SPELL
Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 34

What is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England?

Edited by
Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva

narr\f
ranck
e\atte
mpto

What is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England?

Edited by
Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva

SPELL

Swiss Papers in
English Language and Literature

Edited by
The Swiss Association of University Teachers of English
(SAUTE)

General Editor: Lukas Erne

Volume 34

What is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England?

Edited by
Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva

narr\f
ranck
e\atte
mpto

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.dnb.de abrufbar.

Publiziert mit Unterstützung der Schweizerischen Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften.

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem und alterungsbeständigem Werkdruckpapier.

Internet: www.narr.de
E-Mail: info@narr.de

Printed in Germany

Einbandgestaltung: Martin Heusser, Zürich
Illustration: Bildbearbeitung Martin Heusser, Zürich
Fotografie: © Simon Knott, Ipswich (England)

ISSN 0940-0478
ISBN 978-3-8233-8150-1

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

The essays in this volume began life as papers delivered at the 5th Biennial Conference of the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies. We are grateful to Lukas Erne and Denis Renevey (former and current Presidents of SAMEMES) for giving us the opportunity to host the event in Zürich, and for their unflagging support throughout. The conference could not have taken place without the sponsorship of the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Hochschulstiftung Universität Zürich, Zürcher Universitätsverein, Englisches Seminar Zürich, and the Canton and City of Zürich.

Editing a volume for SPELL has accrued many debts of gratitude. First and foremost we would like to thank the scholars who have entrusted us with their work, and the reviewers in Switzerland and abroad who agreed to share their thoughts with us. Thanks are also due to the Englisches Seminar, Zürich, for providing us with the funds to hire Deborah Frick. Deborah's zeal for checking references and willingness to work to deadline has lightened our task immeasurably. We are grateful to Simon Knott for allowing us to reproduce his image of the defaced angel, and to Martin Heusser for designing the cover. Last but not least, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the gimlet-eyed Keith Hewlett whose instinct for spotting and eradicating error is formidable.

General Editor's Preface

SPELL (Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature) is a publication of SAUTE, the Swiss Association of University Teachers of English. Established in 1984, it first appeared every second year, was published annually from 1994 to 2008, and now appears three times every two years. Every second year, SPELL publishes a selection of papers given at the biennial symposia organized by SAUTE. Non-symposium volumes usually have as their starting point papers given at other conferences organized by members of SAUTE, in particular conferences of SANAS, the Swiss Association for North American Studies and SAMEMES, the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies. However, other proposals are also welcome. Decisions concerning topics and editors are made by the Annual General Meeting of SAUTE two years before the year of publication.

Volumes of SPELL contain carefully selected and edited papers devoted to a topic of literary, linguistic and – broadly – cultural interest. All contributions are original and are subjected to external evaluation by means of a full peer review process. Contributions are usually by participants at the conferences mentioned, but volume editors are free to solicit further contributions. Papers published in SPELL are documented in the *MLA International Bibliography*. SPELL is published with the financial support of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Information on all aspects of SPELL, including volumes planned for the future, is available from the General Editor, Professor Lukas Erne, Département de langue et littérature anglaises, Faculté des Lettres, Université de Genève, CH-1211 Genève 4, Switzerland, e-mail: lukas.erne@unige.ch. Information about past volumes of SPELL and about SAUTE, in particular about how to become a member of the association, can be obtained from the SAUTE website at http://www.saute.ch.

Lukas Erne

Introduction

"What is an image?" is a question perhaps as old as humanity itself. In 2008 James Elkins posed it to 30 historians and image theorists who then spent 35 hours at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago debating it. In the introduction to *What is an Image?* (2011), the written records of these taped seminars, Elkins begins with a playful "selection of theories . . . in absolutely no order" (3). He soon breaks off, however, conceding that any attempt to order and delimit potentially infinite theories of the image is intrinsically "hopeless" (6). Why so? In answer he tabulates six possible problems, four of which deserve to be quoted here because of their implicit relevance to the current volume:

> 3. Some accounts are primarily concerned with the politics of images or images as politics, while other accounts do not feel the necessity of approaching political concepts at all. [. . .]
> 4. Some accounts are about the agency of images – their "voice," their "life." . . . At the extreme, when such accounts draw near to anthropology, religious belief, or animism, they may also involve a suspension of disbelief . . . It is not clear, at least to me, exactly how to change the register of the conversation when talk goes from a picture's structure, or even its politics, to its agency, its voice, its life. [. . .]
> 5. The same sort of observation can be made about the idea that images are a fundamentally religious category. [. . .]
> 6. The same problem of theorizing the move from one form of understanding to another also emerges again in the discussions about the claim that images have a certain logic or rationality, and the companion claim that they possess a kind of irrationality. [. . .] (8-10)

"What is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England?" was a question originally posed to some 60 participants at the 5th Biennial Conference of the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English

What Is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England? SPELL: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 34. Ed. Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva. Tübingen: Narr, 2017. 11-15.

