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Joanne Findon

Napping in the Arbour in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* Play

The turning point in the late medieval Digby *Mary Magdalene* play occurs when Mary Magdalene falls asleep in an arbour. This scene immediately follows her seduction in a tavern, and her words here indicate that she has given herself over to a life of sensuality. She has come to this arbour – a liminal space that partakes of both Nature and Culture – to await the arrival of one or more lovers.

> MARI: A, God be wyth my valentynys,
> My byrd swetyng, my lovys so dere!
> For þey be bote for a blossum of blysse!
> Me mervellyt sore þey be nat here,
> But I woll restyn in þis erbyre,
> Amons thes bamys precyus of prysse,
> Tyll som lovyr wol apere
> That me is wont to halse and kysse.
> [*Her xal Mary lye doun and slepe in þe erbyre]* (ll. 564-72)[1]

In her sleep, she hears the voice of an angel who repeats and recrafts her words, warning her "Ful bytterly thys blysse it wol be bowth!" (l. 589) and insisting that "Salue for þi sowle must be sowth" (l. 594) if she wishes to avoid eternal punishment. In repeating Mary's word 'blysse', (l. 589) the angel highlights the price of unbridled sensual pleasure; his use of 'bowth' to echo Mary's word 'bote' (l. 566) has a similar function. The angel's 'salue' (l. 594) recalls the 'bamys' (l. 569) of the arbour which Mary sees as an appropriate setting for her encounter with her 'valentynys'; yet of course these 'bamys' are intended for erotic attraction, while the 'salue' is for healing her soul of lust and pride.

Of course, Mary's slumber here is more than just a nap: it is the vehicle for a life-changing intervention from a realm beyond the everyday world. When she awakens, a deeply repentant Mary exclaims,"Alas, how betternesse in my hert doth abyde!/… A, how pynsynesse potyt me to oppresse,/ That I haue

synnyd on euery syde!" (ll. 604, 606-7)) and resolves to seek Jesus, the 'Prophett' (l. 611), saying that

> Be þe oyle of mercy he xal me relyff.
> Wyth swete bawmys, I wyl sekyn hym þis syth,
> And sadly folow hys lordshep in eche degre. (ll. 612-14.)

Here the 'swete bawmys' have been redeemed and transformed into the perfumed ointment with which she will soon anoint the feet of Jesus (l. 641). After this brief monologue (ll. 602-14) in which she assesses her past deeds and her present situation, she formulates a plan for her future.[2] Mary Magdalene immediately leaves the arbour to find Jesus, the man who will replace her earthly lovers as her perfect, heavenly Bridegroom. Unlike her earthly 'valentynys', this heavenly bridegroom does not disappoint her through his absence; indeed, when she finds him in the house of Simon the Leper, her process of repentance is completed (ll. 641-704). As Theresa Coletti has noted, the language used here in the arbour anticipates the later *hortulanus* scene with the resurrected Jesus. [3] But this encounter with the angel who visits Mary in the liminal space of the arbour also recalls the visit of Lady Lechery to Magdalen Castle, the encounter which began the process of Mary's temptation and downfall, and replaces it with one that begins her process of repentance and redemption.

When watching this section of the play, the late medieval East Anglian audience would likely have heard powerful echoes of other garden scenes, many of which are to be found in medieval romances. It has become increasingly clear that medieval drama borrowed freely from many other genres. These certainly include saints' lives and legends, and Coletti has ably demonstrated the significant influence of mystical texts and religious treatises on East Anglian drama.[4] However, medieval dramatic texts also borrowed from more secular genres like romance, folk tales and *fabliaux*.[5] Robert Hanning notes that a number of poets wrote texts that could be termed 'religious romances' and Andrea Hopkins, Susan Crane and others have discussed the religious tenor of a number of later medieval romances. [6] In short, the boundary between saints' lives and romance was highly permeable, and the mixing of secular and religious discourse is, then, not surprising. Moreover, in the late middle ages, courtly love language and religious symbolism often merged in the depictions of female saints. As Hanning has noted, 'It is no mere rhetorical affectation but rather perceived generic similarities that leads the author of another late medieval English mystical treatise, *A Pistle of the Discrecioun of Stirings*, to describe the soul's journey toward inner

harmony as a type of metaphorical romance plot.' [7] And as Helen Cooper has argued, the language of the *Song of Songs,* read as an allegory for the marriage relationship between Christ and the church, authorized 'a language of mystical union in metaphors of the sexual; but it also authorized the expression of sexual union in metaphors of the mystical.'[8] This reciprocity collapses the boundaries between 'sacred' and 'secular' categories, and the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play takes full advantage of the resulting ambiguities in its portrayal of Mary as both saint and anti-romance-heroine. Thus, the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play is much more than a religious drama which presents Mary Magdalene as 'the archetypal contemplative and mystical lover.'[9] It is also a powerful fusion of romantic and spiritual adventure centred on a female protagonist who grows from dependency and naïveté to full-blown heroic stature.[10]

The romance connections would be all the more apparent to the audience in light of the Digby playwright's numerous additions and alterations to Mary Magdalene's legend. Many elements in the play appear either in different form or not at all in the religious literature about Mary Magdalene that served as his major sources. The author of the Digby play used three main sources: the New Testament accounts, which he often paraphrases closely in the first half of the play, and the outlines of Mary's life and career as a missionary and hermit which appear in the *Golden Legend* and the *South English Legendary*. However, the playwright does not hesitate to expand his sources when he sees fit. For instance, although Mary Magdalene's final years of fasting and contemplation in the wilderness are stressed in his sources, the playwright devotes comparatively little time to this episode. By contrast, he greatly enlarges on the *Golden Legend*'s account of Mary's descent into an immoral life and makes it the focus of the first section of the play. Expanding on only a few sentences from the *Golden Legend*, our playwright creates the whole allegorical structure of the assault on Magdalen castle (clearly a symbol of the virtuous Soul) by the Seven Deadly Sins. He also adds Lady Lechery's temptation of Mary, the tavern scene in which Mary falls for the 'galaunt' Curiosity, and her life-changing nap in the arbour. Interestingly, he does not dwell on Mary's sinful life as some continental texts do;[11] a mere eight lines of Mary's speech suffice to sum up her new sensuality and her narcissistic focus on herself as a 'blossum of blysse' (l. 566). The playwright deploys allegorical figures from morality plays, such as the World, the Flesh and the Devil and their servants, to represent Mary Magdalene's inner state during her temptation and fall. The playwright highlights Mary's emotional life throughout, both through realistic scenes and through the allegorical figures

who assault her soul, thus making her the subject of her own story. Indeed, her inner development is a fusion of the 'crisis of inner awareness' that medieval romance heroes undergo[12] and the inner transformation typical in conversion stories.

