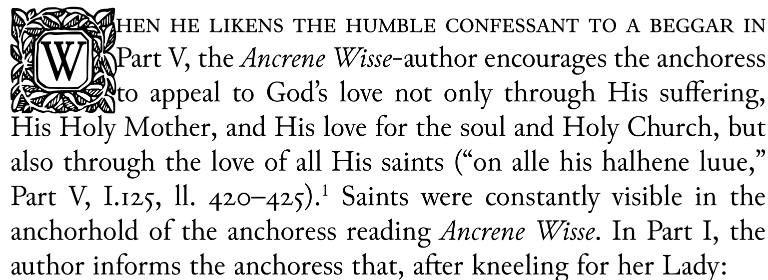
DEFAMILIARIZATION IN THE HAGIOGRAPHIES OF THE *KATHERINE GROUP*: AN ANCHORESS' READING

Abstract: This article studies the three hagiographies of the *Katherine Group* (*Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Marherete*, and *Seinte Iuliene*), focusing on an anchoress' reading of these texts. It argues that in reading these hagiographical legends, the anchoress engages in a spectatorship based on defamiliarization or estrangement. Deliberately discouraging their readers from uncritical affective stirrings for the saints, the legends invite the anchoress to see beyond this bodily trauma to the heavenly purpose of the suffering. Situating itself within scholarship by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Sarah Salih, this article contends that an anchoritic reader gazes not upon naked tortured flesh, but upon the divine foundation underpinning this abuse.
Keywords: female spirituality, early Middle English literature, saints, suffering, anchorites, *Katherine Group*, *Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Marherete*, *Seinte Iuliene*.

Resumen: Este artículo estudia las tres hagiografías del *Katherine Group* (*Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Marherete* y *Seinte Iuliene*), centrándose en la lectura de esos textos por parte de una anacoreta. Argumenta que, leyendo estas leyendas hagiográficas, la anacoreta se involucra en una contemplación basada en la desfamiliarización o extrañamiento. Disuadiendo adrede a sus lectores de acríticos indicios afectivos hacia de las santas, las leyendas invitan a la anacoreta a ver, más allá del trauma corpóreo, el propósito celestial del sufrimiento. Situándose en el marco de las investigaciones de Jocelyn Wogan-Browne y Sarah Salih, este artículo sostiene que una lectora anacoreta no mira la torturada carne desnuda sino el fundamento divino que sostiene tal abuso. **Palabras clave:** espiritualidad femenina, literatura inglesa medieval temprana, santas, sufrimiento, anacoretas, *Katherine Group*, *Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Marherete*, *Seinte Iuliene*.

1 The anchoritic reader



When he likens the humble confessant to a beggar in Part V, the *Ancrene Wisse*-author encourages the anchoress to appeal to God's love not only through His suffering, His Holy Mother, and His love for the soul and Holy Church, but also through the love of all His saints ("on alle his halhene luue," Part V, I.125, ll. 420–425).[1] Saints were constantly visible in the anchorhold of the anchoress reading *Ancrene Wisse*. In Part I, the author informs the anchoress that, after kneeling for her Lady:

> aleast to þe oþre ymagnes ant to ower relikes luteð oþer cneolið, nomeliche to þe halhen þe ȝe habbeð to þurh luue

[1] References to *Ancrene Wisse* (Part, volume and page) from Millett 2005–2006.

> iturnd ower weofdes, swa muche þe reaðere ȝef ei is ihalhet.
> (I.8, ll. 60–63)

As Bella Millett notes, Aelred of Rievaulx's (1110–1167) austere rejection of images was not consistently followed.[2] The anchoress reading *Ancrene Wisse* had direct and frequent visual access to saints, though the exact form of these "ymagnes" is not clarified in the text; the presence of the "relikes" may have facilitated a touch-based access.[3] Complementing the anchoress' use of saintly images and relics was her careful reading of hagiographies.

Hagiographical writings were not divorced from the other elements of the anchoress' reading programme; the *Ancrene Wisse*-author himself advises the reading of various saints' lives, most famously "ower Englische boc of Seinte Margarete" (Part IV, I.93, ll. 931–932). The *Katherine Group* hagiographical legends are never directed explicitly at anchoresses, nor did the audience of the texts comprise female recluses alone (Millett 1988: 33). Given the association of the five *Katherine Group* texts with *Ancrene Wisse* in the manuscript and linguistic traditions, it remains likely that anchoresses would have comprised part of the readership.[4] The anchoritic reader is not intended to re-create the saints'

[2] See her comments on the Gilbertine nuns of Sixhills Priory in Millett 2005–2006: II.19. See also Hoste & Talbot 1971: 657.

[3] This is not to ignore the fact that reliquaries may have also served to protect the relics from touch. For a survey of the role of relics and reliquaries in medieval devotion, see the British Museum exhibition catalogue *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (Bagnoli, Klein, Mann & Robinson 2010). Apart from her possible view of wall paintings depicting saints, the anchoress may have had rich and detailed pictorial representations in her cell, like those "exquisite pictures" of the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist in the cell discussed in the later *Rites of Durham* (1593) and noted in Clay 1968: 80.

[4] See further Millett 1982: xxiii. Throughout this article, the reference to a singular "anchoress" and "reader" is deliberate, as its focus is on the anchoresses who had a high level of literacy in English and French, and a basic knowledge of Latin. On anchoresses' literacy, see Millett 1996; Robertson 2003.

torture literally: the *Ancrene Wisse*-author is clear on this point (Part VIII, I.158, ll. 118–127 and Part V, I.129–130, ll. 599–609).[5] But she has to be aware of the intricacies of the saints' trials, with descriptions provided in Part III, I.49, ll. 68–73 and Part VI, I.137, ll. 201–204. The author offers the anchoress a skeletal version of the saints' narratives; she would have presumably retrieved the full details through her reading of hagiographies.[6] Comparing various saints' legends with the life of Christina of Markyate (b. *c.* 1096), Jocelyn Wogan-Browne suggests that the violence in such texts had particular relevance to female readers, with the physical brutality encapsulating "violence to the volition of young women" (Wogan-Browne 1991: 315, 321). And Sarah Salih (2001) has revealed the attentive reading skills an anchoress employs in confronting the savagery of the *Katherine Group* hagiographic legends.