Studies held in Zurich in 2016. The conference aimed to complicate the question that Elkins had identified as problematic in two interrelated ways: firstly, by focusing on the image at a particular time and in a particular location, and secondly, by exploring the status of the visual image in relation to another sign system and medium, namely words and texts.

In the Latin West, it was in the late medieval and early modern periods that religious images would be subject to particular pressure, notably in the first half of the sixteenth century when reformers in Strasbourg, Zurich and Geneva would denounce them as idolatrous, and Catholics would reinstate them. But it was in England that the debate on images was particularly protracted, first expressed in Lollard resistance to depictions of the divine and then in the iconomachy and full-blown iconoclasm of the Reformations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As a consequence, the relationship between the so-called sister arts of *pictura* and *poesis*, image and word, would be problematised. Yet, the story of the inexorable demise of the religious image in early modern England and the concomitant "iconophobia" of its people is being revised. Evidence suggests that there was a far more variegated iconic landscape in post-Reformation England and that the status of the religious image was inflected by its medium, location, and subject matter. Moreover, such images formed and were in turn formed by images produced in new media across a range of disciplines. What, for example, did the new print culture do to the status of the visual image embedded in a text on a page? What happens to images when they move from page to stage, or from sacred space into the secular world? How far did the Protestant celebration of hearing and denigration of sight in theory actually recalibrate the hierarchy of the senses in practice?

The 10 essays in this volume are representative of the creative ways in which established and newer scholars in the fields of medieval and early modern literature, history, and art history grappled with the difficulties intrinsic to our question. We have arranged them in roughly chronological order as a way of demarcating the historicist nature of the original project. But lest we fall for simple teleology, Brian Cummings's lyrical, suggestive "Afterword: Words and Images" takes us back to the beginning.

For Christiania Whitehead an image is the late fifteenth-century cycle of 17 panel paintings depicting episodes from the Life of St Cuthbert, the great Northumbrian, Anglo-Saxon saint, found not in Durham, the centre of his cult, but in Cumbria at Carlisle Cathedral. She argues that in rendering pictorially the markedly visual Middle English metrical *Life of Cuthbert* while alluding to Bede's authoritative Latin *Prose Life* beneath,

the cycle conveyed its message to both lay and clerical viewers alike. More broadly, Whitehead posits that the cycle is indicative of Durham's agenda to make Cuthbert the leading saint not just for the Benedictines of Durham but for all orders in the entire northern region. For Nicolette Zeeman an image is the pagan idol of medieval religious discourse and manuscript illumination, a figure whose insentient lifelessness paradoxically raises the possibility of aliveness and psychological interiority. By transposing this understanding of the idol to the armoured knight of Arthurian romance, the reader is alerted to the sentient being beneath the insentient exterior.

An image for Alexandra Walsham is, paradoxically, a graphic representation of an act of iconoclasm – an image of image-breaking – be it in a printed Protestant Bible, in Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, in a painted anti-papal allegory, a Catholic martyrology, or a Civil War pamphlet. Walsham asks why Protestants sought to remember their "rites of oblivion" in this way and suggests that such images served to commemorate and advocate types of reformation – from above or from below, orderly or violent, in pursuit of truth or in the face of it. Such images were thus implicated in the process by which Reformations in England and on the Continent became part of collective memory.

But an image can also be less material. It can be an image in the mind's eye. Kilian Schindler reads Marlowe's *Faustus* in the light of radical scepticism towards diabolical intervention in the material world, a sceptical position advocated by Dutch Anabaptists, Libertines, and the Family of Love, but already evident in Marlowe's England. This reading puts into question the material presence of the devils in the A-text of the play, insinuating that they are the projection of Faustus's deranged imagination. Schindler grants greater demonic agency in the B-text, but interprets this not as a critique of predestination but a response to Bullinger's and Vermigli's nuanced understanding of reprobation. An image for Sonia Pernet is a metaphor, specifically John Donne's use of liquid metaphors across a range of sermons to illustrate the act and effect of preaching on the believer. Pernet argues that for Donne hearing is the pre-eminent sense, and yet in drawing our attention to his brilliant use of visual images of flowing water to represent the workings of grace, she intimates that Donne validates the sense of sight no less.

In Hannah Yip's and Rachel Willie's essays images are printed portraits embedded in texts. Yip alerts us to the ways in which material images – commemorative portrait miniatures and epitaphs from funeral monuments – migrate onto the pages of two seventeenth-century printed sermons. She suggests that the visual and textual dimensions of these

sermons work together to commemorate the exemplary dead and so edify the reader. In contrast, Rachel Willie traces how van Dyck's portrait of Archbishop William Laud (c. 1633-5) gets recycled and subvertted for satirical ends after Laud's impeachment in 1640. By contextualising a particular printed pamphlet of 1641 illustrated with numerous satirical woodcuts, Willie shows how Laud's episcopacy is equated with the papacy.

