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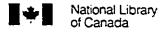
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The Masculine Voice in the <u>Visio monachi de Evnsham 1196</u>

by
Jamie Zettle

A Thesis
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Abstract

    The mystical literature of twelfth-century England provides an unique insight into the conceptions and construction of gender in the Middle Ages. For the purpose of this thesis, these ideas are particularly evident in the <u>Visio monachi de Evnsham</u> (1196). The vision, recorded in the monastic environment of late twelfth-century England, details a journey through the three levels of Purgatory by a young novice, Edmund of Eynsham.

    The <u>Visio monachi de Evnsham</u> is important because it is a clear example of a "gendered" text. The androcentric focus of the text, in its construction of Purgatory, the nature and expiation of sin and in its treatment of women, was designed to instruct a male audience. The text was necessarily gendered male to appeal to a monastic audience and to lead men to salvation. The text is particularly concerned with the salvation of men, its lessons always admonishing and guiding men, spoken of and reflected upon with masculine images and experiences.

    Throughout the text, one is constantly aware of the various aspects of monastic masculinity. Feminist theory has sensitized researchers to a female or feminine voice. This same scholarship provides the necessary tools to examine the expressions of various monastic masculinities in the literature. The <u>Visio monachi de Evnsham</u> (1196) provides a superb illustration of the expressions of monastic "maleness" and male behaviour.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The study of medieval visionary literature is crucial to the contemporary understanding of twelfth-century symbolism, religious thought and social conditions. Medieval mysticism was a charismatic and subjective element of the religious culture of medieval Europe. The genre of visionary literature which emerged from all parts of Europe and in all centuries was an attempt to give voice to the experiences and yearnings of the heart. This literature is full of joyful celebration, sorrowful mourning of the mysteries of the Resurrection and harsh warnings for the faithful. Medieval mystics experienced the world as whole, the spiritual and physical worlds mingling and converging, colouring their society with a richness of exultation and pain.

The twelfth century was a period of great change and religious revival. The period following the Norman invasion of England (1066) until the end of the twelfth century was characterized by expansion, conquest and a reorganization of society. Medieval women and men pushed the limits of the geographical, intellectual, scientific, economic, literary and religious barriers which structured medieval society. The twelfth century witnessed a religious revival. The Crusading spirit enabled medieval Christians to "re-conquer" the religious terrain which had been neglected in the preceding two centuries.

The Crusades provided an outlet for religious fervour, but more importantly, they represented the desire to re-invent religious culture. The Cluniac reforms called for a return to the strictness of monastic life. The laity became more involved in the life of the Church. Penance and confession became more systematized and important as a sacrament in the spiritual journey of Christians. The twelfth century was a renaissance of religious fervour, intellectual activity and economic expansion.

It is this environment in which Edmund of Eynsham dictated his <u>Visio monachi de Eynsham</u>. Edmund's vision of Purgatory was influential throughout England three centuries after its composition. In this vision, Edmund travels to Purgatory with St Nicholas as his guide and there witnesses the torments of Purgatory and the process of the expiation of sins. He returns, however, not downcast, but with a message of hope. His vision is a call to conversion, to penance, to confession. The vision, composed in 1196, may be seen as an indicator of the changes which would be implemented in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Moreover, the 1198 Council of Paris included instructions for confessions, albeit brief ones.[1] The <u>Visio monachi de Eynsham</u> reflects the movement toward sacramental penance and confession and is an important, lucid and engaging piece of twelfth-century

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[1]Jacqueline Murray, "The Perceptions of Sexuality, Marriage, and Family in Early English Pastoral Manuals" (Ph. D. Dissertation, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987), 19 from Council of Paris (1198), C. VI, c. 1. J. Dominique Mansi, ed., <u>Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio</u>, Vol. 22 (Venice: Antonium Zatta, 1776), col. 678.

visionary literature. A brief historiographical survey of the visionary literature, and particularly the Visio monachi de Evnsham, is useful to provide the background on which to build an understanding of the revelation. The scholarship concerning the origins, development and popularization of Purgatory must also be examined to elucidate the foundations of the creation of the Visio monachi de Evnsham.

The Visio monachi de Evnsham was widely circulated and available in the Middle Ages and needs to be assessed in light of its historiographical treatment and usefulness. The original manuscript was composed in 1196. There are sixteen or seventeen manuscripts of the vision surviving in various libraries throughout Europe. An edition of the Latin version of the Visio monachi de Evnsham appeared in 1903 in the Analecta Bollandiana.[2] Herbert Thurston, working on the phenomenon of mystical experience, published this version in the hope of generating interest in what he felt was an important, if neglected, work of religious literature. Thurston also published an important article concerning the identity of Edmund of Eynsham linking him with Edmund of Canterbury who was later beatified.[3] H. E. Slater, in 1908, included a discussion of the vision in his introduction to the Cartulary of the Abbey of Evnsham in which he

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[2]Adam of Eynsham, "Visio monachi de Eynsham," Analecta Bollandiana, vol 22 (Bruxelles, 1903): 225-319.

[3]Herbert Thurston, "A Conjectural Chapter in the Life of St. Edmund of Canterbury," The Dublin Review, (October 1904): 229-257.

included a complete version of the text.[4]

To this point, the vision was available only in Latin and largely only to academics. Recognizing the popular value of the vision, Valerian Paget published a modern English translation of the <u>Visio</u> in 1909 under the title, <u>The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham</u>.[5] Interest in the vision proper seems to have had a hiatus until the 1960s. In 1966, there appeared a reprint of the 1482 Middle English version originally printed by William de Machlinia on the continent. Edward Arber had it reprinted in 1869 and the English Reprint Society again published it in 1966 under the title of <u>The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham 1196</u>.[6]

The supporting primary material for the vision was also published in the 1960s as interest in medieval mysticism and literature increased. Decima L. Douie and Hugh Farmer edited Adam of Eynsham's <u>Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis</u> in which he narrates the biography of Hugh of Lincoln.[7] This survey represents the extent of the study focused on the vision and its publication history. With the exception of Nancy Partner's article in

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[4]H. E. Slater, ed., "Introduction to the Vision of the Monk of Eynsham" in <u>Cartulary of the Abbey of Evnsham</u> (volume two. Oxford: The Oxford Historical Society at the Clarendon Press, 1908.)

[5]Valerian Paget, trans., <u>The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham Abbey</u> (London: Alston Rivers Ltd., 1909.)

[6]Adam of Eynsham, <u>The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham 1196</u> (English Reprints volume 5 William de Machlinia circa 1482; ed. Edward Arber. London: Bloomsbury, 1869; New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966.)

[7]Adam of Eynsham, <u>Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis</u> (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1961.)

Speculum where she mentions Edmund as a case of male hysteria[8],
the Visio monachi de Evnsham has not been well explored by
scholars of medieval visionary literature.

Numerous scholars have devoted their attention to the
history of mysticism in medieval Europe and particularly medieval
England. An overview of recent scholarship concerning the
mystics of the church must begin with the monumental and ground-
breaking work of Evelyn Underhill. Her book entitled The Mystics
of the Church drew attention to the rich heritage of visionary
literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.[9] In this
text, Underhill explores the works of the medievals including
Bernard of Clairvaux, the Victorines, Hildegard of Bingen,
Richard Rolle and the later Renaissance mystics including Meister
Eckhart. Conrad Pepler's The English Religious Heritage and Ray
Petry's Late Medieval Mysticism represent contemporary studies
examining the Middle Ages anticipating the work done by
Knowles.[10] David Knowles' works, The Monastic Order in England
and The English Mystical Tradition, originally published in the
1930s, mark the beginning of a sustained and scholarly interest

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[8]Nancy F. Partner, "Making Up Lost Time: Writing on the Writing of History," Speculum 61, 1 (January 1986): 90-117.

[9]Evelyn Underhill, The Mystics of the Church (London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, 1931.)

[10]Conrad Pepler, The English Religious Heritage (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1958), and Ray C. Petry, Late Medieval Mysticism (London: SCM Press Limited, 1957.)

in medieval mysticism and religious culture.[11]   R. W.

Southern's Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages,

published in the 1970s, signalled the rise of literature devoted

to the place of the church in culture and the role of mysticism

in the life of the church.[12] Finally, Wolfgang Riehle's The

Middle English Mystics acknowledges the legitimacy of the study

of mystical literature as valid and important and localized by

geography.[13]

There emerged various studies concerning the psychology and

symbolism of mysticism. This interdisciplinary approach to the

medieval mystics represents clearly the changing academic

environment of the 1970s and the "coming of age" of the study of

visionary literature. James Leuba's The Psychology of Religious

Mysticism was Freudian in its approach and marked the beginning

of a concerted interest in the psychological effects of a

cloistered, solitary lifestyle on the spiritual experiences of a

monastic.[14] Robert Hollander's Allegory in Dante's Commedia and

Charles Singleton's commentary on The Divine Comedy witnessed the

analysis of visionary literature from a strictly allegorical and

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[11]David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1963), and The English Mystical
Tradition (London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1961.)

[12]R.W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle
Ages (New York: Penguin Books, 1970.)

[13]Wolfgang Riehle, The Middle English Mystics (London:
Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981.)

[14]James Leuba, The Psychology of Religious Mysticism (Boston:
Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972.)

metaphorical viewpoint.[15] Adolf Katzenellenbogen added to this study, examining the use of allegory in medieval illuminated manuscripts and art in Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art.[16] H. Flanders Dunbar promoted the study of medieval symbolism as a medium through which the scholar may gain insight into the signs and symbols which constituted the meaning in medieval society in Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy.[17] These works are instrumental for understanding the symbolism and allegories which play such an important role in instructing Edmund's listeners.

Studies surrounding the origins and development of the concept of Purgatory help our understanding of Edmund's vision. Ernest Becker, at the close of the nineteenth century, published a comparative analysis of the medieval visions. This work, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of the Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell, with Special Reference to the Middle-English Versions, was indispensable in beginning the comprehensive analysis of the medieval visionary literature and the manner in which this literature borrowed from various other sources, including secular and religious poetry, mythology, history and

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[15]Robert Hollander, Allegory in Dante's Comedy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) and Charles S. Singleton, trans. The Divine Comedy Inferno Commentary (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.)

[16]Adolf Katzenellenbogen, Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Medieval Art (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964.)

[17]H. Flanders Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961.)

ancient philosophy, in order to evolve into an unique genre.[18]
More recently, Jacques LeGoff's exhaustive study, The Birth of
Purgatory, presents a startling analysis and focus and has
profoundly influenced our understanding of the development of a
doctrine of Purgatory.[19] More than any other author, LeGoff's
analysis offers insight into the need for the creation of
Purgatory and the functions it served in medieval society.
Moreover, this work provides the literary and historical
background against which one may assess the Visio monachi de
Evnsham. The Visio is a part of this process of an evolving
purgatorial literary genre. Its ideas informed the medieval
conception of Purgatory and helped to define its nature and
attempted to provide an explanation of how to expiate sins.

The work of Paul Anciaux entitled, The Sacrament of Penance,
was instrumental in illustrating the development and functions of
penance in the medieval and renaissance Church.[20] Handbooks of
penance also received attention during the 1960s with the work of
John McNeill and Helena Gamer who focused on the early medieval
period and the development of this literary genre. Oscar
Watkin's influential work, A History of Penance, published in
1961, details the evolution of public penance and obligatory

[18]Ernest J. Becker, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of
the Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell, with Special Reference to
the Middle-English Versions (Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1899.)

[19]Jacques LeGoff, The Birth of Purgatory (Chicago: University
of Chicago Press, 1984.)

[20]Paul Anciaux, The Sacrament of Penance (New York: Sheed and
Ward, Publishers, 1962.)

confession and its effect on the medieval church.[21] Thomas
Tentler and Leonard Boyle respectively added to the dialogue
concerning the function of penance in medieval Europe.[22]
Tentler contended that penance functioned as a form of social
control while Boyle saw penance as primarily aimed at
"conformity" to God's law as the goal. The history of penance is
intrinsically wrapped up with the composition of the Visio
monachi de Eynsham for the vision seems to be calling for
Christians to take up penance and confession as part of their
spiritual journey. The changes in the Church's attitude toward
penance and confession may be seen in the thrust of the lesson of
the vision.

Literary analysis also played an important role in providing
the historiographical framework in which to examine Edmund's
text. G. R. Owst, in the 1960s, published Literature and Pulpit
in Medieval England and Preaching in Medieval England, which
explored the relationship between the development of a uniquely
English literary heritage and the influence of sermons and
homilies in this emerging genre.[23] These studies are

[21]Oscar D. Watkins, A History of Penance (New York: Burt
Franklin, 1961.)

[22]Thomas N. Tentler, Sin and Confession on the Eve of the
Reformation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) and
Leonard E. Boyle, "The Summa for Confessors as a Genre, and its
Religious Intent" in The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and
Renaissance Religion (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974:126-130.)

[23]G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England
(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) and Preaching in Medieval England
(New York: Russell & Russell, 1965.)

particularly important when viewed with Edmund's text in mind
with its instructional and evangelizing functions. R. Howard
Bloch's work on misogyny in medieval literature begins the
analysis of the manner in which authors shape literature for
specific purposes and how literature becomes the proponent and
champion of various social structures and genders and
conceptions.[24] Leonard Boyle's work concerning the Summa for
confessors as a genre[25] and Emero Stiegman's study of the
literary genre in Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermones super Cantica
canticorum reflect the reality of definite literary styles in
religious writing which permeated medieval literature.[26]
Moreover, as Robert Sweetman has demonstrated, medieval visionary
literature may have been instructive in nature and may have been
a variant on the popular style of medieval preaching.[27]

Finally, recent work in feminist scholarship and women's
studies has done much to illuminate the religious context of
medieval mysticism. Caroline Walker Bynum must be recognized as

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[24]R. Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny. Woman as Riot,"
Representations, 20 (1987):1-24.

[25]Leonard E. Boyle, "The Summa for Confessors as a Genre, and
its Religious Intent" in The Pursuit of Holiness in Late
Medieval and Renaissance Religion (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974:126-
130.)

[26]Emero Stiegman, "The Literary Genre of Bernard of Clairvaux's
Sermones super Cantica canticorum" in Simplicity and Ordinariness
(Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980.)

[27]Robert Sweetman, "Christine of Saint-Trond's Preaching
Apostolate: Thomas of Cantimpré's Hagiographical Method Revisited,"
Vox Benedictina 9, 1 (Summer 1992):67-97.

a leading scholar in this field. Her work on women mystics and eucharistic devotion, the significance of food to religious women and the body of Christ in late medieval devotion attests to the innovation and originality of her scholarship.[28] Judith Brown's work on lesbian sexuality and John Boswell's study of homosexualities in the Middle Ages broadens the perspectives of sexual activity which has been examined.[29] Sharon Farmer's study of women and the female voice in persuasion in the thirteenth century expands the researcher's understanding of the gendered nature of the medieval text and the manner in which medieval clerics interacted with the written and spoken word.[30] Jane Schulenburg looks at sacrificial mutilation among religious women in the Middle Ages. Sherry Ortner theoretically discusses the binary opposites of male and female in philosophical terms in

[28]Caroline Walker Bynum, "Introduction:The Complexity of Symbols" in Gender and Religion:On the Complexity of Symbols, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg" in Fragmentation and Redemption, (New York: Zone Books, 1991:79-118) and "Women Mystics and Eucharistic Devotion in the Thirteenth Century," Women's Studies 11, no 1-2 (1984):179-214.

[29]Judith C. Brown, "Lesbian Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Europe" in Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past (New York: A Meridian Book, 1989:174-86) and John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.)

[30]Sharon A. Farmer, "Softening the Hearts of Men: Woman, Embodiment, and Persuasion in the Thirteenth Century" in Embodied Love Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987:115-134.)

the medieval period.[31]   Richard Kieckhefer has begun the

difficult task of deconstructing the culture of devotion of late

medieval male saints, carefully using feminist theory to reveal

the dynamics of the edification of male saints.[32]   The recent

surge in scholarship concerning the medieval religious heritage

invites the contemporary scholar to look again at the existing

texts for new insights.

The Visio monachi de Eynsham, however much a product of the

heritage of medieval visionary literature, reflects a decisive

movement toward instruction in its style and focus.   The vision,

like sermons and preaching, functions to educate and guide the

listeners to lead a holy mode of life.   In the case of the Visio,

Edmund urges his audience to accept penance and confession as

prerequisites to salvation.   The text admonishes sinners and

deftly describes the consequences of sin through its discussion

of the purgative nature of the afterlife.