Intriguingly, the playwright's main non-biblical sources, the *Golden Legend* and the *South English Legendary*, explain Mary Magdalene's fall into sexual sin in ways that differ sharply from the play. In the *South English Legendary*, Mary's fall is described as a reaction to her aborted wedding to the apostle John; this non-biblical legend recounts how Jesus called John to him when he was about to wed Mary, and how, out of anger and spite at being deprived of a husband, she gave herself over to prostitution.[13] *The Golden Legend* version attributes her addiction to pleasure to her beauty and wealth.[14] The author of the Digby play, however, astutely invents his own explanation: Mary is overwhelmed by grief for her father, who has died suddenly, and this grief leaves her vulnerable to the flattery of Lechery (who visits her at her home) and Curiosity, the attractive and smooth-talking young man in the tavern. The dramatist's changes suggest the perception (famously elaborated by Freud) that a young woman deprived of a beloved father feels an overwhelming need to replace that father-figure with another man. Jacques Rossiaud's discussion of French preachers Olivier Maillard and Michel Menot, and of playwright Jean Michel's *Le Mystère de la Passion*, strongly suggests an evolution in fifteenth- century theories about prostitutes: 'As all authors emphasize, the absence of a father is what lay behind such a life of abandon'.[15] This factor raises the possibility that the Digby playwright was familiar with such continental portrayals of Mary Magdalene and borrowed this concept from them.

The Digby playwright further departs from his sources in inventing a whole tavern scene to show us the mechanism of Mary's temptation and fall.[16] The scene is characterized – incongruously, but deliberately – by the anomaly of extravagant (and possibly even parodic) courtly love language spoken in a tavern. When he first meets Mary Magdalene, the gallant Curiosity exclaims:

> A, dere dewchesse, my daysyys iee!
> Splendavnt of colour, most of femynyte,
> Your sofreyn colourrys set with synseryte!
> Consedere my loue into yower alye,
> Or ellys I am smet with peynnys of perplexite! (ll. 515-19)

In this tavern scene, Mary is both a 'daysyy's iee' (the common English flower, l. 515) and a 'swete lelly,' (l. 526) emblem of the Virgin Mary and flower of

aristocratic gardens. Both sets of associations mingle to suggest the multiple potentialities already inherent in Mary's character at this stage.

Indeed, the romance resonances of the arbour scene are richly anticipated by the discourse of courtesy that the Digby playwright has incorporated almost from the beginning: in Cyrus's flattery of his daughters Mary and Martha in courtly language (ll. 71-74); in Lady Lechery's blandishments to lure Mary to the tavern (ll. 440-65); and in the wooing language of Curiosity himself (ll. 515-26).[17] Tony Davenport calls the tavern sequence 'a neat little pastiche of a courtly love scene',[18] while Coletti's analysis of this section suggests a critique by the playwright of courtliness as verbal and ideological system, which 'calls attention to the excesses and contradictions of courtliness itself, as both a discourse that produced specific gender relationships and an attribute of the ruling-class identity to which Curiosity aspires'.[19] She further speculates that Curiosity succeeds in seducing Mary because his discourse of courtesy 'verbally echoes her father's praise'.[20] On the other hand, Chester Scoville argues that the decorous language of courtesy so closely identified with Mary Magdalene serves to point to her real *ethos* as a higher class woman with considerable inner worth, and that Mary Magdalene is portrayed even in this scene as having 'residual goodness' since she 'falls reluctantly', and her conversion comes swiftly after the angel's visit.[21] Such a portrayal militates against the popular depiction of her as a 'sinful woman' in many medieval sermons and plays.[22] Certainly, the playwright's additions and changes to the legendary material suggest a writer who is attentive to his audience's preoccupations with a number of late medieval concerns about women's piety and women's desire, and about female agency both in the secular world and in the spiritual realm.

An audience watching the arbour scene would likely have been reminded not only of romances in general, but in particular of a type of scene in Middle English romances, the kind of narrative 'unit' that Helen Cooper terms a 'meme',[23] in which a main character, usually a male hero, falls asleep outdoors under a tree, usually in a somewhat liminal space like a garden but sometimes in a forest or orchard. Often this hero is in deep distress or depressed. Dozing off precipitates a life-changing encounter with Otherworld forces of some kind. Of course, such a situation also often precipitates a poet's dream-vision – as in Chaucer's prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* and Langland's *Piers Plowman* – but in such cases the slumber is a framing device for the dream vision itself. More typically in romances, no full-blown dream-vision occurs; rather, the sleeper awakens to a changed situation, often one with magical and/or marked erotic overtones.

For example, in the Middle English romance *Ywain and Gawain*, Ywain in his beastly, maddened state falls asleep in the forest under a tree, where he sleeps naked until three women find him.[24] These women administer a magical healing ointment which brings the hero back to 'humanity' (ll. 1715-1868). The recovery of his human form and the shedding of his beastly state is the outer sign of incipient *inner* recovery, and constitutes the hero's first step on the road back to life and eventual reconciliation with the wife whom he has thoughtlessly abandoned. Women with Otherworldly associations (particularly the aristocratic lady, with her magical ointment from 'Morgan le Fay') play a crucial role in this scene. Ywain's ultimate reunion with his wife cannot be achieved without a series of encounters with other helpful women. As in a number of other 'penitential romances', the hero's journey is emotional and spiritual as well as physical; he must be inwardly transformed before the story can end happily.[25]

In *Sir Launfal*, the depressed and poverty-stricken hero dozes under a tree in the heat of the day (in 'þe vnderntyde', l. 220) after tumbling off his horse into a mud puddle (ll. 220-8).[26] He is visited by glamorous serving women who lead him to a magnificent pavilion in the woods, wherein lies his ideal Otherworld lover, Dame Tryamour, who is only too eager to grant him love and wealth.[27] The reader may be initially unsure about whether the beautiful women are 'just a dream' or real; yet as the remaining story unfolds at King Arthur's court, where Launfal must deal with a very nasty Queen Guenevere, it becomes clear that Dame Tryamour is an Otherworld woman whose realm is closely connected to this time and earthly space. As in Ywain's case, Launfal's adventures are emotional as well as chivalric as he deals with the repercussions of his broken promise to his lover. When he is finally reunited with her, they both depart to the Otherworld, never to return.

