A Concise Companion to
Middle English Literature

Edited by Marilyn Corrie

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Helen Cooper is Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at the University of Cambridge. Her books include *The Canterbury Tales* in the Oxford Guides to Chaucer series and *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

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Barry Windeatt is Professor of English at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Emmanuel College. His books include a parallel-text edition of *Troilus and Criseyde* (Longman, 1984) and a Penguin Classics edition of Chaucer's poem (2003); the Oxford Guides to Chaucer critical introduction to *Troilus and Criseyde* (1992); an annotated edition of *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Longman, 2000) together with a Penguin Classics translation (1985); and also an edition of *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 1994). He has created the 'Medieval Imaginations' website of images of medieval English visual culture (http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/medieval/) and is writing a study of text and image in later medieval England.

Acknowledgements

I would like, first and foremost, to thank all of the contributors for their tolerance of my often considerable demands, and for their patience in waiting for the book to appear in print. I would especially like to thank Andrew Galloway for his help and encouragement from the inception of the project to its very last stages.

   A number of my colleagues in the English Department at University College London have helped me in a variety of ways. I am very grateful for advice provided by Rosemary Ashton, John Mullan and Henry Woudhuysen, and for the continuous help and encouragement of Susan Irvine. I could not have completed the project without the kindness and support of Neil Rennie. Anita Garfoot sorted out many issues that I was unable to sort out myself. I would also like to thank Nicola McDonald at York, Francis O'Gorman at Leeds, Corinne Saunders at Durham and Marion Turner at Oxford for invaluable assistance with different aspects of the book. Thorlac Turville-Petre gave generous and useful feedback at an early stage; Elisabeth Dutton and Christina von Nolcken provided crucial and greatly appreciated help much later in the day. Emma Bennett at Wiley-Blackwell has been a kind and astute editor, and I have benefited too from the expertise and patience of Annette Abel and Sue Leigh. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends for both practical help and moral support. I am especially grateful to Emma Barker, Georgia Brown, Gordon McMullan and Melanie Mauthner,

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Introduction

It has become fashionable for literary studies to blur the boundaries that have traditionally been used to distinguish one period of literature from another. Scholars of medieval literature have explored both the transmission of Old English literature in the period of Middle English and its study in the Middle English period by people who could no longer read it with ease (see, for example, Franzen 1991). More recently scholars have blurred the boundaries between the Middle English and the 'early modern' periods, examining the transmission and presentation of the writings of late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English authors – especially Chaucer and Lydgate – in the sixteenth century, after printing had become firmly established (Gillespie 2006), or the continuing interest in medieval romances as late as the early seventeenth century (Cooper 2004). Interests and ideas that have been thought to be new in the early modern period have also been discerned in writing and in manuscripts that were produced in the fifteenth century (Strohm 2005; Wakelin 2007). As David Matthews discusses in this volume, recent literary histories that treat the medieval period have chosen as their starting point the mid-fourteenth century, and have continued their surveys well into the sixteenth century – or have begun their surveys in the Old English period and continued them up to the mid-fourteenth century. There are reasons for splitting the period of Middle English in two, as such surveys do: in particular – as has long been recognized – it is in the second half of the fourteenth century that the English language

becomes widely used for great literary writing, including the works of Chaucer (and William Langland's great dream vision poem *Piers Plowman*, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the other works in the manuscript in which that poem has been preserved). But there are reasons too for preserving the traditional 'fence' placed around the Middle English period, usually loosely defined as the centuries between 1100 and 1500. Those reasons are the subject of this book.

The subjects covered in the various chapters of the volume, which are by different authors, have been chosen with a view to elucidating issues that are likely to be unfamiliar to people approaching Middle English literature for the first time, or who have only limited experience of that literature. Those issues need to be appreciated if Middle English texts are to be understood on their own terms. At the same time, each of the chapters offers new insights on its subject, and the contributors consider material that will be unfamiliar even to experts in Middle English literature, or look at more familiar material from new perspectives. This is a book, therefore, for more advanced readers of Middle English texts as well as new ones.

Chaucer, the best-known Middle English author, figures prominently in the volume as a whole, and is discussed in detail in many of its essays. But Chaucer's writings are considered in the context, and the light, of other writing of the period: an approach that enables readers to appreciate both how Chaucer is typical of the age in which he was writing and, in a number of important respects, how he departs from, and sometimes implicitly queries, many of the conventions of writing in the Middle English period (see in particular the essays by Catherine Sanok, Andrew Galloway, Alexandra Gillespie, Jane Griffiths, Helen Cooper and Helen Barr; compare also Daniel Wakelin's and David Matthews' chapters).

