From Siena to Syon: A Study on the Transmission and Translation of Catherine of Siena's Middle English Texts

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Abstract

This thesis studies the medieval English reception of texts by and about Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) and, in particular, their transmission across medieval Europe and their translation into Middle English. After surveying the corpus of Catherinian texts, the thesis examines case by case the five texts for which circulation in medieval England can be established conclusively: Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* (chapter 1); two related hagiographical letters, Stefano Maconi's *Epistola de gestis et virtutibus sanctae Catharinae* and Bartolomeo da Ravenna's *Epistola Thomae Antonii de Senis* (chapter 2); William Flete's *Documento spirituale* (chapter 3); and Catherine's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*, on which some preliminary observations are made (coda to Part I: Transmission). Building on previous studies on the transmission of the *Legenda maior* with original archival and philological research, this thesis situates manuscript and early-print evidence from medieval England—both in Latin and Middle English—within a larger corpus of European archival material. The chapters in Part I of the thesis outline the textual histories of each work under consideration, paying attention to the text's genesis, its later recensions, and the historical context in which these recensions were produced and circulated. By way of textual and historical evidence, Part I of the thesis argues that English copies of the *Legenda maior* and of Maconi's and Bartolomeo's *Epistolae* show signs of a Carthusian transmission, while Flete's *Documento spirituale* bears possible traces of a Dominican transmission. Part II turns to translation and analyzes *The Orcherd of Syon*, a Middle English version of Catherine's *Dialogo* prepared for the Birgittine nuns at Syon Abbey (chapter 4). This adaptation is read alongside other Middle English translations of texts by European visionary women. The comparison shows that the *Orcherd* presupposes a sophisticated reading process and a non-interventionist approach to its source that elevate both its women readers and woman author, in contrast to the typical treatment of European contemplative texts, especially if translated for women readers. All in all, medieval English reception of Catherine of Siena shows a deep engagement with European mystical literature as well as a cosmopolitanism not often recognized in the religious and literary environment of fifteenth-century England.

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Acknowledgements

My first words of thanks go to my supervisors, Elizabeth Robertson and Alison Wiggins for their attentive reading and perceptive feedback throughout the process. Their complementary areas of expertise have been extremely important for developing the different aspects of this thesis: Beth's literary-critical acumen and enthusiasm for scholarship have been an immense source of inspiration ever since she supervised my undergraduate dissertation several years ago, while Alison's deep understanding of archives and archival research has greatly facilitated my engagement with manuscript and early-printed sources. Thanks are due to Silvia Nocentini, too, who has effectively been a third supervisor from the moment I have started working with her as a Visiting Doctoral Researcher at the University of Rome 'Tor Vergata'. This thesis owes much to her guidance in philological matters and, of course, to her groundbreaking publications on Catherine of Siena. I would also like to thank and dedicate a thought to Vincent Gillespie†, whose unparalleled knowledge of Syon Abbey has been instrumental when I first started working on *The Orcherd of Syon* for a Master's dissertation he supervised at the University of Oxford. His observations have lingered at the back of my mind well after completion of my degree at Oxford, steering the direction of my doctoral work, too, even if this thesis ultimately reaches different conclusions from my earlier MSt dissertation.

Kathryn Lowe and Laura Saetveit Miles, my two examiners, should be thanked for reading this thesis very carefully, for engaging so meaningfully with my work, and for the very energizing conversation that originated from their questions.

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Near the completion of my doctorate, I joined the editorial team of *postmedieval* and I wish to thank the editors-in-chief Rebecca De Souza, Charlotte Eubanks, Alani Hicks-Bartlett, Jason Jacobs, Shazia Jagot, and Sara Ritchey. I observed their work with true admiration. The care with which they handle submissions, the feedback they give authors, and the preceptive questions they ask them have sharpened my own writing and thinking, too. Even more importantly, they have shown me what the field of medieval studies can gain from thinking through theory in a multiplicity of ways and from solidifying engagement with theory into praxes that keep questioning the ethical implications of our scholarship, research, and publication practices.

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH\L503915]. I am deeply grateful to the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH), which managed this award. My training as a researcher has benefited immensely from SGSAH's commitment to professional development activities. Their deep understanding of what it means to undertake a PhD in this day and age, their bold vision of what research in the arts and humanities can bring to society, and their creativity and generosity in approaching funding for training initiatives are peerless and immensely encouraging at a time when the arts and humanities are depauperized. Through SGSAH I had the privilege of meeting many inspiring researchers; for our similar research interests, I would like to single three of them out: Emma McCabe, Carlotta Moro, Ebba Strutzenbladh. Their scholarship has resonated with me profoundly in these last few years

and their brilliant work on gender at the intersection of literature, history, and religion in the medieval and early modern period enhanced my own understanding of the topic. I am humbled to be able to call them colleagues as well as friends.

Research in archives and libraries would not have been possible without the substantial financial support of two external grants that alleviated research travel costs: a Major Grant from the Bibliographical Society (awarded in February 2021) and a Research Travel Bursary from the Society for Medieval Languages and Literature (awarded in June 2022). Nor, of course, would I have been able to consult primary material without the help and work of so many archivists and librarians. I would like to thank, in particular, Cristian Mladin at the Biblioteca Batthyaneum (Alba Iulia) and Fabrizio Messina Cicchetti at the Biblioteca Statale del Monumento Nazionale di Santa Scolastica (Subiaco). They both went above and beyond to make sure I could get the most out of my visits to their libraries.

Finally, I wish to thank my family: my father and my mother, Romano and Claudia, my two sisters, Michela and Camilla, as well as two more recent additions to the family, Nicolas and Andrea. I am extremely grateful for our love and support for each other, which need not be expanded on here, but which should never go unmentioned. The passion, dedication, and precision they all put into their non-academic professional lives has made me a much better scholar than I would have been without them as role models. Special thanks go to my mother and father who, like many of the people I write about in this thesis, were very much involved in the transmission of texts from Italy to Britain. They frequently sent scansions from notes and books I left in their care at home in Italy, fulfilling my requests with the diligence of the Carthusians and with much more speed, even though, more often than necessary or acceptable, these came around the time of matins.

Although work on this thesis was made easier by the support from these people and institutions, it has remained a challenging task. This has made me appreciate the necessity of the apologias which many medieval translators, authors, and compilers include in their texts. Their meaning no longer feels void or merely conventional, so I would like to repurpose the ending of *The Orcherd of Syon*, with a slight, but necessary, integration to its phrasing:

> If ony fruyt or heerbe be here myssett or plauntid, I commytte alle defautis or errouris to þe correccioun of betir lettrid clerkis & of trewe feelynge fadris [*& modirs*]. And for my neclygence & ignoraunce, as I am wont to seye so I now write: A, Iesu, mercy.[1]

[1]. Catherine of Siena, *The Orcherd of Syon*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS, OS, 258, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 421. My addition in square brackets is not based on actual textual evidence.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed name: Nicola Estrafallaces

Signature:

List of Abbreviations

Codex	Gabriella Pomaro, ed., *Codex. Inventario dei Manoscritti Medievali della Toscana*, <https://www.sismelfirenze.it/index.php/biblioteca-digitale/codex>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
DBI	*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ed. Fortunato Pintor, Arsenio Frugoni, Alberto Maria Ghisalberti, Massimiliano Pavan, Fiorella Bartoccini, Mario Caravale, and Raffaele Romanelli, 100 vols. (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia italiana, 1960–2020). Also available online, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Dizionario_Biografico>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
EDIT16 CNCE	*Censimento nazionale delle edizioni italiane del XVI secolo (EDIT16)*, <https://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web/edit-16>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
EETS	Early English Text Society — ES extra series; OS original series
ISTC	*Incunabula Short Title Catalogue. The International database of 15th-century European printing*, <https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
Manus	*Manus Online. Manoscritti delle biblioteche italiane*, <http://manus.iccu.sbn.it>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
manuscripta.at	*manuscripta.at. Mittelalterliche Handschriften in Österreich*, <https://manuscripta.at>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
Medieval Bodleian	*Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries. A catalogue of Western manuscripts at the Bodleian Libraries and selected Oxford colleges*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
Mirabile	Mirabile. Archivio digitale della cultura medievale. Digital Archives for Medieval Culture (website), SISMEL–Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, <www.mirabileweb.it>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
SISMEL	Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino (International Society for the Study of Medieval Latin Culture), Florence
STC	*A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, first compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson, completed by Katherine Pantzer, 3 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–1991)
USTC	*The Universal Short Title Catalogue*, <www.ustc.ac.uk>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

Conspectus siglorum

Manuscripts which are cited frequently, especially those for which I am providing textual variants in tables, will be cited first with the full shelfmark and subsequently in abbreviated form, according to these *sigla*:

B	Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 1741 (*olim* lat. 893)
C	Cesena, Biblioteca Comunale Malatestiana, S.XXXIX.17
L	London, British Library, Harley MS 2409
M_1	Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AD.IX.11
M_2	Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AD.IX.38
M_3	Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AE.IX.35
O_1	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Misc. 182
O_2	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Misc. 205
O_3	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Digby 180
O_4	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. th. e. 26
O_5	Oxford, Magdalen College, MS lat. 141
S_1	Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, C.V.24
S_2	Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.II.4
S_3	Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.II.5
S_4	Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.II.7
V_1	Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3466
V_2	Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. n. 12708
V_3	Vienna, Schottenstift, 207 (*olim* Hübl 193)

Editorial and Citation Conventions

My transcriptions from primary sources (both manuscripts and early-printed books) are edited. I use modern punctuation and capitalization conventions, disregard lineation, and, when transcribing Latin, I normalize *u*/*v* and *i*/*j*.

Generally, I expand abbreviations silently, but I use formatting and diacritics if the material elements of writing are significant for the development of my arguments—for example, when discussing marginalia and corrections, or when questioning past editors' expansion of abbreviations. My use of diacritics and formatting is based on established practice,[1] with some differences due to conflicting practices by different scholars and to the particularities of the material I transcribe. In particular, I use italics to signal abbreviated characters; half-brackets (⌜ ⌝) for interlinear or marginal additions (omitting *carets* and other marks, and placing the insertions where intended by the scribe); square brackets for deletions (whether sub-punctuated, crossed out, or erased); curly brackets for corrections over erased characters (if a correction is added in the margins, this will be signalled with half-brackets); and angle brackets for editorial emendations.

In tables, I use a bold typeface to draw attention to similarities between different versions of the texts discussed.

When quoting other scholars' transcriptions and editions of primary material, I retain their spelling and orthography (and therefore in some Latin quotations *u/v* and *i/j* are not normalized), but I leave out their editorial marks (such as italics for expanded abbreviations or brackets for insertions).

Unless otherwise indicated in footnotes, translations from Latin, medieval and contemporary Italian are my own.

[1]. And especially, M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands, 1250–1500* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), XVIII–XXX; Anthony G. Petti, *English Literary Hands from Chaucer to Dryden* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 34–35.

Introduction

Caterina di Iacopo di Benincasa (1347–1380), better known as Catherine of Siena, needs no introduction: history, religion, and literature aficionados will likely have heard her name before. Catherine's life was brief but intense.[1] She died when she was only thirty-three years old, but she was outlived by her reputation for mystical ecstasies, visions, strict ascetic practices as well as by the impact of her political efforts to campaign for a crusade, to resolve military conflicts among Italian cities, to promote ecclesiastical reform, and to move the papacy from Avignon back to Rome. Formal recognition of her and her theology's influence on the Catholic Church came with her 1461 canonization and with her 1970 appointment as Doctor of the Church (the first woman, jointly with Teresa of Avila, to be given such recognition).[2] Crucially, Catherine was also outlived by a considerable textual legacy which includes texts she herself composed through dictation, as well as a vast corpus of texts about her written by her followers, who aimed to spread her cult, increase the chances of her canonization, and make her teachings known widely.

Understandably, Catherine is typically associated with medieval Italy, but her significant contributions to literary and religious culture resonated far beyond her native Tuscan city, and even beyond Siena's neighbouring states on the Italian peninsula. Catherine's texts, in fact, were disseminated far and wide. As this thesis shows, a significant amount of her works reached medieval England, where they circulated in Latin and in Middle English adaptations and where they inserted themselves seamlessly into the literary environment of late medieval England: as early as the fifteenth century, they were copied by English copyists, translated by English translators, printed by English printers, and read by English readers. All in all, my research points to Catherine's significant impact on medieval English literature and to the richness of her textual legacy in England—an

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[1]. For an accessible, yet scholarly, biography of Catherine, see André Vauchez, *Catherine of Siena: A Life of Passion and Purpose*, trans. Michael F. Cusato, foreword Suzanne Noffke (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2018).

[2]. For the history of Catherine's canonization and an overview of the different formal procedures which were opened, see Otfried Krafft, 'Many Strategies and One Goal: The Difficult Road to the Canonization of Catherine of Siena', in *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Gabriela Signori, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 25–45. For Catherine's appointment as a Doctor of the Church and the role of her textual production in her election (and in particular of *Il dialogo della divina provvidenza*), see Clarisse Tesson, 'Le *Dialogue*, pièce maîtresse de la proclamation de Catherine de Sienne comme docteure de l'Église', in *Il 'Dialogo' di Caterina da Siena. Per una Nuova Edizione Critica: Filologia, Tradizione, Teologia*, ed. Silvia Nocentini, La Mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente 36 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2023), 201–18.

impact and a richness defined in terms of the variety of Catherinian texts transmitted to England and the early date of such transmission, as well as the importance and sophistication of their Middle English translations.

The positive reception of Catherine's writings attests to a flourishing, cosmopolitan mystical culture and to the prominent role visionary and religious women played in shaping the direction of this strand of devotion. This vibrancy is not often recognized in analyses of fifteenth-century England, which is generally characterized as a stifling or even spiritually repressive place where censorship and self-censorship limited the production and dissemination of innovative religious literature in the vernacular and whose spiritual scepticism, albeit affecting all levels of society, was apparently exacerbated in the treatment of women's devotion, especially if mystically inclined.[3] Notwithstanding, the sustained interest in Catherine and the receptiveness and attentiveness to her texts create space for a counternarrative and give evidence of a favourable attitude towards contemplation, especially, but not exclusively, in the elite monastic milieux of the Carthusian Sheen Priory and the Birgittine Syon Abbey. When looking at the reception of Catherine of Siena, fifteenth-century England no longer appears to be either insular or conservative, two adjectives typically deployed to describe medieval English attitudes to religious mystical texts. Even if used to denote historical tendencies, *insular* and *conservative* are terms with charged modern political and cultural resonances, so their use should prompt a reflection and re-evaluation of inherited historiographical narratives and critical stances, lest we, as academics, should inadvertently subscribe to and reinforce a teleology of 'English exceptionalism' in religious and cultural matters.[4] My research, instead, foregrounds the connectivity between medieval England and Italy and, in so doing, it aims to destabilize a received understanding of an English literary tradition tilted towards a perceived provincialism.

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[3]. See the studies cited in the initial section of chapter 4, where I unpack critical attitudes towards fifteenth-century English religious texts, translation of texts imported from mainland Europe, mysticism in medieval England, texts by visionary women, and texts adapted for women readers.

[4]. Modern criticism of Chaucer, for instance, has been influenced by Protestant assumptions retroactively applied to Chaucer's understanding of religion and thus construes him as a proto-Protestant figure, as argued by Linda Georgianna, 'The Protestant Chaucer', in *Chaucer's Religious Tales*, ed. C. David Benson and Elizabeth Robertson, Chaucer Studies 15 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 55–69. For an analysis on the continued role of a Protestant ideology in the construction of an English/British national identity, especially in relation to a European religious Other, see Charlotte Galpin, 'Anglo-British Exceptionalism and the European "Other": White Masculinities in Discourses of British National Identity', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 26, no. 2 (2024): 389–92.

I build this argument by looking at two aspects of the reception of Catherine's texts, their transmission and translation. These are treated in the two separate parts of this thesis, but they are not discrete, compartmentalized concepts and they converge into a single argument: the transmission of a significant portion of Catherine's texts and the preparation of sophisticated translations testify to considerable English interest in women's visionary literature, an aspect of spiritual culture often deemed alien to England because of the small number of known native women mystics and their limited reception among contemporaries.

This thesis begins with a cluster of three chapters on the transmission of Catherine's texts. In this first part of the thesis, I ask one question: how did texts by and about Catherine of Siena reach medieval England? Interest in the medieval and early modern English reception of Catherine has recently gained momentum, in particular in the work of Jennifer N. Brown, who has started painting an increasingly precise picture of the circulation of texts by and about her in England.[5] To contribute an answer to the question of the transmission of Catherine's texts, I proceed case by case, giving a particularized account of the textual history of works related to Catherine known to have circulated in medieval England. I situate English textual evidence (manuscripts and early editions, both in Latin and in Middle English) against a fuller backdrop of philological evidence from European archives and libraries. By considering manuscript origin, provenance, presence and nature of textual variants, I establish likely transmission routes for the texts under consideration. Before moving to a discussion of each text, I unpack my methodology, I outline the historical context, I identify the usual agents who transmitted Catherinian texts and the characteristics of their labour (chapter 1). Then, I proceed to argue for the involvement of the Carthusians in the transmission of some hagiographical and para-hagiographical writing—Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* (chapter 1) and two biographical letters by Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo da Ravenna (chapter 2)—and to suggest that William Flete's *Documento spirituale*, instead, may have been transmitted to medieval England via Dominican contacts (chapter 3). I close this first part with some reflections on Catherine's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza* and by laying the groundwork

[5]. See, in particular, Jennifer N. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard: Reading Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2018); Jennifer N. Brown, 'The Many Misattributions of Catherine of Siena: Beyond *The Orchard* in England', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41 (2015): 67–84; Jennifer N. Brown, 'From the Charterhouse to the Printing House: Catherine of Siena in Medieval England', in *Middle English Religious Writing in Practice: Texts, Readers, and Transformations*, ed. Nicole R. Rice, Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 17–45.

for future research on this text and its transmission (in the coda to Part I: Transmission). On the whole, this analysis has a twofold outcome: on the one hand, it advances scholarly understanding of the Latin tradition of selected Catherinian texts, reviewing the *status quaestionis*, discussing new archival findings, and identifying and explaining stages of authorial revision; on the other hand, it brings to the fore the interconnectedness of English religious literary culture and a wider European one. Ultimately, in fact, England stands out in fifteenth-century Europe for its significant and sustained engagement with a wide-ranging selection of Catherinian texts.

In the second part of this thesis, I turn to the process of translation and examine what happens to Catherine's texts when they are adapted into the vernacular and repackaged for new audiences. Here, I focus on *The Orcherd of Syon*, a Middle English version of Catherine's *Dialogo* translated for the Birgittine nuns at Syon Abbey (chapter 4). The text's author and its intended audience make the *Orcherd* the perfect case-study to examine the role of gender in the creation of a text. It is worthwhile to ask: how was a text by a visionary woman, a spiritual category that attracted both reverence and scepticism, adapted? How was it adapted for women readers? Remarkably, reading the *Orcherd* alongside other Middle English texts by and for women expands our understanding of medieval women readers and writers: going against the grain of much fifteenth-century Middle English translations of mystical texts, and of what critics assume such translations look like, the translator of the *Orcherd* adopts a non-interventionist approach to his source and thus elevates at once both the text's author and its new readers, by refraining from subjugating either one to censorship or simplification.

The twin areas of inquiry of this thesis—transmission and translation—are enclosed in a structure which is deliberately asymmetrical: two parts, one of three chapters and one of one chapter. This asymmetry is a nod to the formal instability and imbalance of many medieval literary works—for instance Catherine's main hagiography, which is divided into three parts, two of twelve chapters and the final one of six only.[6] Implicit in this asymmetrical structure is a degree of unfinishedness, an inevitable limitation of academic research which should not be read as an impediment to the conclusions I reach in this work, but, rather, which I intend as an invitation for future explorations of English texts by and about Catherine of Siena.

[6]. See Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior sive Legenda admirabilis virginis Catherine de Senis*, ed. Silvia Nocentini, Edizione nazionale dei testi mediolatini d'Italia 31 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2013).

Part I

Transmission

I should like to repeat what I have said elsewhere, that we cannot do very well to study English texts and manuscripts in isolation from those in other languages and from other countries and I think there are increasing signs of that being realised.
—A. I. Doyle

Preface

Despite its peripheral position in medieval *mappae mundi*, England was at the centre of the early transmission of texts by and about Catherine of Siena. But how did these texts get there? The first part of this thesis contributes to answering this question by considering historical and textual evidence together, and by situating data from medieval England within the wider European patterns of textual dissemination of works related to Catherine. As it will be shown, careful consideration of each work, its genesis, later recensions, and agents involved in its transmission will allow me to argue for precise transmission routes for each specific text, and to conclude that, on the whole, the considerable presence in medieval England of Catherinian texts is likely the result of multiple dissemination networks. The labours of the two religious orders which most actively promoted Catherine's cult and textual legacy in mainland Europe, Carthusians and Dominicans, seem to have complemented each other, with both Orders planting the seeds for Catherine's English tradition—the Carthusians transmitted three hagiographical texts, Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* and two letters by Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo da Ravenna, while the Dominicans were possibly responsible for the dissemination of William Flete's *Documento spirituale*.

The question of how Catherinian texts reached medieval England is one that has been asked often in scholarly work on the saint's English reception. Thus far, however, researchers have only painted a broad picture, identifying the likely agents involved based on historical considerations alone, either on the history of transmission of mystical texts in general or of Catherinian texts specifically.

I build on this initial academic work by developing a dialogic and comparative methodology: primary sources from English archives are situated in a larger context of European archival resources; likewise, secondary sources rooted in English Studies are integrated with recent, important work published outside the Anglophone sphere and stemming from other academic traditions. In particular—because of the subject matter of this thesis—I draw from Italian scholars working from Italian institutions and making their work available through Italian publication venues. So far, in fact, medieval English reception of Catherine of Siena has understandably been rooted firmly within Middle English Studies. This academic stance, however, poses important ethical and hermeneutic

problems—ethical because a vast amount of high-quality scholarship from different, but related, fields is seldom taken into consideration; hermeneutic because the knowledge produced from within this framework has a tendency to conceptualize a European 'Continent' that is a homogenized cultural space where various cultural traditions are flattened to carve out a perceived Englishness.[1] In practice, this has meant that work on the English reception of Catherine mainly looked at her Middle English texts, spending very few words on the English manuscripts containing their Latin sources and even fewer on the broader circulation of these Latin texts in mainland Europe. Textual production—and textual transmission in particular—does not happen in isolation, as I. A. Doyle reminds us in the epigraph cited above,[2] and the evidence scholarly work draws on should take this fact into account. There is much, in fact, that we can learn about patterns of transmission by putting English evidence in a dialogue with a broader pan-European archive of sources and studies. This is especially true for some Catherinian texts, whose Latin manuscripts, their origins, and textual variants have been the subject of thorough philological enquiries, especially by Silvia Nocentini.[3]

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, very solid foundations have been laid as early as the first major scholarly enquiry into Catherine's English legacy. In an influential paper given to the British Academy in 1964, Phyllis Hodgson drew scholars' attention to *The Orcherd of Syon*, the Middle English translation of Catherine's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*, a text which soon later she co-edited.[4] Noting Catherine's personal connection with two prominent religious orders, the Dominicans and the Carthusians, Hodgson posits that the source of the *Orcherd* may have arrived in England through their networks and contacts. The Carthusian Order, Hodgson goes on, is well-known for its

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[1]. For instance, in the most complete study on Catherine's reception in medieval England, a recent monograph by Jennifer N. Brown, *Continental* is occasionally taken to mean two geographically and temporally distinct locales without further historicizing (thirteenth-century Helfta and fourteenth-century Siena). Cf. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 100.

[2]. A. I. Doyle, 'Introductory Address: York Manuscript Conference, July 1991', in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. A. J. Minnis, York Manuscripts Conferences 3 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer), 3.

[3]. See, in particular, Silvia Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium* di Tommaso Caffarini a Venezia', *Hagiographica* 12 (2005): 79–144; Silvia Nocentini, 'La diffusione della *Legenda maior* di Santa Caterina in ambiente domenicano', in *Il velo, la penna e la parola. Le domenicane: storia, istituzioni, figure*, ed. Gabriella Zarri and Gianni Festa (Florence: Nerbini, 2009), 125–31; or the comprehensive update in her introduction to Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 3–106.

[4]. Phyllis Hodgson, '*The Orcherd of Syon* and the English Mystical Tradition', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 50 (1964): 231–32. The edition of the text is Catherine of Siena, *The Orcherd of Syon*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS, OS, 258, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

emphasis on the production and study of books and for transmitting mystical texts across medieval Europe.[5] On the other hand, what strengthens the hypothesis of a possible Dominican transmission, according to Hodgson, is the fact that the English Dominican William Bakthorpe, prior of Lynne, was in touch with Catherine's confessor, Raymond of Capua; their epistolary exchange may have paved the way for a textual exchange. Later scholarship reprises Hodgson's suggestions about Carthusian and Dominican involvement, extending the two hypotheses she advanced for the *Dialogo* to the other Catherinian texts circulating within medieval England.[6] Besides Hodgson's original theories, another name often mentioned in relation to the transmission to England of Catherinian texts, and especially the one he himself wrote, is that of William Flete, an English Augustinian Friar who developed a spiritual friendship with Catherine.[7] These three hypotheses are sometimes accompanied by a fourth one, specific to the *Dialogo*. As early as the first scholarly inquiry into the Middle English translation of the *Dialogo*, a 1958 article by Sister Mary Denise, it has been pointed out as a possibility that the source of the text was brought to England by Birgittine contacts, since the Middle English translation for the text was prepared for the Birgittine nuns at Syon Abbey.[8] The question of transmission is not yet settled, and the latest and most thorough account of Catherine's medieval English legacy, a monograph by Jennifer N. Brown, supports most of the hypotheses outlined

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[5]. Subsequent scholarship has further developed this view of the English Carthusians, but this argument has been overextended to the point of requiring some qualification in recent years; see the references in my discussion of Carthusian transmission in chapter 3.

[6]. See Dirk Schultze, 'Translating St Catherine of Siena in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Gabriela Signori, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 196–98; Carol F. Heffernan, 'The Middle English *Orcherd of Syon* in Late Medieval England: A Reconsideration', *Magistra* 22 (2016): 12–14; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, *passim*.

[7]. Jane Chance, 'St Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval Britain: Feminizing Literary Reception through Gender and Class', in 'Women Mystic Writers', ed. Dino S. Cervigni, special issue, *Annali d'Italianistica* 13 (1995): 175n32; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, *passim*. Some well-founded scepticism for Flete's involvement in the transmission of Catherinian texts is offered in Alexandra Barratt, 'Continental Women Mystics and English Readers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 251; Schultze, 'Translating St Catherine of Siena', 188n5; Heffernan, 'The Middle English *Orcherd of Syon*', 14–15.

[8]. Sister Mary Denise, '*The Orchard of Syon*: An Introduction', *Traditio* 14 (1958): 291; Tamsin R. Woodward-Smith, 'A Critical Study of the Middle English *Orcherd of Syon* in both Manuscript and Print Form, with Particular Attention to its Context and Audience' (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2006), *passim*; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 113. I wish to thank Tamsin R. Woodward-Smith for giving me permission to cite her doctoral thesis.

above, leaving open the possibility of Carthusian, Augustinian, and Birgittine involvement.[9]

Crucially, Brown begins to nuance this discussion by considering each text individually, thus highlighting some of the particularities of specific works rather than treating the whole corpus as a single entity. Brown's invaluable work and the earlier, equally essential, body of research have identified the likeliest routes Catherinian texts must have taken, thus tracing the leading lines for my own work. But current scholarship only scratches the surface, and an individualized approach should be pursued further, by positioning English copies of specific works within the wider textual history of each particular text. Ultimately, Brown concludes: 'We can only speculate as to how these texts actually arrive in England, however, because the pathway is not clear for any of the extant manuscripts'.[10] Integrating the intuitions expressed in existing literature with research into each work's textual history—research that takes into consideration not only English sources but also European ones more widely—will further clarify the pathway taken by each of these texts, allowing scholarly knowledge on their transmission to move beyond speculation and to build strong cases on robust historical and textual evidence.

A Note on the Selection of Texts

Catherine of Siena left behind a considerable textual legacy. Not only did she write 387 letters,[11] twenty prayers,[12] and a major contemplative treatise, known today by the title of *Il dialogo della divina provvidenza*,[13] but she also inspired many contemporaries to compose hagiographies, lyrics, sermons, and countless other texts written in her praise. Which of these circulated in medieval England? Six Catherinian texts could be read there before the dissolution of monasteries. Out of the many texts about Catherine composed by her followers, there is evidence for English circulation of her main hagiography, Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* (chapter 1); two letters about Catherine's life and miracles

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[9]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 14 *et passim*.

[10]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 14.

[11]. For the latest tally and a discussion on the problems of counting Catherine's letters (sometimes sent in slightly altered copies to multiple addressees): see Diego Parisi, 'Per l'edizione dell'*Epistolario* di Caterina da Siena. Censimento dei manoscritti (con alcune note sulla tradizione)', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 119 (2017): 450–66.

[12]. Catherine of Siena, *Le orazioni*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini, Testi Cateriniani 4 (Rome: Edizioni Cateriniane, 1978).

[13]. Currently, a critical edition is being prepared by Noemi Pigini. In the meantime, the standard scholarly edition remains Catherine of Siena, *Il dialogo della divina provvidenza*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini, 2 ed., Testi Cateriniani 1 (Siena: Cantagalli, 1995).

which Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo da Ravenna sent as depositions for the Processo Castellano, an early inquiry into Catherine's sanctity (chapter 2); and the *Documento spirituale*, a short summary of her theology compiled by the English Augustinian William Flete (chapter 3). All of these texts survive, either in Latin or Middle English, in medieval English manuscripts or early editions. We also have an English translation of a slightly later text: the prefatory letter with which Marco Civile da Brescia opens his 1496 edition of the *Dialogo* is translated and printed as a foreword to a 1519 English edition of the *Dialogo*.[14] As for texts penned by Catherine herself, only her *Dialogo* made it to medieval England and became an important part of late medieval English spiritual literature when it was translated into Middle English for the nuns at Syon Abbey (coda to Part I: Transmission and chapter 4).

Another two Catherinian texts, the saint's letters and Tommaso da Siena's *Legenda minor*, have been taken into consideration for my survey, since they survive in medieval manuscripts currently held in archives and libraries across the English-speaking world.[15] But these are likely postmedieval importations. Let us briefly consider these texts separately.

As far as Catherine's letters are concerned, six manuscript copies, because of their current location in English-speaking countries, are potentially relevant for a study of the English circulation of Catherine's works.[16] In all cases, however, we are dealing with manuscripts transmitting the Italian text of Catherine's *Epistole*, written in Italian hands and on Italian paper, and with records of Italian provenance—for some of these witnesses

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[14]. *Dialogus Seraphice ac diue Catharine de Senis cum nonnullis aliis orationibus* (Brescia: Bernardino Misinta, 1496) (*ISTC* ic0028500), sigs. a2r–a4r; *Orcharde of Syon* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1519), sigs. 2r–3r.

[15]. I am here considering American libraries and archives, too, as their holdings often include material produced in medieval England.

[16]. Austin, TX, Harry Ransom Center, Phillipps 12883 [*s.* XVII], pp. 149–59; London, British Library, Add. MS 8293 [*s.* XVII], fols. 159r–167r; London, British Library, Harley MS 3480 [*s.* XV^{1}], fols. 2ra–159vb; Oxford, Oxford Oratory, 1.20 [29 April 1377]; Notre Dame, IN, Hesburgh Library, Ital. b. 2 (*olim* 18) [*s.* XV$^{3/4}$], fols. 1r–35v, 55r–103v; Syracuse, NY, Ernest Stevenson Bird Library, Ranke MS 58 [6 December 1682], pp. 227–33. For catalogue descriptions, see Marco Cursi, Antonella Dejure, and Giovanna Frosini, eds., *Epistolario. Catalogo dei manoscritti e delle stampe*, Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale. Antiquitates 54 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2021), 66–67, 79–80, 110–12, 119–20, 182–83, 211; *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1808), 3:31; David T. Gura, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts of the University of Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 388–90; Edward Muir, *The Leopold von Ranke Manuscript Collection of Syracuse University. The Complete Catalogue* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1983), 57–62.

as late as the twentieth century. Three of these manuscripts have been written in the seventeenth century.[17] One is the original letter sent to an Italian addressee, Iacomo di Viva.[18] All this evidence combined—the date, material elements, specific provenance and origins of these objects—points to patterns incongruous or even outright incompatible with English circulation in the period surveyed here. In the absence of any evidence which may suggest that Catherine's letters reached medieval England we can ultimately assume that they did not.

In fact, the assumption that Catherine's letters *could* have circulated in medieval England should be qualified, if not challenged altogether. If we have a closer look at the history of their transmission, we find that there may have been a simple, but considerable, hindrance to their circulation abroad: the absence of an extensive programme of translation into Latin and the lack of a plan for the widespread dissemination of the few letters which were indeed translated. Translation from Italian into English began to sprout towards the end of the late medieval period, around 1530s–1540s, coming into full bloom only as the sixteenth century progressed even further.[19] Before then, in England, texts were typically translated from Latin or French, including texts originally written in Italian vernaculars, whose Middle English versions are typically based on intermediary Latin/French translations.[20] The availability of Latin versions of Catherine's letters was therefore an indispensable prerequisite for their dissemination in medieval England.

It is useful to take stock here of what little is known about Catherine's Latin letters. Apart from fundamental cataloguing work, the Latin tradition of Catherine's letters has not attracted much scholarly attention, and, naturally, it has always been eclipsed by its vernacular source, the largest collection of letters by a medieval woman and one of the most dynamic examples of late medieval Italian literature. Catherine originally dictated letters to her secretaries in her native Sienese vernacular, in a period spanning from the 1370s to her death in 1380. The original language of composition, the Italian vernacular, is the language in which the letters mostly circulated. A bird's-eye view of surviving

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[17]. Phillipps 12883; Ranke MS 58; Add. MS 8293, which contains shortened versions of Catherine's letters probably summarized from *Epistole devotissime de Sancta Catharina da Siena* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1500) (*ISTC* ic00281000).

[18]. Oxford, Oxford Oratory, 1.20.

[19]. Karla Taylor, 'Writers of the Italian Renaissance', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, ed. Roger Ellis, vol. 1, *To 1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 390–406.

[20]. See Nick Havely, 'Britain and Italy: Trade, Travel, Translation', in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350–c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 218.

witnesses tells us that the circulation of Catherine's letters was more local than that of other texts by and about her: overall, there survive seventy-three manuscripts with single letters, collections of letters, or epitomes with summaries of their contents; sixty-eight of those are in Italian vernaculars and, further than that, linguistic evidence suggests that a rather large number, twenty-seven of these witnesses, was copied in Tuscany.[21] Only five manuscripts contain letters in Latin translation.[22] And in these five manuscripts, we do not have the large collections of letters that we sometimes find among volumes of the Italian originals; instead, each of these five codices has only one or two letters by Catherine alongside other texts. On the whole, a total of five letters have been translated into Latin.[23] Most of these manuscripts contain different letters, and only two letters (T 221 and T 76) are found in more than one manuscript—but in one of these two cases the base-texts of the translation appear to be different versions of the same letter, so the repetition in another manuscript is probably to be attributed to an interest in the letter itself rather than the success of its Latin translation.[24] All things considered, the lack of a sustained corpus of

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[21]. See Cursi, Dejure, and Frosini, *Epistolario. Catalogo dei manoscritti e delle stampe* and, for linguistic analysis specifically, the essay contained in the volume by Giovanna Frosini, 'Geografia linguistica e storia delle lettere di Caterina', 31–56.

[22]. Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 1078 (*olim* 35/31 4º) [*s.* XIV *ex.*], fol. 118r–v; Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale, 844 Rés [*s.* XV], fols. 122r–134v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nouvelles Acquisitions latines, 1250 [*s.* XV], fols. 65rb–67ra; Reggello, Abbazia di Vallombrosa, s.n. [*s.* XVI *in.*], fol. 39r; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano latino 939 [*s.* XV$^{3/4}$], fols. 191r–194v.

[23]. These are letters T 39 (Gi 55; IS 184), T 49 (Gi 177; IS 21), T 76 (Gi 76; IS 154), T 173 (Gi 134; IS 130), and T 221 (Gi 152; IS 52). See relevant entries in DEKAS. Database Epistolario Katerina da Siena (website), <https://www.dekasisime.it>. Accessed January 6, 2025. Throughout this thesis, to indicate specific letters in Catherine's *Epistolario*, I use the numbers of Niccolò Tommaseo's edition (T), but give cross-references to other popular numbering systems, those by Girolamo Gigli (Gi) and the one used in the ongoing critical edition published by the Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo (IS); Caterina da Siena, *Opere della serafica Santa Caterina da Siena*, ed. Girolamo Gigli, 4 vols (Lucca: Leonardo Venturini, 1707–1721) [the letters are printed in vols. 2 and 3]; Caterina da Siena, *Le lettere di S. Caterina da Siena ridotte a miglior lezione, e in ordine nuovo disposte con proemio e note di Niccolò Tommaseo*, ed. Niccolò Tommaseo, 4 vols. (Florence: Barbèra, 1860); Caterina da Siena, *Epistolario*, ed. Attilio Cicchella et al., vols. 1–, Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale. Antiquitates 58 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2023–). When citing the text of the letters, I quote from Catherine of Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. D. Umberto Meattini, pref. Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, 4th ed., Letture cristiane del secondo millennio 4 (Milan: Edizioni Paoline, 1987). For an English translation of Catherine's letters, see Catherine of Siena, *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, trans. and intr. Suzanne Noffke, 4 vols., Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 202–3, 329, 355 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000–2008).

[24]. T 221 is both in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles Acquisitions latines, 1250 and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano latino 939; T 76 is in both

Latin translations, the few surviving copies, and the scarce overlap of content between these, indicate that Catherine's followers did not put in place a programmatic attempt to translate and disseminate her epistolary output to a Latin readership.

To be sure, this is not to say that Catherine's followers were not interested in her letters and in transmitting them. In fact, some of the names of those involved in their dissemination (for instance, Stefano Maconi, Tommaso da Siena, Cristofano di Gano Guidini) are familiar to students of the transmission and translation of other Catherinian works and will appear frequently in the pages of this thesis. However, unlike the *Dialogo*, which has been translated into Latin multiple times (see coda to Part I: Transmission) and whose Italian and Latin traditions are comparable in terms of surviving manuscript copies (twenty-eight and twenty-six respectively),[25] the transmission of Catherine's letters was mainly domestic and heavily skewed towards the vernacular.

Some copies of the Latin translations do have foreign signs of provenance,[26] so there may have been a preliminary attempt to circulate these Latin letters internationally, possibly at the initiative of the Carthusians, who owned some of the surviving Latin copies.[27] Ultimately, however, this effort does not seem to have had much success at transplanting Catherine's letters across the Alps, especially in the form of a collection, an *Epistolario*. Catherine's letters likely never reached medieval England, but they still managed to have an indirect impact on medieval English literary tradition through William

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Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale, 844 Rés and Reggello, Abbazia di Vallombrosa, s.n. (where the source of the translation is Manutius's 1500 edition).

[25]. For a list of manuscripts with the Italian version of the *Dialogo*, see Noemi Pigini, 'L'Edizione critica del *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*: Rimaneggiamenti sintattici e prassi ecdotica', in *Il 'Dialogo' di Caterina da Siena. Per una nuova edizione critica: filologia, tradizione, teologia*, ed. Silvia Nocentini, La Mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente 36 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2023), 53. For a list of Latin copies, see Silvia Nocentini, 'Le traduzioni latine del *Dialogo* di Caterina da Siena', in *Il 'Dialogo' di Caterina da Siena. Per una nuova edizione critica: filologia, tradizione, teologia*, ed. Silvia Nocentini, La Mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente 36 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2023), 114–17 (to which we must add Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, Lat. 303, further discussed below, coda to Part I 'Transmission').

[26]. Grenoble, Bibliothèque municipale, 844 Rés and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Nouvelles Acquisitions latines, 1250 are of probable French and German origin respectively; Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 1078 is written in an Italian hand, but it belonged to the Charterhouse at Žiče.

[27]. See Marco Cursi, 'Dal tempo delle lettere al tempo dei libri: alcune considerazioni sulla traduzione manoscritta dell'epistolario di Caterina da Siena', in *Epistolario. Catalogo dei manoscritti e delle stampe*, ed. Marco Cursi, Antonella Dejure, and Giovanna Frosini, Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale. Antiquitates 54 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, 2021), 7.

Flete's own epistolary activity, as I will suggest in a later chapter of the thesis (chapter 3, section 3.4).

A slightly more complex case that needs to be unpacked more carefully is Caffarini's *Legenda minor*. This text is an abbreviated version of Catherine's hagiography based on the longer *Legenda maior* by Raymond of Capua. Probably between 1416 and 1417, Caffarini shortened Raymond's text in order for preachers to have easier access to material on Catherine's life.[28] Much like other texts I discuss in this thesis, the *Legenda minor* was disseminated through Dominican and Carthusian houses.[29] As with Catherine's letters, copies of this text, two, are now held in English and American archives. One of two copies was written in a Venetian hand and shows no sign of English provenance earlier than the late modern period.[30] The other, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Digby 180 (from now on *O₃*), has been in England for a longer stretch of time, since as early as 1634, when it was donated to the Bodleian Library.[31] But was *O₃* already in England during the Middle Ages? Because it is written in both English and Italian hands, the codex's provenance has been described as 'unclear',[32] so it is worth examining the history of this manuscript and of the Digby collection, which will allow us to rule out the text's circulation in medieval England.

The first thing that should be pointed out is that *O₃* is a composite manuscript made up of four distinct codicological units. The part containing the *Legenda minor*, Part 1, is written on paper by an Italian hand of the early fifteenth century. More precisely, this codicological unit was produced in Venice. The historiated initial which opens Caffarini's text is Venetian in style and iconography: it has been attributed to the Venetian artist Cristoforo Cortese and it follows closely in iconography a group of Catherinian manuscripts produced at the Dominican *scriptorium* of San Zanipolo in Venice.[33] As for

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[28]. A parallel critical edition of the two versions of the text, the *recensio vetus* and *recensio nova*, can be read in Tommaso da Siena 'Caffarini', *Sanctae Catharinae Senensis Legenda Minor*, ed. Ezio Franceschini, Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici 10 (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1942). For a study of the text, see Ezio Franceschini, *Leggenda Minore di S. Caterina da Siena* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1942).

[29]. Franceschini, *Leggenda Minore*.

[30]. Baltimore, MD, Walters Art Museum, W. 155 (De R. 391). See Seymour De Ricci, with W. J. Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1935), 1:821.

[31]. The manuscript is catalogued and described in *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_4300>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[32]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 256n7. See also Brown's comments on p. 142.

[33]. Carl Huter, 'Cristoforo Cortese in the Bodleian Library' *Apollo* (January 1980): 13; Otto Pächt and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford*, vol. 2, *Italian School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 46.

the rest of the codex, a fifteenth-century English hand copies Richard of Wallingford's *Exafrenon prognosticationum temporis* in Part 2; a fifteenth-century Italian hand copies Part 3, a life of Saint Jerome; and another fifteenth-century hand, this time a French one, writes Part 4, which contains an alchemical treatise. Since the different hands are responsible for the different codicological units, the coexistence within the same volume of Italian and English hands is not indicative of a shared, transnational production.