In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur,* Sir Lancelot falls asleep under an apple tree and has a similar Otherworldly encounter with women. The 'apple tree' connects this episode with the scene in *Sir Orfeo*, discussed below. Like Sir Launfal, Sir Lancelot falls asleep in the middle of the day, a time traditionally considered perilous.[28] Although Lancelot and his companion have just passed through a forest, they come to a 'deep plain' and a landscape that bears the signs of civilization, marked with a hedge and an apple tree. Overcome by drowsiness, Lancelot falls asleep underneath the apple tree (Malory, VI.1.3, ll. 26-34).[29] While Sir Lionel rides off to deal with some knights, the sleeping Sir Lancelot is visited by four queens, one of whom is Morgan le Fay. They all wish to sleep with the handsome knight, and they enchant and abduct him. Lancelot is eventually rescued from his prison by the daughter of King

Bagdemagus. As in *Sir Launfal*, the knight's nap beneath a tree precipitates a visitation by Otherworld women, but in this case the women are dangerous and not benign.

Perhaps the most interesting of these romance analogues is *Sir Orfeo.*[30] Here again, the Otherworld visitation takes place in a liminal space, an orchard – in this case beneath an 'ympe-tre' ('a grafted tree', l. 70). The tree itself is thus at once part of nature and of culture, a hybrid, on the threshold between one thing and another, and thus provides an appropriate setting for Otherworld encounters. Significantly, in this tale the sleeper is a woman, Orfeo's wife Heurodis. Even more significant, perhaps, is that unlike the romances that feature slumbering male heroes who eventually triumph over or benefit from the Otherworld encounter, this tale depicts the sleeping woman's experience as a catastrophe. While napping under the 'ympe-tre' in her orchard one hot noon in May, Heurodis has a frightening dream-visitation from the king of the fairies, and awakens screaming in terror and tearing at her face and clothing (ll. 63-78).[31] Heurodis's behaviour suggests the onset of madness (perhaps even schizophrenia, as Pearsall and Spearing have suggested[32]), but she is nevertheless able to describe her vision of the fairy Otherworld to her husband, although she is despairingly resigned to the fact that she must part from him. The next day she is kidnapped by the fairy king and taken to the Otherworld. She is eventually rescued by Sir Orfeo and brought back to the 'real world', but the romance suggests that she and her husband never really recover fully from this acute trauma and the lost years that result.[33]

This romance version is particularly interesting because of the relative rarity of female characters in such scenes. When female characters do doze off in gardens, orchards or arbours, the results of the supernatural encounters that ensue are almost always disastrous: the woman is often raped or impregnated by a fairy lover or *incubus*, or suffers some other kind of tragic loss. In *Sir Gowther,* the hero's mother, desperate to conceive a child, is impregnated by a demon while she is 'in hur orchard apon a day' (l. 67).[34] In the Middle English lay *Sir Degaré,* the heroine is raped by a fairy lover while her *maids* sleep at noon under an enchanted chestnut tree.[35] Even if the woman is not sexually assaulted in such scenes, she is likely to suffer catastrophic losses like the Empress in *Octovian*, whose two children are stolen from her when she is resting in an 'herber redy wroght'.[36] Notably, although Heurodis is abducted, she is not sexually assaulted in *Sir Orfeo*, nor does she lose children like the Empress and others; the tale's interest in her as a female character is different, as she is and remains childless. For this reason, the orchard scene in *Sir Orfeo*

might well have provided a striking parallel in the minds of audience members watching the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play who were also familiar with some version of this romance.[37]

As we have seen, in the Digby play Mary falls asleep in an arbour while waiting for her lovers to meet her after her 'fall' into sin in the tavern scene. As in the romances, the encounter with the Otherworld (in this case the Christian Otherworld) is a pivotal moment, a turning point in both the story and in the life of the protagonist. None of the Digby play's sources contains this scene; it appears to be the invention of the playwright. Encounters with angels are certainly commonplace in medieval drama and saints' lives, but what is especially interesting here is the ways in which the scene specifically echoes a romance situation – the Otherworld visitation in a liminal space – and thus situates itself within a larger constellation of folk motifs that were still circulating through medieval Britain in the fifteenth century.

Mary Magdalene's life-changing encounter with the angel – the pivotal point of the play – occurs in this 'erbyre'. This Middle English word, a loan-word from the French 'herbier', is a powerfully suggestive word with a range of meanings. In general terms it denotes a garden: a cultivated outdoor space often enclosed by walls and adorned with flowers. It is often specifically associated with love, and perhaps particularly reminiscent of the dream garden in the *Romance of the Rose*. But the word 'erbyre' can also mean a structure providing shade and privacy within the larger space of the garden, a 'bower covered with flowers, vines, shrubs, or the like; an arbour' (*MED,* def. *e* 'herber'). The arbour is an example of human intervention in Nature, of 'Art' or 'Culture' shaping and controlling 'Nature' – an idea that was, as Henisch has noted, an important one to medieval gardeners.[38] The arbour was 'a place in which to sit rather than walk' and was designed to provide pleasurable shade and partial concealment for those who would view the sunny garden from a sheltered vantage point, seated on benches often covered in turf.[39] In its provision of shade and privacy, the arbour might be seen to mimic a tree, a natural thing even while it is clearly constructed by human hands. The arbour itself was thus a powerful emblem of liminality, straddling the boundary between nature and culture, a structure partaking of both 'inside' and 'outside', and thus an apt stage for an encounter with Otherworldly forces. A garden with an arbour was certainly a pleasure garden, the kind of intimate space where lovers might meet in romance. Yet at the same time, the Virgin Mary and her infant Jesus are often depicted in late medieval art as sitting in a trellised arbour-like structure.[40] Thus, the arbour also evoked both sacred and secular love.