The book is, first and foremost, about Middle English literature – but several of the subjects with which it deals also inform medieval literature in languages other than English. I have grouped those subjects of which this is especially true at the start of the volume, under the title 'Key Contexts'. The chapters here consider such issues as the compulsion to read symbolic significance into the phenomena of this world in the Middle Ages, evidenced, as Barry Windeatt discusses, in Middle English writers ranging from the female visionaries Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich to Sir Thomas Malory, the author of *Le Morte Darthur*, as well as in the Middle Scots writer Robert Henryson; the responses of medieval people to the religious beliefs that

they were taught to hold, scriptural, doctrinal and otherwise, exemplified strikingly, but far from exclusively, in writing by the *Gawain*-poet and Langland; ideas about women in the Middle Ages, which infuse writing both by men and by women themselves, and which are one of the most conspicuous ways in which Chaucer engages with debates that were, by his day, traditional (although they remained current); and thinking about the past in the period, which was regularly seen, especially, not as something separate from the present, but as something that was, in fact, inseparable from it, as was apparent to the anonymous playwrights of the mystery cycles that were performed in prosperous English towns in the late Middle Ages, amongst other people. There is an important exception to the applicability of the points made in this part of the book not just to Middle English literature but to medieval literature more generally, and that concerns the response to religious teaching that prevails in Middle English literature in the fifteenth century. This is the product of circumstances that were particular to England, the result of the backlash of the Church in England and the English state towards teaching that had already been branded heretical. Discussion of this issue is included in the second chapter of the book, on 'Religious Belief'.

The second group of chapters discusses issues that distinguish the production of Middle English literature from the production of writing in other periods. The first of the chapters in this part considers the contexts in which Middle English literature was both produced and disseminated – orally and in writing, in (and from) religious milieux, especially monasteries, and secular milieux too, including the royal court, aristocratic households and, late in the period, the environment of the administrative centre of England at Westminster and the adjacent city of London. The second of the chapters discusses the engagement of Middle English literature – including, again, Chaucer's writings – with the distinctive medieval ideas surrounding the role of an author in the production of a text. By the end of the medieval period something resembling many of the ideas about authorship that prevail today had emerged; and yet even then traditional medieval thinking about authorship can be seen to linger in the ways that the authors of texts represent themselves.

The third part of the book covers subjects that are of particular relevance to writing in England in the medieval period. The first chapter here discusses the features of the Middle English phase of the English language. As Jeremy Smith points out in the chapter, it is to nineteenth-century historians of the English language that we owe the

term 'Middle English'; they perceived that between the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the introduction of printing technology to England in 1476, English showed certain characteristics that set it apart from Old English on the one hand and early modern English on the other. The chapter explores what the characteristics of Middle English are, and how they are related to the functions that English performed in the years between the Conquest and its début in print. The second chapter in the section discusses the fact that a great deal of the Middle English literature that survives to us, from religious treatises to romances, is translated or adapted from writing in other languages, particularly French and Latin. Chaucer's works show a conspicuous and recurring interest in the issue of translation, and a more sophisticated attitude towards its practice than his famous branding as a 'grant translateur' by one of his French contemporaries may suggest. In the final chapter of the section, the historical 'background' to Middle English writing is discussed, and particularly the specific events in England and concerning England with which that writing engages. Middle English texts are vehicles – sometimes the only vehicles we have – for telling us about those events, and yet, as Helen Barr explains in the chapter, their presentation of them is far from objective: if Middle English literature is informed by certain events, it also 'produces' those events in various ways when it gives them textual shape.

The final part of the book addresses issues relating to the ways in which Middle English literature is perceived in the present day. The chapter 'Manuscripts and Modern Editions' discusses how the media in which Middle English literature is usually read now change the experience of reading it in important ways from the experience that people in the Middle Ages would have had when they read it. Modern printed editions of Middle English texts both add things to the manuscript forms in which Middle English texts circulated in the Middle Ages and take things away, and it is essential to be aware of the changes that they impose on the texts if we are to have a sense of the distinctive ways in which they were read, and the ways in which they circulated, in the Middle Ages. The book concludes by discussing how present-day perceptions of Middle English literature have been shaped by the changing ways in which it has been thought about and commented on since the Middle Ages. The chapter also ponders the future of Middle English literature, suggesting the appeal of its 'difference' from the literature of other periods and regretting some aspects of the current trends in academic scholarship that obscure that difference.

