CRACKED FOUNDATIONS: ST. ANTONY,

TEXTUAL PRODUCTION,

AND GENRE

by

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ABSTRACT

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St. Antony is a saint who defies description. The foundational text about Antony—Athanasius' *Life of Antony*—is a text that introduces many of the paradigmatic elements of the hagiographic genre yet actually subverts many of the prescriptions it creates and promulgates. This drive toward normativity and non-normativity, a basic characteristic of Antony's textual materials through the centuries, is confirmed by the presence and structure of *Vita Antonius*, a mid-fifteenth century prose legend featuring Antony found in MS *Royal* 17.C.XVII.

Through examination of these two texts, this thesis argues that St. Antony's long textual presence is born out of the ability to co-opt, rewrite, and revise his legend. Foregrounding the inquiry with a strategy complied from recent "queer" theory, I demonstrate that the texts illustrate at once highly specific cultural moves and transhistorical ideals of identity, pointing ultimately to the "queer" nature of Antony and his textual production.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Almost from its beginning hagiography is characterized by a contradictory stance toward corporeality. Saintly narratives at once conventionalize renunciation of the body through glorification of virginity and venerate the same corporeal nature through worship of the body as relic. Because of the large number of extant hagiographic texts, one can deduce that works about and by the saints influenced the culture of Christendom until the Reformation. In using the word "culture" I also must stress that it could signify the production and consumption of a lay audience or the scholastic output of a clerical audience, and in that case, the goals of "culture" would be radically different.[1] In the context of secular cultures such as fifteenth-century England the question arises of how to reconcile the didactic aim of a work that stresses virginity with the procreative and economic ends of cultures that depended upon marriage, childbirth, and exogamy to create political, social, and economic ties. How does clerical culture make attractive a phenomenon that serves to deny the procreative function to an audience built on that same function? Further inquiry leads to the question of embodiment—how does the cult of the saints maintain denial of the body, even as it is venerated while living, in the descriptions of

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[1] Of course, this is a distinction that is tenuous at best. What can be known about the difference in class and society is scant. My reading of differing cultures has been informed by the evolution of thought on the subject. Arguably, part of the lasting heritage of the Enlightenment has been the solidification of a belief in a "two-tiered" organization of culture especially religion. Peter Brown discusses this issue at length, and the discussion of clerical and lay culture throughout this work is informed by his book *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981). See especially pages 13-22 for Brown's argument concerning David Hume and his *The Natural History of Religion*. I suggest also Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, whose book is more appropriate than Hume's for our purposes in view of his treatment of both Antony and Athanasius. Consult Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, Ltd., 1998) for a more recent (1921) example of "Enlightenment" thought of religion, class, and hagiography. In addition, Jacques Le Goff contends that the late medieval period was characterized by the cultural productions of two separate economic and social classes, i.e. the clerics and the laity. See pgs. 154-158 of *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980). For a more nuanced discussion of medieval textual culture, and hagiography in particular, besides Peter Brown, one could also consult

saints with athletic and beautiful bodies, their outward signs of holiness, and as it is adored in death, as pieces of an entity that still offer efficacious cures to disease, madness, and death? Is it possible for a saint to serve the aims of clerical and lay audiences, rendering to both Caesar and God equal shares? How do the implications of these inherent contradictions, which characterize the cult of the saints, change when the holy body is self-consciously denied by the saint?

St. Antony Abbot is a figure who denies his body and burial and, in spite of this, becomes one of the most important saints for Western Christendom. A saint for whom the appellation father of Western monasticism applies, Antony is a seminal figure in the history of the early church, and, while not the first hermit to take flight into the desert, he is certainly one of the most famous, whose textual legacy is prodigious, beginning in the 4th century CE and ending in the 19th century. The master text of his legend is Athanasius' *Life of Antony* a 4th century Greek composition, and is followed by a Latin translation by Evagrius, published soon after. Several manuscripts that feature all or part of the Athanasian biography are extant from the Middle Ages, and among these, some are written in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Middle English.[2] It is clear that Antony's influence reached beyond the *scriptorium*, and his readership most likely included a lay audience, in Latin and in vernacular languages, such as English and Italian. An independent Middle English prose legend known as *Vita Antonius* survives along with shorter versions of his life that are included in both the 1438 edition of the *Gilte Legende* and William Caxton's translation of *The Golden Legend*. In Italian, Antony appears in Domenico Cavalca's thirteenth century *Le Vite dei Santi Padri* and is the subject of a fifteenth-century Florentine guild play *La rappresentazione d'Antonio*, and Antonia Pulci's convent drama *Sant'Antonio Abate*, which are very similar plays.

Thomas J. Heffernan's *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1988), a text that christens the term "sacred biography."

[2] The Middle English life is found in MS *Royal* 17.C.XVII, and many Latin versions are extant, including *Arundel* 330, and *Burney* 50 and 351.

Although Antony, in texts that feature him, spans the generic canon from prose to drama, he is also found in works in a more peripheral fashion such as St. Jerome's *Paul of Thebes*, St. Augustine's *Confessions* and *On Christian Doctrine*, and Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, an Anglo-Latin metrical text, which praises chastity. Over three centuries pass between Jerome and Aldhelm, yet that distance pales in comparison to the years that separate Jerome and high and late-medieval authors such as Dante Alighieri and Geoffrey Chaucer who include Antony, in positive and negative ways, in *The Divine Comedy* and *The Canterbury Tales* respectively. The march of history does nothing to slow the growth and expansion of Antony's legend, until the nineteenth century arrives, and with it, Gustave Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, nominally the last work to feature centrally the saint.

The history and influence of the Catholic church can alone explain the longevity of Antony's textual corpus, and that explanation, while pat and predictable, glosses over the reality that Antony is a saint for whom description and classification is problematic. The extent of his reach must be questioned, as the original text Athanasius' *Life of Antony* describes a saint who defies every normative function of a member of the cult of the saints: he is a militant illiterate who disdains the process of post-mortem veneration. These two jarringly incongruent elements should serve as impediments to Antony's lasting influence and use, as the illiteracy would most likely render his written tradition at best contradictory, and the denial of relic preservation would leave his material practices obsolete and unnecessary. It is clear that Antony's deviations from the non-normativity of saints have the power to deny bodies that are textual and corporeal in nature.

Notwithstanding the lack of a corporeal body (until late in the tradition) and the non-normative textual body, Antony does live on, longer than saints who have a complete hagiographical package. Interestingly, very few studies exist that examine Antony's tradition and its reason for survival, and the most complete, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*, focuses not on the material practice of Antony's followers and the trajectory of his textual materials, but on the function of asceticism in a wider, cultural context. This lack of scholarship

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on Antony's resilient presence is troubling, because, while Antony lacks certain characteristics of a larger hagiographic tradition, he functions as a locus of ambiguity and indeterminacy that offer later authors the freedom and range to recreate and revise the structure of Antony's legend for their own aims, plans, and contexts.

Through Antony, a literate clerical and lay culture can access a figure who through his troubling genesis can function according to the desires of those who use him, rather than demand a certain treatment. His legend helps to create genre and tradition, even as his texts, from start to finish, trouble that paradigm, and this element is what one might call Antony's non-normativity. Affixing the label of non-normative to a saint establishes that saint as a figure outside a group of transgressors, a liminal figure who surpasses in his desire to transgress an entire canon of otherworldly entities, for the saints are all figures of non-normativity. Antony is particularly important, as the texts, which feature him maintain a delicate balancing of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, with the result of a written tradition that can only be described as "queer."

"Queer" does not refer, in this instance, to a sexual formulation of the term although evidence of that connotation can be found in the *Life* and later works. Rather, one should strive to view "queer" as a strategy for expressing elements outside the strict dichotomies and binaries with which hagiography is usually characterized. To look for the "queer" is to look for the non-normative, which coexists with the normative in Antony's textual tradition, and this instance of finding what is "queer" is especially productive for hagiography. The use of "queer" discourse may seem heavy-handed or anachronistic when used with texts that range in date from the fourth to fifteenth centuries, and originate from Egypt to England, but the fact that hagiography takes as its subjects people outside of the heterosexual or normative economies—in not only political and economic terms, but also in social and cultural terms—tends to mark hagiography as a discourse heavily invested in the "queer." "Queer" theory can function heuristically as the tool needed to explain Antony's textual afterlife.

In the context of sacred biography, a further explanation of "queer" is necessary. In her exploratory study *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, Annamarie Jagose articulates "queer" as it

performs in different contexts, and it is her treatment of "the post-structuralist context of queer" that is most germane to the interpretative purposes here.[3] Ultimately, "as a point of convergence for a potentially infinite number of non-normative subject positions" one can see why the latest scholarship weds ideas of indeterminacy, middles, and the "queer."[4] As Jagose says, citing the work of David Halperin, "given the extent of its commitment to denaturalisation, queer itself can have neither a foundational logic nor a consistent set of characteristics."[5] Perhaps Halperin and Jagose's thought can be modified a bit because it does appear that in its indeterminacy and affinity for middles—and perhaps muddles—"queer" can be defined and characterized, however loosely, with the idea of the middle truly exemplifying what it means to "queer" or to be "queer." Here what I refer to as a middle is Glenn Burger's formulation of the "productive 'middle," a strategy for juxtaposing the "marginal and hegemonic" in order to clear a space in which traditional and oppositional categories of identity clearly and "queerly" fail.[6] The result here of course is that in the collapse of strict dichotomies, the production and proliferation of "the third term," that which is found at neither end of the dichotomy.

