



1 Canterbury Cathedral.

This book is an investigation of the churches of late medieval England. How they were read, constructed, and contested by their communities and how their most important characteristic – their sanctity – was manifested and understood. It is an attempt to stand in the church, as the Canterbury pilgrims did, and by bringing together textual, visual, and material culture, to show how the laity were not only taught to view the church as a sacred space but to contribute to the production of that sanctity. The pilgrims' experiences in the cathedral and at the shrine of Thomas Becket provide a starting point for developing a reading of sacred space that foregrounds the role of lay practice and that is alert to the social and cultural contexts in which sacred space was operating and the debates in which it was entangled. Paul Strohm argues that

‘the peculiarity of medieval space involves the extent to which it is already symbolically organised by the meaning-making activities of the many generations that have traversed it’.² Consecrated by a ceremony that builds scriptural quotation, liturgical ritual, and communal participation into the very foundations of the building, the church as sacred space is a prime example of a material building and spiritual concept that is already densely laden with meaning. The church was the house of God on earth but in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries this identity was under considerable scrutiny. Groups such as the Lollards asked whether the church community was better off without the church building, that ornamented distraction grown rich in visual decorations at the expense of the poor and needy. But the legacy of the pastoral care reforms of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 saw the church building reinvigorated as a space of teaching and edification. Stained glass windows and wall paintings of pastoral schema such as the Seven Works of Mercy or the Warning against Gossip helped the laity not only to control their behaviour but also to preserve the sanctity of the church by guarding against desecration. Furthermore, increased competition among the parish churches, cathedrals, and pilgrimage sites of medieval England meant that sanctity was increasingly valuable as a form of symbolic capital that could improve a church’s social as well as sacred status in the world.

Sacred spaces such as Canterbury Cathedral were a multimedia project and a community concern. They were constructed out of a fusion of architecture, iconography, material culture, and narrative practice. Master builders and artists worked together to create sacred spaces from stone, stained glass and sculpture, and writers and preachers turned to churches, shrines, and miracle sites as symbols of community, places of spiritual edification, and above all, as God’s house on earth. This study will bring cultural practices such as preaching, liturgical rituals such as church consecration, the visual arts, and the textual record into conversation with modern theoretical approaches, from theories of space and place to ideas of performance, in order to ask the question, as Mary Carruthers suggests, not only ‘what does it mean’ but ‘what is it good for?’³ Sacred spaces were constructed in stone, art, language, and embodied performance in order to glorify God and provide a place for worship, but they were also used to edify communities, negotiate social tensions, and debate theological issues. Sacred space was a key tool for medieval communities to represent, understand, and interact with the world around them.

My reading of the church as sacred space demands an interdisciplinary approach and I will have recourse to research from literary studies, history, art history, and a range of theoretical works throughout this book. In the last two decades scholars have increasingly turned to space as a topic for textual analysis and recent work in medieval studies by Keith Lilley, Robert Barrett Jr., and Catherine Clarke's *Mapping Medieval Chester* project team has sought to integrate textual constructions of space with related practices in other media, from maps and buildings to processions and performances.⁴ Such approaches ask questions not only about the ways in which medieval communities conceived of and represented the space around them but also how that space was lived and practised, and how it participated in the formation of communal identity. The church as sacred space in particular invites such a methodology, as performance and practice are at the core of sacred space from its inception in the consecration ceremony.

Since Paul Strohm's *Theory and the Premodern Text* in 2000, theoretical approaches to medieval texts have flourished. In the introduction to the 2013 *Handbook of Middle English Studies*, in which scholars brought a range of theories to bear upon literary texts, Marion Turner comments that 'Aristotle, Augustine, and Dante are theorists just as much as Derrida, Foucault, and Žižek. Theory helps us to open texts up and allow them to speak to us.'⁵ The fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts that are my focus in this book are just as theoretical as their modern counterparts. From allegorical readings of church architecture to foundation legends, exempla warning against sacrilege to treatises on the relationship between the material and spiritual church, the medieval writers under discussion are themselves asking theoretical questions. What does the church symbolise, how is sanctity produced and maintained, what is sacrilege, how should we read the painted church? Michel Foucault described the Middle Ages as a space of 'emplacement', foregrounding the 'hierarchic ensemble of places' such as sacred and profane, celestial and terrestrial.⁶ In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre argued that the Middle Ages is 'inhabited, haunted by the church' and he asks 'what would remain of the Church if there were no churches?'⁷ This is precisely the question that arises in Middle English debates on the material church in the light of Lollard concerns. How important was the building to the idea of the church? Both medieval and modern texts share an interest in exploring such theoretical issues as the relationship between building and concept, the production of space, and models of

spatial hierarchy. Turner concludes that ‘theory, in productive relationship with texts, can act as a catalyst, enabling dynamic reading experiences’.⁸ To encounter the sacred space of the church in the Middle Ages was a dynamic experience and by drawing upon modern theorists who share a focus on practice, production, and a synthesis between material and intellectual framings of space, I propose a new way of reading and understanding the medieval church in the modern world.

The dynamism of sacred space can be clearly seen in the depiction of the restoration of St Paul’s Cathedral in the Middle English miracle narrative *St Erkenwald*:

Mony a mery mason was made þer to wyrke,
 Harde stones for to hewe wyt eggit toles,
 Mony a grubber in grete þe grounde for to seche
 þat þe fundement on fyrst shuld þe fote halde.
 And as þai makkyde and mynyde a meruayle þai founden
 As 3et in crafty cronecles is kydde þe memorie.⁹

Here the construction of sacred space is depicted as skilled and joyful physical labour. Merry masons chisel at the stone with specialist tools, men dig deep into the ground to locate the foundations, and as they ‘make’ and ‘mine’ they discover a marvel: the uncorrupted body of a pagan judge who speaks to the bishop and the people about his plight as a righteous heathen. This moment in *St Erkenwald* figures the restoration of the church as an energetic and industrious process involving individuals whose collective effort and creativity unearths a marvel in their shared history. The late Middle Ages saw considerable rebuilding work being undertaken in churches and cathedrals across England as communities sought not only to maintain and repair but also to enlarge and elaborate upon their buildings, adding spires or extending porches, installing stained glass windows and populating the nave with devotional images. Sacred space was often a building site and as such occupied a prominent place in the public consciousness as medieval communities came into close contact with the material fabric of their buildings. And at such moments, they looked to their shared sacred history for support and encouragement. Miracles remembered in ‘crafty cronecles’, such as the one in *St Erkenwald*, were a powerful incentive for communities to honour their sacred spaces. *St Erkenwald*’s use of the alliterative ‘makkyde and mynyde’ alerts us to the productive relationship between textual and material creation; the Middle

English verb ‘to make’ is used both of material construction and poetic composition.¹⁰ *St Erkenwald* not only records the miraculous, it re-enacts it and brings it to life in the contemporary world. As Sari Katajala-Pelltomaa argues, ‘the recollection of miracles can be seen as an interaction with the sacred’ that strengthens and renews the original moment of sanctity.¹¹ Such interactions are especially beneficial when a community is rebuilding or restoring its church, as we shall see in *The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew’s Church* in Chapter 2 of this book.