If the book deals with issues that define the distinctiveness of Middle English literature, it does not obscure heterogeneity in approaches to those issues amongst writers of the period, nor changes and developments across the four hundred years in which the literature was produced. The essays draw attention, for example, to the rise of the concept of 'poesye' in the late fourteenth century (see Andrew Galloway's chapter); the changes in the dissemination of Middle English texts that took place at around the same time (see Alexandra Gillespie's chapter); the appearance in Middle English writing of the late fourteenth century of new ideas relating to the role played by an author in the production of a text (see Jane Griffiths' essay); and new attitudes towards the copying and the presentation of Middle English texts in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (see Daniel Wakelin's chapter). Within the world of writing and the copying of that writing in England, various changes were taking place more or less simultaneously around the end of the fourteenth century, a parallel to the many changes that were taking place in the wider world at the same time (compare, for example, Staley 1996; see also my own chapter and Helen Barr's below).

It will have been evident from the above summary of the subjects covered by the book that, within the concise format necessitated by the demands of the *Concise Companion* series, the volume aims to provide a comprehensive (if not, of course, exhaustive) guide to the study of Middle English literature; it can also, however, be dipped into for consultation on specific topics. Each of the chapters aims to offer comprehensive coverage of its particular subject, again within a concise format. In all of the essays, contextual information about the subject that is being addressed is combined with the critical (or linguistic) analysis of a range of texts. The aim of the volume as a whole, then, is to offer a guide to its subject that is both useful and illuminating. If it is a concise companion to Middle English literature, it hopes, nonetheless, to be an authoritative and a stimulating one.

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Notes on the contents of bibliographies; references; and abbreviations

The bibliography at the end of each chapter is divided into two sections: 'Primary texts' and 'Secondary sources and suggestions for further reading'. Primary texts are generally listed under the names of the editors whose versions of the texts the contributors have used; references within the text of each essay specify whose edition has been consulted. The possibility of including extensive bibliographies for each subject has been precluded by the demands of the *Concise Companion* series; where they have thought it appropriate, the contributors have, however, added some titles to the list of works that they reference within their chapters in order to indicate reading that they consider essential to their topic.

Quotations from Chaucer's works have been taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) unless stated otherwise; the line numbering of *The Riverside Chaucer* has also been used in the essays. References to quotations from *The Canterbury Tales* (or *CT*) are to the number of the fragment from which the quotation is taken, followed by the line numbering within the fragment, again as identified in *The Riverside Chaucer*. References to editions of texts and quotations from editions are given in the form (for example) '(ed. Vinaver 1990)' and '(ed. Vinaver 1990: 850)' respectively; references in the form (for example) '(Vinaver, ed., 1990: 10)' are to a statement made, or material contained in, an edition that is not part of the edited text itself. Unless otherwise indicated, references are to page numbers in the specified works. Italics in quotations identify material expanded from abbreviations in manuscripts, or material underlined in manuscripts; square brackets identify material supplied by editors or contributors themselves.

'EETS' stands for the Early English Text Society; 'OS' stands for the Ordinary Series of volumes within the publications of the Society, 'ES' for the Extra Series, and 'SS' for the Supplementary Series.

Part I

Key Contexts

Chapter 1

Signs and Symbols

Barry Windeatt

> Omnis mundi creatura
> quasi liber et pictura
> nobis est in speculum;
> nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis,
> nostri status, nostrae sortis
> fidele signaculum.
> (Alan of Lille, ed. Raby 1959: 369)

> [All creation, like a book or a picture, is a mirror to us – a true figure
> of our life, our death, our condition, our lot.]