The mention of "queer" must inevitably conjure the specter of sexual desire, specifically same-sex desire. What is particularly fruitful about a juxtaposition of monasticism and same-sex desire is manifold: an institution that requires not only sexual renunciation but also the separation of the sexes offers an opportunity to interrogate the ways in which anxieties concerning deviant sexualities are imbedded in an ultra normative context.[7] Although the term is

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[3] Jagose, Annamarie. *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: NYU P, 1996), 75. The quote "post-structuralist context of queer" is the title given to the section of chapter 7 that discusses the epistemological background of a theoretical use of "queer," with emphasis to Ferdinand Sassure, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan among others.

[4] Ibid., 101.

[5] Ibid., 96.

[6] Burger, Glenn. *Chaucer's Queer Nation* (Minnesota: U of Minn P, 2003), xix. According to Burger, one trajectory of his book is to perform a "queering of medieval and modern identity positions as they relate to the *Canterbury Tales*—and along with this the related queering of a set of assumptions about how we think about medieval and modern, pre- and post-modern, Chaucerian identity and canonicity."

[7] See Mark Masterson, "Impossible Translation: Antony and Paul the Simple in the *Historia Monachorum*," *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality,* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2006): 215-235 for a discussion of the desert as a homosocial, and, perhaps, *homosexual* space. Masterson argues, among other things, that the *Historia Monachorum*, an anonymous

fluid enough to encompass a marginalized sexual aspect, discussions of "queer" and texts must

not be relegated simply to the realm of sexual desire. "Queer" will rarely be deployed here in a

sexual fashion. With the exception of the black boy/demon, relationship between Antony and

the older hermit, and anxieties about the beauty of Antony's body I will not touch upon the

specter of same-sex desire and monasticism although the productive energies released through

examination of embedded heteronormativity in normative contexts can be reached in other

ways. My approach offers potent possibilities as well as possible perils, as the inevitable

criticisms from "queer medievalists" make clear—why do I not make more of the sexualized

demon or the radical housing arrangement Antony proposes with the hermit? Criticism will occur

as predictable questions arise from more doctrinal sources—Wasn't Antony a saint, bereft of

any sexual desire? In the middle of this unproductive binary, I maintain that the *Life* is always

more about the textual than the sexual, and the lack of attention to the sexual does not negate

the power of a theory that examines the shortcomings of dichotomous identities, and the

tendency of hegemonic discursive strategies to maintain the marginal, even the incidental. I aim

always to see how, in this thesis, Antony frustrates the aims of hagiography, even as his textual

materials create the basic outlines of a textual production that outlasts the Reformation.

Although the sexual is almost never invoked, the discussion of a figure outside normative

economies of gender, sexuality, and class points to the usefulness of an invocation of "queer." I

am not alone in a reading of "queer" theory that participates fully in examinations of a textual

nature. Gregory S. Hutcheson has described "queerness" as a phenomenon that "normativity"

must "reject or conceal in order to exist."[8] The close textual relationship between heterodoxy

and orthodoxy points to the presence of "queerness" that "is always palpable in the

incongruities, excesses, or anxieties of normative discourse, but it is only exceptionally given

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Greek text, along with its Latin translation maintain the relationship of Paul and Antony as a substitute
for heterosexual marriage. Most importantly, the fact that Latin translation takes great pains to separate
Paul and Antony, points to the recognition and prohibition of that relationship.
[8] Hutcheson, Gregory S. "Introduction." *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the
Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke UP, 1999), 3.

expression, and this only at the margins."[9] So in discussions of the ways in which Athanasian sacred biography and its later incarnations veer into the marginal—forays into a world of demons, illiterate holy men, and furtive funerals—I argue the *Life* is "queered."

Antony's resilience originates from his "queer" textual elements and problematic desires that offer the saint as a site of adaptability, a liminal text in the hagiographic genre. Chapter one explores this facet of the legend of Antony in a largely Latinate and clerical culture and seeks to explain why a saint who disdains the written word, post-mortem veneration, and miracle-working is responsible for helping to create the monastic and hagiographic traditions. Beginning with Athanasius' *Life of Antony* and following with a discussion of St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and Aldhelm's Latin poem *Carmen de Virginitate*, I argue Antony is continually treated because his foundation text offers potent possibilities for revision and refashion, a fact demonstrated by his appearances in later texts.

The primary strategy for illustrating "queer" facets of the *Life* revolves around issues of indeterminacy in the relationship between paganism and Christianity, the difference between imitation and emulation and the similarity in Antony's thought on literacy and relics. Beyond the discussion of the *Life*, chapter one focuses on Jerome's *Paul of Thebes* and its hierarchy of sainthood and rewriting of Antony, followed by a discussion of St. Augustine, the nature of conversion, and the power of Antony—in textual form—to accomplish it. The chapter concludes with an examination of Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* and its creation of Antony as a paradigmatic warrior for chastity. Major differences exist among all four texts under consideration, yet undergirding the interpretation of the texts is the reception of the medieval audience and what is constitutive of that audience. Conjectures about authorial intention are not enough alone to explain the phenomenon of textual creation that surrounds the cult of Antony; rather, an interpretation of reception and expectation is absolutely necessary to understand the production and dissemination of hagiographic texts written centuries before.

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[9] Hutcheson, 3.

Turning to the vernacular, chapter two engages the Middle English Life of St. Antony in the context of the original *vita* written by St. Athanasius, and in particular, the *inventio* which is found in the Middle English text. While Antony's refusal of post-mortem veneration, his truculent demeanor as saint, and his illiteracy problematize his position as founder of monasticism, the added *inventio* serves as a normalizing feature to Antony's *vita*, alleviating the anxiety over a saint who does not want to be found. While the prose legend maintains the radically anti-saintly characteristics of Antony, the existence of a curative aspect serves to illustrate non-normative generic aspects and further to correct them. Chapter two demonstrates how and why the most challenging aspects of Antony's *vita* survive—that the anxieties felt about larger cultural structures inhered—as the queer always does—in the spaces of normative discourse. Chapter two concludes by drawing connections between the movement of Antony's relics and his texts from Egypt to France, a connection made possible by the Middle English text's "knowledge" of the location of Antony's body. Turning to the textual, the chapter reinforces the odd nature of Antony's hagiography: a text that reflects his body and ultimately finds it.

CHAPTER 2

ANTONY: EAST TO WEST

> "And a voice came to him saying, 'Antony, I was here, but I was waiting to watch your struggle. But now, since you have bravely held your own in this fight, I will always help you and I will make you famous throughout the world."
> Athanasius, *Life of Antony*[10]

The quote above—God's answer and assurance to Antony who has dared to ask why he had to fight demons alone—offers a fitting metaphor for the trajectory of Athanasius' *The Life of Antony*, a text that reverberates through literary history as late as the nineteenth century. This fourth century vita portrays the major events of Antony's life, and represents a pivotal moment in the history of monasticism and hagiography, a fact that is borne out in the genesis of the words used to describe the holy state of asceticism. Literally one could not be a monk or belong to a monastery without Antony and his continued influence. Originally borrowed from Greek, *monasterium* and *monachus*, though used infrequently in the early centuries of the Church, were probably introduced with the Latin translation of *The Life of Antony*.[11] Initially written in Greek, it was translated by Evagrius no later than 375 CE and served a large role in the dissemination of "monastic ideals" in the early stages of Western Christianity and is referenced by many seminal figures of early Christianity.[12]

While the original text and its translation were known by Jerome and several other important early Christian thinkers such as Paulinus and St. Augustine, the precise dating of

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[10] Athanasius, *Life of Antony*. Reprinted in *Early Christian Lives*. Ed. and trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin, 1998), 16. All references of the *Life* come from White's edition of Athanasius' *Life of Antony*.

[11] Dennis E. Trout, "Augustine at Cassiciacum: Otium honestum and the Social Dimension of Conversion." *Vigiliae Christianae* (1988) 42:2 pg. 141.

[12] L.W. Banard, "The Date of Athanasius' 'Vita Antonii." *Vigiliae Christianae* 28:3 (1974): 169.

Athanasius' Greek *vita* is difficult.[13] Power struggles, accusations of heresy, and constant threats of alliance between one's spiritual enemies and temporal forces defined the early centuries of the Church, and, in the midst of chaotic and unpredictable events, the lack of concrete evidence of the *Life*'s dating is unavoidable.[14] It is clear that Athanasius, as a stalwart anti-Arian, was not immune to these whims of fortune and fate, and was imprisoned for periods throughout his life, a fact that points to the date range of 356-362 as the most appropriate dating for the *Life*. During these years Athanasius lived in Upper and Lower Egypt, apparently far enough from the surveillance of Rome, Byzantium, or Alexandria to narrate Antony's life.[15] Certainly scholars have attempted to date Athanasius' work with a greater degree of precision to 357 or 358, contending that Athanasius' changing description of and deference to the emperors represent the clearest way to fix a date for Athanasius' text, but the evidence, while interesting, is mainly conjecture.[16]

Regardless of the inability to ascertain the date of the *Life*, not all knowledge is lost about the text that portrays the life of Antony Abbot, the scion of a well-moneyed and well-positioned Christian family living in Egypt and one of the first ascetics to take to the desert in strict *imitatio Christi*. In spite of his wealth, Antony is intransigent in his unwillingness to learn to read, and his veneration of his illiteracy is one of the more important *leitmotifs* in Athanasius' text.[17] *Hearing* the call to abandon the world one day in a sermon, Antony gives away all his property on two separate occasions, and only maintains enough to send his sister to a convent.[18] He then seeks out a local monastery, where his brothers love and cherish him and

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[13] Banard, 170.

