

I did not dare to reveal to my Father in God my scheme for returning to Jerusalem, lest I might trouble his spirit, and lest both he and others when they heard it might be scandalized at me, judging me to be light-minded and impatient of the quiet of the cloister, or perhaps suffering for the temptations of the devil, or guilty of the sin of idle curiosity, or moved by frivolity.

Fabri had good reason to fear his superiors’ displeasure. By the time he was considering his second trip to the Holy Lands, such journeys had become more and more commonplace, and hence more suspect. Critics of pilgrimage labeled it a

frivolous activity, laden with the vice of curiositas, the needless prying into
unprofitable, worldly things that lead one away from salvation. But a laity which had
become more literate, more devout, and more active in their piety throughout the high
Middle Ages saw in pilgrimage the opportunity both to forge connections with the
divine and see the world beyond their hometown, and thus participated as
enthusiastically as they did in confraternities, Corpus Christi processions, cycle plays,
and other public forms of late medieval piety.

Pilgrimage posed a special problem for religious under vows. Medieval
theologians and monastic leaders struggled with the idea that those who had
committed themselves to the religious life — a life which was supposed to be sedentary
and stable — should participate in this form of piety, which would lead them away
from the cloister and into the world, with all its temptations. Thus, Fabri had more
reason to be concerned about the opinion of his superiors than an ordinary lay person
might. But there was another, larger group in medieval society that faced the same
expectation of sedentary, and hence immobile, lives: women. There were some
medieval women who lived with little restriction on their mobility (for example,
prostitutes), and there were others, like the pilgrims discussed in this study, who

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4 See Bronislaw Geremek, The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris, trans. by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ruth Mazo Karras, Common Women: Prostitution
periodically overcame such restrictions. But there is no doubt that for the majority of medieval women, acceptability was defined by remaining within certain physical spaces, and crossing out of those spaces was automatically a transgression.⁵

An expectation, of course, is not always reality, although it can exert a powerful force to shape reality. This dissertation is a study of women who, in the context of a culture that expected them to remain discreetly immured in their homes, chose to travel as pilgrims to holy sites across Europe and the Near East. Such women found themselves at a nexus of conflicting expectation: as women, they were supposed to remain in the home, fulfilling their most significant function in caring for their families; as Christians, they were performing a meritorious act which could involve tremendous personal sacrifice in the name of Christ and the saints. I will argue that women found ways to become pilgrims in the face of this conflicting outlook, and indeed used both sides of the conflict to define themselves in a socially acceptable manner while they traveled. In so doing, they created an image of women as pilgrims that was a powerful rebuttal to the notion that their travels were frivolous, wasteful, and both morally and financially damaging to themselves and their families.

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Pilgrimage in Medieval Devotion

For the purposes of this study, pilgrimage can be defined as a journey of any distance taken to a Christian shrine in order to obtain or offer thanks for a personal experience of the divine. These experiences of the divine might include healing or other miracles, visions, indulgences (the granting of full or partial pardon of the punishment of the soul in purgatory), the fulfillment of a penance, or the deepening of individual devotion through the visual and tactile experience of holy sites. The impulse to travel in order to more fully experience the sacred seems to have arisen from a number of concurrent developments in early Christianity. One such development was the desire to renounce the corruption of civilization in favor of wandering "in the desert," a form of imitation Christi which was popularized by the Desert Fathers. Since such wandering in the desert meant giving up the comfort and security of home and community, pilgrimage was thus understood as a sacrifice that was pleasing to God. Indeed, in one early medieval sermon, pilgrimage was even described as a kind of martyrdom: "Red martyrdom was death but white martyrdom was the separation from everything that an individual loved for the sake of God."  


Another development, the veneration of saints, hinged on the belief that the holy dead were present both in heaven and on earth, at the site of their graves. In order to be in the presence of the sacred, with all its potential benefits (e.g., healing or intercession for the forgiveness of sins), one needed to visit these graves; thus the cult of the saints also contributed to the growth of pilgrimage as a devotional practice.\(^8\) Finally, because the gospels were precise as to the location of the events they described, Christians could visit the places where Jesus and the Apostles had lived, preached, and died. This desire to make connections with the physical settings of the gospels was also a major contributor to the development of Christian pilgrimage.\(^9\)

The two most important pilgrimages in the western Christian tradition were those to Jerusalem and Rome, where pilgrims could see the places and the graves of the people described in the New Testament. There is evidence of pilgrimage to Jerusalem in order to visit the places described in the Gospels as early as the second century C.E. By the time Constantine endorsed the Jerusalem pilgrimage and ordered a church built over the Holy Sepulchre, the tradition was well-established.\(^10\) By the fourth century, pilgrims to the Holy Lands added visits to local holy men to their itineraries.\(^11\) In Rome, which was “the richest of the cities of the West in relics and

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shrines," the veneration of Saint Peter and Saint Paul had also begun sometime in the
second century. Despite its rich store of relics, Roman pilgrimage did not develop
into one which focused on miracles performed by those relics. Benedicta Ward has
explained the lack of miracles in these long-distance pilgrimages in this way:

At Rome, Compostella, and above all Jerusalem, the sanctity of the
saints involved was not in question, nor was the place where they were
to be venerated in much dispute. Moreover, in each case their miracles
were recorded already in the Bible and were well-known to all
Christians, so that accounts of miracles were not needed to establish a
claim to sanctity. Secondly, miracles were not necessary to stimulate
devotion to such well-known holy persons; the desire to venerate the
apostles and Christ himself in some visible place on earth was
spontaneous. 

While both the Roman and the Jerusalem pilgrimages remained central
throughout the early and high Middle Ages, each of them was fueled by high medieval
developments. Sumption calls the period which followed the first millennium "the
great age of pilgrimage," during which the lay nobility, which was also beginning to
exhibit interest in the growing monastic reforms and in affective piety and the
humanity of Christ, also began to look to pilgrimage as an element of their devotional
regimen. In the case of the Jerusalem pilgrimage, this interest was shortly to be fueled
by the Crusades, the mass armed pilgrimages to Jerusalem that began in 1095.
Crusaders were believed to be earning full pardons for their sins because of their

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journeys. The pilgrimage to Rome, which Birch believes to have been shrinking in numbers by the twelfth century because of the growth of interest in crusading and in the rise of a new pan-European shrine at Santiago de Compostella in Spain, was similarly boosted in the thirteenth century by the papacy's declaration of increasingly large indulgences, culminating in the plenary indulgence offered by Pope Boniface VIII in the Jubilee of 1300.15

Alongside these long-distance pilgrimages, the localized cults of saints who worked miracles and protected their regional devotees thrived throughout the late Antique and medieval periods. The veneration of saints and their relics was a very early development in Christianity; Peter Brown has associated it with the funerary practices and 'invisible companion' beliefs of Roman paganism.16 According to Finucane, "although saints’ relics were being venerated in the second century, if not earlier, the great boom in miracles associated with Christian relics seems to have begin during the fourth century, after Christianity was declared to be a tolerated religion ."17 Throughout the early and high Middle Ages, Christians continued to venerate the holy dead and publicize miracles they had performed, and to create new devotions and shrines to new saints. The majority of those who sought them were in need of healing,18 but the saints also intervened to bring about the miraculous freeing of

15 Birch, Pilgrimage to Rome, chapter 8, 198.

16 Brown, Cult of the Saints, chapters 2 and 3, 23-68.


18 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 59.
prisoners, protection of ships and other travelers, extinguishing of fires, and so on. Until the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), a new saint was ‘made’ by a thriving local veneration and miracles, which were then routinely approved by the Pope. After 1215, however, the papal curia began to take a more and more direct role in canonization decisions, restricting the number of new saints and rigorously investigating claims of miracles.¹⁹

As we have seen, pilgrimages became more and more common over the course of the high Middle Ages; but, according to Sumption, they also became more mechanistic.²⁰

the Crusades brought a new formality to the notion of pilgrimage, a formality which radically altered its character. . . . the doctrine of indulgences, whose development was greatly assisted by the crusades, transformed the pilgrim’s journey into a ritual, devoid of the intensely personal and spiritual quality of the pilgrimages of the eleventh century.

The ritual of pilgrimage, by the later Middle Ages, contained common elements no matter what the destination. It included the making and fulfilling of the pilgrimage vow, and the performance of ritual acts (prayers, the making of offerings, the kissing of relics, etc) at the shrines themselves. In the case of the Jerusalem pilgrimage, these rituals were performed for the sake of the indulgences which went along with them; at the shrines of the saints, they might bring indulgences, but they were also performed as a request for or in thanksgiving for a miracle. Failure to fulfill a pilgrimage vow


²⁰Sumption, Pilgrimage, 137.
could bring divine wrath on the head of the negligent pilgrim; saints might revoke miracles or even cause misfortune to those who so transgressed.\textsuperscript{21}

By the later Middle Ages, shrines of the saints had proliferated across Europe, and an increasingly literate and devout laity enthusiastically participated in pilgrimages to shrines near and far. With the loss of Christian control over the Holy Lands in the late thirteenth century, the pilgrimages to those shrines became tightly organized tours run primarily through Venice.\textsuperscript{22} Pilgrims gathered in Venice and engaged the services of a galley-captain, who provided transportation and guidance both on the sea voyage to and from Jerusalem and during their visit to the shrines there.\textsuperscript{23} The centralization, however, did not represent a reduction in the number of pilgrims; on the contrary, churchmen were dismayed by the number of people who went to the Holy Land, as well as to other shrines. It was common to understand these mobs of pilgrims, in the words of Joanthan Sumption, as ‘base born men’ and ‘light-minded and inquisitive persons’, who were using a devotional practice as an opportunity to escape the tedium of home, rather than as a mechanism to bring them closer to God.\textsuperscript{24} It is in this setting of pilgrimage’s swelling popularity and declining reputation for piety that the women under scrutiny here made their journeys.

\textsuperscript{21} Finucane, \textit{Miracles and Pilgrims}, 34-35.

\textsuperscript{22} Brefeld, \textit{A Guidebook for the Jerusalem Pilgrimage}, 19.

\textsuperscript{23} Sumption, \textit{Pilgrimage}, 189-190.

\textsuperscript{24} I borrow these phrases from Sumption, \textit{Pilgrimage}, chapters 14 and 15, 256-288; on the lack of religiosity of later medieval pilgrims (or the contemporary assumption thereof), see also Zacher, \textit{Curiosity and Pilgrimage}, chapters 1-3, 1-59.
Methodology

‘Pilgrimage’ is a broad term, and discussing it as a single phenomenon is fraught with the danger of oversimplification. Sixth-century peripatetic Irish monks were pilgrims; those who traveled off to the saint’s shrine just down the road to cure their illnesses were pilgrims; noblemen who took enormous retinues to fight and worship in the Holy Lands were pilgrims, too. Such diversity of experience presents certain problems for the study of women as pilgrims. How can the experiences of women who might be seeking different things from their journeys, and who might be taking journeys which differed significantly in length and difficulty, be lumped together? Their experiences on a long-distance pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem might be quite different from those of a pilgrimage to a smaller, local shrine which, in the words of Benedicta Ward, “drew on local and immediate needs of people round about for a limited time at best.”25

In many ways, this is yet another repetition of a question with which many historians of women, especially premodern women, have had to contend: since women exist in all levels of a society, how can one generalize their experience? In this case, the answer to this question lies in the cultural focus of this study. While the individual experiences of women might differ because of difference in their wealth, their goals as pilgrims, and the distances they traveled, they all, at least on the face of it, sought some kind of personal experience of the divine. Thus, the experiences of all female pilgrims were to some extent or another shaped by the attitudes of later

medieval Christians toward women and their interaction with the divine. These attitudes, and the ways women worked with and around them to accomplish at least two different kinds of pilgrimages, are the focus of this study.

Because of the diverse nature of pilgrimage and of the discussion of female pilgrims, this study will employ evidence of many different types, treating pilgrimages which lasted only a day alongside those which lasted over a year, taken by women from across the social scale. Knitting this evidence together is not easy because different types of pilgrimages yield different evidence. Miracle collections, for example, represent only a certain kind of shrine. While miracles at local saints’ shrines were expected, two major long-distance pilgrimages for western Europeans, those to Rome and Jerusalem, were not to places where miracles were traditionally expected to be worked. The pilgrimages to these shrines generated a different kind of evidence: pilgrim accounts and guides, which describe the geographical sites and shrines and their religious significance, rather than accounts of wonders worked there. Other kinds of evidence regarding medieval pilgrimage apply to any pilgrimage by anyone anywhere. These include the sermon exempla, courtesy literature, poetry and satire which discussed pilgrimage, often in pejorative terms.

Because the source material that discusses the pilgrimages of later medieval women is so diverse in form, origin, and intent, each variety of source material will require an approach that considers its limitations. None of the documents under consideration here, for example, was actually written by a woman, except for one: a passage from Christine de Pizan’s Livre des trois vertus. It is necessary, then, to
consider the intent of the male authors who at best (in the cases of Margery Kempe and the women in the miracle tales) were recording or collaborating with female voices, and at worst (in the case of misogynist satire) were seeking to denigrate women. In many cases, what the sources can offer us is not an understanding of women's experiences, but rather an understanding of the cultural assumptions that surrounded the pilgrimages of women. Other sources, particularly the male-authored narratives of Jerusalem pilgrimages, offer information about the activities of female pilgrims, but not of their interior reception of those activities. When approached with due caution, however, these sources can offer a picture of the obstacles—financial, legal, social, and cultural—which female pilgrims had to overcome, their external devotional behavior, and perhaps something of how they wished themselves to be understood.

Historiography

The last thirty years have seen an explosive interest in the history of women. Medievalists have joined their colleagues in other fields, busily seeking to correct the fact that women "have been systematically left out of the official record."26 There are now several good summary studies of medieval women, which struggle valiantly to cope with the incredible variety in women's experiences based upon their differing

positions within the social scale. While it is not possible in this restricted space to offer a detailed discussion of the historiography of medieval women, it is necessary to sketch a broad outline of the work which has been done to date, in order to clarify how the present study contributes to it. For the purposes of this discussion, a convenient way to approach the relevant historiography is to divide it into two categories: histories of ordinary women, and histories of extraordinary women.

The study of ordinary women is, in some ways, a corollary of the social history which was engendered by the *Annales* school, driven by the notion that the mundane and day-to-day is as worthy of study as powerful political figures. Ordinary medieval women were usually illiterate, and hence we rarely hear their voices speaking directly. Nevertheless, we have learned a great deal about their lives from a variety of sources. Studies of the medieval economy in both towns and countryside have given us information about the economic constraints within which medieval women lived and the kinds of economic activity they engaged in. They have found, by and large, that women's work was a significant component of the family economy. Other studies

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have provided a wealth of information on ordinary women by discussing their legal position in both secular and canon law. Historians have also looked at groups of ordinary women in different stages of their lives and places in society: young women, wives, widows, nuns, and other female religious have all been investigated. Others have examined cultural and religious attitudes towards women, trying to help us come to grips with the effects of medieval misogyny on the day-to-day lives of women by clarifying the medieval outlook on what it meant to be female.


Equally revealing work has been done on the history of extraordinary women, whose lives are often so much more directly accessible to us through their own writings or the writings of those close to them. Noblewomen have been the subjects of numerous biographies, especially when those women had a direct hand in important political matters. Historians have also explored the lives of noblewomen in a more general fashion, seeking to understand their unique double-bind as a part of the landed, powerful elite but also members of the 'fourth estate.' The lives of educated women, who participated in theological and political discourse alongside men, have perhaps been the easiest of all to approach. Such figures as Hroswitha of Gandersheim, Hildegard of Bingen, and Christine de Pizan have proved fertile ground for exploration. Finally, excellent work has been done on the most unusual women:


saints and mystics. Bynum’s *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* has been perhaps the most influential work in this vein. Work on these women has led us into a new understanding of women’s spirituality in the Middle Ages, one which suggests that women had a unique understanding of their relationship with the divine which was grounded in the medieval notion that women were more physical and less spiritual than men.

The present study takes its inspiration from both sides of this divide. Most of the women under examination here are ordinary. None of them seem to have written their own stories, and only one, Margery Kempe, is in any way an unusual figure. Thus, many of the techniques I employ in the interpretation of source materials that were not written by women, but instead written about them, were developed by those who study ordinary women. On the other hand, it is hard to deny when reading the lay literature which lampooned female pilgrims or collections of miracle stories that these women were doing something extraordinary. They were crossing the boundaries of their normal existence, a thing which society feared; and, further, in some cases they were understood to be crossing the boundaries of earthly existence to make connections with the divine.

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While pilgrimage, as a major Christian institution, has merited a veritable avalanche of scholarly attention, very little has been said about the participation of women in pilgrimage. Sumption's summary study of the topic offers two pages devoted to the question of women's participation, noting that they seemed to be more present in the later Middle Ages and that several shrines barred them from entering.

Kristine Utterback addressed the topic in her brief article, "The Vision Becomes Reality: Medieval Women Pilgrims to the Holy Land," that examined the narratives of Margery Kempe and Birgitta of Sweden. Utterback emphasized the visionary nature of their visits, and their desire to connect their inner, visionary life to the

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physical landscape of the gospels. Patricia Halpin has also produced a fine article on
the pilgrimage of Anglo-Saxon women.

But there has been little examination of later medieval women's pilgrimages.
Halpin begins her article on female Anglo-Saxon pilgrims with the following critique
of studies in the field:

"The Late-Antique period provides various accounts of pilgrimage
undertaken by women, most notably that of Egeria, whose valuable
travel itinerary describes her three-year journey through the Holy Land
in the late fourth century. In the Later Middle Ages, Chaucer, Margery
Kempe and the records of women among the crusading pilgrims
provide descriptive passages, detailed itineraries and vivid images of
female pilgrims. The early Middle Ages, however, especially pre-
Conquest England, suffer from a paucity of these straightforward
accounts by and about women.

While there are several studies which discuss the late antique sources, and Halpin
herself filled in the gap in the early medieval materials, only one study has been
written which brings together some of the late medieval source material which Halpin
describes. In Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public
Performance, Susan Signe Morrison, a scholar of medieval literature, explored
women's participation in pilgrimage through the art and architecture of the English

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shrine of Walsingham, the literary, economic, and legal documentation of English women’s long-distance pilgrimages, and the relevance of gender to spatial issues in medieval culture.\textsuperscript{46} Her study, published in 2000, overlaps this dissertation in some ways. She took an interest in the pilgrimages of women as an historical phenomenon.\textsuperscript{47} She, like myself, was also interested in literary depictions of female pilgrims in both secular and clerical sources.

Morrison’s work, however, approaches the topic in a different and somewhat more restricted fashion than the present study. To begin with, she limited her work to England, while this work includes source materials from England, France, Spain, Germany, and Italy. Further, Morrison made little or no distinction between local pilgrimages and pilgrimages over long distances. But perhaps most important, her historical evidence and argument rarely moved beyond an attempt to prove the presence of female pilgrims. She did not analyze that presence either with respect to our broader understanding of medieval women, or compare it with our understanding of medieval pilgrims in general. For example, Morrison’s exploration of economic and legal documents (letters of permission, grants of monetary support, appointments of supervisors for the pilgrims’ affairs, etc.), which were largely written in preparation for a pilgrim’s journey, provides several examples of female pilgrims. But she does not attempt to quantify those examples in any way (thereby potentially providing a

\textsuperscript{46} Morrison, \textit{Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance} (New York: Routledge, 2000).

\textsuperscript{47} Morrison, \textit{Women Pilgrims}, 43-56.
measure of how comparatively common or rare they were). Further, these documents do not allow her to explore the nature of those women's experiences—only their plans to become pilgrims. In her chapter on the shrine at Walsingham she described the experiences of female pilgrims, based upon the art and architecture of Walsingham itself and of the churches along the major pilgrimage routes. Here, she attempted to deduce both the existence and the interior world of female pilgrims based upon the objects they would have been viewing. This led her to make unsubstantiated statements like the following: "...pilgrims could buy ampullae filled with holy water and a drop of [the Virgin's] milk, presumably to aid in fertility, childbirth and lactation,"* and "It is possible that ordinary women also derived a kind of authority in their lay role as mothers through the images seen in churches" (emphases mine). The present study will address such issues in a concrete manner, based upon verifiable evidence.

Morrison's discussion of the literary representation of female pilgrims has the closest congruence with the present study. She based her observations upon many of the same sources (or Middle English translations thereof) examined here, noting some of the same themes. But Morrison did not systematize her observations about the literary topos of the female pilgrim. Nor did she situate this topos within the broader context of medieval misogyny. Further, her examination of a few examples of female pilgrimage in hagiography leads her to conclude that religious literature

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wholeheartedly endorsed women's pilgrimages. As this study will show, some clerical authors did indeed castigate the pilgrimages of laywomen; hagiography alone does not provide a comprehensive survey of medieval clerical attitudes about women. As this work proceeds, the relevance of the specifics of Morrison's work will be noted.

The Present Study

This study falls into four substantive chapters. The first is a discussion of late medieval literature, both lay and ecclesiastical, which reflects the overwhelmingly negative response of late medieval culture to female pilgrims. It traces these attitudes in poetry (the Canterbury Tales, Le Roman de la Rose, and the Decameron), didactic literature (The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry, Le Ménagier de Paris, and Le Livre des Trois Vertus of Christine de Pizan), and a single compendium of sermon exempla (the Alphabet of Tales). A stock figure of the female pilgrim whom I have dubbed the “Wandering Woman” emerges from these sources; she is a creature modeled upon many of the medieval misogynist assumptions about women’s physiology and behavior. Her primary characteristic is wanderlust, but in order to enjoy her wandering to the fullest she will also engage in lechery, greed, pride, and deceit. When real, flesh-and-blood women desired to go on pilgrimage, they had to cope not only with economic, social, and legal restraints, but also with the Wandering

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50 Morrison, Women Pilgrims, p. 123.
Woman, who no doubt encouraged many men to keep their wives, sisters, and daughters ensconced in the safe and controlled sphere of the home.

Chapter Three examines one of the most common types of pilgrimage: visits to the shrines of the saints. Such pilgrimages were documented in miracle collections, compilations of stories told by grateful pilgrims to church officials who oversaw shrines. This chapter examines the presence of female pilgrims in four such collections. While miracle stories are a complicated source for the history of women, potentially shaped by the attitudes and goals of the church officials who wrote them down, they nevertheless yield much information about the situations that sent women on pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints, and on their ritual behavior during the process. In miracle tales, women most appeared at the shrines of the saints looking for a miracle for their children or other family members. While such pilgrimages drew women out of the home, they were nevertheless a mechanism intended to help the women fulfill their traditional duties within the family. Hence, the female pilgrims of the miracle stories used one social expectation — that women should care for the physical well-being of their families — to overcome another — that they should remain in their homes.

Chapter Four looks at another variety of pilgrimage in the later Middle Ages, the long-distance pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem. Such pilgrimages represented the height of sacrifice, as they were the most costly, the longest in duration, and the most physically dangerous pilgrimages. Further, they were not undertaken in order to experience a miracle; instead, their primary purpose was to deepen the devotion of the
pilgrim through visits to the place where Christ and the apostles lived and died, and to confer indulgences upon the pilgrim which would speed his or her soul to heaven. As such, the Jerusalem and Rome pilgrimages represented the most difficult pilgrimages for a woman to undertake; they required special permissions, considerable ready cash, and travel companions willing to protect a woman in a dangerous world. Further, they could not so easily be understood to be performed for another's immediate benefit; thus women who undertook such pilgrimages were open to the charge of being frivolous, overcurious Wandering Women. Nevertheless, women did undertake these journeys, and this chapter examines their experiences on the road. As they traveled, women tended to stick together and to remain as quiet and invisible as they could to avoid the censure of their male counterparts. Should they become too visible, they could be punished in any number of ways, or even left to fend for themselves. What remains remarkable about these women is that they did make the journey—a journey whose primary goal was their own spiritual enrichment.

Finally, Chapter Five attempts to apply these perceptions about later medieval devotional culture to the growth of a single pilgrimage: the pilgrimage to St. George's Chapel, Windsor, in honor of King Henry VI of England, who was never formally canonized by the Pope. Between Henry's death in 1471 and Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1534, he was honored as a martyr, and a vita, miracle collection, and liturgical texts were written in his honor. He was commemorated in a number of visual media, including woodcut, sculpture, stained glass, tapestry, and panel painting. From this wealth of evidence, it becomes clear that women found a place in Henry's
cult from the beginning. Although he was a political saint with no overt connection to women or children, women appeared often in his miracle collection, having made pilgrimages in thanksgiving for the miraculous healing of their sick and injured children. It is in one of the miracles in Henry’s collection that a possibility hinted at by the four collections examined in Chapter Three is made startlingly concrete: women who sought the saints for the healing of others, and who told their stories to those promoting their shrines, were helping to create another image of women as pilgrims. This image of womanhood, the Holy Matron, played an intercessory role between humanity and the divine, a role analogous to that of the saints. Her prayers, faith, and deep devotion helped to bring miracles.

There are more aspects of women’s contributions to later medieval pilgrimage culture which have yet to be explored, and which I hope to examine as this dissertation evolves into a book manuscript. For example, many medieval people, both men and women, found ways to participate in the idea of pilgrimage without actually leaving home. They read devotional texts which described the Holy Lands in great detail; or they sent jewelry with friends who took the journey, asking that they be touched to the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome, the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, or other important shrines, and returned, charged with divine grace. They asked those same friends to bring them souvenirs of the journey — ribbons cut to the length of the Holy Sepulchre, or candles lit there — which were considered efficacious in treating illnesses. And they also left money in their wills so that a relative might complete a pilgrimage that they
had vowed but failed to complete themselves. These vicarious forms of participation in pilgrimage seem to be ideally suited to women, and especially to female religious, and deserve specific attention.

Another topic that deserves attention is the involvement of women in penitential pilgrimage. The church courts used pilgrimage as a form of wandering imprisonment from the early Middle Ages forward, and were still sentencing people convicted of canonical offenses to visit particular shrines in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. How the church courts handled such sentencing with regards to gender could prove a fascinating line of inquiry. It is my hope that the present study nonetheless offers worthwhile observations about the negotiations that took place within a culture that distrusted the mobility of women, and yet in which women nonetheless chose to undertake devotional travel.

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51 See the examples noted by Morrison, *Women Pilgrims*, 51.
CHAPTER 2

“SHE COUDE MUCHEL OF WANDRINGE BY THE WEYE”:

CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE PILGRIMS

Christian Zacher, in his book *Curiosity and Pilgrimage: The Literature of Discovery in Fourteenth-century England*, has argued that pilgrimage in the later Middle Ages was closely associated with the vice of *curiositas*: the needless examination of worldly things which do not help one to attain salvation. "Moralists," he wrote, "thought *curiositas* signified a wandering, errant, and unstable frame of mind and was thus exemplified best in metaphors of motion or in the act of travel."¹ Zacher’s book examines the perception of “the increasingly numerous opponents of pilgrimage” who believed that “it had become an exercise in curiosity.”² According to Frédéric Tinguely, “this condemnation of curiosity was so fundamentally anchored in


² Zacher, *Curiosity and Pilgrimage*, 51.
the literature of pilgrimage that one could still find it formulated in an explicit manner in the era of the Wars of Religion.\textsuperscript{3}

But because women more often became pilgrims in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries than they had previously,\textsuperscript{4} late medieval authors also commented on female pilgrims as a distinct phenomenon. Both lay and ecclesiastical writers discussed female pilgrims in a number of literary forms, from fiction to handbooks of moral and practical advice to sermons. While the commentary on female pilgrims was at least in part rooted in the broader fear of the vice of curiositas, which applied to both men and women, medieval authors also voiced concerns and complaints which were specific to their understanding of women.

Mary Elizabeth Perry has commented on a Spanish proverb castigating those who acted outside accepted gender roles, which insisted one should accept “neither broken sword nor wandering woman.”\textsuperscript{5} I will use this phrase, “wandering woman,” to name an interconnected web of stereotypes about women’s misbehavior which became associated with pilgrimage in the later Middle Ages. The Wandering Woman, as she appeared in literary works by male authors, was an antithesis of ideal womanhood. Her appearances are moments wherein male authors express their


\textsuperscript{5} Mary Elizabeth Perry, \textit{Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 7.
deepest fears about women, sometimes with comic effect. The Wandering Woman displayed a specific group of dangerous personality traits. The most important is that trait for which she is named; *curiositas*, greed, and lust led the Wandering Woman to wander about in the physical sense, traveling outside of the safe, enclosed, and controlled space of the home and into the public sphere. Medieval critics feared that this physical mobility would also lead her into other, more dangerous kinds of wandering. The Wandering Woman’s visual attention also wandered, and caused her to become acquisitive. Her tendency to roam about was associated with wandering sexual and emotional attachments, and hence lechery. Finally, in order to satisfy her desire for physical and sexual liberty, as well as for material objects, she became deceitful, and created networks of other deceitful and wandering females to help her carry out her trickery. While the Wandering Woman was not always represented as a pilgrim, the authors examined here often list pilgrimage and other religious observances as one of her forms of wandering. In their understanding, pilgrimage was no better than feasts, carols, or other large public events, which were opportunities for women to indulge in their worst behaviors.

The Wandering Woman is but one aspect of the complex tradition of misogyny in the Middle Ages, which can only be treated in a summary fashion here. The Wandering Woman draws on some behaviors which appear in other stereotypes arising out of the tradition. For example, the figure of the Lusty Widow (or Widow of Ephesus), who seeks sexual gratification even though she is past her sexual and childbearing prime, shares with the Wandering Woman the voracious sexuality
women were commonly supposed to possess.⁶ Another negative version of older womanhood is the Go-Between or Procuress, who is paid by potential lovers to corrupt the chastity of beautiful young wives through persuasion and trickery.⁷ She shares with the Wandering Woman the use of women’s networks and deceit, as well as a lack of regard for chastity. The misogynist tradition offers roles to younger wives, too. Another stock figure, who was later so effectively used by Shakespere, is the Shrew: a wife who gives her husband the sharp edge of her tongue as often as possible.⁸ The Shrew shares with the Wandering Woman a desire to get her own way; but in the Wandering Woman, this desire is focused on attaining physical mobility and the sexual and social liberties which go along with it. Another misogynist image was the Murderous Wife, whose presence in early modern English texts has been so carefully documented by Frances Dolan.⁹ This stereotype suggests that, in order to get her own way, a woman would cheerfully resort to killing her husband – sometimes

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⁸ See, for example, the discussion of Alison of Bath as a Shrew in David S. Reid, “Crocodilian Humor: A Discussion of Chaucer’s Wife of Bath,” *Chaucer Review* 4, no. 2 (1969): 73-89.

with the help of a household servant who was also her lover. Thus the Murderous Wife shared the desire for freedom from social restraints and a lack of chastity with the Wandering Woman. No doubt other figures arising out of the same tradition have been and will be named and described; these are only some of the most common.

The Wandering Woman, then, like all her sister stereotypes, draws on a common well of negative assumptions about womanhood, in this case women's inherent instability. She appears in both lay and ecclesiastical literature, and in a variety of storylines: she is a deceitful wife trying to cheat on her husband; a young woman trying to catch a husband; an elderly gossip teaching younger women to be deceitful while making profit from their deceit. Many of her appearances could also be interpreted as one of the many stereotypes mentioned above; as such, it is not my intention to reclassify all the literary figures I will investigate here, but rather to expose another facet of their natures. When real women sought to become pilgrims, it was at least in part this particular facet of medieval misogyny which they had to overcome.

**Female Pilgrims in Lay Literature**

Many voices disparaged the practice of pilgrimage in the later Middle Ages, and a significant number of these critics were not churchmen, or at least were not speaking in a religious context. This discussion will draw on the Wandering Woman's appearances in several literary works. The most extensive of these is in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in the complex character of Alison, the Wife of Bath. The *Roman
de la Rose, an allegory of courtly love written in the thirteenth century by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, also plays upon images of wandering women and of pilgrimage. Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, a satirical tract written in the early fifteenth century by an anonymous monk, details the suffering of husbands at the hands of their wives, including those whose wives wander about. Similar concerns are voiced by Boccaccio in the Decameron. Didactic literature also discusses the Wandering Woman. Le Menagier de Paris, a handbook written in 1394 by a Parisian merchant for his young wife, gives instruction on how women can avoid the faults Chaucer, Lorris, and De Meun decry. The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry, written in 1371 by a noble of Anjou for his three daughters, gives similar instruction from the point of view of the nobility, rather than the bourgeoisie. A woman’s perspective on the same issues is offered by Christine de Pizan, in her Livre des trois vertus, a handbook of advice for women of different social stations written in 1405. While she expresses the same concerns as the male authors, her understanding of the origins of the Wandering Woman is somewhat more sympathetic.

Interestingly, this brief list of texts in which the Wandering Woman appears is interconnected. For example, Alison of Bath is widely interpreted as a borrowing from Jean de Meun’s La Vielle (Old Woman), because Chaucer himself translated parts of La Roman de la Rose and clearly borrowed from it. As Charles Muscatine

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10 See discussions of the connections between The Roman de la Rose and The Wife of Bath’s Prologue in Patterson, “‘For the Wyves Love of Bathe’”; Ann S. Haskell, “The St. Joce Oath in the Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” Chaucer Review 1, no. 2 (1966): 85-87; for other connections between the two texts, see John Finlayson, “The Roman de la Rose and Chaucer’s Narrators,” Chaucer Review 24, no. 3.
has put it, "the Roman was constantly on Chaucer's desk, and provided both matter and manner to the wife's Prologue." Donald McGrady also argued for extensive connections between The Canterbury Tales and Bocaccio's Decameron, suggesting that if Chaucer did not have the text in front of him as he wrote, he had at least read it at some time in the past. His argument has been further supported by Peter G. Beidler. Christine de Pisan is well known for her vehement refutation of medieval misogyny in the quarrel over the Roman de la Rose; indeed, Rosalind Brown-Grant has suggested that the advice about adultery offered in the Livre des trios vertus "implicitly rewrites the Rose." In the same discussion, she compares the advice offered by Christine to that of La-Tour Landry and the Ménagier, since all fall into the genre of the late-medieval courtesy book, and all circulated in France in the same period. All the authors under consideration here were at least aware of some, if not all, of the other texts being considered; in short, they drew from a common literary well, and in some sense collaborated to create the image I will discuss.


11 Muscatine, Medieval Literature, Style, and Culture: Essays by Charles Muscatine (University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 172.


14 Rosalind Brown-Grant, Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 207.
Susan Signe Morrison, in her book *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance*, has also used the same interconnected group of sources to discuss female pilgrims (although, since her interest is in England alone, she used the Middle-English versions of the *Roman de la Rose* and the La-Tour Landry courtesy book, and passed over the *Decameron*).\(^{16}\) She notes two themes similar to those I include as elements of the Wandering Woman: first, images of women who use pilgrimage as a disguise or subterfuge (what I would term as 'an opportunity to wander');\(^{17}\) and second, the association of women's pilgrimages with sexual misbehavior.\(^{18}\) She did not show how these themes are connected to one another or to other themes in the same texts, however; nor did she offer any discussion of their relevance to the broader context of medieval misogyny. Indeed, her entire analysis of the negative images of female pilgrims in secular sources was presented in the following brief statement: “the numerous examples above illustrate the generally dubious position of women pilgrims in secular literature.”\(^{19}\) It is my hope that the analysis of the Wandering Woman that follows is both more systematic and more closely grounded in the broader context of medieval culture.

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\(^{16}\) I would like to note here that the congruence of our source materials was strictly an instance of convergent evolution of thought; her book became available to me only as I was performing final revisions on this dissertation.


\(^{19}\) Morrison, *Women Pilgrims*, 117.
Perhaps the most prominent appearance of the Wandering Woman in all of medieval literature is Alison, the Wife of Bath, that complex caricature from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. Alison has perhaps been the subject of more Chaucerian criticism than any other of his creations, and it is necessary to take a moment to acknowledge the struggle of modern criticism to cope with her. Scholars have repeatedly attempted to reconcile her inconsistent commentary on marriage, sexuality, and womanhood. In these attempts, she has been classified and reclassified, revised and re-explained. For some scholars, she is a caricature, which Chaucer did not intend for the audience to understand as a real personality. At least one author has suggested that she is purely allegorical, a manifestation of Rhetoric who does battle with the Clerk, a type of Logic. Others have argued vehemently that she should be considered a real, fully-actualized character, although her surface appearance and speech play with misogynist stereotypes. In fact, some scholars have argued that her speech turns on those stereotypes because there was no other language available to those who wanted to discuss empowered women in the Middle

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Ages, or because Chaucer is a male author writing about a female who challenges authority. Others set aside the question of her position as a woman, arguing that her gender-inappropriate behavior renders her more a masculine than a feminine figure.

One school of thought has gone so far as to explain that Alison's inconsistencies are actually an expression of her guilt: hints in the text, these scholars suggest, show that she and her fifth husband actually conspired to murder her fourth.

I do not propose to revolutionize criticism of the Wife of Bath; indeed, I feel that what I offer here does not challenge any of these viewpoints, nor does it 'choose a side' in the debate between interpretations of the Wife as a real, fully detailed personality and as a comedic caricature. The only point on which all of these scholars agree is that the Wife's performance certainly incorporates "an image of woman that duplicates the *mala femina* of the misogynist tractates." Whether one sees her use of misogyny as ironic or as the sum of her being, hints of the various negative female

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figures named above can be seen in her portrait. My purpose is to show that the
Wandering Woman can also be seen in her.

Alison’s hallmark trait was a desire to wander about freely. Chaucer has Alison
describe her desire for physical mobility openly: “For I always loved to be merry /
and to walk in March, April, and May / from house to house, to hear sundry stories . . .” 28 Alison used every possible excuse to gad about, from the sacred (pilgrimage,
weddings, processions, and preaching) to the profane (keeping an eye on her
philandering husband). Her desire to wander, to see and be seen, fit comfortably into
the medieval understanding of women as unstable and inconstant creatures,
“inconstant by nature and quickly yielding to stray desire.” 29 Women’s ‘natural’
tendency to be wayward and to wander was understood by medieval culture to derive
from their physiology. Ancient medical texts available in medieval Europe offered
two principal theories that linked women’s behavior to their physiology. Plato
explained the womb as a restless animal in the body, which wandered around inside
the woman if not impregnated often enough, causing ‘hysterical’ behavior. Galen,
who rejected the notion of the wandering womb, offered instead the theory that
women had more cool and moist humors than men, and were therefore “slippery,

lovede to be Gay;/ And for to walke in March, Averille, and May;/ Fro hous to hous, to here sondry
talis — . . .”

29 Judith M. Bennett, introduction to Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages, ed. by Judith, Bennett, Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O’Barr, B. Anne Vilen, and Sarah Westphal-Wihl, (Chicago: University of
inconstant, and forever seeking novelty." Their cool humors were also thought to leave them in a "condition of perpetual desire" because they were "driven by their craving for the hottest, most complete being, that is, the male." Since the basic understanding of women's physiology endowed them with negative traits, it is no surprise that their behavior was always suspect, especially with regards to their physical mobility. Morrison briefly noted the connection between women's physiology and their wandering, commenting that woman is like the womb, which "threatens by its ability to stray."

Since women's instability and tendency to wander about if unsupervised was a given, it appeared in a variety of texts—Alison was by no means alone. The anonymous author of the *Quinze Joyes de Mariage* also suggested that women like to wander to pilgrimages, banquets, and to see lovers. The fifteen 'joys' are patterned after the prayer of the Fifteen Joys of Mary, in which her happiness derives from her son; in this satirical version, in fifteen situations a husband's misery derives from the

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behavior of his wife. For her part, “the wife is portrayed as a wily, shark-like predator seeking sexual gratification, ostentatious finery, physical satisfaction, and domestic seignurie.” In eight of the Joys, at least part of the problem that causes the marriage to disintegrate is related to the wife’s wandering to banquets, feasts, pilgrimages, secret meetings with lovers, and to church. Four of the fifteen situations hinge on pilgrimage in particular. Many of the wandering women in this text imitate Alison’s merry gadding, but some situations are darker: “sometimes, perhaps, because of the ugly rows he (a husband) makes and also because he beats her, she deserts her husband and goes on a journey.” But even this situation was ultimately the fault of the wife’s instability. The ‘ugly rows’ were over the wife’s infidelity, and during her ‘journey’ she spent her time with her paramour, and then asked her mother to cover for her.

Guillaume de Lorris presented the stereotype of the Wandering Woman both from the perspective of the husband and from that of the Woman herself. The allegorical figure of Amis (Friend), while advising Amant (The Lover) on how to

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35 Joys 2, 3, 8, and 11.


proceed with his affair, had occasion to imitate an angry husband scolding his wandering wife: "As soon as I go to my work, you go off dancing and live a life so riotous that it seems ribald." The woman’s need to wander. In her speech to Bel Acuel (Fair Welcome), she wants to enlighten ‘him’ (as the expression of the rose’s accessibility to the lover) regarding women’s sexual experience, and to train him to extort the maximum material benefit from men, whilst conceding the least degree of personal freedom, in order to exact revenge for the ills she herself has suffered at their hands but is now too old to avenge in person.

To this end, the strategies that La Vielle presents in her speech include physical mobility. She suggests that “a woman should be careful not to stay shut up too much, for while she remains in the house, she is less seen by everybody, her beauty is less well-known, less desired, and in demand less.” She recommended that, in order to avoid this, a woman should attend a number of public and religious events, going to her church, to weddings, and on trips. The dynamic between the sexes, as understood by male authors, was clear: the Wandering Woman desired the right to wander, and her husband desired to keep her at home.

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The *Decameron* also exhibited concerns about women’s desire to gad about and engage in the other evils of the Wandering Woman. The stories of the seventh day all take as their theme women who deceive their husbands. In the process of describing comic modalities in the work, Marga Cottino-Jones has summarized the plots of the seventh-day stories in this way:

In its structure, each of the novelle moves through four basic steps: (1) an initial situation which generally presents or projects a rendez-vous between a woman and her lover; (2) an intrusion, usually by the husband, which advances the situation to the danger point; (3) The woman’s reaction . . . which serves to neutralize the potential danger; and (4) a final positive and harmonious situation.

Boccaccio’s tales all hinge upon wives’ strategies for sneaking their lovers into the house, rather than upon their strategies for getting out of the house. Nevertheless, one of the women still expresses her desire (and that of all wives) to be out and about. Fiammetta, who tells the Fifth Tale, points out that women are cooped up all week: “like everyone else she yearns on Sundays for peace and comfort, and wants to enjoy herself a little, just as farm laborers do, or the workers in the towns, or the magistrates on the bench . . .”