A more probing look into the history of the Digby collection indicates that the codicological unit with Caffarini's *Legenda minor* was likely bought in Siena and imported into England in the seventeenth century. The collection was donated to the Bodleian Library by Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–1665) between 1634 and 1639.[34] Digby was a keen bibliophile and he often treated his trips abroad as fitting occasions to grow his library. In 1620, young Kenelm Digby spent some time in Siena, where he had an active role in the intellectual life of the city: he was inducted into a local learned society, he became the dedicatee of a volume printed in Siena in 1621, he delivered lectures and speeches, and, it seems, he bought books printed in the city or composed by Sienese authors.[35] As I have mentioned above, Part 1 of *O₃* was copied out and decorated in Venice, at Caffarini's *scriptorium* in San Zanipolo. From this *scriptorium* Catherinian texts were sent all over Italy and certainly to Siena. Currently, nine manuscripts coming from this *scriptorium* are held in the city.[36] We know that some were already there as early as 1411,[37] while for many others their early permanence in Siena is attested by sixteenth-century ownership notes and shelfmarks, as well as early-seventeenth-century annotations.[38] The list of Venetian

[34]. The majority of items left by Digby to the Bodleian Library once belonged to the collection of his Gloucester Hall tutor, Thomas Allen (1540–1632). This does not seem to be the case for most of *O₃*. Only Part 4 has 'Thomas Allen' written on the upper margin of its first folio (fol. 79v) and an inventory number that corresponds to an entry in Allen's library catalogue (fol. 80r). Parts 1, 2, and 3 all record Kenelm Digby's name (fols. 1r, 30r, 40r) and were therefore likely to have been part of his personal library, bound together on Digby's donation to the Bodleian. See Andrew G. Watson, 'Thomas Allen of Oxford and his Manuscripts', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts & Libraries: Essays presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scholar Press, 1978), 279–314; R. W. Hunt and Andrew G. Watson, 'Notes on Macray's Descriptions of the Manuscripts', in W. D. Macray, R. W. Hunt, and Andrew G. Watson, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues*, vol. 9, *Digby Manuscripts* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1999), 83.

[35]. Dennis E. Rhodes, 'Sir Kenelm Digby and Siena', *British Museum Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (1958): 61–63. See also Hunt and Watson, 'Notes on Macray's Descriptions', 1.

[36]. Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.I.1; T.I.2; T.II.1; T.II.2; T.II.3; T.II.4; T.II.5; T.II.7; and T.II.8 (Part 1). Descriptions for these manuscripts, catalogued by the *Codex* project, are available on Mirabile. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[37]. Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*', 101–3.

[38]. See Mirabile (*Codex*) for catalogue descriptions of Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.II.1; T.II.2; T.II.3; T.II.5; T.II.7; T.II.8. Accessed January 6, 2025.

manuscripts now in Siena includes texts which were composed around the same time as the *Legenda minor* (1416–17). A handwritten note dated to 1705 informs us that a manuscript containing Caffarini's *Libellus de supplemento* (1417–18) and Massimino da Salerno's *Legenda parva de sancta Catharina Senensis* (after 1417; based on Caffarini's *Legenda minor*), had been kept 'per secoli' (for centuries) in the convent of San Domenico in Siena.[39] This indicates recurrent exchanges of manuscripts from Caffarini's *scriptorium* to Catherine's native city, happening both before 1411 and after 1417 and involving all sorts of material related to Catherine. Several copies of texts which share with Part 1 of O_3 similar contents, origin, and composition dates were available in Siena during Digby's stay around 1620. The likeliest explanation for the appearance of this copy of the *Legenda minor* in England, then, is that Digby brought the text home with him in the seventeen century and then bound it into a volume with other material from his library. This conclusion would leave us with no evidence that the *Legenda minor* circulated in England during the Middle Ages, not even in Latin, as the only manuscript copy of the text with an early connection to England is, in all likelihood, a postmedieval importation.

[39]. Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.I.2, fol. IIIr. This is part of a series of inscriptions written in 1705 when Catherinian manuscripts owned by the convent of Saint Dominic were rebound and transferred from the archive to the sacristy. These notes are not always accurate in some of their historical references; see catalogue entry for MS. T.I.1 in Mirabile (*Codex*), <https://www.mirabileweb.it/codex/siena-biblioteca-comunale-degli-intronati-t-i-1/218142>. Accessed January 6, 2025. Nonetheless, there is no reason to doubt that MS. T.I.2 had long been at Saint Dominic, as this is definitely the case for many other manuscripts owned by the convent (cf. above, note no. 38).

Chapter 1

Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior*

Much of our modern understanding of Catherine of Siena's biography derives from the *Legenda maior*, the earliest complete hagiographical account of Catherine's life written by her last confessor and spiritual director, Raymond of Capua.[1] It is in the *Legenda maior* that we read such memorable episodes as Catherine's lively childhood and family adversities, her mystic marriage, stigmatization, exchange of hearts with Jesus, activities with the poor and sick, meetings with popes, to name but a few examples that endure in collective memory. Raymond offers the earliest account for many of these episodes, and certainly the most popular.[2] The *Legenda maior* was, in fact, an extremely influential text and effectively established an authoritative model for Catherine's life which was held in high regards and strictly followed by promoters of Catherine's cult.[3] Its influence cannot be overstated. The text shaped Catherine's iconography,[4] dictated the content and tripartite structure of following hagiographies,[5] and also conditioned modern perception of Catherine's life, which at times ignores the literary quality of the text and accepts as historical truth Raymond's hagiographical version of the events.[6] For this thesis,

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[1]. For a brief overview of Raymond's biography and an analysis of his relationship with Catherine, see John W. Coakley, *Women, Men, and Spiritual Power: Female Saints and Their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 170–92.

[2]. There exists an earlier, partial hagiography written in 1374 in an Italian vernacular by an anonymous Florentine man: *I miracoli di Caterina di Iacopo da Siena di Anonimo fiorentino*, ed. Francesco Valli, Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici 4 (Milan: Bocca, 1936).

[3]. Silvia Nocentini, 'La *Legenda maior* di Raimondo da Capua: una eredità condivisa', in *Virgo digna coelo. Caterina e la sua eredità. Raccolta di studi in occasione del 550º anniversario della canonizzazione di santa Caterina da Siena (1461–2011)*, ed. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Luciano Cinelli, and Pierantonio Piatti (Vatican City: Libreria editrice vaticana, 2013), 105–9.

[4]. Diega Giunta, 'L'immagine di S. Caterina da Siena dagli ultimi decenni del Trecento ai nostri giorni', in Lidia Bianchi and Diega Giunta, *L'iconografia di S. Caterina da Siena*, vol. 1, *L'immagine* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1988), 70.

[5]. E.g., Tommaso da Siena's *Legenda minor*, for which, see above, my preface to Part I: Transmission.

[6]. F. Thomas Luongo makes this argument in regard to the chronology of Catherine's early life and her entry in the *mantellate*: F. Thomas Luongo, 'Cloistering Catherine. Religious Identity in Raymond of Capua's *Legenda Maior* of Catherine of Siena', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3 (2006): 25–69. For a fuller account of the historical reception of Catherine, see F. Thomas Luongo, 'The Historical Reception of Catherine of Siena', in *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco, and

Raymond's *Legenda maior* has added value: the text's history—studied in painstaking detail by its modern editor, Silvia Nocentini—shows that the main transmission channels of Catherine's texts are identifiable through discriminating consideration of textual variants, a philological observation that provides the underlying model for my own investigation of other Catherinian texts and their transmission to medieval England (chapters 2 and 3).

Raymond began writing his hagiography at the request of Catherine's followers in 1385, but the writing process was slowed down by his commitments as Master General of the Roman obedience of the Dominican Order, a position he held for almost twenty years, from 12 May 1380 to his death in 1399; it was not until 1395 that he finished his book.[7] In the following century, especially in the years leading up to Catherine's 1461 canonization, the *Legenda maior* was copied and transmitted across Europe, exported to new cultural contexts and translated into late medieval European vernaculars, most notably German,[8] Italian,[9] and English.

There is ample, if scattered, evidence that the *Legenda maior* was known, read, and that it circulated in medieval England. This chapter discusses the well-documented history of the transmission of the Latin text, which circulated in medieval Europe mainly thanks to the efforts of two monastic orders, the Dominicans and the Carthusians. After a survey of the evidence for circulation of the *Legenda maior* in medieval England, the complete

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Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23–45.

7. For the history of the composition of the *Legenda maior*, see Silvia Nocentini's introduction to her critical edition: Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 3–8. A shorter account in English is given in Silvia Nocentini, 'The *Legenda maior* of Catherine of Siena', in *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 341–43.

8. For an overview of the German translation of the *Legenda maior*, see Thomas Brakmann, 'The Transmission of the Upper German Life of Catherine of Siena', in *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Gabriela Signori, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 83–107. For a comparison of some of the aspects of the German version of the *Legenda maior*, known as *Ein Geistlicher Rosengarten* (spiritual rose garden) and a complete Middle English translation printed by Wynkyn de Worde, see Steven Rozenski, 'Translating Raymond of Capua's *Life* of Catherine of Siena in Fifteenth-Century England and Germany', in *Writing Holiness: Genre and Reception across Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Jessica Barr and Barbara Zimbalist, Cursor Mundi 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), 235–54.

9. For the history of early Italian translations, see Silvia Nocentini, '"Pro solatio illicteratorum": The Earliest Italian Translations of the *Legenda maior*', in *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Gabriela Signori, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 169–83.

Middle English translation of Raymond's *Legenda maior* (as it survives in an incunable printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1492–1493)[10] will be read in light of philological studies on the transmission of Raymond's text, which will allow me to argue that Carthusian links were likely responsible for the transmission of Raymond's text to medieval England. This argument and the methodology through which it is bult provide the set-up for studying other Catherinian texts and their transmission (chapters 2 and 3).

1.1 The Transmission of the *Legenda maior* in Mainland Europe

Once completed, Raymond of Capua brought the *Legenda maior* to Venice and entrusted it to one of the most zealous promoters of Catherine's canonization, Tommaso da Siena, 'Caffarini', who co-ordinated initial plans for the dissemination of the text from the Dominican convent of San Zanipolo (Santi Giovanni e Paolo). Caffarini does not delay, and in 1396, soon after receiving the text from Raymond, he sends a copy to Milan, to the Carthusian Stefano Maconi, one of Catherine's secretaries and close friends, directing him to send the hagiography to his contacts in European charterhouses.[11] Caffarini and Maconi are the two main actors who propelled the transmission of this and other Catherinian texts nationally and internationally. Silvia Nocentini's detailed and extensive philological studies on the history and on the text of the *Legenda maior* reveal that the dissemination of Latin copies of Raymond's work primarily ripples out from *scriptoria* associated with Caffarini and Maconi, who had manuscripts copied out and systematically transmitted through their respective religious orders.[12] As Nocentini has established, these two branches of transmission are not identical, but tend to produce distinct versions of the text, recognizable not just for variant readings, but also for their additions and manipulations of certain passages, especially at the later stages of textual transmission when dissemination channels became ossified and copies moved farther away from the text's archetype. As I

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[10]. For an agile and influential introduction on de Worde's career, see James Moran, *Wynkyn de Worde: Father of Fleet Street*, 3rd ed. (London: British Library–Oak Knoll Press, 2003). For up-to-date scholarly work on de Worde, see the bibliography in the volume, compiled by Lotte Hellinga and Mary Erler.

[11]. Tommaso da Siena 'Caffarini', *Libellus de supplemento. Legende prolixe virginis beate Catherine de Senis*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini and Imelda Foralosso, Testi Cateriniani 3 (Rome: Edizioni Cateriniane, 1974), 405–6.

[12]. Especially Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*', and the updated account in the introduction to her edition of Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 8–94, from which references to Nocentini's philological work will be taken. See also Silvia Nocentini, 'La diffusione della *Legenda maior*'. For an overview in English of some of the major points of the transmission of the text, see also Nocentini, '*Legenda maior* of Catherine of Siena', 345–52.

will show later, the adjustments that Caffarini and Maconi made to Raymond's text can help us reconstruct the involvement of the Carthusian Order in the transmission of the *Legenda maior* to medieval England. Let us now survey the major characteristics that allow us to distinguish between versions of the *Legenda maior* belonging to the Dominican and Carthusian branches.

The more radical changes to Raymond's text are found in some codices affiliated with the Dominican Order and they can be traced back to Caffarini's pen and actions. In his *scriptorium* at the Dominican convent of San Zanipolo in Venice, Caffarini oversaw the production of a large quantity of manuscripts related to Catherine. His work at the *scriptorium* had two, synergistic purposes: to gain papal approval for the Dominican Order of Penance (exploiting Catherine's reputation for holiness to formalize the religious experience of Dominican laywomen) and to have Catherine officially canonized by the Roman Curia (an easier task once the *mantellate* would become a papally recognized institution).[13] After the first objective was met in 1405, Caffarini diverted all his strengths to the cause of Catherine's canonization and intensified the transcription of existing material and the production of new hagiographical texts which would further solidify her cult, such as his *Legenda minor* and *Libellus de supplemento*, respectively an abbreviation and an expansion of Raymond's *Legenda maior*. It is around this period, between 1402 and 1405/7, that Caffarini added three passages to the text of the *Legenda maior*, additions now found in Dominican manuscripts belonging to the ζ (*zeta*) sub-family.[14] At the end of three chapters, these manuscripts include passages copied from Caffarini's *Libellus de supplemento* which emphasize miraculous aspects of Catherine's life and expand on Raymond's account by providing further testimonies and references to material relics associated with her cult.[15] In attempts to have Catherine canonized, Caffarini and his *scriptorium* did not just issue copies of Raymond's *Legenda maior*, but they also revised the text and added material which would strengthen Catherine's claim to sanctity.

Caffarini was not the only person who altered Raymond's text: a different process of textual revision, one less intrusive, can be attributed to Stefano Maconi and characterizes many codices coming out of European charterhouses. Just like Caffarini,

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[13]. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 25–34. For the complex history of the institutionalization of Dominican penitent laywomen and for the role of Caffarini and of the *Legenda maior* in the promotion of the Dominican Order of Penance, see also Lehmijoki-Gardner, 'Writing Religious'.

[14]. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 34–39, 90–92.

[15]. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 34–39, 90–92. These passages are added at the end of 1.11, 2.12, and 3.4. The complete text of these additions is edited in Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*', 129–44.

Maconi laboured to disseminate texts by and about Catherine and orchestrated the transmission of the *Legenda maior* through Carthusian networks, mainly from the charterhouses at Žiče—where he resided from 1398 to 1410 as Prior General of the Carthusian Order—and at Pavia—where he moved in 1411 and stayed until his death in 1424.[16] Maconi knew Catherine personally, was one of her secretaries, and accompanied her often on her apostolic missions. Because of his proximity to Catherine, he is cited as a reliable witness on more than one occasion in the *Legenda maior*, which makes use of Maconi's testimony to fill in the gaps left by its author's absence at important moments of Catherine's life, like her death.[17] It is Maconi's role as a key witness to Catherine's sanctity that also drives the changes he makes to the *Legenda maior*. Six Carthusian manuscripts of the *Legenda maior* contain marginal notes, in some instances autograph ones, in which Maconi confirms the content of the text or provides additional details to validate Raymond's account with his own testimony.[18] In the sub-family of Carthusian manuscripts θ (*theta*) what looks like a personal recollection by Maconi found its way into the text, which offers a more detailed version of the miraculous recovery of Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, a recovery for which Maconi personally beseeched Catherine.[19] While transmitting a text which is overall more faithful to Raymond's original than the one circulating in Dominican environments, even codices from Maconi's Carthusian *scriptoria* pass down to us a version of the *Legenda maior* with distinctive and recognizable interpolations resulting from the desire to enhance Raymond's hagiography with further details on Catherine's life and further personal testimonies to her holiness, a process of textual revision that also affected other para-hagiographical material like Maconi's own *Epistola de gestis et virtutibus sanctae Catharinae*, as I show in chapter 2.

The history of the transmission of the *Legenda maior* tells us that Catherine's hagiography was, to a degree, a social text, shaped by multiple agents and their personal and institutional concerns. In particular, philological data—textual additions, clarifications,

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16. For a detailed chronology of Maconi's involvement in the dissemination of this text, see Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 13–25. For biographies of Maconi, see Giovanni Leoncini, 'Un certosino nel tardo medioevo: Don Stefano Maconi', in *Die Ausbreitung kartäusischen Lebens und Geistes im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Thir and Anton Drexler, Analecta Cartusiana 63 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1991), 54–107; Hélène Angiolini, 'Maconi, Stefano', *DBI* (2006), 67:118–22. Also available online, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/stefano-maconi_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

17. See Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 369–70 (3.1.22).

18. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 13–22.

19. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 22–25.

expansions—bear the traces of the two personalities who spearheaded the dissemination of this text, the Dominican Tommaso da Siena and the Carthusian Stefano Maconi.

How do English versions of the *Legenda maior* fit into these textual patterns? Unfortunately, we do not have any Latin copy of the text produced in England,[20] which means that scholarship on the Latin text does not discuss the transmission of Raymond's hagiography across the English Channel. However, the traces of Stefano Maconi's re-elaboration of Raymond's hagiography can be found in a Middle English translation of the text, as will be shown after a discussion of evidence which attests to the circulation of the *Legenda maior* in late medieval England.

1.2 Evidence for the Circulation of the *Legenda maior* in Medieval England

Catherine's *vita* was found in the libraries of monasteries and of the English aristocracy, as suggested by documentary and testamentary evidence. The *registrum* of the brethren's library at Syon Abbey, compiled between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, lists a volume with an unspecified 'Vita sancte Katerine de Senis' and another one containing, among other spiritual texts, 'Reuelaciones beate Katerine de senis cum quibusdam excerptis de vita eiusdem' (The revelations of the Blessed Catherine of Siena with some excerpts from her life).[21] A similarly vague reference is found in the 1495 will of Cecile Neville, Duchess of York and mother of two kings, Edward IV and Richard III, who bequeathed a 'boke of the life of Saint Kateryn of Sene' to her granddaughter Bridget, a Dominican nun at Dartford Priory.[22] These brief mentions do not give many details to help with an identification of the text: *vita* or *life* could refer to any of the many hagiographical accounts of Catherine's life. However, in two cases the hagiography appears to be the only text in a bound volume, which must therefore have been a work of substantial length, like Raymond's *Legenda maior* or Caffarini's *Legenda minor*. As no corroborating evidence

[20]. There are two Latin copies of the *Legenda maior* now in British and American collections: Baltimore, MD, Walters Art Museum, W.350 (De R. 392) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Misc. 205. Their provenances do not suggest an early circulation in England. See De Ricci, *Census*, 1:822; *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_3225>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[21]. With the shelfmark of M.81 and M.71 respectively. See Vincent Gillespie, ed., *Syon Abbey*, with *The Libraries of the Carthusians*, ed. A. I. Doyle, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 9 (London: British Library, 2001), 243, 246.

[22]. John Gough Nichols and John Bruce, eds., *Wills from Doctors' Commons: A Selection from the Wills of Eminent Persons Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1495–1695* (Westminster: Camden Society, 1863), 2–3. This book was probably in English and, given the late date, we cannot be certain whether it was a manuscript copy or an edition printed in 1492–1493 by Wynkyn de Worde (for which, see below). For a discussion of Cecile's devotional readings, see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 16–17.

confirms the circulation in medieval England of Caffarini's hagiography (preface to Part I: Transmission), these are more likely to be references to Raymond's book.

If we press the entry for 'Vita sancte Katerine de Senis' in the Syon *registrum* for more information, we find out that the 'vita' was in all probability a Latin manuscript copy. Thomas Beston's methodical work in compiling the library catalogue gives us enough contextual clues to advance this hypothesis: in his entries Beston also lists the *secundo folio* for the volumes as well as their donors, if known. The *secundo folio* of the 'Vita sancte Katerine de Senis' is '*de quibusdam*', which tells us that the book was written in Latin, as indeed were most holdings of the library of the Syon brethren.[23] We are also given the name of the donor of the book, a certain 'Lawys'.[24] If this is the same 'Dominus Iohannes Lawys, diaconus' mentioned in the Syon *Martiloge*, then the volume must have been given to Syon before his death on 5 February 1477[25]. At any rate, the entry is written in Thomas Beston's main bookhand, a hand responsible for a stint which was completed by 1504.[26] The *editio princeps* of Raymond's *Legenda maior* does not appear until much later: while editions in Italian and even Middle English were printed by 1500, it was only in 1553 that the Latin text was first printed.[27] The entry in Beston's *registrum* is therefore one of the few traces we have of the circulation in medieval England of Latin manuscript copies of Catherine's hagiography.

If documentary evidence can only reveal a faint trace of the presence of hagiographic material related to Catherine in medieval English libraries, then manuscript and textual evidence confirm the circulation of Raymond of Capua's text. Manuscript evidence is, again, patchy: no copy of the Latin text produced in England survives, nor do we have manuscripts with a complete Middle English text. Translated portions of the *Legenda maior* survive in two fifteenth-century miscellanies, both containing, among other spiritual texts, various excerpts from Raymond's hagiography, London, British Library, Royal MS 17 D. v [*s.* XV *ex.*], fols. 59r–62r and London, British Library, Harley MS 2409 [*s.* XV *in./med.*], fols. 70r–75r.[28] In both cases, the manuscripts do not include a single

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[23]. Gillespie, *Syon Abbey*, 246; see also p. LXIV.
[24]. Gillespie, *Syon Abbey*, 246.
[25]. Gillespie, *Syon Abbey*, 582.
[26]. Gillespie, *Syon Abbey*, XLVIII.
[27]. *Theologiae mysticae* (Cologne: Jaspar von Gennep, 1553) (*USTC* 696739). For a census of early edition of Catherinian text, see the website of Centro Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, <https://centrostudicateriniani.it/santa-caterina-da-siena/edizioni-e-traduzioni-antiche-sec-xv-xviii/>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
[28]. For catalogue descriptions, see George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, vol. 2, *Royal MSS. 12 A. i to*

excerpt from the text, but they create a short anthology of Catherine's spiritual teachings. The series of excerpts in Royal MS 17 D. v picks out passages from the *Legenda maior* which offer guidance on how to conduct one's spiritual life, especially on overcoming temptations from the Devil, on prayer, and on the annihilation of the self. The instructional nature of the collection appears clear from its title, given by a rubric in the manuscript: 'Here folowen dyuerse doctrynys deuowte and fruytfull taken owte of the lyfe of that glorious virgyn and spowse of our lorde Seynt Kateryne of Seenys'.[29] In 1521, this title is re-used by Henry Pepwell, who printed a short volume of devotional texts which included these excerpts, probably using as his source Royal MS 17 D. v.[30] Harley MS 2409 (from now *L*), too, looks at Catherine's writings for advice on spiritual progress and introspection, this time selecting excerpts with a visionary focus.[31] After the long version of 'the Cleannesse of Sowle', a text which will be analyzed in detail in chapter 3, the manuscript offers a short compilation of material taken from the *Legenda maior* and goes on to discuss self-knowledge, the doctrine on the discernment of spirits, and to give an account of Catherine's mystic marriage to Jesus.[32]

And it is as authority on visions and on the practice of the discernment of spirits, the *discretio spirituum*, that Catherine's words in the *Legenda maior* are cited once again in the *Mirror to Devout People* (also known as *Speculum devotorum*). The *Mirror* is a series of meditations on the life of Christ in the pseudo-Bonaventuran tradition, written in the fifteenth century by a Carthusian, in all likelihood a monk at Sheen.[33] Among the sources called to shed light on the subject matter we find texts by a cadre of female authors labelled 'approuyd wymmen', a small group of mystics and saints often cited together in the English medieval spiritual tradition: Birgitta of Sweden, Mechthild of Hackeborn,

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20 E. x and App. 1–89 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1921), 251; *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts*, 2:690. An up-to-date description of the Harley manuscript is also included in Dirk Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings by Catherine of Siena in BL Harley 2409: An Edition', *Anglia* 136, no. 2 (2018): 304–5.

29. London, British Library, Royal MS 17 D. v, fol. 59r.

30. See Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 164–70. Henry Pepwell's edition, *Here foloweth a veray deuoute treatyse (named Benyamyn) of the myghtes and vertues of mannes soule, & of the way to true contemplacyon, compyled by Rycharde of saynt Vyctor* (*STC* 20972; *USTC* 501647), was later reprinted in Edmund G. Gardner, ed., *The Cell of Self-Knowledge: Seven Early English Mystical Treatises Printed by Henry Pepwell in 1521* (London: Chatto & Windus-Duffield, 1910).

31. See Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 110.

32. An edition of these excerpts is available in Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings'.

33. For an edition of the text, see *A Mirror to Devout People (Speculum devotorum)*, ed. Paul J. Patterson, EETS, OS, 346 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Elizabeth of Hungary, and Catherine of Siena.[34] In concluding the chapter on the Annunciation, the compiler translates a long quotation from the *Legenda maior* on how to distinguish visions coming from the Devil from those with a divine origin.[35] With the one passage quoted in the *Mirror* and the excerpts included in the two miscellanies cited above, manuscript evidence for the English circulation of the *Legenda maior* is not voluminous. However, these witnesses tell us that the English reception of Raymond's text was not passive: where available, it was appreciated, excerpted, disseminated for its instructional value, and incorporated in the production of original compilations and texts.

In a way, the fate of the *Legenda maior* in medieval England is similar to the one of another well-known holy biography, that of the English mystic and visionary Margery Kempe. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, too, circulated in the form of a series of excerpts, surviving in a 1501 pamphlet printed by Wynkyn de Worde and later reprinted by Henry Pepwell in a 1521 short devotional miscellany.[36] As is well known, the selection is not representative of Margery's *Book* as a whole: the shortened version of her text emphasizes her spiritual (rather than physical and visionary) connection to Christ, encourages a meditative and introspective form of devotion, and thus omits Margery's lively, and at times controversial, active life of pilgrimages and her contact with late medieval society.[37]

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[34]. For more information on the English reception and circulation of this group of women, see *Mirror to Devout People*, XL–XLIV; Barratt, 'Continental Women Mystics'; Vincent Gillespie, 'Religious Writing', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, ed. Roger Ellis, vol. 1, *To 1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 263–64. Note, however, that scholars identify the Hungarian princess mentioned in the *Mirror* with Elizabeth of Töss (1294–1336). Nonetheless, the paragraph in the *Mirror* that cites 'Seyint Elyȝabethys lyfe, þe kyngys dowghttyr of Hungry' derives from Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (finished around 1265). Because the *Legenda aurea* predates Elizabeth of Töss, the text cannot be referring to her nor to the other Elizabeth of Hungary (c. 1260–1322) who probably wrote the *Revelations* circulating in medieval England (see references in note no. 42 below), but it refers to the homonymous Hungarian princess Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231); cf. *Mirror to Devout People*, XLn44, 172, 242–43; Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea. Con le miniature del codice Ambrosiano C 240 inf.*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, trans. Francesco Stella (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo–Biblioteca Ambrosiana, 2007), 2:1296–321, 1694–96.

[35]. *Mirror to Devout People*, 20–21. The excerpt corresponds to Rayomond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 174–75 (1.9.13–15).

[36]. *Here begynneth a shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by our lorde Jhesu cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie kempe of lynn* (London: Wynkyn de Worde 1501) (*STC* 14924; *USTC* 500792); Pepwell's *Here foloweth a veray deuoute treatyse (named Benyamyn)*.

[37]. For work on this set of excerpts from Margery's *Book*, see Sue Ellen Holbrook, 'Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Exeter Symposium IV. Papers read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 27–46; Allyson Foster, '*A Shorte Treatyse of*

The set of excerpts uproots Margery from her world, to the extent that Henry Pepwell famously changes her status from laywoman into 'deuoute ancresse'.[38] Likewise, the selection of Middle English passages from Catherine's hagiography tends to focus on contemplation and spiritual guidance to the detriment of those narrative sections of the *Legenda maior* which deal with her biographical elements, involvement with society or religious affairs, hagiographical *topoi*, or descriptions of her mystical visions—with the exception of the excerpt of her mystic marriage to Jesus in *L*. The treatment of the two holy women is thus analogous: in both cases, readers of shortened versions of their *vitae* are presented with spiritual lives projected inwards, more than outwards. It should not come as a surprise, then, that excerpts from Catherine and Margery eventually found a shared home in a 1521 devotional miscellany printed by Henry Pepwell, where the two women appear one right after the other. Allyson Foster has already noticed the similarities between Margery's and Catherine's excerpts in Pepwell's booklet: both lay an emphasis on the importance of a firm spiritual practice of ghostly exercises and prayer.[39] But these similarities can also be extended to the other Middle English excerpts from the *Legenda maior* (those in *L* and the one in the *Speculum devotorum*); in those cases, too, the selection of quotations from Raymond's hagiography privileges Catherine's inner life and words of spiritual wisdom. This method of selection and excerption gives us an idea of one of the ways in which Catherine's and, more generally, women's hagiographical and pseudo-hagiographical material was read in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England: rather than for its narrative moments or for displays of Catherine's exemplary virtues and behaviours, the *Legenda maior* was harvested for its spiritual content, providing English compilers with a chance to create devotional guides from the text by taking out of the hagiography forms and themes typical of hagiography.

A more consistent trace of Raymond's text has arrived to us through the medium of print. In 1492–1493, Wynkyn de Worde published *The Lyf of Saint Katherin of Senis*, a

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Contemplacyon: *The Book of Margery Kempe* in its Early Print Context', in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 95–112; Melissa Crofton, 'From Medieval Mystic to Early Modern Anchoress: Rewriting *The Book of Margery Kempe*', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 16 (2013): 101–24.

[38]. See the incipit and explicit that Pepwell uses to frame Margery's excerpts in his 1521 *Deuoute treatyse (named Benyamyn)*, on sigs. d6v and e3v.

[39]. Foster, '*A Shorte Treatyse of Contemplacyon*', 104–10. There are also minor differences between the figures of Catherine and Margery emerging from their respective sections, mainly in the degree of authority granted to each woman and the assertiveness with which their doctrines are stated. Those differences, Foster argues, reinforce, rather than challenge, a common spirituality between the two and the juxtaposition of their texts.

virtually complete Middle English adaptation of the *Legenda maior*, originally translated from Latin for the spiritual edification of a religious community of women.[40] Around 1500, a re-issue of selected folios was printed and now survives in one single copy.[41] The cultural significance of the volume should not be overlooked. De Worde's incunable, in fact, occupies positions of primacy on the international and national book markets: it is the earliest text related to Catherine to have been printed outside Italy and one of the inaugural publications by Wynkyn de Worde, predating, in England, all other major editions of texts by or about visionary women.[42] The volume is, then, a pioneering enterprise which

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[40]. *The lyf of saint Katherin of Senis* ([Westminster]: Wynkyn de Worde, [1492–1493]) (*ISTC* iv00297000; *STC* 24766). A modern edition of de Worde's volume was published in Carl Horstmann, *The Lyf of Saint Katherin of Senis*, in *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Litteraturen* 76 (1886): 33–112, 265–314, 359–91. I am currently working on a critical edition of the *Lyf* based on the methodologies developed by the field of textual bibliography. The omissions of the *Lyf* have not been discussed in detail. Studies either focus on selected passages or provide generic overviews with little discussion on specific omissions; e.g., Chance, 'Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval Britain'; C. Annette Grisé, 'Catherine of Siena in Middle English Manuscripts. Transmission, Translation, and Transformation', in *The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 149–59; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 140–70. A systematic comparison between the text and its source is therefore necessary to determine precisely what portions of Raymond's work were not translated, and the implications this restructuring has on the overall text. For considerations on the intended audience of this translation and how it shaped the text, see below, chapter 4.

[41]. A copy held by the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA (55643) (*STC* 24766.3). This re-issue is sometimes described as a 'reprint' or an 'edition' in itself, imprecise terms that risk overstating the popularity of the edition by implying the existence of more copies of this second state of printing; e.g. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 143, 149, 230n52. Material evidence, however, suggests that this was an *ad hoc* re-issue of some folios bound within an older, unsold, defective copy: only three sheets are reset in a different, later type (fols. h2.5, n1.6, and q1.4) and the rest of the sheets correspond to the layout and type of the version published in 1492–1493.

[42]. For a chronology of early editions printed by de Worde, see Lotte Hellinga, 'Tradition and Renewal: Establishing the Chronology of Wynkyn de Worde's Early Work', in *Incunabula and Their Readers: Printing, Selling, and Using Books in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Kristian Jensen (London: British Library, 2003), 13–30. Among English editions related to visionary women, the *Lyf* is contemporary to an edition of a Middle English translation of the *Revelations* of Elizabeth of Hungary (printed in the same volume as Catherine's *Lyf*) and is only preceded by a small volume (44 fols. in 4^{o}) of a series of prayers attributed to Birgitta of Sweden, *The fifteen Oes* (Westminster: William Caxton, [about 1491]) (*ISTC* ib00683600; *STC* 20195). See C. Annette Grisé, 'Holy Women in Print: Continental Female Mystics and the English Mystical Tradition', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 83–95. For an edition of Elizabeth's *Revelations*, see Elizabeth of Hungary, *The Two Middle English Translations of the Revelations of St Elizabeth of Hungary: ed. from Cambridge University Library MS Hh.i.11 and Wynkyn de Worde's printed text of ?1493*, ed. Sarah McNamer, Middle English

anticipated a mother lode of editions of Catherinian texts published throughout Europe and which foreran a prolific stream of English editions of devotional texts, a genre which de Worde's press helped popularize.[43]

What is the relationship between the full translation of the *Legenda maior* printed by de Worde and Middle English manuscript excerpts? At the current state of research, it is not clear. Studies offer contrasting views on whether these versions are related. Jennifer Brown suggests that all excerpts (those in *L* and Royal MS 17 D. v. as well as the passage quoted in the *Speculum devotorum*) are similar enough to de Worde's edition to suggest a common source.[44] On the other hand, Dirk Schultze is more cautious and points out some syntactic differences between *L* and the *Speculum devotorum*, concluding that they are two independent translations, but leaving out any consideration of their relationship with the version printed by de Worde.[45] Where scholars agree is in saying that the phrasing of the excerpts found in Royal MS 17 D. v. corresponds closely to the one of de Worde's edition, which means that a complete Middle English translation of the *Legenda maior* was already in circulation before de Worde printed his edition.[46] A future reassessment of the excerpts by way of a textual comparison will clarify the relationship between the other Middle English excerpts of the *Legenda maior* and de Worde's edition of the text.

While this documentation is enough to give us a partial picture of how the *Legenda maior* circulated within medieval England, who some of its readers were, and the aspects of the text in which they were interested, the nature of the evidence makes it hard to ask questions on the transmission of the text to medieval England. No complete manuscript

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Texts 28 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996). For an edition of Caxton's version of *The fifteen Oes*, see Birgitta of Sweden (pseudo), *The Fifteen Oes and Other Prayers: Edited from the Text Published by William Caxton (1491)*, ed. Alexandra Barrat and Susan Powell, Middle English Texts 61 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2021). The identity of the Elizabeth associated with the *Revelations* is disputed, see Alexandra Barratt, 'The Revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary: Problems of Attribution', *Library* 14, no. 1 (1992): 1–11; *Meditations on the Life of Christ: The Short Italian Text*, ed. Sarah McNamer (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), CXXXIX–CXLVI.

43. See George R. Keiser, 'The Mystics and the Early English Printer: The Economics of Devotionalism', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Exeter Symposium IV. Papers read at Dartington Hall, July 1987*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 9–26; Mary Erler, 'Devotional Literature', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, vol. 3, *1400–1557* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 495–525.

44. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 147.

45. Dirk Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings', 309–11.

46. Warner and Gilson, *Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 2:251; Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings', 311; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 147.

copy of the text survives, either in Latin or in Middle English, and we cannot therefore rely on important contextual clues such as manuscript provenance to help trace the agents involved in the introduction and dissemination of the text to English medieval readers.[47] What survives—anthologized translated excerpts and a Middle English printed edition—is some degrees removed from the lost complete copies of the *Legenda maior* that must have circulated on the island. In addition, this material is the result of the mediation of translators, compilers, and printers, all of which tinkered with the text. However, despite this complex process of stratification, it is in the text itself that we find elements to advance hypotheses on its transmission. In fact, the textual particularities of the transmission of Raymond's Latin text can still be a useful framework to interpret the English legacy of the text. In particular, the distinctive elements of the Carthusian branch of transmission can be discerned in de Worde's edition of Catherine's *Lyf*, which offers philological evidence to make a case in favour of their involvement in the transmission of Raymond's text to medieval England.

1.3 Carthusian Traces in *The lyf of saint Katherin of Senis*

The various Middle English excerpts of the *Legenda maior* do not contain significant portions of Raymond's hagiography, both in terms of quantity of text and their distinctiveness of recorded variant readings. It is therefore not possible to link them with specific branches of the Latin tradition of the text.

On the other hand, the translation printed by Wyknyn de Worde, despite its differences from its Latin source, preserves enough of the text for discerning traces of its underlying Carthusian skeleton. Let us, then, read *The lyf of saint Katherin of Senis* against the foremost characteristic traits of Dominican and Carthusians copies of the text, that is, the interpolations by Tommaso da Siena and Stefano Maconi which I have briefly mentioned above (see section 1.1).

As discussed, Caffarini introduced in the text of the *Legenda maior* three major passages taken from his *Libellus de supplemento* and now found in manuscripts of Raymond's text belonging to the ζ sub-family, a group of ten manuscripts which circulated mainly in Dominican environments—six of these manuscripts have unmistakable signs of Dominican provenance.[48] The Middle English text of the *Lyf* does not bear the traces of any of these three additions. The first of these additions is inserted at the end of the eleventh chapter of the first part, nested within Raymond's closing formula. Caffarini complements

[47]. A point also raised in Brown, 'From the Charterhouse to the Printing House', 28.
[48]. For a description of the manuscripts, see Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 39–68.

the description of Catherine's miraculous literacy by explaining that she did not simply learn how to read, as the original text of the *Legenda maior* stated, but she also learnt how to write. He then goes on to give details about a prayer she composed and transcribed, concluding by mentioning the location of this document, which was safeguarded and kept as a relic by Venetian Dominican Nuns. The Middle English *Lyf* makes no mention of the miracle of writing and it calques the wording of Raymond's text, proceeding to close the chapter without Caffarini's additional information (see Table 2). Likewise, we find no correspondence to Caffarini's second addition. In fact, in the final chapter of the second part, before a long section on Catherine's devotion to Saint Agnes of Montepulciano, Caffarini adds some details to the many Eucharistic miracles narrated by Raymond. Even in this case, the Middle English *Lyf*, despite trimming some of the specifics, is closer to Raymond's original text (see Table 3). Finally, at the end of the fourth chapter of the last part of the *Legenda maior*, Caffarini gives two further examples of Catherine's postmortem apparitions, to bolster the vision of Semia included by Raymond in the narrative. Caffarini appends to the end of this chapter two letters describing other analogous visions, one by Tommaso Petra and another one by Giovanni dalle Celle. These two embedded texts are not found in the Middle English adaptation (see Table 4). All of the three major interpolations introduced by Caffarini into the *Legenda maior* are, then, absent from the Middle English adaptation of Raymond's hagiography, making it unlikely that the translator availed himself of a Dominican copy of the text.

But a case based only on the absence of certain passages, a philological *argumentum ex silentio*, is very tenuous. An important aide to establishing the text's chain of transmission is presence rather than absence, and, specifically in this case, the presence in the Middle English *Lyf* of features typical of Carthusian copies of the *Legenda maior*. In fact, while traces of Caffarini's additions are nowhere to be found in the Middle English *Lyf*, Maconi's interventions are visible. As mentioned above, the primary telltale of Carthusian manipulation is the presence in the text of a longer and more detailed description of Catherine's role in the recovery of one of her disciples, Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi. The eighth chapter of the second part of the *Legenda maior* focuses on Catherine's healing powers, those times when the saint's intercessory prayers improve the conditions of the sick and dying, cure members of her entourage from the plague, and even resuscitate her mother Lapa, who had died without receiving Confession and without undergoing penance.[49] Among the beneficiaries of these miraculous cures is Neri,

[49] Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 294–311 (2.8).

Catherine's scribe, who fell sick in Genoa during their return journey from Avignon. Raymond offers a succinct version of Neri's illness and recuperation: Catherine advises the group to rely on physicians, but, when their cures fail, Stefano Maconi begs Catherine to step in and heal his friend. Maconi's request moves Catherine, who visits the sick man and brings about his speedy recovery. In Carthusian codices, the events unfold in a different way, in all likelihood expanded with Stefano's personal recollections: at first, Catherine gently opposes Maconi's prayer, telling him not to despair and that Neri's suffering will earn him reward in heaven, but then, at Maconi's insistence, she gives in and agrees to pray for Neri. The following morning, Stefano and Catherine go to Mass, where she prays, receives the Eucharist, is rapt in ecstasy, and finally tells Maconi that God has agreed to heal Neri. The Middle English *Lyf* closely follows this latter version and records the more intricate interaction between Catherine and Maconi that is found in copies of the θ sub-family of the *Legenda maior* (see Table 5).

Sifting through the Latin and Middle English versions in search of other textual variants gives confirmation that the *Lyf* must have been based on a copy of the *Legenda maior* belonging to its θ sub-family. The nature of the Middle English text complicates this search: in the process of translation and adaptation, certain sentences are altered, other omitted, other paraphrased, and therefore the precise syntax and lexis of the Latin source is sometimes impossible to determine simply by looking at the Middle English version. In addition, several errors or variations which may be important to group into families copies of Latin texts—such as mistakes in case endings, misuse of prepositions, misspellings, omissions of closed class words, or substitutions of a word with a close synonym—lose their significance in the transition from Latin to Middle English. To these difficulties, we must add yet another complexity: intrinsic to the process of translation is a constant interpretation and re-interpretation of the base-text. A translator has to reflect on the text's meaning and interpret obscure passages, and therefore, compared to a copyist, is more likely to catch common mistakes and correct them. Therefore, not all *loci critici* which differentiate θ manuscripts from other families are useful to our purpose of trying to glean more information about the source used by the Middle English translator. Among the textual variants of θ copies of the *Legenda maior*,[50] however, there are three which stand out: two lexical differences that alter the meaning of two sentences and the substitution of a noun for a related gerund (see Table 1). In all three cases, the Middle English adaptation follows departures from Raymond's original text, departures which appear in θ

[50]. I have searched for all those errors and variants typical of θ listed in Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 83.

manuscripts, thus offering additional textual evidence which brings the *Lyf* closer to Carthusian copies of the *Legenda maior*.

Table 1. Significant variants of θ sub-family in the Middle English *Lyf*.

Position in text	Raymond's original text	Variants of θ sub-family	*Lyf*
2.7.58	quod habebat extra civitatem predictam miliario quarto vel tertio	quod habebat extra civitatem predictam miliario **secundo**	þat was **two** myle wythout the Cyte (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 290)
3.3.20	O trinitas eterna, o deitas que per virtutem nature divine fecisti tantum valere pretium sanguinis unigeniti filii	O trinitas eterna, o deitas que per **unionem** nature divine fecisti tantum valere pretium sanguinis unigeniti filii	O endeles Trinyte, O godhede the whiche by **vnyon** of dyuyne nature hast made the bloode of thyn oonly-goten sone so moche wourthe in pryce þat it suffyseth to rawnsome all mankynde (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 369)
3.6.11	sede atque corona summi pontificis decoratum	**sedentem** atque corona summi pontificis decoratum	she saw our lord arayde as a bisshop **sytting** . . . (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 384)

Textual similarities, then, allow us to conclude that the Middle English translator of the *Lyf* worked from a Latin manuscript of the *Legenda maior* which belonged to sub-family θ, a group which originated from a copy revised by the Carthusian Stefano Maconi and then circulated across European Charterhouses—as attested by the provenance of eight of the twenty-three manuscripts which make up this sub-family.[51] As is inevitable, there was some spillover from Carthusian textual communities, and Maconi's altered version of the *Legenda maior* overflowed the monastic walls of Charterhouses.[52] It is impossible to determine whether the copy used by the *Lyf*-translator reached medieval England through one of these secondary branches. Ultimately, in light of the productive international

[51]. For a description of the manuscripts, see Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 39–68.