[14] See David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), pg. 247 for an explication of this phenomenon in relation to the Athanasian biography of Antony. In interpretation of Antony's vision of the defilement of the Church's altars, Brakke writes "Athanasius makes clear that this vision refers to the events of 356, when the imperial government took the church buildings in Alexandria from his [Athanasius'] control and delivered them to his opponent." Brakke continues: "Athanasius' frequently unhappy experiences with imperial authorities give an ambivalent tone to Antony's interactions with representatives of the empire."

[15] Banard, 171.

[16] Barnard, 171-175.

[17] Athanasius, 8-9

[18] Ibid., 9

the devil seeks to undermine Antony's holiness with every weapon in his demonic arsenal—thoughts of lust, recollections of Antony's former high status and sister, wild and strange noises, and torturous beatings.[19] The *Life* continues in this fashion for fifteen chapters, narrating the wiles of the demons, and the powers of the Lord and of Antony to oppose them. Athanasius follows this examination of Antony's early years with chapters 16-43, which record in "direct" quotations Antony's advice to his brothers in the burgeoning monastic movement. Beginning with Antony's belief that "the Scriptures were sufficient for all teaching of the rule"—something that resembles *sola scriptura*—these chapters contain the lion's share of Antony's reflections upon the monastic life.[20] The *Life* then segues into a discussion of miracles, Arianism, and a description of Antony's dwellings as they become more and more remote. Athanasius concludes appropriately with Antony's death, which centers on the distribution of his scant worldly goods and a discussion of his remarkable distaste for post-mortem veneration.

Notwithstanding the worldly goods Antony leaves behind or the body he attempts to hide, the text of Athanasius represents the bulk of Antony's patrimony, and in order to interrogate Antony's generic heritage, one is forced to examine the text, which carries within it an often-contradictory message about pagans, demons, literacy, and death. Addressing questions of *exempla* and their reception, translation and language, addition and omission, this inquiry asks the reader to reach back into the distant past, so that he will discover the beginnings the cult of Antony Abbot, a seminal figure in histories of the early Church, whose literary influence casts a shadow through the dawn of the Enlightenment. As the father of Western Monasticism, and a saint whose textual heritage is extended for over fifteen centuries, Antony also represents a locus of heterodoxy in his stated views on death and literacy and serves as an exception for so many of the defining characteristics of the generic form of sacred biography. As a saint who is the epitome of non-normativity, Antony's deployment as both negative and positive exemplum represents perhaps his greatest strength; indeed, what always

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[19] Athanasius, 10-18.
[20] Ibid., 19.

remain indeterminate are the boundaries between the two discrete uses of Antony. The indeterminacy that characterizes the larger textual history defines the *Life* in instances where the text attempts to maintain problematic elements concerning the relationships between paganism and Christianity and demons and saints. The difficulty, even the inability, to preserve the distinctions in the aforementioned groups emerges and points to the "queer" nature of the *Life*, a text that cannot maintain simple binaries, which creates later opportunities for revision and retelling. Thus, in encountering such diverse topics as demons, burial rites, and language, it becomes clear that the *Life* frustrates expectations it creates for a later, hagiographic tradition.

Early hagiography focuses on paganism and its failings as a system of faith and salvation. Demons masquerade as pagan idols, and the polytheistic canon is totally powerless to defeat the Christian deity and his special followers, the saints. In the legends of the martyrs, one of the most common elements is the relationship between paganism and demonic activity.[21] Hagiography, including the *Life of St. Antony* but also works such the *Life of Martin*, emphasizes the virtues of Christianity and concentrates upon the failings of polytheism, inextricably tying this genre to the paganism that it seemingly defeats. The *Life of Antony* performs this convention well, following an earlier pattern and strengthening a tradition that lives on well into the later Middle Ages. In the *Life*, as in other texts, paganism is believed to be entirely the result of demons, and yet the explanation for this—that demons coordinated their efforts, traveled faster and farther than humans—could describe the ability of the saints to intercede on human affairs, pointing to a problem that is fraternal, which affects the disordered view of Cain, as well as the righteous examination of Abel.

The analogy of Cain and Abel points further to the way in which the *Life* portrays a system of valuation in which Christianity and paganism are judged, even as the relationship between the orthodoxy Antony celebrates and the paganism he denigrates is one that is

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[21] Sulpicius Severus, *Life of Martin of Tours*. Reprinted in *Early Christian Lives*. Ed. and trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin, 1998), 145.

characterized by closeness, even interchangeability, defying an absolute opposition between Christianity and paganism.[22] One could think of the connection between Christianity and paganism to be similar to the one depicted in the story of Cain and Abel—a fratricide that occurs after a dispute over the methods and ends of religious observance. While Cain and Abel were brothers, they were not twins, and the urge to view commonalities between Christianity and paganism must not become "a study of the unmoving subsoil from which Christianity sprang," an inquiry that would reject the innovations of the cult of the saints.[23] This cult radically alters views on death, the proper placement of bodies, and the very geographical organization of cities, but certain phenomena within paganism resonate with later incarnations of the sacred cults of Christianity.

The assertion of similarity between early Christianity and paganism, as for example in the parallels between the cult of the saints and the cult of the pagan hero—one of the areas in which common cultural energies seem to be at work—has its critics. Hippolyte Delehaye's work on pagan contributions to the cult of the saints demonstrates that a scholarly view of the religions' interchangeability and relationship is hotly contested, even as Delehaye's thought on the subject is inconsistent. In his discussion of Greek hero-worship and its similarities to Christian saint-veneration, Delehaye states "there can be no need to emphasize that Greek hero-worship did not have the same theological basis" as Christianity, a statement that occurs in his chapter after Delehaye posits that not only did the Greeks worship relics of a sort and believe that heroes' tombs were loci of healing and luck but also that the "mob" that "swamped"

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[22] Delehaye devotes an entire chapter to this subject in *The Legends of the Saints*, entitled "Pagan Memories and Survivals," pgs. 119-169. Certainly, studies of comparative religion that level all distinctions make Delehaye apoplectic: "The subject we are entering on is full of surprises and—let us say at once—of unfortunate confusions. It has given rise, and still gives rise, to over-ingenious theorizing whose concern is to connect certain religious phenomena specially relevant to hagiography with pagan beliefs and customs. With the help of subtle argument, often based on very wide learning, attempts are made to detect remains of the old mythology and links with earlier religions beneath the surface of Christian legend; analogies or likenesses are found between different religions, and it is claimed that they can only be explained as borrowings."

[23] Brown, *Cult,* 20. Brown argues that the cult of the saints revolutionizes ideas of bodies and death, and causes a seismic shift in the articulation of relationships between the dead and living.

the Church was influenced by "polytheistic ideas which still fermented in the people's mind."[24]

Delehaye seems to want to argue that pagan practices function as an antecedent for Christianity, even as he advances that the two belief systems do not share the same foundation.

Ultimately, Delehaye's admission to the lasting effects of polytheism rings perfectly true and illustrates that Antony's description of demonic forces and powers follows the very contours of the strength/weakness of his own legend—namely, the ability to read sacredness as positive and negative, and to maintain inconsistent and even contradictory elements within the same discourse. Understandably in descriptions of unearthly beings—one has to posit that angels, demons, and saints all are otherworldly—the tendency toward ambiguity seems to be particularly strong, and one cannot forget that as beings outside the temporal and mundane order saints are well positioned for both negative and positive uses.[25]

The ambiguity in portraying this otherworldly cast of characters in hagiography—either for or against God—is particularly potent in the *Life*. Although the listing angels, saints, and demons together as a confraternal order and eliding differences among them emphasizes the commonality of entities that are found outside the realm of the normative hierarchy of society, the *Life* records, of course, the battle *par excellence* between saint and demon for the soul of man. The appearance of demons, and the central place afforded, however negatively, to these creatures of darkness marks the *Life* as a text that is ultimately invested in Otherness. The text relishes the marginalization embraced by Antony, and certainly demons signify beings or ideas outside a normative economy. Demonic activity marks the insertion of a radically different ideology, but beyond the multiple sites of identification one might have with these demons—a post-colonial critique might be most appropriate here—the larger issue is one of indeterminacy: what is sacred, profane, or demonic? Antony is often portrayed as monstrous as the demons he

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[24] Delehaye, 130.