Whilst the three hagiographies in the *Katherine Group*—*Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Marherete*, and *Seinte Iuliene*—are important to the anchoritic reader, they also contradict her usual affective receptivity. An anchoress must nurture her capacity to feel physical and, moreover, affective pain. Yet the saints in these texts remain curiously detached from the sensation of pain through their tortures. In reading the legends of the *Katherine Group*, the anchoress engages in a spectatorship based on defamiliarization

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[5] *Ancrene Wisse* is also peppered with holy figures apparently known to the author—though probably drawn from the *Vitae Patrum*—who suffer on a level that is both impossible and inadvisable for the anchoress. Examples include the unnamed man and woman mentioned at the close of Part VI (I.144, ll. 479–490), whose severe bodily trauma is recounted to the anchoress.

[6] Whilst the *Katherine Group* hagiographies are, as Millett 1988 has shown, "part of a style intended primarily for listeners rather than readers" and intended for "public delivery" (Millett 1988: 29, 33–34), an anchoress is likely to have read these saints' lives. The *Ancrene Wisse*-author refers to the "boc" about St Margaret, and then immediately refers to reading about St Bartholomew ("me redeð," Part IV, I.93, ll. 931–932).

or estrangement. The implied suffering is not made familiar enough to "deaden" the sharpness of her reading skills, nor does passive affective engagement with the saints impair the "critical detachment" necessary to analyse the legends appropriately.[7] Unlike the Christ of her Passion meditations, the saints in these legends remain unreachable and untouchable; and the anchoress remains a distanced spectator, pushed away from the spectacle and barred from affective entrance. Her approach to reading the hagiographies is not identifiable with the affective immersion she embraces when meditating on the Passion.[8] Situating itself within the scholarship by Wogan-Browne and Salih, this article contends that an anchoritic reader is inundated with violent imagery to resist it. An anchoritic reader of these texts gazes not upon naked tortured flesh, but upon the divine foundation underpinning this abuse.

The anchoritic spectator's affective distance from the pain of the saints is closely related to her non-voyeuristic readings of these texts. According to the gaze theory models of John Berger and Laura Mulvey, the fetishized and itemized body of the female is scrutinized by a male gaze, hostile and overpowering, which attempts to reduce the female to a "commodity ready for consumption" by male sexual

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[7] This article uses Russian formalism and the theatre of estrangement as a springboard for discussion of the hagiographies, but it does not use Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie*, nor Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, as a full framework; this anachronistic approach creates more problems than it solves. For "deadening," see Jestrovic 2006: 4: "Estrangement (*ostranenie*) is a means of counteracting one of the most deadening forces in both art and life—habitualization or automatization." See also the comments on the translation of *ostranenie* as "defamiliarization, distancing, or estrangement" (Jestrovic 2006: 19). On the danger of passive emotional involvement in theatre, see especially the discussion by South American director Augusto Boal (2008: 395) on Brecht's theories. On "critical detachment" in Brecht's theatre, see Bradley 2006: 7.

[8] For Passion narratives likely to have been read by anchoresses, see especially *Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerde*, where the reader is invited to share Christ's and Mary's pain (Thompson 1958: *passim*, especially 33, ll. 472–495 and 35, ll. 562–563).

and social appetites (Mulvey 2009: 57).[9] Wogan-Browne and Salih have both argued convincingly that the *Katherine Group* saints are not passive victims of voyeuristic violence, objects of pornography ripped apart at the will of the male torturers (Salih 1999; Wogan-Browne 1994). In their recent collection of essays on pornography and sanctity, Bill Burgwinkle and Cary Howie (2010: 8) stress the permeable borderline between viewer and viewed:[10]

> What do pornography and sanctity have in common? [...] They produce bodies as spectacle [...] and enact a process of synesthetic corporeal interaction such that the viewer believes that s/he can feel what the other is feeling or that the other is in him even more than himself. In these domains, the distinction between bodies that are "lived in" and "looked at" largely disappears.

But with the gaze of an estranged spectator, the anchoress actively refuses to "live in" the saints' bodies. She estranges herself from the implied pain saturating these texts in order to interpret the violence correctly. It remains unclear what the anchoress does with the residual imagery of horror that permeates the *Katherine Group* hagiographies. Writing on Passion narratives in the Middle Ages, Thomas H. Bestul has raised the question of whether the graphic Passion scenes would have numbed the audience to violence. He concludes that "the effect was not to desensitize their audiences to violence or anesthetize them to brutality" (Bestul 1996: 160–161). It is also unlikely that an anchoress is meant to become desensitized from this overload of grisly imagery in the hagiographies, as this would devastate her acutely sensitive and careful response to the Passion. The important point for the purpose of this article is that

[9] See also Berger 2008. For use of gaze theory in analysis of Middle English literature, see especially Stanbury 1991.

[10] "Pornography" is defined in the present article as images and texts used for sexual titillation, but, following the nuanced definition of pornography given in Burgwinkle and Howie's essay collection, it is not a "distinct genre;" it is rather "a mode of manifestation and reception" (Burgwinkle & Howie 2010: 3).

a sophisticated anchoritic spectator does not settle her gaze on the carnage.