[52]. See, for instance, Nocentini's cautious discussion of some codices in Nocentini, 'La diffusione della *Legenda Maior*'.

network of textual transmission active between monasteries of the Carthusian Order and, specifically, of Maconi's initiative in circulating his slightly emended *Legenda maior*, the Carthusian textual echoes in the Middle English *Lyf* are plausibly explained by the involvement of this monastic order in the transmission of this text to medieval England. Certainly, Maconi's efforts to disseminate Catherine's hagiography made it possible, either directly or indirectly, for the *Legenda maior* to fall into English hands. A focus on the textual details of the *Legenda maior* and the *Lyf* reveal philological evidence for the Carthusians' likely responsibility for the introduction of Catherine's hagiography to medieval England. Attention to the textual details of the *Legenda maior*, its Lain manuscript copies, and the Middle English *Lyf*, allows us to trace the hagiography's journey across medieval Europe and to England, but, beyond clarifying the transmission of a specific text, this chapter also provides us with a method for mapping the dissemination of other Catherinian texts, as it will be shown in chapters 2 and 3.

Table 2. Comparison between Caffarini's first addition, Raymond's original text, and the Middle English *Lyf*.

Caffarini's first addition (ζ sub-family)	Raymond's original text	*Lyf*
. . . **Quod, concedente Domino, explanabitur infra perfectius.** Verum, quia non solum apparuit in supradicta virgine singulare de litteratura seu supradicta lectura miraculum, sed etiam de scriptura, idcirco, pro conformitate materie, iudico illud hic non incongrue presentibus inserendum, pro quo sciendum quod, cum quoddam semel ad manus virginis huius sacre occurreret vasculum, in quo erat cinabrum temperatum et ad scribendum ac apices depingendum per quemdam scriptorem dispositum et paratum, sumpto calamo et carta modica de papiro, cum numquam alias scripsisset vel ad scribendum aliquatenus didicisset, consedit et scribere cepit ac sequentia verba de competenti satis littera scripsit, licet in suo vulgari sermone, in cartula prelibata. Hec autem in latinum translata, que fuerunt ista, videlicet: 'Spiritus Sancte, veni in cor meum per tuam potentiam illud trahas ad te Deum et mihi concede caritatem cum timore. Custodi me Criste ab omni mala cogitatione. Me recalescas et me reinflammes tuo dulcissimo amore, ita quod omnis pena mihi	. . . **Quod, concedente Domino, explanabitur infra perfectius, sed nunc finem huic capitulo faciamus ut in sequenti etiam huic prime parti terminus, Domini suffragante gratia, imponatur. Que autem continentur in eo habita sunt tam ex dictis eius suis confessoribus secrete prolatis, quam ex scriptis epistulis eius, in quibus quandoque ad aliorum exemplum de se, sicut de alio recitando, narrat quedam que sibi vite in huius stadio contigere.** (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 197 [1.11.31])	. . . **as I shall declare to you here-afterward by the helpe of god. For thus shall I make an ende of this chapytre. All this that is conteyned therin, her confessur had somme other by knowleche of her pryuely and somme by relacion, that she tolde to other as it hadde be tolde of another and not of her-self, to the more edyfycacion of them.** (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 83)

levis videatur. Sancte mi pater et mi dulcis dominator, or me iuvate in omni mea necessitate. Christus amor, Christus amor'. Quibus verbis conscriptis, nusquam reperitur quod ex tunc aliquid aliud per se ipsam scripserit, quamvis per alios alia multa et multa notabilia, secundum quod ex sequentibus apparebit, tam per modum epistolarum quam per modum libri, sive tractatus, in scriptis dimiserit. In signum autem evidentis miraculi talis fuit qualitatis et forme eius supradicta scriptura, quod non posset similis fieri per aliquem, nisi etiam per bonum temporis spatium, tam silabizare quam etiam litteras componere ac scribere didicisset. Unde et postmodum tradita fuit dicta cartula sic miraculose conscripta pro singulari reliquia cuidam venerabili religioso fratri Ieronimo de Senis ordinis heremitarum sancti Augustini, qui post transitum dicte virginis reperiens se in civitate Veneciarum eandem cuidam venerando sacerdoti, domino videlicet presbitero Leonardo Pisani de Venetiis, pro singulari ensenio est largitus et dictus sacerdos consequenter ipsam tradidit pro munere speciali cuidam huius virginis in Christo carissimo filio, videlicet fratri Thome Antoni de Senis ordinis predicatorum in Venetiis tunc predicanti et de quo in sequentibus aliquando fit mentio		

specialis. Pro nunc autem est dicta cedula sive cartula cum quibusdam aliis huius virginis reliquiis ac quarundam aliarum bacarum sui status apud sorores de penitentia beati Dominici de Venetiis. Possent autem hec et alia narrari **sed nunc finem huic capitulo faciamus ut in sequenti etiam huic prime parti terminus, Domini suffragante gratia, imponatur. Que autem continentur in eo habita sunt tam ex dictis suis confessoribus secrete prolata, quam ex scriptis epistulis eius, in quibus quandoque ad aliorum exemplum de se, sicut de alio recitando, narrat quedam que sibi vite in huius stadio contigere.** (Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*', 129–31)		

Table 3. Comparison between Caffarini's second addition, Raymond's original text, and the Middle English *Lyf*.

Caffarini's second addition (ζ sub-family)	Raymond's original text	*Lyf*
	. . . **Et ego quidem de hoc non clare perpendi, sed bene semper sentiebam sonum seu strepitum quem faciebat sacra hostia dum in os eius intrabat, ac si quasi lapillus fuisset in os eius a remotis violenter proiectus.** Frater autem Bartholomeus Dominici, sacre pagine professor et nunc prior provincialis Romane provincie ordinis mei, etiam dicit quod quando eam communicabat sentiebat duobus digitis quibus sacram hostiam tenebat violentiam quandam fieri et eam quasi violentius de manu eius exire. Ex quibus omnibus datur intelligi quod non insulse loquebantur qui asserebant se videre sacram hostiam in os eius volando intrare; ego vero hec nec asserere audeo nec negare, sed devoti lectoris discretio iudicet quid credentum in talibus, consideratis fundamentis gratiarum supra recitaterum. Porro plura sunt superius recitata que hanc tangiunt materiam, que replicare foret superfluum **et ideo de huius sacramenti mirabilibus finem hic faciamus, sed de miraculis circa sanctorum reliquias**	. . . **The whiche Mayster Reymound perceyued neuer, saue this he perceyued that the swete reuerende hoste made a noyse in her mouth whan she receyued it as though a stone hadde bee caste in her mouth from a ferre contree.** **Now thus shall I make an ende off the grete merueylousnes of that reuerende swete holy sacramente of the aulter, and telle you of dyuerse myracles** that befylle to this holy mayde saynt Katheryne of Sene **aboute certayn relykes of sayntes.** (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 357)

. . . ego vero nec asserere audeo nec negare, sed devoti lectoris discretio iudicet quid credendum in talibus consideratis fundamentis gratiarum supra recitatarum. Ubi etiam occurrit aliud nullatenus pretermittendum, sed diligentius advertendum, quomodo videlicet tantus erat huius virginis ignitus affectus erga supradictum venerabile sacramentum, quod, quando ipsum per manus sacerdotis quam devote suscipiebat, sepius non solum certitudinaliter videbatur quod hostia consecrata quasi cum quadam violentia de ipsius sacerdotis manibus, seu digitis, prosiliret et absque labiorum, vel dentium seu lingue, ipsius virginis attractione in os eiusdem virginis evolaret, sed etiam quod post prefate consecrate hostie sumptionem, propter eximiam ipsius ad Iesu Christi sanguinem etiam devotam affectionem, quam pluries cum eidem a sacerdote iuxta morem vinum in calice sumendum porrigeretur, tanta utriusque hominis reverentia et fervore ipsum vinum calicis, ac si proprium Iesu Christi sanguinem sumeret, ita bibendo sumebat, quod, veluti divine suavitatis mirabiliter pasta et supermirabiliter inebriata dulcedine, taliter dicto vino sumpto dentes suos ad oram sive summitatem calicis applicabat ipsumque calicem sic per magnum spatium cum tanta vi dentium fortiter retinebat, quod tandem oportebat sacerdotem non sine magna difficultate et ingenio singulari dictum calicem	**contingentibus breviter disseramus**, ut finem huc secunde parti ponere valeamus. (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 354–55 [2.12.34–35])	

de ipsius virgineis dentibus quasi violenter abstrahere. Quo fact, iuxta ipsius consuetudinem virginis, tamquam totaliter sursum acta et in abyssum divine degustationis absorta, per plures horas quasi exanimis et abstracta in totum a cunctis extrinsecis sensibus reddebatur. Dicte autem ipsius virginis vehementis cum dentibus applicationis ad calicem notabile testimonium et admirabile signum fuit quod duo calices, quos cum paramentis idoneis virgo sacra apud se retinebat pro opportuna celebratione missarum ad votum, prout a papa Gregorio XI sibi indultum fuerat prosequenda, ita erant in suis summitatibus ab ipsius virginis dentibus intercisi, ac si forma subtiles et de materia stagnea sive plumbea extitissent, cum tamen ambo essent de argento peroptimo. Et unus ipsorum quem a quodam nobili in civitate Ianue gratis et amore Dei susceperat, tempore quo ipsa ibidem fuit in reditu cum dicto Gregorio XI de Avinione, triginta duobus ducatis constitisset, licet minoris quantitatis alius foret atque valoris. Et istud pluries vidit et exertus est supradictus frater et magister Bartholomeus, non solum multotiens ipsam virginem in confessione sacramentali audiendo, sed etiam eidem quam sepe sacramentum eucaristie conferendo, nec non et hoc ipsum totum vidit quidam frater Thomas Antonii de Senis, de quo pluries supra facta est mentio et		

alii non pauci fratres et sacerdotes cum sociis ac etiam utriusque sexus persone, que interfuere celebrationibus supradictis. Insuper et quidam venerabilis religiosus frater Gregorius de Arimino in sacra theologia magister et doctor eximius ordinis heremitarum sancti Augustini, in presentia cuiusdam venerabilis domini presbiteri Leonardi Pisani de Venetiis et aliis quam pluribus venerandis personis, hoc inter alia de ista virgine testimonium perhibuisse dignoscitur; quod videlicet, cum in urbe romana, ubi tunc ipse venerandus magister erat et ipse aliquando eandem virginem ex singulari gratia post celebrationem misse comunicaret, evidenter advertit cum aliis circumstantibus una pre admiratione stupentibus hostiam consecratam per se ipsam de patena quam tenebat in manibus sive de ipsis suis manibus vel digitis prosilire et recto itinere in os virginis evolare. Et hoc ipsum in civitate Venetiarum multotiens habuit recitare supradictus dominus presbiter Leonardus coram non paucis hominibus reverendis presentibus etiam supradicto fratre Thoma, tunc Venetis predicante, et coram quidam domino presbitero Iohanne de Puteo, qui etiam a supradicto reverendo magistro id ipsum audivit oraculo vive vocis et adhuc amplius utpote quod, cum idem supradictus magister Gregorius hanc virginem comunicasset et os calicis ori ipsius		

virginis apposuisset, sumpto per ipsam vino taliter dictum calicem accepit ipsa virgo cum dentibus et astrinxit, quod non sine singulari violentia eundem de ore et dentibus eiusdem virginis ad se retraxit, intercisa summitate ipsius calicis remanente. Et cum dictus magister super hiis vehementer, ut supra dictum est, cum aliis circumastantibus stuperet, ab eisdem se fassus est audivisse quod non solum taliter, sed etiam accidisse aliquando quod ab altari capelle usque ad locum introitus eiusdem, ubi tunc virgo residebat, in ore ipsius consecrata hostia evolasset. Porro plura sunt superius recitata que hanc tangunt materiam, que replicare foret superfluum **et ideo de huius sacramenti mirabilibus finem hic faciamus, sed de miraculis circa sanctorum reliquias contingentibus breviter disseramus**, ut finem huic secunde parti ponere valeamus. (Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*', 132–35)		

Table 4. Comparison between Caffarini's third addition, Raymond's original text, and the Middle English *Lyf*.

Caffarini's third addition (ζ sub-family)	Raymond's original text	*Lyf*
. . . **Quibus dictis, cuncta que viderat recitavit filiis et filiabus qui et que circumstabant sacrum corpus eius servantes et sit hic finis huius capituli.** Poterit autem huic capitulo fieri additio per infrascriptum modum, videlicet: Etiam pro conformitate materie non est silentio transeundum de duabus aliis revelationibus seu visionibus, que infra mensem a transitu sacre virginis duobus venerabilibus viris diversimode ac divisim noscuntur de ipsa virgine et eius ostensione glorie contigisse. Quarum una facta fuit cuidam venerabili Deo domino Thome Petra, etatis grandeve ac domini pape protonotario et in Christo prefate virginis precipuo filio. De qua visione cum a prefato domino, existente Rome in curia domini Bonifatii pape noni, eiusdem visionis series de Venetiis per quendam reverendum magistrum Bartholomeum de Senis, ordinis fratrum predicatorum tunc priorem conventus sanctorum Iohannis et Pauli eiusdem ordinis, per plures litteras peteretur instanter, ipsam visionem ibidem, scilicet Venetiis et	. . . **Quibus dictis, cuncta que viderat recitavit filis et filiabus, qui et que circumstabant sacrum corpus eius servantes. Et sit hic finis huius capituli.** (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 396 [3.4.33])	. . . **Thenne she respyred and tolde to her susters and to other ghostely children of heres what vysyon she had suche a tyme, al as it is rehersed. Thus endeth this chapitre.** (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 378)

eidem magistro ac priori transmisit in scriptis sub infrascripto tenore. Videlicet. . . . [letter from Tommaso Petra to Bartolomeo Dominici] [letter from Giovanni dalle Celle to Barduccio Canigiani] (Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*', 136–44)		

Table 5. Comparison between Raymond's original text, Maconi's addition, and the Middle English *Lyf*.

Raymond's original text	Maconi's addition (θ sub-family)	*Lyf*
. . . Cui illa compatiens ait: 'Ego hac nocte quantum Christus concesserit laborabo, instando apud Dominum indefesse, quod dignetur nobis hanc misericordiam facere ut eum restituat pristine sanitati'. Hiis dictis prefatus Stephanus ad infirmum redit opemque de celo promictit; sequenti die venit virgo visitatum infirmum et ex parte omnipotentis Dei precipit infirmitati ne procedat ulterius, infirmo autem ut redeat ad pristinam sanitatem. Dixit et facta sunt, nam ex illa hora infirmus convaluit et infra paucissimos dies restitutus est pristine sanitati, nec dubito	. . . Cui benigna virgo compassa materna caritate respondit: 'Ut quid filii mi turbaris vel doles si Deus vult Nerium fratrem tuum de suis laboribus premiare? Non' inquit 'debes dolere sed letari.' Ad quam ille: 'Dulcissima mater obsecro ut vocem meam audiatis et eum iuvetis, quia non dubito quod si vultis potestis'. At ipsa maternum affectum continere non valens ait: 'Hortabar ut conformitatem haberes cum voluntate divina, sed ex quo te video taliter afflictum, cum cras ad missam accessero pro comunione sancta, reducas hoc ad memoriam	. . . To whom this holy mayde answerde thus: 'sone, why art thou heui? thou sholdest not be sory for thy felawe, ffor our lorde wyl rewarde hym in blysse for his pacyence in sufferyng of that sekenes'. Thenne he sayd agayn: 'dere moder, yett here myn prayer at this tyme and helpe hym: for I wote well ye may, and ye wyll'. Thenne she sayd: 'well, sone, I see well that thou art not in will to conforme the to the wil of god as I haue tolde the. Therfore, sythe I see that thou art soo tourmentyd for hym, come to me tomorowe whan I go to here masse and be houselyd, and

quin in momento eum potuisset curare, sed ad fugiendum favores humanos sic voluit operari virtutem sibi concessam ex alto, quod infirmo prodesset et sue humili reputationi nequaquam obesse valeret. . . . (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 308–9 [2.8.44–45])	meam et ibi promitto quod precem hanc Domino porrigam. Tu vero Deum orabis ut exaudiat me'. Tunc Stephanus hac promissione contentus ac letus mane sequenti tempestive coram sacra virgine, cum iret ad missam, humiliter genua flectens ait: 'Oro, mater mea, ne sim fraudatus a desiderio meo'. Que tunc in eadem missa communicavit et post moram et sue sancte mentis excessum, iuxta consuetudinem suam, tandem sensibus corporalibus est restituta et statim dictum Stephanum expectantem ibidem subridens locuta est, dicens: 'Gratiam habes quam petis'. Et ipse: 'Numquid mater mea liberabatur Nerius?'. Et illa: 'Firmiter liberabatur, quia Dominus eum nobis restituit'. Tunc ille gradu non lento accessit ad egrotum ipsum in Domino confortans et post paulum medici, venientes et signa sua multipliciter considerantes, de salute cuius omnino desperaverant cepertunt inter se dicere possibile fore quod adhuc sanetur. Ipse vero, iuxta verbum virginis, successive convaluit usque ad sanitatem perfectam . . . (Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 308–9 [2.8.44–45])	reduce this mater to myn mynde: and I shall sende vp thyn prayer to god; and thou shalt praye for me that I maye be herde'. Thenne stephen was well apayed wyth this byheste. Erly on the morowe he mette wyth this holy mayde goyng for to here masse. Assone as he aspyed her, he fyl doune on his knees and prayed her that she wolde not forgete hym of that he spake to her the daye afore. After-tyme whan she was hoselyd, she was rauysshed from her bodely wyttes and prayed our lord for that seke man. Soon after she was restoryd ayen to her bodely wyttes and came to the same Stephene smylyng, the whiche abode her there of an answere, and sayde vnto hym thus: 'Sone, thou hast the grace that thou hast asked.' Thenne he asked her whether Neryus shold be deliuerd of his sekenes. She sayd, ye. Wyth that he wente gladly to his felawe and badde hym be of good chere, for he shall be hole. And soo he was, full tendaunt aboute for to recouer hym. . . . (Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 299)

Chapter 2

Stefano Maconi's and Bartolomeo da Ravenna's *Epistolae*

Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* is by far and large the most popular and important of Catherine's hagiographical sources, but it is only one of many such texts in circulation in the Late Middle Ages. Another major work is the so-called Processo Castellano, a collection of written testimonies gathered between 1411 and 1416 for a diocesan enquiry into Catherine's sanctity which aimed to assess the legitimacy of her growing cult.[1] Two of the testimonies, letters by the Carthusians Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo da Ravenna, also circulated independently of other depositions, spread more widely than other parts of the volume, and reached medieval England.[2] Just like with Raymond's *Legenda maior*, a collation of surviving copies of these letters and consideration of manuscript evidence enables a precise reconstruction of their textual history, which will provide an explanation for their presence in England. In a case that is analogous to the transmission of the *Legenda maior*, English copies of these two *Epistolae* contain revisions by Stefano Maconi and can be linked back to Carthusian channels of transmission.

But, originally, these two letters were not Carthusian texts: they were part of a larger body of testimonies about Catherine's virtues and deeds, the so-called Processo Castellano.[3] As mentioned in chapter 1, among the people most dedicated to Catherine's cause was Tommaso da Siena 'Caffarini', who lived in Venice for forty years, from 1394 to his death in 1434. There, Caffarini performed influential roles in the city's religious institutions: prior of two important Dominican convents, first San Zanipolo (1409–1411) and later San Domenico (1414–1429?), as well as director of local Dominican lay penitents

1. The texts of all depositions have been critically edited: *Il Processo Castellano. Con appendice di documenti sul culto e la canonizzazione di S. Caterina*, ed. Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici 9 (Milan: Fratelli Bocca, 1942).

2. The two letters are given different titles in different catalogues. I use the titles given on Mirabile: *Epistola de gestis et virtutibus sanctae Catherinae* for Stefano Maconi's letter and *Epistola Thomae Antonii de Senis* for Bartolomeo da Ravenna.

3. For the complete history of the Processo Castellano, see Laurent's introduction to his edition (V–CIV) and, for an account in English, George Ferzoco, 'The *Processo Castellano* and the Canonization of Catherine of Siena', in *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 185–201.

(from 1396).[4] The presence of Caffarini and of other prominent followers of Catherine's cemented Venice as one of the earliest and most active hotspots of Catherine's cult. In the city, beside textual and image production and the translation of key relics, devotion to Catherine was fostered through a busy activity of preaching.[5] In 1411, a sermon delivered by Bartolomeo da Ferrara for the celebrations of Catherine's *dies natalis*, the anniversary of her death, apparently caused some uneasiness among the congregation at San Zanipolo. While many were roused by tales of Catherine's sanctity, some reportedly questioned the appropriateness of dedicating such high honours to a person who, at that time, was not officially recognized as a saint by the Church. For this reason, the case was brought to the attention of the relevant church authority, Francesco Bembo, the Bishop of Castello, whose diocese included the territories of the city of Venice and whose see gave the name to the Processo Castellano. The process was set into motion by people apparently sympathetic with the cause of Catherine's canonization and who were probably hoping to ground Catherine's local cult in ecclesiastical approval, rather than quash it.[6] Bartolomeo da Ferrara and Tommaso da Siena, who preached on Catherine's life and virtues on her 1411 feast day, were summoned to the Bishop of Castello and asked to submit testimonies to Bembo for his assessment of the legitimacy of these commemorations. Caffarini elicited from his contacts further statements confirming Catherine's holiness and, in the years between 1411 and 1416,[7] a total of twenty-four people sent depositions and other documents for inclusion in the proceedings of the trial. The result is a voluminous collection of para-hagiographical and historical material on Catherine's life and her early cult. Whatever the initial intentions behind the Processo Castellano, its effect, in due course, was to secure Catherine's tardy and difficult canonization: members of the papal committee who eventually canonized her in 1461, in fact, went back to the proceedings of the Processo Castellano for their evaluation.[8]

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[4]. For a biographical sketch of Caffarini's life and his Venetian period, see his entry in *DBI*: Fernanda Sorelli, 'Tommaso da Siena', *DBI* (2019), 96:154–57. Also available online, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/tommaso-da-siena_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[5]. For the production of Catherinian texts in Venice, see Nocentini, 'Lo *scriptorium*'; for Caffarini's involvement in the production of Catherinian images, see Giunta, 'L'immagine di S. Caterina da Siena', 69–70; for Venetian relics, see Jennifer McFarland, 'Relics, Reinvention, and Reform in Renaissance Venice: Catherine of Siena's Stigmata at the Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo', *Renaissance Studies* 34, no. 2 (2019): 278–302.

[6]. See Ferzoco, 'The *Processo Castellano* and the Canonization', 190–92; *Processo Castellano*, VIII.

[7]. For the complex chronology of these testimonies, see *Processo Castellano*, IX–XI.

[8]. See Krafft, 'Many Strategies and One Goal', 25–45.

Not only is the Processo Castellano a collection of invaluable historical significance, but two depositions—the two letters by Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo da Ravenna—are also important literary documents with a history that pertains to medieval English literary culture. Unlike other texts coming out of the enquiry, these two letters spread beyond the narrow juridical context of the Processo Castellano and were included in spiritual miscellanies of larger devotional interests.

The two letters have a joint history. The first stages of this history, because of the legal nature of the Processo Castellano, are well-documented and their chronology has been reconstructed in detail by Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent in his edition of the trial proceedings.[9] On 1 August 1411, Tommaso Caffarini sends to the Charterhouse at Pavia a request that Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo da Ravenna, who had known Catherine when she was alive, offer their testimonies on Catherine's life and doctrine, verify them with the Charterhouse's seal, have them undersigned by notaries, and send them back to Caffarini in Venice.[10] The two Carthusians comply: Stefano finishes his lengthy letter on 26 October 1411 and Bartolomeo completes his shorter one on the following day.[11] On 20 June 1412, Caffarini entrusts them to Francesco Bembo's notary and the two letters are therefore included in the larger volume of depositions.[12] Once the investigation was deemed complete, the whole proceedings were copied out and disseminated by Tommaso Caffarini, but these copies remained on the Italian peninsula.[13] At this point, however, Stefano Maconi's and Bartolomeo da Ravenna's letters began circulating separately from the other depositions, and even internationally. In his meticulous research on the Processo Castellano, Laurent already observed that these two texts achieved a wider dissemination than other testimonies, and compiled a list of manuscripts in which they are found—a list which is still up-to-date eighty years later.[14] What remained hitherto unnoticed is the fact that these manuscripts do not simply excerpt the letters from the proceedings of the Processo Castellano, but they represent a second redaction of these letters. As I will argue in this chapter, philological evidence suggests that some years after the Processo Castellano had concluded, Stefano Maconi received a copy of the proceedings, re-read and

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9. *Processo Castellano*, XVI–XXI, LXXI–LXXXIII.
10. *Processo Castellano*, 255–56.
11. *Processo Castellano*, 273, 277.
12. *Processo Castellano*, 256.
13. *Processo Castellano*, LXX–CII. All five surviving fifteenth-century copies are of Venetian origin and Italian provenance.
14. *Processo Castellano*, LXXI–LXXXIII. The shelfmark of each of these manuscripts will be given below when discussing in detail the textual history of these letters (sections 2.1 and 2.2).

revised his own deposition and Bartolomeo da Ravenna's, and disseminated them through European Charterhouses. It is this second, Carthusian version of these two letters that reached medieval England.

2.1 Stefano Maconi's *Epistola de gestis et virtutibus sanctae Catharinae*

Stefano Maconi's deposition for the Processo Castellano is a refined literary document which offers a deeply intimate portrait of Catherine's life and sanctity. In a mixture of personal recollections and insights on Catherine's spiritual qualities, Maconi writes about how his life intertwined with Catherine's—their life-changing first encounter, when she mediated a civic quarrel and dissuaded Stefano from the dissoluteness of his youth; his work as her secretary; her death and her advice that Stefano join the Carthusians; their travels together in Avignon and Genoa, when Catherine healed Stefano from an illness. As he narrates episodes from her life, Maconi draws attention to Catherine's diplomatic abilities, her God-given doctrine, and the taxing effects on her body of her extreme ascetic practices, made vivid by graphic descriptions of her fasting and recurrent ecstasies. Maconi's letter gives readers a highly personal depiction of Catherine from the point of view of a devoted disciple and explains how Stefano's life changed its course from the moment he chanced upon Catherine's extraordinary virtues and holiness. It is a short document that complements well other hagiographical material about Catherine and was, in fact, a fairly popular text that found its way into several medieval manuscripts both in Latin and in two medieval European vernaculars, Italian and Middle English, and that was included in at least three early printed books.[15]

But before the letter was disseminated and reached a wider audience it underwent a process of revision by its author. As a systematic collation of surviving witnesses shows, this revision was carried out in two steps similar to the two stages of revision Maconi implemented in Carthusian copies of the *Legenda maior* (see chapter 1). First, Stefano re-read and annotated a copy of his deposition, correcting the text and adding, in the margins, clarifications, alternative phrasings, and even a short new paragraph expanding his earlier

[15]. A list of manuscripts with the Latin and Middle English versions of the letter is given below in this section. To this list, we must add Lucca, Biblioteca Statale, MS. 2010, which contains an Italian translation of the letter. The letter was also printed in Latin in Misinta's *Dialogus Seraphice ac diue Catharine de Senis*, sigs. a4r–b1v, and in Italian in Manutius's *Epistole devotissime*, sigs. *2r–*7v and in *Epistole et orationi della seraphica vergine santa Catharina da Siena* (Venice: Federico Toresano, 1548) (*EDIT16 CNCE* 10271; *USTC* 819712), sigs. *2v–*6v. See also Luciano Gargan, ed., *L'antica biblioteca della Certosa di Pavia*, Sussidi Eruditi 47 (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1998), 14n35; *Processo Castellano*, XIX.

recollections. Second, he further refines his letter, by rewording some of his marginal additions, finalizing their form and position in the text, and by adding a few more phrases and sentences. This revised version of the letter, with a sharper and more effective prose, some corrections in historical details, and additional confirmations of Catherine's sanctity, is circulated throughout Europe, mainly through European charterhouses, and is the version that could be read in medieval England.

Maconi's second reading and first set of revisions can be dated with some certainty to the years 1421–22. As Stefano explains in an autograph note written on a parchment fragment, Tommaso da Siena sent to the Charterhouse at Pavia a copy of the proceedings of the whole Processo Castellano—now Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AE.IX.35 (from now on *M3*):[16]

> Iste liber pertinet ad domum Sancte Marie propre Papiam, ordinis Cartusiensis, quem ego, frater Stephanus, monacus professus eiusdem domus, habui a venerabili patre fratre Thoma Antonii de Senis, qui nunc est prior conventus Sancti Dominici de Venetiis, loco cuius exhibui prefato fratri Thome Dyalogum quem sancta mater Katerina composit licet in vulgari, sed ego latinizavi.[17]
>
> [This book belongs to the Carthusian house of Saint Mary near Pavia. I, brother Stefano, a monk of that house, received this from the venerable father, brother Tommaso da Antonio da Siena, who is now prior of the convent of Saint Dominic in Venice. To that place, to the aforementioned brother Tommaso, I sent the *Dialogo* which our holy mother Catherine composed in the vernacular and which I translated into Latin.]

According to Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, Maconi's deployment of specific terms to indicate his and Caffarini's clerical roles gives historians a very short window of time in which Tommaso's donation of the volume and Stefano's annotations can be dated, from 1421 to 1422. In fact, in 1421, after a brilliant and quick career that saw him soar to the very top ranks of the Carthusian Order (Maconi was elected prior of several important charterhouses and, from 1398 to 1410, he was Prior General of the Carthusian monasteries

[16]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in *Manus*, <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/cnmd/0000114346>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[17]. The strip of parchment with this note was once pasted onto the front flyleaf and is now bound in the codex and appended before the start of the volume. See description in *Manus*.

still obedient to Rome), Stefano retired from administrative roles and stepped down from his position as prior of the Charterhouse at Pavia to go back to life as a simple monk, a 'monacus professus'. Tommaso da Siena's biography dictates the *terminus ante quem*: he was prior of Saint Dominic in Castello (Venice) only until late July 1422. Assuming, as it is certainly reasonable to do, that Stefano was up to date with his friend's career and that he wrote this ownership note at the same time as the other marginalia in the codex, Maconi's note is a very precise timestamp for dating to 1421–22 his annotations to his earlier deposition.

Many scholars have made references to the marginalia in M_3 in their works, but only in relation to their controversial status as autographs. Eminent Catherinian Scholars are divided on whether these marginalia, and a group of other handwritten notes in related manuscripts, can be attributed to Maconi or not: Robert Fawtier and Ezio Franceschini exclude that the annotations in M_3 are in Stefano's hand, while Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, Silvia Nocentini, and more recent scholars tend to defend the opposite view.[18] The contrasting responses from the same corpus of handwriting must be, at least in part, due to the complexity of Maconi's palaeographical profile. On the whole, there survive a discrete number of autograph letters, a significant stint in a codex, and several marginal annotations. In spite of the wealth of evidence, establishing with certainty if all these examples were written by the same hand poses some difficulties: first, the evidence spans a period of around thirty years, so palaeographical analysis must reason diachronically and take into account possible evolutions of Stefano's handwriting across time; second, this evidence is representative of a variety of genres and of influences of different scripts, from bookhand to more cursive hands; and third, while there are some very distinctive letterforms that can help with identification, Maconi, it seems, allowed a degree of flexibility in the morphology of letters. Some of the intricacies of this case have been recently untangled by Sandra Gorla, who has carried out a preliminary, but meticulous and fruitful, palaeographical analysis.[19] While some examples of handwriting traditionally attributed to Stefano still await further work—and, therefore, Gorla is prudent in drawing any overall conclusion on Stefano's scribal activity—she notes that the marginal

[18]. A detailed survey of scholars' arguments on this hand and complete references to their works is given in Sandra Gorla, 'Tra lettere autografe e postillati presunti: indagini preliminari sulle scritture di Stefano Maconi', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 126 (2024): 445–95. The following summary is based on Gorla's article and palaeographical expertise.

[19]. Gorla, 'Tra lettere autografe e postillati presunti'.

annotations in *M₃* present very few differences from what we know to be Maconi's hand, and can ultimately be considered his autographs.[20]

Moving beyond graphical and formal aspects of the marginalia in *M₃*, the content of Maconi's notes is also worth dwelling on: from a reading of the marginal additions, in fact, it transpires that these are not just authorial corrections to scribal errors, but, rather, they represent a different kind of intervention, a first, tentative, authorial revision. Certainly, some are straightforward corrections to a corrupted text: wrong case endings, skipped or incomplete words, and incorrect dates are all erased, rewritten, and completed to bring the text closer to the letter Maconi sent Caffarini in 1411. Other marginalia, however, actually distance *M₃* from Maconi's original letter. When reading, in fact, Stefano does not limit himself to reconstructing his 1411 deposition, but he begins revising his prose. Most of the revisions at this stage are short and stylistic in nature—like the occasional subject, adverb, or verb added to make the wording more specific.[21] However, Maconi also includes a couple of clarifications that give further information on minor historical details—for instance, on the material of Catherine's funereal monument and on attitudes to Catherine's sanctity:

> ad Minervam, videlicet, Predicatorum ecclesiam, detuli tumulandam, ymo verius in capsa cedrina et honorabili tumulo ⌜**marmoreo**⌝ conservandam. (*M₃*, fol. 58r)
>
> [I took her to Santa Maria sopra Minerva, that is, the church of the Order of Preachers, to be buried in a cedar coffin and to be kept in a worthy marble tomb.]
>
> Et, interrumpendo verba sua, me liberatum esse clamavi, ⌜**cunctis qui aderant admirantibus**⌝, et annis multis postea cum perfectissima sanitate perseveravi. (*M₃*, fol. 59v)
>
> [And, interrupting her, I shouted I was delivered, and all those who were present were in admiration, and afterwards, for many years, I stayed in perfect health.]

[20]. Gorla, 'Tra lettere autografe e postillati presunti', 471–75.

[21]. See the central column in Table 6 for a transcription of Maconi's marginal notes in *M₃*, and the side columns for a comparison of these *loci critici* in the first and second recension of his letter. I have left out of the tables those marginal and interlinear additions where Maconi simply corrects errors and included only instances where he revises the text.

> Quorum unus per totam Italiam valde famosus mihi dixit: 'Solus Deus et ego sciebamus illud quod ista virgo mihi dixit'. ⌜**Unde vere cognosco quod est valde maior in conspectu Dei quam esse credatur**⌝. (*M₃*, fol. 60r)
>
> Of these, a man very famous throughout Italy told me: 'Only God and I knew the thing this virgin told me'. And from this, I recognize that she is held in much higher regard in God's eyes than she is believed to be.]

But with these small clarifications comes a more substantial addition, too: at the bottom of fol. 61r, Maconi adds a further recollection on Catherine's presence at the papal court at Avignon. In his original letter, Stefano writes that Catherine withstood successfully a probing interrogation by three sceptical cardinals; in his revision, he adds as a concluding remark Gregory XI's response to the treatment his cardinals reserved for Catherine:

> Summus quoque Pontifex, audiens illos ita virginem irritasse, moleste tulit et apud eam humiliter excusavit, asserens quia non fuit intentionis eius ipsos ita fecisse, persuadendo quod si forte venire presumerent ultra, quod ipsa faceret hostia contra sua pectora claudi. (*M₃*, fol. 61r)
>
> [The Supreme Pontiff, too, hearing that they had pestered the virgin, reacted adversely and apologized humbly to her, saying that it was not his intention that they should behave as they did and persuading her to have doors slammed in their faces, should they come back and demand more.]

All in all, with these marginal notes Maconi intervenes on his original letter: he begins to edit his prose and to mark places where more substantial additions could solidify Catherine's claims to sanctity.

The process of revision does not terminate with the annotations in *M₃*: Maconi carries on further edits to the letter, but on a larger scale, ultimately creating a second redaction of his text. This second version of the letter can be read in eight manuscripts.[22] In these codices, Maconi's *Epistola* survives apart from the other testimonies of the Processo Castellano:

[22]. These manuscripts are differentiated only by some minor variant readings, especially in the use of synonyms and alternative word order.

1. *B*: Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, 1741 (*olim* lat. 893) [14 February 1485], fols. 1r–8r.[23]
2. *C*: Cesena, Biblioteca Comunale Malatestiana, S.XXXIX.17 [*s.* XV^2], fols. 97r–107v.[24]
3. M_1: Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AD.IX.11 [*s.* XV], fols. 59r–68v.[25]
4. M_2: Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AD.IX.38 [*s.* XV], fols. 176r–183r.[26]
5. O_5: Oxford, Magdalen College, MS lat 141 [*s.* XV^1, *ca.* 1433], fols 39r–42r.[27]
6. V_1: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 3466 [*s.* XIV], fols. 149r–153v.[28]
7. V_2: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. n. 12708 [1485–1499], fols. 82r–86r.[29]
8. V_3: Vienna, Schottenstift, 207 (*olim* Hübl 193) [*s.* XV], fols. 117v–124v.[30]

The version in these manuscripts incorporates into the text of the letter most of the changes Maconi introduced in the margins of M_3. Some small edits do not make it into the revised

[23]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in Lodovico Frati, 'Indice dei codici latini conservati nella R. Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna', *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 16 (1908): 384–85. Frati misprints the shelfmark and gives '1742' instead.

[24]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in Paolo Zanfini, Andrea Daltri, and Paolo Urbini, eds., *Catalogo Aperto dei Manoscritti Malatestiani* <http://catalogoaperto.malatestiana.it/ricerca/?oldform=mostra_codice_completo.jsp?CODICE_ID=329> Last modified on March 18, 2016.

[25]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in *Manus*, <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/cnmd/0000113808>. Accessed on January 6, 2025.

[26]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in *Manus*, <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/cnmd/0000113848>. Accessed on January 6, 2025.

[27]. The date above refers to the first codicological unit, where Maconi's letter is found. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in Henry O. Coxe, *Catalogus codicuum mss. Collegii B. Mariæ Magdalenæ*, in *Catalogus codicum mss qui in Collegiis aliusque Oxoniensibus hodie adservantur* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1852), 2:67. An updated catalogue is being prepared by David Rundle, whom I would like to thank for sharing his draft entry for this manuscript.

[28]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in *manuscripta.at*, <https://manuscripta.at/?ID=12328>. Accessed on January 6, 2025.

[29]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in *manuscripta.at*, <https://manuscripta.at/?ID=45028>. Accessed on January 6, 2025.

[30]. A catalogue description of the manuscript is available in *manuscripta.at*, <https://manuscripta.at/?ID=28707>. Accessed on January 6, 2025.

version of the letter—mostly nonessential additions of the pronoun *ego* and of the adverb *vero*—but all substantive modifications are finalized, often after being reworked, repositioned, and recast in slightly alternative phrasings (see Table 6). Stefano also implemented some structural changes to prepare his letter for the next stage in its textual history and to open it up for a wider readership than the functionaries involved in the Processo Castellano: he removes contextual and paratextual elements such as the rubrics that, in proceedings of the whole trial, help readers navigate through the topics of each deposition,[31] and the opening and closing that give information about the occasion of the original letter and the notaries who undersigned it.

Apart from these macrolevel changes, when producing this second version, Maconi took the opportunity to revise the form and contents of the text further, according to similar criteria to his earlier edits in M_3: stylistic changes and corrections or additions of historical details, especially where there was the potential to enhance Catherine's saintly profile further (see Table 7).[32] For instance, with these revisions, even if minor and at the phrase level, readers get more vivid descriptions of Catherine's fasting practices: Maconi expands the short list of foods Catherine used to eat to include rotten grapes and then specifies the means by which she induced vomiting after eating, a fennel stick:

> caseum non comedebat, nisi quando bene putridus erat . . . et cum uno virgulto quem ad stomachum immittebat, donec violenter per eamdem viam et illum succum et aquam potatam ad extra revocabat. (*Processo Castellano*, 267)

[31]. These headings were not part of Maconi's original letter, the document he sent to Caffarini on the latter's request (now in Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.III.6 [*olim* T.III.7], fol. 112) and, consequently, Laurent does not report them in his edition. However, the headings were inserted in the trial proceedings, and thus were part of the copy Maconi works on for these revisions.

[32]. Table 7 gives selective variant readings between Maconi's original letter and the later, revised version. I have not recorded those variants that are only found in some of the manuscripts and which must therefore be scribal, but I have included only variant readings shared across a group of manuscripts, generally at least three. However, I did include those idiosyncratic readings found in O_5 because these, even if not relevant for a discussion of Maconi's authorial revisions, are of interest to the English reception of the letter. These idiosyncratic variants also help clarify the relationship between O_5 and the Middle English translation of Maconi's letter: while clearly related, some omissions in O_5 show that the Middle English translation was not carried out from this manuscript, but from one slightly higher up the *stemma codicum*.

> Caseum vero non comedebat nisi quando bene putridus erat **et similiter uvas** . . . et cum uno virgulto **feniculi vel altro**, quem ad stomacum immittebat, violenter per eamdem viam illum sucum et aquam potatam ad extra revocabat. (*M₂*, fol. 180v)
>
> [She did not eat cheese unless it was very rotten **and similarly grapes** . . . and through a stick **of fennel, or something else,** that she inserted in her stomach, she violently drew back out from the same way they went in the juice and water she had drunk.]

Catherine's abnegating and self-effacing through food consumption, and thus her holiness, are brought to the surface even more by this additional level of systematic revisions.[33] Greater attention is also given to the behaviours and psychological states of the saint and her followers. In addition to the expansions already included marginally in *M₃*, in this second version of his *Epistola* Maconi specifies further the intensity of the pain Catherine endured in her final days, as well as her serene disposition in the face of her own death. Stefano also highlights the astonishment Catherine provoked in her audience, even in learned men, when she would demonstrate her profound knowledge of theology and Scripture:

> ubi post multos labores infatigabiliter ad honorem Dei deportatos diem felicissime clausit extremum in presentia mea. (*Processo Castellano*, 261)
>
> Ubi post multos **et ut ita dixerim intollerabiles** labores infatigabiliter ad honorem Dei portatos **et ylarissime tolleratos** felicissimo cursu diem clausit extremum in presentia mea. (*M₂*, fol. 177r)

[33]. Catherine's *anorexia mirabilis* has been the subject of several influential historical studies and is thus one of the most identifiable aspects of her devotion: Rudolph M. Bell dedicates to her a chapter in his book on *anorexia mirabilis*, as does the psychoanalytical study by Ginette Raimbault and Caroline Eliacheff. Catherine also receives extensive treatment in Caroline Walker Bynum's influential account of food-related religious practices and medieval women. See Rudolph M. Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, epilogue by William N. Davis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Ginette Raimbault and Caroline Eliacheff, *Les Indomptables. Figures de l'anorexie* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1989); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[where after many **and, so to speak, unbearable** labours tirelessly sustained for God's honour **and endured most gladly,** she happily came to her end in my presence.]

Omnem sacram paginam ita lucidissime declarabat et interpretabatur, ut omnes quantumcumque docti nimis admirarentur. (*Processo Castellano*, 268)

Omnem sacram paginam ita lucidissime declarabat et interpretabatur, ut omnes quantumcumque docti **sive magistri velut attoniti mirarentur** (M_2, fol. 181r)

[She would elucidate and interpret a whole page of the Bible in a way that everyone, even if learned men **or Masters, would be left in admiration as if stunned**]

When read *en masse*, Maconi's revisions bring to light some of the intricate actions that went into the making of a holy woman: through an ongoing process of textual composition, second readings, and revision, Catherine's followers crafted a vast corpus of highly 'movable' (*à la* Zumthor)[34] texts always open to further changes, historical corrections, and personal recollections that could better capture Catherine's charisma—both in the theological and secularized sense of the term.