The tale becomes a complaint against a jealous husband who, like all his ilk, kept his wife locked up at home. Although women seemed less free to move about in Boccaccio’s work than they did in the northern European sources,

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Mediterranean culture also feared that religious observance in particular was a potential opportunity for dalliance; the same jealous husband would not allow his bored wife "to attend a party or a wedding, or go to church, or step outside her door for a single moment . . ."\(^4^3\)

The Wandering Woman's desire to roam about unfettered, be it to friends' homes or the shrines of the saints, was often portrayed as a serious bone of contention between she and her husband. Chaucer's Alison demonstrated for her fellow pilgrims how she would argue with her husbands for the privilege to gad about by drawing attention to their double standard in the matter: "What do you do at my neighbor's house? / Is she so fair? Are you so amorous? / . . . And if I have a gossip or a friend / without guilt, you chide like a fiend / if I should walk or play to his house!"\(^4^4\) Her fifth husband, in reply to such tirades, appealed to classical and biblical examples of men who rejected wandering women:

... And I wanted to walk, as I had done before,  
From house to house, although he had forbidden it.  
About which he would often preach,  
And teach me of old Roman deeds,  
How Simplicius Gallus left his wife,  
And forsook her for all his life,  
Only because he saw her bare-headed  
Looking out the door one day.  
Another Roman he told me by name,  
That, because his wife went to a summer's game

\(^4^3\) Boccaccio, *Decameron*, McWilliam, ed. and trans., 507; also, *Decameron*, Sapegno, ed., 637: "La donna, lasciamo stare che a nozze o a festa o a chiesa andar potesse, o il piè della casa trarre in alcun modo . . ."  

\(^4^4\) Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 111, lines 239-245: "What dostow at my neighebores hous?/ Is she so fair? Artow so amorous?/. . . And if I have a gossib or a freend,/ Withouten gilt, thou chydest as a feend,/ If that I walke or pleye unto his hous!"
Without his knowledge, he also forsook her.
And then would he seek in his Bible
That same proverb from Ecclesiaticus,
Where he commanded and firmly forbade:
Man should not suffer his wife to go roaming about.
Then would he say right there, without a doubt:
‘Whoever builds his house out of willows,
and spurs his blind horse over plowed land,
and suffers his wife to go seeking shrines,
Is worthy to be hanged on a gallows!’

While some medieval authors sought to decry the Wandering Woman and
others tried to explain her, the Ménagier de Paris sought to prevent her altogether.
The author of the Ménagier offers advice for his young wife in the areas of household
management, personal conduct, and spiritual development; he generally seems kind
towards her, and concerned more about her inexperience than her natural inclination to
sin. For example, in his borrowing from other devotional manuals regarding sin and
confession, he sharply reduces the amount of text devoted to lust and luxury, hinting
that he would not expect her to be in a position to confess to such sins. Hence it is
unsurprising that he chooses to offer a positive model for his youthful wife, rather than
attempting to threaten or castigate through the use of negative models. In a passage

45 Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 120-21, lines 639-658: “...And walke I wolde, as I had doon
biforn, / From hous to hous, although he had it sworn./ For which he often tymes wolde preche./ And
me of olde Romayn gestes teche,/ How he Simplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,/ And hir forsook for terme
of al his lyf,/ Noght but for open-heveded he hir say/ Lokinge out at his dore upon a day./ Another
Romayn tolde he me by name,/ That, for his wyf was at a somores game/ Withoute his witing, he
forsook hire eke./ And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke/ That like proverbe of Ecclesiaste/ Wher
he commandeth and forbedeth faste/ Man shal nat sufere his wyf go roule aboute;/ Thanne wolde he
seye right thus, withouten doute:/ ‘Whoso that buildeth his hous al of salwes,/ And priketh his blinde
hors over the falwes,/ And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,/ Is worthy to been hanged on the
galwes!’”

46 Janet M. Ferrier, “A Husband’s Asides: The Use of the Second Person Singular in Le Ménagier de
that is very nearly an inverse image of Alison and the other wanderers, the author
placed limits on his wife’s behavior when she went out. Primarily, he insisted that she
should only go out with proper companions, and that she should “flee suspicious
company.” Further, he described appropriate physical bearing during such excursions:
“as you go, bear your head straight, keep your eyelids lowered and still and look
straight before you about four rods ahead and upon the ground, without looking nor
turning your gaze upon any man or woman to right or left, nor looking up, nor
glancing from place to place, nor laughing, nor stopping to speak to anyone in the
road.” This would, presumably, keep her from wandering away from the task that
had brought her out of the house in the first place, and guard her from the problems
associated with women who did roam without supervision. This picture of a carefully
supervised woman who avoids unnecessary interactions is about as far from the busy
and talkative Alison as it is possible to get.

It is interesting to note that Alison’s fifth husband, in Chaucer’s portrait, saw
no difference between a female pilgrim - the wife ‘seeking shrines’ - and any other
woman who appeared unescorted in public. These authors often portrayed female
pilgrims as another version of the Wandering Woman, and regularly listed pilgrimage
alongside banquets and dances as opportunities for women to get into trouble. Alison,

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47 Eileen Power, ed. and trans., The Goodman of Paris: A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by
a Citizen of Paris (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1928), 52; also, Georgette E. Brereton and
comaignie suspecionneuse; ... Et en alant ayant la teste droite, les paupieres droites basses et
arrestees, et la veue droit devant vous quatre toises et bas a terre, sans regarder ou espandre vostre
regard a homme ou femme qui soit a destre ou a senestre, ne regarder hault, ne vostre regard changier
en divers lieux muablement, ne rire ne arrester a parler a aucun sur les rues.”
who appears in the context of a pilgrimage, is perhaps the most obvious example. The list of her pilgrimages given in the general prologue shows that "she has in fact visited all the major shrines in Christendom." She also described other times when she had made religious observance into an opportunity to wander. One Lent, while her husband was away and she "had better leisure to play," she went on "visits / to vigils and processions, / and also to preachings and to those pilgrimages, / to miracle plays and marriages." In Chaucer's understanding, Alison's wandering was all of one piece, whether she was going to visit a 'gossip' or going on a pilgrimage. Anytime she went about in public unsupervised, she was engaging in the same undesirable behavior. Indeed, after telling of her eight long-distance pilgrimages, Chaucer commented in the General Prologue that "she knew much about wandering along the road" (emphasis mine).

The anonymous author of the *Quinze Joyes* also identified pilgrimage as a dangerous form of wandering when practiced by women. In the Second Joy, the author claims, "the lady . . . goes to numerous feasts, gatherings, and pilgrimages . . ." This 'joy', in the author's opinion, leads to situations where "she often departs from

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49 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 118, line 551: "I hadde the bettre leyser for to pleye . . ."

50 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 118, lines 555-558: "Therefore I made my visitaciouns,/ To vigilies and to processiouns,/ To preching eek and to thise pilgrimages,/ To pleyes of miracles, and mariages . . . ."

51 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 14, line 467: "She coude muchel of wandringe by the weye."
Again, pilgrimage is estimated no more highly than any non-religious social function. In the Eighth Joy, where the author describes how unpleasant the process of pilgrimage is for a husband, he offers an explanation for wives’ desire to go: “They decide to go on a journey because they cannot do as they would in their own homes.” Further, he feels that pilgrimage lends itself to the development of further wanderlust. After one pilgrimage, “henceforth she will wish to travel and be on the highroad now that she has once begun.”

The Knight of La Tour-Landry was more conventional in that he viewed pilgrimage as a devout act. His book, written for his three daughters, was similar to the Ménagier de Paris in that it demonstrated great concern for their spiritual welfare and correct behavior, although it did not concern itself with household management.

He felt it necessary to warn his daughters about ill-counsel which “taketh and turneth folk from their devotion, fasting, alms, pilgrimage . . .” and he feared the possibilities for mischief when women become pilgrims. In a pair of exempla, he

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52 The Fifteen Joys, 31-34; also, Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, 27: “. . . et va á plusieurs festes, assemblees et pelerinages . . .” and 30: “Lá se met aucunefois hors de son charroy . . .”

53 The Fifteen Joys, 129; also, Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, 118: “Et ont entreprins d’aller en voyage, pource qu’ilz ne peuvent pas bien faire à leur guise en leurs mesons.”

54 The Fifteen Joys, 134; also, Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, 123: “Dorenavant elle vouldra voyager et estre par chemins, puis que el y a commencé.”


demonstrated his ambiguous outlook.\textsuperscript{57} The first exemplum details the story of a devout woman who heard three masses a day. While on pilgrimage, she found herself without a chaplain able to say mass for her, and because of her long history of devotion, God sent a saint to say mass for her.\textsuperscript{58} Here, he viewed the woman's pilgrimage as perfectly acceptable, especially considering her religious devotion. But in the very next story, a young wife who was in love with a squire and wished to spend some time with him "made her husband to understand the she had vowed diverse pilgrimages; and her husband, as he that thought none evil, and would not displease her, suffered and held him content that she should go where she list."\textsuperscript{59} Hence, those pilgrimages carried out in the utmost devotion were acceptable, but his daughters should not allow lecherous intent to change them from female pilgrims into Wandering Women.

The Ménagier also worried about the possible negative repercussions of his wife's religious observance, although he did not specifically mention pilgrimage. His advice as to comportment during trips "to town or to church", quoted in part above, also covered his young wife's behavior once she reached a church. Once within the building, she ought to choose an out-of-the-way place and worship there "without moving hither and thither, nor going to and fro;" she should also look "continually on

\textsuperscript{57} Cynthia Ho, "As Good as Her Word: Women's Language in the Knight of the Tour d'Landry," in \textit{The Rusted Hauberk: Feudal Ideals of Order and Their Decline}, ed. by Liam O. Purdon and Cindy L. Vitto (Gainesville, Florida: The University Press of Florida, 1994), 106, notes that the author also pairs other exempla to make his point regarding the governance of women's speech.

\textsuperscript{58} LaTour-Landry, \textit{Book}, 64.

\textsuperscript{59} LaTour-Landry, \textit{Book}, 65.
[her] book or on the face of the image, without looking at man or woman. The Ménagier, Livre de la Chevalier de LaTour-Landry, Chaucer, Jean de Meun and Guillame de Lorris, and the anonymous author of the Quinze Joyes all understood public worship, and in most cases pilgrimage in particular, as a potential danger for women.

But why did these authors understand husbands to be so firmly against their wives’ desire for a physical mobility, even in a devotional context? According to these authors, women who wandered unsupervised were more likely than not to fall into sin. They claimed that women who wandered saw too much or wanted to be seen too much, and in either case became acquisitive, especially in the realm of clothing and personal adornment. Further, they feared that unsupervised women had opportunities to carry on sexual affairs with men other than their husbands. The authors reasoned that the Wandering Woman sought these lovers because they might provide both sexual pleasure and the clothing, jewelry, or other wealth that she had come to desire. Finally, the Wandering Woman might turn to deceit in order to obtain the opportunity to wander, to carry on love affairs, and to wear fine clothing. All of these traits are amply demonstrated in the sources under scrutiny here, although the authors see the causal links between them in different ways.

60 The Goodman of Paris, 52; also, Le Ménagier de Paris, 11: “Et se vous estes venue a l’eglise, eslisez un lieu secret et solitaire devant un bel autel ou bel ymaigne et illec prenez place, et vous y arestez sans changier divers lieux ne laer ça ne la; et aiez la teste droite et les boilevres toujours mouvans en disans oroisans ou priers. Ayez aussi continuellement vostre regard sur vostre livre ou au visage de l’image, sans regarder homme ou femme, peinture ne autre chose, et sans pepelardie ou fiction.”
The thumbnail sketch of the Wife of Bath in the General Prologue emphasized her pride in her social station: “In all the parish there was no wife/ that went to the offering before her/ and if they did, she was indeed so angry/ that she was put all out of charity.”\(^{61}\) As with any group in the Middle Ages, the social station of women was denoted by their clothing. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were a period that emphasized the need for clothing as a mode of identification of social rank, because urbanization had created a ‘world of strangers’ wherein clothing was a helpful clue to an individual’s place in the social hierarchy.\(^{62}\) La Vielle of the *Romance of the Rose* emphasized this connection between status and clothing, explaining that for women, “if she is to be admired above all others, she has to be well-dressed.” La Vielle gave a lengthy and specific description of how a woman ought to dress and to move in order to show off her fine clothing to the best advantage.\(^{63}\) Although fine clothing was a necessity in order to maintain or improve a woman’s social station, there were definite fears associated with its misuse. When the Knight of La Tour-Landry gave advice to his three daughters, he was especially concerned that they use finery in the proper way. He included a cautionary tale about a woman who had fine clothes, but only wore them “if she was supposed to be at some feast or (when) she thought to find

\[^{61}\text{Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 14, lines 449-453: “In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon/ That to the offringe bfore hir sholde goon:/ And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she/ That she was out of alle charitee.”}\]


\[^{63}\text{Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 233, line 13529-13574; also, *Le Roman de la Rose* vol. 2, 161-162, lines 13499-13544.}\]
some lords or great strangers,” and thus would not wear them to Mass. Her refusal to wear her finery to church in order to honor God led to a divine punishment of paralysis and swelling.\footnote{LaTour-Landry, \textit{Book}, 50-1.}

The male authors differed in their understanding of the link between women’s desire to wander and their interest in clothing. Some of the Wandering Women desired fine clothing so that they might raise their social station, and thus better enjoy the experience of wandering. Such was the case with Alison. Whenever she went out, “... I wore my gay scarlet gown.”\footnote{Chaucer, \textit{The Canterbury Tales}, 118, line 559: “... And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.”} In this scenario the desire for fine clothing is secondary, a sort of prerequisite to the desire to wander about. In fact, Alison wanted fine clothes from her husband \textit{so that} she might wander about and impress people, complaining to her husband that “I sit at home, I have no nice clothing.”\footnote{Chaucer, \textit{The Canterbury Tales}, 111, line 238: “I sitte at hoom, I have no thrifty cloth.”} Her husband actually used this association to help keep Alison at home, telling her that a cat with singed fur would not go out, but women with fine clothes and cats with sleek fur “... will not dwell in the house half a day, / but will go forth, before the dawn of day / to show their fur and go a-caterwauling.”\footnote{Chaucer, \textit{The Canterbury Tales}, 114, lines 350 to 354: “She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,/ But forth she wole, er and day be dawed,/ to shewe hir skin and goon a-caterwawed.”}

The need for fine clothing might also be the \textit{result} of a woman’s wandering, rather than a prerequisite for it. The Wandering Woman sometimes saw and envied the clothing of others during her peregrinations, and thus demanded similar attire from...
her husband. Alison grounded at least some of her complaints on the finery of a neighbor: “Why is my neighbor’s wife so gay? / She is honored wherever she goes.”68 The author of the Quinze Joyes also feared this possibility. In the first Joy, the wife sought a new gown from her husband because she went to a feast and “there was no woman (no matter how lowly her estate) so poorly dressed as I.”69 In these cases, fine clothing and the associated improvement of a woman’s social status was the ultimate goal, rather than wandering, but there is still a close association between wandering and acquisitiveness in women.

Finally, the authors felt that a woman’s desire for fine clothing might prompt her to take a lover. In these cases, wives whose husbands had failed to provide the fine clothing they desired sought lovers in order to acquire the garments from a different source. This is the set of associations that seemed to appeal most to the authors of the Romance of the Rose, which was greatly concerned with the issue of lovers. La Vielle gave lengthy advice to women about how “to get the lover to give them coats, jackets, gloves, or mittens,” teaching them “the proper ways to pluck men.”70 Amis warns Amant of this tendency in women: “Truly, however, women are nearly all eager to take and greedy to ravish and devour until nothing can remain to

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68 Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 111, lines 236-7: “Why is my neighbores wyf so gay?/ She is honoured over al ther she goth . . .”

69 The Fifteen Joys, 18; also, Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, 15: “. . . je croy qu’il n’y avoit femme (tant lust-elle de petit estât) qui fust si mal abillée comme je estoye . . .”

70 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 235, line 13709; also, Le Roman de la Rose vol. 2, p. 166, line 13679 forward: “Mes au plumier convient maniere / Se valiez et sa chamberiere / et sa sereur et sa norrice / et sa mere, se mout n’est nice, / pour qu’il consentent la besoine / facent nuit tant que cil leur oigne / seurcoute ou cote ou ganz ou moufles . . .”
those who most proclaim themselves theirs and who love them most loyally.\textsuperscript{71} Reson (Reason), who gave a long discourse on the foolishness of love in \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, pointed out to Amant that the giving and receiving of gifts such as clothing and ornaments was an integral part of courtly love, although she placed limits on such gifts:

\begin{quote}
A woman who seeks to despoil a man should be valued at nothing. I do not say that she may not, for pleasure and solace, wear an ornament given or sent by her friend, but she must not ask for it, since she would then be taking it basely; in return she must give him something of hers if she wants to act blamelessly.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

Thus the wandering of the woman might be an end in itself, an opportunity to raise social status by exhibiting fine clothing, or, in the most complicated scenario, an opportunity to catch a lover who can then provide the fine clothing needed to raise social status.

According to male authors, the Wandering Woman’s interest in lovers is just as great as her interest in her appearance. Medieval culture understood women to be more lusty, and less able to control their lust, than men were,\textsuperscript{73} fear of sexual infidelity was therefore woven into this archetype of womanhood gone astray. Alison

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\textsuperscript{71} Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 183, line 8281; also, \textit{Le Roman de la Rose} vol. 2, 2, lines 8251-8256: “Si sunt eles voir pres que toutes / covoiteuses de prendre, et gloutes / de ravir et de devourer / si qu’il ne puist riens demorer / a cues qui plus por leur se claiment / et qui plus leaument les aiment; . . .”
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\textsuperscript{72} Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, 98-99, lines 4557-4589; also, \textit{Le Roman de la Rose} vol. 1, 140, lines 4547-4556: “L’en ne doit riens prisier moillier / qui home be a despoillier. / Je ne di pas que bien ne port / et par soulaz et par deport / un joellet, se ses amis / le li a doné ou tramis, / mes qu’ele pas ne le demant, / qu’el le prendroit lors leidement; / et des siens ausinc li redoigne, / s’el le peut fere sanz vergoine.”
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\textsuperscript{73} Bennett, introduction to \textit{Sisters and Workers}, 9.
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was openly lecherous, beginning her prologue with a discourse defending her five marriages and her overall enthusiasm for sex rather than virginity. Her interest in lovers seemed, in this passage, to have less to do with financial gain than with physical pleasure. On the other hand, La Vielle explained the lecherous behavior of women in practical terms. She claimed that “a woman ought to spread her nets everywhere to catch all men; since she cannot know which of them she may have the grace to catch, at least she ought to hook onto all of them in order to be sure of having one for herself.” She also presented a more naturalistic and less pragmatic argument, saying that “women are born free,” and that marriage was not intended by nature. Therefore, “when they are engaged, captured by law, and married, they still exert themselves in every way, these ladies and girls, ugly or beautiful, to return to their freedoms.”

While there has been some debate as to whether or not her defense of free love reflects the opinion of the authors or is intended as irony, there is no doubt that La Vielle demonstrates the medieval connection between women’s mobility, their dress, and their lustful intentions.

74 Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 105 - 109, lines 1-163.

75 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, Dahlberg, ed. and trans., p. 234, lines 13582-13600. Le Roman de la Rose, Lecoy, ed., vol. 2, p. 163, lines 13559-13564: “Ausinc doit fame par tout tender / ses raiz por touz les homes prendre / car porce qu'el ne peut savoir / des quex el puist la grace avoir, / au mains por un a soi sachier / a touz doit son croc estachier.”

76 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, Dahlberg, ed. and trans., p. 238 line 13875 forward. Le Roman de la Rose, lecoy, ed., vol. 2, p. 171-172, lines 13845-13868: “D'autre part el sunt franches nees; / . . . . si que, quant el sunt affiees, / par loi prises et mariees, / por oster dissolucions / et contenz et occisions / et por aidez les norretures / dom il ont ensemble les cures . . . .”

As with her desire for fine clothing, the Wandering Woman was connected to the desire for lovers in different ways. As was mentioned above, lovers could be a mere prerequisite to the goal of acquiring fine clothing. This could work in the other direction, too; women could desire fine clothing in order to catch a lover. In The Romance of the Rose, Amis warns that “a woman who wants to be beautiful, or who exerts herself to appear beautiful, examines herself and takes great trouble to deck herself out and look attractive because she wants to wage war on Chastity, who certainly has many enemies.”

Lovers could be the ultimate goal of a woman’s wandering. The Wife of Bath boasted to her companions of using her freedom to wander for sexual license. Having told her husband that she wandered by night in order to spy on his wenching, she told the other pilgrims that she “had many a good time under that guise.” Lest there be some doubt about the nature of this fun, Dame Alison later explained in some detail how a period of gadding about while her fourth husband was away in London allowed her to pre-arrange her marriage to her fifth husband: “I say that we walked in the fields/ until truly we had such dalliance/ this clerk and I, that by my foresight / I spoke to him and told him how he/ if I were a widow, should wed me.” Although

78 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 163-4, lines 9013-9020; also, Le Roman de la Rose vol. 2, 24, lines 8983-8989: “Dom je jur Dieu, le roi celestre, / que fame qui bele veust estre / ou qui dou resembluer se paine, / et se remiere et se demaine por soi parer et cointoier, / qu'el veust Chastaé guerroier, / qui mout a certes d'aenemies.”

79 Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 115, line 399: “Under that colour Hadde I many a mirthe . . .”

80 Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 118-119, lines 564-569: “I seye that in the feeldes walked we,/ Til trewely we hadde swich dalliance,/ This clerk and I, that of my purveyance,/ I spak to him and seyde him how that he,/ if I were widwe, sholde wedde me.”
this seems relatively harmless – after all, Alison did not physically cheat on her husband – other examples of the same type behavior were more serious. The author of the *Quinze Joyes* expressed these grave doubts throughout his work. After darkly hinting that women who are allowed to wander often depart from the straight and narrow, he proceeded to demonstrate the possibility in several hypothetical situations. In a number of cases where the husband was forced to allow his wife to roam, she was supposed to go along with female relatives or gossips and “her cousin who, perhaps, is no kin at all, but she is wont to say so and for good reason.” The reason was obvious enough that the author felt no need for further elaboration.

Further, these fears of sexual infidelity were often placed within the context of pilgrimage. In the Eleventh Joy, a hypothetical young woman used a “pilgrimage to Notre Dame” to meet with her potential husband. This courtship/pilgrimage was marred by the fact that it had been carefully orchestrated to help her snare the young man and marry him quickly, because (unbeknownst to him) she was already pregnant by another. Jean de Meun, the second author of the *Romance of the Rose*, associated pilgrimage so closely with sexual affairs that he included it in his allegorical structure. The plot of the poem centers on the assault on the Castle of Love by a group of allegorical figures seeking to win sexual access to a desired one (in this case, she is represented by a Rose). The assault on one of the gates of the castle was carried out

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81 *The Fifteen Joys*, 31; also, *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, 28: “... et pour ce emprunt avecques sa cousine, sa commere et son cousin, qui à l'aventure ne lui est rien, mais elle a accustomed ainsi dire et pour cause.”
by two figures: Atenance Contrainte (Constrained Abstinence), a woman, and Faussemblant (False Seeming), a man. They achieve their victory by trickery, by dressing up as pilgrims to approach the guardian of the gate.\textsuperscript{83} Hence, the pilgrim’s costume was used by a liar, portrayed as male, and a woman who represents all those being forced to abstain from sex, so that they might allow a lover to achieve his goal of sexual union with his sweetheart.

When the lover finally did achieve his goal, the pilgrim metaphor was again employed: “I set out like a good pilgrim, impatient, fervent, and wholehearted, like a pure lover, on the voyage toward the aperture . . .”\textsuperscript{84} What follows is a long allegorical passage which used images of pilgrimage to denote intercourse. The pilgrim’s traditional traveling gear, the scrip (bag) and staff, stand in the place of male genitalia; the lover has a “sack and the staff so strong that it didn’t need to be shod with iron for traveling and wandering.”\textsuperscript{85} Female genitalia, on the other hand, becomes a pilgrimage shrine; as the lover approaches a sanctuary for relics which stood between

\textsuperscript{82} The Fifteen Joys, 163; also, Les Quinze Joys de Mariage, 151: “. . . Il convient, fait-elle, que nous allions demain en pelerinage à Nostre-Dame de tel lieu.”

\textsuperscript{83} Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 209 forward, lines 12033 forward; also, Le Roman de la Rose vol. 2, 115 forward, lines 12003 forward.

\textsuperscript{84} Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 348, lines 21316-20; also, Le Roman de la Rose vol. 3, 141, lines 21316-19: “Je, qui l’an rant merciz .c. mile, / tantost, comme bons pelerins, / hastis, fervenz et enterins / de queur comme fins amoureus, . . .”

\textsuperscript{85} Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 348, line 21355; also, Le Roman de la Rose vol. 3, 142, lines 21351-21356: “Ele meusmes le bourdon / m’avoit apparaillié por don, / et vost au doler la main metre / ainz que je fuisse mis a letre; / mes du ferrer ne li chalut / n’onques por ce mains n’an valut.”
“two fair pillars” and down a “narrow aperture” which the Lover probed with his pilgrim’s staff.

Ann S. Haskell has suggested that a more subtle version of this motif also appears in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, where the Wife explains that she repaid her unfaithful fourth husband by making him jealous of her own infidelity: “But he was quit, by God and St. Joce! / I made him of the same wood a cross.” Haskell pointed out that St. Joce was a patron of pilgrims, and was typically portrayed bearing a pilgrim’s staff or *bourdon* (a word which was used elsewhere in the *Tales* as a pun on ‘phallus’). Hence, in swearing by him about her own infidelity, Alison once again invoked the idea of the regalia of pilgrimage as male genitalia. Thus, even in cases where pilgrimage appears as a literary motif, it was regularly portrayed in tandem with sexual transgression.

Finally, the Wandering Woman, either because her wandering taught her lechery and avarice, or because it was an opportunity for the exercise of innate lust and greed, regularly resorted to lies and deceit in order to achieve her goals of personal liberty, acquisition, or sexual misconduct. Dame Alison was a marvelous trickster, and was proud of it. She explained that deceit was as innate to women as suffering and household tasks: “...For all such wit is given to us at birth. / God has

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86 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 117, lines 483-484: “But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce! / I made hym of the same wode a croce.”

87 Haskell, “The St. Joce Oath,” 86.
given deceit, weeping, and spinning / By nature to women while they live." Thus, she openly declared that "No man can half so boldly / swear and lie as a woman can." Jean de Meun echoes her nearly word for word: "nothing swears or lies so boldly as a woman . . ." 

Alison practiced deceit regularly. We have already mentioned how she defended her nighttime perambulations by insisting they were necessary in order to keep her husband from lechery, when in fact they were simply an opportunity for her own "mirthe." She used deceitful tactics which her mother taught her to help her woo her fifth husband (while her fourth yet lived), purposefully giving him the idea that she was wildly in love with him, and telling him she had dreamed of him, even though " . . . all was false – I never dreamed of him, / But I always followed my mother's teaching / as well in this as in many other things." Although she had already arranged to marry the young clerk, she feigned sadness at the funeral of her fourth husband "as wives must, for it is custom." Nevertheless, while she followed the funerary procession, she paid more attention to the handsome legs of her new mate than to the loss of the old one.

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88 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 115, line 400-402: "...For al swich wit is yeven us in oure birthe:/ Deceite, weping, spinning God hath yive/ To womanne kindele whyl they may live."

89 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 111, lines 228-9: "For half so boldely can ther no man/ Swere and lyenb as a womman can."

90 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 30, line 18129; also, *Le Roman de la Rose* vol. 3, 43, lines 18093-18098: "il fist occurcie et troublee, / tant est la langue doublee / et diverses plicacions / a trover excusacions / car riens ne jure ne ne mant / de fame plus hardiemant . . . ."

91 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 119, lines 583-5: "And al was fals – I dremed of it right naught,/ But as I folwed ay my dames lore/ As wel of this as of other thinges more."

92 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 119, line 589: "... As wyves moten, for it is usage . . ."
Other male authors also told of the kinds of deceit that women practiced in order to win their desired freedom or wealth. In the *Romance of the Rose*, La Vielle explained that women need to be emotionally deceitful in order to best ‘pluck’ their lovers’ wealth. She taught that a woman should “pretend to be a coward, to tremble, be fearful, distraught, and anxious when she must receive her lover,” and that she should “sigh and pretend to be angry, to attack him and run at him” when displaying jealousy over his tardiness at appointments, so that “he will believe, quite incorrectly, that she loves him very loyally” and will be more likely to remain in the relationship, continuing to give gifts.

This deceit was generally achieved not only through the Wandering Woman’s natural capacity, but also through the help of her friends, and especially her gossips or commères – those with whom she shared the bond of baptismal co-parenthood, which had been a significant social tie since the sixth century. Chaucer’s Alison worked through friends in order to meet and court her fifth husband before the death of her

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93 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 237, line 13795; also, *Le Roman de la Rose* vol. 2, 169, lines 13765-13769: “Si doit faire, s’il n’est musarde, / faire semblant d’être couarde, / de trembler, d’être pooreuse, / d’être destraite et angoisseuse / quant son ami doit recevoir.”

94 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 237, lines 13825 forward; also, *Le Roman de la Rose* vol. 2, 170, lines 13793-13808: “Puis doit la dame sopirer / et sal par semplant aïrer, / et l’assaille et li queure seure / et die que si grant demeure / n’a il mie fet sanz resoun / et qu’il tenoit en sa meson / autre fame, quell qu’elie soit, / dome li solaz mieuz li plesoit, / et qu’or est ele bien traîe / quant il l’a por autre enhale; / bien doit etre lasse clamee / quant ele aime sanz estre amée. / Et quant orra ceste parole / cil qui la pensee avra foie, / si cuidera tout erraumont / que cele l’aint trop leaument.”

fourth; he was boarding in the home of one of her gossips, and it was her mother’s teaching which allowed her to catch him: “my mother taught me that subtlety.” La Vielle also taught women in search of lovers to rely on the help of their networks of female friends: “get your servants, the chambermaid, the nurse, your sister, even your mother, if she is not too particular, to help in the task . . .” The hypothetical situations set up by the author of the *Quinze Joyes* were often abetted by a female network. The woman’s *commères* helped to convince the poor, abused husband to let the wife go wandering in the Second Joy; female servants acted carried messages between between wives and their lovers in the Fifth Joy; friends and *commères* attended her pilgrimage in the Eight Joy; and “friends persuade her mother to say she has been with her all the time” when she ran off with a lover in the Tenth Joy.

The entire web of fears and assumptions is well demonstrated in the *Romance of the Rose* by Amis, who, in order to discourage the lover from marriage to his sweetheart, imitates a husband’s wrath:

> But now tell me without making up any lies. Where, for the sake of love, did you get that other rich new dress in which you fixed yourself up here the other day when you went to the carols, for I know very well that I am to think that I never gave it to you. You swore to me by Saint Denis, Saint Philbert, and Saint Peter that it came to you through your mother, who sent you the cloth for it because, as you gave me to understand, her love for me is so great that she wants to spend her

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97 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 235, line 13709-10; also, *Le Roman de la Rose* vol. 2, 166, lines 13680-13682: “Ses valiez et sa chamberiere / et sa sereur et sa norrice / et sa mere, se mout n’est nice . . .”

98 *The Fifteen Joys*, 150; also, *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, 138: “. . . elle a aucuns de ses amis qui traictant avecques la mere, qu’elle die qu’elle a toujours esté avecques elle . . .”

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money in order to make me keep mine. May she be spitted alive, that dirty old whore . . . . I know that you have talked together, and it is obvious that you both have hearts touched by the same wand.  

The husband here feared that his wife, who had gone off unsupervised to a carol, had found a lover who gave her a rich dress, and deceitfully planned, with her mother, to cover it all up while still being able to wear the gown and thus raise her social station. This example lacks only a reference to pilgrimage or religious observance as a form of wandering. But de Meun, as we have demonstrated, mentions pilgrimage in several other passages.

In her Livre des trois vertus, Christine de Pizan's interpretation of the female pilgrim stands in contrast to the distinctly masculine fears demonstrated in the other texts examined here. Christine offers advice to women of all social ranks. She, too, has great concern for the moral welfare of female pilgrims. She warns “women of property and city women” against several of the sins of the Wandering Woman, including excessive interest in fine clothing and potential affairs, the latter of which she teaches women to avoid in order to protect their honor. She also explains that excessive wandering can be dangerous:  

99 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, 168, lines 9313-9340; also, Le Roman de la Rose vol. 2, 33-34, lines 9283-9310: “Mes or me dites sanz contrueve, / cele autre riche robe nueve / don l’autre jor si vos parastes / quant aus queroles en alastes, / quar bien connois, et reson ai, / c’onques cele ne vos donai, / par amors, ou l’avez vos prise? / Vos m’avez juré saint Denise / et saint Philebert et sint Pere / qu'el vos vint de par vostre mere / qui le drap vos en envoia, / car si grant amor en moi a, / si con vos mefetes entendre, / qu'el veust bien ses deniers despendre / por moi fere les miens garder. / Vive la &ce l'en larder, / l’orde vielle putain de prestresse . . . . Bien sai parlé avez ensemble; / andois avez, et bien le semble, / les queurs d’une verge tochiez.”

Some women travel on pilgrimages away from town in order to frolic and kick up their heels in jolly company. But this is only sin and folly. It is a sin to use God as excuse and shelter for frivolity. Such pilgrimages are entirely without merit. Nor should a young woman go trotting about town, as is the custom – on Monday to St. Avoye; on Tuesday, to who knows where; on Friday to St. Catherine, and elsewhere on the other days. Even if some do it, there is no need for it. Of course, we do not wish to prevent anyone from doing good works. But considering a woman’s youth and exuberance, plus men’s desire to seduce women, as well as the fact that words are so often spoken so readily and so rashly, the surest thing for the soul’s profit and the body’s honor is to avoid the habit of trotting here and there. God is everywhere to hear the prayers of his devout believers, wherever they happen to be, and He wishes all things done discreetly and not necessarily at will.

While her specific concerns sound similar to those of the male authors examined above, there are subtle differences in how they are presented. Christine’s main reservation regarding pilgrimage was that women should not use a solemn religious event as an opportunity for fun – she worried first about the insult to God and secondly about the possibilities for mischief. When she did directly address the concern that the Wandering Woman will engage in lust, she had more sympathy than male authors, naming “youth and exuberance” as the primary character flaw in wandering women, rather than innate lustfulness. She also pointed out that sexual

Champion, 1989), 182: “Ne de trouver ces pèlerinages hors ville pour aler quelque part jouer ou mener la gale en quelque compagnie joyeuse n’est fors pechié et mal a qui le fait: car c’est faire ombre de Dieu et chape a pluie; ne tieux pèlerinages ne soit point bons, ne aussi tant aler trotant par ville a joennes femmes: au Lundi a Saincte Avoye, au Jeudi je ne scay ou, au Vendredi a Saincte Katherine, et ainsi aux autre jours. Se aucunes le fint n’en est ja grant besoing. Non pas que nous uellons empeschier le bien a faire, mais sans faille, veu le peril de joennesce, la legierté et la grant convoitise que homes ont communement a attraire a femmes, et les paroles qui tost en sont levees et a pou d’achoison, et le plus seur, meismes pour les prouffit des ames et l’onneur du corps, n’estre coutumieres de tant troter ça et la: car Diex est par tout qui exuce les oroisons des devoz deprians, ou qu’ilz soient, et qui veult que toutes choses soient faictes par discretion et non mie du tout a voulenté.”
misconduct required another participant, and expressed fears of seductive men rather
than lustful, acquisitive, or manipulative women.

Finally, throughout the *Livre des trois vertus*, Christine was occupied with
teaching women to protect their honor and to avoid bad reputations so that they would
wield more social power. While men expressed distrust of women who went on
pilgrimage, Christine taught women to protect themselves from this distrust. Brown-
Grant has explained the difference between Christine’s goals and those of La-Tour
Landry and the Ménagier in this way:¹⁰¹

What distinguishes Christine’s advice in the *Trois Vertus* from that of
her male counterparts in their courtesy books is her emphasis on what
might be termed a ‘politics of visibility,’ a politics designed to protect
women but which, paradoxically, would seem to be drawing on a
tradition going back to one of the most fervently misogynist Church
Fathers. . . . the *Trois Vertus* eschews exemplification in favor of a set
of codes of virtuous conduct which must not only be followed, but
must be visibly followed for all to see. The originality of Christine’s
text therefore resides in its stress on women’s skillful mastery and even
manipulation of those codes within which their reputations will be
defined.

Thus, according to Christine, if a woman is seen to be virtuous, she will obtain respect,
and will “silence misogynists forever” – a end to which, one could argue, Christine’s
entire literary career was dedicated.¹⁰² Certainly, her attacks on the *Roman de la Rose*

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¹⁰² Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women*, 214; and Kevin Brownlee,
“Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the *Romance of the Rose,*” in *Rethinking the Romance
of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception*, ed. by Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Hunt (Philadelphia:
University of Pennsylvania Press), 235-261.
were motivated by that text’s mistreatment of women. But there were also practical benefits for women who sought to purposefully shape their own reputation for the better. Hints of this can be seen in her discussion of how wives should handle adulterous husbands. Christine points out that wives have no choice but to treat even adulterous husbands kindly: “If I speak to him harshly, I will gain nothing. . . . Perhaps he might send me away.” Instead, Christine suggests a combination of gentle admonition in private coupled with unswerving loyalty in public. She argued that such behavior might perhaps convince the husband to reform, and at the same time would enhance the wife’s good name. Thus, Christine’s warnings against pilgrimage should be understood in the context of her book: her aim is not to remove women’s agency, but rather to enhance it within the constraints and expectations laid upon them.

Women and Pilgrimage in Clerical Literature

Churchmen, too, had their concerns about women wandering about. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, these concerns were hundreds of years old. Perhaps the most oft-quoted complaint ever made by a cleric about female pilgrims

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was voiced in 747 C.E. by St. Boniface in a letter to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury:

Finally, I will not conceal from your Grace that all the servants of God here who are especially versed in Scripture and strong in the fear of God agree that it would be well and favorable for the honor and purity of your church, and provide a certain shield against vice, if your synod and your princes would forbid matrons and veiled women to make these frequent journeys back and forth to Rome. A great part of them perish and few keep their virtue. There are very few towns in Lombardy and Frankland or Gaul where there is not a courtesan or harlot of English stock. It is a scandal and a disgrace to your whole church.

Despite the rather harsh nature of this comment, it neatly distills the overall attitude of the clergy when it came to the Wandering Woman: while they voice their concerns just as strenuously as the lay authors examined above, they tended to phrase them with regard to the physical and spiritual well-being of the woman herself, rather than as a complaint about how her behavior affected the physical, social, or financial well-being of her husband or family.

Perhaps the best introduction to clerical concerns about the Wandering Woman in the later Middle Ages is to be found in collections of *exempla*, or didactic stories intended to be incorporated into sermons. The preaching of sermons had been a part of Christian practice since the patristic era, but it had largely been confined to the monastic and university settings until the reign of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). Innocent, searching for ways to improve the priesthood and educate the laity about proper orthodox belief in the face of growing heresies, made the preaching of sermons

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a required part of ministry to the laity in the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). This, combined with his decision in 1210 to authorize the first of the mendicant orders, the Friars Minor, and to allow them to preach on moral topics, extended the spiritual benefits of preaching to the majority of medieval Europeans. The preaching of the mendicant orders was so prolific that Jean Longère, who in his coverage of preaching before the twelfth century attempted to list all major preachers and their works, commented once he reached the mendicant orders that “it is not possible in the limits of the present volume to present an exhaustive list of the mendicant preachers from their origins to the end of the Middle Ages.”

Because sermons were so commonly preached to an enthusiastic laity in the high and late Middle Ages, exempla proliferated as well. Their use was not entirely new, however; Welter noted that exempla were “introduced by the Savior himself in evangelical preaching.” According to Joan Young Gregg, exempla can be described in this way:


... they are persuasive and didactic in aim and tone; they teach
lessons of good conduct not only as the means to earthly happiness but,
more importantly, as the means for eternal salvation; and they are told
on the authority of recognized spiritual leaders as “true” events, either
historical or contemporary, which supposedly took place as narrated.

Latin collections of such stories, intended for the use of those composing sermons,
began to appear as early as the twelfth century. According to Jean-Claude Schmitt,
“From 1200 to 1500, 46 distinct collections of exempla were compiled.” Exempla
seem to have resisted attempts to clearly classify them, perhaps because they come
from such diverse sources; they were drawn from classical sources, the Bible, the
lives of the saints, chronicles, historical events, and even current events. The
content of these stories ranges from the mundane to the fantastic, and from the devout
to the shockingly profane.

Exempla were widely circulated, translated and copied, so that there is often a
great deal of overlap from one collection to another. Further, they passed easily out
of the realm of clerical literature into lay literature. Ruth Mazo Karras has commented
that “if anything reveals how common men and women received the church’s

115 Brian S. Lee, “‘This is No Fable’: Historical residues in Two Medieval Exempla,” Speculum 56, no. 4 (1981): 748-760.
teaching, it is the exemplum," and their use in lay didactic manuals and literary production supports her claim. Both the Knight of LaTour-Landry and the Ménagier turned to collections of exempla to illustrate their points. Margaret Jennings has argued that sermon patterns appear in the Canterbury Tales, as well.

In order to offer a brief introduction to the Wandering Woman’s appearances in sermon literature, I examine tales about women in An Alphabet of Tales, a fifteenth-century English collection. Ruth Mazo Karras has performed a similar investigation of John Bromyard’s Summa Predicantium, a fourteenth-century English collection, and her conclusions will provide further illumination. The Alphabet of Tales is a translation of a Latin collection, the Alphabetum Narrationum, completed in 1307 by the French Dominican Arnold of Liège (d. 1345). While the English translator remains anonymous, his translation of the stories “correlate(s) closely with those in the Latin,” with a few errors in translation. The English version is a compendium of eight hundred and one tales, organized alphabetically by topic and extensively cross-

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120 Karras, “Gendered Sin.”

121 Welte, L’exemplum, 304. The original Latin version of the compendium has never been published (see Joan Young Gregg, “The Exempla of ‘Jacob’s Well’: A Study in the Transmission of Medieval Sermon Stories” Traditio 33 (1977): 361, note 7).

122 Gregg, “‘Jacob’s Well,’ ” 360.
referenced. There is a section of stories on women (*mulieres*) and another on wives (*uxores*); these two sections, along with their cross references to stories from sections as diverse as those on 'chastity,' 'Saint Clement,' 'patience,' and 'serpents,' yield fifty-two stories which the author designated relevant to the topic of women. Thirty-nine of the stories are examples of vicious women (to borrow the terminology of Karras), wherein women engage in vice; the remaining thirteen are stories of virtuous women, who demonstrated their morality to a level which certainly seems above and beyond the call of duty by modern standards.123

The *exempla* of the *Alphabet of Tales* voiced concerns about women which were similar to those in the works of lay authors. In particular, they addressed the issues of wandering, lustful behavior, the misuse of women's networks of friendship and support, pride, and the use of fine clothing. But clerical presentation of these concerns is flavored by their pastoral concern for the *spiritual* well-being of women and men alike. For a cleric, a disaster occurred the moment a woman committed adultery and thus endangered her soul; for the lay authors examined above, it occurred when this sin was made public, causing social or economic difficulties for her husband and family. This clerical focus on the *act* and *state* of sin, rather than its worldly consequences, means that the *exempla* did not always draw connections between one negative behavior and another; each, in isolation, was worthy of attention. Because of this, the Wandering Woman does not appear in these sources in so integrated a form as she does in lay literature. A few *exempla* do place more than one of her characteristics

123 Karras, "Gendered Sin," 238.
together for the purposes of advancing the plot of the narrative, however, and one places all of her characteristics together on the same laundry list of concerns without making overt connections between one behavior and another.