2 Feeling pain in saints' lives

Saints' sentience in medieval hagiographical writings has already received critical attention. As Esther Cohen has asserted in her recent monograph on pain in medieval cultures, "martyrological" texts are contradictory: "The stories are full of pain infliction, but pain itself is sometimes simultaneously affirmed and denied in the same text" (Cohen 2010: 229). Tracing the saints' sensitivity to pain over time, she observes that, in the later medieval centuries, "martyrs were far more impassive than impassible" (Cohen 2010: 248–249). Karen Winstead's book on virgin martyrs includes an assessment of thirteenth-century Middle English hagiographies. On the *South English Legendary*, regarding a passage in the Juliana legend, Winstead remarks:

> One might conclude that violent passages such as this one are designed to evoke readers' compassion for the saints' pain. This interpretation is too simple, however, for descriptions of grisly tortures are almost invariably accompanied by assurances that the saint feels nothing (Winstead 1997: 73).[11]

In her 2006 article on the abbreviated *vitae* in Dominican legendaries, Donna Trembinski has suggested that the painlessness of the saints enabled the cultural move towards accepting judicial torture in the thirteenth century.

The relative levels of sentience evoked in hagiographies and saint-based visual cultures throughout the broad medieval period is a subject beyond the scope of this article; its focus is solely on the three thirteenth-century hagiographies of the *Katherine Group*.

[11] Regarding the *Katherine Group* legends, Winstead suggests a level of affective involvement and identification on the part of the reader, which contrasts with the interpretation put forward in the present article: see especially Winstead 1997: 42, 47, 63.

It is now near-commonplace that in all three cases, the torture of the saints has been made more explicit in the Middle English adaptations of the Latin texts (Winstead 1997: 40).[12] But the saints' sensation of pain during these tortures should be treated as a separate question, as Winstead's comment on the *South English Legendary* shows. The Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana of the Middle English texts are not consistently "impassible;" there are indications of pain-sensation. Margaret shows an awareness of the pain she is about to experience, submitting her body to whatever "bitternesse" comes from Olibrius' cruel ingenuity, regardless of how "sare" it bites into her (Mack 1934: 12, ll. 7–10; quotations from *Seinte Marherete* from this edition). She again implies her sensation of pain as she is scourged, praying that the wounds and other signs of agony may be wiped clean from her countenance:

> Lauerd, loke to me ant haue merci of me. Softe me mi sar swa, ⁊ salue mine wunden, þet hit ne seme nohwer, ne suteli o mi samblant, þet ich derf drehe. (Mack 1934: 14, ll. 1–4)

She feels pain, but asks only that the pain does not reveal itself. To return to Cohen's phrase, Margaret is impassive but not impassible. Katherine's martyred empress also feels pain. As she is about to experience the horrific torture of having her breasts torn off from the roots before being beheaded, the empress admits that for Christ she suffers ("ich þolie") and is maimed ("me bilim[eð]," 112, l. 779).[13] She refers to her "wa," "wene," and "pine" (47, ll. 14, 3), and in response, Katherine makes clear that her torture will be painful:

> for þis lutle *pine* þe alið i lute hwile, endelese reste i þe riche of heouene; for þis swifte [*sar*] þe aswikeð se sone, blissen buten ende. (112, ll. 787–789; emphases added)

[12] Particular comparisons between the Middle English and Latin texts will be made in the course of the analysis.

[13] Lines from *Seinte Katerine* quoted from d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981.

As will be discussed, Juliana's pain is also indicated at points in the text. These references to pain are set against moments of extreme torture where the saints apparently feel no pain at all, revealing the "contradiction" that Cohen has observed.

The brief references to pain-sensation in the *Katherine Group* are significantly less evocative than the accounts of suffering in Christina of Markyate's *Vita*.[14] Christina's sensation of physical pain in the hermit Roger's abode is made plain:

> O quantas sustinuit illic incommoditates frigoris et estus. famis et sitis. cotidiani ieiunii. Loci angustia non admittebat necessarium tegumentum algenti. Integerrima clausula nullum indulgebat refrigerium estuanti. Longa inedia. contract sunt et aruerunt sibi intestina. Erat quando pre ardore sitis naribus ebullire⟨n⟩t frusta coagulati sanguinis.
>
> O what trials she had to bear of cold and heat, hunger and thirst, daily fasting! The confined space would not allow her to wear even the necessary clothing when she was cold. The airless little enclosure became stifling when she was hot. Through long fasting, her bowels became contracted and dried up. There was a time when her burning thirst caused little clots of blood to bubble up from her nostrils. (Talbot 1959: 102–105)

So vivid is this description of Christina's anguish that modern scholars have felt her distress. In a seminal volume on anchorites and hermits, Rotha Mary Clay (1968: 119) quotes part of the above passage before declaring: "The description of physical agony is too painful to repeat". Christina's *Vita* is permeated with accounts of her pain, encouraging a reader's affective participation. The *Katherine Group* texts, on the other hand, encourage a reader's affective distance, militating against the anchoress' affective penetration of the spectacle.

[14] There is no evidence that the *Ancrene Wisse*-author or the *Katherine Group* authors knew of Christina's *Vita*, but it is included here as an analogue.

3 Defamiliarization in the *Katherine Group*

A thirteenth-century wall painting of St Katherine in the church of St John the Baptist in Cold Overton, Leicestershire does not show the martyr suffering on the wheel of torture: instead, it depicts the saint holding the wheel in her hand (*c.* 1230).[15] Like a viewer of this wall painting, the anchoritic reader of the *Katherine Group* hagiographies must not succumb to a spectatorship that sees only pain. Deliberately discouraging their readers from uncritical affective stirrings for the saints, the legends invite the anchoress to see beyond this bodily trauma to the heavenly purpose of the suffering. *Seinte Katerine* focuses on the spectator's translation of scenes of violence into scenes of beauty; *Seinte Marherete* reveals the impotency of the pagan gaze which focuses so inadvisedly on bodily pain-pleasure; and *Seinte Iuliene*, much like *Seinte Katerine*, asks the spectator to transform scenes of brokenness into scenes of healing. Each legend will now be studied in turn, following the order of texts in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 34.