[25] David Brakke, "The Making of Monastic Demonology: Three Ascetic Teachers on Withdrawal and Resistance." *Church History* 70:1 (2001): 23. What Brakke emphasizes is Antony's relationship to Origen's teachings concerning the common unity of humans, angels, and demons: "In its basic elements Antony's demonology is indebted to that of Origen. All created beings, including angels, heavenly bodies, human beings, and demons, originated in a lost unity, from which they fell due to their 'evil conduct.'"

fights, and he problematizes a strict dichotomy between the sacred and demonic by participating in the same behavior as his demonic foes.

Though he is a figure comparable in some ways to the demons, Antony is also a figure who participates in *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ, the process by which saints are proven and prove themselves. Imitation is, in fact, the purpose of the *Life*.[26] In his preface, Athanasius writes that he composed the events of Antony's life "so that you [the monks] might be able to emulate him and follow his example."[27] Imitation, however, is not solely the provenance of monks and Christians; it is also the process by which demons seek to disprove and discredit Christians. As figures outside normative society and participants in the fraternity of otherworldly beings, demons understand the power of imitation and its position as the currency of Christianity, and, while the idea of imitation and its power as the currency of Christianity may seem overly modern, the text clearly illustrates a connection, however contested or implied, between the two concepts. In an episode of silver and gold plates that perhaps recalls 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Antony is offered first a silver, then a gold dish.[28] While the silver dish "disappeared like smoke from the face of the fire," the second plate that "appeared really was gold."[29] Antony dismisses the silver plate out of hand, but marveling at the size of the real gold, runs from it, as though "escaping from a fire."[30] This passage would seem to comment upon Antony's love of coin and support Brakke's contention that economic temptations surpass all others for Antony, yet the story of silver and gold signifies something else as well. This episode maintains the topic of imitation, illustrating that demons along with Christians are capable of imitation, but it also casts doubt upon the nature of demonic and sacred imitation. The silver is fake, but the gold is real. Further clarifying, or muddling, the episode is the fact that the verses

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[26] Brakke, *Politics*, 201-2. Here Brakke argues, convincingly, that Athanasius had relatively little contact with the historical Antony. But, as Athanasius himself admits, his information is really more about writing a "narrative" in which followers of Christ can find a good and true example. However, I would argue that Athanasius includes himself in the *Life*, in the episode of Antony's cloak that he gives to Athanasius.

[27] Athanasius, 8.

[28] Ibid., 17.

[29] Ibid.

of 2 Timothy 2:20-21 speak directly to the dangers of imitation in the form of vessels, in gold, silver, wood, and clay. While gold and silver vessels are privileged in Timothy, in the *Life* silver and gold have taken on the opposite meaning.

If imitation of Christ and the saints lies at the heart of Christianity, then imitation in its more deceptive nature defines the *modus operandi* of the demonic world. Antony, in his "direct quotations," sees the demonic world as ultimately characterized by direct imitation, not crude parody. One will not know the demons from their inability to perform Christianity because, as Antony notes, "they [the demons] often come at night, pretending to be angels of God and praising the monks' dedication, admiring their perseverance and promising future rewards."[31] The demons imitate even the monks and, according to Antony, "disguise themselves as genuine monks and put pressure on many of the monks, accusing them [the *real* monks] of their former sins in which the demons themselves were their accomplices."[32] No human power can discern whether these be angels, monks, or demons. Only the power of Christ, enacted through the sign of the cross, compels these demons to show their true nature, demonstrating what "feeble jokes" demons truly are.[33] More than simply highlighting the deceptive powers of demonic forces, Antony's admission that demons and angels are indiscernible to the human eye reinforces the close connection between paganism and Christianity. The lack of clear boundaries between the sacred and demonic also poses a question: Are the demons angelic or the angels demonic, or can this be known?

The question of motive and its role in the difference between emulation and imitation drives a possible critique of the collapse of the boundaries between sacred and demonic. In his preface to the *Life*, Athanasius describes emulation as "a noble contest" in which the "monks abroad" attempt to "equal the monks of Egypt or to outdo them in striving after moral perfection

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[30] Athanasius, 17.
[31] Ibid., 30
[32] Ibid., 25.
[33] Ibid., 31.

by means of rigorous self-discipline."[34] Emulation is the aim of the *Life*—of the *exempla* of Antony, Paul the Simple, and other desert fathers—but as Antony himself has warned, the demons understand too well how to offer themselves as objects of emulation. Perhaps one cannot argue that Athanasius would have made a link among the sacred, the profane, and the demonic, or that pre-modern audiences noticed, or even cared for that particular link. However, in the chapters that follow, in which Antony gives advice to his "sons," Antony's words point to the dangers of the non-normative that inhere in a genre such as hagiography, which is founded upon emulation of the saints, figures who epitomize the function of transgression in their wider societies. Speaking of demons and of the measures necessary to confront them, Antony argues that he must explain everything in greater detail, "because repetition brings greater security."[35] His emphasis on repetition is interesting, pointing as it does to the creation of genre in general, and the formation of hagiography in particular. The only defense against the literal "demons" Antony battles and the demons lurking inside his and others' tales is the ritualized repetition of retelling. So the demons symbolize the danger within, the power of subversion. And in view of their construction as non-normative, what might have troubled the medieval reader, and what ultimately fascinates the modern one is the degree of character development in these demons. This rewriting of the Satanic impulses in a sympathetic way, more than a millennium before John Milton's effort, troubles a strict distinction between saint and demon and maintains the power of the non-normative within Athanasius' text. Rather than simply create stock characters, Athanasius presents Antony with a *dramatis personae* that is believable and even likable.

Whether one can like the Devil or not is not a purely hypothetical exercise. After all, the very first demonic encounter in which a fully delineated character is introduced involves issues of race—however one can understand race in this era—youth, repentance, and lust. After hearing a small noise, Antony looks down to find a small black boy, who confesses that he is a demon and lust anthropomorphized after Antony interrogates him. Noteworthy for many

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[34] Athanasius, 7
[35] Ibid., 26

reasons, not the least of which is the fact that this is the "first sign of the Saviour's power in Antony," the scene of the small, yet ugly black boy is full of pathos. Antony sees a demon "gnashing his teeth (as it says in the Bible) and wailing," appearing "as was fitting, in a form that revealed his true nature: an ugly black boy."[36] The idea that a demon can repent intrigues, and, while this could be some form of deception, the instance of the unforgivable asking for that forgiveness further erases the strict boundaries between the sacred and the profane. One demonic characteristic, already learned and internalized in this *vita*, is difficulty of differentiating demons from angels and vice versa. Clearly, this demon either wants true redemption or understands well the drama of confession and redemption. But the end is not yet, for Antony cannot give what the Lord will not cede. Forgiveness is denied, and at the signing of the cross, the demon disappears. The implications for a religion nominally founded upon forgiveness freely given are enormous, and, perhaps the audience—clerics, monks, temporal rulers—reading *Antony* could mark the distance between powers of the air and the earth more fully, and this denial of salvation was the expected outcome. Clearly, in an examination of the limits of identity, other limits and boundaries appear—who is more sympathetic and worthy of mercy but the demon who asks for pity? Indicative of the imitative power of the Christians as well as those of the demons, the denial of absolution and hardening of Antony's heart point the reader to the foggy distinction among saved, damned, and forgiven.

Athanasius' treatment of the black boy/demon is "queered" through his inability to maintain lucid distinctions between demon and saint, but the existence of other "queer" elements—in a more sexual connotation—appear in this episode as well. In the amalgamation of race, age, and gender, the figure of lust is "queer" in every sense of the word. Clearly there is a notion of pederasty that might be conjured by the male-to-male deployment of lust here, for lust is a black and ugly boy.[37] To a clerical elite that is steeped in the pagan remembrances of

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[36] Athanasius, 12.

[37] Brakke, *Politics*, 229. Brakke has written extensively on this episode and the way in his color "draws on the colour prejudices of some Egyptians of the Roman period." Moreover, "By choosing to represent the spirit of fornication and its weakness with a boy, Athanasius plays on Christian stereotypes about

the former Roman empire, the image of an aesthetically unpleasing and non-Roman boy—we are after all in the desert—would quite possibly be contraposed against the classical idea of Cupid or Ganymede.[38] The end result is that the demon plays majority culture, both the recent pagan and the contemporary Christian, with equal fervor and accuracy. Yet the lingering issue remains—where do boundaries between black demons, white angels, and same-sex desire end? The answer may not exist, but the inquiry is germane to the discussion of a highly ritualized text and genre that weaves heterodoxy and orthodoxy equally. One cannot presume because the demon disappears in the space of a few lines, that his presence is unimportant or unnecessary. In an early Christian cosmology in which demons and angels waged wars for the souls of men, the description of a demon as sexed, raced, and objectified articulates cultural anxieties about the ability to distinguish between battling entities. As Carlo Ginzburg has argued, it is "in the anecdotal, the incidental, the idiosyncratic" that one finds clues to broader conflicts.[39] While this demon may be small, one should not assume the issues he represents as incidental. In the murmuring of lust defeated introduces lingering conflicts between paganism and Christianity, burgeoning ideas of identity and Otherness, and disputes about the nature of salvation.