It should be noted that the presence of the Wandering Woman in *exempla* is not proof of a monolithic opposition to the pilgrimages of women on the part of the medieval clergy. Morrison, based upon her examination of late medieval English hagiography, has concluded that “Saints’ legends . . . endorse women pilgrims to validate the sanctity of the holy person in question.” As we shall see in the next chapter, miracle collections, also written by clerics, offer a positive image of female pilgrims. It is interesting to note, however, that *exempla* were intended for the instruction of the laity, whereas hagiography and miracle tales had several purposes, most importantly the documentation of a canonization case and the promotion of pilgrimage to a particular shrine. Hence, where the spiritual well-being of lay people is the highest priority in a text, women’s pilgrimages tend to be questioned; but where the promotion of the cult of the saints is the primary motive, women’s pilgrimages become somewhat more acceptable. Whatever the case, the diversity of opinion in clerical sources suggests that one cannot safely argue, as Morrison did, that secular and clerical perceptions of female pilgrims represent “binary opposites.”

On the contrary, like their sisters in lay literature, women did wander about in the *Alphabet of Tales*, although not so frequently. Since wandering is not, in itself, a

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sin — only a potential occasion for sin — it is unsurprising that it should not take center stage. But seven of the fifty-two stories under examination featured sins committed as a result of women’s wandering. In one relatively tame story, for example, innocent maidens who were “going by the way” aroused the visual interest of a monk, who was reproved by the old wife who accompanied them: “If you were a perfect monk you would not even have beheld us, or known that we were women.” Another recounted the famous legend of Pope Joan, starting with her wandering: “once there was a young damsel, and a love of hers went away with her and brought her in man’s clothing unto Rome . . .” (emphasis mine). The ultimate outcome of this jaunt was Joan’s elevation to Papacy, and the revelation of her gender-inappropriate behavior when she gave birth to an illegitimate child during a solemn papal procession, and then died on the spot. Perhaps more horrifying than the pope who turned out to be a Wandering Woman was the Wandering Women who turned out to be a devil. A lustful bishop, in this story, was tempted by the devil, who took the shape of a young women and claimed that her father “would have married me to a worthy prince, and I

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126 Mary McCleod Banks, ed., An Alphabet of Tales. An English 15th Century Translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum Once Attributed to Etienne de Besançon (London: Early English Texts Society, 1905), stories 67 (pp. 49-51); 454 (pp. 308-9); 534 (p. 359); 538 (pp. 362-3); 539 (pp. 363-4); 650 (pp. 401-2); and 798 (pp. 529-30).

127 Alphabet, 359: “And þou wer a parfite monke þou sulde not behalde vs, nor know þat we wer wommen.”

128 Alphabet, 401-2: “We rede in ‘Chronicles’ how som tyme þer was a yong damysell, and a luff of hurs went away with hur & broght hur in mans clothyng vnto Rome . . .”
am a runaway and I would not have him, because I avowed my virginity to Almighty God (emphasis mine).”

Another story seems clearly related to the fabliaux tradition in that it was less concerned with sin than with public humiliation, and in that the vicious woman was not punished, but rather triumphed. A woman whose husband kept her safely locked in a tower in order to guard her chastity saw an attractive young man through her window, and began to sneak out in the night to carry on an affair with him. When her husband attempted to lock her out of the house, thereby intending to hand her over to the authorities (“they who were found to be out at midnight, watchmen would take them and in the morning set them on the pillory”) she cleverly tricked him into coming outside, locked him out in turn, and accused him of adultery to the authorities. He was duly punished on the pillory. It seems hard to imagine that this story could have been used to dissuade women from lust, but it certainly might have been used to dissuade men from marriage.

Another three stories were examples of virtuous women who adopted immobility, silence, and stability rather than wandering about. One such woman, afraid that her beauty would lead men into lust, closed herself in a grave and only received food through a little hole, a feat the author clearly felt marked the woman as

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129 Alphabet, 49: “... my fader wolde hafe marid me vnto a wurthi prince, and I am fled away & wold not hafe hym, because I had avowed my virginitie vnto almighti God.”

130 Alphabet, 362: “... bi bat wer fon ber-oute at mydnyght, wachemen sulde take bam & on be morn sett bam on be pyllorie, bat all men might wonder on bam.”

131 Alphabet, stories 16 (pp. 14-15); 136 (p. 95); and 329 (p. 228).
holy. Three other stories associate pilgrimage in particular with the lustfulness of women, but in these two cases the pilgrim in question is male. One of these men dressed as a pilgrim and appeared thus at the home of his own mother in order to test her chastity (a test she failed); the other two each began with the pilgrimage of a husband, which left his unsupervised wife prey to bad influences and, ultimately, to adultery.

It seems as if Arnold of Liège originally included a specific complaint about wandering wives. In the cross-references under the heading of “women,” the translator of the *Alphabet of Tales* includes the following: “A woman ought to be quiet and not wander. Below, wife.” Much to this historian’s frustration, none of the tales under the heading of “wives” focuses specifically on wandering as a sin, but it is entirely possible that some of the stories were accidentally or purposefully left out when the collection was translated into English.

One story offered a counter-example wherein the wandering of a woman was a virtuous response to her circumstances. Arnold of Liège seems to have been fond of such inversions, providing at least one story which made a virtue out of what would

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133 *Alphabet*, 465-6.

134 *Alphabet*, stories 536 and 537 (pp. 360-1).

135 *Alphabet*, 358: “Mulier debet esse quieta et non vaga. Infra de vxore.”

136 The author is currently collecting and rolling unwanted pennies in the hope of buying the microfilm necessary to settle this vexing question. All donations welcome.
normally have been designated a vice. In this case, it was the story of Matidiana, the mother of St. Clement.\footnote{Alphabet, 101: “And sho vmthought hur þat sho wolde go oute of þe contre a while, and sho fenyd a dreme & told hur husband at þer was a voice at come vnto hur in hur slepe, & bad hur go furth of þe cetye with hur ij sonnys, Fuastus & Fuastinus, vnto tyme it called hur agayn, and els sho & bothe hur sonnys mond be peryshid & destroyed.”}

... she decided that she would go out of the country, and feigned a dream and told her husband that there was voice that came to her in her sleep, and bade her to go forth out of the country with her two sons... until the time it called her again, or else both she and her two sons would both perish and be destroyed.

Normally, such a deception would be the prelude to running off with another man or some other serious sin. In this case it was a virtuous act, despite the fact that it meant she both lied to her husband and set herself to wandering in the world, because of her purpose in leaving. She was being repeatedly and aggressively propositioned by her husband’s brother, and this was the only way she could avoid the situation that, as the author pointed out, could “cause him and his brother, her husband, to be at debate.”\footnote{Alphabet, 101: “And sho vmthought hur þat sho wolde go oute of þe contre a while, and sho fenyd a dreme & told hur husband at þer was a voice at come vnto hur in hur slepe, & bad hur go furth of þe cetye with hur ij sonnys, Fuastus & Fuastinus, vnto tyme it called hur agayn, and els sho & bothe hur sonnys mond be peryshid & destroyed.”}

The author considered lust and anger, two of the seven deadly sins, to be far more serious than a small deception and the wandering of a devout woman. Matidiana suffered terribly during her twenty years of self-imposed exile, losing her sons in a shipwreck and enduring paralysis of the hands, which left her a beggar. Her virtuous wandering was eventually rewarded when she was reunited with her “lost” sons and her husband.

In the light of the other stories about women, it seems unsurprising that even in this case clerical authors would rather see a woman wander unsupervised than risk her
chastity; of all the sins which the Alphabetum addressed, lust was by far the object of greatest concern. Thirty-five of the fifty-two stories about women under consideration here (67.3 per cent) include lust as one of their central elements. Karras has noted that the Summa Praedicantium also overwhelmingly related women to the sin of lust; in fact, in that collection “women are nearly five times as likely to be presented as lustful as men.”

The thirty-five stories in the Alphabet of Tales described situations which ranged from overwhelming, random, and innate lust in women to stories in which women were led or even tricked into adultery. Some tales even warned that women lead men into sexual sins, whether they intended to or not, and hence women should avoid contact with men and vice versa.

Medieval fears of women’s voracious sexuality played themselves out in exempla wherein women aggressively sought to satisfy sexual desires that were taboo. The lust of one such woman was directed towards a cleric, who refused her. She had him falsely imprisoned, and then broke into the prison to force herself on him. He was burned for witchcraft because the authorities believed he had used magic to spirit her into the prison to satisfy his own lust, and after his death his bones performed miracles.

In another story, a married woman who was wooing a cleric (in this case, a bishop) brought him many gifts, and was shamed when he pointed out that he could

138 Alphabet, 101: “...for to cauce hym & his bruther, hur husbond, to be at debate.”

139 Karras, “Gendered Sin,” 244.

140 Alphabet, 308-9.
not accept such gifts unless her husband knew about them and approved.\textsuperscript{141} Incest was another taboo explored in the stories. One woman wanted to sleep with her own son; when he refused, she took him to court and accused \textit{him} of propositioning \textit{her}, and he was tortured and killed as a result.\textsuperscript{142} Incest reappeared in the story of Queen Semiramis. She passed laws which legalized incest and then propositioned her own son, who killed her in disgust.\textsuperscript{143} Indiscriminate promiscuity was castigated in the story of a Roman noblewoman, who was openly promiscuous and encouraged other women of her class to behave in a similar fashion. Because of this behavior, she was killed by the Emperor and her husband; and “she was so forgetful of mind that when they killed her she asked them why they would not come and have sex with her.”\textsuperscript{144} Another noblewoman alone in a castle, possessed by lust, went down from her chamber and asked the porter if he would come sleep with her. His vehement rejection prompted her to go dunk herself in the cold water of the river below the castle, which cured her lust, and then to thank him for his gift of good counsel.\textsuperscript{145} As was mentioned above, the medical tradition held that women were more prone to lustful behavior than men because of their physiological makeup. Hence, this aspect of Wandering Womanhood received the most attention in a clerical source, which

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{141} Alphabet, 527-8.

\textsuperscript{142} Alphabet, 48-9.

\textsuperscript{143} Alphabet, 357.

\textsuperscript{144} Alphabet, 357: “... and sho was so forgettell of mynd þat when þei slew her sho askid þaim whi þai wolde not com & hafe att do with hur.”

\textsuperscript{145} Alphabet, 501.
\end{footnotesize}
regarded lust as a far more concrete sin than wandering. In fact, the Alphabet of Tales does not contain a positive counter-example that demonstrates circumstances under which extramarital sexual relations would be considered acceptable – and there are such counter-examples for every other complaint about women examined here.

Exempla displayed more than one take on the problem of women and lust. Not only did the Alphabet of Tales tell of women who attempted to gratify inappropriate sexual desires, but it also taught that women, without even intending to do so, could lead men into lust. It was part of the nature of womankind, these stories explained, to inspire lust in men. According to Karras, the Summa Praedicantium also "stressed the notion of women’s beauty as the cause of men’s sin."¹⁴⁶ The solution to this problem was not to urge self-control on the part of men, but instead for men to reject women’s bodies altogether, and for women to make themselves invisible and untouchable. In one story, a man who first wrapped his hands in fabric before helping his mother to cross a river so that he would not be touching her person was held up as an example of how this problem of unintentional lust should be solved.¹⁴⁷ The woman mentioned above who confined herself to a grave did so to avoid inspiring lust in men, thus connecting the physical immobility of women to the preservation of chastity.¹⁴⁸ Two men mutilated themselves in order to distract themselves from women.¹⁴⁹ A woman

¹⁴⁶ Karras, “Gendered Sin,” 244.
¹⁴⁷ Alphabet, 355.
¹⁴⁸ Alphabet, 14-15.
¹⁴⁹ Alphabet, 96-7; 518.
who forced a reluctant abbot to hear her confession was verbally shamed by him, giving her bishop the opportunity to encapsulate this response to the problem of lust:

"Do you not know that you are a woman? And the devil tempts men with women, and especially holy men. And for this reason that man spoke to you as he did. But for all he said those things, he still prays for your soul."^150 

In all of these stories, it is the sin of lust itself which is under attack; women are accused of nothing more or less than possessing or inspiring unbridled sexual appetites, and often either the woman or, through her deceit, the object of her lust were killed or maimed. But three fabliaux-style stories forge connections between lust and other undesirable female behaviors^151. In them, women’s desire to engage in lustful activities is achieved through the mechanisms of deceit and the aid of networks of female friends, relatives, and servants. The first two tell of women using their husbands' absences as opportunities to spend time with lovers, and then sneaking the lovers back out under the noses of their husbands when they came home unexpectedly.^152 In one, the woman deceived her husband by explaining that she wanted to perform a magical charm on his eyes, one of which was injured; while she thus obscured his vision, the lover snuck out. Thus, the deceitfulness of women entered into this tale, as well as lust. In the other, a woman and her mother held up a

^150 Alphabet, 327: "Knowis þou not at þou ert a womman? And þe devull tempis men with wommen, & speciall haly men. And þerfor yone man said vnto the as he did. Bod þuf all he said so, yit he prayis for þi saule."

^151 Alphabet, stories 536, 537, and 538 (pp. 360-63).

^152 Alphabet, 360.
bedsheet for the husband's inspection; the lover snuck out behind the cover it
provided. Not only was this wife lustful and deceitful, she was also using her network
of connections to other women— in this case, her mother— to carry out her plans.
Deceit and women’s networks appear once more in next tale, which told of an old
woman who was paid by a besotted young man to act as an intermediary in his
unrequited love of a married woman. The old woman tricked the married woman into
thinking that she could be turned into a dog for the 'sin' of rejecting her suitor.153
Thus, while connections among the desire for lovers, deceitfulness, and the
exploitation of women's networks are not fundamental to all the stories about women
in the Alphabet of Tales, they do nevertheless exist in some of them.

Indeed, women’s networks might not only make illicit sexual encounters
possible, they might even actively encourage such encounters for the purposes of
financial gain. The woman who tried to seduce the philosopher, for example, did so
because she had made a wager that she could do it "one day as she was speaking with
other women."154 The old woman who tricked the younger into believing she might
be turned into a dog if she rejected her extramarital suitor was, as was mentioned, paid
by the suitor for her services. In a story which featured the themes of pilgrimage, lust,
deceit, and women's networks all together, a man who was trying to test the chastity
of his mother arrived at her house disguised as a pilgrim. He offered his mother’s maid
money for sexual access to the lady of the house, “and she granted this to him and his

153 Alphabet, 361.

154 Alphabet, 356: “So on a day as sho spak with oher wommen . . .”
mother both.” Naturally, he did not go through with the deed, but slept with his mother only “as a child should do with his mother.”

As with the issue of wandering, the *Alphabet of Tales* also includes one counter-example, in which women’s networks were startlingly positive. A woman had been imprisoned and condemned to death; the prison authorities were withholding food from her until her execution. The woman’s daughter was allowed to visit daily, but was searched by the jailer before each visit to prevent her from bringing food to her mother. “So when [the jailer] found that she abided in life many days without meat, once when her daughter came he searched her and he found that she had sustained her mother’s life by the milk of her breasts . . . and because of this the justice had compassion and forgave her trespass for her daughter’s sake.”  

In this case, the women were working together to deceive the authorities, but instead of using this collaboration to cover up for an illicit sexual affair, they were instead attempting to preserve the life of one of the network’s members. This goal was deemed noble enough that not only were the conspirators not punished, they were pardoned. It is interesting to note that the method used by the conspirators – breastfeeding – was an act of maternal caregiving that was universally understood to be positive. A nursing

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155 *Alphabet*, 475: “And sho grawnyd ynto hym & his moder bothe . . . and when pai war in bed he halsid hur in his armys as a chylde sulde do be moder . . .”

156 *Alphabet*, 116: “So when he fand sho abade on life many dayes with-owten meate, on a tyme when hur doghter come, he serchid hur & he fand pat sho had sustenyd hur moder life with hur milk of hur pap; & he though pat his a boughre mervayle & went & told be iustice. And be iustice herfore had compassion on hur & forgaff hur hur tryspas for hur doghter sake.”

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mother, providing nourishment for her family members, seems the very antithesis of an untrustworthy wife out to cuckold her husband.

The Alphabet of Tales also warned of women’s desire for fine clothing. Here the complaint was not so common as it was in the lay literature examined above, perhaps because, compared to the lust which churchmen so sternly decried, when considered in isolation it was not so harmful to the woman herself and was of little harm at all to the people around her. Nevertheless, it is associated with women in this collection, as well as in the Summa Praedicantium, where Karras found that “Bromyard . . . pok[ed] fun at vain women and show[ed] how women’s preoccupation with their appearance witnesses their greed and lust.” Surprisingly, the use of fine clothing to inspire lust is mentioned only once in the Alphabet of Tales. A nobleman of Rome was used as an example of wisdom when he would not allow his wife to dress in fine clothing, “to the intent that she should not be suspect or brought to blame.” Even here, the concern for his wife was less that she was trying to attract lovers than that her social status might suffer if that was what people thought the purpose of her finery to be. More often, however, the stories in the Alphabet of Tales seem to understand that the desire for fine clothing is simply wasteful and annoying, as in the exempla which complained that “women . . . must have gold and silver and gay clothing, and a servant and many other things, and yet all the night she will lay

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158 Alphabet, 529: “& here-for he wolde not late hur be gaylie clad; to pe entent at sho sulde not be suspecte nor broght in blame.”
chattering that there are others that have better kerchiefs and are fresher arrayed than she is . . .”

Some of the stories that do focus on fine clothing appear macabre beside the somewhat commonplace complaints of wives and husbands in lay literature. One woman, for example, was so greedy about fine cloth that when her husband was dying, she sent the maid to buy three yards of hardyn for a shroud, arousing the maid’s protests that they had plenty of fine linen on the house. “And the woman was angry and said ‘May not three yards of hardyn serve him well enough?’ And the man who lay sick happened to hear her, and when he came to himself, as ill as he was, he said ‘Yes, make it short enough that it will not be filled with clay.’” The woman’s greed for nice cloth in her dying husband’s presence seems far more upsetting that Alison’s desire for a pretty costume for gadding. Another shocking tale tells of a woman who appeared at the church door one Sunday in a long train, upon which the cleric could see demons cavorting; the cleric, through prayer, made the fiends visible to the congregation and the woman herself. The woman repented, and never wore a train again; “and both unto her and all others who saw this vision it was an occasion of meekness, and that they should never after wear proud clothing.”

159 *Alphabet*, 529: “. . . for wommen, he says, burd hafe gold & syluer & gaye clothynge, & a servand and mayny o^er thyngis, & yit all þe nyght sho will lyg chaterrand & say þat þer is oder þat has better curchus & er fresser arrayed pan sho is . . .”

160 *Alphabet*, 358: “And sho was wroth & said; ‘may not ⅲi ierdis of harden serriff hym well enough?’ So þis man at lay seke happend for to here hur, and when he come to hym selfe, als ill as he myght, yitt he said: “Ya, make it shorte enough þat it be not fylid with clay.”

161 *Alphabet*, 395: “And bathe vnto hur and all o^er þouat say þis vision it was ane occasion of mekenes, & at þai soulde neuer after vse prowde clothynge.”
But in one of the stories, a woman used her finery not to catch lovers or raise her social station, but to subvert a threat to her safety. A strange tale of female bravery appears in the *Alphabet of Tales*, in which a woman named Olimpias heard that armed men were coming to kill her, and “went and dressed in gay clothing, and took two maidens with her and went to meet them. And when they saw her in that array, they were astonished that she had done so, and returned to their masters and told how they found her not afraid . . . . and thus she was delivered.” Through the use of fine clothing, she reshaped the men’s attack into a warm homecoming, a tactic which baffled her attackers and impressed those who had sent them. This use of clothing as a symbol of hospitality fit into a positive, caregiving model of womanhood, and thus her beautiful clothes were deemed acceptable. Had she donned them in order to raise her own social status, no doubt cavorting demons would have appeared.

Although the *Alphabet of Tales* tends, as we have seen, to examine one sin at a time, drawing minimal connections between one undesirable behavior and another, one *exemplum* exhibits the possibility for a laundry list of complaints, one following (although not coherently related to) the next. The *exemplum* is more a misogynist rant.

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162 *Alphabet*, 365: “. . . and when she saw armyd men come and wold hafe slayn her, sho went & cled hur in gay clothyng, & tuke ii maydens with hur and went to mete þaim. And when þai saw hur in þat array, þai were astonyed at sho did so & þai went again vnto þer maisters & telld how þai fand hur not ferd . . . . And þus sho was deleyverd.”
on the evils of wives than a coherent story. It begins with a complaint about the desire for clothing.\textsuperscript{163}

Jeronimus tells in the “Book of Marriage” of an Aurelius Theophrasti, and in this book he asks if a wise man should wed a wife, and he says though she were never so fair, nor so well taught, nor had never so honest father nor mother, yet nevertheless . . . a wise man should not wed her, for . . . it is not possible to a man to please both his wife and his children; for women, he says, must have gold and silver and gay clothing, and a servant and many other things, and yet all the night she will lay chattering that there are others that have better kerchief and are fresher arrayed than she is, and if she be well arrayed she likes . . . to come among no people and she will say “Lo! I am the lowest in all this town!”

From here the author launched into a complaint about women’s desire to wander and their envy of their husbands’ mobility. There was no causal link or other transition between this complaint and the previous one. It is also interesting to note that the wording of the complaint echoes the Wife of Bath nearly word for word:\textsuperscript{164}

Also she will say to her husband “Why did you look at your neighbor’s wife, and why did you speak with your neighbor’s maiden?” And when he comes from the market she will say “What have you bought? I may not have a friend nor a fellow because of you, nor love of another man, but if I be suspect.”

\textsuperscript{163} Alphabet, 529: “Jeronimus tellis in ‘Libro de Nupcijs’ of ane Aureolus Theophrasti, & in this buke he axkis if a wise man sulde wed a wife, and he says thue war nevur so fayre, nor so wele taght, nor had nevur so honest 6dur nor moder, yit nevur-þe-les, he says, a wyse man sulde not wed hur, for þis Aurelious sais it is not possible to a man to please bothe his wife & his childer; ffor wommen, he says, burd hafe gold & syluer & gay clothyng, & a servand and mayny oþer thyngis, & yit all þe nyght sho will lyg chatterand & say þat þer is oðer þat hase better curchus & er fresher arrayed þan sho is, and if sho be wele arrayed hur lykis . . . . to com emang no pepull and sho will say, ‘Lo! I am the baddeste in all þis town!’ ”

\textsuperscript{164} Alphabet, 529: “Also sho will say vnto hur husbond; ‘Whi beheld þou þi neghbur wife, & whi spak þou with þi neghbur mayden?’ And when he commys fro þe market sho will say: ‘What hase þou boght? I may not hafe a frend nor a fellow for þe, not luf of a noder man bod if I be suspecte.’ “
Because of these things, the author had a very dour outlook on marriage, suggesting that those who were to enter into it should not take any action to actually make the outcome happier, since it was not possible for them to be happy in marriage. Again, there was no transition between the previous complaint and this suggestion:

And therefore there no man should choose his wife long before, but take whichever one happens to come to him, whether she be fair or foul, or proud or angry, and therefore they should not be tried out before they are married. A horse or an ass, an ox or a cow or a servant, all these should be tried out before they are bought or hired, but a woman should not see a man before he weds her, so that he will not be displeased after they are wed.

Here, without warning or transition, he launches into yet another list of complaints, which touch on the issues of greed, lust, and pride. But, as in the rest of the *Alphabet of Tales*, these concerns are not related to one another, except that they are all things that women supposedly do.

And if you give her all your goods to keep, yet she will believe that you keep some for yourself, and thus she will suspect you and hate you, and happily afterward poison you. And if you bring men of craft into your house, like tailors or others, it is peril for her . . . . So if you forbid her

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165 *Alphabet*, 529: “And þerfor þer sulde no man make chesyng of his wife long befor, bod take such one as hym happened, wheder sho be fayre or foulwe, or prowde or angry, & þerfor þai sulde not be provid or þai war wed. A hors or ane ass, ane ox or a cow or a servand, all þes sulde be provid or þai wer boughht or hyrid, bod a woman sulde not a man se or he wed hur, þat he war not displesid after þai war wed.

166 *Alphabet*, 529-530: “And if þou goff hur all þi gude to kepe, yit sho wyll trow at þou kepis som þi selfe, and þus sho will suspecte þe hafe þe in hatered, happelie afterward pyson the. And if þou bring men of craft in-to þi hows, as taullours or oþer, it is perell for hur unclennes. So if þou forbid hur it will cauce hur do truspas. Therefor what profetis a diligente kepyng of a wyfe when ane unchaste wyfe may not be kepyd, ffor þe keeper of chastite is nede, and þat sho þat is not luste to syn, sho may be called chastie. And if sho be fayr, oþer men will luf hur, and it is full hard to kepe þat wele þat many men luffis, and it is full hevy to ahe þat no man wyll cheris nor hafe in welde. Nevur-þe-les a fowle wyfe may bettir be kepyd þan a fayr wyfe may, for þer is no thing bod som peple will giff þer vew and þer fantasey þer-unto.
it will cause her to trespass. Therefore what profits a diligent keeping of a wife when an unchaste wife may not be kept . . . . And if she be fair other men will love her, and if she be foul she will be proud, just in case men will make much of her, and it is very hard to keep well that which many men love, and it is very sad to have that which no man will cherish . . . . Nevertheless a foul wife may better be kept than a fair wife may, for there is nothing but some people will give their view and their fantasy thereunto.

This ‘tale’ leaves out only the issue of women’s networks in its recap of all the complaints about the Wandering Woman. And, like the rest of the stories in the Alphabet of Tales, it only dimly created causal links among the various undesirable behaviors of women. Nevertheless, the way in which the same list of complaints tumbled out when this author addressed the topic of women and their sins suggests that the stereotype of the Wandering Woman was present in his mind. His focus, however, was on her sins, not on the social and economic damage she could wreak on her family, and thus causality is not so great an issue when he described her.

Conclusions

Both clerical and lay authors associated women with a host of vices which included the desire to wander about, lust, deceit, pride, and the use of women’s networks for ill purposes. Together, these vices constituted a multifaceted but unified stereotype of womanhood which I have called the Wandering Woman. She appears, fully fleshed, in many works of lay literature; belief in her existence informs the concerns of clerics, who list her sins together even where they fail to relate them to one another. And it was the Wandering Woman who came to mind when both clerics
and lay people wanted to voice concerns about the pilgrimages of women. From the single image of a female pilgrim, authors could explore the stereotype to extrapolate a woman who wanted to wander about for purposes of satisfying her lust and her pride, and would use all the means available to her to secure her physical mobility and hence her opportunity for vice.

No doubt there were those women (and men) whose choice to become pilgrims had more to do with wanderlust and curiosity than with a genuine devotional impulse. It is not possible to know whether these secular motivations prompted more pilgrimages than were undertaken because of a desire for spiritual growth. But whether a woman’s motivations were secular, religious, or even a little of both, she would have had to overcome the negativity towards her actions generated by the stereotype of the Wandering Woman in order to carry out her pilgrimage. The remainder of this dissertation will be devoted to an exploration of the ways in which women participated in pilgrimages despite the cultural resistance to their presence. Later medieval women did, indeed, go on pilgrimage, using a variety of strategies to work over, around, and through the resistance of later medieval culture. In the process, their actions and the stories, recorded in collaboration with churchmen who supported their pilgrimages, created a positive image of female devotion to compete with the Wandering Woman.
CHAPTER 3

"HAVING CONFIDENCE IN THE MERITS OF THE SAINT:"
WOMEN AND MIRACULOUS PILGRIMAGE

There were several types of pilgrimage in the later medieval Latin West. This study will discuss two of them in-depth. Miraculous pilgrimage was a journey undertaken to one of the ubiquitous shrines which boasted either the tomb of a saint or some part of his or her relics. By the later Middle Ages, such pilgrimages were usually performed either in the hope that the saint would intercede with God, who would then grant the pilgrim’s request for a miracle, or in thanksgiving for a miracle which was believed to have already occurred. In over 90 per cent of cases,¹ the miracle that was sought through pilgrimage was the healing of a sick or injured person, although the shrines of the saints were also associated with the raising of the dead, the freeing of prisoners, and the salvation of the shipwrecked and storm-tossed. Miraculous pilgrimage arose in late antique Christianity; according to Peter Brown, miracles and relics were a significant part of the adaptability and quick spread of Christianity in the

Late Antique. "Late antique Christianity, " he writes, "as it impinged on the outside world, was shrines and relics."^2

The second type of pilgrimage I will discuss was a long-distance journey intended to help the pilgrim in the next life, rather than in this one. Pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem offered the pilgrim the opportunity to obtain indulgences, so that he or she might atone for sins in this world rather than in the next, and hence suffer less in purgatory. Such pilgrimages had devotional purposes aside from the penitential. For example, the pilgrim to Jerusalem might be seeking to contextualize the messages of the Bible by seeing their original geographic setting. The length and arduousness of the journey were understood in the nature of a penitential offering. Those who undertook the pilgrimage to Jerusalem in particular could expect to spend at least eight months traveling, often in dangerous, uncomfortable conditions. Long-distance pilgrims also generally did not expect to see a miracle during their pilgrimage.

Because of the sharp differences in both the nature and duration of the two types of pilgrimage, they left different types of records. This chapter will examine miracle stories, the primary records of miracle-oriented pilgrimage. For this purpose, I have chosen to discuss the late medieval miracle collections related to four saints' cults: St. Mary Magdalen, the penitent prostitute of the New Testament, at the Dominican friary of St.-Maximin de Provence; St. Louis IX of France (1226-1270) at

St.-Denis, outside Paris; the Augustinian hermit St. Simone da Todi (c. 1260-1322) in the parish church of St. James, Bologna; and St. Agnes of Montepulciano (c. 1268-1317) at the Dominican nunnery of Santa Maria Novella, Montepulciano. By the later Middle Ages, miracle collections had become a complex kind of literature. Written by the promoters of pilgrimage shrines, miracle stories must have been shaped to meet the needs and expectations of those promoters. At the same time, they reflect in many ways the experiences of a real person who genuinely believed that he or she had experienced a miracle. This chapter will examine the role of women in the pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints, showing how late medieval culture made a particular place for women in the pilgrimage to such shrines.

The Sources

The Christian practice of compiling collections of miracles began with stories about Jesus himself; the gospels report that he performed a wide variety miracles. His miracles, like those of the saints who followed, involved very human concerns such as the restoration of the sick, possessed, or dead, or the manipulation of the weather and food supplies for human benefit. The stories of the Christian saints self-consciously emphasize their attempts to follow Christ's example (the imitatio Christi). Kleinberg has pointed out that the earliest saints, the martyrs, did not necessarily need

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to perform miracles to be considered saints; instead, their martyrdom proved their sanctity. But when Christianity became legal in 313 C.E. and martyrdoms ceased, the sanctity of an individual had to be proven on other ways. Texts as early as the lives of the desert fathers written in the fourth century C.E. began to offer proof of sanctity through the incorporation of miracles performed by the saint — many of which were similar to those performed by Christ, although some were quite different. Thus, St. Anthony displayed clairvoyance and St. Martin brought the dead back to life.

The powers of such holy people were believed to remain available to Christians after the saints’ deaths. According to Peter Brown, one of the reasons that late antique society understood the saints to be special was “because they made available to the faithful around their tombs on earth a measure of the power and mercy in which they might have taken their rest in the Above.” Because of this link with Heaven, the tombs of these particular people shed their usual association with death, and instead became shrines where life-affirming miracles occurred through the power of the saint. Accordingly, Ward, miracles that took place at the shrines of saints in the Latin West were recorded for a period of time after the death of the saint or the

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5 Kleinberg, “Proving Sanctity,” 186.


7 Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, includes a more in-depth and theoretical exploration of these issues; for a discussion on Early Christian thought regarding miracles at the graves of saints, see 77-79.
translation of his or her relics. In what Ward called the ‘traditional’ period, before 1200 C. E., she says that “records of miracles at shrines were kept with particular care, without the need that arose later to streamline the collections. The accounts of individual miracles were written down as they were reported to the officials at the shrines, and often rewritten in a literary form by a capable writer.”

Ward argued that by the twelfth century the records of miraculous experiences were changing; by this time, “reshaping by writers with some literary pretensions influenced the material itself.” This reshaping, she argued, was intended to bring more glory to the shrine, to promote pilgrimage, and generally to promote and strengthen the cult of a particular saint. Cownie has argued that a similar purpose shaped the miracles of St. Edmund in the eleventh century. This more literary approach to miracle collections seems to correspond to the shifts in the canonization process itself. Beginning with the papacy of Eugenius III (1145-1153), the pope took control over the process of canonization out of the hands of church councils, and instead made it a “judicial inquisitorial procedure.”

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8 Ward, Miracles and the Medieval Mind, 34.

9 Ward, Miracles and the Medieval Mind, 35.

10 Ward, Miracles and the Medieval Mind, 67.

11 See for example her discussion of William of Norwich: Ward, Miracles and the Medieval Mind, 69-76.


The role of the hierarchy about a hundred years earlier had been to approve an inspired and rarely disputed popular institution and to see that the saints were properly honored. The thirteenth-century papacy understood its role mainly in negative terms. It examined claims that were assumed to be highly suspicious and it tended not to be generous in its approvals. Hostiensis, for example, saw the process as a deliberate introduction of obstacles to causes to make sure that only the best would survive...

It seems unsurprising that under such circumstances, miracle tales were recorded with as much literary pomp as possible, in order that they might stand out from the competition. At the same time, however, it must be remembered that they also needed to contain as much accurate detail as possible, as the canonization process was rigorous in testing the miracles, seeking to eliminate the possibility of natural explanations for the events described and checking to be sure the testimony of all witnesses was cohesive. The miracles of Henry VI, for example, were investigated by papal representatives who, as many as twenty years later, sought out the people who claimed miracles to check their testimony and that of the other eyewitnesses, and to examine the physical evidence of the miracles of healing. The investigators left their notations about each case in the margins of the manuscript miracle collection.

By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the genre of miracle tales was beginning to pass its peak in many places in Europe. This may have been because, as Finucane pointed out, "attempted canonizations had grown more and more expensive, the process had become more complicated, definitions and proofs of miracles more

14 Kleinberg, "Proving Sanctity," 201-203.

technical. André Vauchez has also observed that by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, not only were canonization proceedings prohibitively expensive, but the curia also tended to favor the canonizations of "those closest to the Curia or with the greatest influence." He pointed out that, because of these barriers, the number of canonizations confirmed by the Curia dropped sharply after 1268. For example, only three people were successfully canonized in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Thomas of Hereford, John of Bridlington, and Osmund of Salisbury), and there were only ten other unsuccessful candidates. Shifts in devotional culture may also have contributed to this state of affairs. Lay devotion in many areas no longer focused so completely on the cults of the saints, which were increasingly competing with shrines housing relics of Christ (such as his blood, nails and wood from the True Cross, or thorns from the Crown), or relics of the Virgin (such as her milk, hair, or clothing). Further, the veneration of beati, those who were not formally canonized, became more widespread. According to Vauchez, "not much was done by the Roman church to control the veneration of uncanonized saints, the Avignon popes showing little interest in this aspect of religious life."

16 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 197.
17 André Vauchez, Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages, trans. by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82.
18 Vauchez, Sainthood, 62.
19 Eric Waldram Kemp, Canonization and Authority in the Western Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 116-117.
21 Vauchez, Sainthood, 90.
involved in the local cults of beati, facing an insurmountable fiscal obstacle, might not have bothered to produce written miracle collections and pursue official canonization.

Whether the records of miracles were taken down by the shrine’s promoters or by papal investigators, they were shaped by the legal use to which they would inevitably be put. The investigators wanted the evidence of miraculous activity at shrines to be as concrete as possible before they would consider canonizing a dead person. Hence, later medieval miracle collections were sometimes written in a formulaic fashion, as if the official at the shrine were taking a legal deposition. Further, they usually involved careful, factual recitation. For example, miracle collections almost always include the names of those who were healed, their place of residence, and sometimes the names of other witnesses to the miracle. In some collections the authors offer long, careful descriptions of the illness that was healed or the evolution of the situation that required miraculous intervention, as if to prove that only a miracle could have satisfactorily resolved the problem. These illness narratives or situational descriptions seem commonplace and plausible enough to have appeared in medical descriptions, court proceedings, or other ‘factual’ medieval documents.

How, then, can the historian use miracle stories to describe the experiences of an individual pilgrim? The problem has a number of facets. To begin with, we must cope with modern scientific skepticism, which insists that there could not possibly have been miracles, and hence that the stories cannot be literally true. Finucane has used this approach in his discussion of miracles, using modern medical knowledge to help explain how the people involved in the stories could have perceived that they
were the subjects of supernatural healing. This problem can simply be set aside, as this dissertation relates less to the question of how an individual really found himself free of illness than to that individual’s understanding of the miraculous.

A more intractable problem presents itself with the transmission of the miracle stories. They rarely represent a direct expression of the experience of the pilgrim. Instead, there was at least one intermediary, usually a clergyman, who wrote down the miracle in a collection of similar stories. Sometimes there was even a second intermediary who compiled, edited, and sometimes translated, the original version. These intermediaries had purposes of their own for compiling the stories, including but not limited to a desire to investigate or to support the canonization of the holy person who performed the miracle, or a desire to promote that person’s shrine as a center of pilgrimage. The structure and content of the written miracles examined here make it clear, as Ward pointed out, that they were used “as propaganda for the establishment and continued veneration of a saint in a particular place.”^23 For example, miracle tales often favorably compare the efficacy of their own shrine to that of others. Supplicants are depicted as wandering from shrine to shrine, finding no relief until they arrive at the one the author is promoting. In the *Vita* of St. Agnes of Montepulciano, Raymond of Capua took this a step further. The Virgin Mary appears to a prisoner who had prayed to her for release, telling him that if he wanted his freedom, he should appeal to St. Agnes, because God had worked many miracles

through her. Raymond thus provides the endorsement of a powerful and well-respected figure for Agnes’ sanctity and efficacy.

With the goal of promotion in mind, the authors of the miracle collections had the power to choose which stories to present, and which to pass over. An author who chose to write down a given miracle also had control over the words with which the story was told. The extent to which the authors shaped the stories for their own purposes is difficult to pin down, but there is some evidence that not just the rhetoric, but also the factual content of some miracle tales was influenced by the hand that wrote them down. For example, the miracles of St. Simone da Todi were written in seven chapters by at least five authors, who varied the basic structure of the narratives. The author of Chapter 4 almost always wrote that the person seeking the miracle decided to go to the tomb of Simone and was healed there. The author(s) of Chapters 6 and 7, however, almost always explain that the suppliant received a miracle immediately after having made a prayer or a vow to St. Simone, and then came to his tomb for a pilgrimage of thanksgiving. It is possible that both patterns of behavior appeared amongst pilgrims to St. Simone, but for some reason, the stories’ authors were only interested in one pattern or the other. Either they were reshaping the stories they were told, or they were only choosing to present the ones that fit a certain pattern. Either way, they had great influence over the way that the cult was represented in the stories.

But there is much in the stories that urges the reader to consider them a fairly
close recitation of the experience of the individual pilgrim. Since canonization
proceedings included a routine investigation of miracle stories by papal
representatives, these stories could not profitably have been made up out of whole
cloth. The authors, if they were not papal representatives themselves, knew that their
facts must reflect reality closely enough that the stories would later pass muster. In
the case of King Henry VI, the marginal notes in the extant manuscript show that even
twenty years after the miracles had been recorded at Windsor, an overwhelming
percentage of the suppliants whom the papal investigators could find were able to tell
and prove their stories well enough for the investigators to declare them “probatum,”
or proved.25

The question of ‘real experience’ as opposed to ‘promotional propaganda’ is
made even more complicated by the speed with which these stories spread. After
having created a sensation among those gathered at the shrine, the stories spread to the
areas surrounding a shrine by word-of-mouth, or, as a medieval writer might have it,
by ‘common fame.’ Finucane, researching twelfth-century English miracle
collections, discussed the oral dissemination of miracles stories at length, arguing that
“the awareness of curative cults was not silently and mysteriously communicated to
peasants in their huts or to knights in their halls, but was physically carried to them by

25 Paul Grosjean, *Henrici VI Angliae Regis Miracula Postuma* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes,
1935), 74*-104*.
living individuals." Finucane also points out that the officials at a shrine might celebrate the report or confirmation of a miracle with public liturgy and processions. They also used miracle stories in sermons, told them in connection with the relics they held, and wrote each other letters about them. Indeed, Raymond of Capua, the author of the Life of St. Catherine of Siena, described how the miracle performed for a certain Niccolò became common fame in a liturgical context:

> On one occasion, when I was preaching the word of God to the people and describing the great things that the Lord had done through His bride, I was telling the story of this miracle when Niccolò himself got up in the middle of the congregation and said in a loud voice, 'Sir, that's the truth! I am the person on whom the virgin did the miracle.'

Since the accounts of miracles, as accepted and interpreted by churchmen, spread so quickly, it is possible that they became a self-reinforcing narrative structure, shaping the way that later pilgrims told their stories. As one author has described the social function of homiletic exempla, the miracle tale was also potentially "an artifact that both mirrored and shaped the cultural notions of its audience." Having heard stories about the way a previous pilgrim had approached a saint or the kind of help he received, another pilgrim might repeat those actions, prayers, or vows looking for help with the same situation. Even if their approach, in the moment, was somewhat

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26 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 156; see also Pierre-André Sigal, L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XIe-XIIe siècle) (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1985), 182-188.


29 Joan Young Gregg, Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 21.
different, they might later reconstruct their understanding of the experience so that it matched the accepted pattern, and thus seemed more ‘real.’ There is no way to consistently separate out these ‘self-reinforcing’ elements in the texts. Further, it is possible that a pilgrim might censor herself entirely by not telling her tale to the officials at the shrine if she knew it might seem far-fetched or inappropriate when compared to the standing interpretation of the saint and the processes of pilgrimage and miracle.

How, then, can we begin to find the experiences of women in these complicated, multifaceted documents? In my interpretations of these narratives, I have attempted to employ the technique Nancy Caciola calls “reading against the grain.” She describes her use of this methodology in this way:

A primary means of reading against the grain is to separate the interpretation of . . . authors from the basic ‘cultural facts’ of the story. By ‘cultural facts’ I mean the most minimal description of what actions are reported to have occurred (hence ‘facts’) and were held as true by the communities that circulated the report (hence ‘cultural’).

In the case of miracle stories, these basic cultural facts would consist of the elements which pilgrims, witnesses to the miracle, and papal investigators would have to be able to agree upon: the names of those who experienced the miracle or who could attest to it, and the place where they came from (if not where it happened); the nature of the illness or other problem which made a miracle necessary; and the fact that all involved agreed that a particular saint had been responsible for the supernatural

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resolution of the problem. Other elements of the stories may have been either factual, fictional, or part of a self-reinforcing narrative structure (i.e., a reinterpretation of the ‘facts’ by the participants in the event). These more fluid elements include the ritual actions taken by those involved, the description of their emotional state, and even perhaps the timing of the miracle. These elements may be telling us about real experiences, and they may not be. But even if they are entirely fictional, they can tell us about the expectations of later pilgrims, or about the interpretive framework within which they might have understood their experiences.