Seinte Katerine is a text engaged in a battle of perspectives. It attempts to translate scenes of violence into scenes of beauty, and the capacity to effect this transformation is in the hands of the viewer. The text itself is cluttered with scenes of bloodshed and torments, but the anchoress is meant to read beyond this savagery to the potential beauty signified within it. The early Middle English version of the life is much-altered from the Vulgate Latin of Katherine's *passio*, with extensive passages "not represented [...] whether by translation, paraphrase, summary, or expansion" (d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981: 132). But the Middle English version preserves from the Latin source Katherine's vocality and the importance of her gaze—both elements which contribute to the emphasis on translating violence into beauty.

[15] This is a common motif in medieval wall paintings of the saints: see Rosewell 2008: 65. For this image, see Anne Marshall's online catalogue: www.paintedchurch.org/coverton.htm. The dating of *c.* 1230 follows Marshall.

To deal with the mass conversion brought about by Katherine's debate, Maxentius orders the converts to be bound by the feet and hands, and burnt: "þet ha [w]rungen aȝein, ant i þe reade lei ant i þe leitinde fur het warpen euch fot" (70–72, ll. 497–500). This desire to have the bodies struggle against their bonds in the fire might be intended both to maximize the converts' pain and to provide a sight for the sadistic Maxentius to enjoy. Nevertheless, his attempt to orchestrate this torture scene falls through:

> Ah þet wes miracle muchel, þet nowðer nes iwe[m]met clað þet ha hefden ne her of hare heafden; ah wið se swið l[u]fsume leores ha leien, se rudie ant se reade ilitet eauereuch leor as lilie ileid to rose, þet nawt ne þuhte hit þet ha weren deade ah þet ha slepten swoteliche a sweouete, swa þet feole tur[n]den to treowe bileaue ant þoleden anan deað i þe nome of drihtin. (74, ll. 518–524)

Maxentius' imagined spectacle is replaced by an image of angelic bodies, likened to floral arrangements. Seen as lilies upon roses, the sight of the bodies brings about conversions; and it is not the last case of conversion through sight in this text.

The violence against Katherine herself has been well acknowledged. Like Margaret and Juliana, Katherine is "stripped stark-naked" and scourged so that her body is soaked in blood:

> Þe king ne cuðe na wit ah bigon to cwakien ant nuste hwet seggen. Het o wod[e] wise strupen hire steort-naket ant beaten hire beare flesch ant hire freoliche bodi wið cnottede schurgen, ant [swa me] dude sone, þet hire leofliche lich liðerede al [o] blode; ah heo [hit lihtliche] aber ant lahinde þolede. Het hire blode; ah heo [hit lihtlice] aber ant lahinde þolede. Het hire þrefter kesten i cwalmhus, ant bed halden hire þrin þet ha now[ð]er ne ete [ne drunke,] leasse ne mare, tweolf dahes fulle. (80, ll. 563–569)

At first glance, Katherine—stark-naked and bleeding, with sexually voracious men observing her—appears to be an obvious example of a fetishized and itemized female scrutinized by a male gaze. But, as mentioned, Wogan-Browne and Salih have both

demonstrated that the *Katherine Group* saints are not mere objects of "pious pornography" destroyed by men.[16] Whilst the spectacle of female nakedness and torture invites a pornographic reading, the reader who enjoys the text in such a way is, as Salih expresses it, "endangered by his own inadequacy as a reader of the spectacle of the body" (Salih 2001: 81, 83, 85). Katherine laughs ("lahinde") through this spectacle, apparently finding humour in the horror, as does St Lawrence with his culinary jest.[17] Her laughter undercuts the effectiveness of this spectacle as pornographic enjoyment for a male, or more broadly a pagan, gaze. The anchoress who reads Katherine's ordeal in such a way becomes the object of ridicule by the saint herself.

Katherine's scourging is unquestionably a horrific torture scene. But once cast into the prison cell, her damaged flesh is healed in a spectacle observed by Porphirius and Empress Augusta, along with the nursing angels:

> Þa ha weren iseten up, sehen as þe engles wið smirles of aromaz smireden hire wunden ant bieoden swa þe bruchen of hire bodi, al tobroken of þe beatunge, þet tet flesch ant tet fel worðen se feire þet ha awundreden ham swiðe of þet sihðe. (84, ll. 585–589)

What was a scene of brutality is transformed into an angelic vision.[18] These "sihðen of heouene" embolden the empress and leader of knights:

[16] The term "pious pornography" is Robert Mills' (2005: 106), not in relation to the *Katherine Group*.

[17] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin (*c.* 1035–1107) is one writer who refers to Lawrence's macabre humour while being burned on the coals (Talbot 1955: 63). As Monika Otter describes it: "The famous story is that Lawrence said, in the middle of the torture, 'I am done on this side, turn me over.'" (Otter 2004: 72 and n. 75). This joke is also included in the Anglo-Norman version of his life (*c.* 1170; Russell 1976: 57, ll. 897–898). For dating, see Russell 1976: 22–23, and also Wogan-Browne & Burgess 1996: xxxix. The earliest recorded instance of Lawrence's defiant humour is in Ambrose of Milan (d. 397). See Wogan-Browne & Burgess 1996: xxxvi.

[18] On this scene in the dungeon, see further Salih 2001: 75.