The medieval arbour is closely related to the garden, which is a powerful, multivalent image – the kind of iconographic image that V.A. Kolve discusses in detail in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative.* Arguing that certain 'narrative images' carry particular weight in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* Kolve explains that these are

> images that the auditor/reader is invited to recognize as being *like* – as being in 'approximate register' with – symbolic images known from other medieval contexts, both literary and visual, where their meanings are stipulative and exact, unmediated by the ambiguities and particularities of fiction.[41]

Kolve stresses in his discussion that such images transcend the boundaries between 'sacred' and 'secular', and can signify in any number of different modes of discourse, in fact gaining in aggregate meanings through just such an accumulation of associations. The medieval garden (and the related signs, the arbour and the orchard) are such iconographic images. The medieval garden is at the same time the Garden of Love and the Garden of Eden, with its primal narrative of male-female conflict and spiritual cataclysm. The Garden of Love is, of course, ubiquitous in medieval romance, and is frequently the space in which lovers meet, plot to be together, and/or proclaim their love for one another (as in, for instance, *Sir Degrevant, Sir Gowther, William of Palerne,* Marie de France's *Guigemar,* and the French *lai Tydorel*). Entry into a garden can also trigger a dream vision, as in *Pearl.* However, gardens, orchards and arbours are also potentially dangerous places: they can be the scenes of adultery and betrayal (Chaucer's 'The Merchant's Tale' and 'The Franklin's Tale', Malory's tale of Balen le Sauvage[42]), or the potentially destabilizing space where Otherworld encounters take place (as in the Breton *lais* and other Celtic-inflected tales, and many English romances such as *Sir Degaré*). As a zone which partakes of both Nature and Culture, and is thus a charged, liminal space, the garden is a suitable venue for life-changing decisions and the expression of the heightened emotions of romantic and erotic love. The garden is sometimes also associated with a chapel, suggesting the proximity of sacred and secular concerns.[43] Amplifying the signification of the garden are its Marian associations with the 'garden enclosed' of the *Song of Songs*, which had become increasingly important in the development of the cult of the Virgin Mary and affective piety in the later Middle Ages. Significantly, Mary Magdalene also came to be associated, in some texts, with the Bride in the *Song of Songs.*[44] This merging with the Virgin Mary becomes clearer later in the Digby play, when the king and queen of Marseilles greet

Mary Magdalene with a 'Hail Mary' on their return from Rome (ll. 1939-42).[45] Finally, the stories about the Virgin Mary's mother Anna, popularized in apocryphal Gospels such as the so-called *Pseudo-Matthew*, included a scene in which Anna, unable to conceive for twenty years, encounters in her orchard an angel who promises that she will conceive, thus providing another link to the positive associations of the garden/orchard.[46]

The Digby play draws on all of these traditions about gardens, orchards and arbours, and audiences would likely have seen all of these connections as they watched this arbour scene. Thus in one sense, by inhabiting the same space as the Virgin Mary does in many poems, hymns and visual depictions, Mary Magdalene's place in the arbour anticipates her imminent conversion and her eventual conflation with the Virgin Mary. At the same time, however, the arbour where Mary waits for her lovers sets up expectations of sinful, fleshly, or doomed love, particularly given her expressed focus on sensuality. Indeed, the arbour's erotic associations were heightened in the 2003 Toronto Poculi Ludique Societas production of the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play, where the same flower-decorated stage was used as the stage of Flesh in the beginning of the play, and then later as the arbour where Mary falls asleep.[47] Her encounter with the angel thus takes place in exactly the same visual space as Flesh's declarations of lust earlier, and his commissioning of Lady Lechery to tempt Mary Magdalene. The arbour is a space which suggests multiple possibilities, one to which the play's audience would have been attuned.

The links to and contrast with the orchard scene in *Sir Orfeo* are particularly interesting and suggestive. I want to look closely for a moment at these two scenes and at how any members of the audience who were familiar with the *Sir Orfeo* story might have understood the play.[48] A number of critics have noted how the orchard scene in *Sir Orfeo* maps a radical state of 'otherness' both in its events (the incursion of fairy abductors from the Otherworld) and its effects (Heurodis's spiritual and then physical abduction).[49] The Otherworld here is obviously the Otherworld of Celtic romance but also, metaphorically, a state of 'otherness' that involves the loss of one's selfhood and self-determination.[50] Heurodis is snatched away despite anything her husband and his knights can do, and she can only be rescued by him after he undertakes a long and arduous journey alone into depression and life-altering hardship in the forest. Although the Middle English *Sir Orfeo* ends happily, rather than tragically like the classical *Orpheus* story, Heurodis never seems fully to regain her selfhood, nor does she speak again in the remainder of the romance. Her experience remains traumatic, mysterious, and terrifying. In the Digby *Mary Magdalene,* Mary also experiences a period of radical other-

ness in the arbour – first in verbally expressing a selfhood that the audience recognizes as completely different (indeed 'fallen') from what she was as a character before her visit to the tavern, and then in a moment of contact with the Otherworld in the visit of the angel.[51] Yet in the arbour scene itself, she does not suffer a loss of self-determination as Heurodis does.