In terms of demons and ideology, other scholars have investigated images of demons that incorporate notions of ideology, sympathy, and cultural conflict, but the *Life* goes further, using these characters in such a way that boundaries between the heavenly and demonic are

pederasty going back to Paul: its excessively lustful character and alleged effeminacy of its practitioners (Rom. 1: 26-7; I Cor. 6: 9). For a discussion of race, see Philip Mayerson, "Anti-Black Sentiment in the 'Vita Patrum." *The Harvard Theological Review* 71 (1978): 304-311, especially pg. 305 for a discussion of race and demons. Here, Mayerson states that "as far as demons go, the Desert Fathers, who encountered multitudes of them, never characterize them by color or race with the exception of those comparatively few that are cited as Ethiopian or black. Specifically citing a demon as black or as an Ethiopian must surely indicate a sentiment among some unlettered and theologically uninformed monks that black was not always beautiful."

[38] Although I cannot state with absolute certainty that Athanasius knew of Cupid or Ganymede, both characters are fully described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the later clerical elite utilized the Ganymede as a marker of same-sex desire as indicated by *The Debate Between Ganymede and Helen*. For an English translation of *Ganymede and Helen*, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980), 381-389.

blurred and that the singular trajectory of Athanasius' text is undermined.[40] While the *Life* is a record of a holy man's life, the text also functions as a locus of ambiguity, and this fact serves to strengthen the text's appeal and longevity. The largest part of *Antony* occurs in the Syrian and Egyptian deserts, and this deployment of space seems to and should amplify the deprivation of Antony's life. Another demonic encounter demonstrates that the desert, however, is anything but deserted and points to the way in which a post-colonial critique would be apropos in the analysis of the demonic role in *Life*, an element—the role of racial and spatial marginalization in later literature—the text anticipates.

This use of post-colonial theory—anachronistic as it is and *should* be—is justified through an examination of the text, and the demons and Antony's use of the rhetoric of colonization and solitude. Athanasius makes explicit the tie between language in the form of Antony's words and the power of colonization, remarking that "his words had the immediate effect of persuading many of those who heard him to reject human things: this marked the beginning of the desert's colonization."[41] And it is Satan himself, the lord of all demons, who articulates the danger and pain of the desert's colonization. Antony hears Satan knocking at his door and is surprised to hear Satan's complaint that

> I have no place to be now; I possess no city; I have no weapons now.
>
> Throughout every nation and all the provinces the name of Christ rings out and

even the desert is crammed full of monks. I beg you, let them look after themselves and let them not abuse me without cause.[42]

Taken with Athanasius' observation concerning the colonialization of the desert, this speech conveys that the desert does not merely symbolize deprivation and isolation, at least not for the monks. Encroaching ever upon the last refuge of the demons, the monks have become colonial rulers, proponents of a ruling ideology, and have reduced the demons to subaltern. The characterization of the desert as populated recalls the work of Peter Brown, which, in examination of the rise of the holy man, the ascetic or hermit, who survives on the periphery of society, advances that the Egyptian and Syrian deserts—Antony maintains his abode first in Syria, then in Egypt—were radically different environments. Most importantly, Brown's argument articulates the urban nature of the Egyptian desert in which conditions were stark enough in to force the "monastic" inhabitants to carry urban rituals and strategies into the desert.[43] If the distinction between sacred and demonic is blurred throughout the text, it is understandable that the difference between desert and city vanishes as well.

Antony's encounter with Satan illuminates the shifting valence of the word "desert" and the myriad ways in which one might interpret such a simple concept. This discussion offers another point of interest as well: Satan's complaint, later echoed by Antony, flattens the boundaries between Antony and Satan even as spatial distinctions between desert and city become problematic. In this shifting instance of identity, and the blurring of boundaries between the sacred and satanic, Antony himself is consumed by the need to be alone, and, in the space of a few paragraphs, Antony mimics and repeats the words of Satan, as he despairs of the "arrival of so many people" in the desert who come to Antony for help and succor and deprive "him of the solitude he desired."[44] As Brown has also argued, the holy man was deeply involved in affairs of the city—whether he enjoyed this or not—and, of course, Antony was no

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[42] Athanasius, 34.
[43] Peter Brown. "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 83.
[44] Athanasius, 39.

21

exception.[45] While Athanasius casts the demons as rural outcasts, a mob of unruly beings relegated to the outer reaches of the Thebaide, the great swath of Egyptian desert, he also portrays Antony as a victim of his own success and a holy man who is demonic in his desire to be deserted.[46]

Antony's wish for solitude in the desert is a life-long pursuit. The *Life* records the constant avoidance of fame and glory, but it is a wish that continues long past Antony's natural life. A primary justification for achieving sainthood is the process of defeating death through the power of relics.[47] Indicative of the contradictory nature of Christianity—especially in terms of the cult of saints—this emphasis upon corporeal power is equally opposed by a turn to the spiritual and a belief in the inherent iniquity of the body, perhaps creating Antony's eternal fear of veneration of his body, even as post-mortem veneration is quickly becoming a staple of hagiography in the ancient world.[48] In clear defiance of the turn toward relic veneration and by extension veneration of bodies, Antony refuses the normative treatment of the saints. While the cult of the saints is never singular in its practices, one characteristic that remains constant throughout the centuries is the need for relics and the ability to believe in their efficacy. Peter Brown has argued this point extensively, citing the number of graves and tombs in Upper Egypt and chronicling the reach of this characteristic of the cult of the saints, remarking that "late-antique Christianity, as it impinged on the outside world, *was* shrines and relics."[49] Though his ties to the demonic world and his ability to perform demonic desires are problematic, nothing marks Antony as an entity outside the normative order—even the non-normative order of the

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[45] Brown, *Holy Man*, 89.

[46] Ibid., 81. It is here that Brown articulates the simultaneously high and low opinion of the holy man: "In studying both the most admired and most detested figures in any society, we can see, as seldom through other evidence, the nature of the average man's expectations and hopes for himself." Of course, the figure to whom he is referring is the holy man of Late Antiquity.

[47] Jean LeClercq, *The Love of Learning and Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham UP, 1961): 203. LeClercq's statement is indicative: "As a consequence of the devotion paid to relics, miracles had, for a long time, been considered as manifestations of a saint's personal power."

[48] Brown, *Cult*, 3. Cf. pg. 5 for a discussion of public places and private grief, and pgs. 11-12 for a discussion of burial practices in Egypt, a discussion that is especially germane to the argument of this work.

[49] Ibid., 11-12. The emphasis is Brown's.

saints—more than his refusal to be buried in a conspicuous place and receive devotion after death.

The escape from fame that is given through death, which is difficult to reconcile with God's promise of lasting influence to Antony, could possibly be explained through the terms of agency throughout the *Life*.[50] Antony, clearly, has no agency, a fact suggested by his miracles and explanations thereof. In the episode of the anti-Cupid discussed above, the disappearance of the demon was not articulated in terms of Antony's actions. Athanasius writes, "This was Antony's first victory over the devil or rather the first sign of the Saviour's power in Antony," and the clarification of the statement signifies Antony's absolute loss of agency.[51] This victory, no matter whom one considers the true victor, "did not give Antony a sense of security nor did the devil's powers fail completely."[52] Antony himself is fully cognizant of his lack of agency and power in matters of miracles and salvation. To find proof of Antony's cognizance of powerlessness, one need look no further than the story of the girl's whose mucus and tears turn to worms.[53] She is a wholly pathetic creature, one who is so afflicted and yet, denied assistance from monks traveling to Antony. Notwithstanding their refusal, her parents take the afflicted girl to Antony to have her healed. She is healed, but as Antony notes the relief has come "as a result of her own prayers."[54] While he argues that it has been the girl's prayers that have saved her, one should not view this as a moment of agency on her part. Rather, as Antony has

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[50] See Brakke, *Politics*, 253. Brakke has commented, as have I, that the Athanasian biogaphy exhibits a total lack of agency in his miracles; the difference in our approaches is the result of this loss of agency, and it is a small one. Brakke argues that this is another way in which the historical Antony is absent, and the picture of the saint we are given is a amalgation of Athanasian theology and earlier Antonian sources. On pg. 253, he contends that "By attributing Antony's miraculous powers to Christ, Athanasius hoped to assimilate the monk's patronal role to his own Christ-centred spirituality." I am not, however, prepared to argue that this loss of agency merely reflects efforts to assimilate Athanasian politics and theology into the biography of a famous saint. Rather, what seems true is that any foundational text not only creates guidelines for future production, but also flouts in many ways the parameters it creates.
[51] Athanasius, 13.
[52] Ibid.
[53] This is the example *par excellence* of not only Antony's loss of agency, but also his own recognition of that fact. Although Brakke argues a similar point about agency, he uses an earlier example.
[54] Athanasius, 45.

testified just before, "No one should come to me, insignificant creature that I am, for the bestowal of cures is not a matter of human wretchedness, but for the mercy of Jesus Christ."[55]

While the idea of agency and phenomenon of relics may seem unrelated, the desire to be healed by relics and the need for veneration of the saint invests that saint with power beyond of human wretchedness. Can a saint serve as a conduit for God's power and still be viewed in the same abject way as an "average" Christian? It is likely that certain late-medieval and early modern criticisms of the saints' cults are expressed, far earlier, in Antony's avoidance of agency and veneration. One can hear in Antony's self-deprecating tone the command to worship and obey God, not his followers. Then, perhaps, Antony's refusal to imbue his body with the restorative and curative powers enjoyed by the other members of the cult of the saints is not only understandable but also ultimately completely consistent.