To the medieval mind symbolic significance might be read into almost
anything, when all creation was a mirror, figure and script that
pointed beyond itself, reminding of an otherworldly dimension that
offered the only true and abiding perspective. In the variety of his works
the fifteenth-century Scottish poet Robert Henryson can represent –
by way of introduction to this chapter – the sheer range of uses of
signs and symbols in medieval writings. His *Garmont of Gud Ladeis* reads
moral conduct in terms of the symbolism of female attire, and in his
Testament of Cresseid the disfiguring leprosy that punishes Cresseid
for defiance of the gods draws on traditions that see sickness as an
outward sign of inner moral condition. In his *Orpheus and Eurydice*
Henryson plays his own variations on medieval traditions of moraliz-
ing classical mythology to expound a Christian moral. Here the hero
and heroine symbolize intellect and desire respectively: when Eurydice

flees through a May meadow from a would-be rapist shepherd, is stung by a venomous serpent and is summoned to hell, she flees from 'good vertew' (perhaps surprisingly to the modern reader) through the world's vain delights, and so descends into hell through excess of care for worldly things. Henryson's *Fables* include the grimly schematic symbolism of 'The Paddock and the Mouse', where a mouse (man's soul), in seeking to cross a river (the world) to reach better things, has no option but to be tied to a frog (man's body) that tries to drag her under and drown her, before both are seized by a kite (sudden death). Yet Henryson's interpretations may also signify challengingly, as in 'The Cock and the Jasp', where a cock finds a jewel (which betokens perfect wisdom and knowledge) but hankers instead for something edible (sensibly enough, for a chicken?) – only to be roundly condemned as an ignoramus on the basis of the otherworldly perspective that unifies the medieval reading of signs.

Sign Systems

> You can make a cross on the meal-table out of five bread-crumbs; but
> do not let anyone see this, except your wife. . . .
> <div align="right">(Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman,
trans. Pantin 1976: 398–422)</div>

As St Augustine had remarked in *De doctrina Christiana* ('On Christian Teaching'), 'A sign is a thing which of itself makes some other thing come to mind, besides the impression it presents to the senses' (trans. Green 1997: 31). In the Middle Ages, the natural world, the human body, or society and its constructions all had their symbolism and were full of signs to be interpreted. Most human experience could be read as symbolic: the successive ages of man; the powers or defects of the senses (vision or blindness, deafness, sweetness); the sleep of sin; illness, medicine and healing, which were seen as signs of moral failing and regeneration. Conduct was often evaluated symbolically in terms of conflicts between vices and virtues (personified in morality plays and innumerable allegories). As for the natural world, there was a long tradition of 'bestiaries', illustrated texts that expounded the moral symbolism discerned in the behaviour of animals and birds, as one preacher explains:

> The Lord created different creatures with different natures not only for
> the sustenance of men, but also for their instruction, so that through

the same creature we may contemplate not only what may be useful
for the body, but also what may be useful in the soul . . . For there is
no creature . . . in which we may not contemplate some property
belonging to it which may lead us to imitate God or . . . to flee from the
Devil. For the whole world is full of different creatures, like a
manuscript full of different letters and sentences, in which we can read
whatever we ought to imitate or flee from . . .

(Thomas of Chobham (d. 1236?), *Summa de arte praedicandi*
('Manual of the Art of Preaching') (ed. Morenzoni 1988: 275))

The symbolism in plants, flowers, herbs and trees (and by exten-
sion in gardens and springs, and the character of the seasons) was also
the focus of moralizing interpretations, while a science of astrological
signs decoded the stars, and, as in Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*,
the ingenuity of medieval mythography read Christian symbolism into
classical mythology. Analysed in texts called 'lapidaries', precious
stones were credited with powers of healing and safeguarding, and
gained symbolic meanings, as did both colours and also numbers, the
subject of elaborate numerological symbolism (on all of which tradi-
tions the *Gawain*-poet draws). With their colours and gems, medieval
clothes and jewellery, and above all ecclesiastical vestments, made sym-
bolic statements, as did such accoutrements as armour and weapons.
Heraldry developed a sophisticated lexicon of signs and signatures of
kinship and descent. The regalia of kingship – crown, orb and sceptre
– were replete with a symbolism of authority invested by coronation
ritual, the most solemn amongst a system of symbolically charged cere-
monies that included swearing of homage, and the dubbing and
arming of knights, as also the observances and insignia of chivalric orders
and the conduct of tournaments. In grander households some princi-
pal pastimes – hunting, jousting, feasting, dancing – were invested with
symbolism, as were games and gift-giving, and all inform romance
literature with its symbolic testings and questings. The quest draws
meaning from a larger symbolism of movement and space: symbolic
readings of journeys, and of the way taken, are especially resonant in
the concept of the pilgrimage, as in romance, while architecture inter-
prets built space in symbolic terms, in secular as well as ecclesiastical
contexts.