There is another similarity between the two scenes. Heurodis, unlike Eurydice in the original, *speaks* about her terrifying vision: we hear her describe it in her own words.[52] In this brief interlude, she becomes a speaking subject in her own right, and thus an agent of her own production as an individual in the text as she describes her transformative experience under the 'ympe-tre'. Although she does not speak again in the story, our impression of what is at stake in the tale is rooted in her words. Similarly, the scene in the arbour in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* also represents Mary as a speaking subject, emotional and increasingly self-aware, transformed before our eyes from self-absorbed narcissist to sincere seeker for higher spiritual values.[53] Although in most of the other analogues involving women (for instance, *Sir Gowther*), the female character does not speak about her experience, both Heurodis and Mary Magdalene exemplify the kind of female subjectivity noted by Cooper in medieval English romances: 'Women… are frequently given their own thoughts and responses, expressed in soliloquies of self-analysis as they awaken to love, which endow them with the kind of subjective, interior, life that has often been claimed to be exclusively both a male and a modern phenomenon'.[54]

In *Sir Orfeo* there are implicit connections through the 'ympe-tre' with the Garden of Eden story. Medieval commentaries on the original *Orpheus* story, such as the one by Pierre Bersuire, explicitly drew a comparison between Eurydice and Eve, between the two trees, and between the serpent that kills Eurydice and Satan; other commentators maintained that sleep was dangerous to the soul, connecting it with sexual indulgence.[55] And it is worth noting that the two later manuscript versions of *Sir Orfeo*, found in Ashmole 61 and Harley 3810, are more pious and less interested in the finer details of the fairy realm than the earliest version found in the Auchinleck manuscript.[56] But there are also echoes here of the language of the *Song of Songs*, as Robert Longsworth has pointed out, and these militate against the possible demonic associations of sleeping at noon under a tree.[57] In the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play, it is the Good Angel who appears in the arbour, not the demonic characters; the Seven Deadly Sins, including Lady Lechery, have already appeared in the preceding tavern scene, and Mary's temptation has already occurred. This scene in the arbour will reverse the process of her downward

journey into sensuality and sin. The contrast is highlighted in Mary Magdalene's use of language in response to the angel's words: she says 'A, how þhe speryt of goodnesse hath promtyt me þhis tyde,/ And *temtyd* me wyth tytyll of trew perfythnesse!' (ll. 602–3, my emphasis). The angel has 'temtyd' her toward righteousness, just as the flattery of Lady Lechery, the dandy Curiosity and all the other Seven Deadly Sins tempted her earlier to sin. Thus, the play's arbour scene evokes the more positive associations of both religious and romance encounters with the Otherworld. Members of the Digby play's audience who were familiar with a range of romance and religious texts would likely have appreciated the multiple interpretive possibilities conjured by the scene's subtle references to both traditions.

As Pearsall has argued, the rescue of Heurodis has its seed in the moment when she sees her husband in the wilderness, and sheds tears at his changed appearance.[58] The healing power of tears has a long history, and was common in medieval literature, both religious and secular. Mary Magdalene's famous tears of repentance, as she washes Jesus' feet with them at Simon the Leper's house, come just after the arbour scene in the play (ll. 631-41). In each case, the visionary events in the orchard/garden/arbour unleash forces that are both emotional and transformative, forces that emanate from both the Otherworld (both Christian and non-Christian) and from within the female characters themselves.

Of course, any audience appreciation of such echoes from the romance tradition assumes a general familiarity with the romance genre in general, and with tales that contain such garden scenes in particular. Recent studies have shown that the late medieval English audience was familiar with a wide range of literature, both written texts and oral stories (including folk tales and legends). The Digby *Mary Magdalene* play, dated to the late fifteenth century,[59] was the product of an increasingly literate and socially dynamic culture. East Anglia – broadly defined as Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire – was home to a number of writers who produced a variety of literary genres, both religious and secular; these included such authors as Lydgate, Capgrave, and Metham.[60] Moreover, by the fifteenth century, England enjoyed what Riddy calls 'a nationwide traffic in texts that was drawn on by different and overlapping readerships',[61] and thus East Anglians also had access to numerous texts produced outside their region.[62] Malory's work circulated widely and might well have been familiar to members of the Digby play's late fifteenth/early sixteenth-century audiences; there is evidence that Malory was acquainted with a number of important fifteenth-century Norfolk figures such as John Paston III, whose library contained a book about 'þe Dethe off

Arthur' which may have been Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, as well as other romances.[63]

The audience of medieval drama most definitely included those who read romance (and/or heard romances read), and thus would have had a 'horizon of expectations' that was considerably broader than has often been acknowledged.[64] Manuscript contents suggest that the late medieval English audience had a keen appetite for both religious works and romances. Even by the fourteenth century the audience for such texts included significant numbers of the increasingly literate and upwardly mobile group that Riddy has called the 'bourgeois-gentry'.[65] A number of late medieval book owners belonged to wealthy commercial families, and many manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are compilations of various genres of literature gathered together for owners who wanted anthologies to read at home.[66] Hudson has noted that a number of these collections seem to have been 'executed as a unit, probably by professional copyists' and tend to include both texts 'of religious instruction and stories on sacred, moral and chivalric subjects'.[67] Such manuscripts as Cambridge University Library Ff.2.38 and British Library Cotton Caligula A.ii contain numerous romances along with devotional works, and were clearly made for patrons who wished to be both instructed and entertained.[68] Indeed, Cambridge Ff.2.38, with its religious treatises, saints' lives (including a Life of St. Mary Magdalene) and numerous romances, attests to the breadth of fifteenth-century literary tastes.[69] The explosion of such anthologies in the fifteenth century attests to both increasing literacy and a growing audience for such literary works.[70] Although the Digby manuscript which contains the *Mary Magdalene* play includes no romances, the E Museo manuscript that was long bound with it does contain both a romance and a chronicle as well as religious plays,[71] and both manuscripts clearly emanate from a literary culture which valued 'family, piety and the marvelous'.[72] The Digby play is also grounded in a social milieu which, as Gibson and Coletti have both argued, was vitally interested in 'exploring the relationship of contemplative piety, religious poverty, and charity to a dynamic social world that embraced the opportunities of the market, the worthiness of commerce, and the responsible use of inherited wealth'.[73] Although we may never attain a thorough understanding of the late medieval East Anglian audience, it follows that if romance audiences were also reading religious treatises and didactic texts, and if numerous lay members of the play's audiences were reading religious texts, then many of these readers were likely reading collections that also contained romances. They would thus bring their familiarity with romance elements to any viewing of the play in

performance. Naturally, each member of the audience would have a somewhat different 'horizon of expectations' depending on the particular romances that he or she knew.