An image for Andrew Morrall is a word-picture or micrographic portrait – a pen and ink drawing of King Charles I composed of minutely written words purportedly taken from the Psalms, an image that has hung in St John's College library since at least 1662. Reading this portrait in the context of the posthumous cult of the martyr king and through the lenses of particular viewers including a university poet, Celia Fiennes, and finally Joseph Addison, Morrall plots the rise and fall of its reception. More generally, Morrall posits that its nature as word-image is symptomatic of an evolving Protestant logocentrism.

For Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Erzsi Kukorelly an image is visual description, an epic poet's or novelist's power to render a picture of someone or something through words. Bevan Zlatar argues that John Milton's famous descriptions and similes of supernatural and pre-lapsarian beings in *Paradise Lost* are integral to the poem's theology, anthropology and diabology. What someone looks like in *Paradise Lost* tells us about his or her nature and how he or she relates to the poem's God. Moreover, the embodied visuality of these beings validates the material world as a repository, and the sense of sight as a conduit, of the divine. In Erzsi Kukorelly's essay an image is visual description and its effect on the reader as theorised by Henry Home and Hugh Blair, and as practiced by Samuel Richardson. By tracing Richardson's use of "painterliness" principally in *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), Kukorelly plots his evolving didactic sensibility.

In his "Afterword: Words and Images," Brian Cummings leads us back to the beginning of our volume, especially to Nicolette Zeeman's and Alexandra Walsham's explorations of the power of images and the Protestant attempts to disempower them. For Cummings, the iconoclast is compelled to destroy because "word and image cannot be separated *except* by force."

Antoinina Bevan Zlatar

Reference

What Is an Image? Ed. James Elkins and Maja Naef. Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, 2011.

Visual and Verbal Vernacular Translations of Bede's *Prose Life of St Cuthbert* in Fifteenth-Century Northern England: The Carlisle Panel Paintings

Christiania Whitehead

This essay offers a new reading of the late fifteenth-century sequence of wood panels depicting the Life of St Cuthbert painted on the back of the north choir stalls at Carlisle Cathedral. The panels display scenes taken from Bede's influential *Prose Life of Cuthbert* (*c.* 721), identified by vernacular couplets. The essay reads this visual and vernacular translation of the *Prose Life* in the light of other late medieval vernacular versions, notably those in the southern legendaries, and in the largescale metrical *Life of St Cuthbert*, produced in Durham Benedictine Priory in the early fifteenth century.

From the eleventh century, Cuthbert's cult had been centred at Durham Cathedral, administered by the bishop and Benedictine community there. What are we to make then of this manifestation of Cuthbertine veneration in a cathedral served by Augustinian canons in the Cumbrian diocese? This essay suggests that Cuthbert's inclusion at Carlisle may be designed to highlight its putative early association with Cuthbert's episcopal see. As a consequence, these panels can be interpreted as part of an assertive programme masterminded by Durham to reinvigorate and expand Cuthbertine veneration during the fifteenth century, extending his reach west and valorising him as the premier saint of the entire northern region.

In Carlisle Cathedral, in the final years of the fifteenth century, seventeen pictures depicting scenes from the life of the Northumbrian saint, St Cuthbert, were painted directly onto the wood panels on the back of

What Is an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England? SPELL: Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 34. Ed. Antoinina Bevan Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva. Tübingen: Narr, 2017. 17-37.

one section of the north choir stalls (Colgrave; Park and Cather 214-20) (see Figure 1). St Cuthbert (*c.* 634-87), the most celebrated northern saint of Anglo-Saxon England, entered Melrose monastery as a young

Figure 1: Cycle of St Cuthbert panel paintings on back of north choir stalls at Carlisle Cathedral. © Historic England Archive. Reproduced by kind permission.

man, after experiencing a vision of the soul of St Aidan, the Irish missionary to Northumbria, ascending to heaven. After a short spell at Ripon monastery, he was sent to Aidan's foundational monastery on the island of Lindisfarne where he became prior. Around 676, wishing for a more contemplative life, he retreated to the island of Inner Farne where he built himself a hermitage. In the 680s he was reluctantly recalled from this seclusion to become bishop of Lindisfarne. Faced by the onset of ill-health, he returned to his hermitage in 686 and died there the following year. He was buried in Lindisfarne monastery, where his body quickly became the focus of a tomb cult. Within a few years of his death, an anonymous *Vita* was composed by one of the Lindisfarne monks to promote his cult, later superseded by the Metrical and Prose *vitae* of the Venerable Bede (respectively, *c.* 716 and *c.* 721).