> Porphire ant Auguste worðen of þeos wordes se swiðe wilcweme ant se hardi, forþi þet ha hefden isehen sihðen of heouene, þet ha wenden from hire, abute þe midniht, ȝarowe to al þet wa þet ei mon mahte ham ȝarki to drehe for drihtin. (90, ll. 630–633)

Porphirius talks to two hundred knights, implicitly inviting their spectatorship of this beauty in turn (90–94, ll. 633–661). The spectating anchoress is included in this widening community of spectators of the beauty effected by Katherine.

The wheel of torture also demands from the anchoress a correct spectatorship. At first eager to watch bodies writhe against flames, Maxentius subsequently devises a wheel to cause maximum pain. He is fascinated with the machine of torture before it has been used to inflict pain. Cursates, hired by Maxentius to wear down Katherine's will, forms the scene of agony before it has occurred:

> ȝet ne seh Katerine nanes cunnes pine þet ha oht dredde. Do ido dede. Nu ha þus þreateð ant þrepeð aȝein þe, hat, hwil ha wed tus, inwið þe[os] þreo dahes ȝarkin fowr hweoles; ant let þurhdriuen þrefter þe spaken ant te uelien wið irnene gadien, swa þet te pikes ant te irnene preones se scharpe ant se sterke borien þurh ant beore forð feor o þet oðer half þet al þe hweoles beon þurhspitet mid [spikes] kenre þen [eni] cnif, rawe bi rawe. Let þenne turnen hit tidliche abuten, swa þet Katerine wið þet grisliche rune, hwen ha þerbi sit ant bisið þerupon, [swike] hire sotschipes ant ure wil [wurche]; oðer, ȝef þet ha nule no, ha schal beo tohwiðeret wið þe hweoles swa, in an honthwile, þet alle þe hit bihaldeð schule grure habben. (100–102, ll. 697–709)

Even in the absence of a body-in-pain, the reader can easily imagine the potential pain caused by the wheel. Cursates emphasizes from the outset the importance of Katherine seeing the torture: Katherine is bold because she has not seen her torture instrument, he claims. This is a claim preserved from the Vulgate Latin, as is the prelude to the wheel's horror before a body has been placed

inside it (191–192).[19] He and Maxentius imagine a body-in-pain and the spectators' response to the pain they see. The wheel is then constructed in accordance with this barbaric fantasy:

> Þis pinfule gin wes o swu[ch] wise iginet, þet te twa tur[n]den ei[ð]er wiðward oðer ant anes weis baðe, þe oðer twa tur[n]den anes weis alswa ah toȝein þe oðre (swa þet, hwenne þe twa walden keasten uppart þing þet ha [c]ahten, þe o[ð]re walden drahen hit ant dusten dunewardes)—se grisliche igreiðet þet grure grap euch mon hwen he lokede þron. Her amid[heapes] wes þis meiden iset forte al torenden reowliche ant reowðfulliche torondin ȝef ha nalde hare read heren ne hercnin. Ah heo keaste up hire ehnen ant cleopede towart heouene, ful heh wið hire heorte ah wið [stille] steuene [...] (102–104, ll. 713–722)

The anchoritic reader is invited temptingly to look at it, "se grisliche igreiðet þet grure grap euch mon hwen he lokede þron." Katherine, however, focuses her gaze correctly once in the wheel. Unlike the torturers and the pagan spectators, she looks not at the wheel and the potential for violence it holds, but rather at Heaven: "Ah heo keaste up hire ehnen ant cleopede towart heouene," following the Vulgate Katherine ("erectis in celum oculis;" d'Ardenne &

[19] In the Anglo-Norman version of Lawrence's life, Decius also uses the horror of sight, prior to the torture itself:

> Devant lui fait puis aporter
> Fors tormenz de totes manieres,
> De fust, de fer, de plun, de pieres.
> Onques ne fu nul torment fait
> Que al feel Deu mostré nen ait
> Decius dit a saint Lorenz:
> 'Et ne veis tu toz ces tormenz
> Ke por tei sunt ci aporté?
> Tu ieres en chascun tormenté
> Se ne veus nos deus aorer
> Et ta fole eror delaisser'
> (Russell 1976: 47, ll. 539–549).

"[Lawrence] had brought before him cruel instruments of torture of all kinds, made from wood, from iron, from lead and from stones. Never had any instrument been made which he did not have shown to God's faithful servant. Decius said to St Lawrence: 'Do you not see all these instruments of torture which have been brought out here for you? You will be tortured by each one if you refuse to worship our gods and to abandon your foolish error.'" This translation is that in Wogan-Browne & Burgess 1996: 53.

Dobson 1981: 193). If the anchoress has become distracted, gazing in horrified fascination with the pagans at the wheel of torture, she is abruptly reminded of where she should, in fact, be looking. The spectators who have been incorrectly gazing at the wheel in its irresistible horror turn into spectacles of pain themselves, watched in turn by Christian people. An angel destroys the wheel after Katherine's prayer, killing four thousand pagans:

> ruten forð wið swuch rune þe stucchen of [baðe], bimong ham as ha stoden ant seten þerabuten, þet ter weren isleine of þet awariede uolc fowr þusent fulle. Þear me mahte iheren þe heaðene hundes ȝellen ant ȝeien ant ȝuren on euch half, þe cristene kenchen ant herie þen healent þe helpeð hire oueral. (104, ll. 730–735)

This follows the Latin in contrasting the chaos of the pagans and the exultation of the Christians (193). The reference to the "cristene kenchen," the Christians laughing at the misery of the pagans, brings to the foreground a community of Christian spectators within the text. It is an anonymous, almost absent community of spectators. This community implicitly appears in the illegal burials of the bodies: first the converted martyrs (74, ll. 524–526), then the empress (114, ll. 799–803), and finally Porphirius and his knights (118, ll. 821–824). Not as visible or as vocal as the wailing pagans, these Christian spectators are the anchoress' closest point of correspondence for her own spectatorship.