What such audiences would have noted in watching Mary Magdalene's experience in the arbour is that, unlike other women who encounter supernatural forces in orchards or gardens, Mary Magdalene retains the power of action and choice in her encounter with Otherworld forces. Heurodis, for example, gives voice to a hopeless acceptance of the inevitable: she must leave this world and part from her husband. In contrast, Mary Magdalene, wakes up to the reality of her spiritual condition, agrees with the angel's assessment of her soul's condition, and chooses to act on that knowledge. Her decisive words 'I xal porsue þe Prophett wherso he be' (l. 610) have their source in her own mind and heart: she chooses to seek Jesus, not because the angel has suggested that she do so (he has not) but because Mary knows about Jesus and realizes that he is the one who can be the kind of lover she needs.

While often referred to as a 'second Eve' in medieval literature, Mary Magdalene is not punished in this garden, in this arbour, even though at this point she is clearly a 'sinner' who is, in a medieval sense, replaying the primal act of Eve's disobedience. Instead, she hears the angel's voice, listens, repents and takes action of her own free will. Mary then goes off to an encounter with a different kind of 'Otherworld' lover, immediately seeking Jesus at the home of Simon the Leper, where she weeps and is forgiven, and where Jesus casts out the Seven Deadly Sins in a powerful moment of triumph over the forces that overwhelmed her earlier in the tavern scene.

I would suggest that the Digby playwright has deliberately chosen to introduce and manipulate this romance 'meme' of the sleeper in the garden in order to enhance Mary Magdalene's personal power. As Mimi Still Dixon has pointed out, Mary's femininity is both the cause of her fall and the path to her triumph as emblematic Christian, and nothing that happens to her can be detached from her feminine identity.[74] Yet the Digby playwright redefines that femininity in relation to other texts in which women similarly act or speak, or are acted upon, like the romances. In emerging from this Otherworld encounter with positive benefits, Mary Magdalene is much more like the *male* heroes of romance – like Ywain, like Launfal, like Lancelot. As such, she is a powerful exemplar of the heroic female through whom, in the context of late medieval piety, devout laywomen in particular could inscribe themselves in the drama of Christian redemption – not simply as fallen flesh but as redeemed spouses of Christ.

In this the Digby playwright's East Anglian audience would have included devout women who were wealthy enough to express their devotion to Mary Magdalene through patronage and endowments and yet who also would likely be familiar with medieval romances. As Scherb has shown through careful study of historical accounts, this East Anglian audience was both rural and urban, and dramatic performances were staged in market towns and villages, for audiences composed of both sexes and a range of social classes.[75] Many recent studies have situated this play within the context of late medieval East Anglia's complex vernacular religious culture, which was deeply influenced by female piety amongst both monastic and lay women.[76] Osbern Bokenham's patrons, among them Isabel Bourchier, seem to have liked their saintly women to be heroic,[77] and the Digby play's Mary Magdalene is even more decisively heroic than Bokenham's version of the saint. Indeed, her moments of weakness in the tavern and the narcissism of her initial words in the arbour are quickly replaced, after her conversion, by remarkable strength and initiative. She travels alone across the sea, paying for her own passage; she preaches to and converts the pagan people of Marseilles, defeating the priest in his own temple; her prayers help the king and queen to conceive a male heir, whom she rescues from death at sea; and she ably rules their kingdom while they are away for two years. The play's audience – and particularly its female members – might have recognized in the Digby play's Mary Magdalene the kind of female voice that they had heard in Capgrave's *Life of Saint Katherine*, and in the writings of Julian of Norwich. They might have felt great satisfaction in seeing a Mary Magdalene who both recalls the heroines of romance and yet resists the passivity and powerlessness of romance women who happen to fall asleep in gardens, orchards, or arbours, and whose life endings are far more constricted and less happy than that of the play's triumphant Mary Magdalene.

Notes

1 Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy, and Louis B. Hall, Jr. (eds) *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby 133 and e. Mus. 160.* EETS os 283 (Oxford, 1982), 43. All quotations are taken from this edition.

2 Robert Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven/London, 1977), 69, discusses the use of such monologues in the construction of speaking subjects in medieval romance.

3 Coletti comments, 'the "erbyre" or bower in which she awaits "valentines" anticipates the "garden" that the resurrected Christ will make in her heart; the "bamys precyus" that grow in that bower look forward to the "bamys sote" with which she attempts to anoint the risen Jesus', *Mary Magdalene and the Drama of Saints: Theater, Gender, and Religion in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 2004), 183.

4 Coletti, *Mary Magdalene*, 50–99. In '"Curtesy doth it yow lere"': The Sociology of Transgression in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*', *ELH* 71 (2004), 1–28, Coletti posits the influence of courtesy texts such as *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter* in the play's construction of Mary Magdalene's character.

5 Monica Brzezinski Potkay, 'Body Broken, Body Whole: Eucharistic Devotion, Fabliaux, and the Feminine Impulse of the Corpus Christi Drama', *Minding the Body: Women and Literature , 800–1500* (New York, 1997), 103–23.

6 Hanning, *The Individual*, 204; Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford, 1990); Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith & Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, 1986).

7 Hanning, *The Individual,* 206–7.

8 *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2004), 246; Anne B. Thompson *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary* (Aldershot, 2003).

9 Coletti, *Mary Magdalene,* 101.

10 Lawrence Clopper notes that the Digby playwright goes even further than his sources in mixing genres together: 'the beginning of the romance legend is enmeshed in the biblical scenes, whereas in the sources the biblical events are demarcated from the romance narrative'. See *Drama, Play and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: 2001), 238.

11 Jean Michel's *Mystère de la Passion* presents Mary Magdalene not as a whore but as 'a coquette'; see Helen Garth, *Saint Mary Magdalene in Mediaeval Literature* (Baltimore, 1950), 64. For Jean Michel's depiction of Mary, see Omer Jodogne (ed) *Le Mystère de la Passion (Angers 1486)* (Gembloux, 1959), ll. 8469–8645.

12 Hanning, *The Individual*, 194–233.

13 Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill (eds) *The South English Legendary*, EETS os 235 (London, 1956, rept. 1967), 303, ll. 8–26.

14 Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, William Granger Ryan (trans) (Princeton, 1993), 375–6.