The Visio monachi de Eynsham is androcentric in its focus

and instruction.   The text is gendered.   The vision was

constructed to reflect the needs of men in religious life and

reflects male conceptions of medieval society and religious

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[31]Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "The Heroics of Virginity: Brides
of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation" in Women in the Middle Ages
and the Renaissance (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986) and
Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" in
Woman, Culture, and Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press,
1974:67-88.)

[32]Richard Kieckhefer, "Holiness and the Culture of Devotion:
Remarks on Some Late Medieval Male Saints" in Images of Sainthood
in Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991:288-
305.)

culture. This gendering of the text is purposeful since Edmund aims his treatise specifically at the members of his monastic community. Furthermore, the text was shaped by male perceptions of social interactions and appropriate retribution. The _Visio monachi de Eynsham_ is important because it represents a clear example of the androcentric nature of clerical religious literature and reveals certain aspects of a monastic masculinity or masculinities.

Joan Scott views gender as a way of referring to the social organization of the relationship between the sexes.[33] This statement will serve to initiate a discussion of the gendering of Edmund's text. The vision reflects the distinctions of gender in social organization through its androcentric focus, based in the reality, the lived experiences, of the different sexes. The literary nature of the text further complicates the explanation of its gendered nature. Post-structuralists emphasize the centrality of language in communicating, interpreting and representing gender. Language, according to post-structuralists, does not mean words but systems of meaning--symbolic orders-- that precede the actual mastery of speech. Edmund's text is informed by his language, which shapes the direction and focus of his argument. Lacan argues that gendered identity is constructed through language. Language, and in this case the written word, can in turn serve to re-enforce those identities. The categories

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[33]Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," _American Historical Review_ vol 91, no 5, (December, 1986), 1053.

of "man" and "woman", however, are problematic since masculine
and feminine are not inherent characteristics but subjective
constructs.[34] This fluidity allows Edmund to shape his vision
to make it specifically accessible to his monastic audience.
Moreover, Edmund's construction of monastic masculinities, or
perhaps more accurately the aspects of monastic masculinity which
are revealed through Edmund's vision, depends on his ability to
utilize the fluid nature of gender in order to create systems of
male and female in his account of Purgatory.

To pursue meaning, one needs to deal with the individual
subject as well as the social organization and to articulate the
nature of their relationship.[35] Here Edmund's text reflects
both his personal inclination and the nature of monastic life in
the twelfth century. This relationship between Edmund and the
constraints of his monastic community necessitates a historical
examination of the text for its traces of social commentary,
theological and scriptural meanings and the parameters imposed by
the genre of visionary literature itself. The Visio monachi de
Evnsham was designed to give power to the monastics in its
audience. The knowledge imparted by the text enabled those
monastics to more fully pursue salvation.

Gender is a primary field within which or by means of which
power is articulated.[36] Indeed, gender becomes implicated in

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[34]Ibid, 1062, 1063, 1064.

[35]Ibid, 1067.

[36]Ibid, 1069.

the conception and construction of power itself. Attention to
gender is often not explicit, but it is nonetheless a crucial
part of the organization of equality or inequality.[37] The _Visio_
monachi de Eynsham, through its androcentric focus, signifies the
prevalence of male power in the religious culture. The gendering
of the text embodies in it the power of persuasion and authority.
Its male character lends itself to being accepted as valid and
accountable. In some ways, the gendering of the text is a
fiction which enables it to be promoted within the monastic
community. This "necessary fiction"[38] is requisite for reaching
its male audience and serve to instruct a male ecclesiastical
hierarchy. The alternative would be to construct a text focusing
on women and their agency in striving for salvation. This
gynocentric focus, however, would have been inconceivable given
the contemporary understanding of woman as inferior and more
likely to sin. Woman was inherently an inferior model of a man
and to the medieval mind a gynocentric focus was definitionally
inferior to an androcentric viewpoint. Consequently, the
gendering of text as male became almost a ritualized practice in
medieval religious writing.[39]

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[37]_Ibid_, 1073.

[38]See Jeffery Weeks, "Foucault for Historians," _History_
Workshop vol 14 (1982):106-119.

[39]Medieval authors wrote for selective audiences and often with
a clear intention to instruct. Men wrote for other men, especially
if the authors were also clerics. For a more detailed discussion
of this gendered orientation in medieval literature, see R. Howard
Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny. Woman as Riot," _Representations_, 20
(1987):1-24.

Ritual is the medium which, by symbolizing these social
divisions, transforms them into concepts and in so doing
reciprocally creates them.[40]   Ritual is essential not merely to
give birth to categories, but also to maintain them, so that
society can conceptualize itself and the world.[41]   This process
is an essential function that religion performs.   Edmund's
religious environment would have profoundly influenced how he
viewed the gendered relationships in medieval society and the
manner in which his immersion in religious culture reinforced
these distinctions.   Religion performs its essential functions of
establishing conceptual thought for men only.[42]   This
conceptualization is the basis for the gendering of Edmund's
text.   Edmund can only conceive of Purgatory and its nature in
male terms and consequently would structure his discussion to
enable a male-conceived, male-represented understanding of the
expiation of sins.   Social institutions shape contemporary
thought[43] and Edmund was deeply influenced by the tradition of
male dominance in the religious culture in his composition of the
vision.

The Visio monachi de Eynsham is first and foremost a piece
of literature informed by its historical context.   But if one

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[40]Nancy Jay, "Gender and Dichotomy," Feminist Studies, vol 7,
no 1, (Spring, 1981), 39.

[41]Ibid, 39.

[42]Ibid, 40.

[43]Ibid, 43.

sees language not as a reflection of the world but as
constitutive of that world, that is, as generative rather than
mimetic,[44] then the gendering of Edmund's text takes on new
importance. It is to the construction of social meaning that the
exercise of literature is directed.[45] The vision, then, aims at
giving meaning to the notion of Purgatory. But to view language
as constituting impersonal codes governing individual expression
radically disturbs traditional notions of the author as a centred
subject.[46] Edmund was incidental to the construction of the
text in that the codes governing expression dictated the ways in
which he expressed his understanding of Purgatory. Although
Edmund centred and structured his vision for the education of
male monastics and definitely employed certain preaching
techniques to make the text more accessible to his audience, the
text itself supports the symbols and conceptions of a male-
dominated society. Edmund's thinking is constrained by this
gendered way of thinking about society. His text would
necessarily and inescapably be androcentric. The creation of the
Visio monachi de Evnsham, while certainly containing elements of
misogyny,[47] reflects the predominant position of men in the

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[44]Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social
Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," Speculum, vol 65, no 1,
(January 1990), 60.

[45]Ibid, 61.

[46]Ibid, 61.

[47]See R. Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny: Woman as Riot,"
Representations 20 (1987):1-24.

systems of power and the androcentric focus of medieval society in general. An examination of this androcentricism and the various aspects of a monastic masculinity evident in the vision is important. It will provide insight into how medieval clericals saw themselves as men, how this androcentricism affected their relationships with other men and how this environment shaped how they understood and expressed their masculinity.

The intention of this study is to examine the manner in which the Visio monachi de Eynsham was constructed specifically to educate a male audience. The gendering of this text, with its androcentric focus, is an important component of the understanding of the conception of Purgatory in England. Edmund moulded his text to make it accessible to his male monastic audience by employing examples of male sinners, historical and local personages easily identified by his audience and by contrasting the experiences of male and female sinners in order to instruct his fellow monks. The androcentric focus of the vision is worthy of study since it reveals something of the manner in which religion in the Middle Ages was gendered. Indeed, the whole conception of Purgatory might be androcentric, though this topic is beyond the confines of the present study. The discussion, description and explanation of Purgatory, however, is not beyond the scope of this paper. How and to whom this information is presented is important for elucidating the ways in which Purgatory was conceived and for identifying who

gained power from this knowledge.

Chapter Two:

Christian Mysticism and Edmund of Eynsham

No other subject arouses as much speculation, astonishment,
debate and scepticism as the study of mysticism. The phenomenon
of mysticism is difficult to define. Its nature escapes precise
definition. Mystical experience has the ability to encompass
all manifestations of the human spirit while functioning
independently and externally to the self. Further, it attaches
supreme importance to a sense of the immediate presence of the
divine. In attempting to comprehend clearly the intricate and
deeply personal attributes of the mystical experience, certain
methodological problems arise. The study of mysticism will be
plagued by the author's preconceived understanding of the nature
of the divine, personal religious upbringing and the influence of
the scientific and logical nature of the contemporary educational
system.

Often our contemporary world outlook does not include a
notion of the supreme. The supernatural is not the fount from
which answers to human quandaries regularly flow. In fact, our
heavy dependence on the infallibility of science inhibits our
ability to understand a culture in which religious sentiment and
a deeper sense of the immediacy of God in daily life played
critical, indeed indispensable, roles in informing the cultural,
social and spiritual lives of its actors. Mystical union was a

grace-filled moment completely socially accepted and sanctioned. It was not seen as a psychological abnormality. This point is intrinsic to the following study. Indeed, it is necessary to state emphatically the assumptions upon which this paper will be built in order to fully digest the argument.

First, the acknowledgement of a higher spiritual being as existing externally and independently of the recipient of mystical union is essential to the understanding of the development of the personal relationship of the religious with the divine. The scholar must accept that the mystic believes this relationship to be true. The individual and society believed this union to be authentic and we must accept this as a given. The distinction between the world of the natural and supernatural was blurred, thus facilitating the transposition of events and personages inter alia with ease. The mystical experience, however, was necessarily coloured by the psychological, sexual and cultural determinants which informed the mystic's personality. Our ability to recognize the personal attributes in an account of mystical revelation provides the scholar with the essential tools to investigate the sexual expression which is embedded in these texts. The historical and cultural context in which he was formulating his questions and from which he was drawing his answers needs to be explicated. Edmund himself demands animation in our minds. We must engage in a discussion with him in order to gain access to his past.

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Generally, the notion of mysticism denotes an experience of
God as the divine being immediately present to the individual.
Historically, mysticism was connected with the mystery cults of
the Greeks.[1] Conceptually, it is the attitude of mind which " .
. . divines and moves toward the spiritual in the common things
of life, not a partial and occasional operation of the mind under
the guidance of far-fetched analogies."[2] Yet mysticism is more
than a perception of the rational faculties of the mind. Inge
has remarked that of all kinds of human thought, mysticism is
almost always and everywhere the same.[3] A certain commonality
pervades the accounts of mystical union across temporal, cultural
and religious barriers. Everywhere, a mystic is one who
cultivates communion with God, ultimately achieving union with
God.[4] Scholars such as Inge, Underhill and Butler have argued
that the definition of mysticism may be philosophical,
psychological or historical in orientation.[5] A sense of
mysticism as an abstract construct is unhelpful for the purpose
of this study which is not concerned with mystical union

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[1]Margaret Smith, The Way of the Mystics The Early Christian
Mystics and the Rise of the Sufis (New York: Oxford University
Press, 1978), 1.

[2]William Ralph Inge, Studies of English Mystics St. Margaret's
Lectures 1905 (London: John Murray, 1907), 13.

[3]Oliver Davies, God Within The Mystical Tradition of Northern
Europe (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 1.

[4]T. W. Coleman, English Mystics of the Fourteenth Century
(Westport: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1971), 13.

[5]Ibid, 13.

generally but rather with the experiences of Edmund of Eynsham in a specifically Christian context.

The roots of Christian mysticism are found in Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism and Neoplatonism. In these impressive constructions of the human spirit, mental and moral discipline were enlisted for the encouragement of the soul's growth, freedom and vision.[6] Judaism is full of mystical prophets including Abraham, Moses and Ruth. Neoplatonists believed that humans had a special faculty, by the exercise of which one could pass behind the phenomenal world and gain intuitive knowledge of the Absolute.[7] Both philosophical and theological schools of thought contributed to the development of an uniquely Christian mystical theology.

The mystical experience is based in three independent and complementary ideas. First, the soul can see and perceive by a spiritual sense. Second, the soul must be a partaker of the Divine nature in order to know God. Finally, it assumes none can attain a direct knowledge, gnosis, except by purification from self.[8] Self conquest and renunciatory devotion lead most directly to the mystic vision. Most medieval mystics were monastics because monastic life lent itself to the cultivation of

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[6]T. W. Coleman, English Mystics of the Fourteenth Century, 15.

[7]Ibid, 21.

[8]Margaret Smith, The Way of the Mystics The Early Christian Mystics and the Rise of the Sufis, 4-5.

a varied spirituality and institutionalized ascetic discipline.[9]
The mystical state requires renunciation of will, of self, of
control, not submission but a surrendering.[10] The discipline of
the mystic way must be, moreover, not only physical and moral but
also intellectual, since its aim is the Vision.[11] In the via
purgativa, a spiritual journey of purgation and a rejection of
the world, desire is permanently centred on the supreme reality
and thus the soul is delivered over to the divine attraction,
while the basis of the via illuminativa, a spiritual journey of
divine enlightenment, is in the theory of knowledge.[12]

Medieval monastics pursued their spiritual life along both
these paths which were readily available to them. Indeed, the
chief mark of medieval mysticism is an intensification of the
mystical life already destined for or available to all Christians
by the inherent nature of Christianity itself.[13] This peculiar
equipoise of contemplation and action, with its major response to
human need in the name of the Divine, was the primary

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[9]Ray C. Petry, Late Medieval Mysticism (London: SCM Press
Limited, 1957), 19.

[10]See Auguste Saudreau, Les Degrès de la Vie spirituelle.
Méthode pour diriger les âmes suivant leur progrès dans la vertu
(Angers: Imp. G. Grassin, Richou Frères, Editeurs, 1920), 22 for
explication.

[11]H. Flanders Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its
Consummation in the Divine Comedy (New York: Russell & Russell,
1961), 345.

[12]Ibid, 347-348.

[13]M. F. Wakelin, "English Mysticism and the English Homiletic
Tradition" in The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter
Symposium, July 1980 (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980), 40.

characteristic of medieval mysticism.[14] The spirit of God and

the mystic's spirit are always mingled in the union.[15]

Consequently, Christian mysticism is highly personal. The

resulting vision must include traces of the individual persona of

the mystic which inform the expression which the revelation will

take. From the unspeakable vision, the mystic returns to the

accomplishment of a divine mission among humankind.[16] This

outward seeking nature of the mystical experience found special

relevance and fluency during the medieval period. Edmund was

caught up in the religious fervour and trends of twelfth-century

England and thus reflected the socio-religious milieu in which he

dictated his vision.

The explosive spiritual awakening which characterized the

twelfth and thirteenth centuries may be recognized as one of the

high periods in Christian mystical experience, theology and

vision. It was an age in search of vision amid radical change.

This period has become synonymous with an heightened awareness of

the individual.[17] This individualism spilled over into the

[14]Ray C. Petry, Late Medieval Mysticism, 22.

[15]A. B. Sharpe, Mysticism: Its True Nature and Value (London: Sands & Company, 1910), 120.

[16]H. Flanders Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy, 371.

[17]Rufus M. Jones, The Flowering of Mysticism The Friends of God in the Fourteenth Century (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), 18. Important work has been done on the rise and development of a notion of individualism in the twelfth century. This development would have profound influence on the pietistic and religious expression of medieval society. Indeed, the mystical union itself encapsulates only the individual. Often these

comprehension of the divine reality.[18] Christocentric

spirituality is a medieval phenomenon which coincided with the

emergence of the notion of the individual. Its romantic and

intensely erotic nature had a powerful influence during the

twelfth and following centuries.[19] It was an age of exploration

of doubt and despair; simple faith no longer possessed universal

quality.[20] The individual was more personally involved in the

exploration of the divine. Theological interest was more

widespread in a culture which was becoming increasing

theologically conditioned.[21] The twelfth century was the

turning point in the history of many of the practices that shaped

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experiences were brought to the community as a whole but the
experience was deeply personal and singular. For a more detailed
discussion of the implications of individualism on medieval piety,
see Caroline Walker Bynum's works Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An
Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality (Missoula: Scholars Press,
1979) and "'Discovery of the Individual' or 'Discovery of Self'?"
in Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle
Ages (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 85-90.
See also Colin Morris, "Individualism in Twelfth-Century Religion.
Some Further Reflections," The Journal of Ecclesiastical History,
vol 31, no 2, (April 1980):195-206.

[18] For an examination of the relationship of the individual with
the afterlife, see Aaron Gurevich, "Perceptions of the Individual
and the hereafter in the Middle Ages" in Historical Anthropology of
the Middle Ages (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992),
65-89.