Finally, although the miracles of St. Mary Magdalen, St. Simone da Todi, St. Louis IX, and St. Agnes of Montepulciano are rich sources, it is not my intention to suggest that these four collections represent a social scientist’s random sampling of a population. Attempting to describe a ‘typical’ miracle would require a far larger body of source materials than this study could encompass, and a more strictly statistical approach. Instead, I intend to follow the example set by Isolde Thyret in her study of Muscovite miracle tales. She compared her methodology to that of Finucane, Ward, and Sigal in this way:

Although these studies successfully demonstrate that the miracle cycles of western medieval saints can be treated as historical source material in spite of their stereotypical form, the studies’ exclusive reliance on the synchronic approach may skew their findings. Their strictly statistical approach is not sensitive to possible regional variations in miraculous healings. Medieval saints, for example, often specialized in curing certain illnesses or showed a preference for

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31 Isolde Thyret, “Muscovite Miracle Stories as Sources for Gender-Specific Religious Experience,” in Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine, ed. by Samuel H. Baron and Nancy Sheilds Kollman (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 116.
healing a certain social group. It is therefore necessary to balance the search for underlying uniform structures in the medieval miracle stories with a sensitivity for the unique features of individual cults.

This balance can be achieved if we apply the synchronic approach to each miracle cycle separately. As a second step, the *Sitz im Leben* of each cycle must be compared with that of other cycles.

Like Thyret, I investigate each miracle collection separately, performing some basic statistical analyses on each. The types of statistical questions I have asked of each collection were dictated by the internal structures of the tales themselves, targeting those elements that seemed internally consistent. Then I discuss the ways in which all four collections appear to correspond when they describe the pilgrimages of women. In order to do this fruitfully, I have consistently compared the experiences of female pilgrims to those of male, to show how women’s experience as pilgrims was identifiably different.

*St. Mary Magdalen at St.-Maximin-de-Provence*

St.-Maximin-de-Provence had been a Benedictine house since the early Middle Ages, and legend had it that St. Mary Magdalen, the companion of Christ who was made popular in the later Middle Ages as the ultimate example of penitence, had gone there to die.\(^\text{32}\) In 1287, the man who was to become King Charles II of Sicily began to search the abbey, looking for the relics of the Magdalen. On December 9 of that year he found the relics, and by 1290 Charles got permission from Boniface VIII to evict the Benedictines and replace them with a congregation of Dominican friars. The

\(^{32}\text{Jacqueline Schlafer, introduction to } Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine \text{ by Jean Gobi the Elder, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Schlafer (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1996), 19.} \)
discovery of the relics of St. Mary Magdalen, alongside the rejuvenation of the house
with new religious, spurred a new pilgrimage to the site. As in many other shrines,
pilgrims arrived describing miracles performed by St. Mary Magdalen, and the stories
were written down. Some time between 1313 and 1328 the prior of the house, Jean
Gobi l’Ancien, edited and arranged these miracles into a single volume.\(^{33}\) The
devotion to Mary Magdalen at St.-Maximin was regional; the miracles repeatedly
claim that she was a particular patroness of Provence. This regional flavor was
intensified because the monastery of Vézelay also claimed to have her remains,
insisting that they had been translated there by one Count Girart in 749.\(^{34}\) Throughout
the period represented by Gobi, the two shrines were actively competing for the
attention of those devoted to Mary Magdalen.

Forty-six men, twenty-eight women, and nine couples who were believed to
have received miracles were recorded in this collection. This first-glance tally
suggests that the shrine was not visited by women as much as by men. Nevertheless,
women still represent a substantial portion of the suppliants in the collection: a little
over one-third of the suppliants are women acting alone, and 44.6 per cent of
suppliants are female if one counts the female halves of couples.

The miracles, as in most collections, are presented in a formulaic fashion. The
overall framework of each story is the same: an individual, finding him- or herself in
some kind of dire need, appeals to Mary Magdalen for help, receives a miracle

\(^{33}\) Schlafer, introduction to *Miracles*, 24.

\(^{34}\) Gobi, *Miracles*, 31-2.
through the saint’s intercession, and at some point makes a pilgrimage to the shrine at St.-Maximin. A typical miracle went as follows:\textsuperscript{35}

A certain man from Marseilles lost both the use of his tongue and his speech for two days and nights because of some illness. When, therefore, he was thus gravely affected, having confidence in the merits of Mary Magdalen, he vowed in his heart that if God through the merits of the Magdalen would restore his speech to him, he would visit her shrine at St.-Maximin. Therefore, having thus made the vow in his heart with great devotion and confidence, God unbound the chains on his tongue through the merits of the Magdalen, so that he was perfectly cured, and this man did not experience any impediment in speech afterwards.

The phrasing of this miracle tale, like three others in the collection, does not directly indicate the completion of the pilgrimage – only the vow which prompted Mary Magdalen’s aid. The overwhelming majority of the miracles, however, describe the completion of the pilgrimage, either before the miracle occurred or after it was granted. In fact, in three cases, those who did not complete the pilgrimages they had promised were punished by having the miracle revoked until such time as they actually visited the shrine.\textsuperscript{36} Thus, it seems safe to assume that even in the four cases where pilgrimage was not actually described, the author understood the pilgrimages which were promised to have been completed.

\textsuperscript{35} Gobi, Miracles, 110: “Quidam de Massilia, ex quodam gravamine quod incurrit, per duos dies et noctes et usum lingue perdidit et loquelam. Cum ergo sic nimirum gravaretur, confidens de meritis Magdalene, corde vovit, quod si Deus per merita Magdalene sibi loquelam restitueret, ipse in Sancto Maximino ejus limina visitaret. Sicut ergo ille corde cum magna devotione et confidentia votum protulit, et Deus per Magdalene merita ejus vincula lingue solvit, ita quod perfecte curatus, impedimentum postea homo ille non senciit in loquela.”

\textsuperscript{36} Gobi, Miracles, 112, 128-30, 168-171.
Gobi grouped the miracles in his collection by their content: eight miraculous releases of prisoners; two debauchers prohibited from their activities by the power of the saint; twenty recoveries of vision, four of hearing, and five of speech; eleven cures of arthritis or paralysis; twenty-two healings of the sick or resurrections of those who seemed dead; six cures of insanity; and four miscellaneous miracles. Men and women approached Mary Magdalen in unequal proportions for help with these problems (see Appendix A, Table 1), with each gender seeking help for the things they were more likely to encounter. No woman sought release from prison, for example, as women were less commonly incarcerated or taken as prisoners of war. But on the other hand, women were more often cured of insanity than men, although men (usually husbands) often acted as their advocates in these cases. In fact, twice as many women were cured of insanity as men were. This rate of insanity in women is not unusually high when compared to other sources. According to Michael MacDonald's study of early modern English mental patients, rates of mental illness in women were twice those of men both in early modern England and in twentieth-century London. Women also appear more often than men seeking cures for their own paralysis and arthritis (17.9 per cent of women as opposed to 8.7 per cent of men). Finucane found that more women than men sought aid from English saints for these problems, and suggested that a combination of the relatively more severe effects of rheumatoid arthritis upon women, the after-effects of birth trauma, and the more

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common occurrence of hysterical debilities among medieval and modern women might account for the difference.\textsuperscript{38}

Finally, women, who were traditionally in charge of the physical health of their immediate families,\textsuperscript{39} were more likely than men to seek healing on behalf of another person. The majority of suppliants requested help for themselves, as in the example above. While forty-six (55.4 per cent) of the suppliants were seeking help for themselves, the remaining thirty-seven (44.5 per cent) were seeking to have a miracle performed for some other person (see Table 2). But the choice to seek help for another was apparently determined by gender. Thirty-five (76.1 per cent) of the forty-six men who appear in these tales as having made a pilgrimage were seeking a miracle on their own behalves, while only ten (35.7 per cent) of the twenty-eight women were seeking help for themselves; the rest were seeking help for family members. Conversely, eleven (23.9 per cent) of the men were seeking help on behalf of another, usually a child or a spouse; but eighteen (64.3 per cent) of the women who appear as suppliants were seeking help for someone else. Women, more than men, seem to have approached the saint on behalf of another, either alone or with their husbands. In fact, women were more likely to make an appeal on another’s behalf than they were for themselves.

\textsuperscript{38} Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 148.

\textsuperscript{39} Margaret Wade Lebarge, A Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 169.
Whether appealing for help for themselves or for someone else, each suppliant had to approach the saint personally. The pilgrim might engage in a series of actions including prayer, vowing a pilgrimage, performing the pilgrimage, or making an offering to the saint, and receive their miraculous intervention at any time during these rituals. The descriptions of how individuals made vows, pilgrimages, and other ritual actions is one of the elements which may have been heavily shaped by the hand of the ecclesiastical author of the stories. In this collection, ritual action centered around the pilgrimage vow and the pilgrimage itself. Women and men made vows and pilgrimages under significantly different circumstances. In twenty-one stories, the suppliant chose to go directly to St.-Maximin without making a vow to go there, in the hope that proximity to the saint, and prayers at her shrine, would bring the necessary miracle. Men were almost twice as likely to approach Mary Magdalen in this way as women were (see Table 3).

But in sixty-two (74.6 per cent) of the eighty-three cases, as in the example presented above, the suppliant chose to begin his or her interaction with Mary Magdalen by making a vow to become a pilgrim to St.-Maximin. Vauchez has commented on the central and binding nature of vows to saints, which “always contained both an invocation of the saint addressed by name . . . and a precise commitment or series of commitments, the performance of which constituted either the prior condition or the price paid for the miracle.” Pilgrimage vows appeared in this text in two different forms. The first form, which I will call the “non-contingent

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vow," was used by sixteen suppliants, who made a promise to go and then immediately made the pilgrimage, with no strings attached to their actions. But in forty-six (55.4 per cent) of the cases, the pilgrim made his or her visit to the shrine contingent upon the receipt of a miracle. Sigal has commented on this type of vow as it appeared in eleventh- and twelfth-century miracle collections: “A certain number of vows clearly had a conditional character: the promised object would be given or the promised action would be accomplished if the saint produced that which one had asked.”

Twenty-four men made these contingent vows, accounting for a little over half (52.1 per cent) of all contingent vows made, and also for a little over half (53.3 per cent) of male suppliants. Women made eighteen contingent vows, accounting for a little over a third (39.1 per cent) of contingent vows and nearly two-thirds (64.3 per cent) of miracles granted to women suppliants. Hence, women more regularly than men made the terms of their interaction with the saint clear from the beginning.

There are several ways to interpret this use of contingent vows by women. It can, at first glance, be understood as a kind of empowered approach to their participation in the cult of the saints: they seem to be willing to bargain with their benefactress. But this must also be understood in light of the overlap between cases where women used contingent vows and where women represented other people’s needs. Sixteen of the eighteen contingent vows were made by women who were seeking aid for someone other than themselves—which also means sixteen of the

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41 Sigal, *L’homme et le miracle*, 82: “Un certain nombre de vœux ont un caractère nettement conditionnel: l’objet promis sera donné ou l’action promise sera accomplie si le saint effectue ce qu’on lui a demandé.”
eighteen women who sought help for others did so with a contingent vow. To make this correspondence more interesting, twelve of the women who sought help for others were seeking help for a family member who was either in danger of death or already dead. In the other seven cases women sought help for family members who were blind, deaf, arthritic and paralyzed, insane, and "swollen." The core set of twelve cases with common elements produces a pattern of women’s relatively aggressive intervention with the saint in cases where family members were dying or dead.

Further, the emphasis on vows made by female suppliants could be seen as a kind of apology for their pilgrimage, because a vow created a serious obligation. In this collection, three stories told of suppliants who received their miracles immediately upon making their vows, and then “having forgotten the benefits already received . . . either out of contempt or neglect did not fulfill the vow.” They suffered the consequence of having the miracle revoked until such time as they appeared at St.-Maximin and completed the vow. Hence, a woman’s travel may have been understood as less frivolous once she was obliged to honor her promise to the saint.

The narratives sometimes ascribe a very different mindset to female suppliants than to male suppliants at the time of the vow. Gobi often included brief explanations of the actions taken by suppliants. They may have belonged more to him than to the devotees of the cult. The mute suppliant had a reason for choosing to make a vow to

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42 Gobi, Miracles, 112: "Succedentibus autem prosperis, mulier illa, obliqua beneficicii iam recepti, votum, quod alii pro ipsa fecerant, ex contemptu vel ex negligentia non perfecit."
Mary Magdalen: he was ‘confident of her merits.’ Jean Gobi regularly used this explanation for the suppliant’s decision to approach the saint. So, in another example, a deaf woman found out about the Magdalen’s power because “some locals, wanting to lead her to venerate the Magdalen, told her through signs rather than through words about the miracle God performed at St.-Maximin through the merits of the said saint.” But in some cases, the author explained the decision to make the vow through the mental anguish of the suppliant. A woman who lost her vision was “stupefied by a loss so sudden and so grave;” another, whose husband and daughter were both near death, “seeing herself devoid of all consolation,” chose to bargain with the Magdalen. Of eighteen women who made contingent vows to the Magdalen, ten were portrayed as being moved by this kind of mental anguish; eight of these ten were seeking help for someone other than themselves, and all of these eight were seeking help in cases of the near-death or actual death of relatives. By comparison, only five of twenty-four cases of men’s contingent vows are explained with this rhetoric of mental anguish, and it is attributed to a married couple once. Women, then, are more likely to be described in a state of mental disarray; understandably, this generally

43 The language is remarkably uniform. Another example appears in Gobi, Miracles, 92: “Confidens autem de meritis Magdalene, ad ipsius adjutorium cum magna devotione recurrit...”

44 Gobi, Miracles, 102: “Vicini autem, volentes eam inducere ad reverentiam Magdalene, persigna pocius quam per verba ei notificabant miracula, que Deus faciebat in Sancto Maximo per merita dicta sancte.”

45 Gobi, Miracles, 98: “Stupefacta autem de defectu tam subito et tam gravi...”

46 Gobi, Miracles, 140: “Mulier autem illa, videns se omni solatio destitutum...”

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corresponds with moments when they faced the mortality of a loved one, and were willing to bind themselves with contingent vows in order to protect him or her.

What can be confidently gleaned from these stories is that women had a place in the pilgrimage to St.-Maximin, making up more than a third of the pilgrims in the miracle collection. Women did appear seeking help for themselves, but their requests were disproportionately for the healing of paralysis and arthritis, a pattern which has also been noted in other English collections. The majority of these women who came for their own benefit either made no vow at all or made a non-contingent vow, which did not demand a miracle in exchange for their pilgrimage. But these women only accounted for about one-third of female pilgrims in the collection. In keeping with their role as caretakers of their families' physical well-being, the remaining two-thirds of the women who approached Mary Magdalen sought help for someone else, rather than for themselves. These eighteen stories have strong emotional overtones: the medical situation is often one of near-death or death, and the woman is often described as being in a state of great distress. In these cases the women often used contingent vows, an action which made sense, because the miracle was required immediately – the dying or dead relative could not wait for her to journey to the shrine. It is unclear whether this use of emotional distress and contingent vows was the author’s imagination recreating the “fragile” emotions of women, or was in fact the women’s own interpretation of their story. Either way, it is clear that there were very particular circumstances under which the miracles taught women that they should travel to St. Maximin. If, needing help for their loved ones and frantic to help them, they bound
themselves in a sacred vow, and the loved one recovered, then they were understood as perfectly acceptable pilgrims. In fact, the loved one she sought to help might be punished with a recurrence of illness if a woman did not fulfill her vow.

*St. Agnes of Montepulciano At Santa Maria Novella, Gracchiano-Vecchio*

St. Agnes was born in c. 1268 in Tuscany. She became a Dominican nun at the local monastery of Sacco at the age of nine. Five years later, she was sent with the director of her novitiate, Sister Margherita, to found a new congregation in Procena; she was elected superior of this new congregation by the age of fifteen. By this time she was already locally famous as a child prodigy marked by extreme piety and visionary experiences. The authorities in her hometown, Gracchiano-Vecchio, wanted very much for her to return, and offered her the opportunity to found yet another monastery there. This new house, called Santa Maria Novella, was completed in 1306, and Agnes remained superior there until she died in 1317.47

As might be expected of a saint who had been so sought-after during her lifetime, Agnes became the object of local devotion after her death. Her life and miracles were written thirty-three years after her death by Raymond of Capua, who was also the confessor and hagiographer of St. Catherine of Siena. A small number of miracles were later appended to the collection in 1500 by one Brother Laurentius. The authors together record forty-one posthumous miracles performed by Agnes for

pilgrims to her shrine at the monastery of Santa Maria Novella in Gracchiano-
Vecchio. Thirty-one of them are offered in detail, and the remaining ten are
mentioned in this briefest of fashions: "And also among the others who were freed by
the merits of the virgin were ten people, from the horrible disease of epilepsy."^48

The thirty-one detailed miracles are still quite simple in format, giving only the
most basic information. This miracle, recorded by Brother Laurentius, is fairly
typical: "A certain Mancuccia, having been mute for eighteen months, coming with
great faith to Montepulciano to visit the relics of the blessed Agnes, was at once
granted the favor of prompt speech, which she also made public by making a notarized
document."^49 Sometimes the author recorded the hometown of the suppliant, or a few
more stray details, but this brief format was consistent throughout. In each miracle, a
person, either suffering him- or herself (in twenty-two cases) or, less commonly (in
nine cases), concerned with the suffering of another, requests a miracle from St.
Agnes. In twenty-one (77.8 per cent) of the twenty-seven cases where timing is
discernable she performs the miracle immediately after the suppliant makes a prayer to
her or a vow to take a pilgrimage to her shrine. In the remaining cases, she withholds
the miracle until the pilgrim actually arrives, and then the miracle is granted. Twenty-
three of Agnes’ suppliants sought a cure for an illness or injury. The nature of these
medical problems varied widely, from drowning and the results of bad falls to the

^48 "De S. Agnete," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, p. 809: "Inter alios etiam per merita hujus aliae
Virginis liberatae sunt personae decem, ab horribili epilepsiae morbo."
restoration of hearing, speech, and sanity. But Agnes performed a few non-healing miracles as well: she freed four prisoners, scared off the devil, stopped a fire from consuming a village, and punished a blasphemer by striking him mute until he repented.

St. Agnes was approached in nearly equal numbers by male and female suppliants. Of the thirty-one fully discussed miracles, fourteen (45.2 per cent) were performed for male suppliants, sixteen (51.6 per cent) for female suppliants, and one for a couple. Hence, slightly fewer men than women appeared in the collection. Further, the male and female suppliants were seeking help for themselves and for others in similar numbers: eleven men and eleven women sought help for themselves (see Table 4). Women were slightly more likely than men to be seeking help for another; three men and five women behaved as intercessors in this way. The timing of the miracle is discernable in twenty-seven cases, but there does not appear to be any gender-specific pattern in the speed of Agnes’ interventions. For ten men and eleven women who asked for help, the miracle occurred immediately upon having made a vow or prayed to Agnes; for two men and three women, upon entering her shrine; the remaining case was of a couple who received their request at the shrine (see Table 5). That so many women appear in Agnes’ miracles is not a surprise; in the seven

49 “De S. Agnete,” Acta Sanctorum, April II, p. 809: “Mancaccia quaedam, decimum octavum mensem muta, magna cum fide veniens in Monrem-Pluitanum ad visitandum corpus B. Agnetis, gratiam promptae loquelae subito impetravit, idque confecto instrumento publicam etiam fecit.”
cults analyzed by Finucane, anywhere from one-third to two-thirds of the recorded suppliants were women.50

There is a gendered component to Agnes' miracles, however, if one examines not her suppliants, but rather the people upon whom she performed her miracles. Men were more commonly the subjects of Agnes' miracles than women. In the nine cases where the suppliants were seeking help on another's behalf, eight sought help for a male (seven of them the sons of the suppliant). Hence, Agnes performed miracles upon a total of nineteen males and twelve females. The timing of miracles is also gendered if one examines the recipients, not the suppliants. For the twenty-seven cases in which the timing can be determined, fourteen men were cured immediately upon the request which they made or which was made for them; only half as many women received immediate attention. Three each of women and men received their miracle upon arrival at the shrine. The suppliants, then, exhibit a pattern similar to that demonstrated in the miracles of Mary Magdalen: fewer women than men were healed by the saint. In Agnes' case, women also waited longer for help than their male counterparts.

While Agnes performed a wide variety of miracles, the only one which seems to be particularly gendered is the freeing of prisoners; she set four people at liberty, all of them male. The format of these miracles requires attention, however, for its other unusual component: each of the four men released from prison experienced a vision or other direct communication from the saint. Agnes only manifested herself

50 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 142-143.
visually or physically in six miracles in this collection: to four prisoners, one man whom she healed of a head wound, and one woman whom she healed of pleurisy. It was necessary for Agnes to appear in the prison breaks; without her direct intervention, it would be possible to understand the event as a mere escape, rather than a miracle. But the vision of St. Agnes was different for the five men than it was for the lone woman. Two of the prisoner miracles were identical: the prisoner commended himself to St. Agnes, and then went to sleep; while asleep, Agnes appeared to him, promising her help. In the first case, the prisoner had prayed for her help, but had made no vow; when Agnes appeared, she told the prisoner that “if he promised to visit her relics, he would be free at once.” In the other case, the prisoner had already made a vow to come to her shrine. To him she said “Son, after you have commended yourself to me, you may not fear death in any way.”

The pattern set by these two, in which Agnes requires a promise of pilgrimage during a face-to-face interaction, is further emphasized by the other visions experienced by her male suppliants. A third prisoner commended himself to the Virgin Mary, rather than to Agnes. The next night the Virgin appeared, “warning that he should invoke the help of the blessed Agnes.” Upon waking from this vision, the man made a vow to visit Agnes’ shrine; and “having made the vow he immediately

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52 “De S. Agnete,” Acta Sanctorum vol. 11, April II, p. 809: “Postquam, fili, te mihi commendasti, nullo modo mortem timeas...”

found himself outside the prison, freed from strong chains and fetters.\footnote{\textit{De S. Agnete}, \textit{Acta Sanctorum} vol. 11, April II, p. 809: “Facto voto subito se reperit extra carcarem, a duris catenis et compedibus liberatus.”} This command from the Virgin continued, then, to underscore the necessity of pilgrimage in exchange for miraculous intervention. The fourth prisoner miracle, which is the most unusual of the lot, also emphasized this notion of exchange, although in a different way. In this case, a relative of a man captured in war and feared dead vowed that he would bring the prisoner to Montepulciano “if he received his friend alive.”\footnote{\textit{De S. Agenete}, \textit{Acta Sanctorum}, April II, p. 810: “...vovit si amicum salvum reciperet eum deducere ad Montem-Politianum.”} At the moment he made the vow, the prisoner “sensed an invisible hand break the chains.”\footnote{\textit{De S. Agenete}, \textit{Acta Sanctorum}, April II, p. 810: “...sustravit sibi invisibili manu solvi catenas...”} While Agnes’ presence, in this case, was excluded from the prisoner’s \textit{vision}, he could ‘sense’ or ‘feel’ her entry into his situation; again, this help came only after the promise of a pilgrimage.

The last man to experience a vision of Agnes sought healing. Gratinus was wounded in the head by an enemy; a doctor brought in to cure him only made him bleed more copiously. His parent then urged him to appeal to Agnes. He commended himself to her, “promised to visit her sacred body, and to offer an image of wax,” if he was healed.\footnote{\textit{De S. Agenete}, \textit{Acta Sanctorum}, April II, p. 808: “Ad quorum verba compunctum infirmus, fideli corde seipsum huic almae Virgini commendans, promisit suum sacrum visitare corpus, imaginemque ceream offere, si a Domino quasi deperditam vitam impetraret.”} He fell asleep, and Agnes appeared in his sleep “and consoling him,
promised that in a short time he should escape safely." The blood flow restricted itself, and soon he was healed completely. Again, the element of exchange appears in this miracle; he promised pilgrimage, and she promised escape. Further, it is interesting to note that while this is not a miracle relating to a prisoner, Agnes, during the vision, told him that he would ‘escape’ (*evaderet*) from his situation. The connections between male suppliants, visionary experiences, and escapes were preserved.

The only woman who experienced a vision of Agnes had a very odd vision indeed. Its dreamlike quality suggests that in this case the actual experiences of a suppliant may be peeking through the narrative. The woman was suffering from pleurisy.  

Having implored the help of the blessed Agnes and Christina, virgins, whom she held in the highest devotion, both [appeared] to her in a vision, [and] the blessed Christina, as it seemed to her, after a long disagreement, said to her that she had obtained from the Lord that she ought to seek help from Agnes. Whence the chest of the infirm [woman] was gently uncovered, and on the painful place Agnes placed her holy hand, saying, ‘Be comforted, daughter; because you will be completely healed.’ Wondrous thing! With Agnes vanishing in some way, this devoted woman was completely healthy, such that she could never again sense pain in that place.

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There are a number of features which distinguish this interaction from those Agnes had with male suppliants. First of all, the woman never promised a pilgrimage, and the author did not mention that she completed one later, although it is probable that she did, since most miracles came to public notice because of the associated pilgrimage of the beneficiary. Regardless of her status as a pilgrim, it is interesting that in her case, the promise of a pilgrimage was not necessary in exchange for help from the saint. Secondly, the appearance of both Agnes and St. Christina, a fourth-century virgin martyr and fellow Tuscan saint (from nearby Bolsena), and the apparent ‘disagreement’ (*longam concertationem*) between them, is odd. Are we to understand that they were contending for the privilege of helping the woman, or rather arguing over which of them would have to take up this duty? This snippet of the miracle had such a dream-like quality that one is tempted to attribute it to an actual dream.

Agnes’ miracles, then, had certain basic elements, which can safely be regarded as factual, in common with Jean Gobi l’Ancien’s accounts of the Magdalen’s miracles. The collections show both men and women engaging in pilgrimage to the saint; in fact, men and women approach Agnes in nearly equal numbers in the collection. While both men and women were most likely to seek help for themselves, we still see, as with Mary Magdalen, more women than men approaching Agnes on someone else’s behalf. Further, intermediary suppliants sought help for males more often than for females. In a facet that may have been shaped by the authors’ expectations, Agnes also tended to act more immediately when the welfare of a male was at stake. In a miracle collection remarkable for its brevity, one of the most
obvious opportunities the authors had to shape the narrative was in their descriptions of visionary experiences. In their interpretations of the stories brought to the shrine, Agnes was in direct contact with male prisoners through visions or physical interactions; in those interactions, the authors emphasized the notion of an exchange of pilgrimage for miraculous intervention. The only woman to experience a vision of Agnes was not required to promise a pilgrimage. Instead, she had an intense and physical visionary experience reminiscent of those of other female visionaries of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Again, whether this was the interpretation of the author, the suppliant, or a little of each is unclear. But women certainly did not interact with Agnes in the same way as men did when she chose to visit them face-to-face.

Saint-Louis at Saint-Denis

King Louis IX, perhaps the apogee of medieval kingship in France, died in Tunisia while on Crusade in 1270. Based on his reputation for extreme piety, charity, and justness, he was promoted as a candidate for sainthood. His bones were eventually transported from the place of his death in North Africa to the abbey church of St.-Denis, and there he performed many healing miracles for pilgrims who, as the compiler of his miracle tales and *vita* repeatedly reports, ‘had great confidence in him.’ The miracles were collected by the monks at St-Denis, and submitted to the papal authorities during Louis’ canonization process, which was completed in 1297. In about 1300, Queen Margaret, Louis’ widow, requested that her confessor,
Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, translate his vita and miracles into French. The original Latin version of the miracles has survived only in fragments; but Guillaume translated some sixty-five miracles, complete with the eyewitness accounts.

Louis' miracles are almost exclusively miracles of healing. Supplicants came to him from all over France, but especially from St.-Denis and Paris, looking for relief from their ailments, especially paralyses, infections and fevers. Guillaume's descriptions of the illnesses and actions of these pilgrims are extremely detailed, although they conform to a more rigid ritual formula than even Jean Gobi's accounts did. He begins by describing the course of the suppliant's illness in detail great enough to prove that the illness could not have been feigned. He invariably either contrasts the illness with their previous health, or dwells on the difficulty, pain, and duration of the illness. Then he describes what, if anything, the suppliant had done to treat the illness, either by medicine or by visiting other shrines, and how these remedies failed. He records that when the suppliant heard of the miracles being performed at St. Denis (in one of the only flexible moments in the formula) he or she either took a vow to go or just went immediately to the shrine. Either way, the healing routinely happened at the shrine, rather than at the moment of the vow. The suppliant would arrive at the shrine and engage in some or all of a long list of ritual actions which included praying at the shrine, touching the tomb, offering a candle the length

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60 Two miracles do not include the healing of the ill or apparently dead. Miracle # 46 (140-42) related the story of a woman who used some hats which were in her possession and had formerly belonged to Louis to evict a flood from her cellars; #62 (189-90) described a knight calling on Louis to rescue him from drowning when he fell out of boat. Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, Les Miracles de Saint Louis, ed. by Percival B. Fay (Paris: Librarie ancienne honoré champion, 1931).
of the body or the limb needing healing or a wax effigy of the same, and remaining before the tomb for nine days. The suppliant was healed at the tomb, although it often took the full nine days, and sometimes the healing process began at the tomb and was completed after the pilgrimage was over. Finally, Guillaume’s accounts end with a description of the good health of the suppliant after his or her pilgrimage, any eyewitness accounts of his or her health or arrival home, and the testimony of the now-healed suppliant before the investigators looking into Louis’ canonization.

As in the case of St. Agnes, there is a rough gender-parity in the numbers of men and women who approached Louis. There are slightly more women suppliants than men in Guillaume’s collection: 31 women, 27 men, and 6 couples arrive seeking help from Louis (see Table 6). If we look at the recipients of the miracles, the balance remains similar: Louis performs miracles upon 32 men and 33 women. Women and men felt equally free to approach Louis for help. The overwhelming majority of Louis’ devotees were seeking help for their own ailments, not those of others. But the individuals who do intercede with Louis on behalf of others are more likely to be women than men. Only two of the men (7.4 per cent) seek help for others, while eight of the women (25.8 per cent) do so.

Other components of the stories suggest a difference in the behavior, or perceived behavior, of male and female pilgrims. As in the case of the Magdalen, where women were more likely to take a vow of pilgrimage than men, women who sought Louis’ help engaged in more concrete ritual action than their male counterparts did. This distinction is most clear when one examines the pilgrims to St.-Denis who
appeared, or promised to appear, on their own behalves, as the issue of gendered behavior becomes cloudier when, for example, a mother appears on behalf of her son. The ritual actions performed by each gender in the forty-three miracles of this kind are summed up in Tables 7 and 8.

Perhaps the most interesting difference between these 22 male and 21 female pilgrims who sought help for themselves is the number of ritual acts that pilgrims of each gender performed (see Table 7). Women were, overall, busier pilgrims than men; they performed an average of 3.5 ritual acts as pilgrims, with the majority of women (9) performing 3 acts. Men performed an average of 2.5 ritual acts, with the majority (10) performing 2 acts. There was no gender preference for one ritual act over another; men and women performed most of the ritual acts in roughly equal numbers. Similar percentages of male and female pilgrims took vows to go to St.-Denis (18.2 per cent of men and 14.3 per cent of women), visited the shrine (90.5 per cent of men and 85.7 per cent of women), offered a candle or wax effigy (27.3 per cent of men and 23.8 per cent of women), performed another penitential act such as fasting or going barefoot (no men and only 9.5 per cent, or 2, women), and confessed their sins (18.2 per cent of men and 14.3 per cent of women). However, two kinds of ritual actions stand out as particularly gendered. Fourteen women (66.6 per cent) are portrayed by Guillaume as praying to the saint, simply asking him for his help, either before his shrine or elsewhere, whereas only seven men (31.8 per cent) do the same. Similarly, only two men (9.1 per cent) are portrayed as subjecting themselves to the
“holy radioactivity which bombarded everything in the area”—touching the tomb of Louis, touching something near to it, spreading tomb dust on their injuries, etc. By contrast, eleven women (52.4 per cent) do this.

Again, women seem to have engaged in pilgrimage to St. Denis in roughly equal numbers with men. They also regularly sought help for their own ailments. While there is no guarantee that the broader gender-parity was not shaped by the author, there would not appear to be any reason why St.-Louis should have demanded equal numbers of women and men, and therefore we can probably assume that his cult was attractive to pilgrims of both genders. On the other hand, women were again more often seen to represent the needs of another than men were. We can state with a certain confidence, then, both that women participated at the same rate as men, and that they were more likely to intercede for another than men were. In what is perhaps a more “malleable” and less “factual” element of the tales, we see women engaging in more concrete ritual action, visible behaviors which mark their presence as sacramental rather than frivolous. Again, whether this is the author attempting to justify their presence, or the women attempting to do the same, or even both, is not entirely distinguishable. It does seem, however, as if there was a general assumption that women had to prove their spiritual intent and dedication through outward signs.

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61 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 26.
St. Simone da Todi

St. Simone da Todi, born to the Rinalducci family in the town of Todi in Sicily, became an Augustinian hermit in 1280. During his life, he was well-known locally for both his theology and his preaching. He died in 1322, and his tomb almost immediately became the focus of a pilgrimage.  

The Miracles of St. Simone, written by several authors between 1322 and 1325, were combined into a single collection consisting of seven chapters. The first two chapters may have been collected by the same author; they have the same extremely brief style, and are both unsigned. A single example of this author's format should suffice:

A certain woman, named Sibyllina, the daughter of the late Bartholuccius, of the land of Montis Acuti-alpis, was deaf; and she said that it had been ten years and longer that she had not heard; and by the merits of the blessed Simone both of her ears were opened, such that she heard clearly.

This author does not offer the scholar of pilgrimage much to work with. He does not mention the use of pilgrimages or pilgrimage vows to appeal to the saint, nor does he tell us where the miracle took place, etc. This author wrote sixty-two of the 135 miracles in the collection. While these miracles did not mention pilgrimage, they do help us to determine which sort of illnesses the saint normally healed for which gender of suppliant.

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63 "De B. Simone," Acta Sanctorum vol. 11, April II, p. 817: "Quaedam fêmina, nomine Sibyllina, filia qu. Bartholuccius, de terra Montis Acuti-alpis, erat surda; et dixit quod sunt decem anni et ultra, quod non audivit; et meritis B. Simonis apertae sunt ambae aures ejus, ita quod clare audit . . "

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The imperial notary Phillip Alberti Papazonis, the author of Chapter 3, was a little more informative. His chapter contained fifteen miracles, most of which he explained as the result of the suppliant's "devotion to blessed Simone." But in four of them, he portrayed the suppliant as seeking the saint's help through a pilgrimage vow (two miracles) or an actual pilgrimage (the other two miracles). Francis Alberti Anselmi, the imperial notary who wrote Chapter 4, was even more forthcoming on the topic of pilgrimage. It is with Francis' stories that it becomes clear how much the pattern of behavior of the pilgrims in miracle tales could be determined by the authors of the miracles, rather than the experiences of pilgrims. In all but two of the miracles written by Francis, the ailing suppliant of St. Simone, after having his or her symptoms described, simply came to the shrine without a vow. His written formula ran thus: "hearing of the miracles of the blessed Simone and of his sanctity, she came with great devotion to his tomb, and praying devoutly on bended knees, she was freed by his (Simone's) merits . . ."64 Whether or not most of the suppliants recorded by Francis made vows to come to the shrine is unclear. Only one of the miracles in Chapter 4, the next-to-last, breaks this pattern: a man suffering with multiple fistulas was healed immediately upon making a pilgrimage vow to the saint, rather than after his arrival; he went to the shrine afterwards "for joy."65 The anonymous author of Chapter 5 was not so uniform as this in his storytelling. In ten of his twelve stories,

64 "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 821: "... audiens de miraculis B. Simonis et ejus sanctitate, venit cum magna devotione ad sepulcrum ejus, et flexis genibus orans devote, meritis ejus liberata est . . ."

65 "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 822.
the suppliant made vows to the saint. Three of his miracles happened at the shrine itself, and the other nine happened as soon as the suppliant made vows or a prayer to St. Simone.

The imperial notary Johannes Nicolai de Manellis, the author of Chapter 6, adopted a more uniform pattern when relating miraculous events, but his pattern differed sharply from that established by any of the previous authors. In eleven of Johannes’ sixteen stories, the suppliant was healed immediately after he or she vowed to visit the shrine. Only two of his suppliants did not make vows; they were two of the five healed upon their arrival at the shrine. This pattern was continued even more rigorously by the anonymous author of Chapter 7 (could it be Johannes?), in whose nine stories all the suppliants were healed immediately upon making a vow or a prayer.

While different authors preferred to understand the sequence of miraculous event differently, the 135 miracles, taken as a body, have issues of gender in common throughout. First, who sought the saint? The suppliants of St. Simone, which included those for whom no pilgrimage was mentioned, were overwhelmingly female: forty seven men, eighty-two women, and six couples asked the saint for a miracle in this collection (see Table 9). The numbers approach something much more like parity, however, if one considers the genders of those who were actually healed: Simone healed 65 males and 70 females. Women also comprised the larger percentage of those who came to Simone’s shrine (see Table 10). Of the sixty-three people described specifically as pilgrims in the collection, thirty-eight (60.3 per cent) were
women, nineteen (30.2 per cent) were men, and six (9.5 per cent) were couples.

Women participated in the cult of St. Simone in the role of intercessor for another's welfare more commonly than men. Twenty-one women acted as intercessors, while only five men and six couples did. Thus, women were more likely than men to make pilgrimages on another's behalf. Further, intercessors acted on behalf of males more often than females. All five men were intercessors acted on behalf of other males. Of the twenty-one women who took on the role of intercessor, only seven acted on behalf of other females; the other fourteen acted on behalf of males, generally their young sons.

St. Simone performed a wide variety of healing miracles for his suppliants: he restored vision and hearing, healed infections and injuries, and cured the disabled. He also cured the possessed. Simone only performed two non-healing miracles: he punished one man for blasphemy, and saved another from shipwreck. Overall, women and men seemed to approach Simone in similar numbers for the various kinds of help he offered (again, see Table 3.9). In point of fact, only two types of healing offered by St. Simone seemed gender-specific. Men were somewhat more likely than women to seek the healing of a hernia (8.5 per cent as opposed to 4.9 per cent). Biologically, of course, there would have been much more demand for hernia-healing for males than for females, and all ten suppliants who actually received this miracle were male. It is interesting, however, that four women and two couples sought this miracle for their sons, and that three men sought it for their sons, as well — since only five men acted as intercessors, their concentration on this particular matter is notable.
The other gender-specific miracle performed by Simone was the casting out of demons. Thirteen women, three men, and one couple sought to have demons cast out of themselves or loved ones. The numbers of the possessed are even more overwhelmingly female: three possessed males and fourteen possessed females appeared at the shrine. Further, the three men who were possessed manifested their possession in very different ways than the women and girls did. Three of the women were simply described as being “possessed by a demon;” but the rest have a common element in their emphasis on the violence of the possessed woman:

On the last day of the month of April, Maria, the daughter of Michael . . . was vexed by a demon, and did things such as the possessed do; and she had to be tied up, so that she could not make wounds in herself or anybody else. And her family, knowing of the miracles of the blessed Simone, led her (to him) by force all in one wagon with great faith and hope . . .

Other women, when possessed, suffered similar violent fits. One testified that “on a certain day that enemy of God threw her in a certain well;” another had a husband who wished to leave her after she became so “stirred up;” a third was

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66 "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 818: "Quaedam femina . . . dixit, quod erat possessa a daemon . . ."; 819: "Quaedam femina . . . dixit quod sunt quatuor anni vel circa quod fuit possessa a daemon . . ."; 819: " . . . erat possessa a daemon . . ."


68 "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 819: " . . et quadam die ille inimicus Dei projecit illam in quodam puteo . . ."

69 "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 822: " . . dicens quod maritus noluit secum morari postquam sic turbata fuit . . ."
behaving "such that no one was in any way able to hold her."\(^70\) Even those who did not behave violently were still described with violent imagery or with violence surrounding their problem. Two possessed women described the pain they suffered during their ordeals as the sensation of dogs tearing at their bodies.\(^71\) Women in this state were described as being out of their senses, memories, and intellects.\(^72\) Several were taken to the shrine by force (per vim). The oppositional behavior of one possessed woman hints at violence: "she would in no way go, nor did she want to go, nor was she able to go to any church."\(^73\) Another symptom of possession in women was, in two cases, the loss of vision, in particular the inability to see the body of Christ during Mass. It is this senseless violent behavior which seems to be the hallmark of possession, and is probably what the authors were attempting to describe when, in five different cases, they said the woman 'did possessed things,' or 'did things such as the possessed do.'

Two of the three demon-possessed males were described very differently by the authors. The first of the three, a man named Jacob, sounded like the typical (i.e., female) demoniac: "Nobody was able to hold him. When was asked, he said 'I am

\(^{70}\) "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 824: "... ita quod aiiquis nullo modo eam poterat tenere."

\(^{71}\) "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 819: "et erat tota plena doloribus et fittis, in tantum quod videbatur ei quod canes corroderent viscera ejus..."; 820: "... et videbatur eidem quod canes corroderent totam suam personam... ."

\(^{72}\) For example, "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 823: "...ad. tempore citra non fuit in suo sensu nec memoria nec intellectu."

\(^{73}\) "De B. Simone," *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 824: "...ipsa nullo modo ibat, nec ire volebat, nec poterat ad aliquam ecclesiam... ."
The next demoniac did not display such violent behavior: “Julianus . . . was as if possessed, and he lost his sense and intellect . . . and lost the vision of his eyes.”\(^7^5\) While the Bollandists, in their marginal notes, describe this man as ‘possessus a daemone,’ the Latin itself is unclear: he was not possessed, but rather ‘as if’ or ‘as though’ (\textit{tamquam}) possessed. Although he suffered the loss of senses just two of the female demoniacs did, he displayed none of their violent behavior. The author may have been using the image of possession to evoke this condition of senselessness without intending for us to understand that the man was actually harboring a demon.

The last male to be troubled by demons, Rainaldus, was not actively possessed or violent, but was instead frightened by a vision. He was a resident of a local hospital, and one night he heard the horses quarreling. He got up and went to the stable, and there he saw “a man on one of the said horses;” he was so terrified that “he fell to the ground and was not able to help himself, or to leave, or to say anything; and thus he remained until day.” A friend later found him, vowed him to the saint, and led him by the hand to the shrine, where he was freed of the terror.\(^7^6\) Again, this does not

\(^7^4\) “De B. Simone,” \textit{Acta Sanctorum} vol. 11, April II, 821: “Nullus eum tenere poterat. Dicebat quando petebatur, ego sum diabolus.”

\(^7^5\) “De B. Simone,” \textit{Acta Sanctorum} vol. 11, April II, 822: “Julianus . . . erat tamquam adversatus, et carebat sensu et intellectu, et ad Paschate Resurrectionis citra caruit visione oculorum . . . ”

\(^7^6\) “De B. Simone,” \textit{Acta Sanctorum} vol. 11, April II, 826: “. . . audivit equos in d. hospitio existentes insimul rixare; et audiens haec in continenti surrexit, caussa eundi ad eos. Et eundo ad stabula visum sibi fuit unum hominem videre super unum ex d. equis, et in continenti taliter pavescit, quod cecidit in terram et non potuit se aduare, nec ire, nec etiam loqui; et sic stetit ad diem.”
closely resemble the violent or senseless possession of the fourteen females who were freed by the power of St. Simone. While the subject was frightened senseless, he was not actively invaded by a spirit.