Symbolism remained readable at different levels of understanding,
education and literacy. Written explanations were provided even for
medieval viewers of the 'typological' schemes of stained glass at Can-
terbury Cathedral, in which certain Old Testament episodes ('types')
are read as prefigurations of New Testament episodes ('anti-types'),

and hence as signs that each episode in Christ's life fulfils a divinely ordained pattern (Michael 2004: 13, 25; see also Henry, ed., 1987). Since Jonah's three days in a whale's belly were understood to prefigure Christ's three days in the tomb (Matthew 12:40), Jonah's being spewed up by the whale offered a memorable symbol of Christ's resurrection, as did Samson's carrying off the gates of Gaza where he was captured and imprisoned (while visiting a prostitute, but typology often seized on parallels regardless of context). In *The Tale of Beryn* – a fifteenth-century sequel to *The Canterbury Tales* in which the pilgrims reach Canterbury – lower-class pilgrims 'counterfeting gentilmen' try interpreting images in the cathedral windows and squabble ignorantly over their significance (ed. Bowers 1992: 64). However baffled they appear, these humble pilgrims' conviction of symbolic meanings to be discovered reflects the wider typological awareness mirrored in the structure of mystery play cycles and throughout medieval visual culture.

Signs are for remembering: symbolism might prompt devout memorization by organizing knowledge, through pattern and tabulation, of core tenets of faith and cues for devotional observance, with no sign more central than Christ's body. Analysis of sins and virtues might be set out in the form of diagrammatic trees or wheels or other visual mnemonics. Always there is the structure lent by numerical pattern: the seven sacraments, seven works of mercy, seven deadly sins; Mary's joys and sorrows (variously, five, seven or fifteen); and Christ's five wounds, object of a fragmenting devotional attention that disassembled Christ's body into fetishized parts for veneration, focusing on separate images of wounded hands, feet and gaping side. Henry VI's confessor records how the king

> made a rule that a certain dish which represented the five wounds of Christ, as it were red with blood, should be set on his table by his almoner before any other course when he was to take refreshment; and contemplating these images with great fervour he thanked God marvellously devoutly.
>
> (trans. James 1919: 35)

The wounds become the 'Arma Christi', or 'Arms of Christ', quasi-heraldic badges of pain and shame ironically signifying glory, sacred insignia often conjoined with the 'Instruments of the Passion' – the emblematic objects and implements of torture that, by a kind of visual shorthand, prompt devout memories to recall man's ingratitude to Christ. Blazoned on bench-ends, screens, roof-bosses, in wall-paintings and external decoration, images of the Wounds and Instruments might be

displayed dispersedly throughout churches. 'His body hanging on the cross is a book open for your perusal', declares a fourteenth-century contemplative, the Monk of Farne, likening Christ's body to a text, and for a contemporary mystic, Richard Rolle, Christ's bloodied body is 'lyke a boke written al with rede ynke' (ed. Farmer 1961: 76; Ogilvie-Thomson 1988: 75).

Since their influence was so potent, the role of devotional images could not go unexamined, although the traditional orthodoxy – that images 'been ordeyned to been a tokene and a book to þe lewyd peple, þat þey moun [can] redyn in ymagerye and peynture þat clerkys redyn in boke' – continued to be a mainstream view, and images were defended because: 'ther ben many thousand of pepull that couth [could] not ymagen in her hert how Crist was don on the rood, but as thei lerne hit by sight of images and payntours' (ed. Barnum 1976–2004: Vol. I, Pt. 1, 82; Erbe 1905: 171). Written for advanced contemplatives, the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing* deplores how some will form distracting mental images of a God richly attired and enthroned 'fer more curiously þan euer was he depeynted in þis erþe' (ed. Hodgson 1944: 105), but the *Cloud*'s contemplative contemporary Walter Hilton justifies images in a pastoral context because they prompt desirable devotional sentiments –

> Amongst which signs the Church sets up images of Christ crucified . . . in order that the Passion and also the martyrdoms of other saints may be recalled to memory by looking at these images; and thus slow and carnal minds may be stirred to compunction and devotion.
>   (ed. Clark and Taylor 1987: Vol. I, 188; compare Figure 1.1)

Churches, therefore, in design, contents and adornment, came to present highly developed sign systems available to be read at different levels by different observers.