A truly sacred space, however, relies upon the presence of God as well as human endeavour. In *St Erkenwald*, the miracle of the uncorrupted body and the subsequent miraculous baptism of the pagan judge made God’s presence known; at Canterbury Cathedral, it was the miracles of St Thomas Becket. Sacred space is often manifested in the form of miracles, instances of God’s supernatural works and intervention in the world. In *The Sacred and Profane*, a study that forms the foundation of my discussion of sanctity in this book, the historian of religion Mircea Eliade argues that in order to be made visible and to operate in the world, sanctity must be made manifest.¹² God’s presence is, of course, ubiquitous but a sacred space represents an intensification of that presence, a space in which God is experienced directly through supernatural events or visions. Eliade calls such a manifestation a ‘hierophany’, which he defines as ‘an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching the territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different’.¹³ A miracle creates a sacred space by marking out the place in which it occurs as ‘qualitatively different’ to the quotidian space that surrounds it, and such miracles can occur as freely in urban space – in city streets and domestic dwellings – as in ritually consecrated spaces such as the church. My focus in this book is on sacred space because while the church is the cornerstone of the medieval concept of sacred space, sacred outposts can emerge elsewhere as a result of miracles associated with the church. Any space can become sacred if God manifests his power and presence there and, conversely, a consecrated space such as a parish church can become transformed into a profane space if its sanctity is desecrated by sinful behaviour.

Sanctity is not confined to a single place, building, or geographical location – it is fundamentally spacious. As God’s house on earth, the church operates as a crucial centre of sanctity but its material objects can travel into the surrounding space and create spaces that are sanctified by association and that reinforce the original source

of sanctity by being a site of further miracles. A consecrated host might calm a storm at sea; the sounds of church bells might free a man from prison. Miracles can occur on a pilgrimage route or at a natural spring or well.¹⁴ Even prayers to the saint of a particular church can be efficacious as mentally imagining the space allows devotees to gain access to its sanctity even at a spatial remove. Sacred space is fluid, contagious, and unconstrained by material boundaries. It is flexible, adaptable, and manifests itself in a range of forms and environments.

The characteristic that all sacred spaces share, however, is their intense potency and their ability to organise and redraw the map of the surrounding space. Sacred spaces are magnetic and attractive, and as Eliade argues, they become 'an absolute fixed point, a centre' of orientation.¹⁵ The parish church is one such centre in the local environment and many of the texts under discussion in this book aim to promote and preserve that centrality. When a sacred space is created through miracles, however, a new topography is established as communities gather and regroup around the miracle site, going on pilgrimage to venerate the space and realigning their sacred map to accommodate the new site. Canterbury Cathedral, the 'absolute fixed point' in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and its continuations, was the most popular pilgrimage destination in medieval England and it formed the centre of the sacred map of the country, rather like Jerusalem in medieval *mappa mundi*. Canterbury's centrality in medieval literature and culture makes it a perfect test case for examining how sacred space operates in late medieval England. How might *The Canterbury Interlude*'s recognisable cast of Chaucerian characters read the space and how might they produce, or destabilise, its sanctity?

The Canterbury Interlude: Chaucer's pilgrims in sacred space

The Canterbury Interlude and the Merchant's Tale of Beryn is found in a copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* known as MS Northumberland 455. The manuscript dates from 1450–70 but the text was composed as much as half a century earlier, perhaps to coincide with the 1420 jubilee of Thomas Becket's martyrdom.¹⁶ The text is anonymous but a Latin couplet at the end of the 'Tale of Beryn' attributes the text to a 'son of the church of St Thomas' (*Filius ecclesie Thome*, 4024). This, coupled with additional evidence, suggests that the author might have been a monk at the cathedral with responsibilities for Becket's shrine.¹⁷ The *Interlude* depicts the

pilgrims' arrival in Canterbury, their stay at a pilgrimage hostel called the Checker of the Hoop, and culminates in the fabliau adventures of the Pardoner with Kit the Tapster. Crucially, the text also depicts the pilgrims' experiences in the cathedral (Figure 1) and it gives an insight into the significant urban spaces of the city, such as the city walls. The *Interlude* has most often been analysed by literary critics in terms of its Chaucerian indebtedness but more recently Robert Sturges has argued that rather than assessing the *Interlude*-author as a reader of Chaucer, we should instead examine 'how its author uses Chaucer to serve his contemporary ends' and 'how adaptable Chaucer is to the needs of a later poet concerned with his own cultural circumstances'.¹⁸ For Sturges, the *Interlude* exhibits class and gender anxieties which are played out in the urban space of the city. I would argue that the text also manifests late medieval anxieties surrounding the use and meaning of church buildings and how the laity ought to understand and interact with their sacred confines. The episode has frequently been discussed by art historians as part of the textual evidence for medieval attitudes to the visual arts, attitudes that, as T. A. Heslop puts it, are full of 'ambivalence and contradiction'.¹⁹ Here I want to explore the text's dramatisation of lay engagement with church art and with devotional practice at the sacred destination of their pilgrimage, the shrine of Becket. The *Interlude* marshals a familiar group of characters, about whom the reader shares certain expectations, in order to play into, challenge, and frustrate late medieval approaches to sacred space and its visual codes. Sanctity, as I will argue throughout this book, is dependent upon lay practice for its production and maintenance and in the *Interlude* we are given an opportunity to see that practice in action, and the consequences for sacred space when it is carried out by less than ideal participants.

When the Miller and his companions enter the cathedral and look at the stained glass, they engage in a fourfold process of interpretation that pays very careful attention to its visual codes. To return to the quotation with which I began:

The Pardoner and the Miller and other lewde sotes
 Sought hemselff in the chirch, right as lewd gotes,
 Pyred fast and poured highe oppon the glase,
 Counterfeting gentilmen, the armes for to blase,
 Diskyveryng fast the peyntour, and for the story mourned
 And ared also – right as rammes horned!
 'He bereth a balstaff,' quod the toon, 'and els a rakes ende'.
 'Thow faillest,' quod the Miller, 'thowe hast nat wel thy mynde.

It is a spere, yf thowe canst se, with a prik tofore
 To bussh adown his enmy and thurh the sholder bore.
 'Pese!' quod the Hoost of Southwork. 'Let stond the wyndow glased.
 Goth up and doth your offerynge. Ye semeth half amased.' (147–58)

Firstly, they focus on the visual iconography. They look intently and with purpose ('pyred' and 'poured') in order to discover what the image represents ('diskyveryng fast the peyntour'). Then they 'mourn' (meditate or consider) the 'story' within which the image operates, 'ared' (interpret) the meaning of the image, and finally debate among themselves as to their conclusions. Although the pilgrims are ultimately unsuccessful in their interpretation, as I will discuss further below, their reading practice is systematic and thorough. Indeed, it mirrors the model proposed in the fifteenth-century treatise on the Decalogue, *Dives and Pauper*, in response to Dives' question, 'how shulde I rede in þe book of peynture and of ymagerye?'²⁰ Phrased in terms of the popular trope that imagery is the book of the laity, Pauper's initial response is to offer an interpretation of the primary Christian symbol, the cross. He urges Dives repeatedly to 'take heid' of different aspects of the image and its meaning: 'take heid' of the crown of thorns and the shedding of Christ's blood 'for to dystroyze þe heye synne of pryde'; 'take heid' how Christ's hands are nailed to the cross to 'dystroyze þe synne þat Adam and Eue dedyn wyt here hondys' when they took the apple; and so on (p. 83). Leaving aside for a moment that Pauper's example focuses on a purely religious symbol, the *Interlude* pilgrims do 'take heid' of the stained glass and they do try to identify the particular elements of the scene in front of them. Pauper tells Dives that imagery 'sumwhat betokenyzt in special, sumqhat in comoun and in general' and he explains that 'in special tokene', for example, the Virgin is depicted with a child in her left arm 'in tokene' that she is the mother of God and with a lily or a rose in her right hand 'in tokene' that she is a virgin and the flower of all women (p. 91). The saints, too, have their special symbols: St Peter and his keys, St Paul and his sword, St Katherine and her wheel, St Margaret and her cross and dragon (pp. 91–3). These attributes not only have symbolic meaning – St Peter was given the keys to heaven by Christ, for example – but they also function as cues for narrative recollection. The image of St Margaret reminds the viewer that 'qhanne þe dragoun deuowryd here she blissyd here & be vertue of þe cros þe foul dragoun brast and she cam out of hym heyl and hool' (p. 93). The *Interlude*-pilgrims rack their brains

for a narrative with which they can make sense of the Canterbury glass, reminding us that religious imagery often functions as an aid to remembrance rather than a tool for teaching something new.²¹ But at this stage of the process, the pilgrims falter and with no authority figure like Pauper to turn to, they begin to quarrel among themselves.