The process through which males and females sought help from St. Simone was also different. Men and women had different patterns of making vows (or not making them), took different kinds of vows, and received their miracles from the saint at different points in the narrative. Of the sixty-three suppliants of St. Simone who are actually described as planning or going on a pilgrimage, 19 were women, 38 were men, and 6 were couples (see Table 11). As was the case with Mary Magdalen at St.-Maximin, women were more likely than men to arrive at the shrine without having made any vow at all — 52.6 per cent of men vowed, but only 39.5 per cent of women. When vows were made to St. Simone, they were one of two types. What I have designated a ‘non-pilgrimage vow’ generally ran thus: “she vowed herself to God and St. Simone, asking our Lord Jesus Christ, that through the merits of the blessed Simone she might be healed of the said infirmity.” These vows did not promise a pilgrimage, although they were generally accompanied by one. A more aggressive vow was the contingent vow, which added to the non-pilgrimage form a promise of pilgrimage or an offering in return for the miracle: “with her heart and spirit she vowed herself to God that through the merits of the said Blessed Simone she would be freed from the said languor; and if she were freed, that she would personally go to

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77 “De B. Simone,” Acta Sanctorum vol. 11, April II, 824: “...vovit se Deo et B. Simoni, rogans D. N. Jesum Christum, quod meritis B. Simonis ipsam liberare curaret a d. infirmitate.”

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visit the shrine of the said Blessed Simone." Again, as with the cult of Mary Magdalen, women were somewhat more likely to use the contingent vow (34.2 per cent of women) than to take the non-pilgrimage vow which simply placed their problem in Simone’s hands (26.3 per cent of women). Women were even slightly more likely than men to use the contingent vow (26.3 per cent of men). But of the thirteen women who took the contingent vow, eleven did so while seeking a miracle for someone else, while only two bargained for a miracle for themselves.

The timing of the miracle was also affected by gender, but in this case by the gender of the person who was healed, rather than of the person who requested the miracle. Table 12 shows the timing of the miracles according to the gender of the suppliant requesting the miracle. As with most of the analysis here, it is based only upon those cases where a pilgrimage was recorded in the miracle. It shows that female suppliants were slightly more likely to get help from the saint immediately upon making a vow or prayer to him, whereas male suppliants were slightly more likely to have to wait until they arrived at the shrine for their miracle. Even so, it appears to be roughly half-and-half between those pilgrims, both male and female, who got help on the spot and those who had to go to the shrine first. If, however, one examines the gender of those who actually received the miracle, a different pattern appears (see Table 13). Nearly two-thirds of males (63.9 per cent) were healed as

78 “De B. Simone,” *Acta Sanctorum* vol. 11, April II, 823: “. . . corde et animo vovit se Deo ut meritis d. B. Simonis eam a d. languore liberaret; et si liberaret eam, quod ipsa personaliter veniret ad arcam d. B. Simonis visitandam.”
soon as the saint was requested to do so, and almost the same percentage of females (63.0 per cent) had to wait for their miracle until they had actually visited Simone’s tomb.

Simone’s miracles offer a great deal of useful factual evidence. The authors of the miracle collection did not exclude female pilgrims — on the contrary, women made up the majority of pilgrims. Given this, it seems as if the authors would not have seen any reason to select which stories to present based on any discomfort with female pilgrims. As in the other cases examined here, though, women more often represented another person than men did. Further, in this case (as in that of Mary Magdalen) they more often represented another person than themselves. The problems they sought help for are most often similar to the problems men encountered, with the notable exceptions of demonic possession, which was a feminine problem in this as in other sources, and hernias, which were biologically a problem in males. The more malleable elements of the story also show differences between women and men. Women made contingent vows more often; this meant that they were absolutely obligated to go to the shrine. They also adopted this aggressive stance on behalf of another more often than men did. Finally, females who were healed by the saint more often received their healing at the shrine than immediately after a vow or prayer was made. We cannot determine whether the authors presented the sequence of events in this way to help ‘justify’ women’s pilgrimages, or the women themselves did this, or whether for whatever reason women actually did need the ritual act of pilgrimage to
effect the healings they sought. We are, however, left with an image of women’s participation in this cult that was not only frequent, but also placed a heavy emphasis on verbal and visible ritual action.

*Conclusions: Women’s Involvement in Miracle-Oriented Pilgrimage*

Despite differences in geographical origin, length, format, and emphasis, these four miracle collections share common features in their inclusion of women. The basic anthropological facts of the stories show a certain continuity. First, and foremost, it is important to recognize that all of the cults regularly record women as pilgrims. According to Sumption, “it is possible that at the close of the Middle Ages women formed the majority of visitors at many shrines.” The evidence from these collections suggests that women were involved in relatively equal numbers with their male counterparts. At the least (in the case of Mary Magdalen at St.-Maximin), one-third of pilgrims were women, and at most (in the case of Simone da Todi) nearly two-thirds of those approaching the saint were female.

Secondly, while women were often involved in miracle-oriented pilgrimage, they also often became pilgrims in order to find help for someone other than themselves. Women were at least twice as likely as men to appear on another’s behalf in all of the collections. In two out of the four collections, women were more likely to be seeking help for another than for themselves. Whether this trend was the creation

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of authors or an accurate reflection of women's pilgrimages is not entirely clear. But even if such stories were recorded in a greater proportion because they were preferred by the authors, the stories themselves are still based on actual events. Women's pilgrimages on behalf of others fit neatly into women's day-to-day responsibility for the family's physical welfare. When a family member was ill, the woman who was responsible for that person's physical well-being was able to place this responsibility above those which formed the boundaries of her normal existence, and leave her home behind for a period of time — and afternoon, a week, a month? — to fulfill her obligation to heal.

Women also sought different kinds of healing than men, again indicating that the stories were shaped by the real needs of medieval people. Women more often needed healing for paralysis and arthritis, a trend that has been noted in other cults, suggesting a biological explanation. Women also needed relief from possession and insanity more often than men did. Women had always been considered more vulnerable to temptation and infiltration by evil spirits than men, and other sources suggest that women have displayed more mental health problems than men from pre-modern times to the present — although whether this is biologically or culturally determined is debatable. Neither Mary Magdalen nor St. Agnes, who freed prisoners as a sort of sub-specialty, freed female prisoners. St. Simone, the healer of hernias, was of course only called upon to make this miracle for men and boys.

When we begin to examine aspects of the stories that are perhaps more subject to the hand of the author or the broader cultural discourse, we still see very consistent
trends with regards to gender. Women regularly took contingent vows – pilgrimage vows which bound them into an agreement with the saint which made their pilgrimages compulsory. But the contingent vows taken by women were overwhelmingly likely to be made when they were seeking a miracle on another person’s behalf, rather than for themselves. When they sought help for themselves, the two collections that rely heavily on vows (Mary Magdalene and Simone da Todi) show that women most often took non-contingent vows or no vows at all. In those collections, only four women took contingent vows on their own behalves. The collections that do not focus on the vow show women’s seeming reticence on their own behalves in other ways. Female pilgrims to the shrine of Agnes of Montepulciano who sought help for their own problems waited longer for their miracles, and those to the shrine of St. Louis performed more ritual actions than their male counterparts in order to bring on the miracle. Thus, women were portrayed in the collections as bold when fulfilling their obligations to others, and somewhat more meek when seeking help for themselves.

In the hands of these authors, women’s pilgrimages also appear to be more overtly ritualized than men’s, as women made a public and visible show of their spiritual engagement in the process. Again, women performed more ritual acts than men did at the shrine of Louis IX. They also had to actually perform their pilgrimages in order to receive help from Simone. Even female pilgrims to Mary Magdalene seemed to have to need or want help more than men, arriving because they were distraught, stupefied by their losses, devoid of consolation. Their situations were
more extreme, and the stories make that tangible through their specific description of the woman’s emotional state.

Hence, there is an overall sense that women need to justify their decision to roam about by making the decision an obligation, by visibly expressing the process for others to see, and by making the need for the pilgrimage a matter of assuaging their overwhelming distress, as well as fulfilling their responsibility as caretakers. Whether the male authors wanted to cast them in a justifiable role in order to distinguish them from the Wandering Woman of Chapter 2, or the women themselves wanted to do so, is unclear and perhaps indistinguishable – but this must have had a strong effect on other women who faced such crises and considered asking for supernatural aid. Such a woman would have known that her actions might be considered suspect, but that if she made a binding vow (especially if it was for someone else, rather than herself), and made her devotional intent visible with gifts and actions, her pilgrimage would not only be acceptable to the saint and to God, but also to her fellow human beings.

Finally, although the parameters for acceptable participation in miracle-oriented pilgrimage by women may appear narrow, they conferred upon women not only the right to become pilgrims, but also a very powerful place within the family. When they went to a saint for help for their children, husbands, or other family members, women were not just playing out their role as the caretaker of the family’s physical well-being. They were also playing the role of intercessor – the same role the saints themselves played between their suppliants and God. This interpretation of women’s place in the spiritual scheme of things has also, to some extent, been
investigated by Caroline Walker Bynum in her landmark study *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*. According to Bynum, who worked with the hagiography and writings of female mystics, food was of great religious significance to medieval women because food preparation and distribution was their special function within the family. Thus, control over food, the rejection of food, the identification of Christ with food, and so on, were common themes in women's spirituality. As we have mentioned, the physical health of the family was also considered a woman's concern; it seems possible that women would look upon the seeking of miraculous healing for their family as being specifically their responsibility, and hence their special area of religious activity (much as Bynum paints fasting or the giving of food as charity). Interceding with the saints, however, placed women not only in the familiar role of caretaker, but also in the same spiritual role played by the saints themselves: intercessor with the divine. While the roles of both women and saints share an expectation of care-taking, a saint was also both a powerful and a holy person. As we shall see in the case of Henry VI, other miracle stories were able to clearly articulate that a female pilgrim who acted as an intercessor might, like the saint she sought out, also be considered both powerful and holy.

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CHAPTER 4

"STRONGER THAN MEN AND BRAVER THAN KNIGHTS":
WOMEN AND THE PILGRIMAGE TO JERUSALEM AND ROME, 1300-1500

Some medieval critics feared the problems which might arise when women spent time traveling; they associated women who traveled with a host of vices, and classified pilgrimage in the same category as carols, dances, and other profane activities – all were opportunities for vice. Despite this negative assessment of female pilgrims, the woman’s role as family caretaker often led her to participate in pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints, seeking miraculous help for her family members when they were injured or ill. But pilgrimage to Rome or Jerusalem was not intended to provide miraculous healing. Instead, it offered pilgrims the opportunity to win indulgences that would shorten their time in purgatory, and to visit the places described in the New Testament and the graves of the people who figured in it. Was there room for women in a pilgrimage such as this, where they could not claim that their travels were an outgrowth of their household duties, and where they might be gone for months or even years – if they lived to return at all?
At least one scholar has claimed that the Jerusalem pilgrimage was "virtually reserved for the male sex,"¹ but the writings of later medieval pilgrims show that this was not entirely the case. Some few women did become long-distance pilgrims, traveling to far-off places for the good of their souls, rather than for the physical welfare of their family members. This chapter will explore their experiences as recorded in twenty-five pilgrimage accounts, written primarily by men, between 1300 and 1500. The accounts show that pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem in some ways represented a worst-case scenario for women who wanted to become pilgrims. Nevertheless, women did participate; and both negative and the positive views on women as pilgrims came into play in the social relations worked out among pilgrims. Further, female pilgrims were able to use both viewpoints to their own advantage. Female pilgrims both conformed to the demands of their male counterparts in order to seek acceptance, and played up their more practical value as helpmates to the men with whom they were travelling.

The Sources

Pilgrims, especially those who traveled to the Holy Lands, had been writing down accounts of their experiences since at least the fourth century. Before the twelfth century, pilgrim’s accounts tended to be more guidebook than diary. They listed each shrine one ought to visit, what indulgences were available there, what relics

were on display, and perhaps which prayers ought to be said there. These guidebooks, called itineraries, were a common form of literature, and were copied and recopied in essentially the same format. According to Sumption, “most of their topographical information was derived from the seventh-century writings of Bede and Adamnan,” and they were “condensed, factual, and turgid.”

By the fourteenth century, however, pilgrimage accounts, like the Jerusalem pilgrimage itself, had changed. As more and more people had become literate in the High Middle Ages, books like Mandeville’s Travels had sparked interest in far-off places. At the same time, the commercial success of the High Middle Ages had created a middle class who were more likely to have the fiscal means to travel. The Jerusalem pilgrimage, which was being pursued by greater numbers of people, began to take on the attributes of tourism: “Official arrangements were now made for tourists for the first time. Information offices appear at Rome and consulates in Egypt and Palestine. The Venetian package tour is at the height of its popularity. Governments begin to encourage tourism.”

So, claimed Sumption, in the later Middle Ages “many pilgrims returned from their travels as little Mandevilles,” and wrote narratives that reflected their experiences and tastes in great detail. Some took the form of diaries, listing important occurrences

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4 Sumption, Pilgrimage, 259.
day by day; others took the old itineraries as a template and filled in personal observations about each of the shrines. These later accounts often take an interest in details not necessarily related to the spiritual process of pilgrimage. For example, authors of a noble background, such as the German knight Arnold von Harff, often assessed the military strength or wealth of the towns they visited; Italian traders such as Gucci and Frescobaldi commented extensively on the trade goods available in different places; and some authors went on at length about the physical discomforts of travel, including hunger, heat, and seasickness. The authors vary in their interest in their fellow-pilgrims. Some, such as von Harff, rarely mention any details about the groups with which they traveled. Others, such as the German friar Felix Fabri or the English eccentric Margery Kempe, record many details about the shrines and about those visiting them, and are thus far richer for the purposes of this study.

I have examined twenty-five narratives, written by English, German, Italian, French, and Spanish pilgrims. Almost all of the narratives discuss the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and a few also include information the pilgrimage to Rome (one focuses on this exclusively) and even to Compostella. Only one of these twenty-five narratives, the *Book of Margery Kempe*, provided detailed information about the experiences of a female pilgrim. For that reason, the experiences of female pilgrims appear in the

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5 The *Liber Celestis* of St. Bridget of Sweden, the only other later medieval pilgrimage narrative that was dictated by a woman, does not contain information about Bridget’s participation in pilgrimage rituals, her interaction with her fellow-pilgrims, or her experience of travel; instead, it records the visions she had while in Jerusalem. Because of this, the text sheds little light on women’s experiences of pilgrimage as they are addressed in this study. In the words of her editor, “Most of what we know of the Saint in the *Liber* we learn from the words addressed to her by the divine speakers: and their messages apply only in the most general terms to her personal situation.” Roger Ellis, introduction to
sources through a layer of interpretation imposed by male pilgrims. The historian is left to decide which parts of these narratives result from the interpretations of the authors, and which parts represent factual occurrences. But since, in most cases, women seemed to represent a small minority of the people in a given group of pilgrims, the interpretations of men, as we shall see, were a powerful force which shaped their day-to-day experience. While most of the texts do not give us much direct information about women’s emotional experience or personal perceptions of the pilgrimage, they will allow us to make some sense out of the social milieu in which their pilgrimages were carried out.

Two of the narratives in particular offer detailed information about female pilgrims to Jerusalem. The first is the journal of Felix Fabri, a German friar who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem twice between 1480 and 1483. Fabri was a keen observer of all that he saw during his two pilgrimages; his *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti Peregrinationem*, the book in which he described his journeys, is a gold mine of information on all aspects of the Jerusalem pilgrimage. Fabri’s voyages have been discussed extensively by H. F. M. Prescott. Fabri recorded the presence of

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women on each of his pilgrimages and commented extensively on their presence, responding to them quite differently depending on their behavior. His text is the only male-authored text that offers such extensive information, and will therefore form a significant component of this discussion.

Since the vast majority of these narratives were written by men, we must rely on *The Book of Margery Kempe* for a woman’s viewpoint. Margery was the daughter of a merchant of King’s Lynn, Norfolk; she married a townsman and during her marriage had sixteen children and several failed businesses. But aside from these mundane details, Margery was anything but typical. She understood herself to be a visionary, having regular conversations with Christ and the Virgin Mary. She tried to include aspects of monastic living in her middle-class urban life, including dressing in white clothing, attempting to convince her husband to live in celibacy with her, and abstaining from meat and alcohol. She was assertive and even brash about her own spiritual status, leading many of those around her to think of her as mentally ill rather than a living saint. One woman (and in particular, a woman as unique as Margery) can hardly be made to speak for all women, but Margery’s account of her pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem is nevertheless helpful in this investigation of the experiences of later medieval women who became pilgrims.

Margery’s book is further complicated as a source because of her illiteracy. She did not write it herself; she dictated it to two different scribes in her later years.

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In that her words were interpreted and recorded by a cleric, her Book offers similar challenges to the historian of women as the miracle collections examined in Chapter Three. How much of the text is her authentic voice, and how much is shaped by the assumptions of her male, clerical interpreter? John C. Hirsch argued that we should take the scribes seriously as authors who had control over the text; Lynn Staley suggested that the Margery of the Book, as a literary creation, should be treated as distinct from Kempe, the author; but others have commented on the power of Margery’s personality as she roars, cries, cajoles, and preaches her way through the text. As we shall see, her interpretation of the events of her pilgrimage was so earthy, so reproachful, and so vehement that it is difficult to believe that they have been significantly modulated by the scribe’s perceptions. Hence, the bare bones of her narrative seem a fairly reliable depiction of her experiences.

The remaining twenty-three narratives offer brief glimpses of female pilgrims alongside a variety of small details about women’s participation in the process and the attitudes about female pilgrims held by their male counterparts. Wherever possible, observations based upon the experiences of Kempe and Fabri will be supplemented by the writings of these other pilgrims, who came from all over Europe and from diverse

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social backgrounds. Although their far-flung origins may have given them differing viewpoints, all of them had in common the experience of travel to Jerusalem, and hence their opinions and observations are a fair representation of the social milieu that a female pilgrim to Jerusalem would have experienced during her journey.

**Pilgrims, Gender, and Canon Law**

There was a broad cultural understanding in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that female pilgrims were problematic at best and mortally sinful at worst. Nevertheless, "the church maintained the doctrine of spiritual equality as the foundation of its institutions," and thus canon law recognized that the souls of men and women were of equal importance in the eyes of God. While a number of Christian theologians had adopted misogynist stances based on woman’s creation as secondary to man’s, or on the part Eve played in the Fall, women’s souls were still to be understood as worthy of salvation, even though their bodies and minds might be suspect. This double-bind had its roots in scripture; while St. Paul insisted that “there does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus," it was also Paul who prohibited women from speaking in church.

This divided cultural and religious understanding of women must have created a confusing situation for women who wanted to travel to Jerusalem or Rome for the

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good of their souls. Many of the legal and ritual aspects of pilgrimage indicated that
the souls and devotions of male and female pilgrims were of the same weight in the
eyes of God and the church. In practice, however, female pilgrims to Jerusalem and
Rome were often discouraged by clerics (as we have seen in Chapter 2) and made
unwelcome by their male companions. Thus the history of long-distance pilgrimage,
like that of medieval women in general, “is in part a history of the constraints of
economic disadvantage, familial duty, and prescribed social roles. But it is also in part
a history of women’s agency within and against these constraints.”

In canon law and church ritual, which were largely developed in reference to
the more demanding long-distance pilgrimage, there was no recognized difference
between a male pilgrim and a female pilgrim. Becoming a pilgrim, at least on the face
of it, was a process which joined one into “an ‘order’ of the church, distinguished from
other men by a uniform and a solemn ritual of initiation.” Neither the uniform nor
the initiation ceremony distinguished between male and female pilgrims. By the later
Middle Ages, all long-term pilgrims, regardless of gender, wore a long, coarse, and
usually white robe and a large floppy hat, and carried a staff and a leather pouch in
which they carried their money and food.

1 Corinthians 14:34-36.

Judith M. Bennett, introduction to *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett,
Elizabeth A. Clark, Jean F. O’Barr, B. Anne Vilen, and Sarah Westphal-Wihl (Chicago: The


The ceremony of initiation also placed all pilgrims on the same footing. The Sarum Missal, commonly used in England, gives the specifics of the rite used to bless pilgrims before their journey. In the rite, two of the items associated with the pilgrim’s “uniform,” the leather pouch and the staff, were blessed, and presented to the pilgrims with prayers. The prayers with which the items were given to each pilgrim, which were addressed in the second-person singular, and seem suitable for any person of any gender or class. The prayer for the giving of the staff went as follows:  

Accept this staff for sustaining you on your journey and the labors of your pilgrimage, that you might have the power to conquer all bands of the enemy and to come securely to the thresholds of the saints where you wish to go, and having completed your journey in obedience you may return to us with joy.

The prayer contains both practical and spiritual images suitable to a pilgrim of either gender. Sumption describes the staff as “the most useful part of the pilgrim’s attire;” physically, it was intended for the pilgrim to lean upon during his or her journey, and here the Sarum Missal portrays it as ‘sustaining’ the pilgrim. Although the language suggesting that the wielder might have ‘power to conquer’ seems subtly gendered at first glance, the subject of that ‘conquest’ is inimicus, ‘the enemy’ – a common usage referring to Satan. This portrayal of the human struggle against sin as a combat with Satan was extremely old, and not limited to men. For example, the trope appears in a

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number of late antique saints’ lives, including both those of St. Anthony and of the
martyrs Perpetua and Felicity.20

The prayer for the giving of the scrip, or bag, is even more gender-neutral in
approach: 21

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ accept this bag, the dress of your
pilgrimage, that well restrained and blessed you will deserve to come to
the thresholds of the saints where you wish to go, and having
completed your journey you shall return to us safe and sound.

Prayers for the success and safety of the pilgrim, then, were common to both genders,
and the liturgy made no distinction between men and women as pilgrims. This is
particularly interesting since, as Sumption has pointed out, “the ceremony had its
origin in the blessing conferred on the knights departing with the first crusade.”22

While the intent of the ceremony may originally have been aimed at men alone, its
language did not presume that the pilgrim was male.

Legally, male and female pilgrims had the same rights. The legal status of
pilgrims in canon, and to some extent civil, law was drawn from an understanding of
the pilgrim as a traveler and stranger (again, assuming that the pilgrimage would be of
some duration and distance). This beleaguered stranger was owed the kindness and

Christian Biographies, ed. by Roy J. DeFerrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1949), 138-142;
also, H. R. Musurillo, trans., “The Passion of Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas,” in Medieval Women’s

21 Legg, ed., The Sarum Missal, 452: “In nomine domini nostri ijesu christi accipe hanc peram habitum
peregrinationis tue ut bene castigatus et saluatus peruenire merearis ad limina sanctorum quo pergere
cupis et peracto itinere tuo ad nos reuertaris incolumis.”

22 Sumption, Pilgrimage, 172.
support of all Christians. Canon law classified pilgrims, along with other Christians in need of aid and support, as miserabiles personae. Interestingly, certain women also fell into the category of miserabiles personae: widows, as women with no husband or father to protect them, also fell into this category. According to Brundage, by the eleventh century all pilgrims, as miserabiles personae, were owed personal protection from harm by other Christians, and hospitality from any bishop, abbot, or other churchman. Further, civil authorities were to refrain from taxing pilgrims or arresting them. According to Sumption, both a pilgrim’s property and feudal services were immune from claims, and “there was no legal remedy to be had against a bona fide pilgrim, so long as he returned home to face his adversaries within a reasonable time.” None of these protections seem to have been qualified by gender.

Finally, pilgrimages undertaken primarily for the indulgences available at the shrines offered the same number of years’ indulgence to both men and to women. Itineraries, which were handbooks of all the sites and all the indulgences available to those who visited them, were an extremely popular form of literature in the Middle Ages, and were copied and recopied in many languages all over Europe. While they might occasionally differ from one another on what indulgences were being offered, in none of them have I found any distinction made between the forgiveness obtained by a

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25 Sumption, Pilgrimage, 170.
female pilgrim and that obtained by a male. Once again, the souls of women and of men were equal in this respect.

Based on these sorts of evidence, it is easy to lose sight of the individuality of pilgrims who were engaging in a process of long-distance travel, seeing them instead as subsumed in a process in which they considered themselves equals, or at least mutually supportive companions. Turner and Turner, writing from an anthropological perspective, explained pilgrimage as a liminal experience: one which removed individuals from the larger culture, put them through an initiation or rite of passage, and then returned them to the culture with an altered social status. They argued that for pilgrims within this liminal (extra-societal) space, "likeness of lot and intention is converted into commonness of feeling, into 'communitas.'" Indeed, they went so far as to assert that "on pilgrimage, social interaction is not governed by the old rules of social structure," although they did comment that pilgrimages, once established, "(operate) like other social institutions" in that they are organized and group-oriented. While Turner and Turner did not go so far as to say that pilgrimage was a great equalizer, a genderless and classless utopia, they did suggest that on pilgrimage, the rules were different, and that the group had a sense of community arising out of its similar goals and circumstances.

Duffy has refined these notions somewhat while at the same time broadening his application of them to embrace all of later medieval Christian practice in England. He described the character of the late medieval English church as one of “corporate Christianity,” which was “resolutely and enthusiastically orientated towards the public and the corporate, and . . . a continuing sense of the value of cooperation and mutuality in seeking salvation.”\(^{28}\) Within this corporate behavior, which he felt was expressed in everything from the decoration of churches to the parish gild structure, Duffy points out that the community’s social hierarchy is still maintained. For example, he interprets Rogationtide processions in rural parishes as “a way of endorsing and underlining the realities of the community and its ordering, throwing the mantle of holy peace and charity over the structures and the pecking order of village life.”\(^{29}\) He makes specific comment about the place of women in this corporate Christian structure in his analysis of age- and gender-specific parish gilds: “gild endorsement of the corporate identity of the town’s unmarried young men or matrons was certainly not a means of separating them from the community at large, but of accommodating them within it.”\(^{30}\) Thus, he sees the corporate Christian structure as making a specific place for each group in the hierarchy of later medieval society, and as emphasizing the cooperation of those groups. Duffy applied this same notion of corporate Christianity to pilgrimage which, he said, “helped the believer to place the


\(^{29}\) Duffy, *Stripping*, 137.
religious routine of the closed and concentric worlds of household, parish, or gild in a broader and more complex perception of the sacred, which *transcended while affirming* local allegiances (emphasis mine)."^31 Duffy, like Turner and Turner, sees a synthetic aspect in the act of pilgrimage, although he feels that it was a synthesis that incorporated the day-to-day social hierarchy.

Duffy's description of the function of pilgrimage applies comfortably to what we have seen in localized pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints. Miracle cults did seem to make a particular place for women's participation, a place which was based upon an understanding of their function within the family unit. But a construction of pilgrimage as a process which tended to erode social hierarchy, or one which clothed that hierarchy in Christian cooperation, cannot fully explain the reaction of the male pilgrims to Jerusalem to the women in their midst. Issues of gender and class did not vanish, or even transform or mute themselves 'under a mantle of holy peace and charity,' when a woman donned the white robe, took up the bag and staff, and headed for Jerusalem. Instead, under the stressful conditions of long-distance travel and cultural displacement, social divisions amongst pilgrims were replayed and even amplified as pilgrims clung to their previous identities. And where no immediate need for certain groups could be seen, those groups were made entirely unwelcome. Thus, all notions of liminality and corporate Christianity aside, noblemen and noblewomen


received better treatment from the captains of pilgrim-galleys than their non-noble counterparts; churchmen disparaged the behavior of lay pilgrims; and men complained that the women who traveled with them were curious, noisy, and behaved inappropriately.

Becoming a Pilgrim: Class and Gender Barriers

Since medieval society was of two minds about women's participation in long-distance pilgrimage, women who desired to engage in the practice had to overcome several practical barriers in order to get started. Like all pilgrims planning to undertake such a long journey, women had to obtain not only the economic resources needed to pay for the journey, but also the permission of their superiors. The issue of economic resources was a particularly difficult one, and (unlike more localized pilgrimages) neither women nor men on long-distance pilgrimages represented a broad cross-section of medieval society. Instead, only a privileged few could afford the journey. During the fourteenth century, the average payment to the galley-captain alone was 60 Venetian ducats. According to Sumption, even the half-fare they sometimes charged the poor was "a sum well beyond the means of most 'poor pilgrims.'"32

For women of the lowest classes, as for men, this expense put the possibility of a long pilgrimage out of reach, although they could easily participate in one of the numerous local pilgrimages to saints' shrines. The status of the women who appear

32 Sumption, Pilgrimage, 205.
in the Jerusalem pilgrimage narratives between 1300 and 1500 confirms that it was primarily the privileged who were able to overcome this financial obstacle. Margery Kempe was perhaps one of the poorest women whose pilgrimage was recorded; she was the owner of a number of failed businesses and lived on charitable donations while a pilgrim in Rome. Nevertheless, she was of a comfortable background: she was the daughter of a merchant who was sufficiently powerful to have been mayor of King’s Lynn, and she was married to a “well-respected burgess.”^ 33 Felix Fabri called the six “ancient ladies” who appear so colorfully in his writings “wealthy;”^ 34 but since he also made clear that they were not noble, they were probably of the merchant class. Fabri also describes a “Fleming” woman who traveled with her husband. ^ 35 Given that they could both afford to go, were not identified as noble, and were from heavily urbanized Flanders, it is probably safe to assume that they, too were of the merchant class. Other women who appear as pilgrims in these records are noblewomen. Margery records a Madam Florentine traveling with a large retinue that included knights and gentlewomen,^ 36 and Fabri records the presence of a noblewoman on board his galley.^ 37

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33 Kempe, Book, Triggs, trans., Chapter 1, 21; also Book, Meech, ed., 6: “...sche was maryed to a worscelpful burgeys...”

34 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 11; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 31.

35 Fabri, “Wanderings” vols. 7 & 8, 166; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 149: “Inter quos erat quidam Flandrensis cum sua uxoré intrans galeam.”

36 Kempe, Book, Triggs, trans., Chapter 31, 76; also Book, Meech, ed., 79.

37 Fabri, “Wanderings” vols. 7 & 8, 41; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 56.
If a woman had the economic resources to become a pilgrim, then the next obstacle she faced was that of obtaining permission, which was a complicated process for any pilgrim. For a lay pilgrim, permission must be granted by his feudal lord if he had one, his spouse if he were married (to excuse him from the marital debt), and his parish priest. Monastic or clerical pilgrims needed the permission of their abbots or bishops. In essence, anyone who had a claim on the potential pilgrim, or some authority over him, must consent to his departure. This list of permissions held for women as well. If a woman were married, she needed permission from her husband both as her legal guardian and as her sexual partner. As Brundage points out, the onus of the marital debt lay equally on men and women.

Margery Kempe recorded the process of obtaining permission, which she described in this way:

When the time came for me to visit the holy places where our Lord lived and died, in accordance with the inner voice I had heard years before, I asked the parish priest of the town where I lived to make an announcement from the pulpit for me: any man or woman with a claim for debt against myself or my husband was to come and have a word with me before I left and I would settle things to their satisfaction—which is what I did. Then I said goodbye to my husband and the holy anchorite... 

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38 Sumption, Pilgrimage, 170.


40 Kempe, Book, Triggs, trans., Chapter 26, 62; also Book, Meech, ed., 60: “Whan tyme cam þat þis creatur xuld vysiten þo holy placys wher owyr Lord was whyk & ded, as sche had be reuelacyon þerys a-forn, sche preyd þe parysch prestes of þe town þer sche was dwellnyng to sey for hir in þe pulpyt þat, yf any man er woman þat cleymyd any dette of hir hosband or of hir þei xuld come & speke with hir er sche went, & sche with þe help of God, xulde makyn a-seth to ech of hem þat þei schuldyn heldyn hem content. & so sche dede. Sythen sche toke hir leue at hir hosband & of þe holy ankyr...”
Here, Margery, a married woman, gives the list of people to whom she owed obligations or allegiance: those to whom she owed money, the parish priest, the anchorite who had been her spiritual guide, and her husband. Unmarried young women would theoretically need the permission of their fathers, but no such woman seems to appear in the narratives under examination here. This is probably significant. Unmarried young women with high spiritual goals were both economically and socially better able to pursue them in the cloister than on a long voyage, and women religious would rarely, if ever, have been granted the freedom to travel from the cloister. The *Treatise on the Holy Land*, written by the Italian friar Francesco Suriano, was composed as a dialogue between himself and his sister, a nun. In it, he describes the Holy Land for her, and tells her “Great is your fervor, my most beloved sister, and your burning desire for these most holy places of the merit of which I do not believe you are deprived, for that you cannot see them comes only from an impossibility” (emphasis mine).41 Only widows, who might not have any particular authority figure to answer to, might have made such a decision freely; and even they, like the rest, would need the permission of their parish priest.

This list of required permissions created a certain amount of difficulty for women who wished to travel on pilgrimage. Most of these women were of the urban middle and elite classes or the nobility. It was easy for the husband of any married woman, be she of the urban elite (i.e., non-noble) or of the nobility, to prevent her

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from traveling, simply by refusing her permission to leave or forgiveness from the marital debt. As we shall see below, marital debt became one of the issues about which Margery Kempe and her husband had to reach an understanding before she was able to leave for Jerusalem. The pilgrimage narratives include three mechanisms women used for coping with the problem of permission: they could bargain with their husbands, they could outlive their husbands, or they could go along with their husbands. The tactic they chose was that which suited their position in life most closely.

Margery Kempe bargained with her husband for permission to travel as a pilgrim. Even though Margery was a townswoman of no particular wealth, she was able to use financial, as well as sexual and social, leverage in her negotiations with her husband. Her description of her departure, quoted above, does not suggest that she had any problem obtaining her husband’s permission, but there was a complex history of bargaining behind this seemingly amiable parting. Margery felt that her interest in becoming a pilgrim was divinely inspired – the product of an “inner voice.” She first mentioned her desire to go on pilgrimage while in mystical conversation with Christ, saying “Whether I pray, weep, go on pilgrimage, fast or speak to any good purpose, my will is that you should definitely give half the merit to Master Robert (her confessor).” She must have decided before even this first mention that she was called to become a pilgrim. There is certainly no doubt from her tone, however, that

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Kempe, Book, Trigg, trans., Chapter 8, 31-2; also Book, Meech, ed., 20: “In prayng, in thynkyng, in wepyng, in pylgrimage goyng, in fastyng, er in any good word speclyng, it is fuly my wyl þat þow þeves Mastyr R. halffyndel to encres of hys meryte as yf he dede hem hys owyn self.”

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she felt that God would sanction her decision to travel. Obtaining permission from her husband, however, became a part of a larger struggle with him over Margery's adoption of certain aspects of the religious life. Margery, much to her husband's chagrin, desired to live with him in celibacy and to keep a Friday fast. She first mentioned her husband's permission for her pilgrimage in the context of a conversation in which they discussed which aspects of their life together they would give up for the sake of Margery's devotions, and which they would keep for the sake of her husband's comfort. After a certain amount of discussion, he made her this offer: "Margery, let me have what I want and you can have what you want. My first wish is that we shall sleep in the same bed as we have done up till now; the second is that you shall pay my debts before you go to Jerusalem; and the third is that you shall eat and drink with me on Fridays as you used to." If by this time he had already released her from the marital debt for the duration of her pilgrimage, then he was not offering her anything she wanted – he still wished to maintain their sexual relationship while she was at home, and he wanted her to quit the Friday fast. But if he previously withheld his permission for her to become a pilgrim, then embedded in his request that she pay his debts before she left can be read an implicit permission for her to go, which would indeed have been a significant concession on his part. Margery's

\[43\] Kempe, *Book*, Trigg, trans., Chapter 11, 34; also *Book*, Meech, ed., 24: "Margery, grawnt me my desyr, & I schal grawnt jow sowr desyr. My first desyr is pat we xal lyn style to-gedyr in o bed as we han do be-for; þe secunde þat þe schal pay my dettys er þe go to Iherusalem; & þe thrydde þat þe schal etyn & drynkyn with me on þe Fryday as þe wer wont to don."
husband, in effect, offered to release her from the martial debt for the length of one pilgrimage if she, in return, would resume their sexual relationship after her return.

Margery engaged in a mystical conference with Jesus over the propriety of these arrangements, wherein Jesus told her to give up the Friday fast in order to get her other wishes from her husband. In fact, Jesus explained, “I told you to fast so that you’d more quickly and easily get your wish, which has now been granted.” Whether the reference to “your wish” was to her celibacy or her pilgrimage is unclear; what is clear, however, is that Jesus had entered into the haggling mentality of the proceedings, regarding the end of her Friday fast as a bargaining chip which could be exchanged for concessions from the other side.

Armed with these instructions, Margery returned to her husband with this counter-offer:

“Sir, if it pleases you, you can grant me my wish and I’ll grant you yours. Promise that you won’t come into my bed, and I promise to clear your debts before I go to Jerusalem. And let my body be totally at God’s disposal, which means that from now till your dying day you must never make any claim on me by asking for your matrimonial rights, and I shall eat and drink on Fridays just as you ask.”

The clearing of the debts and their meals together on Fridays, the financial and social leverage available to Margery, must have carried great weight, for Margery’s husband

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44 Kempe, *Book*, Trigg, trans., Chapter 11, 35; also *Book*, Meech, ed., 24: “For, my derworthy dowtyr, pis was he cawse bat I bad he fastyn for bu schuldyst he sonar opteyn & getyn bi desyr, & now it is grawntydt he.”

45 Kempe, *Book*, Trigg, trans., Chapter 11, 35; also *Book*, Meech, ed., 25: “Sere, yf it lyke ȝow, ȝe schal grawnt me my desyr, & ȝe schal haue ȝowr desyr. Grawntyth me bat ȝe schal not komyn in my bed, & I grawnt ȝow to qwyte ȝowr dettys er I go to Jerusalem. & makyth my body fre to God so bat ȝe neuyr make no chalengynge in me to askyn no dett of matrimony aftyr pis day whyl ȝe leuyn, & I schal etyn & drynkyn on ȝe Fryday at ȝowr byddyng.”
did agree to give up their sexual relationship in return for these favors. But the entire proceedings show that it was possible for urban women to obtain permission from their husbands to travel. Margery's experience with her reluctant husband seems to uphold Bennett's suggestion that medieval women had agency even within their social constraints. While I have not encountered another late medieval source that speaks so clearly about this process, it seems possible that such a round of bargaining could have preceded many women's journeys.

Other female pilgrims seem to have overcome the problem of permission by waiting until they no longer had a husband to stop them. Indeed, the status of widowhood seems to have been an ideal basis for women who wished to become pilgrims. Widows were not only understood as *miserabiles personae*, entitled to the protection of the church and of church courts, but they also had no husband who might deny them permission to travel or forgiveness from the martial debt. For widows of the merchant class and the nobility, the lack of a husband often meant that they took over his role as head of the craft shop or family business, or manager of his lands, until such time as they remarried or their sons were of age to take over these responsibilities. As Estow pointed out for medieval Castile, "a widow assumed social,

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46 Bennett, introduction to *Sisters and Workers*, 6.

47 Brundage, "Widows as Disadvantaged Persons," passim.
legal, and economic responsibilities that set her apart from the rest of adult female society.”

From this position of relative freedom, it was easier for widows to choose to become pilgrims. Susan Signe Morrison has found several examples of later medieval English widows who made preparations and received letters of protection in order to become pilgrims. Pilgrim widows also appear in the narratives under examination here. On Felix Fabri’s first pilgrimage, his group was joined by “certain women well-stricken in years, wealthy matrons, six in number . . .” who traveled together. In other places they were referred to by Fabri as “ancient matrons,” although their later perseverance in the face of seasickness, heat, and other rigors of travel did not indicate that they were extremely elderly or frail. The women were not described as noble; in all likelihood, they were of the urban merchant class, widows in their forties, fifties, or sixties who had enough money to travel independently and no husband to deny them permission. Other groups of women travelling together may well have been in a similar situation.

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50 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 11; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 31: “et quaedam etiam mulieres, vetulae, devotione matronae dixies . . .”

51 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 26; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 43: “Videntes autem antiquae vetulae matronae necessitate nostram . . .”
A third option that appeared in the narratives was for women to engage in long-distance pilgrimage along with their husbands. Such a situation eliminated possible disagreements and restrictions imposed by the husband, and also meant that the woman would be travelling with a protector. Morrison has also found several examples of married couples making plans for a pilgrimage together. 52 A married woman, together with her husband, joined Fabri’s second pilgrimage. She earned the universal loathing of the rest of the pilgrims because of her noisy curiosity. She, too, having been identified as a “Fleming,” was probably of the urban middle classes of the heavily urban Low Countries, and here she obtained her husband’s permission by becoming a pilgrim along with him. Interestingly, her companions objected to her presence because she was the only woman on board. 53 Apparently, for the sake of propriety, to travel under the auspices of one’s husband might not be considered enough; a woman should have other female traveling companions, as well.

Women on Pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome

“Before or during the course of the voyage,” wrote Sigal, “pilgrims sought to form groups.”54 It is the social context of these pilgrimage groups that formed the basis of the long-distance pilgrimage experience. A common theme running through the extant evidence of female pilgrims’ experiences is that their male companions had

52 Morrison, Women Pilgrims, 46.

53 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 166; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 150.
difficulty with their presence. It seems that many pilgrims had the same expectation of women's participation as Nompar de Caumont, a French noble who made his pilgrimage in the early fifteenth century. In his account, he began by settling his affairs, and included an injunction “for you gentle women” as well as the rest of his subjects: they were to pray for him while he was away.\footnote{Pierre-André Sigal, \textit{L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XI$^{e}$-XII$^{e}$ siècle)} (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1985), 118: “Avant ou au cours du voyage, les pèlerins cherchant à se grouper.”} Aside from praying for him, the ladies at home were involved in the process only as the beneficiaries of the fine goods he bought as a tourist in the Holy Lands, which he lists at the end of his account, saying “These jewels I brought from those countries to give to my wife and to the lords and ladies of my country.”\footnote{Nompar, Seigneur de Caumont, \textit{Le Voyage d'Oultremer en Jherusalem de Nompar, Seigneur de Caumont}, ed. by Peter S. Noble (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), 12: “Item a vous gentilz femmez et autres quelconques de ma ditte terre a toutes en general et a chascune par soy vous prie si affectuosament comme je puis . . .”} When women extended their interest in pilgrimage beyond these vicarious methods of participation and actually decided to travel, it was often made clear to them by their male companions that they were unwelcome, cumbersome, and a nuisance. Male pilgrims, if they must tolerate the presence of women among them, usually did so for the price of the silence and invisibility of those women. Indeed, it seems as if women sometimes sought to conform to these demands for silence, as invisibility was easier for them than any other course.