And it is the personal nature of these further revisions that leaves no doubt of Maconi's authorship. Unlike the preliminary edits in the margins of M_3, these additional revisions are not written in Maconi's own hand, though two of the manuscripts containing this revised version of the letter seem to contain autograph marginal corrections (M_1 and M_2, both from the Charterhouse at Pavia), which attests to a process of authorial correction before wider transmission and to an extremely thorough editorial process on Maconi's part.[35]

The content of these revisions is also clearly authorial, as they presuppose an intimacy with the details of his own and of Catherine's life, details that would be hard to

[34]. See Paul Zumthor's influential definition of *mouvance*: Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, Collection Poéthique (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

[35]. See Gorla, 'Tra lettere autografe e postillati presunti', 478–83. Gorla raises some doubts regarding M_2, whose corrections may not have been written by Maconi but by a scribe trained in the imitation of his handwriting.

imagine from anyone else.[36] (It must be recalled, in fact, that even Raymond of Capua relied on Maconi's knowledge of Catherine and his memories when writing certain sections of the *Legenda maior*.) No scribe, for instance, would have known about a conversation Maconi had with a monk from Vallombrosa and recalled in this addition:

> Tamen adhuc plenius viva voce mihi suprascripta seriose narravit, voce publica virginem extollendo et ad eius devotionem omnes audientes invitantando que de porta mortis extraxerat eum potius precipiendo quam orando. Multum admirans laudabat Altissimum, qui talem atque tantam auctoritatem isti sponse sue concesserat. (*M_2*, fol. 179r)
>
> [He told me what is written above in more detail and in a serious manner, praising publicly this virgin and exhorting everybody that listened to be devoted to the person who dragged him from death's threshold by virtue of orders, more than prayers. In great admiration, he praised the Lord who had granted this virgin such authority.]

Similarly, the highly personal comment on Stefano's declining health is, in all likelihood, authorial:

> Hec ergo pauca nunc occurrunt in testimonium vite sancte virginis Catherine de Senis vestre caritati transmittenda ut a me cum instantia postulastis, que simplici stilo descripsi, et licet in multis occupatus, corde simpliciori dictavi. (*Processo Castellano*, 272)
>
> Hec ergo pauca nunc occurrunt in testimonium vite sancte virginis Katerine de Senis vestre caritati transmittenda, ut a me cum instantia postulastis, que simplici stilo descripsi, et licet **egritudine corporali gravatus et in quam pluribus** occupatus, corde simpliciore dictavi. (*M_2*, fol. 182v)

[36]. For instance, in a revision Maconi corrects the material of Catherine's coffin, from 'cedrina' (cedar wood) to 'cypressina' (cypress wood). Regarding this detail, Lidia Bianchi writes: 'il Maconi è l'unico a dare questo ultimo particolare, come chi ne abbia avuto direttamente cura' (Maconi is the only one to mention this detail, as if he personally took care of [Catherine's burial]). Lidia Bianchi, 'Il sepolcro di S. Caterina da Siena nella basilica di S. Maria Sopra Minerva', in Lidia Bianchi and Diega Giunta, *L'iconografia di S. Caterina da Siena*, vol. 1, *L'immagine* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1988), 21.

> [These briefs words are now available as a testimony of the life of the holy virgin Catherine of Siena and are to be entrusted to your charity, as you insisted. And these words I have written in a simple style and dictated with a simpler heart, **since I am burdened with physical illness** and I am busy with many tasks.]

And it is a plausible comment, too, since he must have carried out his revisions (which must postdate his 1421–1422 annotations in M_3) in his seventies and not long before he died on 7 August 1424.

All in all, palaeographical, textual, and historical evidence neatly converge to delineate a clear picture of the textual history of Maconi's *Epistola de gestis et virtutibus sanctae Catharinae*: on 1 August 1411, Stefano receives Tommaso's request to write a testimony for the Processo Castellano; on 26 October 1411, Stefano signs his letter; in 1421–1422, Caffarini sends him M_3, a volume with the whole proceedings of the Processo Castellano, which Maconi reads and annotates, thus beginning revisions on his earlier deposition; in 1421–1424, Stefano finalizes his revisions, corrects them, and circulates a revised version of his *Epistola*.

The circulation of this revised letter is predominantly Carthusian. While there are some examples of manuscripts belonging to other religious institutions, more than half of the surviving copies are of Carthusian origins: M_1 and M_2 come from the Charterhouse at Pavia, where, we have seen, both redactions of the text originated; *B* is from Enghien (in present-day Belgium); and O_5 from Sheen.[37] English evidence is, again, mostly Carthusian. A copy of the Latin text, now lost, belonged to the Augustinians at Thurgarton Priory,[38] but all surviving manuscripts were once held at Charterhouses: O_5 belonged to Sheen, while an *ex libris* from Beauvale places in Carthusian hands the only known copy of a Middle English translation of Maconi's letter, a translation that is clearly based on this second revision of Maconi's letter (see Table 7).[39]

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[37]. *C* is Dominican; V_2 is Augustinian; and V_3 is Benedictine. For the origins and provenance of all these manuscripts, see the relevant catalogue entries cited above in notes nos. 23–30.

[38]. Teresa Webber and Andrew G. Watson, eds., *The Libraries of the Augustinians Canons*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 6 (London: British Library, 1998), 421.

[39]. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Douce 114. See *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_4492>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

2.2 Bartolomeo da Ravenna's *Epistola Thomae Antonii de Senis*

Closely linked with Maconi's letter, both in its composition and transmission history, is another text about Catherine for which medieval English evidence survives: the *Epistola ad Thomam Antonii de Senis*, a brief and little known letter by the Carthusian Bartolomeo Serafini da Ravenna (d. 1413) which was certainly transmitted to England via Carthusian channels.

Bartolomeo da Ravenna was first prior of the Carthusian community on the island of Gorgona, a small island just off the Tuscan coast.[40] It was on this island, during a visit Catherine made in 1375, that Bartolomeo personally met the saint and became part of her spiritual *famiglia*.[41] The Carthusians at Gorgona enjoyed Catherine's favour.[42] Not only did she personally visit the Gorgona community, her letters tell us she was actively engaged in their spiritual and material sustainment: Catherine campaigned for bringing to the monastery new members and assets, and she took Francesco Tebaldi, one of the novices there, under her wings, sharing with him some aspects of her spiritual doctrine.[43] She also held Prior Bartolomeo in very high esteem and recommended him to Pope Urban VI as one of eight advisors to help the Church with its reforms.[44]

Bartolomeo's own letter informs us that Catherine's high regard for the community at Gorgona also ran in the opposite direction, and relates three episodes which testify to Catherine's saintly reputation among Bartolomeo's Carthusian confrères on the island.[45] First, the author recalls how, during her stay on the island, Catherine foretold that the community was facing an impending danger, how a monk attempted suicide soon after, and how the distressed monk could only be calmed down when Bartolomeo placed on him

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[40]. For Bartolomeo's biography, see Giulio Prunai, 'Bartolomeo da Ravenna (Serafini)' in *DBI* (1964), 6:761–62. Also available online, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bartolomeo-da-ravenna_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[41]. For an account of Catherine's 1375 visit to Gorgona, see Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 332–33 (2.10.29–30).

[42]. For an overview of Catherine's relationship to the community at Gorgona, see Gaetano Bonifacio, 'Santa Caterina e l'Isola di Gorgona', *Bollettino Storico Livornese* 4, no. 2 (1940): 136–40.

[43]. For the letters concerning Gorgona, see Catherine of Siena, *Lettere*, 531–33 (letter T 130; Gi 271; IS 290), 1391–95 (letter T 150; Gi 62; IS 129), 1396–403 (letter T 154; Gi 63; IS 128).

[44]. Catherine of Siena, *Lettere*, 1389–90 (letter T 323; Gi 54; IS 297). See also Catherine's language of praise for Bartolomeo in letter T 130 (for which, see above, note no. 43). For an edition of the official papal bull summoning Bartolomeo to Rome, see *Documenti*, ed. Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent and Francesco Valli, Fontes vitae S. Catharinae Senensis historici 1 (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1936), 53–55.

[45]. The letter is edited in *Processo Castellano*, 274–77.

Catherine's mantle, a gift the Saint left to the monastery at the end of her visit. This powerful anecdote shaped the material life of Bartolomeo's letter and the cult of Catherine's relics: a parchment copy of Bartolomeo's letter, probably his autograph, was attached to a wooden and crystal coffer containing Catherine's habit.[46] The original letter and habit are now lost, but they were gifted by Tommaso Caffarini to the Dominican convent of San Domenico in Venice, where they remained at least until 1749, when the letter was transcribed.[47] After the section about Catherine's mantle, Bartolomeo's letter then goes on to narrate an encounter with a possessed woman from whom he learnt that Catherine's state of perfection was so great that she could have exorcised the demon afflicting her, a task which Bartolomeo and a fellow monk could not perform. Finally, Bartolomeo mentions how Catherine's blessing and her intercession helped the Gorgona brethren avoid a shipwreck when they were caught in a storm on their way back to the island.

Just like Maconi's letter, Bartolomeo's was originally conceived as a deposition for the Processo Castellano. The two testimonies were composed under similar circumstances: both texts were written at the Charterhouse of Pavia, where the two monks were residing at the time of writing, and they are dated just one day apart.[48] This affinity continued to dictate later stages of the letters' textual histories. Bartolomeo's letter is the only other deposition from the Processo Castellano—apart from Maconi's—known to have circulated at a later stage independently of the whole trial.[49] It appears, though, that Bartolomeo's letter achieved a considerably narrower circulation than the missive by his friend. The letter seems to have been mainly known and read as part of the Processo Castellano and only two manuscripts attest to its independent circulation:

1. M_2: Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AD.IX.38 [*s.* XV], fols. 183r–184v.[50]
2. O_5: Oxford, Magdalen College, MS lat 141 [*s.* XV[1], *part.* 1433], fol. 42r–v.[51]

[46]. Flaminio Corner, *Ecclesiae Venetae antiquis monumentis nunc etiam primum editis illustratae ac in decades distributae* (Venice: Giambattista Pasquali, 1749), 9:336.
[47]. Corner, *Ecclesiae Venetae*, 9:336–39.
[48]. On Maconi's and Bartolomeo's roles in the early governance of the Charterhouse of Pavia and in establishing its library, see the introductory chapter to Luciano Gargan's edition of the medieval library's booklist: Gargan, *L'antica biblioteca*, 10–15.
[49]. See *Processo Castellano*, XVIII–LXXIII.
[50]. See note no. 26 above.
[51]. See note no. 27 above.

Even when it survives separate from the context of the trial, Bartolomeo's letter does not circulate on its own, but it follows Maconi's.[52]

A comparison between the text of Bartolomeo's letter as it appears in the Processo Castellano and M_2 and O_5 suggests that Bartolomeo's deposition, too, just like Maconi's, underwent a process of revision. These revisions are only minor, and mainly concern the letter's style and presentation: some phrases are altered to sharpen the syntax and to clarify some of the references; the headings of the Processo Castellano, which summarize the contents of the letter's paragraphs, are removed; the final information about the undersigned witnesses is condensed, which results in an error when reporting the date of composition, 26 October 1411 in the revised letter (it was 27 October 1411 in the original, see Table 8).

The variants of Bartolomeo's letter do not sketch a textual history as clear as the one I have been able to reconstruct for Maconi's deposition. As I have argued above (section 2.1), around 1421–1424 Maconi produced a second version of his deposition, correcting some historical information, expanding the narration to include additional details on some of the events, and making a few stylistic changes. He then circulated this second version of the letter within the Carthusian Order. Since in all surviving manuscripts Bartolomeo's revised deposition always follows the second redaction of Maconi's letter, we can safely assume that the process of revision of the two texts was analogous: Maconi, coming into possession of a copy of the proceedings of the Processo Castellano (M_3), re-examined and adjusted his own letter and the one by his friend, by then dead. He must have considered them worthy testimonies of Catherine's life, since he had them copied and transmitted alongside other Catherinian texts coming out of Charterhouses.

Even more than Maconi's, Bartolomeo's letter is linked with Carthusian transmission. Both manuscripts in which this second redaction survives are, in fact, Carthusian: M_2 was copied out at and owned by the Charterhouse of Pavia, while O_5 was linked with Sheen Charterhouse.[53] And the two manuscripts are clearly related. The text of

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[52]. From Corner's surviving description, it seems that the lost manuscript once in the convent of San Domenico in Venice (see note no. 46 above) only contained Bartolomeo's letter. This is considered by some Bartolomeo's lost original and, as such, it does not pertain to the later stages of the text's history described here. See *Processo Castellano*, XXII.

[53]. For the Milan manuscript and its connection to the Charterhouse of Pavia, see Gargan, *L'antica biblioteca*, 44; for the Oxford manuscript and its Sheen connection, see Ralph Hanna, 'John Dygon, Fifth Recluse of Sheen: His Career, Books, and Acquaintance', in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 127–41; David Rundle, 'Our Imperfect Knowledge: John Dygon and Joanna Greenwood

the two copies corresponds almost word for word, save for some minor differences, short omissions typical of mechanical errors occurring when copying out a text. The two copies, on the whole, are remarkably close and they even use the same rubric to introduce the text, a paratextual element easily susceptible to change by scribes and compilers:

> Sequitur alia copia litterarum quas venerabilis Pater dominus Bartolomeus de Ravenna, olim prior Gorgone, rescripsit prefato fratri Thome Antonii de Senis in suprascripta materia sancte virginis Katerine de Senis. (*M*$_2$, fol. 183r)

> Sequitur alia copia litterarum quas venerabilis Pater dominus Bartholomeus de Ravenna, olim prior Gorgone, rescripsit prefato fratri Thome Antonii de Senis in sup<ra>scripta materea sancte virginis Katerine de Senis. (*O*$_5$, fol. 42r)

There is no evidence that Bartolomeo's revised letter ever circulated outside of Carthusian monasteries, perhaps because its subject matter—the special devotion toward Catherine shown by the Carthusian community at Gorgona—is deeply linked with the Carthusian Order.

Even in England the text did not achieve widespread dissemination. As opposed to the other Catherinian texts analyzed in this thesis, Bartolomeo's letter was not translated into Middle English, and we have no evidence that it was read or known outside of Sheen. Bartolomeo's letter eluded the critical eye, too, and even overviews of Catherine's reception in medieval England never mention it among the texts by and about the Italian saint circulating on the island.[54]

The letter apparently had a rather limited impact on medieval culture at large, but precisely because of its very restricted circulation it is all the more impressive that the text reached England and was copied by an English scribe. We do not know of any other region where the text was known and copied in this revised version, and even in its earlier form it appears to have circulated mainly in Italy—all manuscripts of the hefty Processo

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versus Andrew Holes', in *Middle English Manuscripts and Their Legacies: A Volume in Honour of Ian Doyle*, ed. Corinne Saunders and Richard Lawrie, with Laurie Atkinson, Library of the Written Word—The Manuscript World 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 71–95.

[54]. See Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, esp. 32, 142, 256n7. Brown analyzes in detail Maconi's letter and also cites the Magdalen manuscript, but makes no mention of Bartolomeo's letter. See also Schultze, 'Translating St Catherine of Siena'.

Castellano are of Italian origin, even the lost manuscript which once belonged to the Grande Chartreuse was copied in Italy.[55]

This observation, of course, may well be skewed by three important factors: the unpredictable survival rate of medieval manuscripts; the uneven state of archival research in different European countries; the fact that other witnesses to such a little-known text may easily have been misidentified and miscatalogued. Maconi's letter may here come again to our help: its witnesses may act as a sort of 'control group' against which we can measure the popularity of Bartolomeo's text. As I have mentioned above, Bartolomeo's revised deposition was transmitted jointly with the second redaction of Maconi's letter. However, the latter, more popular, letter is also found detached from Bartolomeo's testimony, paired with other Catherinian texts or on its own. If some witnesses to Bartolomeo's text had been miscatalogued or overlooked, they would most likely appear alongside Maconi's letter. The fact that no other does allows us to overrule the three objections I have posed above and tentatively draw out some conclusions from the limited surviving evidence. Maconi's letter was known and copied across medieval Europe, including in Italy, England, as well as present-day Belgium, Austria, and Czechia. In Italy and, as we have seen, in England, it was also translated into local vernaculars. Bartolomeo's letter, on the other hand, appears to have had a considerably less wide circulation, with sure attestations only in Italy and England. If, like Maconi's letter, it reached the French and German regions, then it must have been deemed less interesting by local scribes, because it left no trace. The fact that an English copy of the text survives, on the contrary, attests to some interest even in one of the most marginal texts in the Catherinian corpus.

It is true, as Brown points out, that many foundational texts by and about Catherine do not seem to have made it to medieval England, such as her letters, her prayers, and much of her biographical material.[56] However, these absences should not eclipse the very significant presences. In fact, when placed in the wider context of the European circulation of some of these texts, English reception of Catherine of Siena stands out for the variety of texts it embraced, and in particular for its interest in some of the less widespread Catherinian material. England rivals Italy, Catherine's own home turf, in terms of number of surviving copies of two of the more niche texts: Bartolomeo da Ravenna's letter and William Flete's *Documento spirituale* (chapter 3), neither attested elsewhere.

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55. *Processo Castellano*, V–CIV.
56. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 200.

Table 6. A comparison between Maconi's marginal notes in *M_3*, his original deposition, and the revised version of his letter.

Position in text		Original letter (*Processo Castellano*, ed. Laurent)	Maconi's marginal notes (*M_3*)	Revised letter (*B*, *C*, *M_1*, *M_2*, *O_5*, *V_1*, *V_2*, *V_3*)
p.	ll.			
260	10	Post modicum temporis	Post modicum ⌜vero⌝ temporis	Post modicum temporis
	15	Queras in corde tuo	Queras ⌜**inquit**⌝ in corde tuo	Queras, **inquit**, in corde tuo *B*, *C*, *M_1*, *M_2*, *O_5*, *V_1*, *V_2*, *V_3*
261	5	et honorabili tumulo	et honorabili tumulo ⌜**marmoreo**⌝	honorabili tumulo ⌜**marmoreo**⌝ *M_2* atque **marmoreo** honorabili tumulo *M_1*, *V_1*, *V_3* et honorabili sepulchro **marmoreo** *C*
	8	ait digitum suum protendendo	ait ⌜**etiam**⌝ digitum suum protendendo	ait **etiam** protendendo digitum *B*, *C*, *M_2*, *O_5*, *V_2*
262	21–22	Numquam dorvmivisset vel comedisset	Numquam dormivisset vel comedisset ⌜**existimo**⌝	Numquam **puto** dormivisset *M_2*, *O_5*, *V_1*, *V_2*, *V_3* Numquam **puto** eam dormivisset *B* Numquam **existimo** dormivisset *C*
	30	forte	fo[*illegible*]{rsitan}	forte *B*, *C*, *M_1*, *M_2*, *O_5*, *V_1*, *V_2*, *V_3*
263	9–10	subito personaliter ad me venit	⌜unde⌝ subito personaliter ad me venit	subito personaliter ad me venit *B*, *C*, *M_1*, *M_2*, *O_5*, *V_1*, *V_2*, *V_3*

	15	Soror autem pape se gessit valde devote	Soror ⌜vero⌝ [autem] pape se gessit ⌜valde⌝ devote	Soror autem pape se gessit valde devote *C* Soror autem pape se habuit valde devote *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
264	9	testimonium	testimonium ⌜et exemplum⌝	testimonium *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
	31–33	Et interrumpendo verba sua me liberatum esse clamavi et annis multis postea cum perfectissima sanitate perseveravi	Et interrumpendo verba sua me liberatum esse clamavi ⌜**cunctis qui aderant admirantibus**⌝ et annis multis postea cum perfectissima sanitate perseveravi	Et interrumpendo verba sua me liberatum esse clamavi **cunctis qui aderant admirantibus** et annis multis postea cum perfectissima sanitate perseveravi *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
265	3	sicut mihi asseruit	sicut ⌜ipse⌝ michi asseruit	sicut mihi firmiter *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
	20	in quibus valde complacentiam habebat	in quibus valde complacentiam habebat ⌜**virgo florigera**⌝	in quibus **virgo florigera** valde complacentiam habebat *C*, *M2*
265–66	30–31, 1	Etiam suspendendi vel decapitandi, quos in carcere visitabat, omnes videbantur oblivioni tradere pro tali tempore penas et affliciones	Etiam suspendendi vel decapitandi quos ⌜**accersita**⌝ in carcere ⌜**quandoque**⌝ visitabat, omnes videbantur oblivioni tradere pro tali tempore ⌜**suas**⌝ penas et afflictiones	Etiamo suspendendi vel decollandi quos **accersita quandoque** in carcere visitabat, omnes videbatur oblivioni tradere pro tali tempore penas et affliciones **suas** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* Etiamo suspendendi vel decollandi quos **accersita quandoque** in carcere visitabat, omnes videbatur oblivioni tradere pro tali tempore penas et affliciones *C*, *O5*
	14	quare quandoque sibi dixi	quare quandoque sibi dixi ⌜**solatiose**⌝	quare quandoque sibi **solatiose** dixi *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *V3*

	29	quod Romam irem	quod ⌜ego⌝ Romam irem	quod Romam irem *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
267	14	Solus Deus et ego sciebamus illud quod ista virgo mihi dixit	Solus Deus et ego sciebamus illud quod ista virgo michi dixit ⌜**unde vere cognosco quod est valde maior in conspectu Dei quam esse credatur**⌝	Solus Deus et ego sciebamus illud quod ista virgo michi dixit. **Unde procul dubio video quod ipsa maior est in conspectu Dei quam credatur**, et cetera *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
	33	bibendo	bibendo ⌜sive **sorbillando**⌝	bibendo, ymo **sorbillando** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
268	29–30	quia sic est absorta, corpus insensibile remaneret	quia sic est absorta ⌜**forte**⌝ corpus insensibile remaneret	quia sic est absorta corpus **forsitan** insensibile remaneret *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2* quia cum caro sic est absorta corpus **forsitan** insensibile remaneret *V3* quia sic mens est absorta corpus insensibile remaneret *B* Alius enim **forte** corpus insensibile remaneret, pro qo quia mens taliter est absorta *C*
269	17–18	Quo precepto sacra virgo descendit ad eos	Quo precepto ⌜**subito**⌝ sacra virgo descendit ad eos	Quo precepto sacra virgo **subito** descendit ad eos *C* quo precepto virgo descendit ad eos *V1*, *V3*
	20	Exordium ipsorum a magna superbia cepit	Exordium ⌜autem⌝ ipsorum a magna superbia cepit	Exordium ipsorum a magna superbia cepit *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*

270	4–5	Inter illos tres erat unus archiepiscopus	Inter illos ⌜vero⌝ tres erat unus archiepiscopus	Inter illos tres erat unus archiepiscopus *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*
	6–7	verba sacre virginis non videbatur acceptare	verba sacre virginis non videbatur acceptare ⌜**quandoque**⌝	verba sacre virginis **aliquando** non videbatur acceptare *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* verba sacre virginis non videbatur acceptare *C*
	11	Postremo recesserunt hedificati	Postremo recesserunt ⌜**omnes**⌝ hedificati	Postremo recesserunt **omnes** hedificati *M2*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* Postremo recesserunt hedificati *B*, *C*, *M1*, *O5*
	20	ita pessimum iter, et cetera	ita pessimum iter, et cetera ⌜Postea vero prefatus magister Franciscus **valde virginem commendavit**. **Summus quoque Pontifex, audiens illos ita virginem irritasse, moleste tulit et apud eam humiliter excusavit, asserens quia non fuit intentionis eius ipsos ita fecisse, persuadendo quod si forte venire presumerent ultra, quod ipsa faceret hostia contra sua pectora claudi**⌝	ita pessimum iter, et cetera. Deinde **valde commendavit eam** affectuasissimis verbis que gratia brevitatis omito *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* ***<u>At p. 270, l. 13:</u>*** et cetera. **Qui tamen papa quando percepit eos ita virginem irritasse displicentiam habuit et apud eam efficaciter excusavit, asserens ultra voluntatem suam eos ita fecisse. Subdens si ultra venerint ad te facias eis hostium in suis pectoribus accludi**, et cetera *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*

271	7–8	Vere, carissime frater, nulla habeo pecuniam	Vere, karissime frater, ⌜ego⌝ nullam habeo pecuniam	Vere, carissime frater, nulla habeo pecuniam *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*
	10	cum magno pretio	cum [magno] ⌜**bono**⌝ pretio	cum **bono** pretio *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *V₁*, *V₃*
	14	suadente	suadente ⌜**ymmo verius compellente**⌝	suadente **immo verius compellente** *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*

Table 7. Selected textual variants in the two recensions of Stefano Maconi's *Epistola* and its Middle English translation.

Position in text		Original letter (*Processo Castellano*, ed. Laurent)	Revised letter (*B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*)	Middle English translation ('Prosalegenden', ed. Horstmann)	Position in text	
p.	ll.				p.	ll.
257–58	1–6, 1–14	In nomine Domini nostri Yhesu Christi et beatissime virginis Marie . . . Tenor quorum inferius per singula describitur hoc modo, videlicet:	***om.*** *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*	***om.***	184	32
258	22	forma	for⌜te⌝ *O₅*	forme		40
		moribus	moribus, **virtutibus** *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*	maners, **vertues**		
	23	virginis Catherine de Senis	virginis **beate** Catherine de Senis *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*	virgyn **blyssed** Kateryn of Senys		40–41
	27	recusant	**nolunt** *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*	**wole not**	185	3
	30	meo	inde *O₅*	myne		6
259	4	fuissent occupati atque fatigati	**aliquando** fuissent occupati atque fatigati *B*, *C*, *M₁*, *M₂*, *O₅*, *V₁*, *V₂*, *V₃*	**oþere-while** hadde ben occupyed 7 irked		13–14

	7	sancta	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		15
	12	nostro	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		20
	12–13	contra quosdam	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		21
	30–31	verba sua et exempla perfectissima	*om.* *O5*	wordes 7 most parfyte ensaumples		38–39
260	1	Interim me benigne rogavit	**Me rogavit interim** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* Me rogavit interim hoc intervallo temporis *Ce*	**She preyed me þe while**		40
	2	scribere vellem: quod valde gratanter	Ego scriberem, et hoc utique valde libenter *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	þat I wolde write. . . . And þat, sooþly, I toke ful blyþely		40–42
	8	predicte sacre virginis	predicte sancte vitginis *C*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	þe forseyde virgyn	186	2–3
	8–9	augmentum	*om.* *O5*	encres		3
	15	Queras in corde tuo	Queras, **inquit**, in corde tuo *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Seke þou, **quod she**, in þy herte		10
	19	commode	**honeste sive** commode *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**honestly or** vantagely		14
		et statum	et **utiusque** statum *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	of **eiþer** state		15
		Gregorium XI	Gregorium **papam** XI *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Gregore **pope** elleuenþ		17
	25	et familiaritate	***om.*** *B*, *C*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	***om.***		20

	28–30	Denique prefatus summus pontifex eam destinavit pro factis ecclesie sancte ad civitatem Florentie, que tunc	Et prefactis ecclesie misit eam Florentiam que tempor tali *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	and for nedys of holy chirche, hee sende hir to Florens, þe whiche þat tyme		22–24
	31	patet	patitur *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	hit is shewyd		25
261	1–2	post multos labores	post multos **et ut ita dixerim intollerabiles** labores *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	after many **7, if I sey hit, vnsuffurabil** labours		27
	2–3	diem felicissime	**et ylarissime tolleratos felicissimo cursu diem** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**and ful gladly suffird, wiþ a fulle-blessed cours**		28
	5	in capsa cedrina et honorabili tumulo	in capsa **cypressina** et honorabili tumulo *B*, *O5*, *V2* in capsa cypressina ⌜marmoreo⌝ honorabili tumulo *M2* in capsa cypressina atque marmoreo honorabili tumulo *M1*, *V1*, *V3* in capsa cypressina et honorabili sepulchro marmoreo *C*	in a cofer **of cypresse** 7 worshypfulle toumbe		31–32
	8	digitum suum protendendo	et estendendo digitum *M1*, *V1*, *V3* etiam protendendo digitum *B*, *C*, *M2*, *O5*, *V2*	7 strecchyng forþ hir fyngyr		34

	9	ut vadas	ut **omnio** vadas *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V2*	þat on **alle-maner wyse** þou go		36
	10–11	nos plorantes	nos **iuxta se** plorantes *B*, *C*, *M2*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	vs **bisyde hir** wepynge		37
	12	gratulari	letari *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	ioye		38
	14	Vobis autem	*om.* *O5*	ȝow		41
	21	vel etiam alium ordinem	vel etiam alium ordinem **ingredi** *B*, *O5*, *V2*	**to entir** þat ordyr, or any oþyr	187	3
	24	ego non attendissem, sicut experientia declaravit	**ego nullatenus acquiescere potuissem ut experientia docuit** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**I myghte no-wise haue graunted, as experiens techyd**		5–6
	26	non est	**et indigno** non est *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**7 vnworþy**, hit is not		7–8
262	2	supra ceteros	supra quos plurimos et *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	more þanne many oþer men		12–13
	17	Non habeo memorie umquam	Non habeo memorie **tanto tempore conversando secum** umquam *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	I haue not herde, **as longe while as I was wiþ hir,** any tyme		26–27
	21	Numquam dormivisset	Numquam **puto** dormivisset *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* Numquam **puto** eam dormivisset *B* Numquam existimo dormivisset *C*	**I trowe**, she hadde neuer slepte		30–31

	22	si auditores habuisset	si auditores **iugiter** habuisset *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	if sche had hadde herers **contynuelly**		31–32
	28	vel a se disiungi	***om.*** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *O5*, *V1*, *V3*	***om.***		38
	32	XI	**antedictum** *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**beforseyde**		42
263	1	dominica	die dominica *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	sondaye	188	1
	3	sed	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		2
	5	Quamobrem me vocabit	vocavit ergo me *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Þen . . . cleped me		4
	7	Hec enim domina	Que domina *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Þe whiche lady		6
	10	dixi	**respondit** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**I answeryd**	188	9
	12	quos	alios autem *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	oþer		11
	13	secum	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	with hir		
	14	Iuvencula erat dedita vanitati	Iuvencula quadam erat vanitate **plena** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	þe ȝonge damyselle was **full** of vanyte		13
	15	gessit	habuit *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	hadde		14
		sed illa infelix	illa vero misera *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Soþly, sche þat wrecche		
	16	unde celebrata missa	Ideo **post missam** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Þerfore **after masse**		15

	18	acerrime perforavit	acerrime **acu** perforavit *B*, *O5*, *V2*	pricked hir fulle sharply **with a nedil**		16–17
	21	proprios	**corporeos** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**bodily**		19
		bene non	vix *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	vnneþes		20
	22	et considerantes	et considerantes **ubi dolebat** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	loked **where þe ake was**		21
	23	illatis	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		22
		malitiam	malitiam **et infidelitate** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	malyce **7 vnbileue**		23
	24	et nequissime mulieris	***om.*** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	***om.***		
	29	conabatur ascendere	stagebat ascendere *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	bisyed it to ascende		28
		a terra suspensa	a terra suspensa et elevata *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	hit reryd vppe . . . fro þe erþe		28–29
	32	qui cum non modica admiratione aliquotiens vidi	**de quo vehementer admirabar** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* de quo valde mirabar et obstupebam *C*	**þere-of I hougely meruelid**		31–32
264	1	pro parte	aperte *O5*	in party		33
	1–2	dictabat illum admirabili modo	valde mirabili modo dictabat *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	while she endyted hit . . . in a ful meruelos manere		33–34
	7–8	effectum	officium *O5*	wille		39

	10	in Ianua	in **civitate** Ianua *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	in **þe cite of** Jeyne		41–42
	11	probe	**venerande** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**worshepful**		42
		dicebatur	**vocebatur** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**was cleped**		
	25–26	Et subiecit	Et illico subiecit *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V3* Et illico respondit adiecit *B* Et adiecit *V2*	And anoon she sayde		11
	29	ac ut alios adiuves	et alios adiuves **uti solebas** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	and atte þou helpe oþere, **as þou diddest byfore**	189	13–14
	32	clamavi	clamavi **cunctis qui aderant admirantibus** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**alle men meruelynge þat þere were**		17–18
265	2	monachum	monachum **professum et** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	monke **professed and**		20
	3	mihi asseruit	mihi firmiter asseruit *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	as he affermyd to me feithfully		21
	6	eiusdem	eiusdem **quos ipsi virgini direxerat** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**þe whiche he hadde sende to þe same virgyne**		24–25
	7	ut	**ne amplius infirmaretur sed** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**þat hee shulde no lenger bee seke, but**		25–26
		et hec implevit absque mora	et absque mora sic opere complevit *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	And so didde hee forþe-with		26–27

	10	quam epistolam in cella nostra devote conservavi.	quam epistolam in cella nostra devote conservavi. **Tamen adhuc plenius viva voce mihi superscripta seriose narravit, voce publica virginem extollendo et ad eius devotionem omnes audientes invitando que de porta mortis extraxerat eum potius precipiendo quam orando. Multum admirans laudabat Altissimum qui talem atque tantam auctoritatem isti sponse sue concesseram** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	þe whiche epistelle I kepte in oure celle ful deuoutly. **Neuerþeles ȝit more pleynly he tolde by mouþe þat at is writen aboue, preisynge þe virgyn openly and stirynge alle þat herde to deuocyone of hir the whiche hadde delyuered hym fro deþ raþer comaundyng þan preiyinge, and mykelle meruelynge louved oure lorde þat hadde graunted siche auctoryte ȝ so grete to þis virgyne, his spouse**		29–34
	20	et unionem	et **amoris** unionem *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	vnite **of loue**		42
	31	decapitandi, quos	**decollati quos accersita in quandoque** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**hir hedes smyten of, þe whiche, whan she was sende after**	190	8–9
266	1	afflictiones	afflictiones suas *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *V2*, *V3*	hir peynes and affliccyouns		10–11
	5	multotiens	multotiens me *B*, *O5*, *V2*, *V3*	I haue dyuerse tymes		14
	6	illi dicens	sibi dicebam *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	I tolde hir		15
	11–12	**velut nos cognoscimus dispositionem**	*om.* *O5*	**as wee knowe disposicyone of visage**		20
	14	propalabat	publicabat *B*, *O5*	she tolde		22

		sibi dixi	sibi solatiose dixi *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *V3*	I seyde to hir		23
	23	facere resistentiam	resistere *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	wiþ-stande		31
	24	tantum fructum	tantum fructum **animarum** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	so grete fuyte **of soulles**		31–32
267	13	valde famosus	valde famosus **et magiis status** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	on ful famose man **and of grete state**	191	4
	14	mihi dixit.	mihi dixit. **Unde procul dubio video quod ipsa maior est in cospectu Dei quam credatur** et cetera *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	has tolde me. **Wherfore wiþ-outen doute I see þat she is more in goddes sighte þanne men trowe**		6–7
	15	Et per hunc modum	Et per hunc **ergo** modum **virgo** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**Þerfore** by þis maner þe ful wyse **virgyne**		7
		manibus	manu *B*, *Ce*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	pouste		8
	15–16	prudentissime	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		
	17	dicta sufficiant.	dicta sufficiant **licet amplissima sit huius modi materia**. *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Þis þat is seyde, may suffys atte þis tyme . . . **þof þis mater be ful mykel**		8–10
	22	nisi	*om.* *O5*	but if		13
	29	putridus erat	putridus erat **similiter uvas** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	wel olde and corrupte 7 **on same maner grapes**		21
	33	bibendo	bibendo ymo **sorbillando** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**soupynge**		24
	35–36	cum uno virgulto	cum uno virgulto **feniculi vel altro** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	wiþ a stalke **of fynel or an oþer þinge**		28

268	7	multi vidimus	multi vidimus **longo tempore** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* multi vidimus et cognoscimus multo tempore *C*	many haue seen **longe tyme**		35
	11	magistri	magni viri *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	grete men		38
		facere	agere *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	do		39
	14	fecisset	perfecisset *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	she hadde made		42
	21	prudentissima	**discretissima** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**as most discrete**	192	3
	29–30	quia sic est absorta, corpus insensibile remaneret	quia sic est absorta, corpus forsitan insensibile remaneret *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2* quia cum caro sic est absorta, corpus forsitan insensibile remaneret *V3* quia sic est absorta mens, corpus insensibile remaneret *B* Alius enim forte corpus insensibile remaneret, pro eo quia mens taliter est absorta *C*	for, þof hit were so skenyd, in happe þe body shulde abyde stille insensibil		12–13
	35–36	nimis admirarentur	**sive magistri velut actoniti mirarentur** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**or maistirs, as astonyed hadde wonder**		18

	38	adspectu	conspectu *B*, *M1*, *V1*, *V3*			
269	1–2	conspectu	**presentia** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**in the presens**		22
	8	**XI**	X *O5*	**elleuenþe**		28
	14	respondit	ait *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	quod þe Pope		34
	15	bene	*om.* *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*om.*		
	17	Dic	Dicas *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Sey		36
		confessore	confessore suo *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	hir confessour		38
	21	dicentes	**inter ceteras** dicentes *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	seiynge **amonge oþere**		41
	25	miserunt	transmiserunt *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*	þey haue not sende		45
		femella	muliercula *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	a vile litil womman	193	1
	28	donec	**ita ut** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**so þat**		3–4
		mirabantur	mirarentur *B*, *C*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	þey meruelid		4
270	6–7	non videbatur acceptare	**aliquando** non videbatur acceptare *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	wolde non accepte **vm-while**		17
	8–9	apertius	apertius **atque plenius** *B*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3* apertius et uberius *C*	openly **and more pleynly**		20
	11	Postremo recesserunt hedificati	Postremo recesserunt omnes hedificati *M2*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	Atte laste þey wente alle hir weye, boþe edified . . .		22–23

	13	ita illuminatam, etc.	ita illuminatam, etc. **Qui tamen papa quando percepit eos ita virginem irritasse displicentiam habuit et apud eam efficaciter excusavit, asserens ultra voluntatem suam eos ita fecisse, subdens: 'Si ultra venerint ad te, facias eis hostilium in suis pectoribus accludi'** et cetera *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	so enlumyned. **Neuerþeles þe Pope, whan he wist þat þey hadde prouoked so þe virgyne, was displesed, and excused hym fully anenste hir, affermynge þat hit was ageyns his wille þat þey hadde done so; and seyde to hir: 'if þey come any more to þe, make the dore be stoken to hem in her brestys.'**		25–29
	19	Catherinam	istam virginem Catherinam *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	*<Two lines are missing from the manuscript>*		35
		. . . ita pessimum iter.' etc.	. . . ita pessimum iter.' etc. **Deinde valde commendavit eam affectuosissimis verbis que gratia brevitatis omito.** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**And þen he preysed hir wiþ ful effectuos wordes, þe whiche I leue, by-cause of shortnes**		36–37
271	1–2	vinum in vegete, quandoque panem in capsa	**panem in capsa, vel augmentando vinum in vegete** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**brede in þe chiste, encresynge wyne in þe barel**	194	3–4
	2	suam	propriam *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	hir owne		4
	3	proprio	suo **lucidissimis** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**with ful shinynge**		5–6
	7	que	ipsa vero *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	And she		9

	9	Et illa: ‘Verum est’	Et ipsa: ‘Verum est’, ait. *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	‘Þat is soþe’, quod she		11
	9–10	sequentes vix cum magno	sequentes eam vix cum magno *O5*, *V2* sequentes eam vix cum bono *C*, *M2*, *V1*, *V3* sequentes vix cum bono *M1*	folowynge hir myghte vnneþes wiþ grete		12–13
	14	suadente	suadente immo verius **compellente** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**compellynge**		17
	26	transitum	**obitum** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**obyt**		28
	29	scripsit	*om.* *O5*	he haþ writen		31
272	13	propulsabo	propalabo *B*, *C*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	shal I seye		45
	15	vel e contra	vel e converso *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	or she hym		46
	23	in multis	**egritudine corporali gravatus et in quam pluribus** *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	**þof I be greuyd with bodily sieknes 7 gretly**	195	8–9
	24	notavi	attendi *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	I toke hede to		9
273	5	novit	novit aptissime *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V2*, *V3*	he wel wote		23
		nichil	michi *O5*	noþinge		23–24
		In quorum omnium fidem et testimonium . . .	**Data in domo nostra suprascripta die xxvi mensis octobris** 1411 **sub manu publica duorum notariorum in presentia quam plurium testium et cum appensione nostri magni**	**Writen in þe hous byfore-seyde þe XXVI daye of October in þe ȝeere of oure lorde** MCCCXI**, vndir þe open hande of two notaryes,**		25–29

			sigilli conventuali in testimonium veritatis et ut vestre petitioni satisfacerem. *B*, *C*, *M1*, *M2*, *O5*, *V1*, *V3*	**in presens of many witnesses, and with appensyone of oure grete couente-seel to þe testymone of trewþe, and atte I shulde fulfille ȝoure askynge.**		

Table 8. Textual variants in the two recensions of Bartolomeo da Ravenna's *Epistola.*

Position in text		Original letter (*Processo Castellano*, ed. Laurent)	Revised letter (*M2*, *O5*)
p.	ll.		
274	1–2	Prologus responsalis contestationis presentis: Eternam Christi salutem et pacem.	*om.* *M2*, *O5*
	5	et humilitate	*om.* *M2*, *O5*
	8	testes in mundo	in mundo testes *M2*, *O5*
	9	et quia	ipse *M2*, *O5*
	10	conscribit	vobis scribit *M2*, *O5*
	11	spiritus	spirituali *M2*, *O5*
	12–13	De aliquali narratione virtutum, quibus virgo pre multis aliis singulariter floruit.	*om.* *M2*, *O5*
	14	hominum	vestram et aliorum *M2*, *O5*
	15	et excelsa virtutum	et excelsa culmina virtutum *M2*, *O5*
	16	ut	videlicet *M2*, *O5*
	17	intimorum] interiorum *M3*	interiorum *M2*, *O5*
		factorum	sanctorum *O5*
	18	abstinentia, misericordia	abstinentia et misericordia *M2*, *O5*
	19	et dico] *om.* *M3*	*om.* *M2*, *O5*

	21–23	De speciali allegatione et adduxione cuiusdam facti, in quo relucent quamplures de virginalibus virtutibus prenarratis, et de quodam miraculo mediante mantello virginis perpetrato: quod	ut *M₂*, *O₅*
	25–26	inspirata Spiritu sancto	a Spiritu sancto spirata *M₂*, *O₅*
	27	de insula	inde *M₂*, *O₅*
	28	in secreto	secrete *M₂*, *O₅*
	32	potest] poterit *M₃*	poterit *M₂*, *O₅*
275	2	S.	beati *M₂*, *O₅*
	3	dictus	*om.* *M₂*, *O₅*
	5	utile neque necessarium	necessarium vel utile *M₂*, *O₅*
	7–8	ut quiescere non valeret	quod quiescere non velebat *M₂*, *O₅*
	9	tota] *om.* *M₃*	*om.* *M₂*, *O₅*
		sermone arrogante	verbis arrogantibus *M₂*, *O₅*
	11	repuli eum	reprimere repuli eum *M₂* reprimere eum *O₅*
		mandavi uni	mandavi ut indilate rediret ad cellam. Qui statim iussa complevit. Ego vero subito percepi uni *M₂*, *O₅*
	12	prefatus monachus	prefatus iuvenis monachus *M₂*, *O₅*
		manu correpto] erecta manu *M₃*	erecta manu *M₂*, *O₅*
	16	vocem	clamorem statim *M₂*, *O₅*
		sine mora	*om.* *M₂*, *O₅*
	17	alta	magna *M₂*, *O₅*
	25	ego	illi *M₂*, *O₅*
		mi] matri *M₃*	matri *M₂*, *O₅*
	28–29	De quodam testimonio per quamdam obsessam a demone sanctitati virginis precipuo modo exhibito.	*om.* *M₂*, *O₅*
	30	dicta	ipsa *M₂*, *O₅*

		virgo	virgo Katerina *M₂, O₅*
	31	provocatum	*om.* *M₂, O₅*
	32	amicorum ire	amicorum accresitum ire *M₂, O₅*
	34	instigassem] interrogassem *M₃*	interrogassem *M₂, O₅*
	35	Dic mihi si hec sancta Catherina de Senis	Dic obsecro mihi si hec sancta virgo Catherina de Senis *M₂* Dic obsecro mihi hec sancta virgo Catherina de Senis *O₅*
	36	Est sanctior	Est procul dubio sanctior *M₂, O₅*
276	1	Sic	utique *M₂, O₅*
	3	est	*om.* *O₅*
	5–7	De quodam singulari casu monachorum per virginem previso et auxiliato; et de multiplicibus epistolis a virgine diversis monacis Carthusiensibus non sine singulari fructu directis.	*om.* *M₂, O₅*
	8	oblitus fueram	oblivioni tradideram *M₂, O₅*
	8–9	cum recessisset	cum ipsa virgo recessisset *M₂, O₅*
	9	de insula nostra	de insula nostra Gorgone *M₂, O₅*
	11	remeandi	redeundi *M₂, O₅*
	13	et navigabant	navigantes *M₂, O₅*
	20	prebere	exhibere *M₂, O₅*
	22	Catherina intercedente	Catherina de Senis intercedente *M₂, O₅*
		nec aliquis de dicta	nullus de *M₂, O₅*
	23	dicta	ipsa *M₂, O₅*
		recepit	habuit non absque quam plurimum admiratione *M₂, O₅*
	24	alias	*om.* *M₂, O₅*
	24–25	scripsisse personis ordinis nostri Carthusiensis	scripsisse pluribus personis ordinis nostri Carthusiensis *M₂, O₅*
	27–29	De excusatione dicendorum et de efficacia testificandi ipsius contestatoris, testibus etiam pluribus adhibitis, cum	*om.* *M₂, O₅*

		sigilli appensione monasterii ordinis Carthusiensis de Papia.	
	30	vobis	vestre caritati *M₂*, *O₅*
	30–31	explicare	bene explicare *M₂*, *O₅*
	31	posset magnalia et inaudita	inaudita ut ita dicam atque magnalia *M₂*, *O₅*
	32	gloriosa ac mirabili sua virgine	hac admirabili virgine Katerina fidelissima sponsa sua *M₂*, *O₅*
		pluribus	multis *M₂*, *O₅*
277	1–9	Etiam ut vestro desiderio satisfaciam, meo iuramento confirmo in presentia dompni Petri de Damasanis, dompni Ugonis de Caste, dompni Vincentii de Zaziis monachorum huius prefati monasterii nostri Carthusiensis, cum appensione sigilli conventualis predicti monastrii. Sancta Trinitas vos semper dirigat in agendis. Datum in dicto monasterio die XXVII octobris anno Domini M.CCCC.XI per indignum et humilem Christi servum dompnum Bartholomeum de Ravenna nunc monachum, olim indignum priorem insule Gorgone. . . .	et cetera. Datum et cetera xxvi mensis octobris 1411 et cetera *M₂*, *O₅*

Chapter 3

William Flete's *Documento spirituale*

Born around 1325, probably in the Lincolnshire village of Fleet, William Flete is the author of a few Latin texts and is the only known direct link between Catherine of Siena and England and, for this reason, he is sometimes assumed to be responsible for the transmission of Catherine's texts across the English Channel. In July 1359, a young Flete abandoned his theological studies at Cambridge in pursuit of a strict ascetic life. He left his native England and settled near Siena at the Augustinian monastery in Lecceto, where he spent the rest of his life as a hermit and where his reputation as a virtuous and learned man spread.[1] At Lecceto, he became acquainted with Catherine of Siena, possibly provided her with spiritual guidance and influenced her early theological formation.[2] The friendship between the two and the parallels in their doctrines may even be, as Jennifer N. Brown suggests, the reasons why Catherine's texts became widespread and well-integrated within English literary culture:

> part of the 'Englishness' of Catherine of Siena is due to the fact that rather than solely representing a foreign Continental spirituality, Catherine mirrors an already

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[1]. For the most complete historical works on Flete's life, see Aubrey Gwynn, *The English Austin Friars in the Time of Wyclif* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 139–210; Benedict Hackett, *William Flete, O.S.A., and Catherine of Siena: Masters of Fourteenth Century Spirituality*, Augustinian Series 15 (Villanova, PA: Augustinian Press, 1992).