Having moved from the literal meaning to the narrative context, the pilgrims each arrive at an individual interpretation that is judged and negotiated through communal dialogue. This is crucial because reading imagery, and reading sacred space, is a communal and social practice. Each reading by a particular community of readers at a particular time generates its own interpretation, about which there might be dissent and disagreement. The verb of interpretation that the *Interlude*-author uses, 'ared', supports this density of meaning as the verb is used elsewhere in the text of the interpretation of dreams, another mode of representation with deeply symbolic significance that also requires a complex and layered reading process.²² Michael Camille argues for the similarity between the process of reading text and image, focusing on the role of performance and social dialogue:

Medieval readers also used books in the ways they used images; in groups, speaking the words out loud, referring back and forth, repeating, returning, even adding to or correcting the unframed continuity of the work. Perception was a performance.²³

The pilgrims' act of perception here is doubly performative as it is, of course, the narrative construction of the *Interlude*-author. The meaning of sacred space is encoded in the building and its decorations by the church hierarchy, of which the *Interlude*-author is most likely a member, but it is read and interpreted by social groups who may, in the case of the pilgrims, be without the mediating presence of a priest. This leaves the interpretative process dangerously open and unpoliced, and rather than the window contributing to the production of sacred space, it generates confusion and argument. While it is unlikely that the *Interlude*-author, as a Canterbury monk, would have any sympathy with the Lollard position on imagery, the text's dramatization of the pilgrims' misinterpretation does raise similar concerns about the efficacy of visual representation as a stand-alone teaching tool.²⁴

The pilgrims' disagreement in the *Interlude* centres upon the implement that the figure in the window is holding and it unsettles the easy equivalence between 'tokene' and narrative that Pauper

rehearsed. The relationship between sign and signified is not straightforward here:

'He bereth a balstaff,' quod the toon, 'and els a rakes ende.'
 'Thou faillest,' quod the Miller, 'thowe hast nat wel thy mynde.
 It is a spere, yf thowe canst se, with a prik tofore
 To bussh adown his enmy and thurh the sholder bore.' (153–6)

It is significant that the Miller is portrayed in debate with a nameless pilgrim here ('quod the toon') as it demonstrates that the cathedral is a space for all, not just the known. This nameless pilgrim suggests that the figure in the window is bearing a staff or rake but the Miller forcefully disagrees, proposing instead that the man carries a spear. John Bowers suggests that the image that might have provoked such controversy could be the twelfth-century panel from the Ancestors of Christ window, featuring Adam tilling the earth:

It would be appropriate if the image causing such confusion in interpretation – a man with a staff? or rake? or spear? – were the panel originally in the north window, opposite the main southwest entrance, showing Adam delving the earth since the Miller and his friends so clearly belong to the unregenerated class of the Old Adam.²⁵

The pilgrims' inability to recognise the image could be a sign of their sin and an indication to the reader that while they might be able to enter the symbolic Jerusalem on their terrestrial pilgrimage, the heavenly Jerusalem is currently out of reach. Madeline Caviness argues that many of the images in the cathedral, most notably the typological windows, are particularly challenging and that they were directed at the monks of the cathedral rather than the general populous. Many of the images are 'bookish and esoteric' and Caviness suggests that 'the typological windows were less a poor man's Bible than an elaborate display of twelfth-century theology which could only be fully understood by the literate'.²⁶ The ability to successfully read the visual codes of sacred space was determined in large part by education and literacy, and by the status of the particular foundation. Canterbury Cathedral served multiple purposes: it was part of the Benedictine monastery, the seat of the archbishop of Canterbury, and a major pilgrimage site, and as such its visual iconography was seen by multiple audiences. The Canterbury pilgrims may not have been the target audience for the typological windows and as such their inability to read the image is

understandable. When they reached Becket's shrine in the Trinity Chapel, however, they would have seen the miracle windows that depicted pilgrims just such as themselves, visiting the shrine and encountering the saint; images that were deliberately designed for their edification and to validate their journey to the shrine.

But as Helen Barr has recently pointed out, the 'identity of the stick-like object over which the pilgrims squabble is never revealed'.²⁷ Indeed, Barr asserts that it is not 'possible conclusively to identify the window in question':

There are numerous windows in Trinity Chapel which feature such an implement: either as a weapon, pilgrim staff or St Thomas's pastoral staff. With no localisation of the window, what the pilgrims see has the potential to figure an implement that has a range of significances from healing to injury across the whole social spectrum.²⁸

Without a clear referent for the window, although it is tempting for us to judge the pilgrims' reading practice as ineffectual, we cannot be sure on what grounds they are wrong. Their interpretation might also be affected not only by their location in the cathedral but by their spatial positioning. Michael Camille comments wryly that if the image is the figure of Adam from the twelfth-century Ancestors of Christ, the windows were 'far above them, both spatially and cognitively'.²⁹ The *Interlude*-author does note that they 'poured highe' upon the glass in order to see it and when the Miller disagrees with his fellow pilgrim's interpretation, he comments 'yf thowe canst se', which suggests that their confused interpretation could be a result of the window's location inhibiting a clear view of its iconography. Any analysis of sacred space should take account of its physical coordinates and be aware that the lived, practised experience of sacred space is shaped by the access that different groups have to the space, both physical and visual, but also in terms of social status and knowledge. On a basic level, the laity were excluded from the most sacred space of the church, the chancel, and their knowledge of religious narratives was to a large extent dependent upon the education they received from their parish priest. The *Interlude* makes the status of the Miller and his companions abundantly clear when he repeats the Middle English word for uneducated twice in the space of as many lines: 'The Pardoner and the Miller and other *lewde* sotes/Sought hemselff in the chirch, right as *lewde* gotes' (147–8, italics mine). Lay education was a major concern following the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, and in the third chapter of this book I will analyse the

didactic materials used by priests to teach the laity the meaning of sacred space and their responsibility for its continued maintenance. What is additionally important for our understanding of *The Canterbury Interlude*, however, is the status of the church as a pilgrimage site. While pilgrimage to Thomas Becket was hugely popular in medieval England, the fact remains that Canterbury Cathedral was an unfamiliar space to most pilgrims. It was not their local parish church, with its recognisable visual codes, a space with which parishioners were encouraged to develop a personal, emotional relationship based on loyalty and familiarity over an extended period of time. The *Interlude*-pilgrims are encountering unknown imagery in a new and awe-inspiring space. It is perhaps to be expected that they fail in their first attempt to read it.

The disagreement between the pilgrims is expressed with considerable vehemence, however. The Miller declares: 'Thow faillest! Thowe has not wel thy mynde!' (154). Sacred space is important, it is worth arguing about, and it demands an interpretative response. But it also provides an opportunity for individuals to assert themselves within the group and to establish their social superiority. Chaucer himself recognised this in the *General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales* when he describes the Wife of Bath's behaviour in church. She has to be the first to make her offering, otherwise she is 'out of alle charitee' and on a Sunday, her headdress is so elaborate that the narrator swears 'they weyeden ten pound'.³⁰ The Wife's appearance at church is primarily a social performance here. The narrator also relates her marital history with reference to the church, 'housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve', and while this refers to the tradition of marriages taking place in the church porch, it reminds us that sacred space is also social space, even amorous space.³¹ We might recall the parish clerk Absolon in *The Miller's Tale* in this context who, when 'sensynge the wyves of the parisshe faste' on a holy day, 'many a lovely look on hem he caste/And namely on this carpenteris wyf'.³² The pastoral care texts that will be the focus of Chapter 3 demonstrate that sacred space never operated apart from social and secular concerns. As Katherine French has shown, the 'centrality of the parish church' in the lives of medieval communities was not purely due to its status as a sacred space. The church was used by its parishioners for a variety of other legitimate purposes: 'business, legal settlements, sociability, and entertainment, in addition to worship' brought parishioners to the church.³³ The laity may have been warned against gossip and amorous encounters in the nave,

and fairs and games in the churchyard, but this did not mean that they did not take place. In fact, the very proliferation of pastoral material addressing such activities suggests that they were a regular facet of parish life in the church.