The desert perhaps serves as impetus for the articulation of Antony's fears of post-mortem worship, causing him to cast the act of relic veneration in terms of pagan remembrances. While Peter Brown has discussed the urban nature of Egyptian monasticism and the relatively populated nature of the Egyptian desert, Antony's neighbors would certainly include the remains of Egyptian funerary culture, indicating that spatial concerns become paramount here, as Antony dies in the deserts of Egypt. The location of innumerable tombs laid out in pharaonic splendor is never far from his thought, and in his reference of the burial practices of the Egyptians and the continued practice, even with holy men of the Church, Antony is clear that such practices are incorrect—bodies should be buried in the ground. According to Antony, the Egyptians "wrap in linen cloths the bodies of those they think worthy, and especially of the blessed martyrs" even though this "Age-old custom" is "pointless."[56] Strictly speaking, Antony is only taking offense at the pagan practice of mummification. Yet, in the practice of relics, the preservation of human bodies, even parts, is a mark of sanctity and efficacy. The real concern is Antony's wish that his burial place be unknown. In his last hours,

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[55] Athanasius, 45.
[56] Ibid., 66.

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Antony commands his monastic brothers and sons to "carry out also this order given to you by this old man who is yours: let no one apart from your dear selves know the place of my tomb."[57] Of all the qualities of Antony's thought that problematize his sainthood—and they are numerous—none is more troubling than this: his stated preference that his body not be found, except by God.

Antony's body and anxieties about its use are a concern even before his death. The story of Antony's trip to Alexandria sheds greater light upon the shifting nature of a tenuous distinction between paganism and Christianity and upon notions of bodies and the holy. Upon denouncing the Arians once again—this time they have actually been brazen enough to include Antony as a proponent and adherent of their heresy—Antony is met by a great mob of people, including pagans, priests, and Christians. This mob "crowded round him, eager just to touch the hem of his garment, in the belief that merely touching it would benefit them greatly," and Athanasius notes that many were freed from the "devil's grip," "different illnesses," and the "idols."[58] Clearly, this story changes Antony into a walking, talking, breathing relic, further undercutting his later stance that his bones must remain in the ground, and his stance against veneration. For Brown has written that *even* objects associated with the body, such as Antony's cloak, became imbued with the power of the cult of the saints.[59] The presence of the venerating mob—a phenomenon that worries Antony sufficiently enough to force the concealment of his final resting place—presages the end result of a saint whose popularity extends well into the next millennium. In the nexus of bodies of followers and the body of the followed, one can see that, as necessary as the demonstrable efficacy of the relic, the presence of the crowd also speaks directly to one's ability to influence man, and heal his distance with the divine.[60]

Antony is transformed seamlessly into a kind of idol, effectively replacing the those of the pagans, a move that seems antithetical to his stated position against corporeal worship. His

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[57] Athanasius, 67.
[58] Ibid., 53.
[59] Brown, *Cult*, 1.
[60] Ibid., 48.

mere presence is enough to empty out the temples. In the conflation of pagans and Christians who seek him, and their respective ills—demonic possessions, illnesses, worship of idols—Athanasius manages at once to break down all barriers of identification between Christians and pagans and to destroy all boundaries between their respective problems. While the Athanasian biography constantly elides differences between identities that are contraposed, this episode goes further, attacking and embracing corporeal veneration simultaneously, proving the trip to Alexandria merely cements a process that has been at work throughout Athanasius' narrative. Indeed, Antony's body has been "worshipped" before: after spending twenty years in an abandoned fort, Antony emerges as a youthful and virile male presence. Frustrating the expectations of followers who assume that "they would find him dead already," Antony appears with "an aura of holiness" and stuns them with the "beauty of his countenance and the dignified bearing of his body which had not grown flabby through lack of exercise."[61] In short, the "handsomeness of his limbs remained as before," and his face retained its healthy tone, rather than the expected pallor.[62] The true test of the efficacy of relics, indeed, is based upon their ability to heal and survive, pointing to the contradiction inherent in relics: dead body parts are only effective if they maintain the aura of life.

Beyond the process of bodily celebration, one part at a time, Antony's beautiful body is proof of his saintliness and God's invested power, if a distinction exists between the two. In fact, mentioning his "aura of holiness," lasting beauty, and "purity of mind" illustrates that, even as a living man Antony's body has become a relic—potent, pure, and permanent. Considering Antony's splendid body, a question remains: here, especially, but throughout, are descriptions of Antony's body ever about his literal body, or is this a way in which the corporeal and the sexual point instead to the textual? Hippolyte Delehaye's pioneering work on the saints is informative. In articulating the number of ways in which Greek hero worship and veneration of the saints merged, Delehaye manages to highlight the similarities of the two phenomena while

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[61] Athanasius, 18.
[62] Ibid., 18.

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simultaneously ignoring that they probably spring from the same cultural energies. Other than noting that the religious mores and needs of the lower orders swamped the Church—which was, one can assume, free of any of the pollution that Edward Gibbon finds in it—Delehaye cannot understand how the similarities between paganism and Christianity are at once problematic, and also understandably causal. Delehaye becomes, in short, Antony of the twentieth century, collapsing all boundaries between Christianity and paganism, especially in regards to corporeal practices, without any indication that he understands or appreciates the consequences of his actions.

The results of Antony's thought and desires concerning his body undoubtedly affects other saints and the generic conventions of hagiography, and the need to hide his body forces Antony's sacred biographies to deal with or minimize in some way this strain of his thought as is demonstrated by a mid-fifteenth century life of Antony in which his body is discovered. In Antony's formulation, in terms of post-mortem veneration and burial practices of the Late Antique, intrinsic differences seemingly do not exist between Christianity and the paganism it replaces although one cannot argue that differences do not exist between the two. Antony's assertion, however, that contemporary holy men are treated in the same way as the pagans before them illuminates the way in which Athanasius' text works toward a synthesis of early Christian burial and standardization of burial practices. Antony's beliefs betray a possible cultural anxiety that veneration—of any kind—is dangerously close to the pagan apotheosis of the Roman emperors or Egyptian pharaohs, in effect, tying the cult of the saints to the cults of other pagan deities by collapsing all boundaries between relics of the saints, and say, relics of Hercules, Sehti, or Rameses.

Clearly, the problematic elements of Antony's hagiography follow the contours of a tenuous divide between paganism and Christianity. The indistinguishable limits between the two are highlighted through Antony's likeness to demons and refusal of corporeal worship and joined by another instance, which occurs in the treatment of his professed illiteracy and distaste of the written word. His avowed denial of the written word is a moment of rupture in a narrative

that at once creates normative practices of hagiography and denies them on several occasions. In the *Life*, Athanasius makes over fifty references to scripture, all without full quotes or text written out verbatim.[63] Are readers to assume that every encounter with Athanasius' text —or Evagrius' translation—was with someone so versed in the Bible, all by *hearing* it, that specific allusions, pieces of verses, and passing references were effective?[64] While this is certainly possible, for one cannot doubt the popularity of the *Life*—many scholars have noted that it was the most, or one of the most popular medieval texts—one cannot assume that its power was only transmitted orally.[65] In fact, doesn't the fact that someone could just hear an allusion to the Bible and recall it assume a literate audience? Athanasius' text, further, is a written text and foundational for Antony's hagiography, or rather the continued knowledge of his hagiography, which is absolutely dependent upon these written texts. As the monk credited with the founding of Western monasticism, a cultural phenomenon responsible for much of the written output of the Middle Ages, Antony is, by extension, also responsible for that production.

Antony exists in more than one textual tradition, a fact that troubles the hegemonic aims of the Athanasian text. In fact, Antony's letters testify that other portraits of Antony were painted with more orthodox, and literate, brushes. While David Brakke has argued that neither Antony's letters nor the Athanasian biography can be interpreted as the historical Antony, his letters certainly depict Antony as a Christian academic, a man learned in Platonic theology.[66] Whether one can find the historical Antony in either his letters or the Athanasian biography is an inquiry that is pointless and impossible, as Brakke has argued. Yet one cannot avoid the fact that a gulf exists between the learned Antony that is found appropriately in his letters, and the simple monk of Athanasius. The *Life* opens with Antony's illiteracy and his high social status. As a family of some wealth and land, it does not seem odd to believe that his education would have

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[63] See the notes at the end of the edition of *Early Christian Lives*, trans. Carolinne White.
[64] In at least one instance, Evagrius uses scripture that Athanasius does not. Also interesting for and germane to this discussion is the fact that Athanasius mentions that Antony speaks Coptic, a detail that Evagrius omits. See *Early Christian Lives*, *Life of Antony*, n. 35 and 31 respectively.
[65] See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003): 28. In Cohen's discussion of St. Guthlac, he remarks of the popularity of Antony's legend.