\footnote{de Caumont, \textit{Le Voyage}, 82: “Les quelles joyes de celuy pais je puortay pour donner a ma femme et aux seigneurs et dames de mon pais.”}
There was resistance to including women in groups forming up for the purpose of pilgrimage. Felix Fabri recorded one such incident. When Fabri’s first pilgrimage was preparing to embark from Venice, the six “wealthy matrons” wanted to join the group. Fabri details the social complexities these women faced when trying to secure passage to the Holy Land aboard a Venetian galley:

The proud nobles, however, were not pleased . . . and thought they would not embark on a ship in which these ladies were to go, considering it a disgrace that they should go to receive the honour of knighthood in company with old women. These haughty spirits endeavored to persuade us not to take passage in the ship in which these old women meant to sail; but other wiser and more conscientious knights contradicted those proud men, and rejoiced in the holy penitence of these ladies, hoping that their holiness would render our voyage safer. On account of this there arose an implacable quarrel between these noblemen, which lasted until it pleased God to remove those proud men from among us. Howbeit, those devout ladies remained in our company in both going thither and returning.  

This situation exposes serious social tensions, which include difficulties over gender as well as over class. One obtained membership in group of pilgrims headed for Jerusalem simply by engaging the services of the galley’s captain, independent of the opinion of any of the other passengers. One anonymous pilgrim was a member of a group of eighty or a hundred, and he mentions at least once that some of these pilgrims

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were not nobles: “Thursday the fifteenth, a poor pilgrim of Spain lost his hat and the wind carried it into the sea while he was sleeping on the deck of the galley.”

In the case of Fabri’s women, while the captain appeared willing to have them join, they faced a group of nobles angry at their presence, whose anger stemmed from being forced to have old women — and also, as it appears from the language of the passage, non-noble women — present at a knighting ceremony at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The nobles' pressure on the other passengers to take passage on another ship could very well have been intended to force the ship’s captain to break his contract with the women by taking away all of his remaining business. When this ploy failed, it left the women at the heart of a deeply divided group of pilgrims: those who resented them, and those who supported them. Fabri’s language (“Haughty spirits,” “wiser and more conscientious knights,” and “implacable quarrel”) makes it entirely clear both that this division among the men on board existed and on which side of it he fell. But it surely could not have been a comfortable position for the “ancient ladies” to be cooped up on a small ship with tensions running high over their very presence.

Even those pilgrims who had chosen to support the six matrons seem not to have regarded them as anything like equal partners in this rigorous spiritual endeavor. Instead, the matrons were as firmly placed in the category of “other” by their

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supporters as they were by their detractors. Throughout his book, Fabri emphasized the bravery of the matrons in the face of odds made overwhelming by their age and gender. Fabri said that he himself “was astonished at the courage of these old women, who through old age were scarcely able to support their own weight, yet forgot their own frailty...” His words hint that the other supporters of the women also looked on them as extraordinary, and specifically hoped that their presence would encourage God to protect the galley (‘hoping that their holiness would render the voyage safer.’). But his view of the women as especially brave may have felt as divisive and problematic to them as being thought an especial nuisance. Even this attitude of praise helped to polarize the opinions of the group, making the women the focus of an ongoing conflict among the other passengers, a conflict which reduced their ability to remain invisible to their companions.

Nor was this the last time that Fabri recounted tensions over the presence of a woman. On his second pilgrimage, the group he joined was originally made up entirely of men. At the last minute, however, the captain added a few more pilgrims to his trip, including the Fleming and his wife, whose presence caused tremendous tension:

When this woman came on board many were vexed at it, because she was the only one on board... There was no one on board our galley who was not displeased at the coming of this old woman, and at the thought of one woman having to dwell along among so many noblemen, especially as she seemed when we first saw her to

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59 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 11; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 31: “Miratus fui audaciam illarum vetularum, quae se ipsas prae senio ferre vix poterat, et tamen fragilitatis proprie oblitae, amore illius sanctae terrae in consortium militium juvenum se ingerebant, et laborem fortium virorum subibant.”
be restless and inquisitive . . . . She ran hither and thither throughout the ship, and was full of curiosity, wanting to hear and see everything, and made herself hated exceedingly.

The Fleming woman presented two problems: her uniqueness as the only woman on board the galley, and her refusal to be invisible. Many women seemed to have solved this first problem by travelling in groups, as the ancient matrons did. But it was on the second point that Fabri and his companions found this woman particularly irritating. If not separated into a completely different group, at the very least women pilgrims were expected to segregate themselves from the male pilgrims with whom they traveled. According to Fabri, on board the galley, “women pilgrims do not come to the common table, but remain in their berths, and both eat and sleep there.” These berths were described by Fabri as miserable and small: “A pilgrim can hardly move without touching his neighbor; moreover, the place is enclosed and exceeding hot, and full of various foul vapors.”

An English contemporary of Fabri’s, William Wey, voiced a similar opinion about the conditions in the berths: “if you go in a galley make your covenant with the patron early, and choose yourself a place in the said galley on the highest level; for in the lowest under it is right

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60 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 166; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 149-150: “Ad ingressum autem illius mulieris multi turbati fuerunt, pro eo, quod ipsa sola erat in galea, quia nulla mulier erat nobiscum . . . . Nec erat alquis in nostra galea, cui ingressus illius vetulae non displicaret, pro eo, quod una sola muliercula inter tot generosos viros commorari deberet, signanter cum satis vaga et curiosa primo aspectu videretur; . . . . Discurrebat enim continuo per navem, et curiosissima erat, omnia videre aut audire volens, et se multum odiosam faciebat.”

61 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 153; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 137: “Mulieres peregrinae non accedunt ad mensam communem sed manuent in suis stantiis, et ibi manducant, ibi dormiunt.”

62 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 15; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 138: “Vix potest se peregrinus movere sine contactu collateralis; locus etiam est clausus et caldissimus ac grossis vaporibus ac diversis plenus.”

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smoldering hot and stinking.\textsuperscript{63} It would seem, then, that in order to keep suitably separate and quiet, women suffered physically from the pilgrimage journey more than men did.

The Flemish woman, however, apparently did not wish to remain in her uncomfortable berth. Fabri goes on about the problem of her visibility at some length: while this was "a thorn in the eyes of us all,"\textsuperscript{64} he points out that "those seven (sic) old women in whose company I had made the voyage before... made less noise and were seen less that this one old beldame."\textsuperscript{65} It could not have been the mere presence of an active and curious pilgrim which upset them so much, because Fabri describes the behavior of the male pilgrims at length, with no condemnation of the outgoing curiosity which they exhibited: \textsuperscript{66}

\textellipsis some, as soon as they arise from the table, go about the galley inquiring where the best wine is sold, and then sit down and spend the whole day over their wine... some shout aloud for lightness of heart... Others run up the rigging, others jump, others show their strength by lifting heavy weights or doing other feats.

\textsuperscript{63} William Wey, \textit{The Itineraries of William Wey}, ed. by B. Badinel (London: Nichols, for the Roxburghe Club, 1867), 4: "yf ye goo in a galey make yowre covenaunte wyth the patrone bytyme, and chese yow a place in the seyd galey in the overest stage; for in the lawyest under hyt ys lyght smoleryng hote and stynking."

\textsuperscript{64} Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 7 & 8, 167; also "Evagatorium" vol. II, 150: "Omnibus erat spina in oculis haec foemina."

\textsuperscript{65} Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 7 & 8, 166; also "Evagatorium" vol. II, 150: "Nam pro vero dico, quod VII illae vetulae, cum quibus prima vice transfretavi, quietiores fuerunt et et rarius videbantur, quam illa unica anus."

\textsuperscript{66} Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 7 & 8, 150; also "Evagatorium" vol. II, 134-135: "Ideo aliqui statim ut de mensa surgunt, ascendunt, et per galeam inquirunt, ubi melius vendatur vinum, et ibi se ponunt, et totem diem juxta vinem deducunt... alii clamant ex jucunditate... Alii per funes currunt; alii saltant; alii suam fortitudinem probant levando onera, vel alias faciendo animosa."
The men were so outgoing and energetic on board that Fabri had to give them this warning, lest they get underfoot.⁶⁷

Let him also beware of getting in the way for the crew of the galley when they are about to run to their work, for, however, noble he may be, nay, were he a bishop, they will push against him, overthrow him, and trample on him, because work at sea has to be done at lightning speed, and admits of no delay.

It must have annoyed the galley crew just as much to have men underfoot, asking questions, and playing on the rigging as it did to have women doing the same thing; but the ambivalence which surrounded women pilgrims was great enough that they were required to remain invisible, while the men were simply cautioned to get out of the way quickly when necessary.

The demand for segregation continued throughout the journey, not just in the close quarters of the galley. Fabri mentions that near the pilgrim hospitals in Jerusalem "was another great hall, wherein women pilgrims were wont to sojourn, since they were on no account permitted to live with their men in the great hospital."⁶⁸

This mention of a gender segregation in living quarters is repeated in a number of narratives. This reflects concerns over the chastity of pilgrims. One gets the impression, however, that the women’s quarters were an addendum to the facilities

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available for pilgrims; the men lived in the “great hospital” (in hospitali magno) and
the women in “another great hall” (alia curia magna). Separated, women and men
could not threaten each other’s chastity, which seems to be the concern Fabri displays
when he says that male and female pilgrims were ‘on no account allowed’ to stay
together. But the vehement insistence upon this kind of segregation on board ship,
especially in the cases of old women whom the male pilgrims seemed to despise,
suggests that there was more to the desire to avoid the presence of women on
pilgrimage than a simple fear of unchaste behavior.

Why, then, was this silence and invisibility demanded of women who went on
pilgrimage? Concerns for chastity may well have prompted segregated quarters in
Jerusalem. For Fabri’s haughty noblemen, it was at least in part a question of
women’s presence in what was strictly a male ceremony: knighting. Throughout,
however, there is a pervading sense that women simply have no place in large groups
of male travelers. Unlike their sisters who sought the help of the saints, women who
traveled to Jerusalem were not making themselves of use to others. Indeed, they were
not identifiably fulfilling any role traditionally ascribed to women by medieval
society. Since the Jerusalem pilgrimage did not include a socially acceptable niche for
women’s participation, women who participated in it seemed out-of-place, underfoot,
and annoying to their male counterparts.

One method of coping with this antipathy was to conform to the demands for
invisibility which accompanied it. If women were able to remain little seen and little
heard-from, there was a chance that they might earn respect, or at least a lack of open
animosity, from some of their companions. Certainly Fabri was supportive of the six matrons who joined his first pilgrimage, and he went on to praise their humility and meekness throughout the journey. At the bathing pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, "by reason of the ... crowding and pushing, our companions, the pilgrim ladies, did not go in, but sat quietly and peaceably saying their prayers outside, and we brought water to them."\(^69\) Indeed, he even goes so far as to compare them favorably to the male pilgrims. When the pilgrims on his first journey went to bathe in the river Jordan, a few of the male pilgrims were very nearly drowned because they took foolish risks in the swift current, trying to prove their strength. Fabri held up in contrast the positive example of the matrons, "who bathed among the reeds with modesty, silence, and devotion, and far more sedately than we."\(^70\)

Another response to this problem was for female pilgrims to stick together. The narratives contain examples of women who traveled together, and who seemed prepared to look after other female pilgrims. Margery Kempe joined the pilgrim retinue of a total stranger, Madam Florentine, on her way to Rome. This Madam Florentine was traveling "with her many Knights of Rhodes, her gentle-women and a fine set of horses."\(^71\) The same noblewoman found that Margery was in dire financial

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\(^69\) Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 7 & 8, 528; also "Evagatorium" vol. II, 418-419: "...propter praedictas enim pressures mulieres peregrinae, sociae nostrae, non introverunt, sed cum quiete et pace foris sedentes manderunt in sua devotione, quibus aquam ministravimus."

\(^70\) Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 9 & 10, 19; also "Evagatorium" vol. III, 41: "...quae supra nos in arundinibus etiam balneantur cum pudore, silentio, devotione et cum maturitate, multo magis quam nos."

\(^71\) Kempe, *Book*, Triggs, trans., Chapter 31, 76; also *Book*, Meech, ed., 79: "Hir name was Margaret Florentyne & sche had with hir many Knygtys of Roodys, many gentylwomen, & mekyl good caryage."
straits in Rome, and although they did not even have a language in common, she saw to it that Margery had enough to eat. It is especially interesting to note that this connection bridged class issues; Margery was not a noblewoman.

Many women who traveled to Rome or Jerusalem traveled in groups, like the six women who went on Fabri’s first pilgrimage. This helps to clarify the frustration of the men on board Fabri’s galley when a solitary woman joined them, their fears starting at the thought of one woman having to dwell alone amongst so many noblemen. In fact, the reason that no women were originally on board for Fabri’s second pilgrimage was that another ship captain, one Master Augustine, “had gathered together all the women on board his galley.” Pilgrim galleys, by the late fifteenth century, could hold up to one hundred passengers; Master Augustine’s galley may have simply had a large contingent of women among his pilgrims, or possibly an entire galley-load made up of women pilgrims. It is regrettable that we do not have any written records of the experiences of women who went in such groups.

Women who did not conform to the rules of silence and invisibility, or stick to the company of other women, could pay an uncomfortable price. In the case of the overcurious Fleming woman, Fabri and his fellows found an opportunity to leave her behind, and took it. When they reached Rhodes, she apparently went alone on an

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73 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 166; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 149-150.

74 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 166; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 150: “...sed Dominus Augustinus patronus alterius galeae omnes mulieres in suam galeam collegerat.”
excursion “to some church outside the town, not supposing that the galley would sail
that day.” The galley did indeed sail, and without her. Despite his staunch defense of
the six matrons, on this occasion Fabri admitted that “except her husband, no one was
sorry at the absence of this woman, because she had rendered herself odious beyond
measure by her silly talk and her inquisitive prying into unprofitable matters.” He
softened somewhat when she caught up with the pilgrims in a boat. He observed that
there was not much happiness at her return, but extended his sympathy for “the straits
to which she had been put by the sailing of the vessel.”

This situation might not have been caused by vindictiveness on the part of the
other pilgrims. Sir Richard Guylforde, an English noble who completed his
pilgrimage in 1509, recorded that a number of pilgrims were left behind on the island
of Mylo because, as they were off exploring the island with the captain’s blessing, the
first fair wind in many days came up, and the captain was obliged to leave
immediately. But other evidence from Fabri at least suggests the possibility that
leaving the Fleming woman behind was intended to be a punitive action. On Fabri’s
first pilgrimage with the ancient matrons, there was also a pregnant noblewoman

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75 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 190; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 169: “quia extra civitatem ad
quandum (sic) ecclesiam evagata fuerat, non existimans, galeam hoc die recedere. Die illius autem
mulieris nemo tristis erat absentia, nisi maritas ejus, quia feceret se ultra modum odiosum suis fàtuis
locutionibus et curiosis indagationibus rerum inutilium.”

76 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 201; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 178: “De cujus ingressu parvum
gaudium erat. Compatiebur tamen misellae propter angustias ejus ex recessu navis perpessas.”

77 Richard Guylforde, The Pylgrymage of Sir Richarde Guylforde Knyght and controuler unto our late
soveraygne lorde kynge Henry the Vii and howe he went with his servaunts and company towards
Jerusalem (n.p.,1511), 91.
aboard. Fabri makes little mention of her, possibly because she, like the other nobles, would have had separate housing in the forecastle cabins of the galley, and would therefore not have been visible to most of the pilgrims. After a bout of bad weather and seasickness aboard ship, the galley rested in the city of Lesina for three days, in order to avoid a dangerous wind, and also "to recruit the strength of the pregnant lady, who had suffered much and became very weak during the gale; indeed, it is a wonder that both she and her infant did not perish during that terrible time." If the entire galley was willing to wait for this woman, who was noble but was also invisible, to recuperate, then the act of leaving the more visible and non-noble woman behind in Rhodes begins to seem more like a planned act to get rid of a nuisance.

Indeed, the Fleming woman is not the only one who is recorded as being abandoned by an annoyed group of pilgrims. Fabri also mentions an incident at the Jordan River when one of the six matrons was accidentally left behind. The remaining five matrons raised a hue and cry and begged the rest of the group to stop and wait while they searched for her. The group was as divided over this rescue effort as they had been when the matrons joined the galley. Some joined the search, and "some rough and hard-hearted knights grumbled at the whole host being thrown into confusion for the sake of one old woman, and had their advice been followed, we should have quite given up the old woman for lost." More generous opinions

78 Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 7 & 8, 128; also "Evagatorium" vol. II, 119.

79 Fabri, "Wanderings" vols. 7 & 8, 41; also "Evagatorium," vol. II, 56: "... et etiam mansimus propter domiae praegnantis et gravidae refocillationem, quae valde fuerat in illis tempestatibus infirmata; mirum est quod non fuit mortua simul cum foetu in tantis terroribus."
prevailed, and the old woman was found by the Jordan, asleep, and “received with joy.” 80 Again, those who resented the presence of these women were quite willing to punish them by leaving them behind; the matron was lucky that she and her companions had allies within the group.

The English pilgrim Margery Kempe, whose extremely visible piety made her sensational to those who met or knew her, was also abandoned by her fellow pilgrims. When her party arrived in the city of Constance, they met with a papal legate, to whom her companions complained about Margery’s weeping, unwillingness to eat meat, and constant devotional conversation. The legate supported Margery, and the party left her and her money with him, refusing to travel further with her. Much to her annoyance, the party also kept her maid, “despite the promise and assurance she had given me that she would never forsake me, come what may” – the extraction of which promise shows that even Margery sought to travel with other women. 81 Margery rejoined the party in Venice; they were convinced that because she arrived before they did she must have God’s favor, and agreed to let her rejoin them if she would leave off her devotional ramblings and vegetarianism. She promised, but failed to keep the promise. While her companions did not abandon her again until they had seen her safely back to Venice, they punished her annoying behavior in a number of

80 Fabri, “Wanderings” vols. 9 & 10, 32-3; also “Evagatorium” vol. III, 51-52: “...quamvis aliqui milites rudes et crudeles murmurarent, quod propter unam vetulam totus exercitus inquietaretur, et si quis secutus fuisse eorum consilium, vetulam illam omnino dimissionsus in perditione .... Accepta autem cum gudio est matrona . . . .”

81 Kempe, Book, Trigg, trans., Chapter 27, 65; also Book, Meech, ed., 64: “...not-wythstondyng sche had behestyd hir maystres & sekyrd hir pat sche xulde not forsake hir for no nede.”
other ways, if her complaints are to be believed. She wrote that they excluded her from eating with them, stole her sheets,\(^2\) tried to bar her from going with them to the Jordan, refused to help her climb Mount Quarantine, denied her a share of their water,\(^3\) and so on.

It is easy to write off Margery’s experiences as the consequence of her flamboyant and apparently obnoxious piety. She experienced many spiritual gifts during her lifetime, and most notably in Jerusalem the gift of tears, leading to such episodes as this: “I fell to the ground and cried out aloud, twisting and turning amazingly in every direction, flinging out my arms as if I was in death throes.”\(^4\) Or: “My body writhed and tossed about, I flung my arms wide and cried out as though my heart would burst.”\(^5\) In sum, her personality was abrasive and her behavior strange, and therefore Margery seems like a questionable representative of women’s experiences. In fact, her overwhelmingly visible and audible personality and devotions have left modern scholars struggling to understand her. A significant number of scholars have insisted that she was insane.\(^6\) One felt that she was both


\(^{3}\) Kempe, \textit{Book}, Trigg, trans., Chapter 30; also \textit{Book}, Meech, ed., 74.

\(^{4}\) Kempe, \textit{Book}, Trigg, trans., Chapter 28, 69; also \textit{Book}, Meech, ed., 70: “… pan sche fel down & cryed with lowde voys, wondyrfully turnyng & wrestyng hir body on euery syde, spredyng hir armys a-brode as ,yf she xulde a deyd . . .

\(^{5}\) Kempe, \textit{Book}, Trigg, trans., Chapter 28, 68; also \textit{Book}, Meech, ed., 68: “sche . . . walwyd & wrestyd with hir body, spredyng hir armys a-brode, & cryed with a lowed voys as pow hir hert xulde a brostyn a-sundyr.”

\(^{6}\) For recent examples, see Phyllis Weissman, “Margery Kempe in Jerusalem: \textit{Hysterica Compassio} in the Late Middle Ages,” in \textit{Acts of Interpretation: The Text in its Contexts}, 700-1600, ed. by Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth D. Kirk (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982); Phyllis R. Freeman, Carly Rees
insane and a mystic, but others insist that two are incompatible, and were incompatible in the medieval conception of mysticism. One scholar of the history of medicine has even tried to diagnose her with Tourette’s Syndrome. Feminist scholars, on the other hand, have “hailed Margery as the bold practitioner of an alternative, matriarchal, feminine kind of spirituality.” The diversity of modern opinions about the genesis of Margery’s behavior mirrors the confusion of her contemporaries, whose responses to her have been accurately described as “fragmented.”

Susan Signe Morrison argued that Margery’s spirituality was a performance, and that “pilgrimage provides her performative and emotional spaces, which express themselves in cries and screams and tears, languages which threaten the religious

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order and empower Kempe.” But other sources confirm that such performances were not limited to Margery alone. The sole extant copy of Margery’s Book contains marginal notations indicating that some of the Carthusians of Mount Grace Priory, who owned the manuscript, experienced very similar spiritual ‘gifts.’ Richard Kieckhefer has pointed out that “many of Kempe’s unconventional behaviors had themselves become conventional on the Continent, and those most receptive to her were often those who knew of the Continental conventions.” Even at home, “the religious milieu of East Anglia was so richly diverse and tolerated such individuality in devotional practices” that while Margery was sometimes castigated, she was never entirely abandoned by the local religious leadership. These behaviors were not unusual for lay persons in the context of the Jerusalem pilgrimage. Felix Fabri, who in other cases praised the meekness and silence of the women he observed on pilgrimage, seemed very comfortable with visual and vocal displays of piety from women visiting the Holy Sepulchre. After describing at some length the very vocal repentance of the pilgrims as a whole, which included sobbing, throwing themselves to the ground, and beating their breasts, he mentions that “above all our companions and sisters the


95 Janet Wilson, “Communities of Dissent: The Secular and Ecclesiastical Communities of Margery Kempe’s Book,” in Medieval Women in their Communities, ed. by Diane Watt (Toronto: university of Toronto Press, 1997), 164.
women pilgrims shrieked as though in labor, cried aloud and wept. Margery was not the only women, nor even the only pilgrim, to weep and wail at important pilgrimage sites. Her weeping and preaching, however, were not contained within these generally accepted group expressions of contrition and piety, and she was thus punished for her unwillingness to conform to demands for invisibility the rest of the time.

Female pilgrims may have been expected to remain invisible, but male pilgrims still had need of the services that they were accustomed to getting from their mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, or female servants at home. Usually, they obtained such services from women who lived along their route. Arnold von Harff, a German knight from Cologne who went on pilgrimage in 1496, made this clear throughout his narrative. Von Harff included short phrasebooks in the languages he encountered on his overland journeys to Jerusalem and Compostella, including Slavonic, Albanian, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Basque, and Breton. He includes the word for “a woman” in each language he gives phrases for; further, his list of important phrases includes such requests and comments as these, all taken from the section in Greek:

Kyratza gamysso sena ego? Woman, shall I marry you?
Kyrasche nazis gymati metosena. Good woman, let me sleep with you.

96 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 283-84; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 239: “Super omnes autem mulieres peregrinae sociae nostrae et sorores quasi parturientes clamabant, ullulabant et flebant.” The same correspondence between Margery’s devotional behavior and that of Fabri’s matrons has been noted in Weissman, “Margery Kempe in Jerusalem,” 215, who argues that such ‘hysterical’ behavior was the result of medieval patriarchy; she failed to note, however, that Fabri described all the pilgrims, men and women, engaging in such behavior.
Von Harff records ways in which to proposition women in five different languages, including Arabic and Hebrew. He also asks for food and other basic services, including phrases in Albanian, Turkish, and Breton requesting that his shirt be washed. One must assume that other male travelers also found it necessary to seek out the comforts of home from foreign women. Italian and English commentators noted that foreign pilgrims and Roman women each represented a temptation for the other. And Fabri commented that the wary pilgrim must be careful of which inns he chooses along the way, as "no one receives German pilgrims into his house save the keepers of houses of ill-fame, who for the most part are Germans..." No doubt a service industry made up mostly of local women had arisen everywhere along the traditional pilgrim’s routes to serve these needs. Many instances of such an industry appear in the narratives. Frescobaldi commented on the presence of “a great number of low-class women, very great merchantresses” between Alexandria and Cairo.

97 Von Harff, The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff, Knight: from Cologne through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France, and Spain, which he accomplished in the years 1496 to 1499, Trans. by Malcom Letts (London: Hakluyt Society, 1946), 90-91.

98 Von Harff, Pilgrimage, p. 77, 249, and 284.


100 Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 163; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 147: “Et nemo peregrinos theutonicos recipit in domum suam, nisi lenones; qui ut in plurimum sunt Theutonici...”

Ogier VIII said that in Cephalonia "men and women came to us who carried fresh bread, chickens, grapes and other goods to sell . . ." And Fabri described the German madam of the brothel in Crete, who sent the prostitutes away upon the pilgrims’ arrival, as "a well-mannered, respectful, and discreet woman, and (she) obtained all that we needed for us in great quantity." 

Men traveling as pilgrims, then, had need of services usually rendered by women, and it appears that they typically bought these services from local women along the way. But Fabri’s experiences show that female pilgrims, if present, could also render such services. While serving their fellow pilgrims breached their protective invisibility, it also proved to their male counterparts that they had a definable purpose, and thereby overcame negative views of their presence (however briefly). The six matrons braved visibility when most of the pilgrims on board their galley became seasick, and Fabri told the tale with partisan relish:

We . . . . cast ourselves down on our beds, very sick; and the number of the sick became so great, that there was no one to wait upon them and furnish them with necessaries. Howbeit, those ancient matrons, seeing our miseries, were moved with compassion, and ministered to us, for there was not one of them that was sick. Herein God, by the strength of these old women, confounded the valor of those knights, who at Venice treated them with scorn, and had been unwilling to sail with them. They moved to and fro throughout the galley from one sick man to another, and ministered

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to those who had mocked and scorned them as they lay stricken down on their beds.\footnote{Fabri, “Wanderings” vol. 7 & 8, 26; also “Evagatorium” vol. II, 43: “Sed et nos,... in lectulos decidimus aegritudinis magna: et adeo multiplicati furent infirmi, quod servitores non erant, qui necessaria cupita infirmis ministrarent. Videntes autem antiquae vetulae matronae necessitatem nostram, motae super nos misericordia nobis servierunt; non enim aliqua inter eas infirma. In quo facto confudit Deus in robore illarum vetularum fortitudinem illorum militum, qui Venetiis eas sperebant, cum eisque navigare refugiebant. Discurrebant autem per galeam de uno infirmo ad alterum et suis pretoribus derisoribus in lectulis prostratis serviebant.”}

The willingness of the matrons to nurse the sick, and Fabri’s claim that they themselves had not succumbed, is made more remarkable by the fact that as women they were unwelcome ever to leave their bunks during the journey, and so had been cooped up in an unhealthy environment more than their male counterparts. They may, however, have been grateful for the opportunity to prove themselves useful, and thereby to ease some of the tensions created by their presence.

Female pilgrims could also serve a purpose for their male counterparts in a less direct fashion. Some commentators turned women who endured their difficult status and completed their pilgrimages with grace and modesty, who conformed to demands for silence but still expressed their devotion, into exempla for their male counterparts. It was clear throughout Fabri’s account that, in his fashion, he supported the endeavors of the old women, and that he considered their story a convenient didactic tool. When he introduced them in his narrative, he described them as feeble: “old women, who through old age were scarcely able to support their own weight, yet forgot their own frailty, and through love of the Holy Land joined themselves to young knights and
underwent the labors of strong men." While Fabri was pleased that the matrons
maintained silence and modesty at the Bathing Pool of Siloam or at the River Jordan,
in other situations he played up their strength and valor. There was a hint of this in
his description of how they nursed the sick, but it became an impromptu sermon when
he described the arduous journey from the Jordan back to Jerusalem through the
desert. This 'sermon' is worth quoting at length:  

But during all these labors our fellow-pilgrims and comrades, the
ancient ladies, outdid all of us, wrested the first place from the knights,
neither groaned nor bewailed their toils, but went on first in the whole
line of march, stronger than men and braver than knights. These old
ladies struck great shame into us by their endurance; indeed, a knight
said to me 'lo! My brother, I don't believe these old creatures to be
women at all, but devils, for women, especially old women, are frail,
tender, and delicate, whereas these women are made of iron, and are
stronger than all us knights.' . . . Whence, however, could power have
come to weaklings, and strength to women, save from Him who hath
chosen the weak things of the world to unfound the strong, and who set
these women above the men, that none of him might boast of his sex,
his strength, his beauty, his youth, or his noble birth - ? For these
women were neither men, nor strong, nor beauteous, nor noble, yet they
underwent without fainting all the labours whereby knighthood is
gained. Herein God confounded the pride of those knights who had
scorned these ladies for companions . . . .

105 Fabri, "Wanderings" vol. 7 & 8, 11; also "Evagatorium" vol. II, 31: "... illarum vetularum, quae se
ipsas prae senio ferre vix poterant, et tamen fragilis proprie oblitas, amore illius sanctae terrae in
consortium militum juvenum se ingerebat, et laborem fortium virorum subibant."

p. 79-80: "Sed in his omnibus comperegrinae et sociae nostae annosae vetulae antecedebant nos,
praepiientes loca militum, et nec genebant, nec conuerebantur de labore, sed fortiores viris et militibus
adaciores primae in acie procedebant. Magnam verecundiam faciebant nobis istae vetulae sua
infatigabilitate, unde quidam miles dixit mihi: ecce, frater, non credo has vetuals esse foeminas, sed
daemones sunt, mulieres enim, praesertim annosae, sunt fragiles, tenerae et delicatae, istae autem sunt
ferreae, cunctis militibus fortiores. . . . Sed unde fragilibus fortitudo, mulieribus robur, nisi ab eo, qui
infrima mundi eligat, ut confundat forti, qui praetulit eas viris, ne quis glorietur de sexu, de fortitudine,
pulchritudine, juventute et de nobilitate. Siquidem nec ipsae erant viri, nec fortes, nec pulchrae, nec
nobiles, et tamen omnes labores peregerunt sine defectu, per quos militia acquiritur. Et in hoc confudit
Deus superbiam illorum militum, qui eas designabantur habere socias . . . ."
Here Fabri makes the matrons serve their male companions in a different way: by using them as an exemplum intended to teach humility. The women’s endurance is dismissed as none of their doing; instead, they are simply tools used by God to set a positive example. Indeed, this is the only way Fabri himself was able to explain how old women, whom he understood to be naturally frail (despite their hardiness during the bout of seasickness), could be so strong. Fabri’s support for the women, however, does not stem from an understanding of them as spiritually worthy in their own right, but rather from the ways in which he perceived the divine speaking to the other pilgrims through their actions.

By dint of invisibility, service, sticking together, and forbearance, women did eventually make it to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, or the many churches of Rome. But the ambivalence of medieval society about the inclusion of women in the process of pilgrimage sometimes extended to women’s experiences of the pilgrimage shrines themselves. In a small number of instances, women were not able to complete their pilgrimages to the shrines they had traveled so far to visit. Instead, they were required to remain outside certain holy places because of their gender. The authors of pilgrimage narratives offered a variety of explanations for this state of affairs, but the restrictions, where they occurred, once again made female pilgrims unwelcome.

Some popular shrines in Rome and Jerusalem were considered overcrowded, and therefore too dangerous for a woman to enter. Sumption has examined this briefly, and believes that closures of a few pilgrimage sites to women can by and large be
attributed to a fear for their safety. He notes that on at least two occasions, at St. Denis in the 1130s and at an exposure of the head of St. Martial in Avignon in 1388, women were hurt in the crushing crowds, including pregnant women. Of course, if the safety of the visitors was the greatest concern, it seems that officials at shrines would have been equally concerned for the safety of children or the elderly, and have closed the shrines to them as well, but no such tradition seems to have existed.

Whether or not there was a genuine concern for the safety of women behind these closures, excluding women was certainly a quick and handy form of crowd control. As we have seen, at saints’ shrines, women could comprise a very large percentage of the pilgrims.

Fabri’s six matrons experienced this limitation at the bathing-pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. According to Fabri’s description, the place was very crowded: “those in front cried out against the impatience of those behind, and those who were last cried at the slowness of those who were in front, and those in the middle cried out because they were squeezed by both the others . . .” Because of this state of affairs, the matrons remained outside, and the male pilgrims were considerate enough to bring them some of the holy water in “basins and bottles,” “for, by reason of the aforesaid crowding and pushing, our companions, the pilgrim ladies, did not go in, but sat quietly and peaceably saying their prayers outside . . .” This case suggests that even where a

107 Sumption, Pilgrimage, 263.

sites was not officially closed to women, they might choose to remain outside and conform to the expectations of their companions that they remain silent and docile.

According to English chronicler John Capgrave, who wrote a description of Rome’s history and churches for the use of pilgrims in c. 1450, some of the shrines in Rome were completely closed to women. He complains that there are many “lewed causes to whech I wil 3ive no credens” which explain the exclusion of women, and then goes on to give the reason he (and Sumption) can believe:

All those who have been at Rome know well that the women there are very desirous to go on pilgrimage and to touch and kiss every holy relic. Now in truth these places which are forbidden to them are very small in number. And perhaps some woman was in the press (of a crowd) and either because of sickness or because of pregnancy was in great peril there; and for this cause they were forbidden to enter these houses as I suppose.109

Capgrave lists the chapel of St. John the Baptist at St. John Lateran as closed to women, but explains that they receive the same indulgences as men “if þei go on pilgrimage and touch þe dore.”110 He did not specifically explain how indulgences at the altars of Saint Leo and the Holy Cross in St. Peter’s could be made up by women,

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109 Capgrave, Ye Solace of Pilgrimes: A Description of Rome, circa A.D. 1450, by John Capgrave, An Austin Friar of King’s Lynn, ed. by C.A. Mills (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), 77: “Al þoo whech haue be at rome knowe weel þat þe women þer be passing desirous to goo on pilgrimage and for to touch and kisse euery holy relik. Now in uery soth&stnesse þese places whech are forbode hem be rith smale in quantité. And uphap sum woman be in the prees eþer for seknesse or with child hath be in grete perel þere and for þis cause þei wer forbode þe entre of þese houses as I suppose.”

110 Capgrave, Ye Solace, 71-2.
however, and again women were not allowed to enter these places. It must surely have been frustrating for women who had pictured themselves in holy contemplation of the altar or the grave of a saint to find that they must be satisfied with touching the door.

Women's exclusion from entering certain shrines was not always understood simply as a form of crowd control or protection, however. Women's notorious lack of sanctity was also used to explain why they were excluded from some shrines. Herein lie the "lewed causes" Capgrave refused to repeat. The Spanish pilgrim Pero Tafur, who made his pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem between 1435 and 1439, wrote that at the chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome, "no women are allowed to enter the chapel, for the reason, as they say, that a woman once uttered such things that she burst asunder." Rather than risk another untidy incidence of bursting, the shrine was simply closed to women. Nicolaus Muffel tells an even more graphic story of a woman who was kneeling at the same shrine when 'nature happened to her,' leaving a stain on the marble steps. Crawford has noted that European culture was long concerned over the presence of menstruating women in sacred places, based on the prohibition in Leviticus. For fear of other women leaving a mark of menstruation,

111 Capgrave, Ye Solace, 63.
113 Capgrave, Ye Solace, 77, n. 1: "...und deweil er ob dem altar stund und sy in ansach mit poser begir, do eging yr die nature; das sicht man auf dem merbelstein do dy fraw ist gestanden."
with its connotations of ritual uncleanness, in a holy shrine, this one was closed to any further women. Yet another set of stories targets women’s pride as the bar to entering pilgrimage shrines. They relate that women who appeared at pilgrimage shrines wearing elaborate hairstyles were mystically prohibited from entering until they had cut off the offending locks.¹¹⁵

Whether or not these stories had anything to do with the official decision to close the Sancta Sanctorum and other shrines to women, the very existence of such stories is telling. In the popular understanding, at least, women were automatically suspect as pilgrims, liable to defile the holiness of a shrine. This offered more fuel to those who were, for various reasons, uncomfortable with the reality of women as pilgrims. Further, the closing of these few shrines, for whatever reason, meant that once again women were asked to live out vicariously the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage. Women might seek out shrines on important Christian sites, but in some cases they must be satisfied with getting near to the experience — with touching the door — rather than actually fulfilling their desire to have the experience of that holiness. Like the ladies asked to pray for Nompar de Caumont, or the six modest matrons, women would receive the most approval from their male counterparts if they accepted this, remaining at home or ‘quietly and peaceably saying their prayers outside.’

Conclusions

Despite the belief of some historians and anthropologists that pilgrimage was a group endeavor which created a 'communitas' that could temporarily change, or at least harmonize, the traditional social structure, women who chose to become long-distance pilgrims were clearly treated as an unwelcome addition to most pilgrim groups. This stands as a stark contrast to their very common participation in localized miracle cults. Far less space was made for women to travel to Rome or Jerusalem as pilgrims than was made for them to participate in other, more routine expressions of medieval Christianity. Their presence was barely tolerated by the male pilgrims, who, at best, demanded their silence and invisibility unless they were called upon to meet a specific need – needs that the pilgrims expected would be filled by local women who had become a part of a service industry along pilgrimage routes. Those few male authors who actually supported the presence of women on long-distance pilgrimage, as long as they maintained silent and modest behavior, were apt to make exempla of them, explaining their presence as God's example to normal (male) pilgrims. Women were excluded from the social milieu of pilgrimage as much as possible. When they arrived at a shrine, this exclusion might even on rare occasions be carried so far as to require that they remain outside, unable to complete the process.

What is remarkable about this is that these unpleasant conditions seem not to have kept women from traveling. By bargaining for permission to go or waiting until widowed, by using invisibility, caregiving skills, and numbers as a shield during the journey, women were able to achieve a spiritual goal that offered benefit to nobody
except themselves. Thus, the very presence of female pilgrims on the road to Jerusalem or Rome undermined the medieval understanding of women as caregivers. While they might be best understood by their male counterparts as helpmates to Christ or their fellow pilgrims, and at worst understood as overcurious nuisances, it was their own salvation or desire to travel to which they were ministering by taking the journey. Perhaps this was the origin of the ambivalence of later medieval culture towards female pilgrims; each journey made by a woman to the Holy Land or to Rome was a self-centered act clothed in Christian devotion. While medieval people approved of devout women, they were far more comfortable when that devotion was made to serve others.
CHAPTER 5

"HOPE HATHE ME MAYDE TO SEKE YIS PLACE":
WOMEN AND THE PILGRIMAGE TO KING HENRY VI OF ENGLAND

Texts that directly address the pilgrimages of women in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are scattered. This study, thus far, has looked at texts written in England, France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, from a wide variety of genres: pilgrimage journals and guides, miracle collections, didactic literature, sermons, and courtly love literature. Since it is risky to generalize from such a scattershot sampling of medieval European culture, this chapter will present a case study that applies the observations drawn from these varied texts to a particular situation. For this purpose, I have chosen to examine the cult of King Henry VI of England, which had its origins immediately following his ‘martyrdom’ at the hands of Edward IV in 1471 and came to an abrupt halt after Henry VIII’s break with Rome in 1534. Henry’s cult is fascinating for a number of reasons. It is well-documented; Henry appears in art, in miracle literature, in liturgy, and even in a \textit{vita}. It is a cult that had overtly political origins, and yet had an appeal that reached well beyond political concerns. It was quickly forgotten after the Reformation, and to this day is either ignored or treated
scornfully by scholars, who find it more politically egregious than socially and culturally significant. Finally, and most important for this study, it is a cult which found a particular place for female devotion, despite having no overt attraction for women at first glance.

This chapter will discuss the cult of Henry VI as it was expressed in several types of source material, including artistic representations of Henry, devotional literature, and his vita and miracle collection. Despite the highly politicized origins of Henry’s cult, from an early stage it had import for people outside the pro-Lancastrian nobility. Indeed, people from across the social spectrum and across the country sought Henry’s supernatural intervention in their lives and included artistic representations of him in their parish churches. Women embraced the devotion to Henry just as quickly. As a common understanding of Henry’s saintly persona – the kinds of help he could offer and the ways in which he interacted with his devotees – emerged, women found the devotion to ‘Good King Herre’ quite compatible with their needs as the caretakers of their families. While this connection between women and the cult of the saints is very similar to that explored in Chapter 3, the compiler of Henry’s miracles offers women who take this role a kind of power that was not so clearly stated in the other collections.
Henry VI

King Henry VI of England was born in 1421, the only child of Henry V and Catherine of Valois.1 His father, famous for his success in the Hundred Years’ War, died in 1422, leaving his nine-month-old son to inherit the English and (technically) the French crown. Through the course of Henry’s long minority, his government and his war in France were run by his two uncles, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and Henry Beaufort, the Cardinal of Winchester. While these two wrestled for power, Henry grew into a retiring, devout young man, immersed in his personal piety, greatly interested in charity and in education (he founded Eton and King’s College, Cambridge), and with a genuine distaste for deceit, avarice, and bloodshed which left him unprepared for the duties of kingship. As a leader he tended towards indecisiveness, forgiveness of obviously dangerous foes (namely Richard, Duke of York), an inability to intercede effectively in noble feuds, and the spending of money that he simply did not have.

In 1446 Henry married Margaret of Anjou, a move calculated to help bring an end to England’s expensive war in France. Her French background and commanding personality combined with Yorkist propaganda to make her a controversial figure through the rest of his reign. Between 1446 and his deposition in 1461, Henry’s reign was a string of disasters. His generals steadily lost his father’s hard-won French territories to Joan of Arc and Charles VII. He dealt with (or rather, failed to deal with) constant tension amongst the nobility, especially between factions led by Richard, Duke of York, and his own allies. He twice suffered from long spells of mental illness during which he was unable to rule, so that England’s already weak governance was left in the hands of his divided nobles. His reign saw constant military tumult in England, including Jack Cade’s rebellion of 1450, which briefly took control of London; Richard, Duke of York’s many politically questionable military actions against ‘traitors’ (generally Henry’s closest advisors and allies); and finally, the opening of political and military hostilities between Lancaster and York in 1459.

In 1461 Henry’s weak leadership and desperate financial situation led to his deposition at the hands of Edward, Duke of York, who became Edward IV. For four years he remained in Scotland, Northumberland, and Yorkshire, alternately hidden by allies and wandering, mentally cloudy and entirely destitute. He was finally captured by Edward IV in 1465 and imprisoned in the Tower of London. Meanwhile, Margaret of Anjou raised money and troops, first in Scotland and then in France, and personally

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led forays into England in failed but bloody attempts to regain the crown for her husband and her son, Edward, Prince of Wales. Not until the Earl of Warwick, later to be called the “King Maker,” fell out with Edward IV and decided to ally with Margaret were her attempts successful. Henry was reinstated as King in late 1470. Edward rallied quickly, and in May of 1471 took back the crown in London and defeated Margaret’s forces in the battle of Tewksbury, after which Edward, Prince of Wales, was killed. Henry was killed in the Tower during the night of 22 May, 1471. Many believed that he died by the dagger of Edward’s brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III), who was in charge of the Tower at the time, but there is no definitive proof of this. His jailers claimed that Henry had died of melancholy. Edward was crowned the following morning, so no matter how Henry died, his death came at a very convenient moment for his Yorkist successor.