Signs of Devotion

> And þen anon is taken to hir a tabil [painted panel], ful wel depeynte with an ymage of oure Lorde crucifyed: and holdyng that open and vncouerd wiþ booþ handys, ful deuoutly she lokiþ . . . in þe same ymage with alle þe intente of hir mynde. And . . . sche is rauesched and waxes [grows] alle starke, holdynge þe tabil . . . And oþere-while þe same tabil is lenyd vpon hir breste, and some-tyme abouen her face, after dyuerse holdynges of þe tabil in þe bikumynge [attainment] of euery
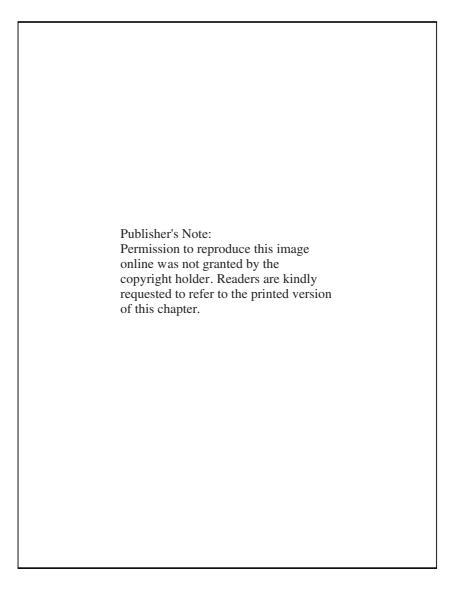
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of this chapter.

Figure 1.1 From *The Art of Good Lywyng and Deyng* (printed Paris, 1503): an angel bids the dying man turn his soul away from impatience. Reproduced by courtesy of The Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

 The image shows (left to right): Christ with the instruments of his scourging; God the Father with scourge and arrow; and four saints bearing the emblems of their sufferings – St Barbara with the tower in which she was imprisoned, St Lawrence with the gridiron on which he was roasted to death, St Catherine with the wheel on which she was tortured and the sword that beheaded her, and St Stephen with the stones with which he was pelted to death.

rauishynge. . . . And soo she durith a good space, wiþ incres of swet-
nesse, as semes to hem þat se right as she didde, in biholdynge of þe
ymage, wiþ oþere hy3 tokens of deuocyone . . . but her countenance is
stedfastly sette in consideracyone of þe ymage; so þat she byholdith no
body nor noon oþere thinge but the tabil allonly. . . Whan alle this is
doon, mykel moor solempnely and moor merueylously þan I can or maye
write, sche keueriþ [covers] and closeþ þe same tabil and takith it to
som body bisyde hir.

(*The Life of St Elizabeth of Spalbeck*,
ed. Horstmann 1885: 110)

In her rapt engagement with this painting the holy woman Elizabeth
of Spalbeck exemplifies just how intense was the stimulus to devo-
tion – and potentially to visionary experience – provided by images.
In England *The Book of Margery Kempe* – the self-account of a Norfolk
housewife and visionary – presents itself as recording the vivid experi-
ence of a comparably suggestible respondent to contemporary signs
and symbols of devotion. (Indeed, Kempe's extravagant weeping is
compared with the conduct of another Low Countries holy woman,
Mary of Oignies, whose paramystical life appears in English transla-
tion alongside that of Elizabeth of Spalbeck). Kempe came to have God
so constantly in her thoughts that she 'behelde hym in alle creaturys'
(ed. Windeatt 2000: 320), and saw everything as a sign: nursing mothers
and young children put her in mind of his Nativity, while witnessing
animals or children being beaten reminds her of his Passion (164).
Kempe's *Book* ignores or merges traditional dualisms – body and
spirit, literal and symbolic – less because she is naïve or literal-minded
than because inclusion matches better with experience. Moreover,
Kempe acts out a medieval devotional tendency to see any one
aspect of Christ's life as present in all others: she might have seen
Annunciation images showing a beam of light descending to Mary –
representing her sinless conception – while a small crucifix or a baby
clutching a cross slides down the sunbeam towards her, encapsulat-
ing Christ's redeeming future death even at the instant of his con-
ception (compare King 2006: plate I 2a). Or again, Kempe probably
encountered the iconography of the 'Lily Crucifixion', an image
which, in depicting Christ crucified on a lily flower, superimposes his
anguishing death on to the lily identified with both the Annunciation
and his mother (see Woodforde 1950: plate XXII). Everywhere
repeated would be an Annunciation image where the dove of the Holy
Spirit flies down towards Mary's ear when the Word is made flesh.
One lyric confidently identifies which ear ('Blessed be, Lady, thy richt