The social status of the pilgrims is foregrounded by the *Interlude* when the Miller and his companions attempt to read the heraldic symbols in the stained glass, ‘counterfeting gentilmen, the armes for to blase’ (150).³⁴ There is clear social comedy here, as the Miller and Pardoner assume an air of nobility in order to pretend that they can read the armorial bearings in the glass, but this incident also foregrounds the way in which sacred space was used to display and negotiate power structures. Monarchs, nobles, and increasingly, the middle classes were aware of the power that could be conferred by the establishment of a visual identity in sacred space.³⁵ Social display in sacred space came in for considerable criticism, however. The Lollards foregrounded the consequences for the poor when money was donated to church decorations rather than charitable works of mercy and in *Piers Plowman*, Langland’s narrator declares:

God to alle good folk swich gravityng defendeth [forbids]
To writen in wyndowes of hir wel dedes
— An aventure pride be peynted there, and pomp of the world.³⁶

Support for the material church as a sign of the ‘pomp of the world’ will be discussed in my final chapter and here in the *Interlude*, the pilgrims’ undisciplined gaze wanders from the depiction of biblical subjects that contribute to the sanctity of the space to the ostentatiously social display of their superiors. The pilgrims place the social at the centre of their vision and God and his saints are relegated to the margins. In the pilgrims’ defence, however, this secularity is already present in the windows; they are merely responding to the heraldry that is displayed before them. The secular and the sacred are inextricably linked in the late Middle Ages.

While the Miller and Pardoner might not be able to ‘blase’ the heraldry in the stained glass, they do place value on another form of visual display available at the cathedral: pilgrimage badges. After the visit to Becket’s shrine and ‘other places of holynes’ in the cathedral, the *Interlude*-author tells us:

Then, as manere and custom is, signes there they boughte,
For men of contre shuld know whom they had soughte.
Ech man set his sylver in such thing as they liked.
And in the meenwhile, the Miller had i-piked

His bosom ful of signes of Caunterbury broches,
 Huch the Pardoner and he pryvely in hir pouches
 They put hem afterward, that noon of hem it wist,
 Save the Sompnour seid somewhat and seyed to hem, 'List,
 Halff part!' quod he pryvely, rownyng on hir ere. (171–9)

The badges advertise to 'men of contre' that the pilgrims have visited the shrine of St Thomas. Such souvenirs enabled the visitor both to take a symbolic token of the shrine back home with them and to use that token to construct a competitive devotional identity in relation to their neighbours. The more pilgrimage badges you have collected, the more sacred spaces you have visited, and therefore the more 'pious' you are in relation to your neighbours. The Miller and the Pardoner's strategy of stuffing their pockets with 'Caunterbury broches', however, demonstrates an insistently material and earthbound approach to pilgrimage. The Canterbury badge, some of which were in the shape of St Thomas's shrine, is a 'sign' of the space in which the pilgrims have made their devotions (175); it could even become a contact relic if it came into physical contact with the shrine.³⁷ But the Miller does not exchange his 'sylver' for one badge (173), he steals a pocketful of badges that he and the Pardoner attempt to conceal 'pryvely' (176). The Pardoner's profession, and confession of avarice in his prologue in *The Canterbury Tales*, may give us reason to believe that he will attempt to sell on the badges for his own profit, reducing their sacred significance to monetary value and personal gain.

While it is not surprising to see this behaviour if we think back to Chaucer's *Tales*, we might not expect to encounter theft in the cathedral if we consider the authorship of the *Interlude*. Peter Brown suggests that the author might be one of the monks 'charged with custodial duties' at the shrine of Becket and that the text's mention of the pilgrims' gifts of silver brooches and rings (134) reflects the author's concern for the shrine's income.³⁸ By stealing pilgrimage badges, the Miller and Pardoner are depriving the cathedral of crucial income, but even more gravely, they are committing the sin of sacrilege. As the Parson's sermon on the Seven Deadly Sins in *The Canterbury Tales* reminds us, stealing from holy church constitutes sacrilege and a devout reader of the *Interlude* would recognise that the pilgrims' behaviour constitutes a violation not only of appropriate pilgrimage practice but of sacred space itself.³⁹ An individual's personal virtue or vice was brought into sharp focus by an encounter with sacred space. In sermon exempla, the presence of the unrepentant or the immoral

often caused sacred space to respond to the threat of desecration by violently ejecting such sinners or publicly revealing their shame. Sacred space functions as a moral barometer with an individual's spiritual condition being revealed through their proximity to the physical building. Although the Miller remains unpunished for his behaviour in the *Interlude*, the narrator shows his awareness of this trope when he has Kit the Tapster describe her dream to the Pardoner:

How I was in a chirch when it was al i-massed
 And was in my devocioune tyl service was al doon,
 Tyll the preest and the clerk boystly bad me goon
 And put me out of the chirch with an eger mode. (102–5)

Kit dreams that she is ejected from the church by a priest and clerk with 'eger mode' (angrily) and this implies that she is an immoral character deserving of censure. The author goes on to comment that he will narrate her trickery of the Pardoner 'though it be no grete holynes for to prech this ilk matere' (119); the use of 'prech' and 'holynes' here ironically compounds her sinful behaviour. Medieval rituals of penance often required sinners to be barred from the church, to safeguard both the space and its community from desecration. As Barbara Hanawalt and Michel Kobialka note in *Medieval Practices of Space*, 'spatial distance' is often used as a 'healing device for conflict'.⁴⁰ The moral disruption that the sinner poses is avoided by their spatial remove and in this episode in the *Interlude*, the author excludes Kit from the dream-church. When we then witness the behaviour of the Pardoner and Miller some sixty lines after the author's depiction of Kit, our moral judgement is encouraged. When the 'lewd' pilgrims enter the cathedral, the narrator comments that they 'sought hemselff in the chirch' (148), and the verb 'sought' has a telling ambiguity here. They 'place or assemble' themselves in the church but they are also expected to seek for themselves and to map out an identity, both individually and as part of the Christian community.⁴¹ Sacred space intensifies an individual's identity and forces them to place themselves in relation to its sacred confines, spatially, socially, and most importantly, spiritually.

Placement within space also comes to the fore when the pilgrims enter the cathedral. The church door is a liminal space that was often used in medieval ritual to purify and reconfigure the community; the 'churching' of women, for example, took place at

the door, as did rituals of penance in which the sinful were ejected and the repentant welcomed back into the community.⁴² When the pilgrims reach the door of the cathedral, they enter according to their position within the three estates:

Then atte chirch dorr the curtesy gan to ryse,
 Tyl the Knyght of gentilnes that knewe righte wele the guyse
 Put forth the prelates, the Person and his fere.
 A monk that toke the spryngill with a manly cher
 And did as the maner is, moilled al hir pates,
 Everich after other, righte as they were of states.
 The Frere feynded fetously the spryngil for to hold
 To spryng oppon the remnaunt, that for his cope he nold
 Have lafft that occupacioune in that holy plase,
 So longed his holy conscience to se the Nonnes fase! (135–44)

The Knight ushers the churchmen of the party into the cathedral first, as befits his status at the top of the social hierarchy and the ecclesiastical status of the prelates. The pilgrims then follow ‘righte as they were of states’ but the Friar clashes over the sprinkling of the holy water with one of the Canterbury monks. It is appropriate that the monk should bless the pilgrims as they enter the cathedral, which is under the jurisdiction of the monastery, but the Friar attempts to usurp this office in order to see the Nun’s face. The irony of his ‘holy conscience’ in comparison with ‘that holy plase’ is pointed here; a central church practice is being performed at the threshold to sacred space without the holiness that should attend it.