The cycle of Cuthbert paintings at Carlisle Cathedral was one of four, unevenly divided between the north and south choir stalls, which all appear to have been commissioned and carried out during the priorate of Thomas Gondibour (1470s-1502), prior of the house of Augustinian canons which had served the cathedral since the early twelfth century.[1] The other three cycles comprise, on the south side, parallel with the Cuthbert cycle, a *Life* of St Augustine of Hippo in twenty-four panels, and on the north side, adjacent to the Cuthbert panels, a *Life* of St Antony of Egypt in eighteen panels, and a further cycle of non-narrative images of the twelve apostles (Harcourt).[2] While each of the twelve apostles is flanked by a matching Latin sentence from the Apostles Creed, the three cycles of saints' lives are all accompanied by rhyming couplets in the northern vernacular, one couplet above each panel image, identifying the subject matter of the scene below.

---

[1] The house of Augustinian canons at Carlisle was founded in 1122. In 1133, their church was raised to the status of a cathedral, forming a new see and detaching Cumberland from the diocese of York (Summerson 30-31). One of the panels in the St Augustine cycle contains the monogram of Prior Gondibour. Gondibour was also associated with other contemporary decorative programmes within the cathedral and priory.

[2] Harcourt's mid nineteenth-century monograph is devoted to the three hagiographical cycles depicting Cuthbert, Augustine and Anthony at Carlisle; Park and Cather note that while the single figures of Sts Augustine and Anthony occur commonly in late medieval art, these panel paintings represent the only surviving cycles of these saints in England (220).

Textual and Visual Sources

Many questions present themselves: what is Cuthbert doing at Carlisle given his Northumbrian and Durham associations? What are the implications of his veneration within a house of Augustinian canons? What should we make of his representation alongside Sts Augustine and Anthony? But before turning to these, it is first necessary to establish the *version* of Cuthbert's *Life* represented in this cycle, bearing in mind the variety of versions circulating by the fifteenth century, and to summarise the current scholarship regarding the probable source of this version. The seventeen panels that make up the Cuthbert cycle depict (1) a child's prediction of Cuthbert's episcopal destiny, (2) the healing of his knee by an angel, (3) his vision of St Aidan's soul ascending, (4) his horse finds bread for him during a journey, (5) he is received by Prior Boisil at Melrose, (6) he offers an angel hospitality at Ripon and is given bread in turn, (7) Boisil prophecies Cuthbert's episcopal future, (8) Cuthbert preaches to the people, (9) he prays in the sea and is dried by otters, (10) he is fed with fish by an eagle, (11) he builds a hermitage on Farne and drives away devils, (12) he miraculously finds a water spring on Inner Farne, (13) he reproves thieving crows on Inner Farne, (14) he is consecrated as bishop, (15) he heals a sick child during an episcopal journey, (16) he receives the sacrament on his deathbed, (17) his body is discovered to be incorrupt.[3]

These seventeen panels illustrate a number of chapters from Bede's highly influential *Prose Life of St Cuthbert*, written in Jarrow in the early eighth century and easily the single most important text at the heart of Cuthbert's cult up until the Reformation. As is well-known, this cult was centred at Durham Cathedral where Cuthbert's body was enshrined under the custodianship of a priory of Benedictine monks from the late eleventh century. Bede's *Prose Life* consists of forty-six chapters; however less than half of those chapters are illustrated at Carlisle, and it would seem that the Carlisle artist was also influenced by the chapters from Bede selected for use within the southern legendary tradition: the relatively terse legends of St Cuthbert in the *South English Legendary* (*SEL*) and the *Gilte Legende*. It is thus the case that the panel paintings favour certain early chapters from Bede's *Prose Life*, including a child's prophecy of Cuthbert's episcopal future, the healing of his knee by an angel, and his vision of Aidan's soul ascending to heaven, in the same

[3] I number the panels in accordance with the order given in Park and Cather 217, Figure 2. The transcription of the couplets follows Fowler, *Life of St Cuthbert* 10-11 throughout.