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been comprehensive. Yet, Athanasius writes that "he refused to learn to read and write," but instead at church "concentrated on what was being read and put the useful precepts into practice in his way of life."[67] What Athanasius accomplishes through this opening of the *Life* is manifold: he gives voice to the tension between oral and written traditions, makes Antony the paragon of simple, unlearned wisdom, and articulates a vision of the faithful as followers of a simple and unquestioning nature. Of course, none of these aims should be taken for granted, and everything Athanasius wishes to accomplish must itself be interrogated. This story of simple wisdom is relayed in a written text from the hand of a bishop, whose learning should not be underestimated. Moreover, the power of Antony's legend stems, in part, from a written textual afterlife that continues into the nineteenth century with publication of Gustave Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. While one cannot discount the power of orality to transmit legends of the saints, one should not expect that oral texts were simply the only means available to advance sacred biographies, nor can one divide so rigidly the oral and written sources of hagiography. As Thomas J. Heffernan has argued the "raw materials for the saint's life were often stories that originated with the audience."[68]

Certainly many people would have experienced the Bible only through hearing it, but it is unlikely that high-born Antony would be one of them. Athanasius, of course, definitely was literate, but apparently he wants the reader to believe that orality is the only way to experience Christianity, a belief that is fraught with contradiction. As any examination of the Athanasian sacred biography makes clear, Athanasius assumes a certain knowledge of the Bible. In the confrontation with the lusty, black demon, Athanasius describes the demon gnashing his teeth and wailing—"as it says in the Bible."[69] Along with this appeal to the Bible—which functions as a written text, but also as an oral text through the liturgy and various performances of iconic

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[66] Brakke, *Politics*, 213.
[67] Athanasius, 8-9.
[68] Heffernan, 22.
[69] Athanasius, 12.

Biblical stories—at several points in the *written* text, Athanasius couches Antony's refusal to read in opposition to paganism.

The true problematic in the *Life*, however, concerns knowledge, paganism, and Christianity. The issue of literacy there is illuminated by Brakke's interpretation of the learned Antony of letters as versed in Platonic theology. Interestingly, in the *Life,* Antony is not simply illiterate, but he has consciously chosen the path of illiteracy. More importantly, however, is the fact that Antony's illiteracy follows the contours of his sacred biography and is articulated along the fault line between paganism and Christianity. The full flowering of Antony's belief about the written word, philosophy, and paganism blooms in the episodes of chapters 72-75, in which pagans and Antony battle over ideas of wisdom. In these episodes, Athanasius seeks to explain the nature of true Christian learning and its superiority to pagan teachings, namely secular philosophy and logic. As with demons and post-mortem veneration, illiteracy in the *Life* is structured around a binary relationship between paganism and Christianity. While affirming this obvious binary seems unnecessary, the tension and slippage between Christianity and paganism in these episodes offers a rather shocking view of Antony's refusal to read.

Athanasius is clear about Antony's illiteracy and its effect upon his wisdom. The lack of formal education does not, in any way, prevent Antony from refuting the logic of pagans and his lack of education seems to increase his wisdom, giving him the power to match wits with the pagans on three separate occasions. The first encounter occurs in chapter 72 during which two pagan philosophers come to Antony, "thinking they could outwit him."[70] He defeats them easily, then reminds the pagans that they sought him out and should imitate him as a result.[71] Notwithstanding the circular, and frankly unconvincing nature of his argument, the pagans leave, convinced of his superior wisdom. Athanasius, then, segues into a more generic narrative, in which Antony utilizes platonic reasoning about the written word to convince pagans of his wisdom. Proving to them that letters come after the mind, Antony states that "'if anyone's

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[70] Athanasius, 53.
[71] Ibid., 53-4.

mind is sound, he has no need of letters."[72] Once again, Antony's logic, simple and crude as it

is, bests the efforts of the pagans. The third and final episode pits Antony against a group of

pagan philosophers, "who were blinded by the fog of secular wisdom and who, in their own

estimation, were the most learned in all branches of philosophy."[73] In this most complete and

detailed of the pagan encounters, Antony uses the dialectic to expose the failings of paganism.

Antony's argument concerns the range of pagan indignities, including Jupiter's debaucheries,

and his belief that "these are the ornaments adorning your temples."[74] He finally exorcises the

demons from the bodies of the pagan philosophers who leave, "admitting to each other that

their meeting with him had been of great benefit to them."[75]

Amazingly enough, the end result of these pagan encounters is that Antony's illiteracy

is undermined, and the tightly constructed boundaries between Christianity and paganism

collapse. Athanasius' thought about the written word in general and Antony's illiteracy in

particular recalls the story of letters in *Phaedrus*.[76] Socrates tells the story of Theuth, who, after

inventing writing, brings his arts to Thamos, king of the Egyptians. According to Socrates, after

Theuth explains the advantages of writing, Thamos dashes Theuth's hopes, pointing out all the

negative outcomes of written language:

> You, being the father of written letters, have on account of goodwill said the
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> opposite of what they can do. For this will provide forgetfulness in the souls of
>
> those who have learned it, through neglect of memory, seeing that, through
>
> trust in writing, they recollect from outside with alien markings, not reminding
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> themselves from inside, by themselves.[77]

Thamos' verdict—that writing slows the mind, engenders forgetfulness—is quite

damning. In his characterization of writing as "alien markings," Thamos advances not only the

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[72] Athanasius, 54.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 56.
[75] Ibid., 59.
[76] See Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), especially pgs. 6-7.

external nature of writing but its superfluous status as well. Antony does something quite similar in the second encounter, in which he privileges the mind over letters. As Geoffrey Galt Harpham notes, Antony's answer to the pagans in the second encounter is consistent with Platonic, Aristotelian, and Augustinian thought concerning the hierarchy of spoken and written language.[78]

Yet the connection with *Phaedrus* is more detailed, as Antony's third encounter proves. First, Antony explains to the philosophers that he will use dialectical reasoning to defend the cross because Antony is forced to "use this ploy to affirm our religion."[79] Moreover, Antony takes direct aim at Platonic theories of the soul in his argument in the third episode when he criticizes pagans for claiming "that the soul, issuing from the purest source of God, has shamelessly fallen."[80] One cannot forget that Socrates describes this literal fall of the soul in *Phaedrus*. The similarities between *Phaedrus* and the *Life* suggest that Athanasius was aware of the text, or at least the teachings of Plato. The issue becomes vexed when one attempts to prove that outside readers knew the *Phaedrus*, or managed to see it as an antecedent for the *Life*, but, whether one can argue this connection was made or missed, the existence of so much overlap between the Greco-Roman intellectual tradition and the Patristic tradition that replaces/subsumes it does prove one point—that Antony can be read as the father of simple desert monasticism, or the master of dialectic reasoning.

Socrates and Antony share many characteristics. By expanding the relationship between *Phaedrus* and the *Life* even further, the Socrates/Plato association not only illuminates the link between Antony and Athanasius but also illustrates the variable nature of Antony and subsequent readings of him. Besides their positions outside normative society—Socrates is eventually put to death for his heterodox views, while Antony is celebrated for his—both are portrayed in their "biographies" as figures who privilege orality. These texts—the dialogues of

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[77] Plato, *Phaedrus*. Trans. James H. Nichols, Jr (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998), 275a.
[78] Galt Harpham, 6.
[79] Athanasius, 57.
[80] Ibid., 55.

Plato, and the *Life*—are not biographies in the strict sense of the word, for, while they communicate the "events" of Socrates and Antony's lives respectively, they do so in the service of larger political and intellectual conflicts. The events of Socrates and Antony's lives seem as calculated as the aims of the authors describing them—a point David Brakke makes concerning Athanasius.[81] In fact, Plato's agenda against the Sophists could serve as a blueprint for that of Athanasius against the Arians.

In a comparison of Socrates and Antony what is most important is the characterization of their "biographic" texts by a contradictory stance toward orality. The story of Theuth and letters in *Phaedrus* and that of Antony's illiteracy in the *Life* testify to the privileging of orality in texts and traditions that owe their power to the written word. One should not view this paradox as a shortcoming, but rather as a strategy that allows these texts to serve multiple functions with regards to different cultures and times. With that in mind, the only true test of the Athanasian biography's power is to trace its progress through the centuries. The close of this chapter will cover much ground and jump temporally and culturally from the late-antique period to the early medieval, moving from Athanasius to Augustine to Aldhelm.

It is beyond contention that Antony survives death, living on in the literary history of Western Christianity, for scholars have long noted the lasting influence of Athanasius' biography.[82] Geoffrey Galt Harpham notes that the "master text of Western asceticism is *The Life of Anthony*"[83] and according to L.W. Banard, many important early Christian writers such as St. Augustine, Jerome, and John Chrysostom knew of the Athanasian text, or cited it directly.[84] The appearance of the Athanasian biography in discrete sources simultaneously cements its position as a text of enduring importance and proves its ability to be deployed in a diverse fashion, for one cannot assume that Augustine, Jerome, or Aldhelm—who is discussed later— uses Antony in a way that is monolithic or reducible to a singular strategy. Indeed, Antony's

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[81] Brakke, *Politics*, 203 and 213.

[82] Brian Brennan, "Athanasius' *Vita Antonii*: A Sociological Interpretation." *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985): 209.