The competition between the monk and friar reflects the conflict between the monastic and mendicant orders more generally in this period. Anti-fraternal satire was widespread throughout the Middle Ages and in the *Interlude*, as Bowers put it, ‘we should not be surprised by such snide references from a monk-poet with an institutional bias against the mendicant orders’.⁴³ The Canterbury monk who greets the pilgrims at the shrine of Becket is, of course, a ‘goodly monke’ and he does his institutional duty by teaching the pilgrims about the holy relics that they encounter there (167). Rivalry between monks, mendicants, and parish priests played a significant role in the promotion of sacred space in this period. There was considerable competition for the attention, devotions, and financial support of the laity from wandering friars and great sites of pilgrimage such as Canterbury or Walsingham, and the local parish church often made use of its sanctity as a key resource for self-promotion. The sanctity of a site was a powerful way

to attract the laity and this was often advertised in terms of the miracles that had taken place there. The more sacred a space, the more likely it was to attract visitors, and as I have already noted, it is possible that the *Interlude* itself was composed to advertise the shrine and bolster its reputation on the occasion of the 1420 jubilee of Becket's martyrdom. Brown notes that at least one Canterbury monk was making use of texts to promote the benefits of pilgrimage to the shrine at this time, penning a Latin poem that was not only 'pinned to a prominent position' within the cathedral but also attached to the door of St Paul's Cathedral.⁴⁴ Competition between sacred spaces is an important theme in my second chapter, focusing on the relationship between St Bartholomew the Great in London and its neighbours, both local and international. Texts play a crucial role in the promotion of sanctity and here the depiction of the Canterbury pilgrims encourages readers to follow in their footsteps. As Brown states, the *Interlude* would have been 'capable not only of entertaining but creating the pleasing impression among listeners that by visiting Canterbury they would become nothing less than Chaucer's pilgrims incarnate, enacting his fiction, enjoying the jokes and bonhomie and playing out the appropriate roles. In the course of doing so, they would bring the *Canterbury Tales* to fruition by arriving in the city and visiting the shrine.'⁴⁵

The Chaucerian context, coupled with the 'lewd' pilgrims' argument over the meaning of the stained glass, foregrounds the importance of narrative practice in the construction and maintenance of sacred space. The pilgrims' argument is in many ways a particularly Chaucerian response. Reading sacred space generates the telling of competitive tales and sacred space can accommodate and sustain multiple readings simultaneously, even if the Miller's decidedly un-sacred interpretation of the man with the spear to 'bussh adown his enemy' suggests that not all readings should be equally valid (156). Telling tales in a Chaucerian context is a social affair. The tales that the pilgrims tell establish and negotiate their position in the social hierarchy. The tales and treatises that I will examine in this book also establish relationships between communities and their churches, individuals and their own salvation, and explore the consequences for sacred space when they do so. Secular tales are often seen as antithetical to devout practice and a distraction from spiritual duties such as church attendance. In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer's Parson delivers a sermon on the Seven Deadly Sins, telling the Host in no uncertain terms: 'Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me.'⁴⁶ Although as we shall see in

Chapter 3 of this book, sermons and penitential handbooks relied heavily upon tales and fables to achieve their didactic ends. In his criticism of pilgrimage, the Lollard William Thorpe castigates those who, like the Canterbury group, bring with them men and women who can sing ‘rowtinge songis’ and play bagpipes like the Miller to entertain them on the journey, concluding that ‘if þese men and wymmen ben a moneþe oute in her pilgrimage, manye of hem an half 3eere aftir schulen be greete ianglers, tale tellers and lyeris’.⁴⁷ For Thorpe, pilgrimage fostered jangling and sins of the tongue. When the Miller and his companions enter the cathedral in the *Interlude*, they are unable to entirely rid themselves of the habit of telling competitive tales. In *Dives and Pauper*, lay fondness for tales is even more problematic: Pauper claims that the laity would rather ‘heryn a tale or a song of Robyn Hood or of som rybaudye þan to heryn messe or matynys’ (p. 189). But this dichotomy is in fact misleading. As Katherine French has shown, even tales of outlaws could benefit the church as there is evidence that Robin Hood revels were performed for parish fundraising, in one instance funding the restoration of the community’s image of St George.⁴⁸ Just as sacred and secular imagery exist side by side in the visual art of the church, the relationship between sacred space and tale-telling can be productive as well as potentially disruptive.

In the *Interlude*, the tussle between the monk and the friar, and the disagreements between the ‘lewd’ pilgrims, shows that the authority to control, access and define sacred space was contested and not necessarily equally distributed. Sacred spaces were always at stake as their sanctity conferred power and prestige on those who controlled them. The verbal and visual motifs which construct sacred space thus represent a vocabulary of desire, possession and ownership as they enable a community or individual to stake a claim to their sacred space. As we have seen with the Miller and his companions, those claims were often contradictory and competitive, and each utterance has a performative role in transforming the space according to the desires of the speaker. The group that had the most influence over the construction and interpretation of sacred space was, of course, the ecclesiastical hierarchy. They structured the laity’s experience of sacred space in the liturgy and taught them how to behave within it. In the medieval church, the relationship between the clergy and laity was represented by their access to sacred space. The laity were housed in the nave and were responsible for its upkeep, but the most sacred space of the church, the chancel, was restricted to the clergy. The language

that was used to construct the sacred was also the domain of the literate ecclesiastical hierarchy and this is especially important to remember when analysing textual depictions of sacred space such as the *Interlude*. The language used to describe the stained glass windows is not in fact the Miller's, it belongs to the Canterbury monk who composed the text, and it is not surprising therefore to find the pilgrims at a loss to interpret its sanctity when they are depicted without a firm ecclesiastical lead. The absence of authoritative guidance leads to an absence of sanctity.

The representation of sacred space can be understood further through the concepts of *langue* and *parole* in the field of linguistics. *Langue*, as formulated by Saussure, is defined as the system of language that every member of society shares. All the sacred spaces discussed in this book share a number of major image clusters that function as a form of *langue* or a lexicon of sanctity: the 'House of God' and the 'Gate of Heaven' (Genesis, 28.17), for example, the cruciform church imitating the body of Christ on the cross, or the church as an image of Jerusalem. Every sacred space draws upon these shared motifs to some degree but each construction of sacred space also establishes a particular identity in the local environment that we might think of as a form of *parole*, or an individual's language use. In the *Interlude*, the cathedral is understood universally as the 'House of God' but more specifically, it is also the house of Becket, and indeed the Canterbury monk's house. Norman Fairclough comments that while Saussure's formulation assumes that 'everyone in a language community has equal access to and command of its language', 'in reality access to and command of standard languages are unequal'.⁴⁹ This can be seen clearly in the responses of the pilgrims in the *Interlude* which resonate with a larger picture of competition for control over sacred space in the period. The majority of the texts that I will discuss in this book are produced by the ecclesiastical hierarchy and they attempt to provide a script for the laity to understand, produce and safeguard sacred space. But it is important to remember that the depiction of lay practice that we encounter does not necessarily originate with, or is under the control of, the laity themselves. In the final chapter of this book, I will turn to the Lollard texts that aim to wrest back control for the devout layperson by showing how the true church is the devotional community and that the material building and its decorations not only hinder lay practice but destroy the hopes of the poor and needy. The author of the *Interlude* is no Lollard but

his depiction of a lay audience unable to engage with the stained glass windows successfully chimes uncomfortably with Lollard critiques of church decoration.