[2]. Several scholars, most notably Alvaro Grion and Benedict M. Hackett, have argued that Flete was a key influence on Catherine's theology. Just as many, e.g. Giacinto D'Urso, P. I. Paci, and Innocenzo Colosio, have put forward counterarguments and asserted that it was Flete who benefitted from Catherine's teachings. Both sides of the debate overstate their arguments; we must be careful not to reduce the relationship between Flete and Catherine to that of a teacher and student or, conversely, to that of a saint and her disciple. A strict framework of unilateral 'influence' cannot capture a dynamic relationship that developed over the years and which was characterized by mutual esteem, as both Catherine's and Flete's own writing clearly demonstrate. Jennifer N. Brown's assessment of the relationship between Catherine and Flete seems to me to be the most nuanced scholarly treatment of this topic. See Alvaro Grion, *Santa Caterina da Siena: Dottrina e fonti* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1953); Giacinto D'Urso, 'Il pensiero di S. Caterina e le sue fonti', *Sapienza* 8, nos. 3–5 (1954): 335–88; P. I. Paci, 'Nuovi studi intorno a S. Caterina', *S. Caterina da Siena* 6, no. 1 (1954): 9–20; Innocenzo Colosio, 'Divagazioni storico-critiche a proposito degli ultimi fascicoli del "Dictionnaire de Spiritualité"', *Rivista di Ascetica e Mistica* 13, no. 2 (1968): 197–202; Hackett, *William Flete and Catherine of Siena*; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 58–81.

> familiar English devotion in part by channelling back to England the thoughts, ideas, and philosophies of William Flete.[3]

In his Cambridge years, William Flete authored *De remediis contra tempaciones*, an extremely influential Latin spiritual treatise on temptation that was copied several times and translated four times into Middle English.[4] After a period of some twenty years in which he did not produce writing, or so it seems, Flete composed important Catherinian texts: a lengthy sermon written in 1382 to commemorate the Saint's death, a letter addressed to Raymond of Capua, and the *Documento spirituale*, the subject of this chapter.[5] The *Documento spirituale*, as we shall see, made its way to England, where it was translated into the Middle English *Cleannesse of Sowle* and was copied into a fair number of manuscripts.

Because of its English author, it has sometimes been assumed that the *Documento* reached England through William Flete's contacts—Brown, for instance, concludes that 'Flete was most likely responsible for the circulation of one of the most copied and anthologized texts concerning Catherine—the Middle English excerpt known as "The Cleannesse of Sowle"'.[6] In this chapter, I rethink Flete's involvement in the dissemination of Catherine's works and argue that he had no role in the transmission of the *Ducumento* to England—a transmission which was likely at the initiative of the Dominican Tommaso da Siena. I suggest, however, that Flete took part in a more subtle, indirect process of textual transmission: some letters he sent to the English Austin friars, I will argue, are so freighted with Catherine's thoughts and poetics that they can be considered Catherinian texts, exemplifying another way in which Catherine found her way into medieval English literary culture. In order to argue against Flete's involvement in the transmission of the *Documento*, I analyze manuscript copies of this work produced in Italy, their textual

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[3]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 60.

[4]. For an edition of *De remediis contra temptaciones*, both the Latin text and of its four Middle English translations, see Jessica Michelle Lamothe, 'An Edition of the Latin and four Middle English Versions of William Flete's *De remediis contra temptaciones* (*Remedies against Temptations*)' (PhD diss., University of York, 2017). For a study on the transmission of the text, see Benedict Hackett, 'William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*', in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn*, ed. J. A. Watt, J. B. Morrall, and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Lochlainn, 1961), 330–48.

[5]. Flete's Catherinian texts have been edited in Robert Fawtier, 'Catheriniana', *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 34 (1914): 3–96. For a modern English translation of these texts, see Hackett, *William Flete and Catherine of Siena*. The translations included here are mine.

[6]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 81.

characteristics, origins, and provenance, to suggest that, like other texts by and about Catherine, the Carthusians and Dominicans were involved in its transmission and that they produced two distinct versions of Flete's text. From an Italian context, I move on to an English one and investigate the only surviving copy of the Latin text of English origin, a copy that has come to light only during research for this thesis and that, therefore, has not yet received scholarly attention. I then go on to close-read the *Documento* and three letters Flete wrote to the English Austin friars in 1380, to argue against Flete's involvement in the dissemination of the *Documento* and to reconceptualize his role in the transmission of Catherine's doctrine.

3.1 The *Documento spirituale:* Background to the Text

Written down on 7 January 1377,[7] the *Documento* was dictated by the Italian Saint to Flete. The text contains Catherine's reflections on how to avoid pride and self-love by grounding oneself in self-knowledge, which is obtained by considering God's role in the creation and conservation of humankind. This process of introspection and meditation leads to self-abasement, which, according to Catherine, will inspire Christians to follow God's will instead of their own. These considerations are followed by a short dialogue between God and Catherine, in which the Saint hears the three steps necessary to achieve union with the divine and to attain perfect purity: to direct all intentions towards God, to deny one's will and the will of other people in favour of God's will, and to avoid judging one's neighbours, unless their actions are manifestly against divine commandments. In its longest form, the text draws to a close with further teachings on self-love and solitude. Flete goes on to distinguish between sensitive self-love (*amor proprius sensitivus*) and spiritual self-love (*amor proprius spiritualis*), describing in detail what they are and how to overcome them by accepting God's Providence, his will, and his desire to stir humankind towards greater sanctity. The text then ends with another short revelation from God, who urges Catherine to find solitude through introspection, within the cell of self-knowledge.

The *Documento spirituale* is a short, but rich text. It deals with several distinct, albeit overlapping, topics on the spiritual life, such as self-knowledge, purity of soul, self-love, and solitude. These different aspects of the text take turns in coming to the surface: when the *Documento* is copied and included in compilations and miscellanies, the text is

[7]. The manuscripts of the *Documento spirituale* indicate 7 January 1376 as the date of composition of the text, with the exception of O_4, which gives the erroneous date of 8 January 1376. This date was written according to the Florentine calendar, and it therefore corresponds to 7 January 1377; see Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, 166.

sometimes used to illustrate Catherine's thoughts on judging one's neighbour;[8] sometimes it is used as a '[n]ota contra lepram proprie voluntatis, contra amorem proprium . . . et contra lepram proprii consilii' (note against the corruption of one's will, against self-love, . . . and against the corruption of one's own judgement);[9] and finally, in its Middle English translation, it is Catherine's description of the soul's path towards God that receives attention.[10] The various subjects and the fragmentary nature of the text seem to have offered scribes, compilers, and translators an opportunity to excise material liberally, giving rise to versions of the text of drastically different lengths, both in Latin and in Middle English, and, thus, a non-linear textual history.

As ever when dealing with Catherinian texts, in fact, the textual history and transmission of the *Documento spirituale* is not straightforward. The Latin text of the *Documento spirituale* survives in five manuscripts, four medieval and a modern one (a handwritten transcription of a medieval manuscript which is now lost):[11]

1. M_1: Milan, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, MS AD.IX.11 [*s.* XV], fol. 56r.[12]
2. S_1: Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, C.V.24 [*s.* XVII *ex.*–XVIII *in.*], fols. 128r–129r.[13]
3. S_4: Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, T.II.7 [*s.* XIV *ex.*], fols. 29r–30r.[14]
4. O_2: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Misc. 205 [*c.* 1407–10], fol. 2r–v.[15]

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[8]. See how the transcription of the *Documento* is introduced in a larger compilation by Caffarini: Tommaso da Siena, *Libellus de supplemento*, 295–96.

[9]. See O_4, fol. 2r.

[10]. Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings'.

[11]. S_1 is a transcription by the Sienese historian Uberto Benvoglenti (1668–1733).

[12]. Catalogue description in *Manus*, <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/cnmd/0000113812>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[13]. The transcription is briefly described in Lorenzo Ilari, *La Biblioteca pubblica di Siena disposta secondo le materie da Lorenzo Ilari: Catalogo che comprende non solo tutti i libri a stampa e mss. che in quella si conservano, ma vi sono particolarmente riportati ancora i titoli di tutti gli opuscoli, memorie, lettere inedite e autografe*, 9 vols (Siena, 1844–1848), 6:520. Ilari gives old folio numbers. I am using the most recent foliation in the codex.

[14]. Catalogue description on Mirabile, <http://www.mirabileweb.it/manuscript/siena-biblioteca-comunale-degli-intronati-t-ii-7-manoscript/218152>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[15]. Catalogue description in *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_3225>. Accessed January 6. 2025.

5. *O_4*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. th. e. 26 [*s.* XV$^{2/4}$], fols. 2r–3v.[16]

Three of these manuscripts—*M_1*, *S_1*, and *S_4*—were already known to Robert Fawtier who, in 1914, produced what still is the standard edition of the Latin text.[17] Another one—*O_2*—became known sometime later, when Francis Roth wrote his voluminous history of English Austin friars.[18] To these four manuscripts, we can now add a fifth—*O_4*—which I have come across during archival research for this thesis and which will be discussed in detail below (see section 3.2). To these five examples of direct transmission, we must add indirect transmission, as the *Documento* was also included in a longer medieval work, the *Libellus de supplemento*, a fifteenth-century compilation by Tommaso Caffarini.[19] In this compilation, Caffarini expands on Raymond of Capua's hagiography of Catherine, the *Legenda maior*, by offering his readers additional details on the Saint's life. He also sets out theological arguments based on the events in Catherine's life and collects supplementary documents related to her biography and doctrine. Among the documents included within the *Libellus* is the *Documento spirituale*, which Caffarini transcribes in its entirety.

The various manuscripts and the *Libellus* vary considerably in terms of which parts of the *Documento* are copied (see Table 9 for a schematization of the contents of each witness). Because of this marked differences, beginning with Fawtier's edition of the text, scholarship has divided the *Documento* into two distinct versions: the so-called Flete's version (in *S_4*, *O_2*, *O_4*, and in the *Libellus*) and Maconi's version (in *M_1* and *S_1*).[20] The second version is named after Stefano Maconi, who was responsible for the dissemination of some of the manuscripts of the text and whom Fawtier mistakenly believed to be the

16. Catalogue description in *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_6780>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

17. Fawtier, 'Catheriniana', 86–93.

18. Francis Roth, *The English Austin Friars: 1249–1538*, vol. 1, *History* (New York: Augustinian Historical Institute, 1966), 539. His discussion on Flete has the merit of giving precise references to the manuscripts containing his Latin works. However, some of his readings of Flete's texts and their impact are unsubstantiated.

19. For more details about the contents of the *Libellus* and for information on its complex composition history, see the introductory essay to the edition of this work (VII–LXXI).

20. The version of the text found in the *Supplementum* is labelled as a separate redaction in Francesco Conti, 'Fonti per la Vita di S. Caterina da Siena—I "Miracoli" d'Anonimo fiorentino—II "Documento spirituale"', *S. Caterina da Siena* 4 (1952): 108–9. Conti's division of the text into three separate redactions is not taken up by other scholars, and the differences between the *Libellus* and the other witnesses to Flete's version are not so many as to justify the use of Conti's distinction (see the discussion below).

author of the *Documento*.[21] The two redactions are very similar, but they sometimes differ in vocabulary, occasionally in word order and syntax, and, most notably, in length. Some of the lexical and syntactic differences between the two versions have somewhat been exaggerated by a few inaccuracies in Fawtier's edition of the *Documento*. If we go back to the manuscripts of the *Documento* we find out that omissions, errors when expanding abbreviations, and the misinterpretation of some of the letterforms have all contributed to creating an edition of two redactions slightly more distant than they actually are. Scholarship has relied on Fawtier's edition of the *Documento* and this has had consequences for the identification of a source for the Middle English translation of the text, as we shall see below. Even though, lexically, Maconi's and Flete's versions are more similar to each other than Fawtier's edited text leads us to believe, there are still significant differences between the two redactions, especially as far as their length is concerned. Flete's version includes a long elaboration on the distinction between *amor proprius sensitivus* and *amor proprius spiritualis*, as well as a short exchange between Catherine and God on solitude. Maconi's redaction is much shorter: the text ends just after the section on the three steps towards purity of the soul. This version does mention the distinction between the two types of self-love, but it closes abruptly before adding further reflections. In Flete's redaction, this sentence is followed by a long paragraph which gives readers more details on the two kinds of self-love, by a comment on the importance of Catherine's doctrine, and by a cursory conclusion on the importance of solitude.

The exclusion from Maconi's redaction of these final paragraphs raises questions about their authenticity: are they part of the original text left out from some versions or are they later interpolations only found in some corrupted witnesses? There is little to no doubt that the expansion on the distinction between two kinds of self-love is part of the original text of the *Documento*, as this is the exposition of a spiritual concept mentioned in both Maconi's and Flete's redactions. However, the final two paragraphs pose more doubts:

> Ad haec autem addidit supradictus Dei servus frater Guilielmus dicens: 'Si ista lectio esset promulgata et comunicata per totum Ordinem nostrum, credo quod magnum faceret bonum'.
>
> Itaque idem mater nostra, id est beata Katerina supradicta, petit a Salvatore solitudinem et dixit Salvator: 'Multi sunt in cella et sunt extra cellam. Ego volo

[21]. Robert Fawtier, *Sainte Catherine de Sienne: Essai de critique des sources* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1921), 67–69. For a critique of Fawtier's argument, see Francesco Conti, 'Fonti per la Vita di S. Caterina', 109–10.

quod cella tua sit cognitio propria peccatorum tuorum'. Istam cella ipsa non exivit dum quibus servus Dei ita facere. Et sic semper erit in cella conservatus ubicumque fuerit. *Deo gratias*.[22]

[The aforementioned servant of God, Brother William, also added to this by saying: 'I think that it would be a great thing if this lesson were to be circulated and communicated throughout our whole Order.'

Then our mother, that is, the aforementioned blessed Catherine, asked Our Saviour for solitude. And the Saviour said: 'Many are staying in a cell and yet they are outside their cell. I want your cell to be your knowledge of your own sins.' She never went outside of this cell. Each servant of God should do the same, and so they will always be secure inside the cell, wherever they are. Thanks be to God.]

The two foundational studies on William Flete and his writings, Aubery Gwynn's and Benedict Hackett's, propose opposite answers to the question of attribution of these two passages. Gwynn does not see a problem with them and implies they are both Flete's.[23] Hackett, on the other hand, considers both paragraphs to be later additions: a note in his English translation cautions readers that this portion of the *Documento* 'was added by Caffarini'.[24] I argue that that the first paragraph is an interpolation, while the second is part of Flete's original text.

The first paragraph, the sentence reporting Flete's comment (Ad hec autem addidit supradictus Dei servus Frater Guilielmus dicens . . . quod magnum faceret bonum), does indeed present itself as an addition and it is one degree removed from the author's voice. The sentence reporting Flete's comment, then, would appear to be a later addition that found its way into the text.

The final exchange on solitude (Itaque idem mater nostra . . . ubicumque fuerit), on the other hand, seems to be part of Flete's original text. It is true that this paragraph brusquely introduces a new section very close to the end of the *Documento*, but a sharp division into sections appears to be a feature of the *Documento* more than a mark of interpolation. In fact, elsewhere in the text Flete fluctuates between different types of narration. The theme and wording of this final paragraph, moreover, echo other writings by

[22]. Fawtier, 'Catheriniana', 93. I have amended Fawtier's edition which erroneously attributes the direct speech in the second paragraph to Catherine and not to God (he prints: 'et dixit: "Salvator, . . .').

[23]. Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, 168.

[24]. Hackett, *William Flete and Catherine of Siena*, 184.

Flete. Solitude was a subject very close to Flete's heart: it was key to his ascetic practices and a topic he returned to multiple times in his other writings. In 1380, Flete wrote three related letters to the English branch of the Augustinian Order, with the aim of promoting reform within the Order (see Section 3.4 for a detailed discussion of these letters).[25] At the core of Flete's propositions is the encouragement of monastic solitude, which is mentioned in all three letters. Flete notes that friars in the Order do not adhere to solitary practices as strictly as they should, a trend which, according to the author of the letters, has harmful consequences for the spiritual health of the brethren as well as of the whole Order and which should be corrected by limiting exposure of novices and friars to the world outside the monastery's walls. In his letter to the English provincial, Flete criticizes the state of the Order in terms which recall the final paragraph of the *Documento*; he writes: 'Fratres ordinis tota die pro nichilo ut communiter discurrunt ad extra, plures sunt ad extra quam ad intra; aliquando plures sunt in foro quam in loco, pauci in choro' (the brethren of the Order generally run about outside all day without purpose. More are outside than inside; sometimes there are more in the marketplace than in their dwellings, few are in the choir).[26] Similarly, the final part of the *Documento* denounces a relaxation in attitudes towards reclusion. It is true that the options for solitude available to Flete's brethren and to Catherine are different: the Austin friars are urged to take refuge from the outside world in their monastic cells, while for Catherine, her cell of self-knowledge is enough. Ultimately, however, both texts share the same view on the need for solitude for religious people, in whatever form this solitude can be attained by specific individuals, and denounce the state of Church institutions with similar expressions. This similarity of themes and phrasing suggests that the final lines of the *Documento* originated from Flete's pen.

Ultimately, it seems that the transcription of the *Documento* found within the *Libellus*, despite being an example of indirect transmission, may present us with the version of the text closest to Flete's original: the long text of the *Documento* without the comment on the usefulness of Catherine's teaching. For those familiar with Caffarini and his *modus operandi*, this conclusion may seem perhaps paradoxical: he is renowned for having reworked, tweaked, and added material to other Catherinian texts, as discussed in chapter 1. And indeed, this tendency earned him (somewhat unjustly) Fawtier's incessant

[25]. The three letters to the English Austin Friars are edited in Marie-Hyacinthe Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis Fr. Willelmi de Fleete', *Analecta Augustiniana* 18 (1942): 303–27. For a modern English translation, see Hackett, *William Flete and Catherine of Siena*; for a commentary, see Gwynn, *English Austin Friars*, 193–210. Translations included here are mine.

[26]. Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis', 319.

distrust.[27] When compiling the *Libellus*, however, he seems to have approached his sources in a rather more conservative way, especially when quoting directly from them.[28]

Table 9. Overview of contents of witnesses to the *Documento spirituale* and *Cleannesse of Sowle*.

Sections of the *Documento spirituale*	Latin text				*Cleannesse of Sowle*			
	Maconi's redaction	Flete's redaction					C	
	Mi₁ and *Si₁*	*Si₄* and *O₂*	*O₄*	*Libellus*	A	B	Short version	Long version
The rock of self-knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Self-hatred	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
God's revelation on purity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carnal self-love		✓	✓	✓				✓
Spiritual self-love		✓	✓	✓				✓
Flete's comment on the importance of Catherine's doctrine		✓						
God's revelation on solitude		✓		✓				

3.2 The *Documento spirituale* in Medieval England: New Manuscript Evidence

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. th. e. 26 (from now on *O₄*) is a small parchment manuscript produced around the second quarter of the fifteenth century. The manuscript has received some critical attention for its connection with Sheen Charterhouse and because it contains, among other texts, a Latin translation of Walter Hilton's popular religious treatise, *The Scale of Perfection*.[29] What has, so far, remained overlooked is the text added

[27]. See Fawtier, *Sainte Catherine de Sienne*.

[28]. Francesco Conti, 'Frate Tommaso d'Antonio e il suo Supplementum', *S. Caterina da Siena* 1, nos. 2–3 (1951): 51; Tommaso da Siena, *Libellus de supplemento*, LI–LIV.

[29]. E.g., A. I. Doyle, 'Book Production by the Monastic Orders in England (*c.* 1375–1530): Assessing the Evidence', in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence. Proceedings of the Second Conference of The Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500, Oxford, July 1988*, ed. Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA: Anderson-Lovelace), 1–19; Sargent, 'Transmission by the English Carthusians', 236; Michael G. Sargent, 'Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*: The London Manuscript Group Reconsidered', *Medium Ævum* 52, no. 2 (1983): 189–216.

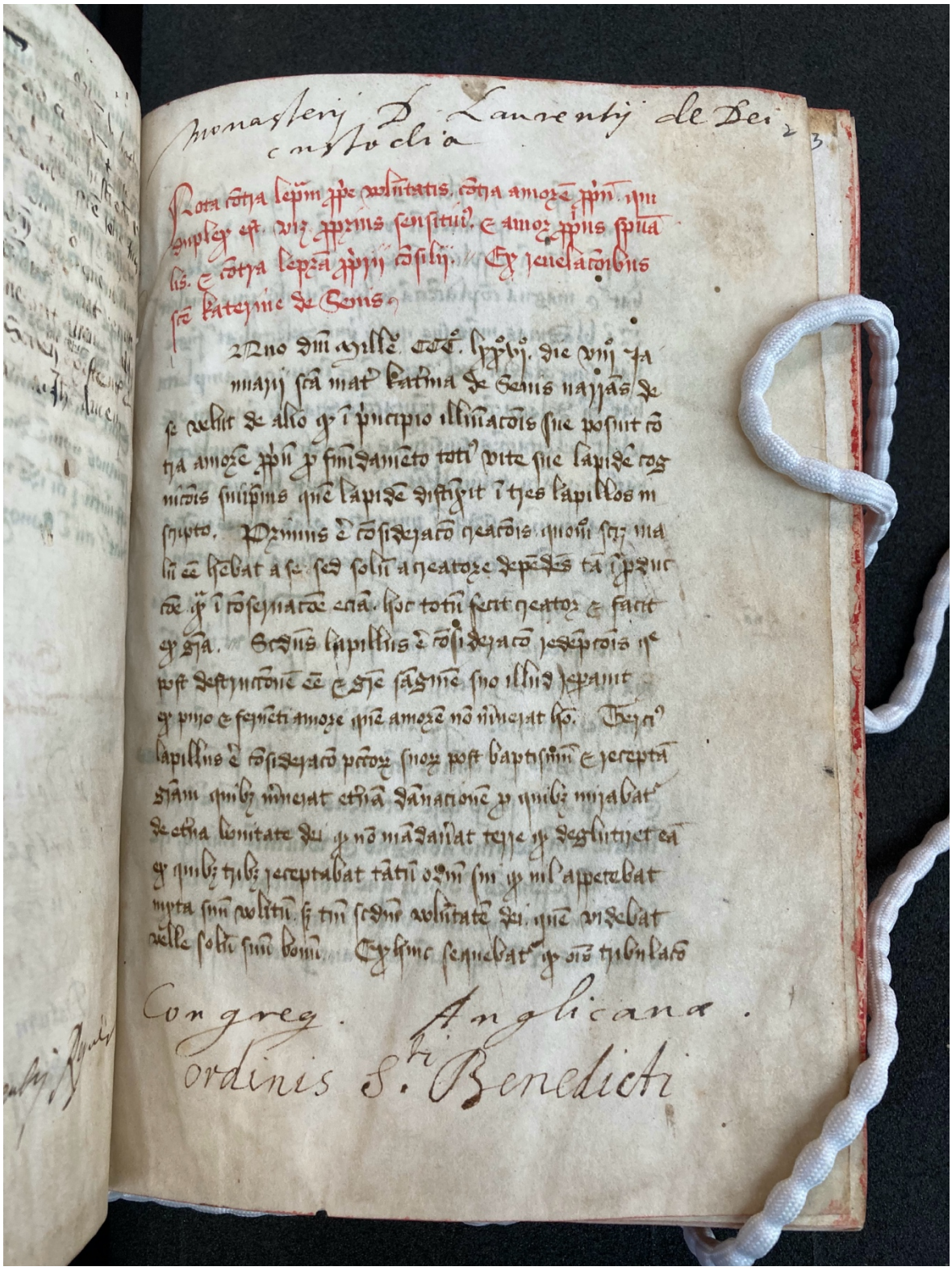

Figure 1. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Lat. th. e. 26, fol. 2r. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, 2025.

right before the table of chapters for Hilton's *Scale* (at fols. 2r–3v) and written on unruled parchment and in a fifteenth-century hand different from the one which copied out the rest of the manuscript (see Figure 1). A rubric informs us that we are about to read an extract 'Ex revelacionibus Sancta Katerine de Senis', from Saint Catherine of Siena's *Revelations*, a term typically used (at least in modern scholarship) to indicate her *Dialogo*. And this is how the catalogue of the Bodleian Library currently identifies the work.[30] Upon closer inspection, however, we find out that we are not in front of an extract from *Il dialogo*, but of a copy of the *Documento spirituale*.

Catherine's *Dialogo* and Flete's *Documento* share the same subject matter, related themes and teachings, and sometimes similar language. This similarity has generated some confusion among modern scholars: Middle English translations of Flete's *Documento* have almost invariably been mistaken for excerpts of the *Dialogo*.[31] The same seems to have happened to the text at the beginning of *O₄*, showing that the misidentification of Flete's *Documento* has affected Latin copies of the text, too, and that it has been going on since relatively early in its textual history. However, we could stop reading after the first few lines and we would already have enough material for a correct identification of this text. *O₄* opens with the distinctive image of the stone of self-knowledge and of its further division into three smaller stones:

> sancta mater Katerina de Senis, narrans de se velut de alio, <dixit> quod in principio illuminacionis sue posuit contra amorem proprium, pro fundamento totius vite sue, lapidem cognicionis sui ipsius, quem lapidem distinxit in tres lapillos in<fra>scripto<s>.[32]
>
> [Our holy mother Catherine of Siena, speaking of herself as if of another person, said that at the beginning of her enlightenment she placed against self-love and as the foundation of all her life the stone of self-knowledge, which stone she divided into the three small stones written below.]

This formulation of self-knowledge as a stone and the following enumeration of its three constituent smaller rocks can be read in all manuscripts of the *Documento spirituale*, but it

[30]. Catalogue description in *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_3225>. Accessed January 6, 2025.
[31]. Brown, 'The Many Misattributions'.
[32]. The other witnesses of the *Documento* all share the reading 'tres lapillos infrascriptos'.

does not occur in Catherine's *Dialogo*. The rest of the text in *O4* also corresponds to that found in other witnesses to the *Documento*, leaving no doubt that the Oxford manuscript, too, contains William Flete's text. And a fuller comparison between *O4*, the *Documento*, and the chapter of the *Dialogo* which most resembles the *Documento* clearly indicates that the text in *O4* is a copy of Flete's work and not an extract from Catherine's longer mystical dialogues (see Table 13 for a comparison of an illustrative excerpt).[33]

There is no doubt that *O4* follows Flete's redaction of the *Documento*. Vocabulary and syntax are closer to copies of Flete's version than Maconi's, and the manuscript includes the full section on self-love, which we find only in Flete (see Table 9). The text in *O4*, however, is not exactly like that of other witnesses to Flete's redaction: the manuscript, in fact, omits the final two paragraphs, a significant omission which, together with some lexical and grammatical variants, may help us place this Latin version of the *Documento* in relation to Middle English translations of Flete's text and clarify some of the doubts scholars have expressed about the relationship between the *Documento* and the *Cleannesse*.

Once it reached medieval England, the *Documento spirituale* went on to have a life of its own. The text was translated into Middle English, became *The Cleannesse of Sowle*, lost all references to its author and, in most of the manuscripts in which it survives, omitted the name of Catherine of Siena, too. Nine manuscripts and three distinct versions of *The Cleannesse*—Versions A, B, and C—have been identified by P. S. Jolliffe.[34] Version A and C appear to be two independent translations of the *Documento*. It is not clear, however, whether Version B comes from the *Documento*, too: its differences from the Latin text and from the other two Middle English versions are stark, which means there is a possibility

[33]. The passage of the *Dialogo* most similar to the *Documento spirituale* appears towards the end of chapter 100; Tommaso da Siena, *Libellus de supplemento*, 297n28; Brown, 'The Many Misattributions', 72. Cf. the relevant passage in Catherine of Siena, *Dialogo*, 280–83.

[34]. Version A: London, British Library, Sloane MS. 982 [*s.* XV], fol. 60v. Version B: Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.5.40 [*s.* XV], fol. 117v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl. C. 285 [*s.* XV], fol. 61r–v. Version C: Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.53 [*s.* XV *ex.*] fols. 140v–141r; London, British Library, Arundel MS. 197 [*s.* XV], fol. 10r; London, British Library, Harley MS 2409 [*s.* XV[1]], fols. 70r–73r ('long version'); London, British Library, Royal MS. 18 A. x [*s.* XV[1]], fol. 10r–v; Manchester, Chetham's Hospital Library, MS Mun.A.7.1 (*olim* 6690) [*s.* XV *med.*], fol. 130r–v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodl. 131 [*s.* XV *med.*], fol. 131r–v. See P. S. Jolliffe, *A Check-list of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance A Check-list of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance*, Subsidia Mediaevalia 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1974), 105.

this short text is an adaptation of a section of the *Dialogo* similar in theme to Flete's text.[35] Most manuscripts containing *The Cleannesse* only include the section of the *Documento* where God instructs Catherine on the three points she is to keep in mind to attain purity of soul. However, a longer version of the text survives in London, British Library, Harley MS 2409 (from now on *L*), at fols. 70r–73r.[36]

This version, known as 'long Version C', translates the text of the *Documento* almost in full and adds at the end three excerpts taken from Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior*, one on the discernment of spirits, one on self-knowledge, and another one on Catherine's mystical marriage to Christ.[37] *L* apparently follows Flete's redaction of the *Documento*, since it translates the sections of the text not included in Maconi's. However, Dirk Schultze, who edited the Catherinian texts in *L*, observed that the Middle English text does not align with Flete's version completely and that, when it strays from it, *L* shares some readings with Maconi's version.[38] These observations led Schultze to use some caution when claiming that *L* is based on Flete, and to advance the hypothesis that the Middle English translator may have consulted both redactions or, alternatively, a text conflating the two Latin versions. A close look at manuscripts with Flete's redaction will resolve these philological doubts. Comparing the edition of the *Documento* with Middle English translations, Schultze lists eleven instances where *L* seems to go back to Maconi's version rather than to Flete's. In six of these cases, however, the manuscripts of the *Documento* all agree with each other and do not show the redactions to be different: the lexical differences flagged up by Schultze are caused by Fawtier's editorial misinterpretations and omissions, which have given us a version of Flete's redaction which departs slightly from the one surviving in manuscript form. New transcriptions of these apparent *loci critici* show that Flete's redaction, Maconi's, and *L* are here perfectly aligned (see Table 10).[39] Another two examples cited by Schultze are also not indicative of a

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[35]. Brown, 'The Many Misattributions', 71–72; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 92–93.

[36]. The Catherinian texts in *L* are edited in Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings'. Schultze's edition compares *L* with the other five manuscripts of Version C of 'The Cleannesse'. The text of one manuscript of Version C (Arundel MS 197) has also been included in Alexandra Barrat, ed., *Women's Writing in Middle English: An Annotated Anthology*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 110–11. The text of Version B (from MS. Rawl. C. 285) has been printed in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole, an English Father of the Church, and his Followers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, 2 vols. (London: Sonnenschein, 1895–96), 1:108; and Brown, 'The Many Misattributions', 71–72.

[37]. Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings', 308–11.

[38]. Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings', 313–15.

[39]. For Flete's redaction, I have chosen to transcribe S_4, as it was the only witness of this version used in Fawtier's edition. I have checked all relevant passages against the version

distinction between Flete's and Maconi's redactions. Unlike the previous examples, here Fawtier is not in error, but *O4* agrees with what was thought to be distinctive of Maconi's version, revealing that the discrepancy in the two versions is exacerbated by a partial analysis of manuscript witnesses (see Table 11). The final three *loci critici* highlight actual differences between Maconi's and Flete's versions. In these three examples, however, the Middle English translation is close to either Latin version and it could have arguably been based on any of the two (see Table 12). The difference does not necessarily signal an influence of Maconi's version on *L*, a point which Schultze himself recognizes for the first two of these three discrepancies, admitting that they 'probably are within the range of translational options and not necessarily based on different readings'.[40] Now that we have a more detailed picture of the Latin tradition of the *Documento*, there is no reason to assume any indebtedness of *L* to Maconi's redaction. The Middle English translator worked from Flete's version which, we now know, contains readings previously thought to be exclusive to Maconi's redaction.

Table 10. Apparent *loci critici* in the *Documento spirituale* mistranscribed by Fawtier.

Documento, Flete's redaction	*Documento*, Maconi's redaction	*The Cleannesse*, long Version C
p*ost* destructum esse **gracie** *S4* prius destructum esse gratie Fawtier	**post** destructum esse **gratie** *M1* **post** destructum esse Fawtier	**efter** þat we had destruyd oure welebeyng and loste **grace**
delectaciones **se*n*sitivas** *S4* delectationes festivas Fawtier	delectationes **sensitivas** *M1*	**feleable** lust
perfectissime uniaris *S4* uniaris Fawtier	**perfectissime** uniaris *M1*	forto be **parfitely** oned vnto me

of the text in the other witnesses and noted significant differences. For Maconi's redaction, I transcribed the only medieval manuscript in which it survives, *M1*. In the transcriptions, I have marked expansions of abbreviations in italics whenever Fawtier's editorial choices may have been determined by a different interpretation of the abbreviation signs.

[40]. Schultze, 'Spiritual Teachings', 314.

hoc autem fiet si tria **servab*is*** *S4* hoc autem fiat si tria servabat Fawtier	hoc autem erit si tria **servaveris** *M1*	saltou be if **þou kepe**
tuam vult **sanctificac*ionem*** *S4* tuam vult satisfacionem Fawtier	tuam vult **sanctificationem** *M1*	þat wil þi **holynes**
sunt diverse mansiones in **p*at*ria** *S4* sunt diverse mansiones in **prima** Fawtier	sunt in **patria** diverse mansiones *M1*	þer er dyuers places of blisse in **heuen**

Table 11. New collation of apparent *loci critici* in the *Documento spirituale.*

Documento, Flete's redaction	*Documento*, Maconi's redaction	'The Cleannesse', long Version C
tam malum quam bonum Fawtier, *S4*, *Libellus* tam **bonum** quam **malum** *O4*	tam malum quam bonum *M1* tam **bonum** quam **malum** Fawtier, *S1*	bothe **gode** & **ille**
semper hoc operante Fawtier, *O2*, *S4* sempre **tecum** hec operante *Libellus*, *O4*	semper **tecum** hec operante *M1*	wirkyng þies þings **in þe**

Table 12. Minor differences between Flete's and Maconi's redactions of the *Documento spirituale.*

Documento, Flete's redaction	*Documento*, Maconi's redaction	'The Cleannesse', long Version C
et hoc totum fecit Creator et facit ex gracia	Et hoc totum ex gratia	and al þis dide he onely of grace
temptaciones dyaboli	Temptationes etiam aduersarii	Tempatcion of þe fende
Quod si attenderis	Quod si diligenter atenderis	And if þou take gude hede

Among the manuscripts containing Flete's Latin version the closest to *L* is O_4. The two reproduce the exact same portion of Flete's text: both include limited contextual information at the beginning and, crucially, both cut the final lines about solitude and the cell of self-knowledge, ending with the discussion on spiritual self-love. O_4 and *L* are the only two examples across the Latin and Middle English tradition of the *Documento* which present a complete text but omit the final part on solitude. Overall, the two display a close textual affinity. *L* also translates some variants found only in O_4 and not in other manuscripts of the text: an error in reporting the date of composition, two syntactic inversions, and some changes in the number of verbs, nouns, and determinatives (see Table 14). Taken on its own, each of these variants could probably be considered polygenetic, but the fact that they are only attested in O_4 and *L* allows us to place them close to each other in a hypothetical stemma. Despite these correspondences, there are also some minor points of divergence between O_4 and *L*, mostly consisting of omissions and scribal errors, which bring *L* closer to the other copies of Flete's redaction (see Table 15). The clearest indication of *L*'s position in relation to the Latin tradition of the *Documento* is found in a sentence, quoted in both Table 14 and Table 15 below, where Flete writes that Catherine simultaneously welcomed demonic temptations, because they tempered her, and despised them, because they caused sensory pleasures:

> et temptaciones dyaboli simul et amplectabatur et aspernabatur: amplectabatur in quantum tribulabant eam, et aspernabatur in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas *O₂*, *Libellus*
>
> *S₄*] *om*. tribulabant eam, et aspernabatur in quantum

[and the devil's temptations she simultaneously cherished and disdained: she cherished them because they vexed her, and she disdained them because they offered physical pleasures.]

et temptaciones diaboli in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas respuebat et amplectabatur in quantum tribulabant eam *O₄*

[and the devil's temptations, because they offered physical pleasures, she rejected and she cherished because they vexed her.]

Temptacion of þe fende, boþe she lufed þam & she despised þam—in als mykel as þei broght hir vntil feleable lust she despised þam, and in als mykel as þai trubled hir she lufed þaim *L*

O₄, unlike all other surviving versions of the Latin text, omits the initial clause and changes the order of the rest of the quotation, telling its readers first why Catherine hated demonic temptations, and then why she embraced them. The Middle English version in *L*, too, has the same syntactic inversion we find in *O₄*; however, unlike *O₄*, the Middle English retains the initial clause explaining that Catherine both loved and hated demonic temptations. Overall, this textual evidence speaks quite clearly and suggests that the long Version C of *The Cleannesse* is based on a text very close and, in all likelihood, related to *O₄*, but not on *O₄* itself, which departs further than *L* from Flete's text. It seems, therefore, that a copy of the *Documento* slightly closer to the archetype than *O₄* was already circulating in England and was translated into Middle English.

3.3 The Transmission of the *Documento spirituale*

As we have seen in chapter 1, the dissemination of Latin texts related to Catherine mainly ripples out from two of the saint's followers, the Carthusian Stefano Maconi and the Dominican Tommaso Caffarini, who had Catherinian manuscripts copied out and systematically transmitted through their respective orders. These two branches of transmission tend to produce distinct versions of texts recognizable for their additions and manipulations of certain passages, especially at the later stages of textual transmission, as copies move farther away from their archetypes.

Manuscripts of the *Documento* produced in Italy follow this bifurcated distribution pattern, too: Flete's longer redaction is found in miscellanies and compilations coming out

of Caffarini's Dominican *scriptorium* in Venice: O_2, S_4, and the two medieval copies of the *Libellus de supplemento*, all of which show signs of a Venetian origin—in script, decoration, iconography, and selection of texts. On the other hand, the shorter redaction is only found in Carthusian manuscripts linked to Maconi, after whom this version of the text is named. M_1 belonged to the Charterhouse at Pavia, while S_1 is a transcription based on a lost codex from the Charterhouse at Pontignano; both are places where Maconi resided.