15 Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, Lydia G. Cochrane (trans) (London, 1988), 142; see also Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama* (Toronto, 2004), 33, note 12 and 53, note 16.
16 See Coletti's discussion in '"Curtesy doth it yow lere"', 7.
17 Coletti, *Mary Magdalene,* 156–8.
18 Tony Davenport, '"Lusty Fresche galaunts"', *Aspects of Early English Drama,* Paula Neuss (ed) (Cambridge, 1983), 21.
19 Coletti, '"Curtesy doth it yow lere"',12.
20 Coletti, *Mary Magdalene* 157–8.
21 Scoville, *Saints and the Audience in Middle English Biblical Drama,* (Toronto, 2004), 32, 33 note 14.
22 Rossiaud points to a 1470 sermon by Maillard, in which he argues that Mary was not a prostitute or a courtesan at all, but a spoiled young woman who 'ultimately gave herself to the handsomest of gallants' (*Medieval Prostitution,* 142).
23 Cooper defines the 'meme' as 'an idea that behaves like a gene in its ability to replicate faithfully and abundantly, but also on occasion to adapt, mutate, and therefore survive in different forms and cultures'; see *The English Romance in Time*, 3, and note 8.
24 Albert B. Friedman and Norman T. Harrington (eds), *Ywain and Gawain*, EETS os 254 (London, 1964), 11. 1709–14.
25 Hopkins, *Sinful Knights*, 8–11.
26 A.J. Bliss (ed), *Sir Launfal*, Second Edition (Oxford, 1966).
27 A very similar scene occurs in *Thomas of Erceldoune*, where the hero lies down beneath a 'cumly tre' and is visited by a beautiful supernatural woman (ll. 33–6); see Ingeborg Nixon (ed), *Thomas of Erceldoune*, Publications of the Department of English, Vol 9, Parts 1 and 2 (Copenhagen, 1982), 29.
28 See John Block Friedman's discussion in 'Eurydice, Heurodis, and the Noon-Day Demon', *Speculum* 41 (1966), 22–9.
29 Eugène Vinaver (ed) *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, Second Edition, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1967 rept. 1973), 253. Another tale in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, in which Sir Perceval is visited by a demonic lady (Book XIV), is also pertinent here.
30 This romance survives in three versions, one in a manuscript with tentative connections to the general area of East Anglia or the East Midlands (Ashmole 61); Gisela Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich, 1976), 249–51.

31 Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (eds) *The Middle English Breton Lays,* TEAMS Publications (Kalamazoo, 1995), 27.
32 A.C. Spearing, '*Sir Orfeo*: Madness and Gender', *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance,* Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (eds) (London/New York, 2000), 258–72; Pearsall, 'Madness in *Sir Orfeo'*, *Romance Reading on the Book,* Jennifer Fellows (ed) (Cardiff, 1996), 51–63.
33 Spearing ('*Sir Orfeo*', 265) suggests that the ten lost years result in the couple being childless.
34 Laskaya and Salisbury, *Middle English Breton Lays,* 276.
35 Laskaya and Salisbury, *Middle English Breton Lays*, 103–4, ll. 71–114.
36 Frances McSparran (ed), *Octovian*, EETS es vol 289, (Oxford, 1986), 92, l. 309 (MS version Cambridge University Library Ff. 2.38).
37 One of the manuscript versions of Sir Orfeo (Ashmole 61) may have circulated in the region in and around East Anglia, as did many manuscripts produced outside the area. A.J. Bliss, editor of all three versions of *Sir Orfeo*, states that '*Sir Orfeo* clearly belongs to the large group of popular romances composed in the east Midlands in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries', *Sir Orfeo* (Oxford, 1966), xx. However, there is no concrete proof of specific East Anglian readers.
38 Briget Ann Henisch, 'Private Pleasures: Painted Gardens on the Manuscript Page', *Inventing Medieval Landscapes,* John Howe and Michael Wolfe (eds) (Gainesville, 2002), 155–63.
39 Henisch, 'Private Pleasures', 163. The turf benches – constructed by human hands out of natural materials – reinforce the idea of liminal space between Nature and Culture.
40 Henisch, 'Private Pleasures', 163.
41 Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (London, 1984), 61, quoting F.P. Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages,* (Coral Gables, Florida, 1970), 91–2.
42 Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, Vol I, 87, ll. 15–19.
43 See L.F. Casson's introduction to *The Romance of Sir Degravant*, EETS os 221 (Oxford, 1949), lxvii, in reference to Marie de France's *lai, Guigemar.*
44 Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York, 1993), 40; 63–7; Marjorie Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth: the Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphoses* (Carbondale, 1975), 58–67.
45 See Coletti's detailed discussion, *Mary Magdalene*, 174–5.
46 M.B. Ogle argues that this apocryphal story is the ultimate source of the orchard scenes in several medieval romances, including *Sir Orfeo*; see 'The

Orchard Scene in *Tydorel* and *Sir Gowther*', *Romanic Review* 13 (1922), 37–43. Bliss, however, notes the number of Celtic tales containing elements that are important to *Sir Orfeo*, pointing out that 'nearly every visitor to the Celtic other world has found an orchard of apple-trees' (*Sir Orfeo*, xxxvi.).

47 *The Play of Mary Magdalene,* dir. Peter Cockett, a Poculi Ludique Societas production, Victoria College, University of Toronto, May 23–4, 2003.

48 Even audience members who were not familiar with the surviving manuscript versions of the Middle English *Sir Orfeo* might have recalled other versions and visual depictions of the story which were popular in the fifteenth century. See John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1970), 146–80.

49 Dorena Allen, 'Orpheus and Orfeo: the Dead and the Taken', *Medium Aevum* 33 (1964), 102–11.

50 See Bliss's discussion of *Sir Orfeo*'s possible sources, xxxvi.

51 Although there is no mention of madness in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play, the angel does warn her that being 'onstabyll' and 'varyabyll' (ll. 588, 595) will cost her dearly: she is bound for Hell if she continues to be changeable in her emotional and spiritual life.

52 Spearing, '*Sir Orfeo*', 271.

53 Compare *Octovian,* ll. 385–402.

54 *English Romance in Time*, 19. Coletti discusses the female voice in several other East Anglian dramas, including the *N-Town* plays and *Wisdom*, in *Mary Magdalene*, 50–99.