[19] Oliver Davies, God Within The Mystical Tradition of Northern
Europe, 2.

[20] Christopher Brooke, The Twelfth Century Renaissance (Norwich:
Jarold and Sons, Ltd., 1970), 20.

[21] Ibid, 21.

the daily lives of believers.[22] The popularization of religious practices carried with it the emphatic interest in humanity for its own worth and for its own sake.[23] This bold and daring principle stressed the direct approach to God by the inward pathway.

The twelfth century, however, resplendent in the cloak of religious fervour, also was an age of codification, expansion and scientific exploration. The literary expression of the mystical vision takes the colour, mood, philosophical climate and coinage of language current in this period.[24] Edmund's *Visio monachi de Evnsham* in 1196 reflects this manner of literary expression. Edmund, like the scholars and religious of the twelfth century, confronted the sensual, natural world in which he lived.[25] These thinkers perceived the universe as an entity within which a symbiotic relationship of natural phenomena and the mystic self was requisite for a complete understanding of the complexity of the universe.[26]

Philosophy mingled with theology in aiding these monastics

[22]Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, eds., *Christian Spirituality Origins to the Twelfth Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), 195.

[23]Rufus M. Jones, *The Flowering of Mysticism The Friends of God in the Fourteenth Century* (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1971), 18.

[24]*Ibid*, 25.

[25]M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 5.

[26]*Ibid*, 6.

to discover the truth of the mystical union. A powerful stream of French mysticism emerged in the twelfth century focused around the abbeys of Clairvaux and St Victor in Paris. This mysticism was inspired by the Gospel of John and the Song of Songs. Bernard of Clairvaux preached eighty-six sermons on the Song of Songs and the two great Victorines, Hugh (1037-1141) and Richard (d. 1173) wrote treatises on natural phenomena and the mystic path.[27] The overriding theme of medieval mysticism was its diversity and complexity; numerous paths offered a route to divine enlightenment. The medieval custom of severe forms of mortification spawned the development of a kind of mysticism called Brautmystik (bride or nuptial mysticism) which Bernard of Clairvaux's commentary on the Song of Songs influenced.[28] Wesensmystik (from wesen, essence or inner nature) emerged from the Plotinian conception of the flight of the alone to the Alone. This shedding of self, called apophatic spirituality or _via negativa_, had a profound influence on the twelfth-century

[27]Rufus M. Jones, The Flowering of Mysticism The Friends of God in the Fourteenth Century, 40-41. For further information on Bernard of Clairvaux see, for example, Etienne Gilson's The Mystical Theology of Saint Bernard (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990) and James I. Wimsatt, "St. Bernard, the Canticle of Canticles, and Mystical Poetry" in An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe (Albany: State University of New York, 1984); for Hugh and Richard of St. Victor see, for example, D. H. Salman "Some Psychological Dimensions of the Contemplative Community" in Contemplative Community (Washington: Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1972) and Evelyn Underhill, The Mystics of the Church (London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, date unknown).

[28]Oliver Davies, God Within The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe, 2.

mystics.[29] Intellectual mysticism, originally explicated by Plato, emerged in the Middle Ages from the thought of Plotinus and Origen. Love mysticism emerged through the fourth-century Cappadocian Father, St Gregory of Nyssa. The writings of Dionysius the Areopagite were perhaps the maturest form of Neoplatonism.[30] Clearly, amid this blur of theological expressions of the same phenomenon, the twelfth century witnessed an explosion of interest in the mystical state. Although these theological and philosophical elements will be discussed more fully later, it is important to recognize that the twelfth century was an era of explosive questioning and that Edmund was caught up in it.

The theology of the medieval schools from the twelfth century on reflect the influence of Aristotle.[31] Hugh of St Victor in Paris may be cited as a prime example of the outpouring of intellectual ferment which so informed mystical theology. Philosophy, for Hugh, is the investigation of the rationes of things human and divine, seeking the final wisdom, which is knowledge of the primaeva ratio.[32] The world in its truest reality is a symbol, a path to knowledge through the activities

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[29]Ibid, 3.

[30]Rufus M. Jones, The Flowering of Mysticism The Friends of God in the Fourteenth Century, 33.

[31]Oliver Davies, God Within The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe, 19.

[32]Henry Osborn Taylor, The Mediaeval Mind. A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages, volume two (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), 387.

of cogitatio, meditatio and contemplatio. Hugh classifies
sciences in the usual Aristotelian way and shows that Christian
theology is the end of all philosophy. He emphasizes the
limitations of the intellect and ardently recognizes the heart's
yearnings and immediacy of the mind perceiving itself as a
conscious agent.[33] The mystic spirit became an essential part
of all piety or religion which relates always to the rationally
unknown and therefore mysterious.

The contemporary education reinforced the pursuit of the
mystical union. As the constructive imagination works, the
intellectual faculty is illuminated and impelled by emotions to
pursue truth.[34] The symbolism and allegorical interpretation of
these mystical visions were obviously apologetic when confronted
with the increasing preponderance of logic in academic
argumentation. This allegorical style however became part of the
very spirit of the medieval time. It functioned as the universal
vehicle for pious expression, at once co-extended with all
medieval piety. Hugh of St Victor's De sacramentis, hailed as a
monumental intellectual achievement, showed the balance of
intellectual and pietistic interests and the Platonic quality of
the mind's sure sense of the reality of the super-sensual.[35]
The educational world was at once grappling with the reality of
the spiritual and theological tradition in which it was based

[33]Ibid, 393.

[34]Ibid, 394.

[35]Ibid, 395.

while responding to the new learning in logic and ethics arriving
from the East.

The medieval church at this time was also colourful and
dynamic. The multi-hued pluralism of the early medieval period
absorbed all manner of non-Christian practices and thoughts into
the institutional church. These years saw the Concordat of Worms
(1122) which augmented the power of the papacy and was gorged on
the passionate rhetoric calling for the Crusades. The Cluniac
movement allowed for monastic reform, a revitalization of
liturgical life and a more cohesive and regularized monastic
life.[36] The dominant ideal of the monastic world was personal
sanctification through asceticism, prayer and monastic obedience
within the context of community life.[37] This selfsame church,
in flux, chaotic, passionate, vibrant, affirmed the congregation
of several ideas and schools of thought into a uniquely Catholic
mystical theology.

Contemplation is the central term and concept of mystical
theology. The theology of contemplation originated from the
convergence of various philosophical and theological thinkers.
Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus speculated on yearning of the human
soul to return to Nous (Mind) from whence it had come and to
contemplate with Nous, the Mind itself, exemplar of life and

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[36]Oliver Davies, God Within The Mystical Tradition of Northern
Europe, 8.

[37]Ibid, 11.

truth and being.[38] As early as the third century, Origen
attested to the superiority of the life of contemplation.
Augustine discussed the relationship between the active and
contemplative lives in his sermons. Indeed, this issue became
the locus classicus of his commentary on the Gospel of John.[39]

The Neoplatonic teachings of Dionysius the Areopagite
accentuated the stages in the ladder of denial to be climbed by
the soul in its ascent to God. All these systems show the
ambiguity of "being," built upon the Plotinian model. "Being,"
or the realization of authentic or self-identified "being," came
to be understood through the process of complete self-denial and
degradation while, at the same time, sensing acutely this process
of denigration. The works of Dionysius were influential with the
Cistercians and Victorines. Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermons on
the Canticle and Richard of St Victor's Benjamin Major and, more
importantly, his Benjamin Minor became classics in every library,
blending the thoughts of Augustine and Dionysius. All systems
were founded in renunciation and mortification. Asceticism
played a formative role in shaping the religious life of this
era. Moreover, this severe discipline may have been essential to
the mystical experience.

The upper reaches of spiritual life, including "infused
contemplation," contemplation during which the divine fills to

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[38]David Knowles, The English Mystical Tradition (London: Burns
& Oates, Limited, 1961), 22.

[39]Ibid, 28.

soul of the mystic and imparts truths, lie in the normal progress
of the Christian in the ascent to God. Ascetic theology
concentrates on the early stages of Christian living while
mystical theology is concerned with the final stages of the
normal progress of the disciplined soul to sanctity.[40] Although
closely linked, asceticism is an active choice of the individual.
Mysticism tends to be more passive in nature. An objective
attitude toward spiritual life was predominant throughout the
Middle Ages[41] but another current more personal, perhaps more
individualistic, appears, most notably, in Bernard of Clairvaux
as well as in the Victorines and the Franciscans.[42] Strict
asceticism facilitated a personal questing for God through its
rigorous self-denial and discipline of the will and desire. The
ascetic quality of monastic spirituality in the medieval period
profoundly informed the expression and consequences of life in a
cloistered, single sex, religious community.

Benedictine spirituality was influenced by the cloistered,
single sex mode of life. The monastic regimen was instrumental
in shaping, regulating and guiding the spiritual lives of the

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[40]Conrad Pepler, The English Religious Heritage (St. Louis: B.
Herder Book Co., 1958), 5.

[41]For the division of the spiritual life between the object
attitude of natural ascension to God and the mystical
transformation of the soul through a super-sensual union, see
Dionysius the Areopagite Celestial Hierarchies, iii, 2; St.
Augustine De Ordine, i, 2, Confessions, i, 13; St. Gregory Moralia,
I, 24, 7; St. Bernard Canticles, Sermons 3,4; Hugh of St. Victor De
Gradibus Caritatis; St. Bonaventure Pharetra, i, I.

[42]Conrad Pepler, The English Religious Heritage, 7.

religious.[43]   The Benedictine spirituality was above all else

practical, concentrating on the opus Dei as its principal

work.[44]   Following the systematization of the theory of the

ascent during the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the

Benedictines were caught up in the tide of the ascetic and

mystical flowering of the twelfth century.[45]   Important

Benedictine centres, including Cluny and Citeaux, felt the

questing of the spirit and from such centres a subtle symbolic

mysticism emerged.[46]   This mysticism was considered a grace from

God and had miraculous consequences.

This era was indeed aware, expectant and susceptible to

miracles.   Gerald of Wales believed that one could find miracles

and wonders inherent within nature as created by God.[47]   By the

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[43]A more detailed analysis of the structure, regulation and liturgical lives of monastics in the Middle Ages would help in clarifying the very austere, disciplined routines which filled each day. Of particular interest for this paper is the treatment of penance and abbatial rule in the monasteries. For an excellent study of this issue see David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.)

[44]Félix Vernet, La spiritualité médiévale (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1929), 7.

[45]Ibid, 10. Benedictine authors who investigated the spiritual or mystic quest were numerous and influential in shaping the spirituality of their co-religious. Such scholars include Peter Damien (d.1072), Othlon of Ratisbonne (d.1080), Anslem of Canterbury (d. 1090), Peter of Celle (d. 1183), Edbert of Schönau (d. 1185), Elisabeth of Schönau (d. 1165), Hildegarde of Bingen (d. 1179), Hervé de Déols (d. 1150) and Jean Sarrazin (d. 1180), principal translator of Dionysius the Areopagite.

[46]Pierre Pourrat, Christian Spirituality in the Middle Ages (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1953), 4.

[47]Benedicta Ward, Miracles and the Medieval Mind Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215 (London: Scholar Press, 1982), 7.

twelfth century, writers had made the distinction between
miracles and magic. Yet the magical arts continued in the
twelfth century and onwards as witnessed by the penitentials.[48]
Dreams could be prophetic. The Eucharist was a mystery made more
personal and spiritual through the miracle of transubstantiation.
In fact, Edmund stated that he had seen the host transformed into
the aspect of a boy.[49] Adam, Edmund of Eynsham's brother and
the official biographer of St Hugh of Lincoln, often said that
Hugh saw a beautiful child between his hands at consecration.[50]
Even more astonishing, cures were regularly affected in Oxford.
The cult of St Frideswide grew up around these miraculous cures
and the nearby people of Eynsham were known to have regularly
made the pilgrimage in hopes of receiving favour.[51]

Thus was the religious, social and cultural environment in
which Edmund lived. It was chaotic, passionate, complex and
dense. This milieu formed the cradle of Edmund's perceptions of
himself, his surroundings, social position and relationship to
God. Edmund of Eynsham must not, however, be relegated to the
margin amid the recollections and events. He was a man who
struggled with and nursed the society in which he lived.

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[48]Ibid, 10.

[49]Adam of Eynsham, <u>Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis</u>, volume two (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1962), 85-88.

[50]Benedicta Ward, <u>Miracles and the Medieval Mind</u>, 17.

[51]Ibid, 87.

In the twelfth century, the Benedictine Abbey of Eynsham in Oxfordshire was under the right of patronage of the Bishop of Lincoln. This Anglo-Saxon community of Benedictines was made famous by Aelfric, philosopher, theologian and teacher.[52] The abbey was re-founded by Remigius in 1036, the first Bishop of Lincoln.[53] The brethren were transferred to Stow in Lincolnshire and then sent back to Eynsham, finally settling down to a quiet and relatively uneventful existence.[54] In 1189, Roger Norreys was appointed Abbot of Eynsham, without canonical election, by Archbishop Baldwin and King Richard of England after having been deposed from the priorship at Canterbury.[55] Roger, however, was unfit for the position or for any spiritual office since he adored wealth and power and was motivated by greed and self-interest. Thomas de Marleberge records that Roger maintained that the king gave him the position for services rendered without ever outlining the details of these services. Baldwin left England 6 March 1190 for Crusade, having blessed Roger on 13 January 1190.[56] Roger consequently became abbot at

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[52]Aelfric of Eynsham and his teachings will receive greater attention in the section concerning the philosophical and theological precepts which informed Edmund's thoughts. Aelfric was perhaps the most famous son of Eynsham before its dispersal. See the following discussion.

[53]Decima L. Douie and Hugh Farmer, eds., "Introduction," Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis, ix.

[54]Ibid, ix.

[55]David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 331.

[56]Ibid, 332.

Eynsham.

The brothers, however, did not accept this appointment. In 1188 the monks at Eynsham had confined Roger for abuses against the abbey while he was treasurer at Christ Church. Roger had escaped in March of that year to become the enemy of his former brothers. Then in 1190, Roger became their abbot despite the monks' hatred for him. His cruelty, extravagance and mismanagement led to a deterioration of the abbey. The monks sought redress for their grievances with the authorities. Meanwhile, Abbot Roger had befriended Geoffrey fitzPeter, the Justiciar of the See of Worcester. Worcester changed hands three times between 1190-1196 resulting in instability and corruption. The monks had no court of appeal since they desired to be exempt from taxation. Consequently, they could not appeal to the Ordinary nor could they appeal to King Richard who was on Crusade. Finally, in 1195-1196, the monks appealed to Hubert Walter, Bishop of Worcester (1196-1198), to rid them of Roger. Abbot Roger avoided punitive measures by relinquishing his use of the pontificalia (the symbolic priestly dress of authority) but he remained the head of Eynsham.[57] Edmund lived in this strife-filled world at Eynsham and, in the same year as Hubert Walter's elevation to the see, he had his vision of purgatory.

The events of Edmund's life are recorded in the meticulous writings of his brother, Adam. Edmund, Adam and another brother called Willelmus de Oxonia belonged to an Oxford burgher family

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[57]Ibid, 334.

of some considerable wealth. Their father, Edmundus Medicus, owned property in Oxfordshire and later died in the Holy Land between 1185 and 1190.[58] Edmund was a student at Oxford and then entered the Abbey of Eynsham as a novice to devote his life to the monastic order. Little else is known about Edmund's life, especially the period after the 1196 Visio, although another earlier visionary experience was also recorded.[59] Adam, Edmund's chronicler, notes that the abbey numbered about thirty monks in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. Adam became abbot of Eynsham in 1213 and was deposed in 1228.[60] He recorded Edmund's celebrated Visio monachi de Eynsham and later made the vision public with the approval of St Hugh of

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[58]Decima L. Douie and Hugh Farmer, eds., "Introduction," Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis, viii.

[59]Although the details of the life of Edmund are sketchy, there has been some speculation about his true identity. In an article by Herbert Thurston entitled "A Conjectural Chapter in the Life of St. Edmund of Canterbury," The Dublin Review (October 1904):229-257. Thurston proposes that Edmund of Eynsham and St. Edmund of Canterbury are the same individual. The author cites various factors which he believes support his claim. He argues that they were the same age, being born in 1170, came from the same neighbourhood, both were familiar with Eynsham, both were clerics but not in holy orders and both had dead fathers. These characteristics may be common to the age and not the individual. But Thurston continues to demonstrate that they both had an university education in England and abroad, were keenly interested in the recovery of the Holy Land and had the practice of reciting the entire psalter. This practice, however, was quite common in the Middle Ages.