Despite the 'lewd' pilgrims failing to read the stained glass, we do find a model of positive pilgrimage practice in the *Interlude*. The Knight and his companions make straight for the shrine, 'to do that they were com fore' (146), and the Host holds up this behaviour as a good example when he intervenes to restore order to the pilgrim company:

'Pese!' quod the Hoost of Southwork. 'Let stond the wyndow glased.
Goth up and doth yeur offerynge. Ye semeth half amased.
Sith ye be in company of honest men and good,
Worcheth somewhat after, and let the kynd of brode
Pas for a tyme. I hold it for the best,
For who doth after company may lyve the bet in rest.' (157–62)

The Host encourages the pilgrims to make their offerings to the shrine and to follow the example of the 'honest men and good' within their company. He does suggest that this will require them to 'let the kynde of brode/Pas for a tyme', by which he means that they should forsake the behaviour natural to their kind, implying that good Christian behaviour does not come instinctively to them.⁵⁰ But the pilgrims are able to adapt their behaviour effectively, as the following passage demonstrates:

Then passed they forth boystly, goglyng with hir hedes,
Kneled adown tofore the shryne, and hertlich hir bedes
They preyd to Seynt Thomas, in such wise as they couth.
And sith the holy relikes ech man with his mowth
Kissed, as a goodly monke the names told and taught.
And sith to other places of holynes they raughte,
And were in hir devocioun tyl service were al doon,
And sith they drowgh to dynerward, as it drew to noon. (163–70)

Initially the pilgrims are overwhelmed by the space – they are 'goglyng with hir hedes' (163) as they make their way to the shrine, reinforcing the Host's opinion that they 'semeth half amased' (158). Marvel is a characteristic response to the sacred, encouraging veneration and impressing upon the viewer that the space really is the house of God on earth, but in conjunction with their 'boystly' or boisterous manner here, the emphasis seems to be more upon their earthbound behaviour rather than the heavenly potential of their surroundings. Nevertheless, when they reach the shrine, the

pilgrims perform the appropriate devotional gestures. They kneel, pray, and with the assistance of the cathedral monk, they kiss each of the relics in turn. This devotional performance is crucial to the production of sacred space. The pilgrims' veneration generates and reinforces the sanctity of the shrine. Located in the Trinity Chapel, the shrine was surrounded by stained glass depicting pilgrims and miracles at the shrine. The *Interlude*-pilgrims become part of this community of believers when they perform their devotions, mirroring the pilgrims in the glass whose presence testifies to the great sanctity of the saint and his shrine. Visual art and devotional practice mutually reinforce the production of sacred space.

What is additionally important about the pilgrims' behaviour at the shrine is the manner in which they make their prayers: 'hertlich hir bedes/They preyd to Seynt Thomas, in such wise as they couth' (164–5). The *Interlude*-author qualifies their prayers by saying 'in such wise as they couth', but crucially, they all pray 'hertlich', devoutly or with heart. And this emotional performance is not hindered by their lack of knowledge or their social status, as we saw in their attempt to read the stained glass. Their prayers are heartfelt and this could not be more important for the production of a sacred space that is truly valued both by the people and by God himself. In *Dives and Pauper*, Pauper explains that 'God takyth mor hede to a manys herte þan to his zifte and mor to his deuocioun þan to his dede' (p. 188) and a major theme in the third and fourth chapters of this book is the importance of emotional engagement if sacred space is to remain a living presence in the community. The pastoral care texts that I will analyse aim to create a relationship between the people and their parish churches based on affection, loyalty and familiarity, and this kind of relationship starts with 'hertlich' prayer and devotion, as modelled by the *Interlude*-pilgrims.

Once the visit to the shrine is complete, the pilgrims naturally leave the cathedral and the focus of the *Interlude* shifts to the urban space around the cathedral. The relationship between the 'contre' and the shrine is important as it establishes Canterbury as a central space on the devotional map. The miracles that St Thomas performed at his shrine establish the cathedral as an 'absolute fixed point, a centre', to return to Eliade's definition of the hierophany.⁵¹ While the cathedral is the pilgrims' destination and therefore the dominant space in their journey, the *Interlude* also places the cathedral in a dynamic relationship with the urban space of the city. Sacred spaces are always constructed with reference to the other spaces that surround them, both literal and symbolic,

from the oppositional relationship with profane space established by the consecration ceremony to the competitive relationship with other churches found in texts such as *The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church*. In the *Interlude*, the walls, the tavern and the road to Canterbury itself enable us to further map the sacred meaning of the cathedral and to consider how sacred space fits into the lived experience of medieval pilgrimage and the space of the city.⁵²

The Knight and the Squire visit the city walls and inspect their defensive capabilities:

The Knyght with his meyné went to se the wall
 And the wardes of the town, as to a knyght befall,
 Devising ententiflich the strengthes al about,
 And apoynted to his sone the perell and the dout
 For shot of arblast and of bowe, and eke for shot of gonne,
 Unto the wardes of the town, and how it myght be wonne.
 And al defence therageyn, after his entent,
 He declared compendiously. (237–44)

The Knight examines the defensive strength of the walls, including their resistance to gunfire, and the violence of this imagery of attack reminds us of the Miller's image of the man with his spear ready to 'bussh adown his enemy' in the stained glass (156). The cathedral is the fixed point from which the rest of the city radiates outwards, and the city walls protect and enclose the city and its sacred space from such attacks, in this period particularly from the French. Robert Sturges comments that in the late Middle Ages 'as cities became more closely identified with their bishops, representations [of the city] focused more on the spiritual protection afforded by their religious spaces, such as the cathedral', than on the city walls.⁵³ In Canterbury, the walls and cathedral shared a material connection as when the walls were rebuilt between 1378 and 1409, the architect was Henry Yevele who was also responsible for rebuilding the nave in the cathedral.⁵⁴ Both the city and its sacred space were enclosed by the architecture of the master builder. Imagery of enclosure resonates with the concept of sacred space as it draws upon the paradigm of anchoritic enclosure, a practice which protects and contains the holy individual from external threat and attack.⁵⁵ The walls of the church served a similar purpose in the consecration ceremony, materialising the boundary between sacred and secular space and establishing a clear demarcation. In the *Interlude*, the cathedral sits within the city

walls like the enclosed anchorite, teaching and protecting the laity in return for their spiritual and financial support.

The pilgrimage hostel, the Checker of the Hoop, also has a material relationship with the cathedral because the building and its land was not only owned by the cathedral, it was specifically constructed by the cathedral authorities to support the pilgrimage trade.⁵⁶ In the literature of pastoral care, the tavern was often figured as the devil's chapel or devil's temple; indeed, in one Middle English treatise, the tavern's patrons are personifications of the Seven Deadly Sins.⁵⁷ We can see this trope at the beginning of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*:

In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye
 Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,
 As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes,
 Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes
 They daunce and pleyen at dees, bothe day and nyght,
 And eten also and drynken over hir myght,
 Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifice
 Withinne that develes temple in cursed wise,
 By superfluytee abhomynable.
 Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable
 That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.
 Oure blissed Lordes body they totere—
 Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough—
 And ech of hem at others synne lough.
 And right anon thanne comen tombesteres
 Fetys and smale, and yonge frutesteres,
 Syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
 Whiche been the verray develes officeres
 To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
 That is annexed unto glotonye.⁵⁸

The tavern is the 'develes temple' in which overindulgence and the vices of dancing, dicing and swearing are the 'develes sacrifice'. Swearing by Christ's body was commonly understood to torture him anew; in a medieval wall painting at Broughton, Buckinghamshire, for example, an image of the pietà is surrounded by men holding Christ's body parts, from his heart to his hands and feet, in a macabre visual representation of the consequences of swearing.⁵⁹ The dancing girls, musicians and bawds in the inn are the 'verray develes officeres' and the medieval audience of the *Interlude* may have had this imagery in mind when they encountered Kit the tapster at the Checker of the Hoop, especially

as the text goes on to narrate the Pardoner's misadventures in her company. Such depictions locate profane space outside the church but are nevertheless constructed with reference to ecclesiastical ritual and imagery. The language of temples, officers and sin keeps the tavern's holy counterpart in mind and also reminds us that what makes the tavern a profane space is sinful practice. Just as the cathedral sustains secular and sacred meanings according to the behaviour of the pilgrims, the pilgrimage hostel has the potential to be a profane house of vice or a wholesome lodging place, depending upon the actions of its inhabitants.