However, the English copy of the *Documento*, O_4, does not fall neatly into this division and complicates the picture: it is a Carthusian codex, but it contains Flete's longer version of the text. Carthusian production of the manuscript reveals that the English branch of the Order was involved at some level in the dissemination of the *Documento*, but it cannot guarantee whether they were the ones who imported the text into England. Sheen may have got the text not from charterhouses in mainland Europe but only once it was already circulating in England—a possibility that is not at all to be ruled out, especially since my textual analysis above (section 3.2) suggests that O_4 is further down a hypothetical stemma than the Middle English version of the *Cleannesse* in *L*, and thus there must have been other Latin copies of the text already circulating in England.

While it is true that charterhouses could count on international networks of book exchange between houses of the Order, Carthusian libraries also expanded their holdings through bequests, donations, incorporation of new members' private collections, and loans.[41] And, indeed, recent scholarship has cautioned against assuming that Carthusian ownership means Carthusian involvement in the transmission of a given text. The English Carthusians were indeed an immensely important repository for mystical texts, both contemplative books produced domestically—like Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, various works by Richard Rolle—and those texts imported from mainland Europe—such as Marguerite Porete, Mechthild of Hackeborn, Thomas à Kempis.[42] Their

[41]. See Roger Lovatt, 'The Library of John Blacman and Contermporary Carthusian Spirituality', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992): 195–230; Vincent Gillespie, 'The Permeable Cloister? Charterhouse, Contemplation and Urban piety in Later Medieval England: The Case of London', in *The Urban Church in Late Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Clive Burgess*, ed. David Harry and Christian Steer (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2019), 253.

[42]. See Margaret E. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 319–53; Roger Lovatt, 'The *Imitation of Christ* in Late Medieval England: *The Alexander Price Essay*', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 18 (1968): 97–121; Michael G. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late-Medieval Spiritual Writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*

active involvement in the transmission of such texts, and especially in their dissemination to the laity, should still be subject to careful scrutiny and should not be assumed as readily as it often has been.[43] Despite their unquestionable importance in the international book trade, as A. I. Doyle points out, '[t]here is however some danger that the prominence of the order in this field of literature may become an unanalysed truism, not always firmly based on the facts or allowing for the complications and uncertainties of individual cases'.[44] It would be a mistake just to assume that the Carthusians were involved in the transmission to England of the *Documento* only because a manuscript copy of the text is found at Sheen.

Working *against* the argument for a Carthusian transmission of this text is textual data. The fact that the text in O_4 is more similar to Dominican copies of the *Documento*, and that the pattern of distribution, if we take O_4 out of the equation, shows clear distinctions between Carthusian and Dominican versions of the text, indicates a strong possibility that the *Documento* was transmitted to England through Dominican channels and that, once there, it was picked up by the English Carthusians.

3.4 William Flete's Involvement in the Transmission of Catherine's Works

Another theory for the transmission of the *Documento* sees the involvement of Flete himself, the only known direct link between Catherine and medieval England. Albeit not universally accepted, the hypothesis that Flete sent this text to his homeland has gained

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27, no. 3 (1976): 225–40; Dennis D. Martin, 'Carthusian As Advocates of Women Visionary Reformers', in *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Julian M. Luxford, Medieval Church Studies 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 127–54; Michael G. Sargent, 'The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late-Medieval Spiritual Writings: A Reconsideration of Walter Hilton and Nicholas Love', in *The Capital's Charterhouses and the Record of English Carthusianism*, ed. Julian Luxford (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2023), 117–51.

[43]. See a meticulous unpicking of this problem in a recent discussion in Vincent Gillespie, 'Preaching to the Choir: Another Look at English Carthusian Transmission of Vernacular Spiritual Writings', in *The Capital's Charterhouses and the Record of English Carthusianism*, ed. Julian Luxford (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2023), 152–204; see also some cautionary remarks in A. I. Doyle, Carthusian Participation in the Movement of Works of Richard Rolle between England and Other Parts of Europe in the 14th and 15th Centuries', in *Kartäusermystik und -Mystiker. Dritter internationaler Kongreß über die Kartäusergeschichte und -spiritualität*, ed. James Hogg, Analecta Cartusiana 55 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 109–20; Jessica Brantley, 'The Pilgrim in the Cell: Carthusian Readers and Deguileville', in *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Julian M. Luxford, Medieval Church Studies 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 296–98.

[44]. Doyle, 'Carthusian Participation', 109.

some traction recently.[45] According to Jennifer N. Brown, Flete likely sent a copy of his text to England, possibly appending it to the letters he sent in 1380 to the English members of his order.[46] Brown reminds us that a copy of the *Documento* reports Flete's comments that it would be a good thing if the text were disseminated through 'our Order' (ordinem nostrum). But evidence for his actual involvement with the transmission of texts, including his own, is very tenuous. Three letters Flete wrote in 1380 to the English province of the Augustinians, the letters Brown identifies as possible conduits for the *Documento*, contain, on the contrary, information that may help us circumscribe his involvement with the English branch of his Order and with the transmission of Catherinian texts.

The profile emerging from Flete's letters is that of a person who severed all ties with his homeland, and of someone who would only write under the direst of circumstances, to discuss the wellbeing of the Church. It seems therefore unlikely that he exploited his English contacts to actively promote the transmission of Catherinian texts to England. The letters clearly mention Flete's reluctance to write to his fatherland:

> Pro salute animarum vestrarum exposui animam meam periculo in scribendo istam litteram; magnum periculum est mihi recordari patriam meam vel parentelam, nisi quando Deus tangit cor meum. . . . Confortetis omnes amicos meos seculares, si qui vivi sunt, ut servent mandata Dei et frequenter confiteantur. . . . Ex parte Dei rogo ut nullus mihi scribat, nec frater, nec secularis. Parcatis mihi quia miserrime scripsi.[47]
>
> [By writing this letter, I exposed my soul to danger, for the health of your souls; it is a great danger for me to remember my home country or my relations, except when God touches my heart. . . . Encourage all my secular friends, if any is still alive, to serve God's orders and to confess themselves frequently. . . . For God's sake I pray that no one, neither brother nor lay, writes to me. Forgive me because I am writing in a very wretched state.]

[45]. Some scholars point out our lack of evidence in support of this hypothesis: see Barratt, 'Continental Women Mystics and English Readers', 251; Schultze, 'Translating Catherine of Siena', 188n5; Heffernan, '*Orcherd of Syon*: A Reconsideration', 14–15.

[46]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 82

[47]. Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis', 312–13.

> Ex parte Dei rogo ut nullus mihi scribat: est mihi magnum periculum recordari patriam vel parentelam meam nisi pro tempore orationis. . . . minime libenter scribo.[48]
>
> [For God's sake I pray that no one write to me: it is a great danger for me to remember my home country or my relations, except during prayers. . . . I am writing unwillingly.]
>
> anno instanti, erit vicesimus primus annus quod exivi patriam et regnum Anglie. Nunquam misi litteram Anglie nec audebam nec proponebam. . . . Male scripsi, non ordinate, non libenter scribo; exposui me periculo pro salute animarum. Periculum esset mihi recordare patriam meam, nisi ipse Deus tangeret me vel moveret me ad ista. Ideo nullus mihi rescribat.[49]
>
> [This year, it will be the twenty-first year since I departed from my home country and the Kingdom of England. I never sent a letter to England, nor would I dare or propose to do so. . . . I wrote badly, inelegantly; I do not write willingly. I exposed myself to danger for the health of souls. It is a danger for me to remember my home country unless God himself touch me or move me to these things. Therefore, no one should write back to me.]

Tellingly, in the letter to the friars, Flete admits not knowing whether his English contacts are still alive. To the provincial of the Augustinian Order in England, he explains that this is the first time in twenty-one years he has written a letter home. In all three letters he urges his English brethren not to write back. The open disinterest in maintaining correspondence with England could, no doubt, be merely rhetorical: Flete's letters are clearly the product of a skilled writer. Although he claims to have written badly and inelegantly ('Male scripsi, non ordinate'), Flete enlivens his letters with several quotations from the Scriptures, quotations he uses with success to elevate his style and to strengthen his argument. In a similar way, his open unwillingness to write home stresses the exceptionality of the situation and the urgency of his requests, making his prose more impactful. This, however, does not mean that the claim is not genuine. There is little reason to doubt Flete's reluctance, however artfully and forcefully expressed, to foster any relationship with the

[48]. Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis', 318.
[49]. Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis', 321.

English Augustinians. His letters make it clear that he had not written to England in the twenty-one years since he had left the island and that he had no intention to write again in future, not even to promote Catherine and her doctrine.

And, in fact, in these letters Flete does not mention the *Documento spirituale* or Catherine, even if his missives deal with some key teachings found in the *Documento*. In the letter, Flete cites the Augustinian Rule and its admonishment to separate sinners from their sin: 'Ex parte Dei, studeatis ut ubique fiant debite correctiones *cum dilectione hominum et odio vitiorum*' (For God's sake, you should apply yourselves that wherever there should be rightful corrections, these be done with love for people and hatred for vices).[50] This is also one of the requirements for purity of soul outlined in the *Documento*: 'Insuper nullum judicabis nisi manifeste videas peccatum. Et tunc vitio irasceris et homini compatieris' (In addition, you will not judge anything unless you see the sin openly. And then you will be angry with the vice and you will pity the person).[51] And, again, both Flete's letter and the *Documento* mention solitude in similar terms, as mentioned above (see section 3.2). However, despite the clear links between what he is writing and the Italian saint's doctrine, Flete does not mention Catherine at all in the letters he sends to his fellow countrymen.[52] If Flete did attach the *Documento* to his missives to the English Augustinians with the aim of spreading Catherine's work and promoting her figure overseas, as Brown speculates, it seems strange that these letters, which have so much in common with Catherine's spirituality and which offer many opportunities to draw parallels with her texts and personality, do not mention the saint or her writings. Flete's correspondence with the English Augustinians reveals a great affinity with Catherine's doctrine (and perhaps even an indebtedness to her), but it does not offer us any evidence that he did send his English confrères a copy of the *Documento*. If anything, the letters seem to negate this possibility: they presuppose no prior or subsequent contact between Flete and the English Augustinians and they do not exploit similarities with the *Documento* to promote or even allude to the Saint.

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[50]. Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis', 311 (italics in the original).

[51]. Fawtier, 'Catheriniana', 91.

[52]. Nancy Bradley Warren writes that Flete's letters to the English Augustinians include 'some discussing Catherine', and so does Jane Chance. However, despite the similarity of Flete's and Catherine's spiritual outlook, none of the three known letters Flete sent to England mentions the Italian Saint. Cf. Nancy Bradley, *The Embodied Word: Female Spiritualities, Contested Orthodoxies, and English Religious Cultures, 1350–1700*, ReFormations: Medieval and Early Modern (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 23; Jane Chance, *The Literary Subversion of Medieval Women*, The New Middle Ages (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 171n74.

If, on the one hand, a close reading of Flete's letters suggests he did not act as a conduit for the transmission of specific texts by and about Catherine, not even his own *Documento spirituale*, then, on the other hand, such close reading prompts a reconceptualization of the very notion of textual transmission. In fact, Flete's *Epistola ad fratres* is so deeply imbued with Catherine's political doctrines and literary forms that it can be considered a Catherinian text in its own right. Flete seems to have transmitted Catherine partially and without acknowledging her, by distilling her political and apostolic doctrine and by embracing the epistolary genre. Unacknowledged borrowings of images, correlations of themes, and similarities in wording are other frequent methods used by medieval writers to engage with and repurpose texts by women visionaries, texts whose influence often manifests itself in the form of these 'textual phantoms', rather than attributed quotations.[53] Flete's letter falls under this kind of invisible and silent transmission and shows that the impact of Catherine's public life rippled out as far as medieval England, influencing its textual culture. As such, the letter forms an important and singular testimony: the political aspects of Catherine's religious life seem to have been only peripheral to the medieval English reception of the saint, and they are often downplayed in the corpus of Catherinian texts circulating on the island. On Catherine's political legacy, Brown writes:

> Catherine had a rich political and public life that is mostly excised from Raymond's *Legenda major*. . . . Without access to Catherine's letters and supplementary hagiographies, the [medieval English] reader of Raymond's translated *Lyf* is given a more conventional view of this unconventional saint that some of her Italian contemporaries would have understood. . . . The example of the visionary woman, if not the practice, is preferable to that of the politicized woman.[54]

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[53]. 'Textual phantoms' allow us to sketch more fully Mechthild of Hackeborn's influence on Middle English texts: see Liz Herbert McAvoy and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, 'Mechthild of Hackeborn and Margery Kempe: An Intertextual Conversation', *Spicilegium* 4 (2020): 1–18; Liz Herbert McAvoy and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, 'The Intertextual Dialogue and Conversational Theology of Mechthild of Hackeborn and Margery Kempe', in *Encountering 'The Book of Margery Kempe'*, ed. Laura Kalas and Laura Varnam (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 43–62; Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Textual Phantoms and Spectral Presences: The Coming to Rest of Mechthild of Hackeborn's Writing in the Late Middle Ages', in *Women's Literary Cultures in the Global Middle Ages: Speaking Internationally*, ed. Kathryn Loveridge et al., Gender in the Middle Ages 20 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2023), 209–24.

[54]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 143.

However, by mapping a visionary woman's spiritual network beyond examples of direct textual transmission, we can assess the full impact of her vocation and restore aspects of her legacy otherwise obscured.

Towards the end of his letter to the English Austin friars, Flete writes a paragraph packed with references to three of the most prominent causes for which Catherine fought in her public life: the need for ecclesiastical reform, support for the Roman papacy (both before and after the Western Schism), and plans for a crusade in Jerusalem and surrounding territories. He writes:

> Recomendo caritati vestre papam Urbanum VI, quia ipse est verus papa, sicut constat servis Dei per revelationes, per inspirationes et per orationes. Expediens esset valde ut per totam Angliam semel in epdomada fierent letanie sicut alias vidi, et orationes pro eo, pro ecclesia e pro reformatione totius mundi, quia *totus mundus in maligno positus est*, et pro pace etiam habenda inter christianos et pro passagio fiendo et pro istis scismaticis illuminandis. Instetis quantum potestis ut ista ordinentur; potestis multum mereri in hac parte. Orate omnes ut cito veniat passagium et ut ibi simul omnes moriamur pro Christo.[55]
>
> [I recommend to your charity Pope Urban VI, because he is the rightful Pope, as has been made known to servants of God through revelations, inspirations, and prayers. It is very pressing that throughout England once a week there be litanies like others I saw elsewhere, and prayers for him, for the Church and for the reformation of the whole world, since the whole world lieth in the evil one, and also pray to have peace amongst Christians and for the crusade and for the enlightenment of these schismatics. Insist as much as you can so that these things are ordered; you may gain much by doing so. You should all pray that the crusade may happen soon and that over there we may all die together for Christ.]

These three points—support for Roman papacy, reform, and crusades—are policies for which Catherine was, and still is, well-known.[56] These three core aspects of Catherine's

[55]. Laurent, 'De litteris ineditis', 320.

[56]. Among the scholars who identified these three policies as the distinctive aspects of Catherine's apostolic and prophetic mission are: Franco Cardini, 'L'idea di Crociata in Santa Caterina da Siena', in *Atti del Simposio Internazionale Cateriniano-Bernardiano. Siena, 17–20 aprile 1980*, ed. Domenico Maffei and Paolo Nardi (Siena: Accademia

active ministry were not unrelated but made up a coherent programme of spiritual remodelling she put forward. By reading through Catherine's own writing, it appears clear that they make up the proposed medicine necessary to heal the wounded mystical body of the Christian Church, through the correction of the moral vices of its members (ecclesiastical reform) and the resolution of human struggles (by supporting a Roman papacy which can oversee a lasting peace among Christian states and by bringing conflict outside Europe through a crusade).

Writing at the time of the Western Schism, when Christendom was divided in its support for the Roman Pope, Urban VI, and an antipope, Clement VII, Flete sides with the 'verus papa' (true, rightful Pope) in Rome, like Catherine before him. Throughout her political career Catherine was a stark defender of the Pope's authority and participated in papal politics.[57] First, she forcefully advocated for the return of Pope Gregory XI to Rome from Avignon, where the papacy had taken refuge as early as 1309 to escape from a politically instable city endangered by feuding noble families. Catherine took to heart the cause of the Pope's return to Rome.[58] She wrote letters and went on diplomatic missions to pave the way for peace among belligerent Italian states and to secure the papacy's smooth return to Italy. Catherine's support and actions may have been less decisive than what nineteenth-century Italian-nationalist scholars first asserted,[59] but her goal was eventually accomplished when Gregory managed to settle in Rome. But soon after his arrival in Rome, Gregory died. His successor, Urban VI, had a difficult relationship with the

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Senese degli Intronati, 1982), 62; Claudio Leonardi, 'Caterina da Siena: mistica e profetessa', in *Atti del Simposio Internazionale Cateriniano-Bernardiano. Siena, 17–20 aprile 1980*, ed. Domenico Maffei and Paolo Nardi (Siena: Accademia Senese degli Intronati, 1982), 163–64; F. Thomas Luongo, *The Saintly Politics of Catherine of Siena* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 81; Blake Beattie, 'Catherine of Siena and the Papacy', in *A Companion to Catherine of Siena*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, George Ferzoco, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 32 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 82; Helen J. Nicholson, 'Women's Writing and Cultural Patronage', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the Crusades*, ed. Anthony Bale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 77.

57. For overviews of Catherine's involvement with the papacy and her role in bringing it back to Rome, see Beattie, 'Catherine of Siena and the Papacy'; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 42–54.

58. For a short collection of studies on Catherine's last period in the city, see Diega Giunta, ed., *Caterina da Siena e Roma: Nel 630º anniversario del soggiorno romano della Santa*, Quaderni del Centro Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani 2 (Florence: Nerbini, 2013).

59. Beattie, 'Catherine of Siena and the Papacy', 74. An early, but still influential, study which overstates Catherine's role in Gregory's return to Rome is Alfonso Capecelatro, *Storia di S. Caterina da Siena e del papato del suo tempo* (Naples: Giovanni Pedone Lauriel, 1856).

cardinals and the Roman curia. The tension between them exploded and the cardinals declared Urban's election invalid; they were deposed, and decided to hold another conclave, electing a new Pope. This Pope, Clement VII, moved back to Avignon, thus precipitating the Western Schism. At this time, Catherine was summoned once again back in the thick of papal politics: in November 1378, Urban VI asked for her to move to Rome, where Catherine spent the last two years of her life dedicating her time to shore up the Roman papacy by writing to secular and religious authorities in search of their support. Catherine also tried to rope in William Flete and she advised the Pope summon him and other holy men to Rome, in order for them to provide public support to Urban as well as advice on the spiritual course to be taken by his Church. When he refused, preferring his hermetic lifestyle, Catherine sent a letter to Lecceto, rebuking Flete for his reluctance to obey the Pope.[60] It is hard to believe that Flete, writing to England with the same objective as the one Catherine worked so hard on since 1378, that is, to cement English support for Pope Urban VI, could have composed his letter without thinking of her.

In his letter, and indeed in all the letters he sends to England, Flete also mentions the importance of the reformation of the Church, which is another cornerstone of Catherine's writings. The need for ecclesiastical reform drives Catherine's writings. Her call for institutional change does not remain bound to the pages of her book but, after her death, Catherine becomes a symbol for the Observant Reform, a reactionary and reformist movement which spread across different religious orders and sought to promote a return to the ideals of strict ascetism expressed in monastic rules.[61] Catherine's holiness and her commitment to penitence and rigorous ascetic practices made her an ideal figurehead for the Observant Reform, and thus she was seen as a model not only for the Dominican Observance, but also for the nuns in Augustinian and Cistercian convents.[62] Flete's requests of the English Augustinians, that is, stricter adherence to the Rule and a more severe form of asceticism, are perfectly in keeping with this programme for reform.

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[60]. Catherine of Siena, *Lettere*, 1279–82 (letter T 328; Gi 130; IS 34). Catherine does not write directly to Flete, but to another Austin hermit at Lecceto, Antonio da Nizza.

[61]. For overviews of fourteenth- to fifteenth-century Observant impulses, see Bert Roest, 'Observant reform in religious orders', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 4, *Christianity in Western Europe, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 446–57; Kathryne Beebe, 'Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages', in *The Oxford Handbook of Christian Monasticism*, ed. Bernice M. Kaczynski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 300–13.

[62]. Tamar Herzig, 'Female Mysticism, Heterodoxy, and Reform', in *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. James D. Mixson and Bert Roest, Brill's Companion to the Christian Tradition 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 258–62.

Finally, the letter by Flete brings up another key aspect of Catherine's political agenda, the undertaking of a crusade. Catherine's writings, and her letters in particular, are testimonies to her efforts to co-ordinate a crusade to Jerusalem, a cause that occupied the saint for much of the early stages of her political career.[63] On reading Catherine's letters, it becomes apparent that the saint's support for the enterprise has many sides.[64] One is military: for Catherine, crusading means taking part in warfare and reconquering territories around Jerusalem. In this respect, some of her letters aim to secure commitments for ships, soldiers, and equipment.[65] Another aspect of the crusade is missionary: waging war against Muslims is, according to Catherine, a means to spreading Christianity and a chance for them to convert and to access salvation. Finally, Catherine thought a crusade would bring peace among Christian nations: instead of fighting amongst themselves, Christian rulers would find unity in their faith and jointly focus their attention towards a religious Other. This last point seems to have resonated with William Flete, whose letter explicitly juxtaposes the idea of the crusade with the one of peace among the Christian ('et pro pace etiam habenda inter christianos et pro passagio fiendo').

Catherine's ideas on the (physical and spiritual) position of the Pope in a Christian society, Church reform, and a crusade to Jerusalem percolate through most of her writing, in varying forms and degrees of intensity. For instance, one of the four petitions that structure Catherine's *Dialogo* is 'per la reformazione della santa Chiesa' (for the reformation of Holy Church), a prayer which elicits God's lenghty answer on the moral corruption afoot in the Church and his explanation of how a faithful Christian subject has

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63. See Paul Rousset, 'Sainte Catherine de Sienne et le problème de la croisade', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 25, no. 4 (1975): 499–513; Cardini, 'L'idea di Crociata'; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Saint Birgitta's and Saint Catherine's Visions of Crusading', in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, ed. Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid (London: Routledge, 2020), 74–92. For Catherine's position in a wider history of women's involvement in the crusading movement, see Christoph T. Maier, 'The Roles of Women in the Crusade Movement: A Survey', *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004): 60–82; Nicholson, 'Women's Writing and Cultural Patronage'.

64. The implications of Catherine's thought and actions in the crusading movement and the language used to describe this enterprise have yet to be fully unpacked by scholars who, at times, tend to oversimplify her position, dismiss her military concerns, and reduce her involvement in the movement to a purely missionary conversion narrative. See, e.g., Cardini, 'L'idea di crociata', 84–87; Maier, 'Roles of Women in the Crusade Movement', 75–81; but cf. the nuanced analysis in Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Visions of Crusading', 82–86.

65. In one letter to William Flete, for instance, Catherine reviewed the troops she had recently secured: Catherine of Siena, *Lettere*, 1265 (letter T 66; Gi 125; IS 175).

to orient themself amidst the miasma of ecclesiastical vice through steadfast obedience.[66] Part of Catherine's political actions are the theoretical framework which guides them can also be read in Raymond's *Legenda maior* and later hagiographical narratives, but here they are always filtered through hagiographers' ideals of sanctity.[67] It would therefore be a mistake to pinpoint Catherine's political thinking and apostolic mission to specific texts or a specific genre. Notwithstanding, Catherine's letters, though not the exclusive archive of the Saint's politics, are where Catherine's political concerns come to the surface more clearly and where her concrete actions for the attainment of her goals can be gauged more accurately.[68] The epistolary form allowed Catherine to exploit her rhetorical skills and promulgate her political and apostolical message to a vast, international, and heterogeneous network of correspondents.[69]

Flete seemed to have picked up on Catherine's political message and her method of communicating it. In 1377–78, he writes to Raymond of Capua an impassioned panegyric on the rhetorical effectiveness of Catherine's letters:

> Quia devotissima mater sagitte tue, id est littere tue, acute, populi sub te cadent, multi elati in sensu suo obstinate tibi contradicentes iaculis litterarum tuarum prostrati sunt ad terram, et adhuc prosternentur, et propter tuam ineffabilem humilitatem ac patientiam sub pedibus tuis cadent.[70]
>
> [Because, most devout mother, your arrows, that is, your letters, are sharp. People will fall under you. Many proud people that obstinately opposed you were prostrated and will still be prostrated by the arrows of your letters and will fall at your feet because of your unspeakable humility and patience.]

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66. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogo*, 3.

67. See, in particular, Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 319–33 (2.10), 362–64 (3.1.8–11).

68. And, consequently, her letters remain the focus of the most important analyses of her political and apostolic work: Karen Scott, 'St. Catherine of Siena, "Apostola"', *Church History* 61 (1992): 34–46; Karen Scott, '"Io Catarina": Ecclesiastical Politics and Oral Culture in the Letters of Catherine of Siena', in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, ed. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 87–121; Luongo, *Catherine of Siena's Saintly Politics*.

69. See Luongo, *Catherine of Siena's Saintly Politics*, esp. 72–80.

70. Luongo, *Catherine of Siena's Saintly Politics*, 78. The punctuation and orthography of this passage has been altered from Fawtier's edition and is closer to the edition of the letter found in Giovanni dalle Celle and Luigi Marsili, *Lettere*, ed. Francesco Giambonini, Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento. Studi e testi 22 (Florence: Olschki, 1991), 2:516–17.

And, a few lines later, Flete cites papal support, ecclesiastical reform, and the crusade as the three specific elements representative of Catherine's spirituality:

> et prosternit se ad terram in orationibus, faciem suam cum lacrimis quasi extenuando, divinam clementiam implorando maxime pro Ecclesia Dei, sed singularissime pro sanctissimo patre nostro domino papa quem vocat Christus in terris, pro cardinalibus ceterisque pastoribus Ecclesiae, pro reformatione Ecclesiae Dei, et pro passagio fiendo.[71]
>
> [and she throws herself onto the ground in prayer, almost belittling herself through tears, imploring divine mercy most of all for God's Church, but in particular for the Holy Father, our Lord, the Pope whom she calls Christ on Earth, for the cardinals and for the other pastors of the Church, for reformation of God's Church, and for the crusade to happen.]

Read together, and in the context of Catherine's and Flete's epistolary outputs, these two passages become an implicit statement of poetics: Flete identifies Catherine's letters as a persuasive method through which the saint carried out her apostolic mission and then singles out the three core political aspects of her spirituality.

Then, in his later epistles to the English Augustinians, Flete makes his own the form and content of Catherine's letters. Appointed by the saint as one of the two heirs of the spiritual leadership of her *famiglia*,[72] in the immediate aftermath of Catherine's death, Flete carries on Catherine's epistolary, apostolic activity. It is true that the medieval English reader did not have access to Catherine's letters (preface to Part I: Transmission) and therefore to the main first-hand record of her political efforts. By looking at Flete's letter, however, we have a testimony of the effects of Catherine's active ministry and of the perdurance of the ideas underpinning it. We need, therefore, to move beyond examples of direct textual transmission to account for the full impact of Catherine's political doctrine on English spirituality. While a re-assessment of William Flete's letters brings to light what is only a small, unattributed fragment of Catherine's political thought, we can interpret this

[71]. Fawtier, 'Catheriniana', 78–79.

[72]. So Nigi di Doccio writes in a letter addressed to Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi. See Tommaso da Siena 'Caffarini', *Leggenda minore di S. Caterina da Siena e lettere dei suoi discepoli*, ed. F. Grottanelli (Bologna: Gaetano Romagnoli, 1868), 291.

evidence in a more positive light: if much of Catherine's political activism was lost to medieval English readers, conversely, through William Flete, they had unique access to a distillation of the core principles and endeavors she worked for in her active ministry. Ultimately, then, Catherine's letters had a singular influence on medieval English textual culture: they do not seem to have circulated in medieval England, but what circulated was an 'English version' of Catherine's letters, three missives by an English author clearly inspired by the Italian Saint and her own letter-writing. Even though the *Documento spirituale* probably found its way to medieval England via the Dominicans, as seems to be suggested by textual similarities between O_4 and Dominican copies of the work, William Flete still managed to send to England traces of Catherine, but in a much less tangible way.

Table 13. Comparison between a section of the *Dialogo* (chapter 100), the *Documento spirituale*, and *O₄*.

Dialogo	*Documento spirituale* (Flete's redaction)	*O₄*
Quello che tu non vedi che sia espresso e palese peccato mortale no 'l debbi giudicare nella mente tua, altro che la volontà mia in loro; e vedendolo no 'l pigliare per giudicio, ma per santa compassione come detto è. E a questo modo verrai a perfetta purità, però che, facendo così, la mente tua non sarà scandalizzata né in me né nel prossimo tuo; però che lo sdegno cade verso del prossimo quando giudicaste la mala volontà loro verso di voi, e non la mia in loro. Il quale sdegno e scandalo discosta l'anima da me e impedisce la pefezione, e in alcuno tolle la grazia, più e meno secondo la gravezza dello sdegno e de l'odio conceputa nel prossimo per lo suo giudicio. In contrario riceve l'anima che giudicarà la volontà mia, come detto t'ò, la quale non vuole	Insuper nullum judicabis nisi manifeste videas peccatum. Et tunc vitio irasceris et homini compatieris. Tertium est si facta servorum meorum non secundum gustum tuum sed secundum judicium meum judicaveris, nosti enim me dixisse quod *in domo patris mei mansiones multae sunt* et cum mansio gloriae respondeat merito viae sicut sunt diversae mansions in prima, sic sunt diversae ambulationes in via, propter quod omnia facta servorum meorum dummodo non sunt contra meam doctrinam expresse habeas in reverentiam et ipso nullatenus judices. (Fawtier, 'Catheriniana', 91)	Insuper nullum iudicabis nisi manifestum videris peccatum. Et tunc vitio irasceris et homini compatieris. Tertium est si facta servorum meorum non secundum tuum gustum sed secundum meum iudicium iudicaveris. Nosti enim me dixisse quod 'in domo patris mei mansiones multe sunt'. Et cum mansio glorie corespondeat merito vie sicut sunt diverse mansiones in prima, sic sunt diverse ambulationes in via. Propter quod omnia facta servorum meorum dummodo non sint contra meam doctrinam expresse habeas in reverentiam et ipsos nullatenus iudices. (fol. 3r)

altro che ’l vostro bene, e ciò ch’ Io do e prometto, do perché aviate il fine vostro per lo quale Io vi creai; e perché sta sempre nella dilezione del prossimo, sta sempre nella mia, e stando nella mia sta unita in me. E però t’è di necessità, a volere venire alla purità che tu mi dimandi, di fare queste tre cose principali, cioè di unirti in me per affetto d’amore, portando nella memoria tua i benefici ricevuti da me; e con l’occhio de l’intelletto Vedere l’affetto della mia carità che v’amo inestimabilmente; e nella volontà de l’uomo giudicare la volontà mia e non la mala volontà sua, però ch’Io en so’ giudice: Io e non voi. E da questo ti verrà ogni perfezione. Questa fu la dottrina data a te dalla mia Verità, se bene ti ricorda. . . . (280–82)		

Table 14. Conjunctive errors in *O_4* and *L.*

O_2, *S_4*, *Libellus*	*O_4*	*L*
die vij^{u} Januarii *O_2*, *S_4* *om. Libellus*	die **viii^{o}** ianuarii	þe **.viij.** day of Januer
et temptaciones dyaboli simul et amplectabatur et aspernabatur: amplectabatur in quantum tribulabant eam, et aspernabatur in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas *O_2*, *Libellus* et temptaciones dyaboli simul et amplectebatur et aspernebatur: amplectebatur in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas *S_4*	et temptaciones diaboli **in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas respuebat et amplectabatur in quantum tribulabant eam**	Temptacion of þe fende, boþe she lufed þam & she despised þam—**in als mykel as þei broght hir vntil feleable lust she despised þam, and in als mykel as þai trubled hir she lufed þaim**
si totam intencionem in me dirigens	si totam intencionem **tuam** in me **dirigas**	if **þou** so ordeyne **þine** entent vnto me
tam malum quam bonum	tam **bonum** quam **malum**	bothe **gode** & **ille**
preceptum Creatoris	**precepta** Redemptoris et Creatoris	þe **comandements** of god
facit hominem ita inherere proprio appetitui spirituali et proprie sentencie quod non vult servire Deo	facit **homines** ita adherere proprio appetitui spirituali et proprie sentencie quod non **valent** servire Deo	it makes **men** forto folow þer owen gostely appetite & þer owen dome þat **þai wil** noither serue god

non querit aliud nec vult aliud nisi meam sanctificacionem	nec querit aliud nec vult aliud nec **nostram** sanctificacionem	sekes noȝt elles no wil bot **oure** holynes

Table 15. Separative errors in *O_4* and *L.*

O_2, *S_1*, *Libellus*	*O_4*	*L*
quomodo scilicet **nullum** esse habebat a se	quomodo scilicet malum esse habebat a se	how þat she had **no beyng** of hir self
post **destructum** esse	post destruccionem esse	efter þat we **had destruyd**
consideracio peccatorum suorum **factorum** *Libellus* consideracio peccatorum **factorum** *O_2*, *S_4*	consideracio peccatorum suorum	consideracion of þe synnes þat she **had done**
et temptaciones dyaboli simul et amplectabatur et aspernebatur: amplectabatur in quantum tribulabant eam, et aspernabatur in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas *O_2*, *Libellus* **et temptaciones dyaboli simul et amplectebatur et aspernebatur:** amplectebatur	et temptaciones diaboli in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas respuebat et amplectabatur in quantum tribulabant eam	**Temptacion of þe fende, boþe she lufed þam & she despised þam**—in als mykel as þei broght hir vntil feleable lust she despised þam, and in als mykel as þai trubled hir she lufed þaim

in quantum offerebant delectaciones sensitivas *S4*		
ut daret sibi **perfectam** puritatem	ut daret sibi perfectissimam puritatem	þat he wolde vouchesafe forto graunte hir **parfit** clennes
per **vicia** non exibis	per vicium non exibis	þou shal noȝt go be **vices**
quando scilicet propter illarum amorem	scilicet propter illarum amorem	as **when** for þe lufe of þem
Qui autem habet **verum** amorem spiritualem	qui autem habet amorem spiritualem	He þat has **verray** gostely lufe
hoc accidit michi ex providencia divina ex **permissione Dei**	hoc accidit michi ex providencia divina ex provisioneque	Þis is befalne me of þe ordynance and **þe suffraunce of god**

Coda: Some Preliminary Observations on the Transmission of *Il dialogo della divina provvidenza*

Catherine of Siena's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza* is a work of real complexity, not just at the theological level, but also at the philological. The composition of her book of revelations is probably the crowning moment of Catherine's contemplative life: a classic of Christian mysticism, the text's nuanced and vivid exposition of doctrine gave Catherine the prestige which allowed her to become Doctor of the Church.[1] *Il dialogo*, as the editorial title suggests, contains a dialogue with God the Father dictated by Catherine to her secretaries while in ecstasy (at least according to hagiographical sources) and then edited over a period of time spanning from the autumn of 1377 to that of 1378.[2] From the original text in the Sienese vernacular, the *Dialogo* was then translated into Latin; and from Latin translations, soon followed vernacularizations in other European languages, such as the Middle English *Orcherd of Syon* (chapter 4). In the last ten years, scholarship has made considerable steps forward in mapping out the text's Latin tradition; however, Catherine's *Dialogo* still awaits further philological work.[3] By way of conclusion to my discussion on the transmission of Catherinian texts, I will outline some recent advances in the study of the Latin tradition of Catherine's *Dialogo* and their implications for the English reception of the text, sketching how the methodology developed in the earlier chapters of this thesis may provide possible ways forward for approaching the question of transmission of this text, too.

The Latin translations of Catherine's *Dialogo* represent an intricate and very important part of the tradition of this text. Soon after Catherine's death, her disciples started collecting, transcribing, and transmitting her works in order to advance her cult and to promote her canonization, as seen in the various case-studies analyzed in the first three chapters of this thesis. A crucial part of this project of dissemination involved the translation of her *Dialogo* into Latin, so that the text could circulate freely across different geographic areas and penetrate deeply into the fabric of late medieval spirituality. It is

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[1]. Tesson, 'Le *Dialogue*, pièce maîtresse'.

[2]. On the composition of the *Dialogo*, see Fawtier, *Sainte Catherine de Sienne*, 2:338–60; Eugenio Dupré Theseider, 'Sulla composizione del *Dialogo* di S. Caterina da Siena', *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 117, no. 351 (1941): 161–202. For a synthesis of scholarship on the composition of Catherine's book and additional analysis of documentary sources, see Pigini, 'La tradizione manoscritta', 19–37.

[3]. See especially Silvia Nocentini, 'Il problema testuale del *Libro di divina dottrina* di Caterina da Siena: questioni aperte', *Revue d'histoire des textes* 11 (2016): 255–94. Her call for a critically established edition of the Italian *Dialogo* has been heeded, and such an edition has been prepared by Noemi Pigini and is forthcoming in 2025 from Edizioni del Galluzzo. The Latin translations, however, are still unedited.

through the process of translation of the *Dialogo* into the Latin *Liber* that Catherine's followers fashioned her into a divinely inspired writer and model for a 'universal' (i.e. Latin-speaking) Christianity, in so doing calquing the saintly model of her near-contemporary Birgitta of Sweden.[4] Catherine's *Dialogo* was thus translated four times into Latin and, as is to be expected when facing such an intricate textual tradition, early annotators, editors, printers, and, consequently, some contemporary cataloguers and scholars do not always give accurate information when referencing these Latin translations. Although it is now generally accepted that *The Orcherd of Syon* is based on a Latin translation by Cristoforo di Gano Guidini, all surviving versions of the Latin *Dialogo* have been proposed at some point as the basis for the Middle English translation.[5] This has created a tangle of misattributions that scholarship has begun to unravel only recently, thanks to the work of Silvia Nocentini.[6] Because of the persistence of such mistakes—as late as 2023 the Latin source of the *Orcherd* has been given incorrectly in an important study[7]—it would be useful to summarize here very briefly Nocentini's recent advances on the Latin translations of the *Dialogo*.

As mentioned, Catherine's *Dialogo* was translated four times into Latin between 1380, the year of Catherine's death, and 1419. Not all these translations survive, and not all are complete. The first to be finished was a translation by Cristofano di Gano Guidini (*c.* 1345–1410), a Sienese notary and a follower of Catherine's who produced a complete and

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[4]. For a fuller account of the historical and cultural implications of translating the *Dialogo* into Latin, see Nocentini, 'Le traduzioni latine del *Dialogo*'.

[5]. The source of the *Orcherd* is a translation by Cristofano di Gano Guidini. These studies, however, attribute to Raymond of Capua the translation of the Latin source of the *Orcherd* (and since what they take to be Raymond's translation is actually a translation by Stefano Maconi, these are also implicit attributions to Maconi): Denise, '*The Orchard of Syon*: An Introduction', 290–91; Denise L. Despres, 'Ecstatic Reading and Missionary Mysticism: *The Orcherd of Syon*', in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 154; C. Annette Grisé, '"In the blessid vyneȝerd of oure holy saueour": Female Religious Readers and Textual Reception in the *Myroure of Oure Ladye* and the *Orcherd of Syon*', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: England, Ireland and Wales: Exeter Symposium VI: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 1999*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 197n16; Steven Rozenski, *Wisdom's Journey. Continental Mysticism and Popular Devotion in England, 1350–1650* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), 268n62. Denise credits Edmund Gardner with the identification of the source in Raymond's Latin translation, but she does not give a precise reference that can be tracked down.

[6]. Silvia Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera": Le traduzioni latine del *Libro di Divina Dottrina* di Caterina da Siena', *Studi Medievali* 56, no. 2 (2015): 639–80.

[7]. See note no. 5.

close translation relatively soon after Catherine's passing, between 1385 and 1389.[8] Guidini's translation was an essential piece of work which clearly was eagerly anticipated by the Saint's following: no sooner did Guidini finish his translation than it fell in the hands of key promoters of Catherine's cult—Raymond of Capua, Tommaso da Siena, and Stefano Maconi.[9] In the meantime, Raymond of Capua was already at work at his own Latin translation of the *Dialogo*, but he died before he could complete the whole project. At his death, in 1399, he had only translated the first ten chapters of the *Dialogo* and the final two (these latter translated for inclusion in his *Legenda maior*).[10] Next, we have two Latin translations connected to Stefano Maconi. Before producing his own Latin version of the *Dialogo*, Maconi commissioned a translation from a Carthusian monk based in Rome, a translation which he seemed to have kept at the Charterhouse at Žiče when he resided there between 1398 and 1410.[11] This translation is now lost, but it is attested by colophons in manuscripts and by historical documentation.[12] Finally, Maconi went on to produce his own Latin version of the text, an elegant translation which he completed around 1419.[13] How much of this later translation, if anything at all, is based on the earlier, lost Carthusian translation will never be known.[14]

Guidini's Latin version of the *Dialogo* is the one on which the Middle English *Orcherd of Syon* is based, as scholars who have worked on the *Orcherd* agree on, despite the uncertainties and errors mentioned above.[15] The translation survives in a rather large number of manuscripts, including one of British origin (no. 4 in this list):

1. Alba Iulia, Biblioteca Batthyaneum, II.54 [12 December 1425].[16]

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[8]. For a biography of Guidini, see Simona Foà, 'Guidini, Crostoforo', *DBI* (2004), 61:350–51. Guidini also writes a memoir, partly edited in Carlo Milanesi, 'Memorie di Ser Cristofano di Galgano Guidini da Siena, scritte da lui medesimo nel secolo XIVº', *Archivio storico italiano* 4, no. 1 (1843): 22–48; and partly edited in Giovanni Cherubini, *Signori, contadini, borghesi. Ricerche sulla società italiana del Basso Medioevo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1974), 393–425.

[9]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 646–55.

[10]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 655–58. The number of chapters refers to the most widespread chapter division of the *Dialogo* (into 167 chapters).

[11]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 658–60.

[12]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 658–60.

[13]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 660–62.

[14]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 660.

[15]. Tamsin R. Woodward-Smith's study of the Middle English text includes a comparison between excerpts from the Italian *Dialogo*, Maconi's, and Guidini's versions: Woodward-Smith, 'Critical Study of the *Orcherd of Syon*', 259–75.

[16]. Robert Szentiványi, *Catalogus concinnus librorum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Batthyányanae*, 4th ed. (Szeged: University of Szeged Library, 1958), 110.

2. Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, A.VII.23 [*a.* 1410].[17]
3. Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library, Lat. 303 [1476].[18]
4. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, 87 (*olim* D.b.IV.18) [*s.* XV].[19]
5. Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 777 [*s.* XV *in.*].[20]
6. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, 134 [*s.* XIV–XV].[21]
7. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canon. Misc. 182 [1475].[22]
8. Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, T.II.4 [*s.* XV *in.*].[23]
9. Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, T.II.5 [*s.* XV *in.*].[24]
10. Subiaco, Biblioteca del Monumento nazionale di S. Scolastica, 230 (*olim* CCXXVII) [*s.* XV].[25]
11. Subiaco, Biblioteca del Monumento nazionale di S. Scolastica, 233 (*olim* CCXXX) [23 November 1467].[26]

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[17]. Catalogue description available on *manuscripta.at*, <https://manuscripta.at/?ID=8076>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[18]. A short entry is available in the online catalogue of Harvard library: Hollis, Harvard Library (website), <https://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990094142720203941/catalog>. Accessed January 6, 2025. The manuscript was brought to scholars' attention by Pigini, 'La tradizione manoscritta', 40. Since the catalogue does not give an incipit or explicit, until now it was unclear which Latin version of the text was contained in the manuscript. I have compared portions of the text taken from the beginning, middle, and end (chapter 1, 69, and 167) which enabled me to identify the text as Guidini's translation. At the end of the text, the manuscript has a version of the explicit found in some other manuscripts with Guidini's translation (Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, T.II.4 and T.II.5); see Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 652. I am deeply grateful to Ebba Strutzenbladh for sending me a sample of images from this manuscript.