[60]Ernest J. Becker, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of the Medieval Visions of Heaven of Hell, with Special Reference to the Middle-English Versions (Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1899), 94.

Lincoln.[61]

Edmund's early propensity for mystical experience is found in his regular liturgical celebration and worship. His mystical experiences were found in the ordinary ritual of the Mass and did not require exceptional circumstances. Like many other mystics, including Hildegard of Bingen, Edmund had mystical experiences during the ritual of the Mass. The sacredness of the liturgy and the real presence during the Eucharist were cause enough for rapture.

The Visio monachi de Eynsham occurred from Holy Thursday to Easter Eve, 1196.[62] Edmund fell into a trance and remained in this condition for two days. During the course of his trance, he was visited by a spiritual being who beckoned to him. The guide was an old man, clad in white, who was later revealed as St Nicholas. Together, they travel toward the East. The East, in medieval lore, suggested Jerusalem and the holy places of the New and Old Testament and ultimately heaven. First, they see a horrible plain upon which there are numerous souls, tormented according to the nature of their crimes, yet all hoping for salvation. Edmund asks St Nicholas the name of this place, which the saint identifies as the First Purgatory. Next, they arrived in a deep valley hemmed in by rocks. At the centre of the valley

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[61]Decima L. Douie and Hugh Farmer, eds., "Introduction," Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis, ix.

[62]Ernest J. Becker, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of the Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell, with Special Reference to the Middle-English Versions, 94. This date is confirmed in Matthew Paris' Chronica Major, Rolls, Ser II, p. 243 ff.

is a lake which bubbles with fetid odours. On the surrounding
mountains fires burn. Souls are plunged into the lake, then into
the fire, then thrown into the air and finally onto the rocks.
There, they are beaten with snow, hail and wind. The souls are
gathered together for punishment according to their sins. St.
Nicholas identifies this locale as the Second Purgatory. Edmund
continues to gaze upon the scene which then transforms itself
into an immense, horrible plain upon which reptiles feed on the
miserable souls with their pincers. Here, the perpetrators of
crimes against nature are tormented and left to be judged on
Judgement Day. Finally, Edmund enters the Abode of the Blessed in
which everyone is clad in white. This area is heaven itself
characterized by a wall of crystal. After this last revelation,
Edmund awakes in the chapter house and begins slowly to relate
what he has seen to his brothers, although not without some
coaxing.[63]

The Visio monachi de Evnsham draws heavily upon the
literature of purgatorial visions, despite its apparent
originality. The Visio contains some unique additions which are
absent from earlier medieval visions. There are, however, many
similarities between this Visio monachi de Evnsham and earlier
accounts of the afterworld. The Vision of Drihthelm, recorded by
Bede, is followed more closely than any other. The Vision of

    [63]For a complementary summary of the vision see Ernest J.
Becker, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of the Medieval
Visions of Heaven and Hell, with Special Reference to the Middle-
English Versions, 94-95.

Drihthelm possesses the common characteristics of a medieval
visionary work. Furthermore, it links the continental stories
with those of English provenance.[64] It specifically mentions
purgatory as a place of probation, distinguished from hell.[65]

In the Vision of Drihthelm, a handsome man in a shining robe
was the guide to a deep valley filled with raging hail and bitter
snows. The souls were tormented and thrown from side to side.
After passing through a nocturnal and solitary gloom, the pilgrim
saw a dim, dark pit from which flames spewed and emitted an
indescribable stench of burning souls. There was a hideous and
desperate lamentation of the souls and devils threatened the
souls with glowing tongs. Finally, the pilgrim was led to a
clear bright light where he saw a tremendous wall of infinite
length and height. There the pilgrim learned from the guide that
the first place was for souls to be punished who failed to amend
their ways, the second place for eternal torment and the last for
those who did good and received immediate entry to Heaven. The
parallels with the Visio monachi de Eynsham are clear. Indeed,
the editors have suggested that Edmund may have read Bede and
would consequently have been influenced by his narrative.

The influence of other visions is apparent as well. The
Vision of Tundale (1149) is the best known and most elaborate of

[64]Ernest J. Becker, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of
the Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell, with Special Reference to
the Middle-English Versions, 52.

[65]The Vision of Drihthelm is related in Book V, chp. 12 of the
Ecclesiastical History of Bede, 290-292, also in V, 13 and V, 14.

the medieval visions.[66] The tearing of flesh is reminiscent of
the Vision of Tundale, section eight.[67] The wall of crystal is
inspired by the Book of Enoch, XIV, 10, perhaps through the
Vision of Tundale, sections 16;20.[68] This account details the
wall of crystal surrounded by tongues of fire and the house of
crystal behind the wall. The house was as hot as fire and as
cold as ice and in the palace of God there was a great fire amid
the splendour of the throne of crystal. The raiment shone more
brightly than the sun and was whiter than snow. Flaming fire was
around the Great Glory and great fire stood before him.

Finally, the torment according to the nature of the crime is
found in both the Vision of Paul[69] and the Revelation of Peter[70]
written in the early third and fourth centuries respectively.
The latter is a vision of the torments of the wicked, in which
various classes of sinners were represented as punished in a
manner suitable to their offenses. The influence of the

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[66]This vision is found in Vincent de Beauvais' Speculum
Historiale, B, XXVIII, chp. 88;3 and Edmond Martene, Thesaurus
Novus Anecdotorum, I, col. 490 (1717).

[67]Ernest J. Becker, A Contribution to the Comparative Study of
the Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell, with Special Reference to
the Middle-English Versions, 96.

[68]The Book of Enoch is explicated by R. H. Charles, The Book
of Enoch or 1 Enoch, XIV, 10, 33-38, verses 9-25.

[69]The extant version described by Augustine of the Vision of
Paul is found in Jean Paul Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus
series latina, XXXV, col. 188.

[70]The Revelation of Peter is detailed in Montague Rhodes James,
"The Revelation of Peter. A Lecture on the Newly Recovered
Fragment" in The Gospel According to Peter, and the Revelation of
Peter (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1892), 40, 45-49; 51.

Apocalypse of Paul can be found in almost all late medieval

visions including the Divina Commedia of Dante. This apocryphal

book is mentioned in list by Nicephorus (c. 850 A.D.) while

writing at Jerusalem. In Palestine, in the fifth century, it was

still read on Good Friday in church. There is no doubt that it

was popular, though its popularity seems to have been confined to

the less educated Christians. Here, too, two men are before the

Lord facing East where all is whiter than the snow and redder

than a rose. There was chastisement in the dark, including being

hung by the tongue for blasphemers. A great lake full of flaming

mire, pitch, and blood was the destination for men and women

hurled down from a great cliff for their sins.[71] Dante is

himself an excellent exemplar of this genre of vision and appears

to have utilized the Revelation of Peter in composing his Divine

Comedy.

The Visio monachi de Evnsham represents the infancy of the

acceptance of the doctrine of Purgatory in England. Under the

patronage of Hugh of Lincoln, the vision was circulated widely

across England and its popularity was immediate. The vision was

popular by the time of its translation into English because it

had enduring themes which were still relevant in the late

fifteenth century. The historical significance of the revelation

lies in the light it throws upon the religious life and problems

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[71]For more information, consult Montague Rhodes James, "The Revelation of Peter. A Lecture on the Newly Recovered Fragment" in The Gospel According to Peter, and the Revelation of Peter (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1892).

of the twelfth century, a period dominated by the political conflicts between the powers spiritual and temporal.[72] Despite his scathing denunciation of the corruption of the religious community and its demoralizing effect on the laity, Edmund delays passing judgement on the inherent good and necessity of the Christian Church.[73] Yet the vision's popularity was immediate.

The _Visio_ remained popular throughout the next three centuries. The original manuscript, no longer extant, was written in 1196 in the reign of Richard Lion Heart.[74] The translation into English by William of Machlinia on the Continent in 1482 witnesses the vision's enduring popularity with the laity. It was one of Machlinia's manuscripts that found its way from the library of King Henry VII to the British Museum.[75]

Thus the vision had broad popular appeal. The vision satisfied the same need in the medieval mind as the instructive morality plays of the time. These morality plays enacted the tortures and suffering of Hell in order to educate the audiences in the nature of the afterlife and redemption from sins. Art reflected this preoccupation with the nature of Hell and eternal suffering.

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[72]Valerian Paget, _The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham Abbey_, 8.

[73]_Ibid_, 9.

[74]_Ibid_, 19.

[75]_Ibid_, 19.

Like Dante in his Divina Commedia, a century later, this
English Dante,[76] this English author who writes to instruct the
soul through a discussion of the pains of the afterlife, sketches
out the topography or map of the other world.[77] Edmund's
speculation on the nature of Purgatory is noteworthy since it was
not until 1438, at the Council of Florence, that the concept of
Purgatory as an item of faith was approved and officially
incorporated in the Roman Catholic faith.   The Visio monachi de
Eynsham was influential in disseminating the notion of Purgatory
in England. The English translation (1492) has several
noteworthy features. The syntax reflects an attempt to make the
work more approachable. Its language is common and contemporary.
It evokes a specific mood, using motifs common in the English
countryside to aid in explaining its ideas. It reads quickly
without losing its impact and the prose is personal and inviting.
The clarity of Edmund's voice invites the reader to engage with
the work and be instructed. Edmund's familiarity with the souls
in Purgatory, most of whom he knew while they were living in
Oxfordshire, even in his childhood, lends to the text a sense of
a diary, a personal reminiscence about the fate of one's

[76]For a discussion of the purgatorial literature before Dante,
see Aaron Gurevich, "The Divine Comedy before Dante" in Medieval
Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1988), 104-152.

[77]Ibid, 22. For a discussion of the development of a specific
topography of Purgatory, see Jacques Le Goff, The Birth of
Purgatory (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) and Le
Goff's "The Time of Purgatory" and "Gesture in Purgatory" in The
Medieval Imagination (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,
1985:67-77, 86-92.)

childhood friends. For combined grandeur and majesty of spiritual prose, it is hard to find anywhere an equal to the concluding pages of the Revelation which are devoted to the description of Paradise.[78]

Moreover, Edmund's vision would have had a significant impact on his audience when it was read aloud in the cloister. The desire of the monks to attain the forbidden or secret knowledge of the text animated the individual impulses of the monk. Their desire for this information reflects an attempt to gain an advantage in salvation, the ultimate aim of a religious life.

The monk, however, must submit to the communal experience of the tale. The medieval practise of reading Holy Scripture or edifying texts aloud, in this case the Visio, would make the experience of the vision an act of community. The reading would be subject to the interpretation of another, the individual listener, and the collective response of the community while listening to the account. The collective sighs, gasps or nods of agreement would profoundly influence an individual's response to the lesson. This medieval style of reading would assault the eyes and ears of the reader at once.[79] The listeners would have their ears and their mind's eyes confronted by the tale. The reader would feel his mouth moving and would feel the bodily

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[78]Ibid, 16.

[79]See Brian Stock, Listening for the Text (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 1-51 and The Implications of Literacy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 12-87.

touch of his fingers on the text.

Because ancient and medieval societies were predominantly oral cultures, philosophers and theologians in those societies felt the full impact of speech as a sensuous and physical phenomenon.[30] Medieval people lived in an oral universe that knew the immediacy of the sensuous power of words as sounds. Moreover, medieval Latin, the language of the clerics, was not learned as they had their mother tongues, through total immersion in the oral-aural realm. Rather, they learned to read, write, and speak latin simultaneously. It was from the beginning a written language which they experienced as a text, through a visual medium, its words were more removed.[81] Consequently, when a monastic heard the vision only, without the textualized speech in front of him, the message would assault his senses and would have been imprinted vividly in his memory. the text would become more alive, more comfortable, more personal.

When the vision had been read through, each monk would be confronted with the decision of weighing the validity of the tale. The pressure of the monks around the individual[82] would

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[30]Sharon A. Farmer, "Softening the Hearts of Men: Women, Embodiment, and Persuasion in the Thirteenth Century" in Embodied Love Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 116.

[81]Ibid, 119.

[82]See Caroline Walker Bynum, "'Discovery of the Individual' or 'Discovery of Self'?" in Jesus as Mother Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982:85-90.) In this article, Bynum responds to Colin Morris' criticisms concerning the role of the concept of the "individual" in the religious life of the medieval cleric. See

inform his decision if only through a desire not to be alienated
from the group. Monks would have been accustomed to accepting
divinely-inspired literature as truth. As the idea of Purgatory
became doctrinal, further pressure would be placed upon the monk
to accept its authenticity. By rejecting the vision, a monk
would be cast out of his community both symbolically and
physically. Suspicions would have been cast at the dissenter who
would have been considered wayward or even heretical. The
direction and focus of the text is androcentric and the
experience of the text in this setting would be definitively
masculine.

Finally, the monks, both communally and individually, would
have a socio-bodily response to the narration. Typically, groups
of monks discussed what had been read to them and might do so
quite emotionally. Many would be spurred on to action in the
form of penance, prayers or good works. The narration would
continue to live on in the imagination and thoughts of the monks
as they continued their daily tasks and prayers. The text
continued to guide and shape physically and spiritually the
actions of the monks who heard it. The images presented in the
text shaped the disposition of the group and their perceptions
and understanding of the nature of Purgatory. The use of vivid
descriptions and horrific tales would have augmented the impact
of the text on the clerics who were listening to it. Monks would

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also Colin Morris, The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200 (New
York: Harper & Row, 1972:64-75)

have listened to the vision and have possessed enduring memories
of it. In a culture which still depended heavily on memory in
education, the vision would have effectively transmitted its
message in a form which would have been lasting and memorable.

This method of instruction was not uncommon or unusual in
the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and reflects an attitude of
docere verbo et exemplo. In this case, however, the teaching by
word and example would take on fresh meaning. The words would be
inspired by a man, discussed among men for the salvation of men.
The examples in the vision are male-defined in order to be
accessible to the male listeners. The vision would live on in
the minds of the monks, thereby being further influenced by the
masculinity of the monks and would have informed how they
understood their expressions of monastic sexuality and
masculinities. This newly acquired information would in turn
shape their religious direction. This direction would be male-
defined from without, in the form of abbatial censure and the
monastic culture, and from within, through the memories of the
teachings of the vision with its androcentric focus.

Primarily designed for a monastic community, the Visio
monachi de Evnsham found a ready audience in the emerging secular
and commercial elements of society who were ultimately concerned
with their salvation but had not entered religious orders in
order to satisfy this desire. Prior to its translation into
English in 1482, the vision was disseminated throughout English
monasteries, beginning first with Hugh of Lincoln and then later

bishops. It was used to instruct monks and was popular among the Latin-reading, educated monks. Purgatorial literature became a favourite theme in the devotional and penitential works composed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Like the work by Dante, the <u>Visio monachi de Eynsham</u> is an intimate portrait of the dealings and interactions of medieval people and their sufferings. Its enduring popularity with the English attests to the brilliance of its composition, the artistry of its images and its profound spiritual message. Suffused with medieval ideology, cultural and ethical values and social behaviour, the text allows the reader to garner insight into the nature of male relationships in this period. It provides a clear example of the encoded constructions of gender, social roles, behaviourial patterns and monastic conceptions of sexuality and masculinities in medieval society.

Chapter Three:

An Androcentric Focus

in the Visio monachi de Eynsham 1196

The Visio monachi de Eynsham is an important twelfth-century

example of the literature which gave rise to the notion of

Purgatory. The vision itself reflects the twelfth-century

developments in law, for example the Decretum of Gratian, as well

as the religious revival and spiritual awakening manifest in the

Cluniac reforms and the crusading spirit. The Visio is deeply

rooted in its theological and doctrinal background. It examines

the nature of humanity, the virtues and vices which characterize

the human endeavour, and the religious responses to such

accomplishments and failings. The vision, moreover, is a mirror

of the social structure and the prevailing values in medieval

society.

The text demonstrates the privileged position of men in

society. The Visio actively promotes an androcentric conception

of Purgatory. In the vision, Edmund seems less concerned with

male privileges than with exhibiting the naturalness of male-

defined salvation history. The institutionalized nature of

patriarchy may have indeed informed the creation and suppositions

of the visionary literature, but the overall unconcious

assumption of the text seems to be the correctness of male dominance in a spiritual conception of the world. The Visio monachi de Eynsham allows one to pose two related hypotheses. First, the conception of Purgatory in the text is focused on men, despite specific passages relating to women. The partiality to men in Purgatory functions to reassert the male definition of salvation history. Second, sin and the penance and expiation in Purgatory are focused on the actions and experiences of men.