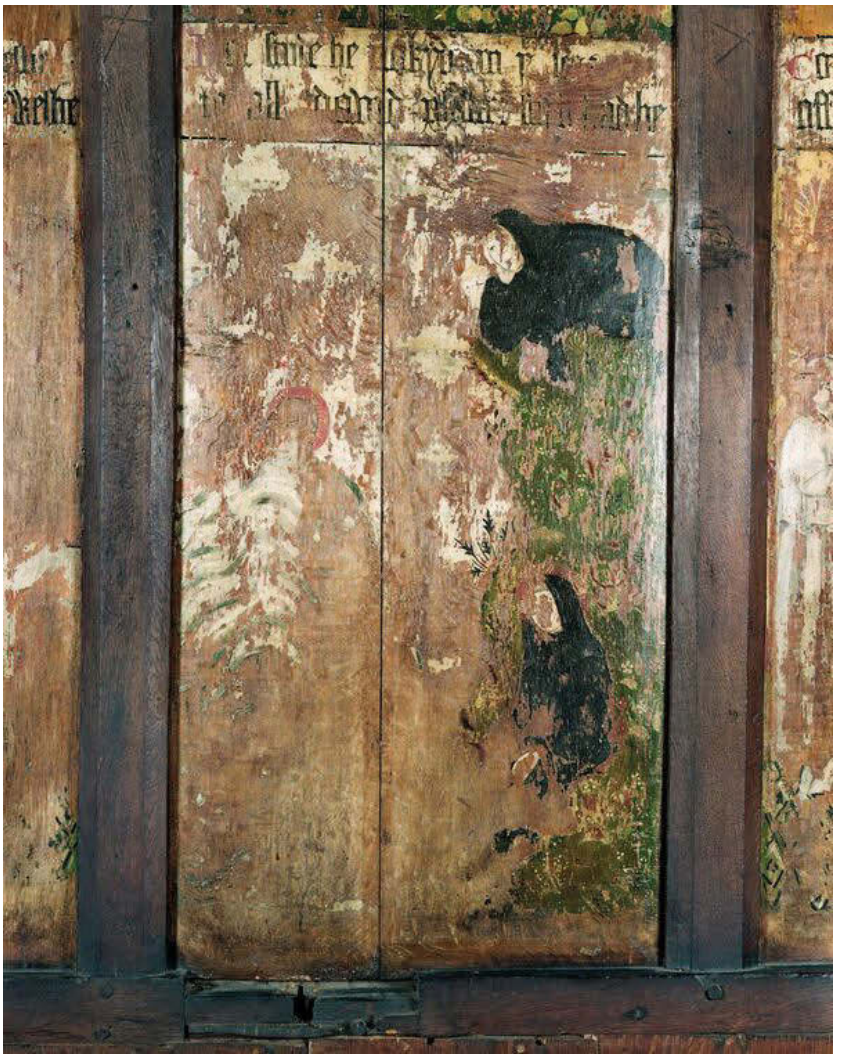

Figure 2. Cuthbert immerses himself in the sea to pray and has his feet dried by sea creatures (Bede, Prose Life, ch. 10).
A): British Library, Yates Thompson 26, fol. 24r. © The British Library Board. Reproduced by kind permission.

B): Carlisle Cathedral north choir stall paintings, panel 9. © Historic England Archive. Reproduced by kind permission.

manner as the *SEL*, while other chapters are omitted from both.[4] The artist of the Carlisle panel paintings makes the same selections from Bede's *Prose Life* as the compiler of the *SEL*; however, he also illustrates *additional* chapters from Bede, and unlike the compiler of the *SEL* shows an active interest in the ministry of animals to Cuthbert (panels 4, 9, 10, and 13),[5] and in Cuthbert's eremitic sojourn on Farne Island (panels 11, 12 and 13).[6] We shall return to the significance of these choices later.

The similarities to the narrative tradition represented by the *SEL* are particularly interesting because, thus far, scholarly attention has only focused upon the *iconographic* source of the Carlisle panels. This is commonly agreed to be the copy of Bede's *Prose Life* contained in the deluxe, late twelfth-century manuscript produced at Durham, now designated British Library, MS Yates Thompson 26, in which each Bedean chapter is accompanied by a strongly-coloured, full-page illumination.[7] The Cuthbert panels at Carlisle are unfortunately in a poor state of preservation, but a comparison of some of the better preserved panels with the corresponding illuminations in Yates Thompson demonstrates entirely convincing levels of compositional agreement (Figure 2).[8] Furthermore, in MS Yates Thompson 26, the Latin rubric for each Bedean chapter is followed, first by the full-page illumination, and then by the text of the chapter in question, so that one might even discern some compositional correspondence between the panels and the *mise en page* of the manuscript: as though the vernacular couplet and panel painting aim to pre-

---

[4] Chapter 3 of Bede's *Prose Life* in which Cuthbert's prayers save monks at the mouth of the Tyne from drifting away on their rafts, provides one relevant example.

[5] Respectively, Cuthbert's horse pulls down bread from a thatched roof, otters dry his feet, an eagle brings a fish for him to eat, disobedient crows bring Cuthbert lard.

[6] Respectively, Cuthbert builds a hermitage on Farne with the assistance of angels, he digs a well there, he reproves the crows who steal his thatch.

[7] Marner focuses on the history of this manuscript and its production, and provides facsimiles of all the illuminations. Baker reminds us that twenty manuscripts of Bede's *Prose Life* survive from between 1083 and 1200, and that around half were produced at Durham (17).