55 Friedman,'Eurydice, Heurodis,' 24. Some medieval illustrations show Satan attacking Eurydice in the garden (Friedman, 25, fig 1), or asleep beneath a tree, as in *Sir Orfeo* (Friedman, 24, fig 3). Friedman focuses on the time of Heurodis's nap: she sleeps until 'after none,/ that undertide was al y-done' (ll. 75–6), a reference to the 'noon-day demon' (Friedman, 28).

56 Murray Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance* (Montreal/Kingston, 1995), 96–102.

57 '*Sir Orfeo,* The Minstrel, and the Minstrel's Art', *Studies in Philology* , Vol 79, No 1 (Winter, 1982), 1–11 at 9. Alternative readings situate *Sir Orfeo* outside of the tradition of allegorical interpretation; see Pearsall, 'Madness in *Sir Orfeo*', 54 and Cooper, who notes that 'popular belief, and the romances with it, most commonly took fairies to be outside theological schemata' (*English Romance in Time,* 179). Numerous texts make a point of distinguishing fairies from demons; for example, in Marie de France's *Yonec*, the fairy lover takes communion to reassure the woman that he is a Christian.

58 Pearsall, 'Madness in *Sir Orfeo*', 58–9.
59 Baker, Murphy & Hall, (eds), *Late Medieval Religious Plays,* xl, 217.
60 Scherb, *Staging Faith*, 23, 28–9; John Coldewey, 'The non-cycle plays and the East Anglian tradition', *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, Richard Beadle (ed) (Cambridge, 1994), 192–4.
61 'Temporary Virginity and the Everyday Body: *Le Bone Florence of Rome* and bourgeois self-making', *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romances,* Nicola McDonald (ed) (Manchester, 2004), 200.
62 The contents of John Paston III's library makes this clear; see Norman Davis, *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1971) Vol 1, 516–18. For women patrons, see Karen K. Jambeck, 'Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage: England, 1200–ca. 1475', *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, June Hall McCash (ed) (Athens, 1996), 228–65.
63 Norman Davis, *Paston Letters and Papers*, Vol. 1, 517; Colin Richmond, 'Thomas Malory and the Pastons', in *Readings in Medieval English Romance,* Carol M. Meale (ed) (Cambridge, 1994), 195–208.
64 Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, T. Bahti (trans) (Minneapolis: 1982), 23, 24, 79. Katie Normington notes that Jauss does not consider the further dynamics of a performance situation where the audience's reception of the work would be further influenced by extratextual elements; see *Gender and Medieval Drama* (Cambridge, 2004), 8 note 33.
65 Riddy, 'Middle English Romance', *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance,* Roberta Krueger (ed) (Cambridge, 2000), 235–52 at 235–8; Coletti, '"Curtesy doth it yow lere"', 1–28.
66 For example, Bodleian Library Ashmole MS 61, which contains a version of the romance *Sir Orfeo,* and Cambridge University Library Ff. 2.38, which contains *Octovian* (both discussed here), as well as a number of saints' lives and religious texts; see Carol Meale's discussion of a number of such manuscripts, their possible mercantile owners, and their importance to women in '"Gode men/Wives maydnes and alle men": Romance and its audiences,' *Readings in Medieval English Romance,* Carol M. Meale (ed), 209–35. Other such manuscripts are British Library Ms. Lansdowne 388, Sloane 1044, Additional 37492, Chetham's library (Manchester) Ms 8009; NLS Ms Adv. 19.3.1; Cambridge U.L. Ms Ii.4.9; and Cotton Caligula A.ii. Felicity Riddy has recently discussed Cambridge Ff. 2.38, noting its focus on narrative texts in 'Temporary Virginity', 199–200.
67 Harriet Hudson, 'Middle English Popular Romances: The Manuscript Evidence', *Manuscripta* 28 (1984), 67–78 at 69.

68 Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers, 1350–1400* (New York, 1981), 71. See also Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca/London, 2002); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven/London, 1992), 68; Carol Meale, '"Gode men/Wives"'; Gail McMurray Gibson, *Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago/London, 1989).

69 Frances McSparran and P.R. Robinson, *Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38* (London, 1979). Ashmole 61 also contains courtesy texts and devotional works (Meale, '"Gode men/Wives"', 221 note 43). Further evidence for the broad tastes of fifteenth-century East Anglian audiences can occasionally be found in wills; Meale cites the will of Isabel Lyston of Norwich, who bequeathed 'an englyssh boke called partenope [*Partenope of Blois*] and myn englissh boke of saynt margarets lyfe'; see Meale, '"Gode men/Wives"', 222.

70 Karl Brunner, 'Middle English Metrical Romances and Their Audiences', *Studies in Medieval English Literature in Honor of Professor A.C. Baugh*, McEdward Leach (ed) (Philadelphia, 1962), 219; Derek Pearsall, 'The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century', *Essays and Studies* 29 (1976), 56–83.

71 Baker, Murphy & Hall (eds) *Late Medieval Religious Plays,* lxxiv–xi.

72 Frances McSparran, 'Literary and Historical Significance of the Manuscript', *Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38*, xi. See also Guddat-Figge, 52–4, and notes. Manuscripts with probable East-Anglian or East-Midland provenance include Cambridge Caius College Ms. 175, Cambridge Trinity College Ms O.5.2 (owned by the Thwaites and Knevet families, who were Norfolk gentry), Boies Penrose Library Ms 6, BL Cotton Caligula A.ii, BL Ms Royal 17.B.XLIII, and Ashmole 61; see Guddat-Figge, 82–3, 87–9, 112–13, 169–72, 211–13, 249–51.

73 Coletti, *Mary Magdalene*, 38; Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, 19–30.

74 Dixon, '"Thys body of Mary": "Femynyte" and "Inward mythe" in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*', *Mediaevalia* 18 (1995), 221–44, at 223.

75 Scherb, *Staging Faith*, 1–43.

76 Coletti, *Mary Magdalene;* Scoville, *Saints and the Audience*; Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*; Scott Boehnen, 'Aesthetics of 'Sprawling' Drama: The Digby *Mary Magdalene* as Pilgrim's Play,' *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 98 (1999): 325–52.

77 Sheila Delany, *A Legend of Holy Women: A Translation of Osbern Bokenham's* Legends of Holy Women (Notre Dame, 1992), xxxiii.