As the hagiographic legend approaches its close, the anchoress is still being asked to spectate correctly. An overwhelmed Maxentius again imagines the response of spectators, before the spectacle of pain has taken place:

> Ne [let] tu us na lengre ah loke nu biliue hweðer þe beo leouere don þet ich þe leare ant libben ȝef þu swa dest, oðer þis ilke dei se dreoriliche deien þet ham schal agrisen alle þe hit bihaldeð. (120, ll. 834–837)

Katherine, however, disagrees with Maxentius' definition of the sight:

> nis nawt grislich sihðe to seon falle þing þe[t] schal [stihen], þurh þet fal, a þusentfalt te fehere, of deað to lif undeaðlich, ant to arise from ream to a leastinde lahtre, from bale to eche blisse, from wa to wunne ant to weole þurhwuniende. (120, ll. 838–841)

She translates the "grislich sihðe" into something "a þusentfalt te fehere." Engaging in a battle for meaning, she insists on her right to define her own spectacle. This re-definition follows the Latin:

> "Non est," inquit, "miserabile spectaculum cui de occasu ortus succedit gloriosus, de morte immortalitas, de merore iocunditas, de tristitia gaudia mercantur eterna." (d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981: 200)
>
> "It is not," she said, "a miserable spectacle where: from a fall is born a glorious ascension, from death immortality, from grief delight, from sadness eternal joys are bought."

Both the Latin and English foreground her death as a spectacle, but one that is not "grisly" or "miserable." There is a close correspondence between the Latin and early Middle English on the transformation taking place at the point of her death, a transformation put on display by the spectacle of the execution. The spectators who follow her to the execution cannot see this beauty:

> Heo, as me ledde hire, lokede aȝeinwart for ludinge þet ha herde, ant seh [sihen] efter hire heaðene monie, wepmen ant wummen, wið wringinde honden, wepinde sare; ah þe meidnes alre meast, wið sari mod ant sorhful, ant te riche leafdis letten teares trondlin. Ant heo biwende hire aȝein, sum[hwet] iwreaðet, ant [e]dwat ham hare wop wið þulliche wordes [...] (122, ll. 849–855)

Only able to see the painful violence, the pagan spectators descend into a sore/painful ("sari" and "sorhful") mood, released through rolling tears ("teares trondlin") and wringing hands ("wringinde honden"). In an echo of Luke 23: 27–28, Katherine looks back at these morose spectators, as clarified three times in this passage ("lokede," "seh," "biwende"), becoming gazer rather than object

gazed upon, and demands, "sum[hwet] iwreaðet" in the speech which follows, an interpretation of beauty rather than horror (122–124, ll. 854–864).[20] One could forgive the anchoress for being confused as to how she is meant to spectate. In a climate of Passion devotion that treasured intense weeping, the anchoress would have cherished her ability to cry.[21] Yet here, to weep is to align oneself with frail pagan souls. Katherine aids the anchoress in polishing her interpretative skills. As crystallized in Lamentations 1:12 ("O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow"), no suffering is comparable with Christ's on Calvary. The anchoress learns not to uncritically transfer her weeping for the Crucifixion, that most unique of events, to the sensationalism of this event. She rejects the ineptitude and hysteria of the pagan gaze, training her eyes to see the beauty inscribed within the anguish.

Seinte Marherete is preoccupied with revealing the impotency of the pagan gaze. The author stresses the suffering of those who view Margaret's torture, as does the author of Katherine's legend with the rolling tears and wringing hands: "wa is us þet we seoð þi softe leofliche lich to-luken se ladliche!," they cry (14, ll. 14–15). The procedures of torture are also amplified from the Mombritius version, as mentioned (Mack 1934: xxxii). But in all their suffering, they gain voyeuristic pleasure, eagerly returning for more visual consumption of Margaret's traumatized body: "Striken men þiderward of eauereuch strete, for to seo þet sorhe þet me walde leggen on hire leofliche bodi ȝef ha to þe reues read ne buhe ne ne beide" (40, ll. 28–31). Margaret's tortured body feeds pain and pleasure into the spectators:

[20] "And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23: 27–28).

[21] See especially Jacques de Vitry's account of the Desert Mother of Brabant-Liège, Mary D'Oignies (*c.* 1177–1213), one of the great weepers of Christian history. (Bolland, Carnandet & Henschenius 1863–1940: IV June 23, 640C–641A).

> Hwil þet ha spec þus, me to-lec hire swa, þet te luðere reue for þe stronge rune of þe blodi stream, ne nan oðer þet ter wes, ne mahte for muche grure lokin þiderwardes; ah hudden hare heafden þe heardeste-iheortet under hare mantles, for þet seorfule sar þet heo on hire isehen. (16, ll. 23–28)

Despite the widening vocabulary for spectatorship ("to-luken" / "lokin," "seo" / "isehen"), the pagans' potential "looking" remains uncomplex, a desire for the kind of pleasurable, passive spectatorship that Augustine of Hippo (354–430) so detests.[22] And differently from Augustine's scenario, these spectators fail to spectate, preferring to hide under their mantles. Even the "heardeste-iheortet," including the unfeeling Olibrius himself, are unable to gaze upon her lacerated flesh, the sheer agony of this gaze conquering the pleasure. Olibrius later claims that he will count all of Margaret's sinews, in a bodily reduction echoing Psalm 21:18 ("They have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me"):

> Ah buh nu ⁊ bei to me ear þen þu deie o dreori deð ⁊ derf; for ȝef þu ne dest no, þu schalt swelten þurh sweord ⁊ al beo limmel to-loken; ant ich wulle tellen, hwen þu al to-toren art in euchanes sihðe þe sit nu ⁊ sið þe, alle þine seonewwen. (16, l. 32–18, l. 4)

He configures an imagined spectatorship of suffering, where a safe enjoyment of her tormented body can be pursued. In doing so, he defuses the threat of overwhelming pain. This reeve is powerless and emasculated, all possible agency in his spectatorship disarmed. For the anchoress, he is the model of impotent spectatorship. Like his subjects, Olibrius has a protective mantle, but in his case it is a figurative mantle born of his morbid imagination. He imagines the saint's pain and dismemberment without facing it directly; he desires sexual gratification from her damaged body, but remains unable to attain it.