[8] Colgrave, one of the great Bedean scholars of the mid twentieth century, was the first to notice this correspondence in 1938. His conclusions have recently been nuanced by Park and Cather, who suggest that a sketchbook may have acted as an intermediary between the manuscript and the wood panels, following typical medieval workshop practice (220), and by Baker, who places both MS Yates Thompson 26 and the Carlisle panels within a more extensive tradition of Cuthbertine pictorial cycles, including, from the fifteenth century, stained-glass cycles at York Minster and Durham Cathedral (c.1420-40). He concludes that there was a conscious revival of traditional Durham iconography in the second quarter of the fifteenth century (22-23, 42-44).

serve the rubric and illumination from each Bedean chapter, while the chapter itself has been dispensed with. Here, at the end of the fifteenth century, in a municipal setting, a sequence of simple couplets and panel paintings appears to stand as an adequate summary of the *Prose Life*.

The *Prose Life* is distilled down to a series of elementary couplets and images on these north choir stalls – to the briefest of epitomes, one might say; however, this is not quite the whole story. Intriguingly, both the first and last couplets of the panel sequence make explicit references to Bede's text. In Panel 1, Cuthbert is rebuked for standing on his head as a child in the face of his illustrious vocation: "Her Cuthbert was forbid layks / and plays. *As S. bede i hys story says*" (my italics). And in Panel 17, his body is revealed to be incorrupt eleven years after its burial on Lindisfarne: "xi 3er after that beryd was he / thai fand hym hole *as red may 3e*" (my italics). The reference to reading here is plainly to reading about the exhumation in Bede. So, the visual sequence opens by signalling its narrative source and associating itself with the authority of Bede, and closes by referring its viewer back to further reading on the subject in Bede's *Prose Life*. In other words, these somewhat naïve panel paintings and vernacular captions need not necessarily comprise the end of the story for the viewer. They offer a minimal visual and vernacular skeleton of the *Prose Life* for those without the educational skills to delve further, but also channel the intellectually curious viewer toward the scholarly complexity of Bede's Latin text. In effect, they draw attention to a second, highly authoritative, Latinate text embedded *beneath* these vernacular couplets and images and perhaps designed for the canons, while the first addressed lay congregations within the cathedral.[9]

How could a twelfth-century Durham manuscript possibly have influenced a late fifteenth-century Carlisle painter? As it turns out, we know that Yates Thompson 26 moved around the north and acted as an iconographic model during the first decades of the fifteenth century. The manuscript is recorded in the Durham library catalogues of 1391 and 1416 (Colgrave 17), and the latter entry records that it had been on loan to Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York (d. 1405). As a result, it has been argued that its illuminations may have been intended as models for the gigantic St Cuthbert stained-glass window in York Minister, probably completed in around 1430, which consists of 105 scenes depicting the saint's life (Fowler; Baker 22-25). Emphasising Cuthbert's episcopal vocation and exemplarity, and incorporating images of contemporary northern bishops and archbishops, this window was commissioned and

[9] The issue of a mixed audience for these panels will be addressed later in this essay.

paid for by Bishop Walter Skirlaw of Durham (1388-1406) and Bishop Thomas Langley of Durham (1406-37), formerly Dean of York (1401-6), and clearly indicates the extension of Cuthbert's cult into the heart of the York archdiocese by the early fifteenth century. In addition to its similarities to the Yates Thompson illuminations, the great Cuthbert window at York Minster also seems to have borne a close relation to a number of Cuthbertine windows at Durham Cathedral in the north aisle of the choir, the Chapel of the Nine Altars, and the cloister garth, these last two commissioned by Bishop Langley in the 1430s (Lynda Rollason; Baker 42-43). Sadly, none of the Durham windows survived the iconoclasm of the Reformation; however they are recalled and described in the late sixteenth-century treatise, *The Rites of Durham*, which details the ornaments and rituals of Durham Cathedral in the first decades of the sixteenth century, from a viewpoint of pro-Catholic nostalgia. In both instances, the York and Durham windows precede the Carlisle wood panels by six or seven decades in transforming the narrative of Bede's *Prose Life* into a sequence of legible, self-explanatory visual compositions.[10]

As well as travelling down to York at the beginning of the fifteenth century, is it possible that Yates Thompson 26 could also have spent a later period in the north-west of the country? If so, it seems likely that the manuscript would have been brought by Richard Bell, who entered Durham Benedictine priory in 1426-7, served as Prior there from 1464-78, and was then appointed Bishop of Carlisle from 1478-94, before returning to Durham in the final years preceding his death (Dobson).[11] Having continued Prior John Wessington's successful programme of cultural and economic restoration at Durham, Bell may well have brought Cuthbertine interests and texts with him from Durham to his new diocese, and conveyed these interests to Gondibour and his canons.[12] Together, the known information from York diocese, and the strong probabilities from Carlisle, enable us to formulate two interim

---

[10] It should be noted that the York and Durham windows also include scenes taken from the twelfth-century "Irish" *Life of St Cuthbert*, attributing to Cuthbert an Irish birth and infancy.

[11] Colgrave notes that another twelfth-century manuscript of Bede's Prose Life (London, British Library, MS Harley 1924), contains elaborate annotations by Bell (17).