The Pardoner's 'campaignye / Of yonge folk' in the tavern reminds us of the 'fressh feleship' of pilgrims on the road to Canterbury at the beginning of the *Interlude*:

When all this fressh feleship were com to Caunterbury,
 As ye have herd tofore, with tales glad and mery,
 Som of sotill centence, of vertu and of lore,
 And som of other myrthes for hem that hold no store
 Of wisdom, ne of holynes, ne of chivalry,
 Nether vertuose matere, but to foly
 Leyd wit and lustes all, to such japes
 As Hurlewaynes meyné in every hegg that capes
 Thurh unstabill mynde, ryght as the leves grene
 Stonden ageyn the weder. (1–10)

On the surface, this depiction of the pilgrims recalls the tales of 'sentence' and 'solaas' requested by Harry Bailey in the *General Prologue*, but on closer inspection, the *Interlude*-author is already signalling a profane turn of events.⁶⁰ As a reader of Chaucer, the author and his audience would be aware of the connotations of the word 'fressh' and its repeated use by the Merchant to describe May in his tale.⁶¹ The use of 'fressh' to describe the pilgrims as they finally arrive in Canterbury suggests that the 'feleship', and its holy purpose, may have become stale. The author goes on to declare that some of the pilgrims have set their minds to such japes as Harlequin's company performed behind the hedges when green leaves fight against the weather. Hurlewain or Harlequin appears to have been a goblin-like spirit whose band of demons pursued wild hunts in the woods, and here the pilgrims are imagined as spirited pranksters hiding in the hedgerows outside the city walls, rather like the Green Men of folklore.⁶² The *Interlude*-author uses this imagery to unsettle the boundary between sacred and profane, secular and ecclesiastical space, because here Harlequin's

men enter the cathedral. They are not confined to a country road, or shut out and safely contained within their own devil's chapel like the 'yonge compaignie' of *The Pardoner's Tale*. The sacred can only be defined in relation to the profane and the secular, and in order to be continually visible within the landscape, the sacred must be challenged and forced to manifest itself anew. Lay practice has the power to desecrate and to reinforce sanctity and, as I will show, once established, sacred space is tested and paradoxically strengthened by contact with the profane. By allowing the profane to enter the cathedral, or to take place within its own jurisdiction if we think of Kit plying her trade on the cathedral's own land, sacred space can contain, neutralise and profit from that threat. A Green Man in the cathedral was a much safer proposition than a Green Man lurking on the roadside. But for the *Interlude*-author, this resolution in favour of the sacred never fully takes place. The pilgrims leave the sacred safety of the cathedral and the narrative focus turns firmly to the tavern and the profane antics of the Pardoner and Kit the Tapster.

Reading the pilgrims' experiences in *The Canterbury Interlude* demonstrates that sacred space was debated, challenged, promoted and above all experienced as a powerful, living force in medieval England. It enabled communities to constitute meaning and to both affirm and test their social, political and theological values. Buildings that were intended for the glory of God often provided an opportunity for the negotiation of social identity as priests and pilgrims, monks and merchants, interacted with their sacred confines. In the chapters that follow, sacred space emerges as a prominent concern in late medieval England. It is produced through a fusion of text, architecture, and performance and it exists in a dynamic relationship with profane space and the socio-political environment. Sacred space is 'the House of God' and the 'Gate of Heaven' (Genesis, 28.17), but as Christ declared in the gospels, 'in my Father's house there are many mansions' (John, 14.2) and within the landscape of medieval England, there are many sacred spaces and many debates concerning their use and meaning.

My first chapter will examine the church consecration ceremony and the paradigm that it sets up for the construction and interpretation of sacred space. The performance of the liturgical ritual unites building, community, and scripture, purifying and consecrating the space as an ideal location for the communal worship of God. Having sketched out the ritual construction of sacred space common to all churches, I will then turn to a

particular production of space in Chapter 2, St Bartholomew the Great, in Smithfield, London, as established in the Middle English translation of the church's foundation legend, *The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church*. The Middle English text was translated during the 'Great Restoration' of the church at the turn of the fifteenth century and my analysis will show how the foundation legend's catalogue of miracles presents St Bartholomew's as a highly competitive sacred space in medieval London and beyond. The sanctity of *The Book* is performative. It is made manifest by miracles and re-enacted by the narration of those miracles in the foundation legend. As the texts in my third chapter make clear, however, the sacred space at the heart of *The Book of the Foundation* is idealised. Always potent and efficacious, never under threat, the community at St Bartholomew's can say with confidence that 'trewly, God is yn this place'.⁶³ But the local parish church, the centre of everyday life and pastoral education, is a place of precarious sanctity, dependent on a congregation whose sin can transform sacred space into profane space in the twinkling of an eye.

The literature of pastoral care and the visual art of the medieval parish church will form the basis of my third chapter in which I will argue that the profane challenge posed by lay misbehaviour paradoxically strengthens sacred space. Devils and demons, such as the fiendish scribe Tutivillus, appear in the church to assist priests in detecting sinful conduct and to cleanse the church of profane contamination such as the bodies of the unrepentant dead. The sermon exempla of John Mirk's *Festial*, the *Alphabet of Tales*, and Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* depict a sacred space teetering on the edge of collapse but marshalling all its didactic resources to combat and exploit profane challenges. These challenges are often met with violent punishment and I will also argue for the integral relationship between violence and the sacred, with recourse to René Girard's theory, both in the violent expulsion of sinners from the church but also in the presence of Christ's blood in both visual and textual exempla. The blood of the saviour consecrates sacred space and holds the laity accountable for their sins. This chapter also reassesses the relationship between church art and sermon exempla in order to argue for a symbiotic relationship that presents the church, and its devotional objects, as a living, breathing actor in the drama of salvation. The performance of narrative exempla animates the visual depictions of angels, devils and saints in the church who come to life to protect and fight for their sacred spaces.

The material architecture of the church is crucial to its sanctity. If it is not constructed virtuously, the church will literally fall down. But for some medieval readers, dismantling the material church was a desirable goal rather than a potential tragedy, however. In my final chapter, I will examine the debate over the relationship between the church building and its community in orthodox and Lollard texts. The allegorical reading of church architecture established by William of Durandus's *Rationale divinorum officiorum* regained traction in the fifteenth century and I will discuss the Middle English translation of Durandus called *What the Church Betokeneth* in the light of the Lollard critique of the material church. Where Durandus's allegorical schema gave each member of the community a secure place in the material church, polemical Lollard texts such as *The Lanterne of Liȝt* aimed to divorce the building from the people, presenting the church as an elaborate distraction that not only disrupted worship but harmed the poor by draining the community's financial resources. In *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* we see the 'curious' and 'crafty' church made flesh as the narrator visits the great churches of the friars in the vain hope of learning his Creed but instead encounters only greed, pride and sterile materiality. All is not lost for sacred space, however. I will conclude by showing how the medieval churches of fifteenth-century England represented an 'architecture of the heart' for their parishioners.⁶⁴ In the great age of church building and restoration, parish communities invested in their churches both spiritually and materially. They cared deeply for their local sacred spaces and performed their devotions, like the Canterbury pilgrims, 'hertlich' or with heart, so much so that Dives is able to assert confidently to Pauper that 'God is in no lond so wel seruyd in holy chyrche ne so mychil worchepyd in holy chyrche as he is in þis lond, for so many fayre chirches [...] is in non opir lond as in þis lond' (p. 188). England's fair churches truly were the house of God on earth for their devoted lay communities.