[19]. Catherine R. Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Mediæval Manuscripts in the Edinburgh University Library* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1916), 142–43. See also online description at <http://lac-archivesspace-live4.is.ed.ac.uk:8081/repositories/2/archival_objects/145530>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[20]. Catalogue description available in *Manus*, <https://manus.iccu.sbn.it/cnmd/0000240561>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[21]. *Inventario general de manuscritos de la Biblioteca Nacional*, vol. 1, *1 a 500* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educacion Nacional, 1953), 115–16.

[22]. Catalogue description available in *Medieval Bodleian*, <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_3200>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[23]. Catalogue description available on Mirabile (*Codex*), <https://www.mirabileweb.it/manuscript/siena-biblioteca-comunale-degli-intronati-t-ii-4-manuscript/218147>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[24]. Catalogue description available on Mirabile (*Codex*), <https://www.mirabileweb.it/manuscript/siena-biblioteca-comunale-degli-intronati-t-ii-5-manuscript/218149>. Accessed January 6, 2025.

[25]. Leone Allodi, *Inventario dei manoscritti della biblioteca di Subiaco* (Forlì: Luigi Bordandini, 1891), 202–4.

[26]. Allodi, *Inventario dei manoscritti*, 206–7.

12. Subiaco, Biblioteca del Monumento nazionale di S. Scolastica, 277 (*olim* CCLXXII) [*s.* XIV *ex.*].[27]
13. Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, lat. IX 192 [1399–1419].[28]

The high number of manuscripts in this list and the length of the text (estimated at around 130,000 words)[29] make it impossible, in the absence of a critical edition of the text, to carry out the granular analysis on variant readings that clarified transmission routes for the other Catherinian texts discussed in this thesis (chapters 1, 2, and 3).

Being unedited and still relatively understudied, there is not much more to be said about Guidini's version of the *Dialogo* and its transmission, but preliminary research suggests that the methods and transmission patterns I have discussed in the earlier chapters will be relevant in this case, too. As mentioned, in fact, Guidini entrusted his translation to both Stefano Maconi and Tommaso da Siena, and both Stefano and Tommaso seem to have circulated the text: Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 777 has an *ex libris* from the Charterhouse at Žiče, while Siena, Biblioteca comunale degli Intronati, T.II.4 and T.II.5, as well as Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, lat. IX 192 were written at Caffarini's Dominican *scriptorium* of San Zanipolo.[30] Caffarini seems to have added to his codices a prologue extracted from Raymond's *Legenda maior*.[31] Perhaps there are other textual variants which can be used to establish whether Guidini's version of the *Dialogo*, like other Catherinian texts, has recognizable Carthusian or Dominican variants.[32]

Considering that the original beneficiaries of the *Orcherd* were the Birgittine nuns at Syon Abbey, another hypothesis that could explain the text's presence in medieval England has been advanced by scholars: that the Abbey obtained Catherine's texts through

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[27]. Allodi, *Inventario dei manoscritti*, 245–46.

[28]. Pietro Zorzanello, *Catalogo dei codici latini della Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana di Venezia, non compresi nel catalogo di G. Valentinelli*, vol. 1, *Fondo antico, Classi I–X, Classe XI, codici 1–100* (Trezzano sul Naviglio: Etimar, 1980), 348–50.

[29]. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey give this estimate in their preface to Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd*, VII.

[30]. See relevant catalogue descriptions as well as Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 662–66.

[31]. Nocentini, '"Fare per lettera"', 652–53.

[32]. Since the addition of a prologue is paratextual, and therefore easily removed at a scribe's initiative, its absence from the *Orcherd* and from Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, 87 should not be wielded to rule out Dominican involvement in the transmission of the text to England. *Au contraire*, when, at the initial stages of this research, I carried out a preliminary, partial, and (admittedly) impressionistic collation of some of the manuscripts of Guidini's translation, the *Orcherd* and the Edinburgh manuscript appeared to be textually closer to the Dominican codices than to the Carthusian one.

their own connections.[33] Recently, Jennifer N. Brown tried to flesh out this hypothesis: in 1423, a delegation headed by the Confessor-General Thomas Fishbourne travelled from Syon to Rome to seek an audience with Pope Martin V in order to discuss the Pope's intention to close double houses.[34] Brown suggests that a copy of Catherine's text may have been borrowed on that occasion from the library at Paradiso, a Birgittine monastery in Florence, and brought back to England by the delegation.[35] Paradiso had an active *scriptorium* where nuns also copied and disseminated Catherine's writings.[36] And, indeed, Catherinian and Birgittine textual communities were extremely intermingled, so, at least theoretically, this possibility would seem viable.[37] Three manuscripts containing Catherine's work have been traced back to Paradiso: a copy of *Il dialogo*, a manuscript of her letters, and another which includes one letter by the saint, among other texts.[38] All of these manuscripts are in Italian, and the rest of the library at Paradiso seems to have been made up primarily by texts composed in or translated into the Italian vernacular: in the catalogue, only six out of eighty-one entries are for manuscripts in Latin, with another four containing a short Latin prayer among longer Italian texts.[39] Given the genre of the Latin texts in the library, mostly prayers or Rules, and also considering that the reconstructed

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[33]. See Denise, '*Orchard of Syon*: An Introduction', 291; Woodward-Smith, 'Critical Study of the *Orcherd of Syon*', *passim*.

[34]. See Hans Cnattingius, *Studies in the Order of St. Bridget of Sweden*, vol. 1, *The Crisis in the 1420's* (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell), 115–55; see also Peter Cunich, 'The Brothers of Syon, 1420–1695', in *Syon Abbey and its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, c.1400–1700*, ed. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham, Studies in Modern British Religious History 24 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 55–56.

[35]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 14, 113, 116, 119.

[36]. Gabriella Zarri, 'Catherine of Siena and the Italian Public', in *Catherine of Siena: The Creation of a Cult*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Gabriela Signori, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 76.

[37]. On the overlap of these textual communities, see Silvia Nocentini, 'Il lievito dell'Osservanza: Manoscritti e persone in rete tra la fine del XIV secolo e l'inizio del XV. Il caso della trasmissione delle opere di Caterina da Siena e Brigida di Svezia', *Codex Studies* 3 (2019): 99–130; F. Thomas Luongo, 'Birgitta and Catherine and their Textual Communities', in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, ed. Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid (London: Routledge, 2020), 14–34; Silvia Nocentini, 'The Transmission of Birgittine and Catherinian Works within the Mystical Tradition: Exchanges, Cross-Readings, Connections', in *Sanctity and Female Authorship: Birgitta of Sweden & Catherine of Siena*, ed. Maria H. Oen and Unn Falkeid (London: Routledge, 2020), 93–112.

[38]. Rosanna Miriello, ed., *I manoscritti del Monastero del Paradiso di Firenze*, Biblioteche e archivi 16 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2007), 143–44, 152–54, 147–48.

[39]. Miriello, *Manoscritti del Monastero del Paradiso*, 58–60, 95–97, 100–101, 133–36, 138–42, 162–66.

catalogue maps almost all of the known holdings of the monastery,[40] it seems very unlikely that Paradiso once owned a Latin copy of the *Liber*. Probably, then, the Bridgettines did not come across the source of the *Orcherd* at Paradiso. All in all, therefore, there would be little evidence to support a Paradiso–Syon exchange on this occasion.

Ultimately, research on the transmission to medieval England of Catherine's *Dialogo* remains open for further enquiries, but a way forward that could possibly yield results is the one I have delineated in this first part of the thesis: a way through the texts themselves and their manuscript variants.

What conclusions can be drawn from these case-studies on the overall transmission to medieval England of Catherinian texts?

First of all, the chapters of the first part of this thesis show two different trajectories through which texts by and about Catherine of Siena were transmitted to medieval England. Chapters 1 and 2 reveal three texts with extremely clear Carthusian affiliations: English copies of Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior*, of Stefano Maconi's *Epistola de gestis et virtutibus sanctae Catherinae*, and Bartolomeo's *Epistola Thomae Antonii de Senis* bear the traces of Stefano Maconi's textual revisions and they share affinities to versions of these texts which typically circulated in Carthusian environments. On the other hand, William Flete's *Documento spirituale*, analyzed in chapter 3, survives in a version that is closer to the one found in Dominican manuscripts and dissimilar to the revised, shortened version available to the Carthusian Maconi. Overall, while Carthusian transmission to England of (some) Catherinian texts is now bolstered by robust textual data, my research shows that it is possible, though it cannot be proven conclusively, that the Dominicans also had a hand in sending texts overseas and into England. There is, then, a concrete possibility that it was not a single agent or dissemination plan that caused the appearance in medieval England of Catherine's texts, but multiple networks that achieved their goal of making Catherine known internationally, speaking to a significant and sustained engagement between of English religious institutions and multiple promoters of Catherine's cult.

A religious institution that stands out in the spiritual geography which I have described in these first three chapters is the charterhouse at Sheen. We do not have a *registrum* for Sheen's library, so we do not possess a document which maps the complete

[40]. Miriello, *Manoscritti del Monastero del Paradiso*, 4.

extent of the monastery's holdings. But, thanks to surviving manuscripts, we know that Sheen possessed the letters by Stefano Maconi and Bartolomeo of Ravenna, the *Legenda maior* (at the very least in the form of the translated extracts contained in the *Speculum devotorum*, for which, see chapter 1, section 1.2), and, we are now able to add, a Latin copy of the *Documento*, *O₄*. Quite a few of the Catherinian texts known to have circulated in medieval England orbited around Sheen: a conservative estimate places at Sheen four out of these five texts, three extant in full copies and one perhaps only partly. The extent of the holdings is presumably greater: given the charterhouse's interest in some of the less widespread texts about the Saint, it would seem very likely that it also owned complete copies of the two most substantial and influential texts in Catherine's textual tradition, Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* and Catherine's own *Dialogo*. This means that the charterhouse at Sheen was plausibly home to all Catherinian texts available to fifteenth-century English readers.

And from Sheen, it is likely these Catherinian texts were sent across the Thames and into its sister foundation, the neighbouring Syon Abbey, which is known to have had copies of the *Dialogo* and *Legenda maior*. The nuns at Syon surely had access, in Middle English translations, to a sophisticated version of Catherine's *Dialogo* that will be explored in the next part of this thesis, and also to the excerpt from the *Legenda maior* included in the *Speculum devotorum*. That Sheen was such an important archive for Catherinian texts gives us reason to assume that the Syon nuns could, and probably did, have access, in some form or another, to the other Catherinian texts, too.

Read at a surface level, evidence for the English circulation of Catherine's texts may seem disappointing: a small number of manuscripts or documentary references and a somewhat narrow geographical concentration, predominantly around London monastic houses. But if we keep other European regions in our peripheral vision, the English legacy of Catherine will look considerable.[41] In fact, medieval England stands out for two reasons:

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[41]. For a state-of-the-art overview of Catherine's legacy in medieval and early modern Europe, see the various contributions collected in Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, ed., *Santa Caterina d'Europa. Edizioni e traduzioni antiche e moderne del corpus cateriniano*, Quaderni del Centro Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, n.s., 4 (Rome: Campisano, 2024). For further considerations on the transmission of works related to Catherine to the Iberian Peninsula, see also Pablo Acosta-García, 'On Manuscripts, Prints and Blessed Transformations: Caterina da Siena's *Legenda maior* as a Model of Sainthood in Premodern Castile', in 'Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval Spain', ed. Jessica A. Boon, special issue, *Religions* 11, no. 1 (2020); Pablo Acosta-García, 'La difúsion de la obra de Caterina da Siena en la peninsula ibérica: El caso de "El diálogo"', in *Il 'Dialogo' di Caterina da Siena. Per una nuova edizione critica: filologia, tradizione, teologia*, ed.

the variety of Catherinian texts in its libraries and the speed with which these were copied, translated, and printed. Among these, we find some of the least widespread works in the corpus of Catherine's texts, like Bartolomeo da Ravenna's letter and William Flete's *Documento spirituale*, both of which had a negligible impact in Italy and a non-existent one elsewhere. Moreover, with many attestations in the first half of the fifteenth century and some as early as the first quarter, Middle English texts by and about Catherine are only slightly posterior to Catherine's death and contemporary to the first generation of her followers, predating other important European adaptations and putting England at the forefront of European reception of a writer who later became one of Europe's patron saints.

Silvia Nocentini, La Mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente 36 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2023), 145–69.

Part II

Translation

Figure 2. Woodcut of Catherine of Siena surrounded by twelve nuns. From *The orcharde of Syon* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1519), sig. 1v. London, Wellcome Collection.

More than history is at issue in interpreting these texts. Clearly those writing for anchoresses were guided by their view of a woman's place in religion and in the world.
—Elizabeth Robertson

Preface

The process of translation of *The Orcherd of Syon* and my method of analysis of this process can be summarized by means of an image: a woodcut printed twice in Wynkyn de Worde's 1519 edition of the text, once on the verso of the title-page and then again on the last folio (Figure 2; sigs. 1v, B4r). At the centre of this image, Catherine is sitting in a throne with a book open on her lap, a demon under her feet, the crown of thorns on her head, her right side open in a wound that mimics Christ's, Jesus's heart in her right hand, and her left hand raised in blessing.[1] Flanking the monumental figure of the saint are twelve nuns who, like apostles, surround the Christ-like Catherine. The woodcuts in de Worde's editions are well-known and much-admired.[2] This one in particular has been chosen as the cover of two recent books and also features prominently on the frontispiece of Henry R. Plomer's classic study on early printing in England, as testimony to the excellence in design and execution attained by certain English xylographic decorations—a *rare* testimony of such excellence, if we agree with Edward Hodnett's overall negative judgement of the aesthetics of English woodcuts.[3]

Besides its artistic merits, this image is a perfect visual representation of Catherine of Siena's medieval English legacy: Catherine is not alone, but in the company of other

[1]. The crown of thorns, book, heart, side wound, and defeated demon are part of Catherine's attributes, though they rarely appear all together. See Lidia Bianchi and Diega Giunta, *L'iconografia di S. Caterina da Siena*, vol. 1, *L'immagine* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1988), 92–100.

[2]. For some influential studies on the use of these woodcuts by Wynkyn de Worde, see Martha W. Driver, 'Pictures in Print: Late Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century English Religious Books for Lay Readers', in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 229–44; Martha W. Driver, 'Nuns as Patrons, Artists, Readers: Bridgettine Woodcuts in Printed Books Produced for the English Market', in *Art into Life: Collected Papers from the Kresge Art Museum Medieval Symposia*, ed. Carol Garrett Fisher and Kathleen L. Scott (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995), 237–67; Martha W. Driver, *The Image in Print: Book Illustration in Late Medieval England and its Sources* (London: British Library, 2004), 140–47.

[3]. Henry R. Plomer, *Wynkyn de Worde & his Contemporaries from the Death of Caxton to 1535: A Chapter in English Printing* (London: Grafton, 1925). See Edward Hodnett, *English Woodcuts, 1480–1535*, Illustrated Monographs 22 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). The woodcut appears on the cover of Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*; Samantha Kahn Herrick, *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, 500–1500*, Reading Medieval Sources Series 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

religious women. As is true of other geographic areas,[4] in medieval England translation of Catherine's texts was driven by the needs of religious women, a group whose growing literacy (typically in the vernacular rather than Latin) and growing spiritual appetites caused many devotional texts to be translated into English, thus reinforcing the status of the vernacular as a vehicle for literature.[5] This second part of the thesis focuses on the gendered process whereby texts are translated and reshaped for their intended women readers. While in many cases translating for women, in the Middle Ages, meant simplifying a text, this is not the case for the *Orcherd*, which retains the complexity and theological sophistication of the original *Dialogo*—a theological difficulty so out-of-tune with received expectations of women's writing that it prompted feminist thinker Simone de Beauvoir to label—or, perhaps, dismiss?—Catherine's texts as belonging to 'the rather masculine type' of mystical literature.[6] Attending to this rupture with a commonplace understanding of medieval feminine piety qualifies and expands medievalists' conceptualization of women authors and readers.

Chapter 4 analyses how specific readers and their gender, the Birgittine nuns at Syon Abbey, shaped the process of translation of Catherine's *Dialogo*. As scholars have demonstrated in the last thirty years or so, religious texts written and translated for women often differ from their sources: authors' and translators' preconceptions about gender have precise textual consequences and cause devotional material to be reorganized, omitted, or highlighted.[7] In keeping with medieval translation practices, English translators did not

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[4]. Just a few examples from other regions: in Valencia, Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* was translated by Tomàs de Vesach into Catalan for the benefit of women readers and printed in 1511; slightly later, in the seventeenth century, the same happens in Dubrovnik, where Catherine's texts were turned into Croatian for the city's Poor Clares. See Anna Peirats, 'Traduzione e trasmissione dell'agiografia di santa Caterina da Siena in catalano' and Ana Marinković, 'Traduzioni e tradizioni dei testi cateriniani in lingua croata in età moderna e contemporanea', in *Santa Caterina d'Europa. Edizioni e traduzioni antiche e moderne del corpus cateriniano*, ed. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Quaderni del Centro Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, n.s., 4 (Rome: Campisano, 2024), 61–77, 183–201.

[5]. Elizabeth Robertson makes the case for the importance of women readers in the development of early Middle English literature in her *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

[6]. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 683n1.

[7]. In addition to the studies cited throughout chapter 4, see especially work by Elizabeth Robertson: her *Early English Devotional Prose*; 'The Corporeality of Female Sanctity in The Life of Saint Margaret', in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 268–87; '"This Living Hand": Thirteenth-Century Female Literacy, Materialist Immanence, and the Reader of the *Ancrene Wisse*', *Speculum* 78, no. 1 (2003): 1–36.

usually see their role just as linguistic conduit for texts written in a language inaccessible to their new readers, but also as commentators of the texts they translated. [8] They therefore added passages and comments to clarify their sources or to draw attention to aspects of a text that could help with the spiritual edification of their audience. By adding and cutting, translators refashioned their sources according to the perceived needs of their new readership. Neither adding nor cutting is free of gender biases. Adding comments usually has an implicit or explicit didactic aim, gives prominence to particular spiritual virtues (typically meekness, chastity, and obedience), and presents an idealized model for the readers to follow. Cutting from a source, on the other hand, involves attempts to sanitize a text, by omitting complicated material or what is deemed to be too controversial. As this next part of the thesis argues, additions and omissions are not the defining feature of the *Orcherd*, which is, rather, characterized by a closeness to its source—a text in which the woman author teaches and women readers self-teach, with little obstruction from the translator.

In de Worde's woodcut Catherine is centred, and so is she in the next part of this thesis, which moves away from the saint's influential entourage of followers and focuses on her own writings. Our perception of Catherine depends heavily on the texts in which we encounter her and on how she has been constructed in these texts by personalities such as Raymond of Capua, Tommaso da Siena, and Stefano Maconi. It has been noticed, in fact, that hagiographical constructions of Catherine do not perfectly correspond to her own self-perception. Historian Karen Scott has dedicated to this central problem a series of key contributions, noting a fundamental difference between two Catherines: one that emerges from the Saint's own writings (and her letters in particular) and one that appears in Raymond's influential *Legenda maior* (and, as a consequence, in all of its hagiographical

[8]. For surveys of medieval translation practices in England, see Helen Cooper, 'Translation and Adaptation', in *A Concise Companion to Middle English Literature*, ed. Marilyn Corrie, Blackwell Concise Companions to Literature and Culture (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 166–87; Ian Johnson, 'Middle English Religious Translation', in *A Companion to Medieval Translation*, ed. Jeanette Beer (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019), 37–49. Cooper writes: 'Strict fidelity to the source texts, however, was comparatively rare, and outside the special case of the Bible, . . . comparatively little sought after' (167).

offshoots).[9] The former is a socially active apostle, who, albeit always moved by religious concerns, is deeply involved in society and politics; the latter, hagiographical Catherine is closer to a prototypical contemplative and recluse. While both sides of Catherine are part of a medieval English understanding of her, as well as our own, I follow Scott in maintaining that '[i]f one asks which sources a study of Catherine's place in the history of medieval spirituality should be based upon, it appears obvious that her own writings should be given priority over Raymond's'.[10] When reading texts by Catherine, we must still take into consideration the levels of mediation these went through at various stages of their textual histories: that of the secretaries who transcribed her dictations and put pen to parchment to record her words, the first editors who prepared early manuscript collections of her works for dissemination, the scribes who later copied her texts, the translators who turned these works into different languages. Notwithstanding all these complexities, it is clear that Catherine exercised a great degree of authorial and editorial control over her letters and her *Dialogo*, which consequently deserve to occupy a prominent place in scholars' analyses.[11]

In the spirit of giving prominence to women writers' own voices, the next part of this thesis foregrounds Catherine's words and focuses on the *Orcherd*, a work authored by Catherine. This text remains at the centre of my analysis and provides the impetus for my research questions. In this way, what follows directly seeks to advance our understanding of the *Orcherd* and, therefore, of Catherine's own work as an author.

[9]. Scott, 'Catherine of Siena, "Apostola"'; Scott, '"Io Catarina"'; Karen Scott, 'Catherine of Siena and Lay Sanctity in Fourteenth-Century Italy', in *Lay Sanctity, Medieval and Modern: A Search for Models*, ed. Ann W. Astell (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 77–90; Karen Scott, 'Mystical Death, Bodily Death: Catherine of Siena and Raymond of Capua on the Mystic's Encounter with God', in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine M. Mooney, pref. Caroline Walker Bynum (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 136–67.

[10]. Scott, 'Mystical Death, Bodily Death', 142; see also Scott, 'Catherine of Siena, "Apostola"', 36.

[11] See, e.g., discussions on Catherine's revisions of her *Dialogo* in Noemi Pigini, 'La tradizione manoscritta del *Dialogo della divina provvidenza* di santa Caterina da Siena. Prolegomeni per l'edizione critica' (PhD diss., Università degli Studi di Siena–Universität Zürich, 2022). See also Noemi Pigini's forthcoming critical edition of Catherine's *Dialogo*.

Woodcuts are the result of relief printing, which means that the image appears by cutting the negative of its design: it is what is left after cutting the block of wood, what remains at the surface level, that makes an impression onto the writing surface. Similarly, the outline of the woman reader and woman author of the *Orcherd* appears only by delineating a negative, an opposite image of medieval women readers and authors. Consequently, in order to illuminate the unique position of the *Orcherd* within English literary history, in my analysis I also bring in another Catherinian text, *The Lyf of Saint Katherine of Senis*, a comparison which in addition to enhancing an analysis of the *Orcherd* also provides further examination and close reading of another Catherinian text and thus advancing, on a second front, academic discussions of Catherine's English legacy. As we shall see, instead of the gendered woman reader typical of most medieval religious texts, a reader to be instructed into the conventional virtues of feminine piety, the *Orcherd* creates a new model for women readers characterized by intellectual independence; in a marked difference from the translated version of texts by other so-called 'approuyd' visionary women, the process of translating and 'approu[yng]' the *Orcherd* does not entail much further modification. The result is an image of a woman author and women readers all gathered around a book without much interference from outsiders, just like in Wynkyn de Worde's woodcut.

Chapter 4

Adapting Catherine of Siena for Women Readers

Translation is never neutral; but, then again, neither are historiographies of translation. For the last four decades, Middle English scholars have been unpacking the relationship between vernacular and Latinate cultures, gathering and interpreting evidence of vernacular literary theory that attests to vibrant, intellectual discussions on language and textuality carried out in and through the vernacular.[1] For all these attempts to problematize the negative connotations of *vernacularization*, there is a subset of medieval English texts where *translation* is still largely synonymous with *dilution*, *simplification*, or even *censorship*: mystical literature. When translating these texts into Middle English, translators (and, even more so, *translators* in the more capacious sense of the word—i.e. redactors and compilers) often edited their sources heavily, in order to prepare new texts for an English spiritual landscape, a devotional space generally believed to be more conservative than other European cultures—or so the standard argument runs.[2] Gender plays an important (but often overlooked) part in this process of cultural and linguistic

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Part of this chapter, section 4.1 'The Woman Reader', is based on material previously published: Nicola Estrafallaces, 'Le prime lettrici inglesi di Caterina da Siena', in *Santa Caterina d'Europa. Edizioni e traduzioni antiche e moderne del corpus cateriniano*, ed. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, Quaderni del Centro Internazionale di Studi Cateriniani, n.s., 4 (Rome: Campisano, 2024), 45–60. While my conclusions and my textual analysis of the *Orcherd* and *Lyf* are the same as in the published essay, the greater space available here allows me to delineate my argument against a wider backdrop of Middle English spiritual texts and translations.

[1]. In particular, see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ian Johnson, 'Vernacular Valorizing: Functions and Fashionings of Literary Theory in Middle English Translation of Authority', in *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeanette Beer, Studies in Medieval Culture 38 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 239–54; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Alastair Minnis, *Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[2]. This is how Barry Windeatt, in a passage quoted in full below in the conclusion of this thesis, summarizes prevailing critical attitudes towards contemplative texts in the (long) fifteenth century in England; Barry Windeatt, '1412–1534: Texts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 195. There are a few notable exceptions that consider carefully an array of different approaches employed by medieval translators, e.g., Rozenski, *Wisdom's Journey*; or Gillespie, 'Religious Writing', which gives an overview of translation into Old and Middle English from the Early Middle Ages to 1550.

adaptation: if women are involved as potential readers or authors, pretexts for censoring textual sources double down, and medieval translators, in implicit or explicit misogynistic tones, elect to omit material they either consider too theologically sophisticated (when translating for women) or deemed unsuitable because of the excessively fervent mysticism typical of European women's devotion (when translating texts by women). In this chapter, I aim to show how, for its unprejudiced treatment of its audience and source material, *The Orcherd of Syon*—the Middle English version of Catherine of Siena's *Dialogo della divina provvidenza*—helps us counterbalance this narrative and refine our understanding of women's involvement in the literary culture of medieval England, both as readers and as authors. The translator's approach to his new audience and to his base-text elevates, at once, both the intended recipients of the text, the Syon nuns, and the author of the text, Catherine of Siena.

The Middle Engish *Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom*, a translation of Henry Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*, illustrates how literary and historical criticism tends to frame medieval English reception of mystical texts from overseas.[3] The case of Suso's *Horologium* was studied in detail in an influential essay by Roger Lovatt, who notes that when it was translated into the *Seven Poyntes*, the text was cut, reordered, and reshaped to the point of becoming almost unrecognizable.[4] Lovatt describes this method of adaptation in unequivocally negative terms, seeing it as a downward intellectual trajectory from source to translation:

> The *Horologium* was remodelled to the pattern of contemporary English piety, its elevated passages often discarded in favour of the practical, the flamboyant in favour of the prosaic, the idiosyncratic in favour of the commonplace. . . . The circulation of the *Horologium* in England was a process of dilution, almost a reduction to the lowest common denominator of English piety. The barriers were not physical but those of temperament and mentality. It was not a matter of

[3]. There is no critical edition of this Middle English translation, but an edition of a single manuscript is available: Carl Horstmann, '*Orologium Sapientiae* or *The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom*, aus MS. Douce 114', *Anglia* 10 (1888): 323–89.

[4]. Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and the Medieval Mystical Tradition in England', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1982*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1982), 47–62. For a more recent study on the Middle English reception of Suso, a study which in part challenges and in part agrees with Lovat, see Rozenski, *Wisdom's Journey*, 52–54, 79–130.

> isolation but of English Conservatism; that is an insularity of spirit rather than of geography.[5]

The *Seven Poyntes* is just an example of a wider pattern.[6] Fifteenth-century England, in general, is often understood to be a conservative space for the production of religious texts. The century started with the anti-Lollard Constitutions (1409) of Archbishop Thomas Arundel, a piece of legislation that, in an attempt to curtail the spread of Lollardy and heresy, sought to control the use of the vernacular for preaching or teaching theology and also forbade the ownership and production of written works containing part of the Scripture translated into English. As Nicholas Watson has argued in an influential article, Arundel's Constitutions were successful at limiting the production of new works of vernacular theology: their application was inconsistent, but, all in all, they created an oppressive climate that stifled the production of new vernacular theology, both in terms of quantity and quality of outputs.[7]

My choice to start here with Suso's *Seven Poyntes* was not made arbitrarily, but because academic discourse around this specific work reveals scholarly assumptions concerning translation, simplification, and gender that this chapter seeks, in part, to redress. Here is a sentence, taken from Lovatt's essay, that describes the translation and simplification of Suso's *Horologium* in a medieval English context: 'Integration as dilution—*absorption as emasculation*—is equally noticeable in the full English translation'.[8] The process of cutting, omitting, and diluting a source is described as 'emasculation', therefore betraying the assumption—apparently unquestioned in 1982 as well as in medieval times—that a text considered richer, denser, more demanding or sophisticated is inherently more masculine than its simplified derivation. Translation, essentially, becomes a process of castration. There is an ambivalence here: the fact that

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[5]. Lovatt, 'Henry Suso', 58–59.

[6]. Some, Birgitta of Sweden's *Revelations* and Mechthild of Hackeborn's *Boke of Gostely Grace*, are discussed in detail below.

[7]. Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum* 70, no. 4 (1995): 822–64. For a series of further reflections on the impact of Arundel's Constitutions on fifteenth-century English religious literature, see the cluster '"Vernacular Theology" and Medieval Studies' in Bruce Holsinger, ed., 'Literary History and the Religious Turn', special issue, *English Language Notes* 44, no. 1 (2006): 77–137; and the essays in Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh, eds., *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, Medieval Church Studies 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

[8]. Lovatt, 'Henry Suso', 57 (my emphasis).

Suso's *Seven Poyntes* was indeed translated for a 'worshipful lady' and a 'goostly douȝhter' is not taken into account in Lovatt's analysis, but the process of translation and simplification is still described in gendered terms.

Lovatt's wording is not just an unfortunate turn of phrase, but it speaks to a wider tendency in Medieval English Studies to associate contemplative texts by and for women with simplified and heavily regulated adaptations, to the detriment of textual evidence that does not fit this mould. For instance, out of the two full-length Middle English versions of Birgitta of Sweden's *Revelations*, the one scholars almost invariably focus on is not the one closer to Birgitta's Latin text (the Julius version) but the version stripped of some of the most controversial elements of Birgitta's spirituality (the Claudius version).[9] This latter translation is the only one easily available to the modern reader, which has inevitably focalized academic attention on an interventionist approach to Birgitta's writing. Our understanding of the saint's reception in medieval England, Laura Saetveit Miles reminds us, is refracted through the lenses of her censor, and thus distorted:

> MS Claudius's outsized influence on modern scholarship perpetuates this censorship, with its modern editor joining a long line of male scribes silently (even if unwittingly and unintentionally) glossing over women's queer transgressive power.[10]

What we are seeing here is a circular discourse: scholarly expectations of gender and religion govern the choice of medieval texts they edit and critique, typically those that conform to received interpretations; these editions and commentaries, in turn, reproduce and reinforce these expectations. To be sure, my aim here is not to contend that the *Seven Poyntes* or the Claudius version of Birgitta's *Revelations* do not engage in

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[9]. The two versions are named after their unique manuscript witnesses: respectively London, British Library, Cotton MS. Julius F.ii and London, British Library, Cotton MS. Claudius B.i. For an edition of the Claudius version, see Birgitta of Sweden, *The Liber Celestis of St Bridget of Sweden*, ed. Roger Ellis, EETS, OS, 291, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). The Julius version is still unedited, but a critical edition is forthcoming as part of the project 'St. Birgitta of Sweden in Medieval England' at the University of Bergen (Principal Investigator: Laura Saetveit Miles); see <https://www.uib.no/en/birgitta/130345/brief-summary-project>. Accessed, January 6, 2025.

[10]. See Laura Saetveit Miles, 'Queer Touch Between Holy Women: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Birgitta of Sweden, and the Visitation', in *Touching, Devotional Practices, and Visionary Experience in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. David Carrillo-Rangel, Delfi I. Nieto-Isabel, and Pablo Acosta-García (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 230.

oversimplification and distortion. Nor do I deny that any such texts exist and that they form a sizeable part of adaptations for women. What I wish to do is outline, through *The Orcherd of Syon*, an alternative approach to the woman reader and the woman writer that can be found in medieval translations and, in so doing, complement scholarly models of the gendered reader and author.

Some research, especially recently, has gestured to the sophistication of the *Orcherd*, of its theology and of the advanced reading model it puts forward, and it is in this direction that I would like to steer my analysis. For instance, in his overview of Arundel's Constitutions and their negative impact on the production of innovative vernacular theology, Nicholas Watson mentions the *Orcherd* twice as the exception that proves the rule, one of the few English 'texts of real complexity' produced in the fifteenth century and a 'theologically adventurous translation'.[11] The fact that this translation is for religious women is even more unusual. As Jennifer N. Brown points out in the most recent complete study on Catherine and her works in medieval England, in the *Orcherd*

> the translator is describing an individualized kind of reading, one that assumes an interiority and theological sophistication not frequently ascribed to female readers. Rather than claiming that he has already vetted the text and chosen what is appropriate (a trope for a female and lay audience), he deliberately acknowledges the ability of the sisters to discern for themselves what will be the 'health of their souls'.[12]

Yet, this promising view of medieval women readers is really only touched upon in passing, and its significance has not been fully fleshed out. In fact, in her analysis of the *Orcherd*, Brown ultimately follows the blueprint provided by earlier studies and goes on to conclude, somewhat reductively, that the *Orcherd*'s translation and structure betray an attempt at controlling mysticism and even suppressing women's voices:

> *The Orcherd*'s set up fully expresses England's ambivalence about women visionary texts and the reading of them. The reader is not prompted to her own

[11]. Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', 833, 836.

[12]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 124. For a similar statement, see Brandon Alakas, 'Delightful Fruits and Bitter Weeds: Textual Consumption and Spiritual Identity in *The Orcherd of Syon*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 48, no. 1 (2022): 50.

> ecstatic and mystical moment. The prologues and epilogues box the text in, containing its power.[13]

This interpretation is where I part from Brown: this chapter advances a different reading of the *Orcherd* and argues that its treatment of source material does not betray an uneasiness about women visionary authors or about giving women reader unrestricted access to their texts.

All in all, there are five separate, but overlapping, assumptions that would lead us to expect from the *Orcherd* a simplified and abridged translation: its origin (a text imported into England from mainland Europe), its date (fifteenth century), its genre (visionary mysticism), its author (a visionary woman), and its intended audience (women readers). However, a close look at the text tells us otherwise, as I will show by situating the *Orcherd* in a wider context of fifteenth-century Middle English mystical texts for women reader and by women authors.

4.1 The Woman Reader

The original historical audience of *The Orcherd of Syon* is known: in the first prologue, the translator makes it clear for whom the work has been adapted, for the

> Religyous modir & deuoute sustren clepid & chosen bisily to laboure at the hous of Syon, in the blessid vyneȝerd of oure holy Saueour, his parfite rewle which hymsilf enditide to kepe contynuly to ȝoure lyues eende vndir þe gouernaunce of oure blessid Lady, hir seruise oonli to rede and to synge as hir special seruauntis and douȝtren, and sche ȝoure moost souereyne lady and cheef abbes of hir holy couent.[14]

The explicit mention to 'the hous of Syon', the references to the *Regula Salvatoris* (the monastic Rule Christ dictated to Saint Birgitta of Sweden), and to the *Sermo angelicus* (the Birgittine Office) do not leave any doubt on who this 'modir' and these 'sustren' were: the Birgittine nuns of Syon Abbey. What is more, the colophon of the earliest edition of the

[13]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 139. See also p. 119, where Brown writes that, in the various steps of translation and printing, the (highly speculative) role played by Birgittine nuns at Paradiso and at Syon 'has been erased, and instead the male translator/scribe becomes the guiding voice and hand of *The Orcherd*'.

[14]. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 1.

text, printed in London by Wynkyn de Worde in 1519, specifies that Syon's steward, Richard Sutton, found a volume of the text 'in a corner by it selfe', forgotten.[15]

Syon Abbey was the first English monastery of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, a contemplative monastic order founded by Saint Birgitta of Sweden in 1344 and approved by Pope Urban V in 1370.[16] Founded in 1415 by order of King Henry V, Syon Abbey was part of an ambitious spiritual project of the young sovereign, who intended Sheen Palace, his royal residence, to be surrounded by three religious institutions: a monastery of Celestines, whose foundation was ultimately unsuccessful; an important charterhouse, Sheen Priory; and a Birgittine house, Syon Abbey.[17] Like other Birgittine foundations, Syon was made up of two separate houses, one of up to sixty nuns, headed by an abbess, and one of thirteen priests, four deacons, and eight lay brothers, headed by a confessor-general. While it had both male and female inmates, in rigorously separate enclosures, the Order was meant primarily for the benefit of the sisters: the abbess remained the foremost authority in the house; the brethren were intended as pastoral guides for the sisters, needed to perform Mass and to preach, but ultimately their presence was only accessory to the sisters' vocations, a loophole that was exploited to circumvent the suppression of the Order following an international controversy over double monasteries in the 1420s.[18] Given the early date of two of the manuscripts in which the *Orcherd* survives, manuscripts which are dated to the first decades of the fifteenth century on palaeographical and art historical grounds, it is likely that the translation was produced for the first generation of Syon nuns, thus making the text one of the very first to enter the monastery.[19]

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15. *The orcharde of Syon* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1519), sig. B3v (*STC* 4815). Scholars tend to read this passage at face value, surmising that the *Orcherd* faded into oblivion less than a century after it was first translated. I think it unlikely that a text so clearly linked with the Abbey and held in such high esteem (at least judging by the lavishness of the Abbey's copy of the text, London, British Library, Harley MS 3432) could be forgotten in such a short time. De Worde's colophon seems, rather, a marketing strategy to advertise the text as a hidden gem or, to use his own wording, a 'ghostely tresure' (sig. B3v).

16. For a history of the inception of the Birgittine Order, see Cnattingius, *Order of Bridget of Sweden*.

17. George James Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery, the Parish of Isleworth and the Chapelry of Hounslow* (London: J. B. Nichols and Sons, 1840), 21–115.

18. See Cnattingius, *Order of Bridget of Sweden*.

19. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, V–VII. The three manuscripts with the full text of the *Orcherd* are: Cambridge, Saint John's College, Ms. C. 25 (*olim* 75) [*s.* XV[1]]; London, British Library, Harley MS 3432 [*s.* XV[1–2]]; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 162 [c. 1470]. For more precise dating, especially of Harley MS 3432, see Woodward-Smith, 'Critical Study of the *Orcherd of Syon*', 41–69.

The importance of Syon Abbey in fostering medieval English literary culture is difficult to overestimate. Although the period of the Abbey's initial activity was a relatively brief stint, from its foundation in 1415 to its (first) suppression by order of Henry VIII in 1539, Syon quickly stood out in the English devotional landscape and distinguished itself very rapidly for its pastoral activity, for the support of important patrons, and for its riches.[20] This climate of favourable connections and material support translated into a vibrant literary culture, which flourished under two very productive partnerships: one with its twin foundation, the charterhouse at Sheen, purveyor of books for the spiritual edification of the Birgittine siters,[21] and another with the London printer Wynkyn de Worde, who issued several volumes of texts connected with the Abbey, thus extending their reach nationally.[22]

All in all, several texts gravitated around Syon, and many of these belonged to the sisters. A catalogue for their library has not come down to us—we only have the *registrum* of the brethren's library, a separate institution[23]—but the sisters' library, just like the brethren's, must have been both voluminous and state-of-the-art, judging from documentary evidence and the provenance of surviving manuscripts and early printed books.[24] Indeed, reading and book ownership were encouraged by the Syon Additions, a set of clarifications to Birgitta's Rule which governed daily life at the Abbey.[25] And,

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[20]. For Syon's troubled history, see E. A. Jones, *Syon Abbey 1415–2015. England's Last Medieval Monastery* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2015).

[21]. See especially Vincent Gillespie, 'Dial M for Mystic: Mystical Texts in the Library of Syon Abbey and the Spirituality of the Syon Brethren', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: England, Ireland and Wales: Exeter Symposium VI: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 1999*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 241–68.

[22]. See Alex da Costa, *Reforming Printing: Syon Abbey's Defence of Orthodoxy 1525–1534*, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Susan Powell, *The Birgittines of Syon Abbey: Preaching and Print*, Texts and Transitions 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).

[23]. See Gillespie, *Syon Abbey*.

[24]. For books belonging to the Syon sisters, see Christopher de Hamel, *Syon Abbey: The Library of The Birgittine Nuns and their Peregrinations after the Reformation. With the Manuscript at Arundel Castle* (Oatley: Roxburghe Club, 1991); Ann M. Hutchison, 'What the Nuns Read: Literary Evidence from the English Bridgettine House, Syon Abbey', *Medieval Studies* 57, no. 1 (1995): 205–22; Julia King, 'Inscriptions and Ways of Owning Books among the Sisters of Syon Abbey', *Review of English Studies* 72, no. 307 (2022): 836–59.

[25]. Ann M. Hutchison, 'Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household', in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 215–16. An edition of the Syon Additions is printed as an appendix to Aungier, *History and Antiquities*, 249–404. On the importance of books for the community of nuns at Syon Abbey, see also

coming from elite backgrounds, mainly from the gentry, mercantile class, or from families connected to the royals, the nuns at Syon would have undergone training and education at their households, and therefore they must have attained different levels of literacy, from an ability to follow liturgical books to fluency in reading English, French, and Latin.[26]

This emphasis on literacy, reading, and learning does not seem, as far as we know, to have inspired the nuns to write books. But, as scholarship on women and literature has taught us especially in the last thirty years or so,[27] this does not mean that the nuns' engagement with literary culture and production should be construed as 'passive'. The Syon sisters were patrons and readers and, as such, they had an important role in the genesis of books. So much so that, in a sense, they have a claim at recognition as co-authors, for not only did they occasion the creation of a considerable number of texts, but they also shaped (and we need not assume only indirectly) the form and contents of a discrete proportion of late medieval English texts. As Laura Saetveit Miles has put it in a recent and nuanced assessment of the nuns' intellectual and literary life:

> It is clear that Syon was an active, innovative centre of textual activity in many ways focused on women, and I suspect further research will illuminate more of the ways in which women actively steered the house's literary culture and were more than passive recipients of male monastic verbosity.[28]

C. Annette Grisé, 'The Textual Community of Syon Abbey', *Florilegium* 29 (2002): 149–62.

[26]. A historical profile on the typical background of Syon nuns and their education is available in Virginia R. Bainbridge, 'Syon Abbey: Women and Learning c.1415–1600', in *Syon Abbey and its Books: Reading, Writing and Religion, c.1400–1700*, ed. E. A. Jones and Alexandra Walsham, Studies in Modern British Religious History 24 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), 82–103.

[27]. Perceptive research on the different ways in which women shaped English literary culture in the Middle Ages can be seen, not exclusively but in particular, in the work undertaken by Diane Watt, both as an author and as a co-editor: Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt, eds, *The History of British Women's Writing, 700–1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); Diane Watt, *Women, Writing and Religion in England and beyond, 650–1100*, Studies in Early Medieval History (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Corinne Saunders and Diane Watt, eds., *Women and Medieval Literary Culture: From the Early Middle Ages to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). For important work on the roles played by women readers in textual production, see Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose*; Robertson, '"This Living Hand"'.

[28]. Laura Saetveit Miles, 'Syon Abbey and the Birgittines', in *Women and Medieval Literary Culture: From the Early Middle Ages to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Corinne Saunders and Diane Watt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 104–23.