Henry’s reign was summed up succinctly, if harshly, by John W. McKenna:

From a youth surrounded by ambitious and greedy magnates Henry had developed a remarkable unworldliness and an extraordinary disdain for the duties of a medieval king. In an age of magnates Henry was a poor feudal lord. In an age of rich and ambitious merchants Henry was an abominable businessman. This pitiable boy called upon to rule a tough and troubled realm would not have even been a good palatine bishop, for he had no political sense at all and not a shred of deceit. The terrible truth is that Henry was that rare phenomenon, a True Christian, which is to say that he was meek, charitable, gentle, otherworldly, temperate, and extremely prudish. Like all living saints he was

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4 Wolfe, Henry VI, 347.

5 McKenna, “Piety and Propaganda,” 73.
impossible to live with, and as a royal saint he was the greatest single
disaster since the previous English royal saint, Edward the Confessor.\(^6\)

Henry's body was hurried along the Thames to be buried at the out-of-the-way abbey
of Chertsey.

If Edward IV had hoped that an obscure burial place would erase public
interest in Henry, he was mistaken. Despite Henry's obvious deficiencies as a ruler,
he was still a King of England, and had been for a very long time. He could not be
disposed of so easily as Edward might have hoped. After his death, rumors that the
King had been murdered, rather than having died of melancholy, that Gloucester had
wielded the knife, that Henry's corpse, like those of all murder victims, had bled
during his funeral, and that he was now performing posthumous miracles, began to
circulate. He was well-known during his life for his piety and charity, and these now
combined with his status as a martyr and with remaining dissent against the Yorkists
to make him a popular object of veneration.\(^7\)

Edward IV tried to suppress the growing cult, with little success.\(^8\) Richard III,
however, was more cautious. Having seen the failure of repression, he chose to move
the cult to a more central location - one that he could personally oversee. In 1484 he
had Henry's relics moved to St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. The steady
stream of pilgrims continued, but now they must walk under Richard's very nose to

\(^6\) McKenna, "Piety and Propaganda," 79.

\(^7\) McKenna, "Piety and Propaganda," passim. McKenna presumes that the cult was primarily the
product of dissent against Edward IV and Richard III, and reinforced by Tudor propagandists seeking to
justify Henry VII's assumption of the throne.

\(^8\) Wolfe, Henry VI, 354.
express what might be considered anti-Yorkist sentiment. Henry VI is still buried there, although the tomb had been substantially changed, now consisting only of an eighteenth-century marble slab bearing his name and the original pilgrim offering-box (Figure 1). The latter is a testament to the popularity of Henry's cult, as it was designed and placed with great concern for the large sums of money it once held. It was made with four locks, each requiring a different key. Each of the keys was held by a different official of the Chapel, so that four pairs of eyes must be present when the box was opened. Further, it was (and still is) placed under a small quatrefoil peephole in the ceiling. From a room above, the peephole allowed the officials to keep continuous watch over the coffer as the pilgrims moved past the shrine and left their gifts.

Once Henry's relics were moved to Windsor, the Dean there began to record the stories of the pilgrims who arrived claiming that Henry had performed a miracle for them. By 1500 a collection of 174 miracles had been compiled. John Blacman, a Carthusian monk who had held administrative posts at Cambridge and had been one of Henry VI's spiritual advisors, also wrote a vita of Henry some time before 1510. Meanwhile, Henry VII appealed to Rome to be canonization proceedings some

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9 Shelagh M. Bond, ed., The Monuments of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle (Windsor: Oxley and Son, Ltd., 1958), 98, offers a summary of the changes in the monument.

10 For this information on the offering-box I am indebted to a very kind gentleman who was working as a tour guide at St. George's Chapel in the spring of 2000. Upon finding out that I was visiting for purposes of this research, he led me around the rope barriers so that I could look at the box, and informed me of the purpose of the quatrefoil, explaining that he himself had been to the room that afforded the view of the box. I am grateful for his generosity, but he slipped away before I could get his name.
time before 1492. He was keen to see his great-uncle canonized, a turn of events that would provide divine sanction for Lancastrian, and hence Tudor, rule. In the mid-1520s, during the reign of Henry VIII, papal representatives began to investigate the miracles, traveling around England to search out and question those who claimed to have benefited from Henry's miraculous intervention in their lives. The investigators left marginal notations on the manuscript of the miracle collection, noting whether they found the person who claimed to have received a miracle and if so, their judgment as to the veracity of the story. Despite their success in finding at least 40 people who claimed to have been helped by Henry, the canonization proceedings stalled after 1528 because of the problems between Henry VIII and Rome. In the same period, Good King Harry's image underwent another transformation in the shift from manuscript to print. While early manuscript prayers, evaluated below, described a wide variety of miracles achieved through Henry's intercession, printed prayer-books praised only his virtues as a healer of the plague. In early printed prayer books, he accompanies Saint Roche under the heading of prayers effective against the peste. But by 1538 pilgrimage, votive offerings at shrines, and the veneration of relics had been banned by royal injunction. With little further need

11 Wolfe, Henry VI, 355.


13 For example, in the Horae Beatae Mariae, Columbus, Ohio State University Library BX 2080.A3 S3 RARE fol. 82'.

to legitimize Tudor rule and pilgrimages considered heretical, the cult faded, leaving marks behind in prayer-books, rood-screens, and the Latin exercises of Eton boys ("Good King Harry doth divers miracles . . .").

Since then, comparatively little attention has been paid to the cult. A few late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century antiquarians noted the cult's existence as a matter of passing interest, publishing transcriptions or translations of liturgies they had found in various manuscripts. These transcriptions and translations are not entirely trustworthy. M. R. James published an edition and translation of Blacman's \textit{vita} of Henry, and Aidan Gasquet and Christine Seebohm paraphrased Blacman's work in their biographies, taking the tract at face value. Ronald Knox and Shane Leslie published an edition and translation of twenty-three of the miracles and some liturgical texts in 1923. The Bollandist Paul Grosjean presented exhaustive documentation of

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19 Knox and Leslie, \textit{The Miracles of King Henry VI}.
the cult in his edition of the miracles, although he, like Knox and Leslie, offered little critical analysis of the evidence he collected.\textsuperscript{20}

As twentieth-century historians have attempted to unravel the causes of the Wars of the Roses, many have taken a moment to ridicule the very idea that Henry VI, who presided over so many disasters, should have been considered saintly. McKenna argued that the cult was the direct result of later fifteenth-century English politics, rather than Henry's spiritual accomplishments.\textsuperscript{21} Few scholars have looked beyond the political setting when discussing the cult, although some historians of late medieval Christianity, notably Eamon Duffy and Ronald Finucane, have used the excellent miracle collection as a source for the discussion of the cult of the saints.\textsuperscript{22} The best modern discussions of the cult as a serious devotional practice are in two articles. The first, Brian Spencer's "King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim," offered a fine but brief overview of the cult as a background to his discussion of Henry's pilgrim badges.\textsuperscript{23} But even this summary used a limited number of sources and focused on the London area and the political background of the cult. The second, perhaps the most balanced discussion available, is Simon Walker's "Political Saints in Later Medieval England." In this article he places Simon de Montfort, Thomas of

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\textsuperscript{20} Paul Grosjean, ed. \textit{Henrici VI Angliae Regis Miracula Postuma} (Brussels: Subsidia Hagiographica 22, 1935).

\textsuperscript{21} McKenna, "Piety and Propaganda," passim.

Lancaster, Edward II, Richard Scrope, and Henry VI together in a group of saints who
died in political violence. He argues that "political saints would best be interpreted as
an inversion of the mentalité of holy monarchy, the claim to a special sacral status
advanced with an increasing insistence by kings in both England and France." I,
too, would argue that the veneration of "Good King Harry" rooted itself deeply in the
late medieval English landscape for many reasons, and that opposition to Edward IV
and Richard III was only one of them — and perhaps not even the primary one.

The Cult of "Good King Herre"

How did those who came to the shrine at Windsor understand the person
whose help they were seeking? Pilgrims chose to ask for help from Good King Herre
rather than some other saint partially based on their understanding of who Good King
Herre was, and what he could offer them. The wide variety of evidence that survived
allows for a detailed description of Henry’s saintly persona as it was presented in
several media used to promote the cult. Written evidence, which includes liturgy,
Henry’s vita, and his miracle collection, described his saintly qualities with great
uniformity. Visual images of Henry created for devotional purposes display a similar
uniformity in their depiction of him. In Emma Cownie’s investigation of similar
materials from the cult of St. Edmund, she comments that “the purpose of these

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differing means of promoting the cult . . . was simultaneously to boost the reputation of the cult . . . and at the same time shape pilgrims' perceptions of the nature of the saint's power.\textsuperscript{25} The sources investigated here, too, offered the pilgrim information on Henry's appearance, the personal merits which led God to sanctify him, the kinds of problems he was most skilled at solving, and the ways in which Christians were expected to interact with him. In these sources, Henry emerges as a king, but also as a gentle and charitable man who suffered great difficulty and eventually martyrdom, and who was therefore deeply sympathetic to the troubles of his devotees. It was to this sympathetic and caring figure that his pilgrims, male and female, brought their problems.

Henry's most recognizable quality was his royal status. His iconography was therefore created entirely in reference to his kingship. Because of his political importance, there were many images of Henry made both before and after his death which were not originally intended to be objects of devotion; his statue on the rood-screen in York Cathedral, which has sculptures of all the post-conquest English kings, is but one example. Although this statue was not intended to be religious in nature, it was nevertheless the object of lay veneration within two years of Henry's death.\textsuperscript{26}

This analysis will focus instead on images created specifically for sacred purposes.


\textsuperscript{26} Wolffe, \textit{Henry VI}, 351.
Henry appears as a saint in parish churches and in one priory church in rood-screen panels, fresco, sculpture, and stained-glass.

In these visual representations, Henry is always dressed in royal robes and crowned, with an ermine cape over his shoulders; he always holds a scepter and in most cases an orb, although in two cases, in the stained glass at King’s College Chapel, Cambridge (Figure 2), and the fresco at St. Lawrence, Alton (Figure 3), he holds a scepter and a book. He is always beardless, perhaps because he was clean-shaven in life. He generally looks youthful, possibly because, as a minor king, he actually was youthful for such a long period during his reign. In five rood screens and the statue at St. Michael, Alnwick (Figure 4) a bit more in the way of clarification is given: Henry’s device, an antelope with a crown around its neck, crouches as his feet. In fact, in the rood-screens of Foulden (Figure 5) and Binham Priory, Norfolk (Figure 6), which were painted over during the Reformation, only the reflection of gold-leaf from the crown, scepter, and antelope horns makes the figure identifiable. One of the rood-screen panels, in St. Catherine’s Church of Ludham, Norfolk (Figure 7), and the stained glass in Ashton-under-Lyne (Figure 8), actually include his name in a scroll at the bottom: “Henricus Sextus” or “S[anctus]. Henricus.” These depictions correspond very closely to the versions of Henry that appeared on pilgrim-badges, small lead ornaments which pilgrims bought at Windsor as a kind of sacred souvenir. According

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27 This may have been an earlier version, or a competing one, of his iconography. The screen at York Minster shows him holding a book as well, and it is probably a reference to his educational foundations at Cambridge and Eton.

28 See, for example, the portrait printed in Wolffe, Henry VI, frontispiece.
to Spencer, such badges also featured a crowned, robed, orbed and sceptered figure; further, "those emblems of regality are occasionally reinforced by an extra crown at his elbow, while at his feet are often found to be the heraldic antelope or the lion, which were sometimes used together as the supporters of his coat-of-arms." But even without the antelope or a written label, Henry is usually quite easy to recognize in these images. He is clearly a king because of his scepter and crown, and he is distinguished from other English royal saints by their iconography. St. Edmund usually holds an arrow, one of the instruments of his martyrdom; Edward the Confessor usually appears holding a ring, which corresponds to a story about his having given a ring to a beggar who turned out to be St. John the Evangelist.

The parish church images are of particular interest because their existence argues for the broad-based support of Henry's cult. The rood-screen, which served the purpose of dividing the nave of the churches from the chancel, was the responsibility of the parishioners to maintain and to decorate. Roods screens typically included individual saints or gospel scenes, such as the Nativity or the Adoration of the Magi, rendered in several panels. It had a privileged position at the front of the nave, and

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parishioners were evidently pleased to offer rood-screens — pleased enough that, in many cases, they left their names on them. Since it was parishioners who commissioned the screen paintings and were responsible for maintaining them, it seems reasonable to suggest that they would have chosen saints and scenes which were popular with the parishioners themselves. Indeed, Colin Richmond has commented on their connection with the spirituality of the lower-class laity, and hence the low quality of their artistic achievement:

Most painted screens, usually between chancel and nave, are what Pevsner was wont to call rustic in execution as well as character, if he did not call them something worse . . . . with a handful of exceptions, chiefly in East Anglia and the west country, English church screens display good carpentry and bad painting. What they lead us into is a more popular culture . . .

The company Henry kept on roods bears out this connection to the devotional culture of the laity. In the three undamaged screens I have seen -- those of Eye, Suffolk (Figure 9), Ludham, Norfolk, and Whimple, Devon (Figure 10) -- Henry appears alongside four groups of saints: virgin martyrs, English royal saints, New testament and early Christian saints, and other English saints. Henry most often consorts with virgin martyrs such as Barbara, the patroness of childbirth, Agnes, Apollonia, the patroness of toothache, and Katherine of Alexandria. In Eye and Ludham he shares the screen with the other English royal saints, Edmund and Edward the Confessor. He also appears with early Christian saints such as Mary Magdalen,


Lawrence, and Stephen (Ludham); Clement and Sebastian (Whimple); and John the Evangelist (Eye). Finally, there were a smattering of other popular English saints that included Walstan (Ludham), Roche and Sidwell (Whimple), William of Norwich and possibly Thomas Becket (Eye). Given that he was surrounded with such undoubtedly popular figures, we can safely presume that Henry himself had achieved a certain broad popularity with lay Englishmen.

Prayers to Henry display a similar focus on his royal identity. The liturgies of Blessed King Henry which can be dated before 1500 or so appear in twelve different manuscripts, primarily in prayer-books intended for the laity, which contained a variety of prayers, hours, psalms, and saints’ liturgies, usually in Latin but occasionally in English. The three exceptions to this pattern include a book compiled for the monks of Westminster Abbey that included Mandeville’s Travels and a pilgrimage itinerary, the primary manuscript of the miracle collection, and the manuscript that holds a portion of the miracle collection alongside several other treatises. The twelve manuscripts all date from the later fifteenth century, except for the Bohun Psalter, which is dated to c. 1370, and was a highly decorated manuscript that belonged to a number of English nobles and even to Henry himself during his

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35 David Jones and John Salmon, Eye Church (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, Ltd, 1980), 14. The authors identify the mitered figure as Becket because he lacked the wool comb normally carried by St. Blaise.

36 Durham, University of Durham, Palace Green Library MS V. III.7.

37 London, British Library, MS Royal 13 c. viii.

38 London, British Library, MS Harley 423.

lifetime. Henry's liturgy was written into the Bohun Psalter on a blank page after his death, as it was in three of the other prayer-books. In the remaining books his liturgy appeared in the main body of the text, meaning that they must have been written after 1471.

While we know that at least two of the manuscripts (the miracle collection and the Durham copy of Mandeville) were created by and for monastic communities, the majority of them were prayer-books intended for use by the laity. These nine prayer-books range in quality. The finest of them is the Bohun Psalter, a major work of fourteenth-century manuscript illumination. But others, like the Bodleian's MS Univ. 8, are less decorated and more utilitarian. Where provenance is known, the books usually belonged to the nobility. The Bohun Psalter was made "for a member of the Bohun family, possibly for Humphrey de Bohun, seventh Earl of Hereford, and was later owned by Henry VI, John Stafford, Archbishop of Canterbury, and several other nobles. A very small manuscript was owned by Sir John Iwardby, a knight from Hampshire, and includes prayers for him, his first and second wives, and his children. Another of the manuscripts belonged to the Pudsays, a prominent family

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41 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Liturg. 19.

42 Falconer Madan, A Summary Catalog of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford which Have Not Hitherto Been Catalogued in the Quarto Series vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), 289.
who sheltered Henry during his years of wandering in northern England.\textsuperscript{43} Two of the manuscripts with no known provenance, British Library MSS Harley 2887 and Stowe 16, contain such beautiful illuminations that the British Library requires extra supervision when they are used by scholars. In short, the prayer-book manuscripts, like many manuscripts of the day, were circulated primarily amongst the nobility and perhaps the wealthy merchant class.

In these manuscripts, and two others that have been partially transcribed and published, I have located twelve distinct prayers to King Henry VI. Again, as in the rood-screens, it was royal status which was Henry's most identifiable quality in these liturgies. In prayers, he was never Saint Henry, but rather the “blessed King Henry,”\textsuperscript{44} “crowned twice of kingdoms,”\textsuperscript{45} “Kynge Henry,”\textsuperscript{46} a “blyssed Kynge,”\textsuperscript{47} or, in a more familiar tone, “King Herre.”\textsuperscript{48} These statements of political importance became lengthy in a few cases, asserting other titles. The Trevelyan bede-roll holds a hymn which begins by addressing him as a “prince of the people, duke and ornament of the

\textsuperscript{43} J. Raine, “The Pudsays of Barford,” \textit{Archeologia Aeliana}, n.s., 2 (1858): 175.

\textsuperscript{44} Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Univ. 8, fol. 88*: “beatum Henricum regem;” London, British Library, MS Harley 5793, fol. 1* and MS Stowe 16, fol. 151*, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Liturg. 19, fol. 32*: “beatus rex Henricus.”

\textsuperscript{45} Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don.e.120, fol. 3*: “regnorum bis coronatus.”

\textsuperscript{46} Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don.e.120, fol 4*.


\textsuperscript{48} Trevelyan, “Extracts,” 2.
Britons, called King Henry,49 and he is also described as “King of the English and ruler of the French,”50 who was, in another prayer, “crowned and honored in Westminster, and afterwards made king of the French by law.”51 Sometimes his noble status was asserted in still other ways. He was referred to as “Your holy knight,” a “precious knight,” and a “virtuous knight of God.”52 He was also the “flower of nobility”53 or “The flowr of all knighthood that never was fyled.”54 Such language seems a comfortable match for the pictures of Henry in royal robes with orb, scepter, and heraldic device.

Henry’s vita, written by his contemporary, the Carthusian monk John Blacman, also offered Henry’s political position for the reader’s consideration. Blacman’s career included service as an administrator of King’s Hall, Cambridge, Henry’s own foundation, and as Henry’s confessor.55 He began his work by explaining why he was not discussing Henry’s royal status — at great length: “Now of his most noble descent,


51 Durham, University of Durham, Palace Green Library, MS V. III.7, folio 97: “... Atque coronatus in Westmynster veneratus / et post francorum rex es de iure creatus...”


53 London, British Library, MS Harley 423, fol. 72° and MS Royal 13.c.viii, fol. 1°: “salve flos nobilitatis...”


55 M. R. James, introduction to Henry the Sixth by Blacman, xv.
how he was begotten according to the flesh of the highest blood and the ancient royal
stock of England, and how in the two lands of England and France he was crowned as
the rightful heir of each realm, I have purposefully said nothing . . ." He goes on to
explain that this is information everyone knows. Kingship had given Henry visibility
during his life, and remained his hallmark trait after his death in both written and
visual sources.

Henry’s royal status may have been used as an identifying marker and a
political impetus for the promotion of his cult, but the connection between nobility and
sanctity went further than this. André Vauchez has noted that noble background had
been a trait of the majority of saints since the Carolingian era, and that “during the
final centuries of the Middle Ages, in the non-Mediterranean West, the majority of
recent saints were of aristocratic origin.” Further, the ways in which late medieval
people regarded their temporal lord was very similar to the way they regarded the
function of the saints. According to Virginia Reinburg,\(^{58}\)

relationships that devotees established with saints to whom they prayed
mirrored relationships characteristic of late medieval and early modern
patronage systems. Both earthly and spiritual patronage required the
exchange of gifts and favors, and in nearly identical manners.

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\(^{56}\) Blacman, *Henry the Sixth*, 25; 3: “De praenobili ejus prosapia, quomodo scilicet ex nobilissimo
sanguine & stirpe regia antiqua Angliae secundum carnem progenitus erat, et qualiter in duabus
regionibus, Angliae s. & Franciae, ut verus utriusque regni heres coronatus fuerat, tacere curavi . . .”

\(^{57}\) André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1997), 173.

\(^{58}\) Virginia Reinburg, “Praying to Saints in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*,
ed. by Sandro Sticca (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996),
275-276.
Hence, appeals to Henry's royal status were a reminder of his ability to provide patronage, which he now exercised in the spiritual rather than the physical realm.

Finally, Henry's royal status was an important aspect of his sanctity because it transformed his murder into a martyrdom. Medieval kings were commonly understood to rule because they were chosen by God; from the time of Constantine kings had been called *imago dei*, "the image of God." To add to this connection between the king and the sacred, from the Carolingian era onwards kings were consecrated through an anointing ceremony, just as priests and bishops were. This had a very specific effect on how the royal person was to be treated:

> And so, to use the biblical expression, kings had become the 'Lord's Anointed,' protected from all the machinations of the wicked by the divine word, for God himself had said: 'Touch not mine anointed.' . . . The effect was to transform the enemies of royalty into apparently sacrilegious persons . . .

Even very poor political leaders like Henry were still God's anointed representatives.

Indeed, in discussing late medieval political saints in England, Walker commented that

> one of the most striking developments in the ideology of the English monarchy in the later Middle Ages [was] the growing conviction that kings stood in an especially close relationship to God, that they possessed certain distinct spiritual qualities by virtue of their exercise of secular office.

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Under such circumstances, a king’s death at the hands of his political enemies was very easily transformed into a martyrdom. Public responses to the deposition-murders of Edward II and Charles I display this connection between kingship and martyrdom, as does the cult of Henry VI. In liturgy, he is “Blessed Henry King and Martyr,” and sometimes just the “Blessed martyr Henry.” He was even once called an “athlete of Christ,” a term that emphasized the hard physical labor and suffering of some of the saints. The term was usually applied to the early Christian martyrs who underwent torture, or to the early monastic saints who performed great feats of self-mortification in lieu of martyrdom. Because of this connection between kingship and the sacred, any reference to Henry’s kingship was also in some ways a reference to his deposition, and thus to his status as a martyr.

But if all Henry had done was to stand still whilst a crown was knocked off his divinely-ordained brow, he might have meant as little to his medieval devotees as he does to his modern detractors. Henry, however, had other credentials. Kleinberg has noted that the only canonist to list the traits which were needed to prove sanctity in the high or later Middle Ages suggested that saints were characterized by suffering,

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64 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Univ. 8, fol. 89r: “...beat Henrici Regis et martyris ...” Trevelyan, “Extracts,” 2: “...beatum Henricum regem et martyrem ...”

65 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Univ. 8, fol. 88r: “...Henrici martyris almi ...” and “alme Dei martir Henrice ...”
chastity, and ‘strenuous acts,’ and that they must exhibit the virtues of patience, simplicity, and humility. Henry’s martyrdom accounted for his suffering and his strenuous acts; but the vita and liturgical texts insisted that Henry possessed all of the remaining qualifications on this list, and more. Henry was also pious, charitable, merciful, humble, and chaste.

Henry’s piety, which made him “a saint of the devotio moderna, a contemplative and ascetic imitator of Christ,” was first and most often mentioned among his good qualities. In liturgy, his pious acts were described in monastic terms; like monks, he “repeatedly fasted” and sought holiness by “despising the world and triumphing over earthly things.” One hymn gives us this monastic allusion: “Hail teacher of churchmen / practicing the standard of the religious / spurning the vanity of the world.” Blacman described his regular attendance at church, and his insistence upon proper behavior during services, when “kneeling almost continuously before his book, with eyes and hands upturned, he was at pains to utter with the celebrant (but

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60 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don.e.120, fol. 3*: “Ora pro nobis Christi accleta . . .”


62 Walker, “Political Saints,” 95.


64 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. Don. e. 120, fol. 1′ and MS Bodl. 939, fol. 45″, and Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS Addit 38-1950, fol. iv*: “Hic vir mundum despiciens et terrena triumphans divitias celo condidit ore manu.”

65 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. Don.e.120, fol. 3*: “Ave tutor ecclesiasticorum / Utens norma religiosiorum / Respuens vana mundanorum.”

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with the inward voice) the mass-prayers, epistles, and gospels."72 Another prayer describes him as the "form of piety."73 Yet another says that he "scorned the art of the temptress / dismissed the fruits of the flesh / in the prudence of (his) mind."74

Henry's charity also earned regular attention in liturgy and in his vita. These charitable works might also have been evoked by images of kingship, as some of them, like the protection of widows, orphans, and the church, were considered to be his duty as a Christian monarch.75 Thus, he was hailed in one antiphon as "defender of the poor and of the church, prone to mercy, fervid in charity,"76 and in another hymn he was a "loving father of orphans / true welfare of the people / and strength of the church"77 all at once. In another prayer he is not only a protector but a "friend of the poor."78 Whether or not it was his royal duty, he was definitely understood to be "never tiring in charity."79 Blacman's description of his generosity to the poor is

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72 Blacman, Henry the Sixth, p. 28; 6: "... quasi continue coram libro genua flectans, oculis ac manibus erectis, missalia, oracula, epistolas, euangelia internis visibus promere gestibat cum celebrante."

73 London, British Library, MS Harley 423, fol. 72r and MS Royal 13.c.viii, fol. 1r: "Salve, forma pietatis . . . ."

74 Trevelyan, "Extracts," 2: "Artem lenae repuisti, / Fructum carnis amisisti / In consensu animi."

75 Henry A. Myers, Medieval Kingship (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982), 139.

76 London, British Library, MS Harley 5793, fol. 1r, MS Stowe 16, fol. 151r, and MS Harley 2887, fol. 11r, and Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 55, fol.141r: "Beatus Rex Henricus pauperum et ecclesiae defensor ad misericordiam pronus, in caritate fervidus . . . ."

77 London, British Library, MS Harley 423, fol. 72r and MS Royal 13.c.viii, fol. 1r: "Pie pater orphanorum / vera salus populorum / robur et ecclesie."

78 London, British Library, MS Harley 5793, fol. 1r, and MS Stowe 16, fol. 151r: "Deus, qui beatum regem Henricum Tuum sanctum militem ecclesiae defensorum et pauperum amicum . . . ."

intertwined with his estimation of Henry’s handling of the meager royal finances and of the allocation of royal patronage during his reign. He was, in Blacman’s estimation,80

most liberal to the poor in lightening their wants; and [he] enriched very many others with great gifts or offices, or at least put all neediness far from them. Never did he oppress his subjects with unreasonable exactions as do other rulers or princes, but behaving himself among them like a kind father, relieved them from his own resources in a most comely sort, and contenting himself with what he had, preferred to live uprightly among them, rather than that they should pine in poverty, trodden down by his harshness.

Henry was also described occasionally as exhibiting other virtues, particularly mercy, humility, and chastity. Blacman offered several examples of his merciful behavior during his life, including his forgiveness of rebellious nobles whom he pardoned from their death-sentences. He declared that Henry was disinclined to punish anyone, which was “plain in the cases of many to whom he was exceeding gracious and merciful.” This was so much true, claimed Blacman, that Henry did not even like to hunt, “nor would he ever take part in the killing of an innocent beast.”81 The understanding of Henry as merciful was also embedded in those prayers which describe his miracles; as a miracle-worker, Henry had “compassion” for those in pain

80 Blacman, *Henry the Sixth*, 31; 9: “Sed ad pauperas omnino liberalis erat, eorum inopiam sublevando. Alios etiam quamplures largitatem dabit donorum, aut officiorum, vel saltum omnem ab eis egestatem amovebat. Nequaquam suos opprimebat subditos immoderatis exactionibus, ut ceteri agunt principes et magnates: sed quamquam pius pater inter filios conversatus, eos decentissime ex suis revelans, propriis contentus maluit sic juste inter eos vivere quam ipsi deficerent egestate, sua supressi crudelitate.”

81 Blacman, *Henry the Sixth*, 40; 18-19: “Quod etiam in quam multis liuet personis, quibus valde fuerat gratiosus et misericors . . . . nec caedi innocui quadrupedes aliquando voluit interesse.”
and “adversite.” In another prayer he was “conspicuous with every goodness and mercy;” in yet another, he was pictured “dismissing offenders.” Blacman seems to use the explanation of humility to gloss over the less than regal moments in his hero’s life. Henry was described as humble because of his unfashionable clothing (when, in fact, he probably could afford nothing more sumptuous). In one of the prayers, he was an “example of humility,” too, although this was not explained further. Finally, his chastity was touted both by Blacman and several prayers. It was certainly a virtue easily attributed to Henry, who was both shy and married for his entire adult life to the same woman. Blacman insisted that he was not only faithful to Margaret when she was away, but also never “used her unseemly” when they were together, “but with all conjugal honesty and gravity.” He then followed this with examples of the king’s distress upon witnessing any nudity whatsoever. A prayer also tells us that Henry “scorned the art of the temptress / and dismissed the fruits of the flesh.”

82 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don.e.120, fol. 4": “Was never man cam beforne thy face / Rebellion or oder yn adversite / Off they compassion commanded them goo free . . . .”


85 Blacman, *Henry the Sixth*, 36, 14.

86 London, British Library, MS Harley 423, fol. 72" and MS Royal 13.c.viii, fol. 1": “. . .exemplar humilitatis . . . .”

87 Blacman, *Henry the Sixth*, 29; 7: “Non etiam ad praefatam suam conjugem effrenate, vel more impudicorum, haere solebat accessum dum insimul commanserunt: sed tantummodo ut ratio et rei necessitas, servata semper inter eos honestate conjugal et cum magna gravitate.”

88 Blacman, *Henry the Sixth*, 30-31; 7-8.


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brief discussion of Henry’s persona suggests that Henry was also venerated as a peacemaker, and because he was a powerful authority figure in death in a way that he had not been in life. I did not find repeated references to these last two aspects of Henry’s persona in the liturgy; Walker noted, however, that they were elements he had in common with the other late medieval political saints.

The combination of kingly traits, martyrdom, piety, charity, and other good deeds created a very specific dynamic between Henry and his devotees. Because Henry had suffered so greatly and so unjustly during his life, after his death he was understood to have sympathy for those who were ‘yn adversite.’ Henry’s many problems were repeatedly mentioned in the prayers, and his patience with them was one of his principal virtues. He was, during his life, “in every adversity adorned by a love of perfect charity,” and hence after death he became a “school of patience / to those oppressed by force / to the sad and desolate.” In fact, Henry’s suffering during his life was so entwined with his concern for his devotees after his death that it was interpreted as divine will. One prayer begins thus.

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90 Walker, “Political Saints,” 95-6.

91 London, British Library, MS Harley 5793, fol. 1r and MS Stowe 16, fol. 151r, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Liturg. 19, fol 32r: “...in omnibus adversis perfectae caritatis amore decorasti...”

92 London, British Library, MS Harley 423, fol. 72r and MS Royal 13.c.viii, fol. 1r: “Vi oppressis vel turbatis / mestis atque desolatis / Scola paciencia.”

93 London, British Library, MS Harley 423, fol. 72r and MS Royal 13.c.viii, fol. 1r: “Salus et salvator omnium in te credencium, piissime Domine Jesu Christe, qui dilectum famulum tuum regem Henricum variis tribulationum pressuris opprimi voluisti, ut ex eius paciencia et innocentissime vite meritis quasi quibusdam botris uberrimus copiosa tue gracie dulcedo per miraculorum gloriam distillaret in plebem...”
Most loving Lord Jesus Christ, salvation and savior of all who believe in you, who willed that your beloved servant King Henry should be afflicted by the weight of many tribulations, in order that by the merits of his patience and most innocent life, as if through that most plentiful fruit of the vine, the copious sweetness of your grace may be displayed to the people by the glory of miracles . . .

But it went further than admiration of his patience. All the prayers that mention what Henry could do for his devotees touch on this term, "adversity," as well. Henry was understood to have particular sympathy for those suffering from the adversity that had pursued him throughout his own life. Virginia Reinburg has commented on a similar connection between Mary Magdalene and her devotees; they found her particularly sympathetic to petitions for the forgiveness of sins, because she herself was a repentant sinner. Thus, in an English prayer which seems to have been specifically intended for use by pilgrims at the Henry’s shrine, the text emphasized his concern for those in trouble: "Was never man cam beforne thy face / Rebellion or oder yn adversite / Off thyn compassion commanded them goo free." Another prayer seeks the patience he displayed when in trouble: "Grant, we ask, that following his example both in the prosperous things of the world and in adversity, we might serve you with perfect a heart." The most overt example of the connection between Henry’s troubles and those of the suppliant is in the last two verses of an English hymn. In the first verse are the troubles of the suppliant; in the next are the troubles of Henry,

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95 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don.e.120, fol. 4'.
96 London, British Library, MS Harley 5793, fol. 1' and MS Stowe 16, fol. 151', and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Liturg. 19, fol 32': "praesta quaesimus ut eius exempla sequentes tam in mundi prosperis quam in eius adversis perfecto corde tibi serviamus . . ."
which helped him to win both Heaven and the power to alleviate the suppliant's difficulties.\footnote{Blacman, \textit{Henry the Sixth}, 50-51.}

The prayer I trust is herd in hevyn
With the Fadyr omnipotent
Mow blyssyd be thy name to nemyne
For ever att neyd thou art present
I trowbyll or payn wen I am schent
Or stand in warely juberte
Thy socur to me full son thu sent
Now sweyt kyng Henre praye for me.

The trowblas life and grett vexacion
With pacyens that thu had therein
And thi constans in contemplacion
Has mad the hevyn for to wyn
Thy sett is ordenyd with seraphyn
As langhyght ((be)longeth) to thi regalyte
With mor melody than I can myn
Now swet kyng Henre praye for me.

\textit{Women and the Pilgrimage of Good King Herre}

The Good King Harry to whom so many pilgrims offered thanks at Windsor was a king, a martyr, a devout and charitable man, and a sympathetic ear who could understand the dire troubles of his devotees. Perhaps most important for them, however, he was a miracle-worker. His kingship, devotion, and death had placed him in a position through which he could not only sympathize with the bad fortune of his suppliants, but also intervene to reverse it. People from all over England and from all walks of life came to Windsor to offer thanks for his intercession, and it is in these stories of miracles that the nature of women's participation in his cult is visible.
The stories of Henry's miracles circulated broadly. Liturgies dedicated to him often mention his miracles, sometimes specifically describing a particular incident. One hymn goes on at some length, giving a list of Henry's accomplishments, all of that appear in the miracle collection:98

Hail to him through whom many sick ones are healed
The blind are made to see
Pilgrims are truly freed
From the greatest danger
The demented are also restored
The crippled and the elderly walk
The paralyzed follow after
    Healthy in their wagons
Hail reliever of the imprisoned
Medicine for the Plague and hope of the sad
Expelling the spots of the hopeless
    And one worn out by fevers
You, thrice resuscitator of the innocent
Purging sixteen worms from
A woman who had them within her . . .

Other prayers also sing Henry's praises as a miracle-worker: "He renders vision to the blind / steps to the crippled and bent / he gives help to the injured / He heals the sick and the ailing / he drives out serious fevers / far away into exile."99 Henry did indeed accomplish all of these things in the miracle collection. He was, as Wolfe put it, "no narrow specialist."100

98 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don.e.120, fol 3*: 'Ave per que plures sanatur / Egroti ceci illuminatur / Peregrinates vero liberatur /De magnò periculo /Dementes etiam restituuntur / Claudii decrepiti graduntur / Peralitici consequuntur / Salutem in vehiculo /Ave relevator carceratorum / Pestis medicina spes mestrorum / Macula pellens desperatorum / Febribus fatigatus / Resuscitator ter innocentis / Vermes femine intus habentis / Sedecim purgans esto petentis . . .''

99 Trevelyan, "Extracts," 3: "Visum reddit execatis / Clausis gressum et curvatis / Lasis fert auxiliim / Aegros sanat et languores / Febres fugat graviore / Procul in exilium."

100 Wolfe, Henry VI, 354.
A lone surviving woodcut provides perhaps the most stunning depiction of Henry's interaction with his pilgrims, representing much more about his cult than the more shorthand images in parish churches. The woodcut, which survives because it was pasted into the rear flyleaf of a Wycliff bible, takes as its centerpiece the standard image of Henry in royal robes bearing the orb and scepter and with his antelope at his feet (Figure 11). What is extraordinary about this image is that it also portrays his pilgrims, and all the trappings of their experience. Several figures kneel around Henry. Eight of these figures can be seen despite the damage to the woodcut, but there may originally have been a few more to Henry's right. Of the eight surviving figures, four are women, three are men, and the gender of the remaining figure is unclear because of the damage to the image. Four of the figures (three men and one woman) have apparently been the victims of violent trauma: a woman has a knife in her throat, a man has a noose around his neck, and two men are pierced by arrows, one through the chest and another in the throat. Despite their obviously life-threatening injuries, these devotees seem calm and focused only on Henry. Further in the background are the offerings they have brought to Henry's shrine: shackles, crutches, and a shirt left behind to memorialize their troubles and Henry's help; a model of a ship; and a small figure of a man with a hole through his middle.

This woodcut is remarkable because it offers a visual shorthand for identifiable miracle stories. First, to address the injured pilgrims: The women with the knife in her throat could be a picture of either nine-year-old Joan Barton or (less likely, given the age difference) two-year-old Benedicta Barrow, both of whom fell and lodged
knives in their throats. The man whose chest is pierced by an arrow reminds the reader of a boy named Reginald Scarborough, who was injured this way during archery practice in the village of South Luffenham in Rutland. The man wearing the noose could be either Thomas Fullar or Richard Beys, both of whom were wrongfully condemned to hang and saved from their fate through Henry's intervention. While the extant collection does not include a story of a man who was pierced by an arrow in his throat, we do know from marginal notations that at least two hundred and seventy-one miracles were eliminated from the original collection by the compiler of the final collection.

Some of the votive offerings that decorate the shrine can also be connected to particular miracle stories. While the collection does not mention that any of them left

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101 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., *The Miracles of King Henry VI*, 62; Grosjean, ed., *Henrici VI*, 61-64. Spencer, in "King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim," 243, has identified this figure as "Helen Barker, ... who cut her throat while insane." But Helen's story does not include a knife actually stuck in her neck; instead, she was found with her throat slit from ear to ear (see Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., *The Miracles of King Henry VI*, 163, or Grosjean, ed., *Henrici VI*, 203-205). I would suggest that Joan, who fell on the knife and lodged it in her body, is a better candidate.


105 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., *The Miracles of King Henry VI*, 19. Spencer, in "King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim," 243, has identified the two figures of men with arrows through their chest and throat respectively (without distinguishing between them) as Scarborough and Richard ap Merideth. Merideth was pierced through the stomach by a sword or a spear (see Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., *The Miracles of King Henry VI*, 56-7 and Grosjean, ed., *Henrici VI*, 38-40). The second figure, however, seems very clearly to have an arrow through the throat, and so seems not to correspond directly with the text of Merideth's story.
their chains at the shrine, it relates four different occasions when Henry freed
prisoners. At least three paralyzed suppliants, Hervey Acke, John Trussel, and
John Gery, left their crutches at the shrine. William Sanderson, whose ship was
saved from destruction through Henry’s intercession, presented a wax effigy of a ship
at the shrine. The votive horse might have been brought by a grateful Thomas
Simon, who vowed to bring a “little offering” to the shrine when he requested that
Henry intercede on behalf of his two ailing horses. And perhaps most remarkable is
the wax effigy of a man with a hole through his torso, which seems very strange by
itself, but corresponds directly to the agonizing story of Henry Walter de Guildford.
He was fighting the king’s enemies at sea when he was struck by a cannonball such
that “his body was shot through, and it was thought that he was even then face to face
with death.” The wound festered, and Henry was put out to sea by his crewmates,

106 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 57, 121, 127, and 128; or Grosjean,
ed., Henrici VI, 41-44, 72, 74, and 75.
107 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 76, 122 and 135; or Grosjean, ed.,
Henrici VI, 72, 95-6, and 172. Spencer, “King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim,” 243, names
this figure as Acke.
108 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 177; or Grosjean, ed., Henrici VI,
109 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 41; or Grosjean, ed., Henrici VI,
25: “... ei scilicet apud Wynsore oblaciuculam suam iterum devovendo.”
110 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 78; or Grosjean, ed., Henrici VI, p.
99: “... unus inter ceteros elector ictu patrarie percussus obruitur, immo verius perforato corpore
iam tunc putabatur oppetere.” Spencer, “King Henry of Windsor and the London Pilgrim,” 243, calls
this votive a “boy-figure,” and relates it to the story of John Lincoln (see Knox and Leslie, ed. and
trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 62-3 and Grosjean, ed., Henrici VI, 60-1), whose parents left a
wax effigy of their son in thanks for the cure of his illness; but the effigy, when examined closely, does
actually appear to have a large hole through the torso.
who could not tolerate his presence; he lived for eleven days on the boat until he was found and brought to shore. He attributed his survival, rescue, and healing to King Henry, who appeared to him in visions during his ordeal. He later had his sister send an effigy of his body to Windsor in thanksgiving.

But most intriguing for the present study is the fact that the artist went out of his way to include both the stories of women and men. In the visual advertising of the shrine, a deliberate choice was made to present both Henry's male and female devotees, and to illustrate their particular injuries and thus bring to the viewer's mind their individual stories. This suggests that the cult welcomed all suppliants, and actively sought the participation of women as well as men. And women did indeed participate in Henry's cult in appreciable numbers. The collection of miracles gathered at Windsor in support of Henry's canonization offers the richest evidence about women's visits to Windsor. The 174 extant miracle stories were collected at Windsor between 1481 and 1500, and recopied into a single volume: British Library MS Royal 13.v.iii. The final collection gives us clues as to the process of its compilation. The author went through and re-numbered the collection several times, hoping to sort out how the numbering of his final collection compared to the numbering of the several smaller collections which were sent to him for incorporation into the final product. Each miracle appears in a brief sketch, and then the compiler goes on to give the full text of the miracle. In 34 of the 174 cases, the full text of the miracle does not appear, so that all which remains is this brief sketch. In the editing process, one of the batches of miracles sent on from Windsor to the compiler was
preserved in its entirety. But four books that contained at least 368 miracles were condensed down to only 97, chosen by the compiler. Thus, the miracles, collected from pilgrims at one end, were written once, then sent on and edited again into the final version. It becomes a serious question, then, about how much of the "authentic" voice of the pilgrims they can be said to represent.