Notes

- 1 *The Canterbury Interlude* in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth Century Continuations and Additions*, ed. John M. Bowers (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), pp. 60–79, lines 147–58. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition by line number.
- 2 Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 4.

- 3 Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; paperback 2000), p. 111.
- 4 Keith Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion, 2009); Robert Barrett Jr., *Against All England: Regional Identity and Cheshire Writing, 1195–1656* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009); Catherine Clarke, 'Mapping medieval Chester: place and identity in an English borderland city c.1200–1500', see www.medievalchester.ac.uk [accessed 29 September 2016].
- 5 Marion Turner, 'Introduction', in Marion Turner (ed.), *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 1–11, p. 3.
- 6 Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 18 (1986), 22–7, p. 22.
- 7 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 255 and 44.
- 8 Turner, 'Introduction', p. 2.
- 9 *St Erkenwald*, ed. Clifford Peterson (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), lines 33–88.
- 10 *MED* 'maken' (v.1) 2, 3 and 5.
- 11 Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, *Gender, Miracles, and Daily Life: The Evidence of Fourteenth Century Canonization Processes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), p. 267.
- 12 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Orlando: Harcourt, 1987), p. 11.
- 13 Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, p. 26.
- 14 On the sanctification of the natural landscape, see Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 49–66.
- 15 Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, p. 21.
- 16 *Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations*, ed. Bowers, p. 57. Peter Brown summarises the arguments for the dating in 'Journey's end: the prologue to the tale of Beryn', in Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen (eds), *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry* (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, King's College, 1991), pp. 143–74, pp. 150–3.
- 17 See Brown, 'Journey's end', pp. 148–50.
- 18 Robert Sturges, 'The pardoner in Canterbury: class, gender, and urban space in "The prologue to the tale of Beryn"', *College Literature*, 33 (2006), 52–76, p. 53.
- 19 T. A. Heslop, 'Attitudes to the visual arts: the evidence from written sources', in Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (eds), *The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1987), pp. 26–32, p. 32.

- 20 *Dives and Pauper*, ed. Priscilla Barnum, EETS OS 275 (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), vol. I, p. 83. All subsequent quotations refer to this edition and volume by page number.
- 21 See Lawrence G. Duggan, 'Was art really the "book of the illiterate?"', in Marielle Hageman and Marco Mostert (eds), *Reading Images and Texts: Medieval Images and Texts as Forms of Communication: Papers from the Third Utrecht Symposium on Medieval Literary, Utrecht, 7–9 December 2000* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 63–107, pp. 95–6.
- 22 Line 99. Compare line 289 in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*, in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; paperback 1988), p. 334.
- 23 Michael Camille, 'The language of images in medieval England 1200–1400', in Alexander and Binski (eds), *The Age of Chivalry*, pp. 33–40, p. 33.
- 24 I discuss the Lollard attitude to visual decoration in the church in Chapter 4.
- 25 *Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations*, ed. Bowers, p. 167.
- 26 Madeline Harrison Caviness, *The Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral: c.1175–1220* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 102.
- 27 Helen Barr, *Transporting Chaucer* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 34.
- 28 Barr, *Transporting Chaucer*, p. 34.
- 29 Michael Camille, '"When Adam delved": labouring on the land in medieval art', in Del Sweeney (ed.), *Agriculture in the Middle Ages: Technology, Practice, and Representation* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 247–76, p. 247.
- 30 *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 30, lines 452 and 454, respectively.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 30, line 460. 'So openlyche at the chyrche dore/Lete hem eyther wedde othere', in *Instructions for Parish Priests by John Myrc*, ed. Edward Peacock, EETS OS 31 (London: Trübner, 1868), p. 7, lines 206–7.
- 32 *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 70, lines 3341–3.
- 33 Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Life in a Late Medieval Diocese* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 2.
- 34 *MED* 'blasen' (v.3) b) 'to identify armorial bearings'. See Ann Payne, 'Medieval heraldry', in Alexander and Binski (eds), *The Age of Chivalry*, pp. 55–9.
- 35 See for example Paul Binski's discussion of Richard II in *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power 1200–1400* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 175–206.
- 36 William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B Text*, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (London: Dent, 1978), p. 36, lines 64–6.
- 37 See Sarah Blick, 'Reconstructing the shrine of St Thomas Becket, Canterbury cathedral', in Sarah Blick and Rita Tekippe (eds), *Art and*

- Archaeology of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 405–41.
- 38 Brown, 'Journey's end', pp. 148–50. Brown also suggests that this might be a reason for the stained glass receiving 'special attention' because 'income at the shrine was used for the upkeep of the windows in the shrine precincts', p. 150.
 - 39 'Espiritueel thefte is sacrilege; that is to seyn, hurtyng of hooly thynges, or of thynges sacred to Crist, in two maneres: by reson of the hooly place, as chirches or chirche-hawes [churchyards], for which every vileyns synne that men doon in swiche places may be cleped sacrilege', *The Parson's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 315.
 - 40 Barbara Hanawalt and Michel Kobialka, 'Introduction' in Barbara Hanawalt and Michel Kobialka (eds), *Medieval Practices of Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. ix–viii, p. xiv.
 - 41 *MED* 'sorten' (v.2) 2. Cf. line 235, 'sorted hem togider righte as hir lustes lay'.
 - 42 See for example Gail McMurray Gibson, 'Blessing from sun and moon: churching as women's theatre', in Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (eds), *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 139–54.
 - 43 *Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations*, ed. Bowers, p. 171.
 - 44 Brown, 'Journey's end', p. 152.
 - 45 *Ibid.*, p. 153.
 - 46 *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 287, line 31.
 - 47 *The Testimony of William Thorpe in Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. Anne Hudson, EETS OS 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 24–93, p. 64.
 - 48 French, *People of the Parish*, pp. 130–2.
 - 49 Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 21.
 - 50 *MED* 'brod' (n.2), 2a 'kind of'.
 - 51 Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane*, p. 21.
 - 52 On city identity see Jonathan Hsy, 'City', in Turner (ed.), *Handbook of Middle English Studies*, pp. 315–29.
 - 53 Sturges, 'The pardoner in Canterbury', p. 54.
 - 54 Christopher Wilson, 'Yevele, Henry (d. 1400)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004: www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30220 [accessed 20 October 2014].
 - 55 For further discussion of the relationship between enclosure and city walls, see Laura Varnam, 'Sanctity and the city: sacred space in *The Life of St Werburgh*', in Catherine A. M. Clarke (ed.), *Mapping the Medieval City: Space, Place, and Identity in Chester c.1200–1500* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), pp. 114–30, pp. 127–8.
 - 56 *Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations*, ed. Bowers, pp. 213–4.

- 57 *A Middle English Treatise on the Ten Commandments: From St John's College, Oxford, MS 94 1420–1434*, ed. James Finch Royster (University of Chicago, 1910–11), pp. 21–2.
- 58 *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 196, lines 463–82.
- 59 See <http://paintedchurch.org/broughtsw.htm> [accessed 12 September 2016].
- 60 *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 36, line 798.
- 61 *Ibid.*, for example pp. 160–1, lines 1782, 1822, 1858 and 1871.
- 62 *Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations*, ed. Bowers, p. 165.
- 63 *The Book of the Foundation of St Bartholomew's Church*, ed. Norman Moore, EETS OS 163 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 32.
- 64 The phrase comes from Shelley Hornstein, *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory, and Place* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 3. I will discuss this theory in more detail in Chapter 4.