While we know with some certainty who the translation of the *Orcherd* was undertaken for and the cultural context from which it emerged, we do not know the identity of the translator, who remains anonymous. Some candidates have been proposed, such as Simon Wynter and the translator of Suso's *Seven Poyntes*, but lack of evidence prevents us from pinpointing this translation to a precise person.[29] The identity of the translator remains elusive, and so too does the identity of the translator's helper, the 'Dan Iamys' mentioned in the epilogue,[30] for which we do not have more than a name.

While scholars always write of a 'he', the possibility that a woman may have translated the *Orcherd* cannot be ruled out without first being given some serious attention. In the Bridgettine motherhouse at Vadstena, there are records attesting to the involvement of nuns in book production, as copyists, illuminators, and translators.[31] At Syon, however, evidence of book-making activities among the nuns is extremely scarce: at the state of research, we only know of two copyists.[32] None of the Syon nuns—or, for that matters, no medieval English nun at all—is known to have signed her name under a translation. The profile of medieval English women translators is slightly different: we have a handful of names of women involved in the translation of religious texts, but all these women were active in the latter half of the fifteenth century, and they were all affiliated with the royal court—so, devout, but lay.[33]

The assumption that the *Orcherd* was translated by a man finds support in contextual historical evidence. Within the Birgittine Order, in fact, the spiritual direction of the nuns was entrusted to the brethren, a task which at Syon was often carried out with the

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[29]. For a survey of hypotheses, see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 121, 249–50n45.

[30]. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 421.

[31]. Ulla Sander Olsen, 'Work and Work Ethics in the Nunnery of Syon Abbey in the Fifteenth Century', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V: Papers Read at the Devon Centre, Dartington Hall, July 1992*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), 137; see also Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 115.

[32]. Veronica M. O'Mara, 'A Middle English Text Written by a Female Scribe', *Notes and Queries* 37, no. 4 (1990): 396–98; Veronica M. O'Mara, 'The Late Medieval English Nun and her Scribal Activity: A Complicated Quest', in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton, Veronica M. O'Mara, and Patricia Stoop, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 26, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 78; Veronica M. O'Mara, 'A Syon Scribe Revealed by Her Signature: Mary Nevel and her Manuscripts', in *Continuity and Change: Papers from the Birgitta Conference at Dartington 2015*, ed. Elin Andersson et al., Konferenser 93 (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2017), 283–308.

[33]. Alexandra Barratt, 'Women Translators of Religious Texts', in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. 1, *To 1550*, ed. Roger Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 284–95.

help of the monks of the nearby Sheen Charterhouse.[34] The hypothesis, supported by many scholars, that the translator of the *Orcherd* was either a Birgittine brother at Syon or one of the Carthusians at Sheen seems therefore to be well-grounded.[35]

If, on the one hand, we know the historical circumstances under which the *Orcherd* was produced, the background of *The Lyf of Saint Katherine of Senis* cannot be identified with such precision. The scarcity of information about the text forces us to rely solely on internal evidence and therefore, keeping in mind the limits of this approach, to proceed with caution. The translator remains anonymous, but in his prologue he gives us some information about the beneficiaries of his work.[36] The prologue opens with an address to a single woman reader: 'Audi filia et vide. Here, doughter, and see', a conventional opening modelled after Psalms 44:11 which is found in other religious texts written for women.[37] The intended readership of the text is, however, clearly wider, and, a few lines below, the translator opens the text up to

> al other of thi gostely susteren, whiche our lord hath graciously chose to serue hym nyght and day in prayer and meditacion and to laboure bodely in tyme of nede to socour and helpe of the seke and the poure.[38]

This description seems to apply to a religious community of women who lives under the guidance of some 'gostely gouernours', as the prologues specifies a few lines above.[39]

Some scholars speculated that the *Lyf*, just like the *Orcherd*, might have been translated for the Birgittine nuns at Syon Abbey; this suggestion has a simple reason: the brethren's was the only library in medieval England known to have held a Latin life of

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[34]. Gillespie, 'Dial M for Mystic'.

[35]. E.g. Denise, '*The Orchard of Syon*: An Introduction', 292; Woodward-Smith, 'A Critical Study of the Middle English *Orcherd of Syon*'; Schultze, 'Translating St Catherine of Siena', 203; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 121.

[36]. Just like the translator of the *Orcherd*, the translator of the *Lyf* does not use gendered language to refer to himself, but, for the same reasons outlined above for the *Orcherd*, it is more likely to have been a man.

[37]. See, e.g., the first line of *Hali Meithhad*, in *The Katherine Group: MS Bodley 34: Religious Writings for Women in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Rebekah Huber and Elizabeth Robertson, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), 189.

[38]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 34.

[39]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 34.

Catherine.[40] Clearly, lacking any further details on the origins of this text, the *Lyf*–Syon connection, or any other connection to a specific group of women, can only be a conjecture and cannot be taken further, a limit which C. Annette Grisé had already recognized when she advanced this hypothesis.[41] As far as the Syon nuns are concerned, a closer look at how the translator characterizes his audience may tell us that the *Lyf* was unlikely to have originated in a Birgittine milieu: the 'gostely susteren' which make up the inscribed audience of the *Lyf*, besides contemplation, are supposed to 'laboure bodely in tyme of nede to socour and helpe of the seke and the poure',[42] a duty which seems to be at odds with the strict life of seclusion observed by Bridgettine nuns in the Middle Ages.[43]

Even though we do not know the precise historical audience for which the *Lyf* was translated, there is no reason to believe that its female readership is a fiction. It is true that the prologue has a certain degree of conventionality: it opens with a formulaic first line and it is initially addressed to a specific, single woman reader, a trope common to many vernacular writers seeking to establish with their readers the same personal relationship as the one between a spiritual advisor and his advisee.[44] The address to a single reader is clearly rhetorical: the prologue itself already opens up the text to a wider readership and vacillates between second person singular and plural pronouns.[45] Once the whole community of religious women is introduced, however, the inscribed audience of the *Lyf* becomes fairly fixed: the translator systematically changes references to Raymond's unspecified 'lector' to accommodate its new audience of 'maydens', creating a new readership that differs in gender and number from that of his source.[46] This level of consistency is not always found in other medieval translations. The Middle English *Disce mori*, a compilation in the tradition of *Ars moriendi*, is a case in point. Although it was

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[40]. Grisé, 'Catherine of Siena in Middle English Manuscripts', 155; Grisé, 'Holy Women in Print', 89; Brown, 'From the Charterhouse to the Printing House', 19, 28–9. For further discussion on Syon's copy of Catherine's Latin *vita*, see above, chapter 1.

[41]. Grisé, 'Catherine of Siena in Middle English Manuscripts', 155; see also Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 147.

[42]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 34.

[43]. See Roger Ellis, 'Further Thoughts on the Spirituality of Syon Abbey', in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 220.

[44]. See Grisé, 'Women's Devotional Reading', 215; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 148.

[45]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 33–34.

[46]. *Maiden* could potentially refer to a man, too, but in Middle English it is overwhelmingly used for women, as seems to be the case in the *Lyf*; see *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. 'maiden n.', <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED26501/track?counter=1&search_id=6362900>. Accessed January 6, 2025. Elsewhere in the *Lyf* the readers are referred to as 'doughter' (33, 34) and as 'dere susters' (381) and 'frendes' (383, 389, 391).

apparently translated for a historically identifiable woman or group of women, very probably connected to Syon, the text refers to its readers as women only in the prologue and epilogue, keeping the masculine pronouns of the original text in the mid sections.[47] The conventional elements of the prologue of the *Lyf* should not be simply dismissed as fictional: they seem to indicate a coherent inscribed audience of religious women.

In many Middle English devotional texts, the *inscribed* audience does not necessarily correspond to the *intended* audience. Translators and authors often point out the relevance of their texts to readerships wider than the ones directly addressed, which suggests an expectation, or at least a hope, that vernacular books would reach multiple audiences.[48]

Women and lay readers, in particular, are often thought to overlap. In her discussion of the *Lyf*, Brown notes that 'the female reader also serves as a trope in order to justify translation, a way of reaching a wider lay audience, male and female both. By claiming the presumably religious female reader, the translator has also shaped a text that he sees as appropriate for the unschooled laity'.[49] Brown follows a similar line of argument for the *Orcherd* and other texts originally produced for the Syon nuns. She notices that Syon texts had a considerable fortune among the laity and concludes: 'The books at Syon, then, always had a twofold purpose—to be private devotional readings and publicly shared texts'.[50] This line of argumentation begs one important question: if Syon texts, and therefore the *Orcherd*, were written with a mixed-gender lay audience in mind, to what extent can we say that they are gendered texts that promote aspects of women's spirituality? Noting that surviving copies of the *Orcherd* bear inscriptions by several male owners, Brown concludes: 'This may seem unavoidably gendered—a woman's text, a woman's devotion, a women's house—but the evidence of all three surviving manuscripts demonstrate that it was not'.[51] However, we have to bear in mind that it has not yet been

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[47]. Grisé, 'Women's Devotional Reading', 212–13. On the audience and composition of *Disce mori*, see E. A Jones, ed., *The 'Exortacion' from 'Disce Mori': Edited from Oxford, Jesus College, MS 39*, Middle English Texts 36 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2006), XXVIII–XXX.

[48]. For instance, the saints' lives in the Katherine Group; Bella Millett, 'The Audience of the Saints' Lives of the Katherine Group', *Reading Medieval Studies* 16 (1990): 139–48. Millett concludes that '[i]t is probably misleading to speak of "the audience" of the Katherine Group Lives; the evidence suggests that they were designed from the beginning to cater for the needs of more than a single audience' (148).

[49]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 148.

[50]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 116.

[51]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 128. Brown's recognitions of the gendered inscribed reader of the *Lyf* are only brief; see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 148–49.

proven that Syon texts were indeed intended for a broad audience. In fact, Vincent Gillespie, whom Brown cites to build her case, prudently hedges: 'Many of the textual productions by or for the nuns of Syon found their way *in due course, by accident or design*, to readers outside the enclosure'.[52]

In fact, circulation of the *Orcherd* seems to have been circumscribed, at least initially. The three complete manuscripts show signs of a close-knit and tightly controlled production: they seem to have been corrected against each other, presumably at the Abbey, which held a presentation copy, London, British Library, Harley MS 3432.[53] Wynkyn de Worde's 1519 edition of the text, while it undoubtedly must have brought Catherine's text to new audiences, was also redistributed among the Syon nuns, as ownership inscriptions attest.[54] Moreover, unlike other Middle English devotional texts, neither the *Lyf* nor the *Orcherd* mentions a hypothetical wider audience, showing no apparent ambition to reach out beyond their inscribed readership. All this suggests a very close, if not exact, correspondence between inscribed and intended audience in these two texts.

In addition, focusing on an eventual reception among mixed-gender audiences and insisting on an apparent confluence between the woman and the lay reader are critical attitudes which risk overshadowing the gendered nature of the inscribed woman reader of medieval devotional texts. I would maintain that at the very moment of addressing a woman reader, whether actual or imagined, a translator's preconceptions about gender materialize on the page. This is because, without slipping into linguistic determinism, language, from lexical to discursive units, operates within culturally and socially defined assumptions about gender.[55]

In my analysis of the woman reader, I concentrate on those textual moments where the translators directly interact with their readers: the prologue with which they introduce their texts to their new audiences and the various apostrophes scattered throughout the

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[52]. Vincent Gillespie, '1412–1534: Culture and History', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 173 (my emphasis).

[53]. Woodward-Smith, 'Critical Study of the *Orcherd of Syon*', 66–69.

[54]. The copy at the New York Public Library, Spencer 1519, belonged to Elizabeth Strickland; see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 134.

[55]. In an influential study, cognitive linguists theorize through experimental data how gender assumptions are triggered even by something as seemingly unrelated to gender and sex categories as the grammatical gender of concrete nouns such as *puente* and *Brücke* (bridge) or *llave* and *Schlüssel* (key): Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt, and Webb Phillips, 'Sex, Syntax, and Semantics', in *Language in Mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Thought*, ed. Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 69–71.

pages of their works. Direct addresses to women readers are textual moments of 'interpellation', to borrow from the theoretical framework developed by the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser.[56] Translators hail their readers through apostrophes; this hailing transforms the reader into a subject (whether resisting or complying will depend on the reader); the reader's subjecthood is further defined by the gendered interpellations—'maydens', 'sustren'—which place her within the paradigms of the interpellating ideology, in this case medieval religious discourses around feminine piety. As overt interpellations, that is, both verbal callouts and implicit summons to an ideologically defined subjecthood, these textual moments are the ideal place to look within these books to determine how their translators attempt to delineate their women readers and place them within the ideological discourses of late medieval devotion.

Then, the perfect place to start is where the texts themselves start, that is, with the prologues written by translators to introduce their works to new audiences. Surveying English texts translated for medieval women, Alexandra Barratt writes:

> For if we read these texts, and in particular their dedications and apologias, with attention, it is clear that translating for women is blatantly a gender power game. By means of translation, men teach women and in various ways acculturate them into the gender roles they want them to fill.[57]

The marked didactic nature (more often than not in the paternalistic sense of the word) of these translations, Barratt continues, is an 'attempt to control and regulate women's behaviour'.[58]

There could not be a clearer example of this instructional, gendered approach than the prologue of the *Lyf*.[59] The translator specifies his treatment of his source when he clearly states, repeating himself, that in adapting Catherine's *vita* he decided to cut material he considers too theologically sophisticated for his readers:

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[56]. Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, intr. Fredric Jameson, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 85–126.

[57]. Alexandra Barratt, 'English Translations of Didactic Literature for Women to 1550', in *What Nature does not Teach: Didactic Literature in Medieval and Early-Modern Periods*, ed. Juanita Feros Ruys (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 299.

[58]. Barratt, 'English Translations', 300.

[59]. *Instructional* is the word used by C. Annette Grisé, too, when describing the style of the *Lyf*: Grisé, 'Holy Women in Print', 83, 89; Grisé, 'Catherine of Siena in Middle English Manuscripts', 151–52, 158.

> in this translacion I leue of the two prologues whiche in the begynnyng the same clerke made in latyn—the whiche passeth your vnderstondyng, and touche alle maters only that longeth only to your lernyng. . . . I leue of also poyntes of diuynyte whiche passeth your vnderstondyng, and touche only maters þat longeth to your lernyng.[60]

The translator's promise is maintained throughout the *Lyf*: he condenses some passages of his Latin source, cutting Biblical references and some descriptions—in particular gruesome details on Catherine's ascetic practices and some specifics related to her political apostolate.[61] The *Lyf*, then, establishes a strict hierarchical relationship between translator and reader: the translator has spiritual authority over his female audience and selects material appropriate for the edification of his readers, filling in as a sort of spiritual advisor. This position of spiritual authority coincides with a position of perceived spiritual superiority and, accordingly, the translator's avowed aim is that of preparing a simpler text for an audience he believes incapable of grasping finer theological points. In keeping with many medieval devotional texts for women, the *Lyf* presupposes a spiritual father–daughter relationship, thus positioning itself firmly within a well-established gendered reading practice, as theorized by C. Annette Grisé, 'wherein the female religious reader maintains a readerly (feminine) stance of obedience to the writer and the text, both gendered male'.[62]

This common approach to translation is important for framing the *Orcherd* and allows us to fully appreciate the spiritual autonomy the text and its translator grant their women readers. In his prologues and epilogue, the translator of the *Orcherd* reimagines the text as an orchard, a metaphor which gives the text its current title. In this garden his readers are free to follow the paths that appeal to them the most:

> In þis orcherd, whanne ȝe wolen be conforted, ȝe mowe walke and se boþe fruyt and herbis. And albeit þat sum fruyt or herbis seeme to summe scharpe, hard, or bitter, ȝit to purgynge of þe soule þei ben ful speedful and profitable, whanne þei

[60]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 34.

[61]. A systematic and detailed comparison between Raymond of Capua's *Legenda maior* and the Middle English *Lyf* still needs to be carried out, and I am hoping to do so as I prepare a new critical edition of the Middle English text. In the meantime, for preliminary observations on how the translation differs from the Latin source, see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 140–58; Chance, 'Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval Britain', 181–88.

[62]. Grisé, 'Women's Devotional Reading', 218.

> ben discreetly take and resceyued by counceil. Therfore, religiouse sustren, in þis goostli orcherd at resonable tyme ordeyned, I wole þat ȝe disporte ȝou & walke aboute where ȝe wolen wiþ ȝoure mynde & resoun, in what aleye ȝou lyke, and namely þere ȝe sauouren best, as ȝe ben disposid. Ȝe mowe chese if ȝe wole of xxxv aleyes where ȝe wolen walke, þat is to seye, of xxxv chapitres, o tyme in oon, anoþir tyme in anoþir. But first my counceil is clerely to assaye & serche þe hool orcherd, and taste of sich fruyt and herbis resonably aftir ȝoure affeccioun, & what ȝou likeþ best, aftirward chewe it wel & ete þereof for heelþe of ȝoure soule.[63]

Although the translator mentions that the teachings of the text, the metaphorical fruit and plants, have to be 'resceyued by counceil', it is the nuns' own spiritual inclination to dictate their learning, and not a translator's or spiritual director's reading programme. The translator suggests an approach to the text: first, it would be beneficial to familiarize oneself with the whole book, a process facilitated by the detailed table of chapters, and then to choose the material one wishes to study more closely, material which is to be reread frequently and meditated on. I would not give to the translator's suggestion as much emphasis as Brown does when she writes that 'the translator is so insistent about the ways in which the text must be read' that 'the encouragement of excerpted reading rather than taking in the whole of the book may have the effect of limiting a program of immersive reading in the visionary text by forcing a logic, an order, and a method to a text that otherwise is convoluted and free-flowing'.[64] This approach is clearly intended as advice ('my counceil'), and not as a prescription, and it is a sophisticated reading process which empowers the readers to decide the direction of their spiritual journey. It is their power of discretion ('when thei be discreetly take'), that is, their ability to discern and to make a judgement, that allows them to distinguish between the bitter plants and the delightful fruit and to learn different lessons depending on what the text proposes as virtuous models to follow or sinful behaviour to recognize and avoid. The second prologue reiterates some of these points:

> Lo, sustren, I haue schewid ȝou what ympis & trees I haue founde and gaderid to plaunte & to sette in ȝoure goostly orcherd. The aleyes of ȝoure orcherd ben ful longe and brode, whereynne ben manye walkynge paþis, whiche schulen lede ȝou truly to what fruyt where ȝou lust to feede ȝou, in what partye þei ben sett or

[63]. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 1.
[64]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 123.

plauntid. But, sustren, lyke it to ȝou to knowe þat in gaderynge delitable fruyt I foond ful bittire wedis. Bittir & soure þei ben to taaste, but profitable to knowe. Siche wedis I purpose to sette among good fruyt, not for feedynge, but to ȝoure knowing.

Tasteþ hem and knoweþ hem, þat ȝe mowe beware of eny gostli enemye when þei profre ȝou suche wedis. Sauoureþ hem not for ful fedynge, for perilously þei worche and ful ofte to þe deþe, but bi grace souner it be remedied.[65]

Far from taking a role as spiritual director and advisor, the translator of the *Orcherd* seems to take a step back: it is not the gardener, but the orchard itself (fittingly an organic and self-generative metaphor)[66] that leads the reader to the fruit, the spiritual message of Catherine's book. It is the text itself and the nuns' own spiritual inclination that guide them through their reading, not the person who has prepared the text for them. Crucially, instead of leaving out difficult passages, the translator includes material which is hard to digest. This warning in itself offers some light guidance: it alerts the readers that the text ahead will introduce them to dangerous, potentially deadly, material. The prologue, however, is the only warning the readers get. The translator does not flag within the text these 'bittire wedis'. It is up to the readers themselves, then, to discern them and learn from them. This readerly autonomy goes beyond the prologues and comes through the text itself, where the voice of the translator of the *Orcherd* is almost inaudible.

Once again, the *Lyf* provides a point of contrast. Its translator addresses his readers several times in the text and these addresses illuminate his understanding of women's devotion. Direct addresses to the reader—or, *lector*—are characteristic of the *usus scribendi* of Raymond of Capua, the author of the Latin source of the *Lyf*. The Middle English translator of the *Lyf* picks up on many of Raymond's addresses to his reader, sometimes translating them word for word, sometimes adding a few details, sometimes rewriting them completely and adapting them to his specific needs. Compared to his source, he also increases their number, adding some apostrophes which are absent from the *Legenda maior*. (It is telling in itself that the *Lyf* has a high number of interpellations, and therefore a constant attempt to redirect its women readers to an ideologically defined

[65]. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 16.

[66]. Garden metaphors abound in medieval religious texts and have been read as 'female coded' images used not only to perpetuate, but also to offer resistance to patriarchal discourses; see Liz Herbert McAvoy, *The Enclosed Garden and the Medieval Religious Imaginary*, Nature and Environment in the Middle Ages Series 4 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2021).

subjecthood.) The new and modified addresses are not neutral at all, but draw his readers' attention to a precise model of sanctity and make explicit the virtues which are typical of medieval women's devotion, therefore contributing to making the inscribed reader of the *Lyf* what C. Annette Grisé would call a 'gendered reader'.[67] Late Middle English religious literature for women, Grisé argues, creates a gendered reader: 'the readers are addressed in such texts as women, and their gender is an important marker of their identity to the writer and to the text'.[68] In particular, devotional texts for women tend to put forward as exemplary for their audience a set of specific spiritual values: meekness, obedience, chastity.[69] These are certainly universal Christian virtues, but in texts written for women they are usually emphasized.

As is to be expected, meekness, obedience, and chastity—in addition to charity and patience—are foregrounded by the translator of the *Lyf* when he wants to make Catherine into an *exemplum* for his readers. In several passages the *Lyf* reminds its readers, where its source does not, of the importance of those virtues: the translator spells out the implicit or explicit lesson of his source and draws out of Catherine's behaviour exemplary qualities for his audience to follow.

Several examples could be cited,[70] but to understand fully how the translator repackages his source, we need only focus on one case, his treatment of the ninth chapter of the second part of Catherine's hagiography. In this chapter, dedicated to Catherine's exorcisms, Raymond explains that the Saint managed to defeat the Devil on several occasions because of her humility, a virtue which is given even more space and emphasis in the Middle English version of the text, for instance, at the end of a section narrating the deliverance of a young girl called Lorenza. Here, Raymond addresses his *lector* simply to transition from one *exemplum* of Catherine's sanctity to the next: Raymond reminds the reader that he has recorded the key elements of the preceding episode—that is, the miracle itself, the way it occurred, and the witnesses to the event. Then, he introduces the next episode, which should give further proof that Catherine possessed the ability to expel demons. He writes:

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67. Grisé, 'Women's Devotional Reading'.
68. Grisé, 'Women's Devotional Reading', 219.
69. Grisé, 'Women's Devotional Reading', 216–18.
70. These are the most significant ones: Horstmann, *Lyf*, 82, 100, 105, 284, 304, 309, 313; cf. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 148 (1.4.11–12), 196 (1.11.26), 236 (2.4.61), 282 (2.7.25), 318 (2.9.17), 333 (2.10.33), 342 (2.11.17).

> Habes igitur, lector, miraculum et modum miraculi, nec non et ipsius testes qui videntes interfuerunt, a quibus ego percepi, sed et aliud narrare intendo, per quod clarius ostendetur almam hanc virginem virtutem expellendi ac compellendi demones plene a Domino percepisse.[71]
>
> [You have, then, reader, the miracle and the manner of miracle, and also its witnesses who were present and saw it, from whom I learnt about it; but I want to tell another one, through which it will be shown more clearly that this good virgin had fully received from the Lord the ability of expelling and challenging demons.]

But the Middle English translator makes explicit, once again, the key to Catherine's abilities as an exorcist, generalizing the lesson that must be learnt from this episode:

> Loo, maydens, by this myracle may ye lerne that þe fende may not abyde ther veray mekenes is, for it is to hym a dedely darte.[72]

While in the Latin text this is a transitional, structural moment, the Middle English translation takes this opportunity to create an instructional moment. No longer does the text just record the miracle for the sake of describing Catherine's exceptionality, as in the Latin; rather, the *Lyf* intends to instruct through the miracle—'by this myracle may ye lerne'. The 'virtutem expellendi ac compellendi demones' is specified in the Middle English: it is Catherine's 'veray mekenes'. This is a point Raymond makes only briefly when relating the episode in the original Latin text: the proud devil is defeated through the 'iaculo humilitatis' (dart of humility).[73] The Middle English translator already expands on this image when Raymond first introduces it, by pointing out that Catherine is the origin of that 'darte of mekenes *the whiche came out of this holy maydens mouth*'.[74] Then, the *Lyf* reprises this metaphor and the importance of Catherine's meekness in its address to the audience, making it the central element of the episode. The Middle English translator closes the chapter by reiterating the importance of Catherine's humility; he adds a very telling sentence to his source:

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[71]. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 316 (2.9.12).
[72]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 303.
[73]. Raymond of Capua, *Legenda maior*, 316 (2.9.11).
[74]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 303 (my emphasis).

> Loo, maydens, thus by this chapytre ye may knowe what gyfte of grace this holy mayde receyued of oure lorde by-cause of hyr chastyte and mekenes.[75]

The Middle English translator, then, draws one last moment of instruction out of the chapter, enriching or, rather, manipulating the sense of his source. In fact, he specifies that it was not just Catherine's humility, but also her chastity that allowed her to receive from God the ability to defeat demons. This additional virtue is mentioned even though Raymond does not so much as hint at chastity in this chapter of his Latin text. Overall, the Middle English translator takes every opportunity (and then creates some more) to mark the importance for his audience of meekness, chastity, and other virtues typical of medieval women's spirituality.

Conversely, the reader of the *Orcherd* does not hear the voice of the translator often within the book. His few comments are typically confined to the margins: they consist of the two prologues which open the book, two brief summaries at the end of two groups of chapters, and the envoi[76]. Only once does the narrator speak directly to his readers within the main body of the book. But, even in this case, the translator's own input is limited: he repurposes a passage already found in his Latin source (and in the Italian *Dialogo* before that), adding a direct address to the audience but otherwise translating the Latin almost verbatim:

> Hec veraciter anima bene mandaverat memorie doctrinam optimam quam sibi coeterna tradiderat veritas, videlicet se ipsam congnoscendo et divinam bonitatem in se nec non oportuna remedia ad tocius reparacionem pereundi seculi, ut ita et divinum iudicium placaretur, id est sanctis continuis oracionibus humilibus et devotis.[77]

> [In truth, this soul had successfully entrusted to her memory the most beneficial doctrine, which the eternal Truth had taught her, namely, to know herself and divine goodness in herself and also the necessary remedies for the reparation of the entire decaying era, so that divine judgement might be appeased, that is, through holy, perpetual, humble, and devout prayers.]

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[75]. Horstmann, *Lyf of Katherin of Senis*, 304.
[76]. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 1–2, 16–17, 60, 98–99, 420–21.
[77]. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library, 87 (*olim* D.b.IV.18), fol. 23v.

> Loo, sustren, seeþ how wel þat soule had kepte in mynde þe noble doctryn, þe which euerbeynge soþfastnesse had tauȝt hir, and bitake hir; þat is to seye, in knowynge hirsilf and þe goodness of God in her, and speedful remedyes for reparacioun of al þe world þat was in perel of pereschynge, so þat þe doom of God myȝte be pesid, & his wraþþe aswagid, þat is to seye, wiþ holy, contynuel, meke, and deuoute prayeris.[78]

This passage is an interesting case: it shows the translator's sensitivity to Catherine's style and the very careful, almost philological, approach he takes to his source. In a footnote to the corresponding Italian passage, Giuliana Cavallini, the modern editor of the standard edition of *Il dialogo*, comments on the style of this paragraph, suggesting that it was an addition by an early scribe which should not be attributed to Catherine's original dictation.[79] The translator of the *Orcherd* evidently had the same thought: he picked up the shift in tone of the passage and singled these lines out from the rest of Catherine's text, clarifying that those words were not the Saint's and presenting the passage as his own aside to the Syon nuns. The translator of the *Orcherd* is here drawing his audience's attention to a similar model of sanctity to the one championed by the *Lyf*, revealing that the two translations share the same cultural framework and similar expectations. A devotion which emphasizes meekness emerges from other texts linked with Syon Abbey, too, and it is in line with what previous scholars have observed about spiritual life at Syon.[80] Therefore, it is rather appropriate that a generic comment on Catherine's meekness is repurposed in translation and directed specifically at the Syon nuns.

What is important to make clear, however, is that this is an isolated case: nowhere else does the translator of the *Orcherd* interrupt the flow of the text to extract spiritual teachings and, instead, always lets his readers draw out teachings directly from Catherine's words, allowing them to discern the significance of their own readings by themselves. Contrary to many, or probably most, medieval English translators, the translator of the

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78. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 59.

79. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogo*, 58n32.

80. E.g., *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, ed. John Henry Blunt, EETS, ES, 19 (London: N. Trübner, 1873); *A Mirror to Devout People*. For a discussion on meekness in these texts, see Grisé, '"In the blessid vyneȝerd"', 200, 206; Vincent Gillespie, 'The Haunted Text: Reflections in *The Mirror to Devout People*', in *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors and Readers*, ed. Jill Mann and Maura Nolan (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 144. See also a discussion on the *Syon Martiloge* in Vincent Gillespie, '"Hid diuinite": The Spirituality of the English Syon Brethren', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. E. A. Jones (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 195.

Orcherd seems to have interpreted his function not as a commentator, spiritual advisor, or exegete tasked with glossing and explaining Catherine's revelations, but chiefly as a linguistic interpreter. The *Orcherd* ultimately creates a woman reader who has freedom to navigate the text and to draw out her own conclusions from it, a gendered reader different from the one that dominates most medieval religious literature written for English women.

4.2 The Woman Author: Adapting 'reuelacyonys of approuyd wymmen'

The translator's non-interventionist approach does not merely reveal his high expectations for his readers and their spiritual acumen, but it also implies a deferential attitude towards his source material: Catherine's text is enough on its own; it does not need an extensive set of clarifying comments and additions, nor excisions. This approach is not to be taken for granted, not even when translating the 'reuelacyonys of approuyd wymmen'. As mentioned above, in its narrative exposition of Jesus's life and Passion, the *Speculum devotorum* integrates doctrinal and Biblical sources with the revelations of a selected and vetted group of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century woman visionaries: Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231), Mechthild of Hackeborn (1240/41–1298), Birgitta of Sweden (c. 1303–1373), and Catherine of Siena (1347–1380).[81] These mystics are the women visionaries which enjoyed the greatest success in medieval England, especially in circles connected with Syon Abbey and Sheen, where their texts circulated in Latin as well as Middle English excerpts and complete translations.[82]

When circulating in England, however, the revelations of these holy women tended to undergo significant changes.[83] For instance, the excerpts from Birgitta's *Liber celestis*, according to Vincent Gillespie, 'often distort her revelations through inept translation, and bowdlerize her spirituality, presenting her as orthodox, pious, sacramental, Christocentric,

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[81]. *Mirror to Devout People*, 6. For an analysis on the use of these mystics' revelations in the *Speculum devotorum*, see also Paul J. Patterson, 'Female Readers and the Sources of the *Mirror to Devout People*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 42, no. 2 (2016): 190–97. As argued above in chapter 1, note no. 34, the *Speculum devotorum* is citing Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231) rather than Elizabeth of Töss (1294–1336), as is often assumed by scholars. However, in medieval England (and in modern scholarship) the two were often confused and conflated. The Elizabeth of Hungary who wrote the visionary *Revelations* which circulated in medieval England may have been a third Elizabeth of Hungary (*c.* 1260–1322); see *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, CXLIII.

[82]. For an overview of the circulation of continental women visionaries in England, see Barratt, 'Continental Women Mystics and English Readers'.

[83]. The two Middle English translations of the revelations of Elizabeth of Hungary, like *The Orcherd*, keep closely to its source; see *Two Middle English Revelations of St Elizabeth of Hungary*, 37–40.

and minimally scriptural'.[84] And one of two full-length translations of the *Liber celestis*, the Claudius version, did not fare much better: it moderates several passages characterized by Birgitta's distinctive intensity or omits them altogether—especially those teeming with female-coded aspects of devotion such as affective piety, mystical ecstasies, feminizations of God, and *exempla* of women's leadership.[85] Recent research on the textual tradition of Mechthild shows that a similar process of abridgement affected her *Boke of Gostely Grace*, too, from as early as when the *Boke* was still the *Liber specialis gratiae*.[86] Despite the incredibly large number of manuscript witnesses to the Latin version of Mechthild's text, very few contain the entirety of the *Liber*; the majority transmit a shorter version that was excerpted from the *Liber* very soon after its composition.[87] The version of the *Liber* which arrived in medieval England was this shorter, more popular redaction, so what circulated in Latin was already a heavily edited version of Mechthild's text. The Middle English translator—probably a Carthusian at Sheen—further strips this edited version of some mystical images, in particular those belonging to a tradition of bridal mysticism, on the whole 'turning the text into a more moderate, less challenging work for a fifteenth-century English audience'.[88] He also clarifies passages of controversial theology; for instance, after a vision in which Jesus tells Mechthild of the salvation of an unbaptized child, the translator brings the reader back to more safely orthodox grounds, adding the following cautionary note:

> Of þis ensample before be warre, that ys to seye that a childe be þe moders vowe of cristiaunte shall be savyd þouȝ it deye tofore, for clerkes holden the contrarie opynyon, for y trowe þe fyrst wryter mysseundyrstode.[89]

The cases of Birgitta and Mechthild ultimately tell us that the revelations of visionary women, no matter how secure their cult or how 'approuyd', were always subject to further scrutiny and emendations by scribes, redactors, translators, and compilers.

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[84]. Gillespie, 'Religious Writing', 262.
[85]. Miles, 'Queer Touch', 225–32.
[86]. Mechthild of Hackeborn, *The Boke of Gostely Grace: The Middle English Translation: A Critical Edition from Oxford, MS Bodley 220*, ed. Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa and Anne Mouron, with Mark Atherton, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2022). The Middle English title is based on a misinterpretation of an abbreviated form of the original Latin text, whereby *specialis* (special) has been read for *spiritualis* (spiritual).
[87]. Mechthild of Hackeborn, *Boke of Gostely Grace*, 8–11.
[88]. Mechthild of Hackeborn, *Boke of Gostely Grace*, 21; see also pp. 14–23.
[89]. Mechthild of Hackeborn, *Boke of Gostely Grace*, 307; see also pp. 21, 445.

Going against the grain, the *Orcherd* stays close to its Latin source, a textual closeness which, in the literary context I have just outlined, stands out as deserving of more attention. Generally, discussions on the relationship between Middle English translation and Latin source are limited to passing observations that the *Orcherd* is a 'full and faithful' translation.[90] Changes to the overall order and inclusion of subject matter seem to be minimal, compared to the arrangement of the Latin text of the *Dialogo*. Four subsections are re-ordered;[91] another two are unified;[92] a subsection is omitted, probably by mistake since its rubric is included and translated;[93] the following one is split into two parts, to make up for the one omitted.[94] With the possible exception of the first element of this list, rather than the result of the translator's deliberate manipulation of material, these changes appears to be accidental and could easily have derived from working with an incomplete or damaged copy of the text, or they could be the result of mechanical copying errors. The *Orcherd* mirrors the erroneous placement of some rubrics, revealing a tendency to follow its Latin source even to the detriment of restoring the logical sequence of headings.[95] What is important to take away from this overview is that even the paratexts of the *Orcherd*, which have typically been considered the most original element of this Middle English adaptation,[96] have much in common with the text's Latin source.[97]

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[90]. Hodgson, '*The Orcherd of Syon* and the English Mystical Tradition', 230. See also *Orcherd*, VII; Windeatt, '1412–1534: Texts', 201; Despres, 'Ecstatic Reading', 154.

[91]. The subsections corresponding to chapters 68–71 (out of 167, the most widespread chapter division of the *Dialogo*) appear in this order: 70, 71, 69, 68. Cf. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 151–59.

[92]. The rubric introducing chapter 31, but the text itself is not compromised. Cf. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 78.

[93]. Chapter 150 is omitted, but its heading introduces chapter 151. Cf. *Orcherd*, 368.

[94]. Chapter 151 is split between the fourth and fifth chapters of the *Orcherd*'s sixth part. Cf. Catherine of Siena, *Orcherd of Syon*, 368–69.

[95]. The headings for chapters 88 and 89 are inverted in ten manuscripts containing the Latin version of the *Dialogo* by Cristofano di Gano Guidini. In addition, in seven of these manuscripts, the five rubrics that correspond to chapters 57–61 follow the chapter they should introduce instead of preceding it. For a full reference to these manuscripts, see Nicola Estrafallaces, 'La patrona d'Italia fuori dall'Italia: La diffusione del 'Dialogo' nell'Inghilterra medievale', in *Il 'Dialogo' di Caterina da Siena. Per una nuova edizione critica: filologia, tradizione, teologia*, edited by Silvia Nocentini, La Mistica cristiana tra Oriente e Occidente 36 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2023), 141.

[96]. E.g. Despres, 'Ecstatic Reading', 154–55; Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 123–25, 136; Alakas, 'Delightful Fruits and Bitter Weeds', 51.

[97]. For further suggestions on how the structure of the *Orcherd* follows and may even be inspired by the structure of Guidini's Latin translation of the *Dialogo*, see Estrafallaces, 'La patrona d'Italia fuori dall'Italia', 140–43.

But it is precisely this adherence to its source that the *Orcherd* demonstrates its originality: we have seen that it is not rare that, when imported into medieval England, mystical texts often undergo significant transformation. In the past, *The Orcherd of Syon* has typically been interpreted as the product of a conservative spiritual context—that is, of a spirituality keen on curbing the so-called excesses associated with women visionaries and mysticism. The shade of meaning of the word *conservative* which perhaps best applies to the translator's approach is another one: 'characterized by a tendency to keep intact or unchanged'.[98] As far as medieval English translations are concerned, this is in itself a radical act.

The combination of author, intended audience, place and time of production may lead us to expect from *The Orcherd of Syon* a simplified text, but this is not what a reading of the Middle English version of the *Dialogo* bears out. Overt attitudes of censorship, scepticism, caution, or didacticism, attitudes which underpin much medieval English literature for or by women, do not play a prominent role in the *Orcherd*. The approach taken by the translator of *The Orcherd of Syon* at once elevates his new readers as well as the material and the text's author. His readers are presented as individuals capable of discerning for themselves a text that is by no means an easy read. The text itself and the author's teachings, on the other hand, emerge as complete products which need no major revision or intervention by a translator, commentator, or editor. If the Syon nuns have the potential to learn by themselves, then Catherine's words have the potential to teach by themselves. *The Orcherd of Syon*, ultimately, is a translation that stands out among its fifteenth-century peers for its recognition of the great intellectual capabilities of medieval women readers and medieval women writers, and allows us to sketch a literary history of medieval women not so much defined by limitations, but defined by their potential and intellectual abilities.

[98]. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed., s.v. 'conservative, n. & adj.'. Last modified September 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9015675135>.

Conclusion

I would like to draw to a close by quoting Barry Windeatt's assessment of how modern literary criticism tends to conceptualize English mystical writings in the period between 1412 and 1534—a period bookended, on one side, by the earliest English manuscripts containing Catherine of Siena's works and, on the other side, by the editions of these texts printed by Wynkyn de Worde. According to Windeatt,

> It is a modern commonplace that the English fifteenth century—although an age of such flamboyant achievements in many of the arts—was a time of intellectual and spiritual repression, regulation and censorship, fearful of heresy and of innovation alike. . . . In its pursuit of the contemplative life, the fifteenth century is hence nowadays characterized—in neglect of much contrary evidence—as conservative, insular, and without originality.[1]

This critical attitude, Windeatt continues, marks our understanding of mystical texts imported from abroad: 'English reception of continental works [is] usually characterized nowadays as cautiously censoring foreign daringness into anodyne piety and conventional edification'.[2] These are certainly the lenses through which English reception of Catherine of Siena is currently viewed. In the most recent monograph on the topic, Jennifer N. Brown summarizes her argument by claiming that, in the process of translation into Middle English, 'Catherine's own writings . . . are reshaped and translated in order to be widely and palatably disseminated, frequently stripped of seemingly unorthodox or more controversial elements'.[3] In the course of this thesis, however, I have advanced a different interpretation and suggested a significant interest in and engagement with Catherinian texts. Rather than confirming the insularity of English devotion, the corpus of texts by and about Catherine of Siena shows that late medieval England can also be construed as a cosmopolitan space, a space which was receptive of spiritual texts coming from across the English Channel.

Catherine of Siena's English history did not come to a halt with the Reformation, though it was considerably hindered and slowed down. Catherine was still a well-known figure and, as such, she is sometimes cited in seventeenth-century religious treatises and

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[1]. Windeatt, '1412–1534: Texts', 195.
[2]. Windeatt, '1412–1534: Texts', 196.
[3]. Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 10.

sermons. No longer invoked as an example of devotion to aspire to, however, she is instead politicized and attacked by preachers and authors who aim to undermine her reputation as a visionary mystic and prophet.[4] Notwithstanding, Catherine retained her popularity with those English Christians still adhering to a Catholic faith and, again, especially with religious women. In 1609, a new English translation of Raymond's *Legenda maior* is printed for a community of recusant nuns who took refuge in Leuven.[5] But the hospitable environment that fostered the transmission and translation of Catherine's texts is no longer. Rather, it seems that by the seventeenth century the English Channel has become an obstacle and that texts with a Catholic and mystical bend, even if written in English, had better luck in mainland Europe.

But before the Reformation the English Channel was no such barrier for Catherine of Siena's texts, which, *au contraire*, overcame geographical boundaries and provided precious contributions to European and English literatures. In fact, David Wallace compares, in passing, Catherine's literary output with the ones of the *tre corone* (three crowns) of Italian literature—Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. According to Wallace, the places along one of the Italianate itineraries in his vast study on European medieval literature—that is,

> Avignon, Lombardy, Florence, Siena, Rome, Naples—contend with the historical, memorial, or literary presence of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, while yet combining to tell revisionarily of *cinque corone*: for Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena, the pre-eminent female saints of the age, so richly productive of writing, are all active along the string.[6]

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[4]. For an analysis of how Catherine's and Birgitta's books become problematic during the reign of Henry VIII, see Diane Watt, 'The Prophet at Home: Elizabeth Barton and the Influence of Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena', in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 161–76. For Catherine's reception after the Reformation, see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 171–201; Rozenski, *Wisdom's Journey*, 177–80.

[5]. *The life of the blessed virgin, Sainct Catharine of Siena* ([Douai]: [Charles Boscard], 1609) (*STC* 4830; *USTC* 3003993). This is a translation by John Fenn from the Italian translation by Ambrosio Catarino Politi. This translation, and the reception of Catherine among recusant English Catholics more broadly, should be studied in more depth, but in the meantime, for some preliminary considerations, see Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard*, 184–94; Rozenski, *Wisdom's Journey*, 167–77.

[6]. David Wallace, 'General Introduction', in *Europe: A Literary History, 1348–1418*, ed. David Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1:xxxiv.

In this intellectually stimulating project, Wallace is re-conceptualizing a literary history of medieval Europe free from the anachronistic national divisions imposed by modern nation states.[7] He points to Avignon as one of the locales where Catherine's writings and activities left a profound mark, already pointing to the transnational character of her legacy. The itinerary of Catherine's texts I have outlined here takes us farther away from her native Tuscany and as far as medieval England, from Siena to Syon.

[7]. On the role played by nationalism in the rise of English Literature as a field of academic studies has already written eloquently Terry Eagleton in his 'The Rise of English', in *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, anniversary ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 14–46.

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