Edmund's account of Purgatory is an example of medieval preaching, an apostolate, an example of docere verbo et exempla.[1] The Visio is a preaching exercise, a model for teaching and calling forth penance and contrition on the part of sinners. In many ways, the Visio monachi de Eynsham parallels in literary form the biography of Christine Mirabilis, which details her living a purgatory in via.[2] Ultimately, the Visio is an instructive work which in its utilization of the preaching style of the twelfth century and its examples and development supports an androcentric conception of Purgatory.

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[1] For an explanation of the implications of this phrase to the twelfth century monastic, see Caroline Walker Bynum's Docere verbo et exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality (Harvard Theological Studies 31. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979). See also her chapter "The Spirituality of the Regular Canons in the Twelfth Century" Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 22-58.

[2] For a more complete understanding of the method used to deconstruct Thomas of Cantrimpré's biography of Christine Mirabilis and the manner in which her life was a preaching apostolate and teaching method, see Robert Sweetman's article "Christine of Saint-Trond's Preaching Apostolate: Thomas of Cantimpré's Hagiographical Method Revisited," Vox Benedictina 9, 1 (Summer 1992), 67-97.

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Yet the <u>Visio monachi de Eynsham</u> reflects the
androcentricism of medieval conceptions of social, ideological
and political systems of dominance and suppression. Experienced
and recorded in a single-sex, cloistered male environment, the
vision reproduces an androcentric focus through its writing
style, male imagery and topical choices. Unlike the mystical
literature of twelfth-century religious women who presented a
more balanced and "woman-friendly" conception of the spiritual
life, Edmund's vision addressed men alone. Perhaps Edmund
included women's humanity in the generic word "man" but this
absence or invisibility further serves to isolated women from his
discussion of Purgatory. Moreover, the invisibility of the
"female voice" in the text added to the clear male focus. The
vision was recorded in a single-sex, thoroughly male, cloistered
environment in which there were no women, no contact with the
female at all. The text is, perhaps, understandably or
inescapably androcentric. But this androcentricism will provide
a guide into understanding monastic perceptions of male sexuality
and masculinity. This discussion will follow in the subsequent
chapter. For the current discussion, it is enough to examine the
nature and extent of the penetration of an androcentric focus in
the vision.

The mystical literature written by twelfth-century religious
women presents a more balanced and "woman-positive" conception of
the spiritual life. Perhaps the best example of a twelfth-
century female mystic is Hildegard of Bingen. Hildegard's works

profoundly influenced the society in which she lived and her opinions on matters of doctrine were sought by ecclesiastical and secular authorities alike. Hildegard is unique in the manner in which she conceptualized man and woman. The divine work entrusted to humankind was performed in a sexed universe. It was carried out by man and by woman for without the latter there would be no humanity.[3]

Hildegard conserved the traditional opposition of man as strength and woman as frailty, but she gives it a much more positive interpretation. Hildegard had a very wide view on the role of women. Woman was born of man as his love, to whom God had given form.[4] At a period when misogynous descriptions prevailed, in Hildegard one notices an attempt to break free of traditional patterns. Hildegard included the feminine element in her theology and, indeed, it may be said that Hildegard tried to move beyond the exclusively masculine concept of God and the values traditionally attributed to man and woman.[5]

Unlike Hildegard, Edmund presented a vision which did not attempt to challenge traditional conceptions of man and woman. In his prologue, Edmund addressed both men and women, urging them

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[3]Emilie Zum Brunn and Georgette Epiney-Burgard, Women Mystics in Medieval Europe, trans., Sheila Hughes (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 13.

[4]Ibid.

[5]For a clear example of her work at equalizing the roles of man and woman, see Hildegard of Bingen, Scivias, trans., Bruce Hozeski (Santa Fe: Bear & Company, 1986.)

to learn from his vision and draw its benefits.[6] His subsequent discussion, however, relegated women to marginality. In fact, women and their roles were largely invisible in his text.

The vision overwhelmingly investigated the nature of men's sins and the relationships between men. More than two-thirds of the vision examined cases of male sinners. Knights and abbots, kings and archbishops, goldsmiths and sodomites received detailed discussion under Edmund's gaze. Moreover, his analysis of these cases filled the first two-thirds of the vision. The discussion of women and their sins was relegated to the final sections of the vision so that even the analysis of women's sins was marginalized.

Throughout the text, the absence of women is obvious to the modern reader. There emerges a kind of androcentricity based on women's absence or marginality. Edmund only utilized examples of women in order to shame his monastic audience into correcting their behaviour. This manipulation of women is a different kind of sexism from a text focused on women, devaluing or attacking them. Edmund simply accepted as true and natural, unlike Hildegard, a male-dominated society and male-segregated environment.

The account of the wife of a poor man epitomizes how Edmund uses women to awaken his male audience to the need for conversion and further elaborates his understanding of sexual relations. Her status as wife was all that was given, although Edmund knew

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[6]Paget, The Revelation, prologue.

her and was pleased to see her faring well.

> Her great fault had been a habit of impatiently
> scolding and upbraiding any who wronged her, and she
> had allowed sourness and rancour to linger in her heart
> against them, and therefore she had suffered these
> pains.[7]

She, however, was remorseful for her actions and ". . . often

wept that she could not overcome it."[8] Consequently, she was

devout in her prayers and in her alms-giving. Because of her

contrition in life, she was relieved some suffering in Purgatory.

The woman's sins ". . . by confession and satisfaction done for

them, God grants to be changed and counted among venial sins."[9]

Women were associated with sins of language as this wife of

a poor man obviously was. Medieval theologians felt the full

impact of speech as sensuous and physical phenomenon.[10]

Medieval people found speech seductive, in a way that moderns do

not, because they lived in an oral universe that knew the

immediacy of the sensuous power of words as sounds.[11] Medieval

clerical men were predisposed to associate the power and

seduction of the spoken word with their mother tongues and with

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[7]Ibid, 191.

[8]Ibid, 191.

[9]Ibid, 193.

[10]Sharon A. Farmer, "Softening the Hearts of Men: Women, Embodiment, and Persuasion in the Thirteenth Century" in Embodied Love Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 116.

[11]Ibid, 116.

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women.[12] Consequently, sinning through speech was associated
with women.

This example continues the definition of sin as
androcentric. A woman's sin is defined in relation to a man and
her speech is accountable to a man. Her natural use of language
becomes sinful when it is used against a man or in opposition to
the wishes of a man. It also suggests that an aspect of a woman,
her natural use of language, with which she is associated, was
sinful. This sin was based solely on her sex, on some biological
or essential aspect of her femininity. This sexism based on
biology, in contrast with the male or male speech which was not
sinful, highlighted the androcentric nature of sin. This story
maintains the androcentric focus of the vision. Moreover, Edmund
through this example, is able to demonstrate how the contrition
of this woman eased her purgation. The recurring theme of a call
to contrition and conversion is reaffirmed through this example.
The male audience would be urged to perform a similar act as this
lowly woman. Furthermore, clerics would be urged to work
together for the expiation of the sins of the souls in Purgatory
in a similar fashion as women. There is an inherent sexism
present in the suggestion that men would have been able to recant
for their sins if women could have done so.

Moreover, women in Purgatory worked together to ease each
other's suffering. An abbess spoke to Edmund:

She requested me to tell many things to her own natural

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[12]Ibid, 119.

> sisters, . . . She told me certain tokens by which to distinguish them, and said the news would be gracious and pleasant to them; but she bade me tell it only to those she commanded me. She said she had received much relief and help in her pains by the devout prayers and psalms of her sisters, . . . to whom she had been a spiritual mother. . . . Therefore let them know that without doubt they shall have great rewards, and I have escaped many sharp pains. If they persevere as they have begun, I hope to escape the remainder of my sufferings.[13]

People believed that souls often remained at the scene of their sins or of their deaths, and appeared to the living, at least in dreams, to request Masses and prayers.[14] Women seem to aid each other in the easing of their sufferings and provide secret knowledge. This practice was not uncommon. About 1150, the mystic Elizabeth of Schonau entered into a dialogue with the souls of dead nuns who requested the assistance of her convent in paying the penalties that remained from their earthly sojourn.[15] Completely separate from the influence or direction of men, these women actively participated in the expiation of the sins of other women. Edmund again highlights the communal notion of the prayers of the living to ease the purgation of all souls.

From this point, Edmund devotes his examples to his call for conversion and confession in the Church. His focus, however, changes. He uses female Christians to illustrate his argument, yet these examples remain curiously androcentric in orientation.

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[13]Paget, The Revelation, 252.

[14]Ariès, The Hour of Our Death, 153.

[15]JoAnn McNamara, "The Need to Give: Suffering and Female Sanctity in the Middle Ages" in Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 213.

They are used primarily to instruct the male audience through the use of contrast and shame. Edmund contrasts the lives, virtues and vices of women with those of the men he has already discussed. The women are an essential component of Edmund's rhetorical strategy.

In contrast to the passage on the prior who neglected the cure of the souls of his monks and who was punished for the sins of those for whom he was responsible, Edmund relates an example of an anchoress whom he saw in the same place. The anchoress' pains were light and ". . . hastened her speedily on the journey to paradise."[16] Her holy mode of life made her purgatorial sufferings less severe than those of the prior.[17]

Indeed, women were more aware of their accountability to the divine order and thus shaped their lives in order to attain salvation. Of two leprous nuns, Edmund had much to say.

> They suffered that plague of leprosy patiently and
> gladly, and thanked God for the chastisement and
> disease, and were as delighted with it as if they had
> received gracious gifts and adornments from Him. A
> little while ago they were pained in this world by a
> long martyrdom; now they blessedly follow the Heavenly
> Lamb, their Spouse, Jesus Christ, without any spot,
> wheresoever He goes.[18]

The contrast between the sufferings and physical ailments of

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[16]Paget, The Revelation, 183.

[17]For further information concerning the role and function of anchoresses in English religious life, see for example Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) and Sally Thompson, Women Religious The Founding of English Nunneries after the Norman Conquest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[18]Paget, The Revelation, 255-256.

and rational? The medieval conception of the religious experience was focused on binary oppositions of male and female. The male was rational, spiritual and strong, the female, weak, emotional and earthy.[20] This example only serves to heighten the horror of the peril of the prior who should have known better by his very nature. Edmund utilizes this example not so much to display the virtue of the anchoress but rather to shame his male audience. The androcentric focus of this argument, through its use of the subtle comparison to the story of the prior, continues to reinforce the call to conversion among the male clergy. Edmund uses female examples to contrast directly with male behaviour.

The Visio monachi de Eynsham sets up various sexual relationships. Monks are urged to suppress the needs and affections of the biological family in favour of the monastery. This rejection of the concerns of the patrilineal family was eased by transferring into a monastic setting similar kinship bonds and friendships. This framework of behaviour, however, had several difficulties. Particular friendships could lead to affective or sexual feelings among monks. Sodomy in the vision was one example of the institution of particular relationships with a clear, carnal aspect. The emotional and sexual tension in an all-male environment led to manifestations of sexual and

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[20]See Caroline Walker Bynum, "Introduction:The Complexity of Symbols" in Gender and Religion:On the Complexity of Symbols Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman, eds. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 1-22.

exclusive relationships. Edmund's examination of the relationships between men and women and among women demonstrates an androcentric understanding of the gender differences in the twelfth century. Edmund's vision ultimately reflects a male understanding of the cloistered environment and social relationships.

Chapter Four:

Monastic Masculinities in the

Visio monachi de Eynsham 1196

The Visio monachi de Eynsham set out a definite

understanding of sexual and gender relations. Familial bonds,

spiritual friendship and sodomy were central themes in Edmund's

examination of the relations between men in a monastic setting

and in secular society. A close examination of the examples of

penance reveals more fully the underlying psychological

motivations of monks in their relationships one with another.

Finally, Edmund's reactions to a bleeding crucifix before he

began his journey through Purgatory represented a symbolic

example of the expressions of a monastic masculinity. His

understanding of the relations between men and women suggested an

androcentric social viewpoint and a strict, traditional adherence

to clearly defined gender roles of the dominant male and the

submissive female. Ultimately, the sexual relations in the Visio

monachi de Eynsham are important for what they reveal to the

researcher about the sexual, social and spiritual relationships

among men in a monastic setting and how monks expressed various

aspects of a monastic masculinity.

A large part of the vision is devoted to examining the consequences for religious men and women who forsake their vows for worldly delights. One of the primary concerns found in the third section of the vision centred on the continuing ties of the monk to his biological family. The discussion of the appropriate relationship of the monk with his biological family was the beginning of Edmund's examination of sexual relations in the vision.

For example, Edmund discusses a prior whom he knew was in Purgatory. The prior was in great pain, submerged first in fire and then in stinking baths of brimstone and pitch. He was there ". . . not only for my own sins and excesses, though I offended in many ways, but also for the wickedness and misrule of the people that I had the charge and care of in my life."[1] This statement is the first indication of the responsibility among monastic officials for the care of their charges.

> Of those sins, what grieves me most is the carnal
> affection and love that I had for my friends, my father
> and mother, and others of my kindred, for some of whom
> I got benefices of the church when they were quite
> unworthy to have them; and to others I gave most
> indiscreetly, gifts from the property of the monastery
> of which I was prior. Now they scarcely remember me or
> do anything for me in my need.[2]

This enduring attachment to familial ties was not uncommon in the Middle Ages and profoundly moulded the shape of monastic and

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[1]Paget, The Revelation, 174.

[2]Ibid, 174.

religious life. Individuals who attained positions of prominence in the monastic order would help their biological family, both economically and politically.[3] Consequently, there developed a conflict of interests between the needs of the monastic "family" and the advantages which could have been acquired by the biological family of the prominent monk.

This concern for familial advancement often caused the prior in Purgatory to neglect the care of his charges while alive. Their organized lifestyle, devoted to attaining salvation, was subordinate to the concerns of the biological family of the prior. Edmund further describes how the prior admitted he:

> . . . loosed the bridle of correction over the wills of my subordinates, and allowed them to follow their desires and lusts, as though my eyes had been closed, fearing that if I corrected and restrained them from their folly, they would become my enemies and endeavour to turn me out of my prelacy.[4]

This passage reveals the weakness of the prior in his conviction to guide and censure his charges. It was an apparent neglect of responsibility on his part. The prior seems to have been more

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[3]For further information concerning the enduring family ties in religious and monastic institutions, see for example Jack Goody's The development of the family and marriage in Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Goody argues that the emerging incest taboos and inheritance restrictions enacted by canonical legislation were in fact a subtle, if not purposefully, erosion of familial power and cohesion. The result of this extension of family ties and restrictions on marriage eroded the family unit's ability to marry to its political and economic advantage. Eventually, the family line would die out and the land, resources and wealth of the family would be left to the Church. In this way, Goody argues, the Church was able to increase its power and prestige.

[4]Paget, The Revelation, 175.

concerned with keeping the peace and winning friends than in censuring their behaviour in order to ensure their salvation.

The prior was personally responsible for the souls of those monks entrusted to him. Now that he is in Purgatory, " . . . [t]he first day after my death was easier than any day since, for all the sins they commit now, after my death, which were contracted through my negligence, increase my pains still more."[5] The prior's sins continued to multiply after he died even though he no longer sins personally. Consequently, his neglect of their care and his responsibility towards them endures after his death. Presumably, the prior could have changed their behaviour. If the prior had corrected their indiscretions, his own purgatorial experience would have been lessened and eased. This relationship between the actions of the prior during his life, the continued influence of his charges while they live and his purgation are closely and inextricably linked.

The monks' sins accrue to him because he neglected his charges while he was alive. The actions of the living still profoundly influence the souls in Purgatory.

> Some who are dead and some still living have
> succumbed to that abominable sin that ought
> not to be named; and because I put them under
> no correction, I now dread nothing so much as
> the fear of being compelled to experience the
> foul stench which is suffered by those who
> fall into this abomination; . . . [6]

Edmund notes the fear of retribution on the part of the prior and

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[5] Ibid, 177.

[6] Ibid, 177.

his fear of having to suffer this same sin, sodomy, as a result
of his inability to correct it among his charges when he was
alive. Indeed the prior muses about why " . . . I was more
ashamed to bear public censure, than abashed at the knowledge in
secret of the shameful dishonour of the order."[7] The contrition
of the prior serves as a guide to the audience in the appropriate
form of penance and conversion for the neglect of his duties.