[22] See his *Confessiones* (Migne 1878–1890: 32.683); the *Confessiones* are one of the sources of *Ancrene Wisse*.

Juliana's Eleusius is equally impotent in his spectatorship, as will be seen. Like *Seinte Katerine*, *Seinte Iuliene* is engaged in efforts to translate brokenness into healing, and it reveals the pagan spectators to be spectacles of pain themselves. The early Middle English life of Juliana also stresses Juliana's vocality, as does its related Latin text, found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 285. Like Maxentius and Olibrius, Juliana's father Africanus attempts to terrorize his daughter through imagined spectatorship of her pain before it has occurred:[23]

> for þu schalt on alre earst as on ernesse swa beon ibeaten wið bittere besmen, þet tu [wani þet tu] were wummon of wummone bosum to wraðer heale eauer iboren i þe world. (15)

Once this bitter beating does occur, Juliana speaks in the midst of her pain, disabling the potential for her spectacle to degenerate into a form of pornographic pleasure for her onlookers:

> Ant het swiðe heatterliche strupen hire streort naket ant leggen se luðerliche on hire leofliche lich þet hit liðeri o blode. Me nom hire ant dude swa þet hit ȝeat adun of þe ȝerden, ant heo bigon to ȝeien: "Beaten se ȝe beaten, ȝe Beliales budeles, ne mahe ȝe nowðer mi luue ne mi bileaue lutlin towart te liuiende godd, mi leofsume leofmon þe luuewurðe lauerd [...]" (15)

Her use of voice is a crucial act of agency, as Salih has affirmed (Salih 2001: 82). It is true that, as Robert Mills has argued, female voices in saints' lives are not necessarily pure and unpolluted vehicles of agency (Mills 2003: *passim*, especially 207). In this instance, Juliana's voice is not entirely her own; she is a mouthpiece for her "leofsume leofmon þe luuewurðe lauerd." But keeping this qualification in mind, Juliana's agency, enabled by her love-worthy lord, is clear in her use of voice. In her major work on pain, Elaine Scarry's central premise is that intense physical pain destroys language, a point also cited by both Salih and Mills (Scarry 1985: 4). Juliana's resistance, or to use Salih's term "immunity," to this degeneration of language

[23] Page references to *Seinte Iuliene* from d'Ardenne 1961.

is particularly important in her case. Though *Seinte Iuliene* is a text that discloses little about the feeling of pain, it does contain one explicit expression of Juliana's sensation:

> Þer wes sorhe to seon on hire freoliche flesch hu ha ferden þer-wið. Ah heo hit al þuleliche þolede for drihtin, ant hwen ha felde meast sar, sikerlukest seide: "Haldeð on longe, ne leaue ȝe neauer! For nulle ich leauen his luue þet ich on leue, ne for luue nowðer ne for luðer eie." (23–25)

It remains unclear for whom this sight is "sorhe to seon:" it could refer to the author as witness, Eleusius, the torturers, or the other spectators. The perspective moves from the observers to Juliana's own sensation of pain: "hwen *ha felde* meast sar" (emphasis added). The extent of the pain Juliana feels is directly proportionate to her use of voice: she speaks when she feels "meast sar." In Juliana's case, language does not crumble in the face of physical pain; rather, it is strengthened. The anchoress shifts her focus from Juliana's felt pain to the potency of Juliana's voice.

Juliana's agency in defining her spectacle persists. As in *Seinte Katerine*, a torture-wheel is devised, and its potential for agony is spectated before a body experiences pain inside it (51). Unlike Katherine, however, Juliana encounters the horrors of the wheel. Her body reaches the ultimate state of brokenness:

> Ant heo, as þe deouel spurede ham to donne, duden hit unsperliche; þet ha bigon to breoken al as þet istelede irn strac hire in oueral, from þe top to þe tan, áá as hit turnde, tolimede hire ant leac lið ba ant lire; bursten hire banes ant þet meari bearst ut, imenget wið blode. Þer me mahte iseon alre sorhene meast, þe i þet stude stode. (51–53)

Again, there is a reference to Juliana's pain, though here it is from the witness' perspective rather than her own sensation: to the viewers who "i þet stude stode," she experiences the worst possible human suffering. Such brokenness is not the anchoritic reader's final sight of Juliana, however. The virgin's body is broken only to be reformed, reassembled after its horrific disintegration. An

"engel of heouene" sweeps down, and "bursten hire bondes, ant breken alle clane." Juliana emerges "fisch-hal:" "ant heo, ase fisch-hal as þah ha nefde nohwer hurtes ifelet, feng to þonki þus godd wið honden up aheuene" (53). The early Middle English author's striking "fish-whole" image does not seem to be in the Latin version in MS Bodley 285 (52). Fishes would have been pervasive in the anchoress' image-based vocabulary, given that this is mentioned as a staple food in her diet in Aelred's regime (Hoste & Talbot 1971: 648–649). A fish-body is characterized by its symmetry and unbroken skin, emphasizing Juliana's wholeness.[24] Juliana slips out of the grasp of any spectator who attempts to define her spectacle as torture. Christ's body is an open dovecote; Juliana's fish-whole body, on the other hand, does not invite affective entrance.[25]

The wholeness of Juliana's body is again threatened, this time by fire. Juliana sees the fire while she is bound within it. But, like Katherine, she turns her gaze to Heaven, and speaks to Christ:

> Eleusius þe hwile, lette his men makien a muche fur mid alle, ant bed binden hire swa þe fet ant te honden ant keasten hire into þe brune cwic to forbearnen. As ha lokede up ant seh þis lei leiten, biheolt towart heouene, wið honden aheuene, ant þus to Crist cleopede [...] (59–61)

She uses her voice to implore Jesus to keep her within his "ehsihðe:" "Ihesu, mi selhðe, ne warp þu me nawt ut of þin ehsihðe; bihald me ant help me" (61). Juliana knows that, unlike the impotent Eleusius,

[24] The thirteenth-century anchoress' potential use of fish imagery resonates with Julian of Norwich's (b. 1343) image of the spreading blood on Christ's forehead as herring scales (Watson & Jenkins 2006: 147). Julian draws attention to the rough texture of a fish's body, whereas the author of *Seinte Iuliene* foreground's the fish-body's wholeness. For more on Julian's use of this imagery, see Finke 1992: 97.

[25] On Christ's body as dovecote, see Aelred (Hoste & Talbot 1971: 671) and Bernard of Clairvaux's († 1153) sixty-first sermon on the Song of Songs (Leclercq, Rochais & Talbot 1957–1977: II.149). Aelred and Bernard are two of the *Ancrene Wisse*-author's named sources. The *Ancrene Wisse*-author, like Aelred, uses Canticles 2:14 to describe Christ's body as a dovecote (Part IV, I.111, ll. 1639–1642).

Christ always maintains his lovers within his sight. In response, she gazes up at him, implicitly enticing the anchoress to do the same.[26] If this enticement by the saint herself is not enough, the anchoress also sees the horrifying results of incorrect spectatorship. Although Christ cools the boiling pot for Juliana after she calls to Him, it remains hot enough to kill the pagan spectators (63; see further Salih 2001: 79–80). This passage on the boiling liquid has a powerful correspondence to *Seinte Katerine*, when the pieces of broken wheel fly into the masses, slaughtering the pagans. An even stronger deterrent to weak spectatorship is Eleusius himself. Throughout the legend, the reeve Eleusius is vulnerable to pain and dismemberment, vulnerable to the spectacle of Juliana. From his first view of Juliana, he is hurt by the sight of her attractiveness:

> As he biseh ant biheold hire lufsume leor, lilies ilicnesse ant rudi ase rose, ant under hire nebscheft al se freolice ischapet, weorp a sic as a wiht þet sare were iwundet—his heorte feng to heaten, ant his meari mealten; þe rawen rahten of luue þurh euch liȝ of his limes—ant inwiȝ bearnde of brune swa ant cwakede as of calde, þet him þuhte in his þonc þet ne bede he i þe worlt nanes cunnes blisse bute hire bodi ane, to wealden hire wiȝ wil efter þet he walde [...] (17–19)

He is wounded by lust, an erratic wounding that contrasts with the power of the anchoress' penitential self-wounding in *Ancrene Wisse* (Part VI, I.143, ll. 436–440). This passage in *Seinte Iuliene* is intriguing in its description of the sensations of desire: Eleusius is at once wounded, hot, melted, and shivering. His affective and physical wholeness is already in jeopardy. The mere sight of Juliana begins the steady destruction of his body, his heart, and, eventually, his soul in the throes of Hell. As she continues to refuse his advances, Eleusius attempts to see Juliana in pain. But it is his own agony and self-annihilation that the anchoritic reader sees.

[26] In the Latin version, the Juliana who speaks is tearful (60); the absence of tears in the early Middle English version further underscores her composure in the midst of torture.

When Juliana is unaffected by the "brune-wallinde bres" (25), Eleusius demands that she be taken out of his sight "swiðe" (see further Salih 2001: 81):

> Eleusius warð þa wod, ant nuste hwet seggen; ah hehte swiðe don hire ut of his eh-sihðe, ant dreaien into dorc-hus to prisunes pine. (27)

He even orders men to "lokin" to check that Juliana is still alive in the dungeon, apparently unable to bear this sight himself (45). The suffering inflicted on Eleusius by the spectacle of Juliana becomes even more obvious as the legend progresses towards its end. He himself is torn apart, first ripping his clothes (63), and then being literally dismembered by animals feasting on carrion (69–71).[27] The ripping apart of his clothes notably coincides with a plea for Juliana to be taken out of his "ehsihðe." Eleusius can no longer endure the sight of such impenetrability. Juliana's body is whole despite the many tortures, and her hymen has not been broken despite Eleusius' overwhelming desire. Moreover, she has remained affectively impenetrable. Like Katherine and Margaret, Juliana seems generally impervious to pain. But even in those rare moments when she does feel pain, the sensation is reversed, and she is able to exit from the tortures insentient and invulnerable.

If the hagiographers were to focus on the felt experience of the saints' pain, it would render these untouchable saints vulnerable. The martyrdom would no longer be a glorious spectacle of God-assertion, but rather an experience of pure agony. The texts would make themselves unbearable for the reader: and in reading the legends, the anchoress' goal is not to delve into unendurable pain. The *Katherine Group* hagiographies are texts which seal themselves from affective penetration. They repel any attempt at passive affective engagement with pain. Through a spectatorship based on defamiliarization, the anchoress reading the hagiographies translates pain into bliss, violence into beauty, and brokenness into

[27] See further Wogan-Browne 1994: 178–179; Salih 1999: 106, and Salih 2001: 92.

healing. She reads the indications of God's love signified within the handmaidens' torture, from the image of burnt bodies as lilies upon roses, to the mouthpiece of God speaking out in the midst of agony. As a spectator of the hagiographies, the anchoress must allow pain to ricochet off her. In learning how to spectate, the anchoress nurtures a crucial skill. She learns how to perform her Lover's will on earth.

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