But the later use of the miracles can begin to mitigate such concerns. We know that this final volume was intended for use in the canonization process. It was, in fact, the same volume which papal investigators later used to track down and question those who claimed Henry's miraculous intervention in their lives. Their marginal notes on the 140 full-text miracles remain, including a separate notation of the place the miracle was supposed to have happened, and their judgment of the veracity of the story. In 60 cases there was no notation of judgment, perhaps because the story was never investigated. In 22 cases, the miracle was judged proven, and in another 5 some witnesses were examined, but perhaps not enough to prove the miracles for legal purposes. In 46 cases the participants in the miracle could not be found, and in only 4 cases, the miracle was judged to be "nichil," "nullius effectus," or "non probatum" — not proved. So although, like other miracle collections, this one has been filtered through the perceptions and preferences of those promoting the shrine, it has also been independently verified. Further, we know that this type of verification was rigorous, seeking any disagreements in the testimony of witnesses and trying to eliminate all

111 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 19.
possible natural causes for the events described in the story. While the investigators were not able to find all of the people who appear in the stories – perhaps because they were seeking them some fifteen or twenty years after the stories were recorded – they overwhelmingly verified the miraculous stories of those they were able to find, in some cases even mentioning the names of the witnesses with whom they spoke. In 22 of the 30 cases where witnesses could still be found alive in the region they used to inhabit, the outside observer was capable of comparing his copy to local memory and physical evidence and declaring that the story was “probatus,” proved or true. Given that this is the case, the basics of the narrative must have been preserved by the scribe. He chose not to preserve all of the stories he was given, which might shape the overall image of women’s interaction with Good King Harry, but the basic anthropological facts of the stories that he did preserve seem to have been little changed.

Even an accusation of retaining only “suitable” miracles can be to some extent mitigated through a statistical analysis of the stories in the collection. The rates at which men, women, and children came to Henry for help bear a resemblance to other English sources. Finucane, for example, has noted that in six English miracle collections, children were more often the victims of accidents than adults. Even in this calamity-filled collection, more children had accidents than adults: 15 girls, 19 boys, 18 men, and one woman. In the same study Finucane found that women more often suffered from chronic illnesses such as lameness and blindness, and non-healing

112 Kleinberg, “Proving Sanctity,” 201-203.

113 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 109-110.
miracles such as rescues from prison and shipwreck were much more closely
associated with men, correlations which he linked to observable physiological and
cultural factors. These observations also correspond to the contents of Henry’s
miracles, as we shall see.

What is perhaps even more interesting is not that rates of accidents or illnesses
have correspondences with gender in miracle collections, but that similar trends also
appear in the English coroner’s records, which recorded for judicial purposes the
details of accidental deaths. It was required by law that the coroner be called
whenever someone died an unnatural death. Hanawalt’s landmark study The Ties that
Bound used these records to reconstruct the day-to-day lives of the late medieval
English peasantry. She described several trends in accidental death that are similar to
trends found in the miracle collections. In her sources, more men than women and
more boys than girls suffered accidents in her sources. In particular, she notes that
“as in modern accidental-death statistics for children of this age {1 year old} the baby
boys tend to be more active and aggressive at play (63 percent of boys’ compared to
54 percent of girls’ accidents),” and that this behavior continued through childhood,

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114 Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims, 147-148.


116 Hanawalt, Ties, 180.
because “boys were more aggressive in their investigations of their environment and consequently had more accidents.”

While rates of illnesses among adults and accidents among children of both genders bear a resemblance to other ecclesiastical and judicial sources, rates of illness among children do not. Finucane, in a study of children in eight miracle collections from throughout Europe (including Henry’s), has noted that in his own study and several others, ill children who receive miracles are about 65 per cent boys and 35 per cent girls. He feels that, as there should be no physiological reason for this discrepancy, this statistic can only be attributed to a cultural preference for boys, which led to a greater concern for their welfare and hence a greater percentage of sick boys brought to the shrines of the saints. But the children who appear in this particular miracle collection do not conform to this observation. In fact, of the sick children and of the children who had died of illness who were revived by Henry, there are 12 girls and 10 boys.

The correspondences between Henry’s miracles and the coroner’s records with regards to gender and the rates of accidents, when combined with the unusually even rate of illness in girls and boys, suggests that the miracles were not filtered with respect to the gender of the suppliants. Further, because the stories were required to correspond to the memories of their tellers many years later, and seem to have stood

117 Hanawalt, Ties, 181.

up to that test, we should also be able to trust that the miracles offer a relatively accurate depiction of day-to-day situations where the aid of a saint was required.

The percentages in which women appeared as suppliants remains the only thing which the scribe may have chosen to control. In the other sources used in Chapter 3, women made up anywhere from one-quarter to slightly over one-half of suppliants; here, they constitute 22.5 per cent of all suppliants where the gender of the supplicant is known (see Table 14, Appendix A). Whether one in four people entering Henry's shrine to make an offering was a female, or two or even three in four, cannot be known. It is possible that the authors, the tellers of the stories, or both favored the stories of men over women, or certain kinds of stories about women over others. So, while these stories were based in the experiences of real people, whether the collection offers a "random sampling" of such experiences is still questionable.

The 174 stories that survive are remarkably diverse, ranging from the traditional *imitatio Christi* healings of the blind, lame, and mute to the removal of a stuck bean from an ear. Henry healed many injuries, freed prisoners, and protected his devotees from fire, hanging, shipwreck, and drowning. He repaired inanimate objects, healed animals, and once even helped to find lost property. He served the needs of religious (from parish priests to monks and nuns), merchants, tradesmen, and poor carters and farmers. But this diversity does not mean that Henry lacked a specialty. On the contrary, he served a very specific purpose in the lives of his devotees. The common thread in their stories is the same thing that may have, in their minds, linked
them to Henry: they were in trouble, oppressed and harassed, suffering from great adversity in their lives.

Although “adversity” is a broad term, and in fact takes into account all pilgrims who sought miraculous aid (after all, they would not have sought a miracle if they had no problems), in Henry’s case it was the sudden and dire nature of their problems that the authors of the miracles chose to emphasize. Henry, to a far greater degree than the saints examined in Chapter 3, was an actor in situations that were very sudden (see Table 15). In exactly half (87 of 174) of the miracles, Henry reversed an immediate calamity in situations which I have designated Sudden and Fatal: he revived people who had just died of illnesses or accidents, cured those who were severely wounded, protected many from immediate dangers such as house fires, shipwrecks, or death sentences, removed the airway blockages of choking victims, stopped a young man from committing suicide by “turning the blade,” and so on. In twenty-four cases, he intervened in situations which I have called Long-Term and Fatal, curing those who had been ill for anywhere from four days to several years – but only when those illnesses had brought them to death’s door. Thus, only 61 (35.1 per cent) of the miracles were performed to rectify situations which were nonfatal: the healing of chronic and non-life-threatening problems such as blindness, paralysis, scrofula, or a bean stuck in an ear canal; the healing of sick animals; and the manipulation of objects (usually coins which had been previously promised to Henry.)

This need for immediate intervention differs significantly from the pattern presented by the cults in Chapter 3, wherein the vast majority of people suffered some
chronic complaint that they brought to the shrine in the hopes of leaving it there. If Henry, like his fellow royal saint, Louis, had required a pilgrimage before he performed a miracle, he would have been too late to assist two-thirds of his suppliants. Vauchez has noted this transition from healing at shrines to healing in immediate situations throughout the miracle collections of the later Middle Ages. But Henry’s miracles still seem to display an unusual sense of urgency. Rates of accidents among children in Henry’s miracles can again be used to demonstrate the emergency nature of the stories in this particular collection. According to Vauchez, the phenomenon of intercession at a distance from shrines which became more common in the later Middle Ages might help to explain the rising numbers of children who were healed in late medieval miracle collections. In Finucane’s study of children in eight such collections (including Henry’s), roughly two-thirds of children brought to shrines were ill, and the other one-third were accident victims. But in Henry’s miracles alone, this statistic is very nearly reversed: 22 (38.6 per cent) of the children were dying or dead of illness, and 36 (63.2 per cent) were injured or killed in an accident, or prevented from having an accident altogether through Henry’s intercession (see Table 16). Hence, Henry more often helped in cases of life-threatening accidents – sudden, unexpected, and shocking events – than in cases of illness, situations which tended to develop over time. Because of the emergency nature of the problems brought to his attention, in 105 cases Henry aids his suppliant “immediately,” “very quickly,” “at

119 Vauchez, Sainthood, 447.
120 Vauchez, Sainthood, 470.
once,” or in some period of time under an hour. In 58 more cases, the suppliant received help at some time before he or she undertook pilgrimage; in only ten cases, the cure happened at the shrine itself, after a pilgrimage had been both vowed and performed.\textsuperscript{121}

It is in the miracles that one can begin to see the ways in which women related to this king, martyr, and protector in adversity. Sudden calamity is surely not the exclusive realm of men, and women often appear in the miracles seeking to have their own tragedies redressed. The gender imbalance seen in other collections is continued here: women do not seek Henry’s help as often as men do. In the cases where the suppliant is known (151 out of the 174), some 34 females, 90 males, 19 married couples, and 8 groups of both men and women together seek Henry’s aid (see Table 14). Women, who represent 22.5 per cent of all suppliants, also act along with their husbands in another 12.6 per cent of the miracles, and are part of a large group (usually, of neighbors or other members of the endangered person’s community) in 5.3 per cent of the cases. Male suppliants thus remain the more common ones – some 59.6 per cent, or 90 cases.

This still leaves 34 miracle tales about women who went to Henry for help, and 27 cases where they sought help alongside men. As in the other collections examined, though, those tragedies brought to Henry’s attention by women conformed to a certain model, one that allowed them to operate within the bounds of social expectation.

\textsuperscript{121} The remaining case, which exits in epitome only, does not give enough information for the reader to determine when the miracle occurred.
More often than not, women appeared as Henry’s suppliants on behalf of someone else. Only 12 women (35.3 per cent of them) sought help for themselves, as compared to 63 men (70.0 per cent) who did the same. But 20 (58.8 per cent) of the requests made by women were for the healing, protection, or resuscitation of children, usually their own.

The less common act for female suppliants, to seek help for themselves, nevertheless deserves attention. In the 75 cases where suppliants were seeking help for themselves (63 men and 12 women), there was a definite understanding of the circumstances under which women might seek help (see Table 17). Women sought help for themselves under a far less diverse set of circumstances than men did. The overwhelming majority of women (83.3 per cent, or ten cases) sought help for the healing of an illness. By way of comparison, only 49.2 per cent of men sought healing for an illness. Some of this discrepancy might be attributed to simple day-to-day circumstance. Women were not so likely as men to be traumatically injured, to be captured in war and held prisoner, or to be in some kind of danger that required their protection by supernatural power. This left serious illness as the main problem which Henry could solve for women. Nevertheless, women generally were not asking for help with those sudden, dire emergencies like men were; only two cases of their twelve can be described as such. In one, a girl working in a sand-pit called on Henry as a large amount of the sand collapsed on her, and was protected from death; in another, a women who had gone mad from melancholy and cut her own throat was healed. The rest were cases of illness of long duration. Men, too, appear with
illnesses of long duration, but they also asked for help with traumatic injury (18 cases), imprisonment (2 cases), rescue from danger (8 cases), and other sudden problems (4 cases), thus dramatically bringing up the “calamity factor” in their needs overall. 54.2 per cent of males who were the subjects of miracles were in Sudden and Dire situations, as compared to 42.9 per cent of women (see Table 5.2).

More commonly, however, women were seeking help for another person, and in this collection it was most often for their own children. It had been suggested that Henry had a particular interest in the welfare of children. Knox and Leslie claimed that this was because he was “the founder of a boys’ school (Eton) and a client of Santa Claus, for he was born on St. Nicholas’ Day.” I have found no other evidence in liturgy or art of his particular interest in children’s welfare. 57 of the 174 miracles, or some 32.8 percent, were performed on children, but this in itself is not unusual. By way of comparison, 28.9 per cent of the Magdalen’s miracles at St.-Maximin, 27.7 per cent of St.-Louis’ miracles, 17.5 per cent of St. Agnes of Montepulciano’s miracles, and an overwhelming 40.7 per cent of Simone da Todi’s miracles were performed on children. What is unusual in Henry’s miracle collection is the gender-parity in the numbers of girls and boys who were healed (see Table 16). 31 boys and 26 girls were revived, healed, or protected through Henry’s miraculous intervention. In the collections examined in chapter 3, a total of 64 boys and 40 girls receive miracles.

But the most striking aspect of the stories of children who received miracles from Henry is that more than two-fifths of them (44 percent of miracles involving

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children, or 25 cases) describe the restoration of a child who has been killed in an accident. In another nine cases (16 percent of miracles involving children) Henry was asked to repair the life-threatening injuries of a child who had not yet died. In these 34 cases, which represent 59.6 per cent of the children Henry healed, the perception of Henry as having a particular understanding of the needs of those in distress is central. The accident that killed the child is explained in heart-rending detail, as are the frantic responses of the people at the scene of the incident. It is in situations like this that women figure prominently as suppliants to Henry. These women faced a very different kind of situation than their counterparts who visited the shrines of the Magdalen, Agnes, Louis, or Simone. In those four collections, only eight children were cured of the results of accidents on the spot; more often, women were seeking help for their children’s long-term paralyses, infections, and fevers.

A demonstration of the ways in which Henry’s cult appealed to women, and especially to mothers who needed help for their injured children, requires an example. The case of Beatrice Shirley of Wiston, Sussex, which was recorded at Windsor on June 9, 1489, and later declared to be proved by a papal investigation, is typical in many ways.123

A girl of three years old was sitting under a large stack of firewood in the company of other children of that age who were playing by themselves, when by a sudden and calamitous accident a huge trunk fell from the stack and threw her on her back in the mud, pinning her down so heavily as to deprive her instantly of the breath of life. It was not possible that the breath should remain in her when her whole frame was so shattered; for the trunk was of such a size that it could scarcely be moved by two grown men. You may be assured that the horror of the sight soon scattered the company of the child’s friend, who forthwith ran to and fro in all directions, showing that something untoward had occurred by their screams or their flight, not by words. Perhaps it was this warning which made the child’s father come up to see what had happened; and he, looking from some distance off, could see that it was his little Beatrice who lay stretched out there. Not a little alarmed, he hastened forward, and, on drawing near and finding her already carried off by so cruel a death, found his face grow pale, and his heart wrung with an agony of grief: yet, lifting the log with some difficulty, he lifted her in his hands.

Such a specific, clear, and often lengthy description of the situation that led to the suppliants’ distress is the first part of all of Henry’s miracles. Where the circumstances were unclear because they had not been witnessed (usually in the cases of injured children), the authors often made guesses, as in the case of young Thomas Scott, who fell out of a tree onto his head: “this boy climbed up a tree at about ten o’clock in the morning, bent on some childish prank, or perhaps birds’-nesting.” The specificity of the stories, spackled with conjecture where small facts are not known, is a by-product of their importance as part of the legal proceedings of

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124 Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 85; or Grosjean, ed., Henrici VI, 102: “...nescio profecto qua insolencia puellí (an forte ut auiculas ex nido surriperet) arborem quondam circa decimam fere horam diei conscenderat.”
canonization, and luckily allow a very clear idea of what sort of circumstances brought Henry to mind.

Once adversity and its emotional impact (grief, and anguish, and sometimes even fury) had been described, someone — often a parent but sometimes a bystander — made an appeal to Henry, asking him to intercede and solve the problem. Both men and women appealed to Henry on behalf of their children, sometimes acting alone, and sometimes with the enthusiastic backing of their community, which often gathered at the scene of accidents and deaths. But there were differences in how each gender of parent approached Henry, and under what circumstances. Men, for example, acted far less often on behalf of girls than of boys; but women, couples, and others acted for both boys and girls in roughly equal numbers (see Table 18). Men and women also interceded in different kinds of situations (see Table 19). In the eighteen cases where a mother and father acted together to call on Henry, the child in question was most often ill, but not yet dead. In other words, couples acted together when there was time to consider together what should be done. Situations involving only one parent were quite different. As we have mentioned, fathers acting alone seemed to concentrate in areas of injury, rather than those of illness. The sixteen women who acted alone to bring a child to Henry’s attention were involved in a variety of situations, but fully half of them were hoping to revive a child killed in an accident. Of the seventeen cases where people other than the parents interceded on a child’s behalf, ten (58.8 per cent) were asking for the revival of an accident victim, too.
What does this all mean? The roles that mothers, fathers, couples, and others played in asking Henry's help for their children was in part shaped by their circumstances. When both parents had to watch the struggles of a severely ill child over a period of time which, no matter its objective length, no doubt seemed interminable to them, they had the time to think over their problem and act together as a couple to solve it. On the other hand, when there was an accident and the community turned out to find out what had happened, any adult might act quickly on behalf of a child of any gender, in loco parentis, to ask Henry for his intercession. Fathers intervened more often for the welfare of their sons than their daughters, perhaps because, as Hanawalt pointed out in the coroner's records, past a certain age boys would be more likely to be with their fathers than their mothers during the day.\textsuperscript{125} But on the scene of accidents or sickbeds where a child had died, it was more often the mother who performed the role of suppliant—she did so twice as often as her husband did, and was more likely to ask Henry for help for her children than to ask for help for herself.

The power of the mother's role in these dramas is clear in the story of little Beatrice. Although it was her father who found her at the scene of the accident, it was her mother who took over from there:\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{125} Hanawalt, \textit{The Ties that Bound}, 183–184.

\textsuperscript{126} Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., \textit{The Miracles of King Herne VI}, 52, or Grosjean, ed., \textit{Henrici VI}, 36: "Ac demum erumpentibus oculorum fontibus coniugem advocat: eique gemebundus hoc tam flebile funus dedit in manus. At illa, suscepto onere et in sinu collocato, pre tristica iam pene privata spiritu, vehemenciori gemitu alciori que flectu collacrimata haud longe positam adivit ecclesiam."
Then the fountains of his eyes were loosed, and, calling his wife, he put the poor corpse in her arms. She took her unhappy burden and laid it on her bosom; and so, almost fainting with her grief, and giving expression to it with heavy groans and loud wailing, made for the church that stood hard by.

From this point, despite the fact that Beatrice's father was present at the scene of the accident, it was entirely her mother's idea to seek divine intervention. She, like the rest of Henry's suppliants, engaged in a number of actions intended to encourage the attention of the saint and of God to her calamity. This attention usually came quickly. As has been mentioned, Henry almost exclusively performed his miracles on-the-spot, rather than conferring grace only in the presence of his relics at Windsor.

Despite Henry's habit of responding quickly, however, there was still time for an element of ritual action in his miracles. The first step, in all of the stories, was for the suppliant to pray, commending himself or herself into Henry's care. Sometimes the author mentions that the individual vowed a pilgrimage in return for help, but more often not. What is interesting to note is that in the hands of this particular author, women are far more likely to vow a pilgrimage than men are (41.2 per cent of women and 27.8 per cent of men, respectively — see Table 20). Perhaps the author intended to justify the women's later pilgrimage of thanksgiving by emphasizing the binding nature of the vow; perhaps the women themselves made this emphasis. But whatever the case, the legally binding vow is a feature of more tales about female suppliants than about male.

Prayer alone often accomplished the miracle, but Henry's suppliants could perform other ritual actions. It is in these actions that a distinct gender differentiation
emerges. In addition to the prayer or vow of pilgrimage, the suppliant might vow another gift, such as a wax figure or money, or another devotional practice, such as taking the pilgrimage barefoot or fasting until the pilgrimage was completed. Women were somewhat less likely to make a verbal promise of other gifts or ritual actions than men – 5.8 per cent as opposed to 11.1 per cent. But there were three ritual acts which women preferred. Two of them were a symbolic way of vowing both a pilgrimage and a gift. The first was to “take the measure” (capta corporis mensura) of a sick or injured person’s body. The length of string would then either determine the length of a candle to be brought to the shrine, or actually become a part of the candle as its wick (sometimes doubled over or wound in a spiral, so as to make the candle more affordable and functional).\(^{127}\) The other symbolic vow was made by “bending a penny to King Henry.” In several cases, the action of bending a coin over a sick or dead person brought them immediate recovery; the coin was bent as a reminder to its owner that it had been promised to Henry, and that he or she must carry it to him as Windsor.\(^{128}\) Women particularly favored these symbolic vows. No men ever took someone’s measure when acting alone, but in two cases women did. 17.6 per cent of women bent pennies upon seeking Henry’s aid, while only 7.8 per cent of men did. Both acts were also favored by couples and mixed groups of suppliants. Women were also more likely to be seeking help for another, as were married couples or the mixed groups of community members who happened to be present at the scene of an


accident. In either case, women certainly felt comfortable performing visible ritual acts which committed them to a pilgrimage to Windsor in order to invoke Henry’s healing power.

Finally, in four cases the suppliant rushed to the nearest church, bringing along the sick or injured person, so that the commendation to Henry could take place in a sacred setting. Three of these suppliants were women, and in the fourth case a couple acted together. Overall, then, women were more likely to vow pilgrimage verbally than men were, and also to use symbolic vows (bent pennies and measures) when acting on behalf of their children. Women in this collection, like those in Chapter 3, could be described as engaging in more concrete ritual action than their male counterparts, perhaps in order to justify their pilgrimages in the face of a hostile cultural understanding of female pilgrims.

Beatrice’s mother was one of the three who brought the victim to the church. The author goes on to explain her action: “There it was her purpose to pray earnestly to God for her daughter with sure faith and certain hope; for she thought it would be more acceptable to God if she disposed herself to prayer far removed from the tumultuous sight of people, and in a sacred place.”^242 It is in this moment that the implicit power of the cults of the saints is clearest. The woman, having faced the very real possibility of her little girl’s death, now had the opportunity to correct that situation, to avert the tragedy for herself and for the child. But her prayers for help,

\[^{242}\text{Knox and Leslie, ed. and trans., The Miracles of King Henry VI, 52; or Grosjean, ed., Henrici VI, 36:} \text{“Eo qippe magis placabile Deo credidit suum votum, quo vel ipsa a tumultuosis hominum conspectibus segregata, vel sacrori loco se statuerit ad orandum.”}\]
like the intercessory prayers of the saints, would only carry weight because they were said with a devout heart and great faith – things that must have been hard to come by in the presence of shrieking children, an inconsolable spouse, and alarmed friends and neighbors. The resolution of the story, in the hands of this author, brings to bear not only the power of Henry, but of Beatrice’s mother (and all mothers):\textsuperscript{130}

Inspired, it may be, by the example of that holy woman, the mother of the prophet Samuel, she bent her bare knees upon the ground and made known to the Lord her heart’s desire no less by her tears than by her prayers. So with the sacrifice of a humble heart she besought God and called for the aid of his Mother: finally, making that most blessed man King Henry her chief advocate in her need, she made a vow to honor with gifts his renowned tomb at Windsor. Her vow undertaken, she determined forthwith to say Pater and Ave five times in his honor with true devotion of heart. The which she had not yet finished, when behold the baby girl that she held tightly in her arms recovered the breath of life and looking at her sought its mother’s arms. The mother, then, seeing that she had either gained the comfort she desired, or at least was not yet disappointed of it, began to glow with a great warmth of devotion, and to magnify with ever greater courage the divine power. Nor was her motherly anxiety more readily bestowed upon her daughter than the speedy manifestation of God’s pity. The mother prayed, the daughter felt relief; nor had the mother yet come to the end

of the prayer she had set about making when the daughter received the grace that was asked for. For recovering that very instant her regular breathing she spoke to her mother, albeit with difficult utterance, complaining of the pain she felt... And, when she had drunk once of her mother’s milk, she neither used nor needed any other medicine afterwards, for she was saved only by the grace of the heavenly gift.

This miracle, which until this point had been typical of many of the stories in the collection, became unusual in its conclusion. In this remarkable passage, the author of the miracles made a connection that is present but unacknowledged in many other tales: a woman acting on another’s behalf is playing the role of intercessor between a human in need and the sacred. Liturgy clearly explains that this is the role played by Henry (and all of the saints); he too is an “intercessor,”\(^\text{131}\) and God’s help comes to Christians “with the grace of the blessed Henry King and martyr intervening.”\(^\text{132}\) Henry’s help is bestowed through “his merits and prayers.”\(^\text{133}\) Beatrice’s mother, too, played this intercessory role, in very similar language. She prays for her child, just as Henry is asked to do in liturgies; and her merits, a “humble heart” and “true devotion,” sound remarkably like those attributed to Henry in liturgy and in his \textit{vita}. In the process of acting out this intercession and demonstrating these merits, the author makes the mother not only a suppliant, but a conduit of divine grace. As if she were herself haloed, she \textit{glowed}; her personal qualities and devout prayers, in the words of the author, \textit{magnified the divine power}. Once the mother’s prayers

\(^{131}\) Oxford, Bodleian Library, Don.e.120, fol. 3*: “... intercessorem...”

\(^{132}\) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Univ. 8, fol. 89*: “... gracia beati henrici Regis et martiris interueniente...”

\(^{133}\) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. Don. e. 120, fol. 1’ and MS Bodl. 939, fol. 45’, and Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS Addit 38-1950, fol. iv*: “... eius meritis et precibus...”

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revived the child, the author shifted her intercessory power into her physical body, and her milk became Beatrice’s medicine. Here even the mother’s body is like those of the saints that became holy relics after their deaths: both function as vessels for God’s healing power.

This kind of language is not commonly present. Some twenty women act as intercessors, and while their faith was praised, the author never again created such a clear cause-and-effect connection between an intercessor’s faith and the efficacy of divine intervention. But the echo of her story can be heard every time authors praised the faith of a mother whose child was healed through her prayers for a miracle. It is only a small step from understanding the saints as powerful intercessors with the divine to understanding women, who so often represent another when they approach the divine, as playing a similar role.

Conclusions

The case of Henry VI allows a glimpse into the formation of a saint’s cult. In the first twenty-nine years or so after his death, Henry became a better caretaker of his subjects than he had been in life. His devotees believed that his unjust death gave him the opportunity to combat the kinds of adversity that had harried him during his life. The rich evidence from those twenty-nine years shows that women rather quickly found a place in Henry’s cult — one similar to that they assumed in the cults discussed in Chapter 3. Since they were caregivers, it was considered acceptable and even appropriate to promise and complete pilgrimages if their interaction with the saint was
intended to heal their family members. In Henry’s case, his seeming interest in emergencies meant that women’s pilgrimages were often made in thanksgiving for the restored health of their sick, injured, or even dead children.

The existence of this connection between women, caregiving, and miraculous pilgrimage in Henry’s cult is remarkable in two ways. First, Henry was not a saint who had any overt reason to appeal to women, or mothers, or even (despite Knox and Leslie’s observation about his natal day) to children. Henry’s cult has often been described as a politically-motivated phenomenon, an example of pro-Lancastrian propaganda from the Wars of the Roses. Even though the situation was somewhat more complex than this, art, liturgy, and Henry’s vita certainly made no bones about the fact that his sanctity was derived, in part, from his kingship. Nevertheless, both women and men from across the social spectrum called on Henry in those first years, and claimed that he had made miracles for them. Women found this caregiving niche in Henry’s cult, and reported their miracles in the face of not only social discomfort with female pilgrims but also of political opposition to the cult during the reigns of Edward IV and Richard III. Their participation in the face of these opposing forces suggests that their participation in pilgrimage was perhaps just as common as the pejorative images of the Wandering Woman that opposed it.

Secondly, this collection offers us a hint that women who sought the help of the saints for others could be viewed not only as devout, but also perhaps as powerful. By selflessly seeking the help of the saints for their children, they became intercessors, playing a similar if subordinate role to that of the saints they had sought. What each
individual woman thought when faced with the death or severe injury of a child, or with his or her miraculous healing, is something we can never know. But the story of Beatrice Shirley and her mother shows that it was possible for medieval people to understand that a woman who entered into an intercessory role had a certain responsibility for the miracle, all by herself. Peeping through the miracle stories is another image of women who went ‘seeking shrines.’ Far more acceptable than the Wandering Woman, this Holy Matron (the designation used so frequently by Felix Fabri) used her humble heart and devout prayers to obtain and wield the power she needed to heal her loved ones. She seems to have needed no further justification for her travel.
By the later Middle Ages, pilgrimage had moved away from its origins as a rare, difficult, expensive, and even life-threatening form of Christian devotion. With the growing economic prosperity of the high Middle Ages, people of modest means could find ways to participate in pilgrimage. The high Middle Ages also saw a proliferation of saints and shrines, which made a local pilgrimage of only a day or three a possibility for nearly anyone in Europe. The pilgrimage to the Holy Lands became more and more structured as the Crusades drew to a close and Muslim authorities took control over Christian tourism. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a trip to Jerusalem was taken with a group of fellow pilgrims, under the supervision of Venetian boat captains and Muslim guides. Indeed, through modern eyes, the process looks like nothing so much as like taking a vacation.

Given this, it seems no surprise that both clerical and lay commentators in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries denounced pilgrimage as irreligious wandering, prompted by the desire to see new things, to meet new people, or to bring home both souvenirs and stories from far-off places. But amidst this universal clamor over the
practice of pilgrimage, a special set of concerns and complaints were reserved for female pilgrims. Women too became pilgrims in greater numbers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a development that some writers observed with dismay. Men, they said, might be tempted to behave badly on the road, and their wandering should be considered wasteful; but women, both clerics and lay writers claimed, were so innately sinful that pilgrimage was nothing more than an opportunity for them to indulge the innate vices that only the safe, controlled, and separate sphere of the home could adequately contain. They feared the emergence of the Wandering Woman, sure that women's natural tendencies towards pride and lust would lead them to engage in extramarital affairs, to desire and acquire fine clothing so as to raise their social station during their visible moments in public, and to lie and conspire with other women to create opportunities for and to cover up their misbehaviors. While there were, no doubt, as many women as men who became pilgrims in order to satisfy their curiosity or raise their social status, women earned a special kind of mistrust in literary sources.

But the naturally sinful tendencies of women were not the only image of womanhood available to those who struggled to define female pilgrims. While some real women wandered about freely for the sake of satisfying their own curiosity, some of them expressed devotional intent during their travels. Women are most often recorded as pilgrims to the shrines of the saints, for example, when they sought miraculous healing for their family members, rather than for themselves. In telling their stories to the officials who compiled canonization materials, they achieved two goals: they did honor to the saint who had helped to heal their loved one, but perhaps
more importantly for this study, they also presented an image of women on pilgrimage far different from the Wandering Woman. It was a part of a woman’s day-to-day obligation to her family to heal them when they were sick. Hence, a woman who went on pilgrimage seeking the miraculous healing of her family members was not abandoning her responsibility to them in favor of aimless wandering, but rather engaging in a devotional act specifically designed to fulfill those responsibilities. In this way, some women were able to use the perception of their proper social role to support their pilgrimages, rather than condemn them. Although these positive images of female pilgrims, like negative ones, were recorded by the pens of male authors, those authors were still interpreting the behaviors of and stories told by real women.

But the existence of an opposing image of female pilgrimage, which I have dubbed the Holy Matron, allowed for something more than just rendering the pilgrimages of women acceptable. Women who looked to this image might also hope to be considered saint-like in their own right. A woman who went on pilgrimage to implore the saints for a miracle on behalf of her child was placing herself between human need and divine grace: she was an intercessor. Medieval Christianity clearly taught that this was the same role that the saints themselves played, interceding with God on behalf of humans in need. As such, stories about women who became pilgrims in order to heal their children always hint that such women reiterate the role of the saint, much as the saints reiterate the role of Christ. The story of Beatrice Shirley, whose mother interceded on her behalf with Good King Harry when she was in dire need, makes this connection more clear. For the duration of her intercession,
the author of the story consciously portrays Beatrice’s mother as a saint. She glowed as if haloed; her merits and prayers brought on God’s help; her physical body became a conduit for healing. Although we do not even know her name, in that moment Beatrice’s mother was, for all intents and purposes, a saint. Such images must have been encouraging for women who desired to become pilgrims (for whatever reason) and feared that they might be labeled Wandering Women if they did so.

But what of pilgrimages which were not performed for the benefit of another? Women who became long-distance pilgrims to Rome, Jerusalem, and Compostella did not expect to receive miracles. The purpose of these pilgrimages was, instead, intensely personal: to see the physical places described in the New Testament, or to earn indulgences to speed the way to Heaven, were not things which could easily be made to serve another person. Yet the image of the Holy Matron could even be associated with these pilgrimages. Women were expected to conform to masculine demands for silence and invisibility on such journeys, and in some cases may have chosen to conform to these demands as much as possible in order to avoid confrontation. But they also offered their caregiving skills to their companions where and when they were able, earning at least temporary and grudging gratitude. Their perseverance on the journey, and their silence and modesty in group situations, could also be interpreted by their male companions as a spiritual gift, an unlikely example sent by God to teach the average (male) pilgrims a lesson in humility. When nursing their sick companions, withstanding the heat of the desert without complaint, and behaving with modesty and decorum at crowded shrines, they might be described and
understood as Holy Matrons who set a good example, conformed to expectations of women’s behavior, and yet were ‘braver than men and stronger than knights’ when engaging in devotional practices. These qualities—modesty and meekness, strength of devotion, selflessness in caring for others—sound remarkably similar to those used in describing female saints in the later Middle Ages.

In the space between the Wandering Woman and the Holy Matron, real women took real journeys. We can peep into their experiences to an extent, recognizing that our information comes from authors who were using their stories to fulfill specific agendas. Perhaps the most authentic description of the travails faced by a woman on pilgrimage comes from the sole woman who recounted her experiences: Margery Kempe. Even Margery dictated her story to a cleric, because she could not write it herself, but her personality comes booming through the text of her Book. Margery was not an ordinary woman. Her belief that she was a living saint experiencing mystical discussions with Jesus and the Virgin set her apart from the quiet, modest devotion of Fabri’s seven matrons. But Margery’s experiences most clearly define the boundaries within which a female pilgrim worked, because she so regularly crossed those boundaries. She refused to confine her devotional practices within acceptable group expressions of piety; she refused to be silent, meek, and modest; she would not accommodate either her husband or her companions on her journey by offering acceptable feminine hospitality, or at least silence, at table. Because she did not use accepted images of femininity to justify either her travels or her behavior among her
fellow-travelers, she was reproved, shunned from the table, and twice abandoned by her fellow pilgrims to fend for herself.

It seems likely that most women who went on pilgrimage, either to a miraculous shrines or Jerusalem, had to find some kind of balance between the demands and expectations of male companions – the Holy Matron – and their own motivations and desires – the Wandering Woman. But the very existence of both of these images is a testament to the agency of women in a culture whose legal, religious, and social customs presumed that they had none outside their homes. It is remarkable that in the face of a cultural assumption that women should remain in their homes caring for their families, women often found the ways and means to travel for devotional purposes. So many women exercised this agency that opposition to their presence can be seen in a variety of texts. But while male authors busily castigated their actions, women continued to exercise this agency, creating through their actions an opposing, more positive image of their behavior. The example of female pilgrims is one historians would do well to remember when they presume, based on an overwhelming percentage of male authors, that cultural production was strictly or even mostly the province of men in premodern Europe. One need not wield the pen in order to contribute.
Table 1. Suppliants at St. Maximin de Provence: Gender and the Type of Miracle Requested.

Note: These statistics do not reflect the gender of those who were actually healed, but rather of those who requested the miracle.
Table 2. Suppliants of St. Mary Magdalen at St.-Maximin de Provence: Gender and the Subject of the Miracle.
Table 3. Supplicants of St. Mary Magdalen at St.-Maximin de Provence: Gender and Types of Pilgrimage Vows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Vow</th>
<th>Non-Contingent Vow</th>
<th>Contingent Vow</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>4 (14%)</td>
<td>6 (21%)</td>
<td>18 (64%)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>16 (33%)</td>
<td>6 (13%)</td>
<td>24 (53%)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>4 (44%)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>21 (25%)</td>
<td>16 (19%)</td>
<td>46 (55%)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miracle for Self</td>
<td>Miracle for Another</td>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>5 (31%)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>11 (79%)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>22 (71%)</td>
<td>9 (29%)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Gender of the Suppliants of St. Agnes of Montepulciano at Santa Maria Novella, Gracchiano-Vecchio.
Table 5. Supplicants of St. Agnes of Montepulciano at Santa Maria Novella, Gracciano-Fecchio: Gender of the Suppliant and the Timing of the Miracle, Where Known.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Upon Request</th>
<th>At the Shrine</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>11 (79%)</td>
<td>3 (21%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
<td>2 (17%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Couples</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>21 (78%)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Suppliants of St. Louis at St.-Denis: Gender and the Subject of the Miracle.

*While there are sixty-five total miracles as listed by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, one man sought healing for both of his sons, who had fevers, at once. I counted this as a single suppliant; hence the total number of suppliants was sixty-four and of male suppliants seeking help for others was two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Miracle for Self</th>
<th>Miracle for Another</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>23 (74%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>25 (93%)</td>
<td>2* (7%)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Couples</strong></td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>48 (75%)</td>
<td>16 (25%)</td>
<td>64*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6. Suppliants of St. Louis at St.-Denis: Gender and the Subject of the Miracle.**

*While there are sixty-five total miracles as listed by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, one man sought healing for both of his sons, who had fevers, at once. I counted this as a single suppliant; hence the total number of suppliants was sixty-four and of male suppliants seeking help for others was two.
Table 7. Miracles of St. Louis at St.-Denis: Number of Ritual Acts Performed in Each Miracle Tale.
Note: Chart includes only those miracles performed on the suppliant and involving either real or promised pilgrimages to St-Denis (22 miracles performed on male suppliants and 21 performed on female suppliants).
Table 8. Ritual Acts Performed by Suppliants of St. Louis at St.-Denis.

Note: Chart includes only those miracles performed on the suppliant and involving pilgrimage, either real or promised, to St.-Denis (22 miracles performed on male suppliants and 21 performed on female suppliants).
Table 9. Suppliants of St. Simone da Todi: Gender and the Type of Miracle Requested.

Note: These statistics do not reflect the gender of those who were actually healed, but rather of those who requested the miracle.
Table 10. Suppliants of St. Simone da Todi: Gender and the Subject of the Miracle.
Note: This chart includes only those 63 persons who actually engaged in a pilgrimage in order to get, or to thank the saint for, the miracle they had requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Miracle for Self</th>
<th>Miracle for Another</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 (45%)</td>
<td>21 (55%)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>14 (74%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>31 (49%)</td>
<td>32 (51%)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11. Suppliants of St. Simone da Todi: Gender and Types of Vows to the Saint.
Note: This chart includes only those 63 persons who actually engaged in a pilgrimage in order to get, or to thank the saint for, the miracle they had requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Vow</th>
<th>Non-Pilgrimage Vow</th>
<th>Contingent Vow</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>15 (40%)</td>
<td>10 (26%)</td>
<td>13 (34%)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>4 (21%)</td>
<td>5 (26%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples</td>
<td>2 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>27 (43%)</td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
<td>22 (35%)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12. Suppliants of St. Simone da Todi: Gender and the Timing of the Miracle.
Note: This chart includes only those 63 persons who actually engaged in a pilgrimage in order to get, or to thank the saint for, the miracle they had requested.
Table 13. Miracles of St. Simone da Todi: Gender of the Subject and the Timing of the Miracle.

Note: This table includes the subjects of the miracle, rather than the suppliants who requested the miracle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requests for Self</th>
<th>Requests for Child</th>
<th>Request for Other (person, object)</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 (35%)</td>
<td>20 (59%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 (70%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
<td>17 (19%)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Couples</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>18 (95%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (63%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 (50%)</td>
<td>53 (35%)</td>
<td>23 (15%)</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14. Suppliants of Henry VI: Gender (where known).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sudden &amp; Fatal</th>
<th>Long-term &amp; Fatal</th>
<th>Nonfatal</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>21 (43%)</td>
<td>7 (14%)</td>
<td>21 (43%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>58 (54%)</td>
<td>16 (15%)</td>
<td>32 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (9%)</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Couples</strong></td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animals</strong></td>
<td>4 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (67%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>87 (50%)</td>
<td>24 (14%)</td>
<td>61 (35%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15. Severity of the Situations Addressed in the Miracles of King Henry VI: Gender of the Subject.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cure Illness</th>
<th>Revive Dead (illness)</th>
<th>Heal Injury</th>
<th>Revive Dead (trauma)</th>
<th>Protect from Danger</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
<td>10 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (15%)</td>
<td>11 (42%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td>9 (29%)</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>14 (45%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>19 (33%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
<td>9 (16%)</td>
<td>25 (44%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16. Children as Subjects of the Miracles of Henry VI.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Cure Illness</th>
<th>Heal Injury</th>
<th>Free Prisoner</th>
<th>Protect from Danger</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>10 (83%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>31 (49%)</td>
<td>18 (29%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>8 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41 (55%)</td>
<td>19 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>9 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17. Gender and the Miracles Sought by the Suppliants of Henry VI for Themselves.
Table 18. Suppliant of Henry VI: Requests for the Healing of Children.
*There are fewer children represented here than in Table 5.2 because in two cases the account is so brief that it does not include the identity of the suppliant at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mother (&amp; community)</th>
<th>Father (&amp; community)</th>
<th>Both Parents (&amp; community)</th>
<th>Another Person or Self</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girls</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boys</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (25%)</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>10 (31%)</td>
<td>7 (22%)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>16 (29%)</td>
<td>8 (15%)</td>
<td>18 (33%)</td>
<td>13 (24%)</td>
<td>55*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cure Illness</td>
<td>Revive Dead (Illness)</td>
<td>Heal Injury</td>
<td>Revive Dead (Trauma)</td>
<td>Protect from Danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (&amp; community)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father (&amp; community)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples (&amp; community)</td>
<td>10 (56%)</td>
<td>1 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (22%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Person or Self</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (77%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>18 (33%)</td>
<td>4 (7%)</td>
<td>7 (13%)</td>
<td>24 (44%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19. Miracles Performed by Henry VI on Children: Gender of Suppliants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vow Pilgrimage</th>
<th>Vow Other</th>
<th>Take Measure</th>
<th>Bend Penny</th>
<th>Go to Church</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>14 (52%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
<td>6 (22%)</td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>25 (60%)</td>
<td>10 (24%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>7 (17%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples &amp; Groups</td>
<td>10 (53%)</td>
<td>2 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (16%)</td>
<td>3 (16%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>49 (56%)</td>
<td>14 (16%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>16 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (5%)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20. Ritual Acts Performed by Suppliants of Henry VI, by Gender (where known).
APPENDIX B

SACRED ART RELATED TO THE CULT OF KING HENRY VI
Figure 1. Pilgrim offering-box by John Tresilian, c. 1480, St. George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle.
Figure 2. Henry VI. Stained glass panel c. 1500 from King's College Chapel, Cambridge.
Figure 5.3. Henry VI. Late fifteenth-century fresco from St. Lawrence Church, Alton, Hampshire.
Figure 4. Henry VI. Late fifteenth-century sculpture from St. Michael's Church, Alnwick, Northumberland.
Figure 5. Henry VI, from a rood-screen dating c.1484 in All Saints Church, Foulden, Norfolk. The screen has subsequently been painted over, but the gilded orb and antelope horns are still visible beneath the damage.
Figure 6. Henry VI, from a late fifteenth-century rood-screen in Binham Priory Church, Norfolk. The panel was painted over in white and lettered with biblical texts during the Reformation. Henry's orb, crown, scepter, and antelope are still visible beneath the damage.
Figure 7. Henry VI, from a rood-screen in St. Catherine's Church, Ludham, Norfolk, dated to 1493.
Figure 8. Henry VI, from the “King’s Window” of the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Ashton-Under-Lyne, outside Manchester.
Figure 9. Henry VI, from the rood-screen in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Eye, Suffolk, dated c. 1480.
Figure 10. Henry VI, from the fifteenth-century rood-screen in St. Mary's Church, Whimple, Devon. While the face had been damaged, the face was further obscured in this picture by the camera flash. Note the antelope, orb, and scepter.
Figure 11. Henry VI. Woodcut, c. 1496, from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 277, folio 367v.
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