The use of the example of a prior in a monastery would seem
personal and easily comprehensible to Edmund's monastic audience.
The prior's loyalty must necessarily be to the monastic community
rather than his biological family. Otherwise, his negligence
leads to the depravity and laxness of the whole community.
Edmund, however, not only criticizes the actions of monastics but
also reproaches prominent ecclesiastics of the twelfth century,
including the contemporary Archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert
Walter.[8]

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[7]_Ibid_, 178.

[8]For a chronological listing of the archbishops of Canterbury
for this period, see Charles G. Herbermann et al, ed., _The Catholic
Encyclopedia_, volume three (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc.,
1913), 299. This archbishop may be identified as Hubert Walter who
held the position from 1193 to 1205. Alternatively, Edmund may be
discussing an earlier archbishop, Baldwin (1185-1190). The
likelihood of Edmund using Baldwin as his reference, however, is
marginal. First, Edmund would have only been a child when Baldwin
was the archbishop. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Edmund
would have a keen understanding of Baldwin's tenure, his strengths
and abuses. More likely, Edmund is discussing Hubert Walter. The
archbishop is Edmund's contemporary. His tenure would be more
available to Edmund intellectually when he experienced the vision.
Finally, the monks of Eynsham had appealed to Walter to solve the
abuses of Abbot Roger Norreys against their monastery. Edmund,
then, would have had a personal recollection, experience, and
criticism of the archbishop.

Elsewhere Edmund continues his criticisms of the state of
the Church, secularism and the continued adherence to familial
ties in the monastic setting. For example, the chapter
concerning a certain abbot focuses on the state of the church and
the vices of the clergy. An abbot's suffering in Purgatory was
eased by the continual prayers of poor people to whom he had
given alms from his estate. Many Christians believed that their
prayers and good works would intervene in lessening their
languishing in Purgatory.[9]

> The abbot was still in suffering, chiefly for excessive
> love to his kinsfolk, to whom he gave too much from
> his monastery, and spent more on them than he ought to
> have done. That vice, carnal love of kindred, has been
> a snare to many people professing religion, and also to
> dispensers of the goods of holy church, as bishops and
> others, who distribute them probably in other uses than
> they should.[10]

Here the word carnal referred to worldly, not sexual love. It
suggests strong family ties taking precedence over clerical ties.
This abbot used the Church for his family's advancement. His
recurring theme centres on the clergy maintaining too strong
attachments to their biological family. The institutional Church
from the tenth century onward was working toward lessening the
familial ties between clergy and biological family. Theologians
of the eleventh century, and particularly Cistercian thinkers,
began to formulate an understanding of spiritual family and
spiritual friendship which superseded the bonds of the biological

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[9]Philippe Ariès, The Hour of Our Death, 152.

[10]Paget, The Revelation, 242.

family.

This conceptualization, however, presented certain difficulties. The needs and demands of the biological family, with its inherent secularism and a sexuality directed toward the continuation of the family, were often in conflict with the teachings and aims of a monastery. The monastic environment demanded a renunciation of these aims. The suppression of carnality, at least in the official literature, had its origin in the monasteries.[11] The suppression of familial ties among the monks inevitably led to the development of strong personal ties among them inside the cloister. The monks replaced one set of strong emotional feelings in the family to a network of emotional bonds within the monastery.

Yet, monastic authorities generally discouraged close personal friendships from developing among or between monks or nuns.[12] The terrors of the flesh and the turning away from one's spiritual journey were the chief characteristics of the monastic attitude toward the renunciation of particular relationships. The dangers to the spiritual life of pseudo-friendships, leading to factions and the danger of sexual temptation, had led most authors to stress the exclusive desire for God at the expense of emotional satisfactions of love of

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[11]Aaron W. Godfrey, "Rule and Regulation: Monasticism and Chastity," _Acta_ vol xiv (1990), 54.

[12]Ruth Mazo Karras, "Friendship and Love in the Lives of Two Twelfth-Century English Saints," _Journal of Medieval History_ 14 (1988), 306.

neighbours and friends.[13]

The concept of spiritual friendship itself in the cloister entered the monastic tradition in the eleventh century. The twelfth-century proliferation of new orders of monks and canons, with their fervour and enthusiasm, helped spread and encourage the devotion to spiritual friendship.[14] This friendship, or amicitia, had more in common with modern romantic love than with modern asexual friendship because amicitia was founded on strong emotional, even loving, feelings which shaped the friendship. It was at once highly emotional and asexual. Twelfth-century friendship was based on companionship, affection and similarity of interest but excluded physical attraction.[15] Aelred of Rievaulx, whose text Spiritual Friendship dealt with this very issue, made it clear that spiritual love was only good so long as it remained untainted by carnal desire. Aelred was no more tolerant of homosexual than of heterosexual carnality. For a monk, either one was a sin.[16]

Despite its dangers of temptation, the notion of friendship eased the transition from the secular to the sacred by transferring already known patterns of friendship into a monastic

[13]Mary Eugenia Laker, "Introduction," Spiritual Friendship Aelred of Rievaulx (Washington: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1974), 36.

[14]Ibid, 37.

[15]Ruth Mazo Karras, "Friendship and Love in the Lives of Two Twelfth-Century English Saints," 306.

[16]Ibid, 311-12.

setting.[17] The patterns of feudal life with their emphasis on kinship bonds, which were familiar to adult novices, as well as a new sensibility of the dynamics of personal experience, functioned to make a same-sex environment understandable and familiar.[18] Male friendships functioned at least in part to determine the monk's new status in the monastic hierarchy. Friendship among monks, however, was only justified if it was geared toward a goal, as a means to reach greater spiritual perfection.[19] For Edmund, the most apparent consequence of the temptations of spiritual friendship would have been the sin of sodomy. The vision discusses in detail examples of sodomy and Edmund used these examples to criticize this sin of waywardness among clerics.

Sodomy was placed within its own sphere of Purgatory and it warranted a detailed and lengthy examination by Edmund. The sodomites are alienated by topography from the other sinners. This alienation of sodomy from the other sins in the vision is interesting. Edmund used the examples of sodomy in his argument to suggest that sodomy was a consequence of the laxness of medieval people in their quest for salvation. Edmund did not

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[17]Ulrike Wiethaus, "In Search of Medieval Women's Friendships: Hildegard of Bingen's Letters to Her Female Contemporaries," in Maps of Flesh and Light The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics ed., Ulrike Wiethaus (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 94.

[18]Ibid, 94.

[19]Ibid, 95. See also, Brian Patrick McGuire, "Aelred of Rievaulx and the Limits of Friendship," in Friendship and Community (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1988):296-338.

explore this sin to understand its nature but rather saw it as the final result of moral depravity. Sodomy, for Edmund, was the consequence of the unrestricted enjoyment of other sins and vices, of a laxness of vows or morals and, as a consequence, sodomy was employed to demonstrate the pinnacle of moral depravity. Sodomy, however, was also an indication of the manner in which monk related one to another. One cannot say that all monastics were sodomites, but the case of sodomy examined in this vision is important.

Sodomy was the only sexual sin which Edmund discussed in the vision. Considering he lived in a cloistered, all-male environment and had no contact with women, it is important that Edmund examined this issue. Presumably Edmund discussed sodomy because it was common enough to be considered a serious moral problem in monasteries. Moreover, it suggests an aspect of a monastic sexuality or masculinity or, more accurately, it reflects expressions of a monastic masculinity.

Sodomy in the Middle Ages often referred to any unnatural sexual activity, that is to say, any sexual activity which was not procreative in nature.[20] The term sodomy was ambiguous since its meaning was not always confined to coitus in ano or between men. Sodomy transgressed both natural and divine law and yet theologians failed to agree on a clear definition. The canons of the Council of London (1102) dealt with moral abuses

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[20]Vern L. Bullough, "The Sin against Nature and Homosexuality," 55.

and mentioned sodomy in two canons but failed to define it. The
canons state that if a person found guilty was an ecclesiastic he
should be deposed, and if a layman, deprived of his legal status
and dignity.[21] Albertus Magnus (1206-1280) listed sodomy as the
worst possible sin since it was not only a sin against nature but
a sin against man. According to Albert intercourse had been
invented and the sex organs formed for the procreation of
offspring, the natural end of intercourse.[22] Sexual activity
was conceptualized with a strict adherence to traditional gender
understandings of men and women. The dominance of the male in
the sexual encounter and the passivity of the female were the
chief gauges of the propriety of the sexual act. In the practice
of sodomy, however, a man must become passive and receptive. To
medieval theologians and medical writers, passivity was a
characteristic of the woman who served only as a vessel to
contain the lusts of men and to provide the environment in which
pregnancy could occur. It represented for the medieval mind a
rejection of the natural superiority of the male and a willing
assumption of the weaknesses and passivity of the female.[23] The
acceptance of this weakness and the passive behaviour on the part

[21]Ibid, 63.

[22]Ibid, 64.

[23]See Michael Goodich, "Sodomy in Ecclesiastical Law and
Theory," Journal of Homosexuality, 1 (1976), 427-34 and Michael
Goodich, "Sodomy in Medieval Secular Law," Journal of
Homosexuality, 1 (1976), 295-302.

of a man was seen as contrary to natural law.[24]

Sodomy, for Edmund, is a male and clerical sin. This homosexual sodomy was strictly censured by the ecclesiastical hierarchy since it went in direct opposition to natural and divine law. Clerical sodomy received a detailed discussion in Peter Damian's Book of Gommorah written between 1048-1054 during the pontificate of Leo IX. The commonly accepted date of composition, however, was 1049 thereby placing the Book of Gommorah after the Council of Riems (fall 1049).[25] Damian attacked the incidents of homosexual activity which had taken place among the clergy of his region. Given the general decline of sexual morality among the clergy at the time, the specific situations dealt with by Damian, and the response to the Book of Gommorah from Leo IX, it would seem reasonable to accept Damian's assertion of the existence of sodomy among the clergy.[26] Whether or not the work succeeded in reversing the spread of homosexual practices in the areas which were of concern to Damian is unknown.

Edmund treated male homosexual activity almost exclusively in the vision. Edmund mentioned female homosexuality obliquely

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[24]See John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.)

[25]Peter Damian, Book of Gommorah An Eleventh-Century Treatise against Clerical Homosexual Practices (trans., Pierre J. Payer. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982), 22.

[26]Ibid, 22.

in his vision, but failed to discuss it or attempt to correct

it.[27] The manuscript of the vision by William de Machlinia,

circa 1482, translates Edmund's text as:

> And yeffe y hadde sene and consyderyd the cause namely
> nowe in tyme of crystendame cowde not in any wyse haue
> beleuyd that such a foule synne and vyse myght haue be
> presumed and done specyally of wemen the whych
> naturelly schuld be more schamfull thenne other. I
> neuyr herd before nether hadde any suspycyon hethirto
> that the kynde of wemen hadde be deprauyd and desoyled
> by suche a foule synne.[28]

Paget's 1909 translation, however, states only: "All those who

were thus punished and pained, had committed, while they lived in

this world, that foul sin which cannot be named by Christians or

by heathens."[29] The fifteenth-century addition, including a

reference to lesbianism or the practice of heterosexual anal sex,

might suggest a new understanding and recognition of female

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[27] For more information concerning lesbian sexuality, see for example Judith C. Brown, "Lesbian Sexuality in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay & Lesbian Past (New York: A Meridan Book, 1989), 67-75. Brown, in this article, examines the reasons for a relative lack of concern over lesbianism and how it both contributed to and was in turn reinforced by conflicting male notions about female sexuality. She explores the cases of lesbianism which came before the courts and concludes that the severity of punishment was related to concerns about women's gender behaviour rather than sexual object-choice. A further discussion of female homosexuality in convents is found in Vern L. Bullough, "The Sin against Nature and Homosexuality" in Sexual Practices & the Medieval Church (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1982), 64. See also Judith C. Brown, Immodest Acts The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[28] The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham 1196 (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), 59.

[29] Valerian Paget, The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham Abbey, 157.

sexuality that Edmund may not have noted. Paget's translation in 1909 is sanitized and does not attempt to decipher Edmund's intention. Edmund had tremendous difficulty in acknowledging female homosexuality. Medieval clerics could not conceptualize the existence of female homosexuality since their understanding of sex required the presence of a phallus and female homosexuality is defined not in relation to a penis or a man. The treatises concerning female sexuality were phallocentric and viewed women as lustful, earthy and uncontrollable but only in a relationship with a man. This omission on the part of the scientific and medical professions was not exclusive. Medieval canonists and ecclesiastics were equally unable to suppose medieval lesbianism. Ultimately, for Edmund, male homosexuality was the only sodomitical activity which he could have conceptualized and thus male homosexual activity is the only expression of the sexual relationship that was examined.

His opening remarks on the vileness of the sin suggest that Edmund related the example to illustrate his abhorrence of the sin and to reveal the penance for such action. A lawyer received rents and benefices from the church and was esteemed by secular and religious authorities alike. He, however,

> . . . was over careful of his bodily health, . . . he
> never confessed his sins for the health of his soul,
> and especially his foul sin of unclean living, which is
> the first deed of alms that a man should do. Neither
> had he any compassion on poor people, to give alms to
> them;. . .[30]

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[30]Paget, The Revelation, 162.

Throughout Edmund's discussion, there is an attempt to equate
sodomy with hard-heartedness and neglect of the commandments.
True to the thrust of his developing argument, Edmund recognized
the weakening of vows and duties. This lack of responsibility
led the sinner into more peril. Sodomy was seen to be
symptomatic of a lessening of the moral certitude and commitment
to a life of righteousness of medieval Christians. He noted the
lawyer's misuse of his body and his lack of contrition.

In fact, "[a]ll those who were thus punished and pained, had
committed, while they lived in this world, that foul sin which
cannot be named by Christian or by heathens."[31]   The sin of
sodomy, mentioned in the above passage, is inextricably wound up
with the neglect of the poor, the failure to provide alms and an
inappropriate concern for the welfare of the body. Medieval
theology stressed the subjugation of the body to the life of the
soul. It constructed a dichotomy between the body and the soul
in which the body was transitory and weak, the pleasures of which
ought to have been willingly foregone while the penitent
concentrated on the welfare and life of the soul as eternal and
good.[32]   These sins seem to Edmund to be against natural law as
well as divine law as though the failure to give alms is contrary
to the nature of humanity. The inclusion of sodomy in this
discussion represents Edmund's assumption of the moral depravity

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[31]Ibid, 157.

[32]See for example John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance,
and Homosexuality (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.)

of the twelfth century and the contemporary transgressing of the natural order.

Sodomy was among the sins of the lawyer but not his chief sin. He also had not confessed his sins at the end of his life and thus had done no penance for them:

> . . . I was ashamed to confess such a horrible sin, lest I should be despised and dishonoured amongst those to whom I appeared illustrious and honest. I confessed my little sins to an honest and worshipful priest, whom you know well. And when he asked me if I had anything else to confess, I bade him go his way, and if any other thing came to my mind, I would send for him and tell him. Directly he was gone, and scarcely arrived at his church, I began to die.[33]

Here it seems evident that his foulest sin was not sodomy but his refusal to confess this sin. This omission on the part of the sinner would condemn him to a prolonged period of purgation and alerts one to the growing importance of sacramental confession to ensure salvation. By this period, confession to the laity had been suppressed and consequently the only legitimate forum for absolution was within the church with an ordained priest in the confessional.[34] This omission to confess on the part of the lawyer was Edmund's chief point in this tale. Confession was a central theme in his vision and the absolute necessity of confession seems to be what Edmund was attempting to demonstrate. Edmund has begun to more closely focus his discussion on the absolute necessity of confession and utilized this example to

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[33]Paget, The Revelation, 164-65.

[34]See for example, Thomas N. Tentler, Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.)

restate his call for confession, penance and contrition.

Yet, this sexual sin signifies various other important issues. This male homosexual activity suggests the breakdown of the mechanics of spiritual friendship. These particular male friendships, aimed at achieving greater spiritual perfection, had succumbed to carnal temptation. The erotic, affective elements of the spiritual friendships in the monastery could have easily fallen into the same circumstance as the case of the lawyer. It is significant that Edmund used the example of the lawyer rather than a monk. In this way, he was able to teach by example rather than highlighting the problems in his monastery and thereby causing his fellow monks to feel his personal censure. Edmund was urging his fellow monks to resist this carnal desire. The intense focus of feeling on Christ, during this period of greater humanization of his image, and the development of affective relationships between the monks made the possibility of homosexual activity in the monasteries more likely. The monks, in suppressing their biological familial bonds while living in an environment which mimicked them, would have been susceptible to intense same-sex feelings, sexual or otherwise in the cloistered setting. The emotional intensity in the monastery would have had to find an outlet and, for Edmund, sodomy was the consequence.