[12] We should note at this juncture that in addition to the Cuthbert wood panel paintings, there was also a contemporary wall painting, now destroyed, on the north-east pier of the crossing of Carlisle Cathedral depicting St Cuthbert's vision of St Aidan's soul ascending to heaven (Park and Cather 221-22). Cuthbertine iconography clearly played a strong role in the cathedral in the late fifteenth century.

conclusions. They demonstrate, first, that a twelfth-century illuminated manuscript might act as the key visual stimulus for fifteenth-century visual programmes in stained glass and panel paintings in various northern cathedral settings; and second, that the movement of ecclesiastical prelates and patrons during the fifteenth century – from York to Durham in Langley's case, and from Durham to Carlisle in Bell's case – could exercise a palpable influence on the movement and reproduction of saintly iconography in different media within the north.

Hagiographical and Geographical Contexts

In addition to acknowledging the influence of the Yates Thompson illuminations upon the Carlisle wood panels, we also need to think further about the hagiographical context in which we find Cuthbert placed. Painted adjacent to scenes from the *Life* of Antony of Egypt, the prototypal desert hermit, in a sequence in which three out of seventeen panels are devoted to his eremitic life on Farne Island, it would seem that Cuthbert must have been particularly venerated for his eremiticism and desert spirituality by the Augustinian canons at Carlisle at the end of the fifteenth century. The link between the asceticism and miracle working of Antony of Egypt and of Cuthbert is explicitly made by Bede himself on at least one occasion (*Prose Life* ch. 19), and we know that Athanasius's *Life of St Antony* served as a significant model for the eremitic component of the *Prose Life*. As a consequence, the programmatic choice to portray the *Life* of Cuthbert alongside the *Life* of Antony in Carlisle Cathedral would seem to indicate a thoughtful and attentive engagement with Bede's Latin text. Three out of seventeen panels depict Cuthbert's eremitic lifestyle; however his preceding years as a monk on Lindisfarne (which are comprehensively illustrated in Yates Thompson) are completely omitted. The canons were clearly interested in the apostolic common life as represented by the images of the apostles and St Augustine of Hippo, and in the life of the desert, as represented by Antony and Cuthbert, but narratives of "Cuthbert as a monk" and the promotion of Lindisfarne as a secondary pilgrimage destination were apparently of less relevance to their canonical regime and Cumbrian sphere of ecclesiastical influence.

As well as omitting scenes of Cuthbert as a monk, the Carlisle panels severely truncate the later chapters of Bede's *Prose Life* (illustrated in full in Yates Thompson), reducing Cuthbert's many episcopal healings and prophecies to a single panel in which he is shown curing a sick child

during an episcopal journey.[13] This truncation replicates the approach taken by the *SEL* and *Gilte Legende*, which also jump over Cuthbert's healing ministry. Also omitted – and this is perhaps more surprising given the location – are those chapters from the second half of the *Prose Life* in which Cuthbert visits Carlisle on a couple of occasions, experiencing a vision of King Ecgfrith's death, and exchanging some final words with Hereberht, the hermit of Derwentwater (chs. 27, 28). One would have thought Prior Gondibour and his cathedral associates would have been keen to select passages from the authorised *Life* emphasising Cuthbert's physical association with the city. Clearly, the standard arc of biography established by the vernacular legendaries (*SEL* and *Gilte*) trumps the advantages of a customised narrative tailored to an individual location.

As well as visiting Carlisle at least twice during his lifetime, Cuthbert had a variety of later associations with Cumbria (Tudor 69-71). One of his earliest posthumous miracles, recorded in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, describes how a relic of his hair, housed in the monastery of Dacre, near Penrith, cures the eye tumour of a young monk from the monastery (Bk. 4, ch. 32). During the ravages of the Vikings, when Cuthbert's coffin was on the move around northern England, we know that it passed through Cumbria prior to embarking on a ship to Ireland, and that the Abbot of Carlisle played a part in that decision as one of the leaders of the peripatetic community. This story remains active in the fifteenth century, as does the list of Cuthbertine landholdings detailed in the eleventh-century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, which includes a section describing King Ecgfrith's gifts of Carlisle and Cartmel to the community of the saint (chs. 5-6). Later still, in the twelfth century, Reginald of Durham's collection of contemporary miracles includes several which benefit the Cistercian abbey of Furness or involve Cumbrian churches dedicated to Cuthbert, suggesting active pockets of veneration within the region (chs. 55-56, 129).[14] These stories and associations must have played a significant part in the veneration of Cuthbert within Cumbria, yet once again, they lose out to the *auctoritas* of Bede when it comes to visual representation, and never succeed in gaining a foothold in Cuthbert's cathedral iconography.

However, even if Cuthbert's local associations with Cumbria do not succeed in winning a visual place within the cathedral, his presence in

---

[13] Panel 15, illustrating Bede, *Prose Life*, ch. 33. The panel caption reads "To thys chyld god grauntyd lyfe / throgh hys prayers – to –s wyffe."