Now that the lawyer is in Purgatory, he is " . . . actually compelled to indulge the same foul passion."[35] The lawyer's purgatorial punishment is to be sodomized in the sight of the

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[35]Pagel, The Revelation, 165.

other souls. There is thus a continuation of the pattern of the punishment of the sinner being directly related to the nature of the sin. Moreover, it is worth noting that what was a secret sin in life is public in death. The vileness of this particular sin aids in drawing attention to the absolute necessity of sacramental confession for the salvation of the soul. Without it, the soul is left to languish in the same vices of the physical world and is denied the grace of Heaven.

Besides the horrible pain with which he is afflicted, the lawyer is ". . . confounded by shame, and made cursed and abominable in the sight of all men by the same sin."[36]

> Pride seems to be at the centre of his ultimate humiliation. Now meditate on what has been said of this clerk, and previously what was said of the goldsmith[a drunken man who failed to correct his sins], . . . That goldsmith, though he was a sinner, never presumed on his wit or any other virtue, but was meek and lowly in his own sight, and knew himself foolish and insecure, because of his sins. . . . This clerk, on the contrary, presumed on the wit and riches he possessed and continued in his wickedness; and because he thought himself exempt from the common labour of men in this world, he is now made a bitter and cruel example, and punished beyond others.[37]

His secret male vice, once hidden, is now visible and his true filth shows. His pride prevented the lawyer from confessing the sin when he had the opportunity. This lawyer trusted in himself over the deliverance of Christ's word and so in his pride and lack of penance is damned. Pride was his worst sin. Within Edmund's framework, the sexual sins were actually minimized

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[36]Ibid, 165.

[37]Ibid, 167-68.

within a hierarchy of vice. The worst sin in this example was the pride which prevented the lawyer from confessing his sodomitical activity. It was his pride which interfered most with his salvation and lengthened his purgation. The sin of sodomy was superseded by his sin of pride.

Edmund's absolute conviction of the necessity of confession in the salvation process led him to see pride, a vice which might limit a full and cleansing confession, as more detrimental to the welfare of an individual's soul than the sin of sodomy. Community of spirit and of action seems instrumental in Edmund's understanding of salvation and the manner in which all Christian souls move through the various stages of the afterlife into Paradise. Sodomy, on the other hand, set up particular relationships between monks or between abbot and monk that detracted from the larger monastic community.

Moreover, this discussion of the example of sodomy suggests for the modern reader certain aspects of a monastic masculinity. The suppression of familial emotional bonds had a considerable impact on the psychological state of the monk. This isolation from the biological family caused monks to develop strong personal and affective relationships with their brothers. The sense of spiritual friendship between monks provided an outlet for these displaced affections. The monk drew his emotional support from his friendships with his fellow monks, some of whom were strangers and some of whom could have been biological brothers. Certainly, one aspect of a monastic masculinity was a

monk's need to satisfy his emotional demands in the relationships which he could have developed within the cloister.

These affective relationships between monks informed male behaviour in the monastery. Whether these bonds led to a platonic relationship between an older monk and a novice or led to a carnal, sexual relationship, the bonds of spiritual and emotional friendship in the monastery limited the expressions of monastic sexual relations and the construction of monastic masculinities.

Another aspect of monastic masculinities evident in these relations between men concerns the descriptions of the penance which Edmund received from a senior monk before he began his journey through Purgatory. An examination of corporeal penance in the monastery further elucidates the relations between men.

In the first section of the _Visio monachi de Eynsham_, Edmund examined the nature of corporeal penance within the community of monks itself. Prior to his rapture,[38] Edmund approaches a senior monk from whom he received penance, saying "When I saw him

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[38]This idea of the soul in mystical rapture encountering various known and metaphorical characters in Purgatory is found in most medieval visionary literature and especially in Dante's _Divine Comedy_. For a fuller treatment of the interaction of metaphysical characters and the soul, see Charles S. Singleton's work on _The Divine Comedy_ (Commentary trans. Charles S. Singleton. Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1970) with special reference to his analysis of Purgatorio. Other works on Purgatory may also be helpful in explaining the topography of Purgatory including Jacques Le Goff, _The Birth of Purgatory_ trans., Arthur Goldhammer. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983) and his chapters "The Time of Purgatory" and "Gestures in Purgatory" _The Medieval Imagination_ trans., Arthur Goldhammer. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 67-77, 86-92.

I made a sign to him to discipline me as he had done before."[39]

Having received his discipline and having approached the altar,

> . . . [I] put off my shoes and knelt on my knees on
> the pavement, and bowed my head many times to the
> ground, and then went behind the altar to seek the
> cross that I had been told of. Behind this altar he
> [Edmund] found a crucifix which he did not know was
> there. . . . Soon I was dissolved in tears of devotion,
> and lying all prostrate I worshipped that holy cross
> full devoutly, . . . often kissing the feet of the
> crucifix, and busily watering them with my tears.[40]

Then Edmund moves to his confessor, an authority figure, to receive punishment and discipline and guidance. There is a sense that alone Edmund does not know how to make this supplication but rather must be initiated into the process of submission. Next, there is a very physical action of kneeling and bowing which acknowledges the superiority of the fatherly confessor. Finally, there is a bodily experience with Edmund's tears and the watering of the feet of the crucifix. Traditionally, it is at the feet of a master that one receives instruction and one must recall the anointing of Christ's feet by Mary Magdalene. Therefore, it is not surprising that this action is manifest.

Edmund's narrative suggests a system of an older man initiating the younger into the ways of the spiritual fulfilment. The younger man seeks the leading male authority in order to determine the correct means to submit to the system. This submission of the personal male voice to the larger social Male

[39]Paget, The Revelation, 76.

[40]Ibid, 76-77.

voice or androcentricity is the result of Edmund's desire to view
Christ as the archetypical Male voice. This procedure is
delineated by Edmund as a form of instruction for the male
audience. Edmund preaches the necessity of penance and
confession. Absolution of these sins is only conferred by a male
priest. The androcentric focus in this passage, including the
confessor, Edmund's supplication and the image of Christ, denotes
the importance of men in this monastic penitential activity.
Although monastic penance was not yet sacramentalized and was
limited to ordained priests, nonetheless, the participation of
monastics in this process re-enforced the preeminence of men in
absolving sins.

Edmund goes on to note how he felt some drops falling from
the crucifix.

> I put my fingers there and knew by the redness it was
> blood. Also I beheld the right side of the image of
> Our Lord's body, and it welled out with blood, as a
> man's flesh bleeds when it is cupped. . . . Then I took
> in my open hand, I know not how many drops of that
> precious blood, and diligently anointed my eyes, ears,
> and nostrils. Lastly I put one drop of that blessed
> blood to my lips, and through the great desire and
> devotion of my heart, I swallowed it.[41]

Edmund viewed this "blood" as the origin, or generative force, in
his salvation, just as in the symbolism of the Eucharist. The
Catholic identification of regeneration with the inner grace of
baptism was viewed not as conversion but rather as new birth.[42]
Edmund was relating to the personal Christ and being reborn.

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[41]Ibid, 79.

[42]Mary Anita Ewer, A Survey of Mystical Symbolism, 197.

This rebirth was requisite for his spiritual passage into Purgatory.

In the twelfth century, theologians pointed to a reawakening of the incarnational aspect of the image of man[13] which facilitated Edmund's ability to empathize with the suffering of Christ. In smearing himself with the blood from the wounds, Edmund is imitating the blood of the body which would have trickled down the side of Christ. The blood-smeared body of Christ was the instrument of humanity's salvation. Edmund is cleansing the sensory organs which led him to sin. Moreover, by covering his face, and especially all of his individual sensory organs, Edmund is negating his personal identity in order to fully identify with the blood-smeared image of Christ. Here, Edmund in fact dies symbolically, mirroring the resurrection mystery of Christ.

Edmund's submission to the corporeal system is found again in an example of penance. He was worshipping at the altar when he heard the voice of

> . . . the same old father that I met last in the church
> porch, of whom I desired to receive penance, . . . When
> I had said my Confiteor, as the custom is, . . . he
> gave me penance six times, as before. I desired him
> again to let me repeat my confession and take penance
> of him, for at every stroke that he gave me instead of
> sorrow and pain, there came inestimable and incredible
> sweetness of joyful comfort. But he would give me no
> more, . . . He went in his albus and sat down in the
> abbot's seat in the Chapter House, and I came and lay

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[13]Gerhart B. Ladner, Ad Imaginem Dei The Image of Man in Mediaeval Art (Latrobe: The Archabbey Press, 1965), 59.

prostrate before him, . . . [44]

Thus this senior confessor has assumed the position of authority in this story, both in his dominance in the penitential lashing and in his position of superiority, symbolized by his seating in the chair of the abbot. The practice of auricular confession became regularized during this period and the practice in England and Ireland originated in the monastic environment and spread out later into the rest of society.[45] Moreover, the physical penance which Edmund desires, and wishes to repeat, does add a sado-masochistic element to this encounter, even if there is no sexual undertone. The corporeal system is further highlighted by the lashing of a young man by an older monk.

The process of initiation of novices into the monastic life and regimen relied heavily on senior men guiding and instructing the novices in the procedures and practices of the order. The senior monks would administer discipline, provide an exemplar of living and instruct the young in their duties.[46] Monks did not differ psychologically from their contemporaries. Violence was commonplace in medieval society and aggressive impulses were

[44]Paget, The Revelation, 83-84.

[45]Oscar Watkins, A History of Penance (New York: Burt Franklin, 1961), 735. See also Jacques LeGoff, The Birth of Purgatory (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 215.

[46]For a more detailed explication of the initiation process of novice monks, see David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

given free expression in the social milieu.[47] Often the
monastic life and the eternal life were presented as the
continuation of the secular military environment.[48] The
continued interest in the medieval romances of love proved by a
feat of arms was part of the psychological baggage of monks.
Edmund used this familiarity with violence in addressing his
audience through the terrible punishments and suffering in order
to elucidate his lesson.

In reaction to this milieu, Bernard of Clairvaux propounds a
theology of restrained violence. Bernard's pedagogical method
and his training of monks was based on their past experiences.
He believed there was a need for an aggressive outlet for their
impulses. Their memories of personal acts of violence are still
alive in their unconscious, ever ready to surface to a conscious
level, even if only in disguise.[49] These memories of personal
violence may have been the background for Edmund's imagined
punishments in Purgatory.

The aggressive aspects of this masculinity were evident in
various other forms of literature written by men. One need only
mention the torments described in the earlier examples of
purgatorial literature, including the Vision of Drithlem, the
Vision of Tundale, St. Patrick's Purgatory and The Revelation of

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[47]Jean Leclerq, Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 88.

[48]Ibid, 89.

[49]Ibid, 97.

Peter, to witness the emphasis on pain and torture in clerical
literature. Women mystics did not record visions filled with
pain but rather with erotic love and mystical marriage.
Hildegard of Bingen and Margery Kempe are excellent examples of
women's visions animated by love and eroticism. Only Christine
of St. Trond's vita mentions her suffering on earth. Perhaps her
life reflects this focus, not as an accurate depiction of her
life or as a choice on her part to highlight her pains, but as an
authorial choice by Thomas of Cantimpré who wrote the detailed
examination of the life of Christine of St Trond. Male religious
writing concentrated more on pain and suffering than women's.
This emphasis on pain suggests an important aspect of a monastic
masculinity.

Edmund's actual description of Purgatory continued this
emphasis on the painful aspects of the afterlife. The second
third of the Visio monachi de Eynsham treats the nature of
Purgatory proper and the sins which are expunged there. Edmund
observes the diversity of sins found in Purgatory and the
infinite number of pains which souls undergo including roasting
in fire, frying in a pan and assault with nails of fire.[50] In
medieval allegories of the virtues and vices, three virtues drive
nails through the hands and feet of Christ while a fourth pierces
his chest with a lance or catches the blood in the chalice.[51]

[50]Paget, The Revelation, 101.

[51]Adolf Katzenellenbogen, Allegories of the Virtues and Vices
in Mediaeval Art (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964),
39.

Nailing came to symbolize the voluntary sacrifice of the Son of God.[52] Other sinners were soaked in baths of pitch and brimstone with a horrible stench or gnawed upon by the venomous teeth of fantastic worms. Finally, the souls could be skewered upon burning stakes.[53]

In medieval symbolism, fire represented God as all consuming love. The soul, as fuel, was transmuted into fire by the touch of the Divine fire.[54] Fire signifies the idea of gradual purification through purgation. God as water, light and air infuses every crack, swims in the waters of baptism and breathes into the soul.[55] Fire is complete immersion and saturation. Hugh of St Victor discussed purgatorial fire, noting that it was reserved for those who will be saved, the elect.[56] Fire not only evoked a place but was the spatial embodiment of the purgative phase through which souls passed after death.[57] The roasting of food is also important. Food symbolism was viewed as the transmutation of power. The Eucharist was elevated nourishment, food with metaphysical properties.[58] Thus the fire and the roasting images were significant for their connotations

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[52]Ibid.

[53]Paget, The Revelation, 101.

[54]Ewer, A Survey of Mystical Symbolism, 147.

[55]Ibid, 149.

[56]Jacques LeGoff, The Birth of Purgatory, 142.

[57]Ibid, 154.

[58]Ewer, A Survey of Mystical Symbolism, 160.

with cleansing and nourishment. Furthermore, Edmund utilized extreme metaphors whose gruesomeness was likely to be remembered by his listeners. One immediately recognizes that the violence which was suggestive of a monastic masculinity was maintained in Edmund's exploration of the pains of Purgatory.

The interplay of monastic masculinities was at the centre of these expressions of aggressiveness and pain. The purpose of the initiation of novices was to sublimate the dynamics of aggression through recourse to the Bible, to examine the struggle of the characters and to suppress the yearnings of the body through physical penance.[59] Bernard gave hidden and spiritual significance to the external social manifestation not only of man's compulsions to aggressiveness and love, but also to the conflict between his spontaneous self-centredness and a Christ-oriented desire for God.[60] Likewise, Edmund felt at ease with this relationship of violence and spiritual questing since it was rooted in his secular background and social milieu. The submission, in the initiation process, mirrored the apprenticeship of secular youths at the estates of various nobles or relatives and was with militaristic and aggressive terminology to which the monk, or indeed any noble man, could relate.

Thus, Edmund would have been comfortable with the notion of the physical dominance of his elders. The sado-masochistic element is important. The physical penitential lashing provided

[59]Jean Leclerq, Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France, 98.
[60]Ibid, 106.

an outlet for the aggressive tendencies prevalent in medieval society. Edmund's repeated desire for penance suggests a masochistic character. He clearly enjoyed the physical lashing and its accompanying pain. The older monk's willingness to perform the penance suggests a sadist authority. Here, power, domination, authority, aggressiveness and the sexual converged in the penitential activity. The lashing of the penitent with the rod, a phallic member[61], expressed the release of sexual frustration and aggressiveness in an all male environment or to assuage guilt over aggressive feelings. In secular society, these men would have been antagonistic toward one another in their military, commercial and feudal affairs. This antagonism was transferred to an acceptable form of "fighting" or a means through which to assert a hierarchy of dominance and privilege within the monastery. The monastic penitent, like female religious, had a desire to suffer.[62] Monks, however, suffered through the self-infliction of pain upon the other while women suffered most through illnesses. One aspect of a monastic masculinity must recognize this acceptance of inflicting pain on

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[61]See Jessie Laidlay Weston, From Ritual to Romance (New York: Peter Smith Publishers, 1941). Weston's classic discussion of the symbolism in medieval literature helps to elucidate this point. Weston equates a sword, lance or rod with men and a cup or a bowl with women. The rod, Weston argues, is directly associated with men and with male aggressiveness.

[62]JoAnn McNamara, "The Need to Give: Suffering and Female Sanctity in the Middle Ages," in Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe eds., Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 199-221.

other monks. This masculinity included the voluntary submission
of one monk to another in order to be physically abused for
penance. Edmund's masochistic tendencies were perhaps not
uncommon in monasteries. This form of penance was regularly
utilized by senior monks throughout medieval monasteries. This
universality of monastic penance suggests a buried indication
that this form of penance was both reflective of and influenced
by medieval conceptions of clerical masculinity.