[14] We know that there was an altar to St Cuthbert in the abbey church at Furness from the 1150s, presumably in response to the miracles that Reginald cites.

the choir stalls as the *single* native and northern saint, situated alongside St Antony, St Augustine and the apostles, is surely worthy of note, and encourages us to reflect conversely on the unexpected hagiographical *omissions* from this largescale iconographic programme. The Virgin Mary is notable by her absence, even though a longstanding cult in her honour existed at Carlisle Cathedral, drawing pilgrims from far afield.[15] The cathedral housed an important collection of relics, including both conventional universal items and those associated with British saints (the girdle of Bridget of Ireland, and the sword which martyred Thomas of Canterbury) (Summerson 36). None of these play any part in the hagiographical programmes of the panels, which effectively *superimpose* themselves on local traditions rather than developing out of the cathedral's existing material culture. Then, there is also the question of other early saints with closer associations with the north west: Kentigern, missionary to the British kingdom of Strathclyde, Ninian, putative bishop of the see of Whithorn in Galloway, and Bega, a legendary Irish princess who fled her homeland to live a life of piety in Cumbria in the eighth century. All are overlooked in favour of north-eastern Cuthbert in this iconographic scheme. Casting our net further afield, a similar imbalance can be seen with respect to church dedications to regional saints in the diocese of Carlisle. Ninian's and Bega's names are associated with one church each, Kentigern with seven, and Cuthbert with fifteen, more than half of which are recorded for the first time in the early fifteenth-century list of church dedications to St Cuthbert compiled by Prior Wessington of Durham (Tudor 71-72; Thompson).[16] What conclusions is it possible to draw from all this? We know that there was an ambitious resurgence in Cuthbert's cult at Durham Cathedral in the first half of the fifteenth century, engineered by Bishop Langley and Prior Wessington, which manifested itself through stained glass and public tabulae in addition to the production of new historiographical compilations. I would suggest that in addition to extending Cuthbert's reach down to York through that gigantic window in the Minster, commissioned and paid for by Durham bishops, the sudden spate of church dedications in Cumbria and wood panel paintings in Carlisle Cathedral demonstrate a deliberate attempt on the part of Durham to expand Cuthbertine veneration in the North West, brushing aside other Cumbrian cults and

[15] Summerson refers to a famous statue of the Virgin within the cathedral (33-34).

[16] The Cumbrian Cuthbertine churches first recorded in Wessington's list include Embleton, Brigham, Great Salkeld, Edenhall, Clifton, Cliburn, Hawkshead, Kirkby Ireleth, and Aldingham (Tudor 73-74).

effectively constructing him as the premier saint of the entire northern region, not simply Northumbria and Durham. As mentioned before, the most plausible actant of this expansionist agenda in the last decades of the fifteenth century is Richard Bell, elevated from Durham priory to the Carlisle episcopate, who presumably brought Durham's hagiographical interests and ambitions with him.

An Episcopal Emphasis

The reading direction of the Cuthbert panels at Carlisle is vertical, moving from top to bottom in a series of adjacent columns. However, toward the end the narrative sequence becomes disordered because an image of Cuthbert's consecration as bishop has been inserted at the bottom of the fourth column (Panel 14), where it will be at eye level and easily visible, separating the saint's discovery of water on Farne, and his construction of a hermitage there (Park and Cather 219).[17] The accompanying caption reads: "Consecrate bysshop thai made hym her / off lyndisfarne both farr and ner." This is the only image from the entire panel sequence that has no corresponding illustration in MS Yates Thompson 26 or any of the other illustrated twelfth-century manuscripts of Bede's *Prose Life* (Baker 40-42). However, it does cross-refer competently to the earlier panel (7) in which Prior Boisil of Melrose predicts Cuthbert's episcopal future on his deathbed. In addition, a very similar image is included in the fifteenth-century York Minster window, and it is also worth noting that Cuthbert's episcopal ministry is cast as a central event in the *SEL* and *Gilte Legende*. Cuthbert's episcopal function is clearly a key component of his sanctity in many parts of the country in the fifteenth century. It may be possible to go even further. The choir at Carlisle Cathedral is not only a canonical space but also an episcopal space. It is where the bishop's throne is situated and where the cathedral's bishops (including Richard Bell) are interred before the high altar. As mentioned earlier, Carlisle became a diocese in its own right in 1133, detaching it from its earlier subordination to the diocese of York. However, the references in Bede's *Prose Life* to Cuthbert repeatedly visiting Carlisle, ordaining priests there, dedicating churches and touring its

[17] The other conspicuously disordered image is the one depicting the provision of the sacrament to Cuthbert on his deathbed (Panel 16). This is positioned immediately before Cuthbert's rebuke to the disobedient crows. Again, its disordered position makes it clearly visible; as a consequence it may be intended to reinforce the canons' sacramental ministry.