With this final example of submission, Edmund was approached
by his spiritual guide, St Nicholas, who summoned Edmund to
follow him. In fact, " . . . he took me by the right hand,
surely and softly clasping my hand in his."[63] Edmund's mystical
journey began. It seems that before this occurred Edmund already
had a special relationship with this saint. Indeed, the
preeminence of sanctified men in the worship of monastics
reasserts the androcentricism of monastic devotion.
Extraordinary attention to prayer and devotion is a common theme
in the lives of male saints and pious male religious in the
Middle Ages.[64]

Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of Purgatory.[65] The

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[63]Paget, The Revelation, 85.

[64]Richard Kieckhefer, "Holiness and the Culture of Devotion:
Remarks on Some Late Medieval Male Saints" in Images of Sainthood
in Medieval Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 295.

[65]The cult of Nicholas was promoted by the prior of Worcester,
also named Nicholas (d. 1124). St. Nicholas became the patron of
mariners, travellers, merchants and bishops. His patronage of
travellers was instrumental in the transition to patronage of
Purgatory. There is evidence that St. Nicholas Day first appeared

cult of St. Nicholas gained prominence in England in the late tenth century. The image of Nicholas was more secular than religious. The rise of the cult was coincident with the rise of trade and the bourgeoisie but the legends appealed to every class to the extent that it was interested in the sensational rather than spiritual. The appearance of Nicholas for the purpose of administering a flogging is a very common motif in the legends but seems uncommon in legends of other saints. Edmund may have drawn the element of flogging in his penance from the Nicholas legends. The masochistic characteristics of Edmund, and his repeated desire for physical penance, suggests that Edmund may have had a particular predeliction towards Nichoas. The fact that his spiritual guide through Purgatory is Nicholas, who is associated with flogging and thus pain, is an important correlation between Edmund's physical spirituality and his

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in England in the southwest in the years before the Conquest, and was a product of Anglo-Saxon, not Norman, activity. The Princeton Index of Christian Art shows the legend of Nicholas the Bishop as being one of the most popular of all Nicholas legends in medieval art - - an indication that the cult was more clerical than claustral. The Nicholas liturgy originated in cathedral, not cloister, and was considered frivolous and impious by conservatives. The text was regularly given in manuscripts of the twelfth century but was not probably in wide circulation before 1060. The Normans popularized this cult and there was a flourishing cult of St. Nicholas in Bavaria between 960 and 1060. Indeed the only saint whose legends are treated in Church plays that are extant and complete is Nicholas. This fact alone points to his popularity. From southwest England, the cult rapidly swept the island so that by the year 1100 Nicholas was venerated by special services in virtually every diocese. For more information, see Charles W. Jones, The Saint Nicholas Liturgy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963) and Jacques LeGoff, The Birth of Purgatory Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

hagiographic counterparts. St Nicholas was associated with
flogging. Thus, Edmund's progress through Purgatory was imbued
with the memories of physical mortification and constantly
reminded of his masochistic longing for lashing by Nicholas, his
guide.

The preeminence of the authority on Purgatory as the guide
would aid in making this revelation more authoritative,
definitive and acceptable. Moreover, with Nicholas as his guide,
Edmund's journey through Purgatory was imbued with sado-
masochistic overtones and a constant reminder of the necessity of
self-mortification in order to receive divine knowledge.

The symbolism surrounding the sado-masochistic aspects of
penance suggested the aggressiveness evident in the relations
between monks. Edmund's account of his reaction to a bleeding
crucifix provides further insight into the underlying
masculinities which informed monastic behaviour.

By considering the nudity of Christ and indeed, the
circumcision of the Lord, as touchstones for the resurrection
mystery for a male mystic, it is possible to gain a deeper
insight into the mystical sexual experiences of the medieval monk
and his unique devotion to the cross. An explication of the
mystery of the circumcision in medieval culture would facilitate
an understanding of the symbolism of the cross and how it affects
the mystic's experience.

The penis of the Christ Child was assigned a crucial,
positive role in the redemption, not only as the proof of

Christ's humanation, but as the earnest of his self-sacrifice.[66]
Theologically, Christ's circumcision served as a connection
between Abraham's covenant with God and as an instrument of grace
for the remission of original sin. Christ's blood paid the
ransom for Adam's sin-- his circumcision became a first
instalment, a down payment on behalf of humanity.[67] Moreover,
Christ's submission to circumcision was understood as a voluntary
gift of his blood, prefiguring and initiating the sacrifice of
the Passion.[68]

Various medieval commentators grappled with this mystery.
Bede saw the circumcision as the ultimate cleansing from all
stain of mortality while Bernard of Clairvaux viewed the
circumcision as proof of Christ's true humanity.[69] The first
pain of circumcision marked the beginning of the path of
suffering to attain spiritual enlightenment. This idea gave rise
to a devotion to the holy foreskin and the Feast of Circumcision
in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[70] The "humanization"

[66]Leo Steinberg, The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and
in Modern Oblivion, 49.

[67]Ibid, 50.

[68]Ibid, 52.

[69]Ibid, 53, 55.

[70]Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later
Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg" in Fragmentation and
Redemption Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion
(New York: Zone Books, 1991), 83. See also, Caroline Walker Bynum,
"Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the
Body: A Scholastic Discussion of Its Medieval and Modern Contexts"
in Fragmentation and Redemption (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 239-
297.

of Christ for the medieval monk meant "enfleshing" Jesus.
"Christ was fully male in gender and sexuality, even to the
involuntary movements of his penis, and as such he represents the
salvation of the totality of what we as [male-defined] human
beings are."[71]   This "enfleshing" of Christ for Edmund could
have taken on various interpretations. The cult of the foreskin
became very popular among women mystics. In fact, some female
mystics understood their marriage to Christ as sealed with the
ring of his foreskin.[72] The humanization of Christ affected
medieval people's understanding of their relationship with him on
many levels.

Yet medieval people saw Christ's penis not primarily as a
sexual organ but as the object of circumcision, the wounded
bleeding flesh. The association of blood and pain with salvation
was intrinsic to the resurrection mystery. Edmund would have
understood the pain of circumcision, even if the procedure had
not been performed on him.[73] What was critical for Edmund was
the voluntary gift of the circumcision of Christ. This shedding
of blood at infancy signalled the lifelong sacrifice of Christ.

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[71]Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later
Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," 84.

[72]See Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious
Practice in the Later Middle Ages," in Fragmentation and Redemption
(New York: Zone Books, 1991), 181-238.

[73]Edmund would have been knowledgable about the practice of
Jewish circumcision in the twelfth-century. For an important
twelfth-century discussion of Jewish circumcision, see Moses
Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed trans., Shloma Pines (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1963).

Although theologians of the twelfth century focused the concern for humanizing conceptions of Christ in the circumcision, it was the blood and suffering that was important and not Christ's sexuality, for what humanity shared with Christ was vulnerability and pain, not a penis. Yet his circumcised foreskin was important to Christ's identity. Medieval thinkers were certain that the body was necessary to "personhood" and sometimes even argued that resurrection was "natural."[74] Christ's identity was as dependent on the fate of his circumcised foreskin as it was on his corporeal body and sacrificial crucifixion. Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi and Angela of Foligno were acutely aware that the body could reveal the divine and that material continuity was crucial to identity. The humanization of Christ and the new emphasis on a personal relationship with God would have profoundly informed Edmund's personal spiritual life.

Prior to receiving his vision, Edmund recounted his personal spiritual experiences in his everyday life. In order to receive absolution one morning before his mystical journey through Purgatory, Edmund called to him two of his brothers who had the power to hear his confession. Edmund made a " . . . full confession of all his sins, of the least omission in his religion or in the commandments of God, and with great contrition and many

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[74]Caroline Walker Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the Body," 254.

tears he desired absolution and obtained it."[75] This effusion

of tears was not abnormal. Margery Kempe was similarly known for

her excessive weeping [76] Indeed, all Christians were supposed

to confess with weeping as a manner of showing contrition for

their sins.

One morning before his vision, Edmund was worshipping and

saw

> . . . not without great astonishment, that the figure
> of Our Lord's body affixed to a cross -- which figure
> and cross are wont to be devoutly kissed and worshipped
> yearly in the convent in remembrance of Our Lord's
> passion, -- was found freshly bleeding from the great
> wound in the right side, and also at the right foot. .
> . . All the brothers came together into the Chapter
> House greatly astonished at these things, and after
> consultation all that were there took penance with
> great contrition of heart, and, lying prostrate and
> weeping in the church, said the seven penitential
> psalms . . . [77]

Edmund later spoke of worshipping the cross on Good Friday, the

day on which his purgatorial vision began. After being told that

in two days it will be Easter, Edmund " . . . began to weep still

more, and said, 'Oh! brethren, should we not have worshipped Our

Lord's cross on Good Friday? And yet we have not worshipped it

together.'"[78] Edmund was then brought " . . . a silver cross .

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[75]Paget, The Revelation, 37.

[76]See John C. Hirsh, The Revelations of Margery Kempe:
paramvstical practices in late medieval England (New York: E. J.
Brill, 1989).

[77]Ibid, 45-46.

[78]Ibid, 54.

. . which he reverently clasped, and with tears watered the foot
of the cross . . ."[79]

Medieval theologians often associated the cross in later
medieval and Renaissance painting and imagery with male
sexuality. The cross was shown bare or nude, without the drapery
of royalty and victory, and the image of Christ on the cross was
often naked as well. Edmund's prologue and introductory remarks
to the vision are filled with references to the cross.

The cross, in general symbolism, was denuded after the
resurrection of the body of Christ. In later medieval and
Renaissance paintings, this cross was accompanied by a nude
Christ.[80] The lack of modesty concerning the genitalia displays
the very work of redemption which promised to free human nature
from its Adamic contagion of shame.[81] Delivered from sin and
shame, the freedom of Christ's sexual member bespeaks that
original innocence which in Adam was lost.[82]

Edmund's reaction to his vision of the bleeding crucifix
revealed how he understood his relationship with Christ and the
Cross. The blood on the right side and on the right foot

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[79]Ibid, 54.

[80]Leo Steinberg, The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and
in Modern Oblivion (New York: A Pantheon/October Book, 1983), 18.
See, for example, Michelangelo's commission to carve a Risen Christ
for a Roman church in 1514.

[81]Ibid, 20, Thomas Aquinas' Summa theologiae, Suppl. q. 81,
art. 3 where he asserts that the resurrected, both male and female,
shall not be ashamed in heaven.

[82]Ibid, 23.

represented the fluid of salvation, the blood of rebirth and nourishment. Edmund and his fellow monks prostrated themselves in front of the altar and wept. All the monks had taken penance one from another. One can imagine the emotional energy in the church after the monks had penitentially lashed one another, followed by the worship of this miraculous blood and the weeping while praying. The hysteria of these monks provides another insight into the expressions of masculinity in the monastery. The monks fed on each others' emotional states and depended on one another to serve as guides to appropriate behaviour in a situation. Edmund devotedly worshipped this miracle and then called together his fellow monks to include them in this ritual.

The spilling of the blood from the crucifix would have further proclaimed the humanity of Christ and his voluntary sacrifice. The monks, aware of Christ's humanity and his nudity on the cross, would have recognized his sacrifice and his woundedness. The resulting emotional hysteria and the penitential activity dictated how these monks related. Worship among monks was emotional, devout and, at times, clearly hysterical. The emotional climate of monastery was volatile. Affective relationships, incidents of sodomy, penitential lashing and hysterical worship characterized the relationships between men in the _Visio_ and provide insight into certain expressions of monastic masculinity.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

The Visio monachi de Evnsham is an important example of
twelfth-century English visionary literature. The Visio reflects
the emerging regulation of spiritual life in the Middle Ages.
The growing importance of confession and penitential practice,
the separation of familial and ecclesiastical ties, and the
development of preaching to instruct monastics: these elements
inform the composition and style of this vision. Edmund's vision
is a work of literature reflecting the changes in ecclesiastical
doctrine of sacramental penance and confession.

The Visio is aimed primarily at instructing monks of
Edmund's own abbey of Eynsham. Edmund tailors his discussion to
his audience. The text is full of allusions to English
historical and legendary figures as well as contemporary examples
from life in the monastery proper. Moreover, his discourse is
overwhelmingly androcentric in its use of examples, didactic
method and aims. The text was written by a man for the education
of men by men. Edmund's Visio monachi de Evnsham is a personal
account, reflecting his own experience. It involves persons well
known to himself and his contemporaries. This familiarity aids in
instructing the monks in the need for contrition, penance and
confession in their spiritual lives.

The Visio monachi de Evnsham may be examined on many levels.

One component of the vision is the personality of Edmund himself
and his influence on the ultimate presentation of the work.
First and foremost, the vision is a deeply personal exhortation
on values and ethics. It is a judgement on the state of the
morality of the twelfth century. It is an individual's call to
his society and his contemporaries to a conversion of heart. The
vision is passionate, a mingling of anger, joy and love, a
mournful sobbing of the heart of one monk for the state of his
brothers. The words of the vision are those of a man in the
wilderness, alone with his God and his emotions. Edmund's voice
carries across the barriers of class, geography and time to
demand conversion, confession and penance and reconciliation with
God. Edmund's language and text, however, are tailored to the
understandings and needs of a male audience.

The masculine voice, therefore, is present in the male-
defined sexual imagery and Edmund's understanding of sexual and
gender relationships. The masculine sexual imagery found in the
first section of the Visio suggests some important aspects of the
emotional and psychological environment within the monastic
setting. A monk's interaction with a more humanized image of
Christ in the twelfth century began to create more emotional and
personal relationship for the monk with the image of Christ and
with religious symbols. Consequently, Edmund's intense feelings
of spiritual love were transferred to the symbol of Christ on a
crucifix. This love, however, was not untainted by Edmund's
masculinity and androcentric worldview. The bleeding crucifix

came to represent a symbol of sacrifice and woundedness.

Moreover, Edmund's actions revealed an important aspect of medieval penance and his own psychological composition. The sado-masochistic characteristics, found in his account of his lashing before his vision, suggest an intense emotional environment in the monastic setting. The suppression of sexuality, desire and carnality in the monastic tradition led to an unspoken and inexpressible aggressiveness. Physical penance was an outlet for this sexual aggressiveness or to assuage guilt over aggressive feelings and a means through which to reassert hierarchies of dominance and privilege.

Edmund's construction of sexual and gender relationships in the vision are also important. One of Edmund's primary concerns was the suppression of the concerns and bonds of the biological family on the monk. A new "spiritual family" with similar kinship bonds and friendships was needed to ease the transition from secular to sacred. Highly affectionate, emotional spiritual friendships among or between the monks replaced the emotional support of the biological family. These spiritual friendships, however, were always subject to carnal temptation which Edmund examined in the form of sodomy.

Edmund's examination of sodomy represented the failure of spiritual friendships to provide an asexual forum in which a monk could strive for greater spiritual perfection. Sodomy was a rejection of natural and divine law and a breakdown of acceptable behaviour between monks. Yet sodomy was particularly a clerical

sin. The close friendships which the cloister engendered, with the tensions of a suppressed sexuality, made the monastic environment charged with emotion. Meanwhile a monk was beginning to have a greater emotional reaction to the humanized image of Christ. These factors made sodomy among the monks perhaps not inevitable but at least understandable.

Edmund's construction of the gender relationships between women and men was completely in agreement with contemporary understandings of their respective roles. Men were dominant, rational and spiritually superior while women were submissive, weak and defined in relation to a woman. Edmund continued to use examples of women to instruct his male audience. Edmund's use of female acts of piety and worship were appropriated in his discussion to further educate men. Women in his vision were instruments of service to instruct wayward men in the path of righteousness.

The _Visio monachi de Evnsham_ contains a clear masculine voice which colours and directs the narration of Edmund's journey through Purgatory. Edmund's use of male sexual imagery and his androcentric understanding of sexual and gender relationships further heightened the masculinity of the text. The _Visio monachi de Evnsham_ is an important medieval source which reveals the prevalence of the masculine voice in medieval mystical literature and in the religious environment of twelfth-century England.

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Vita Auctoris

NAME   Jamie Zettle

PLACE OF BIRTH   Orangeville, Ontario

YEAR OF BIRTH   1968

EDUCATION   Orangeville District Secondary School
                        Orangeville, Ontario
                        1983-1987

                        University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
                        Honours Bachelor of Arts
                        1987-1992

                        University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
                        Master of Arts
                        1992-1994