[83] Galt Harpham, 3.

treatment at their hands is not always completely positive or affirming. Jerome's *Life of Paul of Thebes* records, for instance, the story of Paul the Simple, Antony's main competition in the Egyptian desert. Jerome's incorporation of Athanasian materials is understandable given that *Paul* was composed in approximately 374 or 375 CE, some years after the accepted date range for the Athanasian biography.[85] Yet Jerome presents a completely different version of Antony, portraying Antony as not only devoted to Paul, but tied, in many respects, to exactly the human emotions and attachments that Antony has renounced in the *Life.* Upon hearing that Paul is dying, Antony

> wept and groaned, and begged Paul not to leave him but to take him as his companion on that journey. But Paul said, 'You ought not to seek your own benefit but that of others. It might be to your advantage to lay down the burden of the flesh and to follow the Lamb, but it is also beneficial for the other brothers to be instructed by your example. And so I beg you to go back, unless it is too much trouble, and bring me the cloak which bishop Athanasius gave you and wrap it around my poor body.'…Antony was astonished that Paul had heard about Athanasius and his cloak."[86]

Besides completely contradicting the ease with which Antony accepts and welcomes death in the *Life*, this episode privileges the monastic teachings and heritage of Paul, a point that is reinforced through the mentioning of Athanasius' cloak. At the end of the *Life* in a move tying the two figures together, Antony gives his cloak to Athanasius. As Virginia Burrus notes, Jerome's retelling is a clever rewriting of the cloak's history that redirects the monastic tradition, resulting in the refashioning of Jerome as the monastic chronicler *par excellence*.[87]

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[84] Banard, 170.

[85] E. Coliero, "St. Jerome's Lives of the Hermits." *Vigiliae Christianae* 11 (1957): 161.

[86] Jerome, *Life of Paul of Thebes*. Reprinted in *Early Christian Lives*. Ed. and trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin, 1998), 81.

[87] See Virginia Burrus, "Queer Lives of the Saints: Jerome's Hagiography." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 457-458, cf. n.43.

More important than the fate of the cloak is the effect of Antony's eagerness to join Paul—effectively becoming all too human—and what this altered portrait communicates about Antony. Here, his adaptability is understandable, given that his textual tradition is relatively new, composed some twenty years before the Hieronymian text. Yet, Antony is still fairly contemporary, a fact that makes eyewitnesses and testimony from the living possible, pointing to the relative risks and rewards of refashions. Regardless of the ease or difficulty of altering Antony's sacred biography, this encounter between Paul and Antony is not the last time that Antony's legend is co-opted in the service to some other aim or motive. The other point is that alterations are made with the Athanasian biography where it is so clearly non-normative. Perhaps, Antony's extreme distaste for post-mortem veneration in a genre that demands it offers the opportunity to challenge what should be unassailable. Referring back to Gregory Hutcheson's definition of "queerness" is useful for this point, as he sees "queerness" in the "incongruities, excesses, or anxieties of normative discourse."[88] What the reader views here is a moment of extraordinary rupture, as the orthodox view of Antony as the ultimate ascetic is challenged by his ties to Paul. It is particularly ironic that a generic form created by the Athanasian text is pointedly used to upstage the text. Recalling the interaction between the younger monks and Antony in the *Life*, the relationship between grieving and dying is the same in *Paul*. In both texts younger ascetics are portrayed denying the reality of God's will and the father figure's destiny coupled with a gentle correction given by the dying, experienced ascetic and the fruition of his plan. In the *Life* Antony frustrates the wishes of his monastic sons by planning for an anonymous burial, and Paul does something similar in the Hieronymian text, announcing his plan for death, for which Antony is not prepared and wants to prevent.

By deploying a uniquely Athanasian construction—which occurs in the framework of supreme non-normativity, the rejection of post-mortem veneration—in a refashioned sense, Jerome changes and challenges more than the history of Athanasius' cloak. Whereas Athanasius' cloak in the *Life* indicates Antony is a living relic, the same cloak in *Paul* points to a

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[88] Hutcheson, 3.

hierarchy of saints and holiness, with Paul clearly the superior. The result of the episodes that feature Athanasius' cloak and Paul's death is that another element of "queerness" is introduced into *Paul*, one that is less textual, and more sexual. As Burrus notes, the relationship between Antony and Paul is follows the paradigm of a marriage in the final act of Paul's burial.[89] The intense feelings are problematic in the context of monastic culture, and the intensity between two men also betrays a homoerotic and homosocial component. According to some scholars, other incarnations of the relationship between Paul and Antony carry the same homosocial and homoerotic overtones. In fact, Mark Masterson writes about the homoerotic nature of Paul and Antony's relationship in the anonymous written *Historia Monachorum* and, while the texts are clearly different in many ways, Antony's status as replacement wife in both unites the discrete narratives.[90] Masterson begins his account by quoting Pachomius' Rules 94 and 95, rules that establish contact and friendly comportant among the monks are forbidden. Pachomius was a contemporary and desert ascetic of Paul and Antony, and his rules anticipate a desire that is forbidden before it is realized, pointing to the fact that not only does Pachomius fear this desire exists, but also that Pachomius knows it does. In light of Pachomius's fear—he is long dead when Jerome composes *Paul*—and Antony's previous exemplum, Jerome's revision of Antony and Paul as tied together in a relationship resembling a marriage and Antony's problematic displays of emotion and subservience represent a use of Antony that is jarringly new.

Although Antony is resurrected in many different contexts and for diverse aims, the common element of the rewriting of his hagiographic tradition is conversion, a concept that is at the heart of Athanasius' project. While Athanasius composes the *Life* purposes of emulation and imitation, he is also prompting a conversion to Antony's strict regimen of Christianity, one that is problematic for Antony's own position as saint and father of Western Monasticism. One can see that translation or change, the other meaning of conversion, is rooted in Antony's

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[89] Burrus, 458. The following is indicative: "Wrapping Paul's body in the cloak and carrying it outside to the accompaniment of his own hymns and psalms (thereby taking on a traditionally feminine role in the rites for the dead—and perhaps also in preparation of a bride for her marriage), Antony remembers that he does not have the necessary tool for digging a grave."

textual history. In fact, the allusions to the Athanasian text, in this work, refer to the Athanasian biography that is translated into English from the Latin version of Evagrius.[91] Evagrius' text and the liberties it takes are not necessarily problematic, as is demonstrated by Athanasius in his preface when he writes about cobbling together the narrative of Antony's life from what he and Antony's water-bearer know.[92] Athanasius himself began this textual journey, taking liberties with the facts or non-facts of Antony's life. Translation of Antony's textual body, then, is a project that begins with Athanasius and continues through the different versions, and the changing and mutating of "facts" in later versions should be viewed not as alien but consistent with the original Athanasian materials.

A freedom to rework the Athanasian tradition is indeed part of that tradition from the beginning, and in view of that freedom, the second part of the inquiry into the textual heritage of Antony focuses upon the idea of mutability in Antony's sacred biography in St. Augustine's *The Confessions* and *On Christian Doctrine*. By using the image of conversion as a call to emulate and process of textual change, Augustine converts/translates/changes the Athanasian text into an exemplum for conversion, suited to his own needs. Interestingly enough, the idea of conversion (when Antony is invoked) in *The Confessions* is textually based and dependent upon the written word, contradicting the process of conversion in Antony's original encounter with pagans in the *Life.* Augustine, however, does not maintain a consistent portrait of Antony, as I will argue, when he emphasizes Antony's illiterate spirituality in *On Christian Doctrine,* highlighting the flexibility of Antony's legend.

Augustine's own conversion in Book VIII of *The Confessions* owes its very genesis and success to the *Life of Antony*. The motivation for Augustine's conversion originates with the *Life*, a text he learns about in a conversation with Ponticianus. Augustine tells Ponticianus that he has been studying scripture, and upon hearing this, Ponticianus begins to relate the story of

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[90] Masterson, 217-219.
[91] Burrus, n.14
[92] Athanasius, 7.

Antony of Egypt.[93] Although Augustine does not explain in any detail what Ponticianus tells him of Antony, Augustine relates what Ponticianus describes about the conversion of two of his friends. Going for a walk while the emperor was away at the circus, Ponticianus and his three friends journey through the garden, until they part ways with two of Ponticianus' friends—who remain unnamed—exploring a cottage inhabited by servants.[94] There, the two unnamed friends find a copy of Athanasius' text and vow to renounce forever their former lives, future wives, and all worldly cares. Ponticianus' retelling has quite an effect on Augustine: he thinks in earnest upon the sexual renunciation of the friends and their former fiancées—they became virgins after the men gave them up—and considers, in disgust, "how many of my years—twelve perhaps— had gone to waste, and I with them, since my nineteenth year when I was aroused to pursue wisdom by the reading of Cicero's *Hortensius*."[95] Stung by remorse and self-pity, Augustine seeks respite in the garden, where instead he is struck by the need to at once deny and accept God. In the midst of "this partial willing and partial non-willing," Augustine hears a voice that tells him to "'Pick it up and read, pick it up and read," and he responds by reading Matthew 19:21, which states, "Go and sell all you possess and give the money to the poor: you will have treasure in heaven."[96] Augustine then fully commits himself to Christianity.

Augustine's conversion follows the basic contours of Antony's. The verse that Augustine alludes to in Book VIII while he repents is Matthew 19:21, precisely the verse that convinces Antony to first renounce his position, worldly wealth, and familial ties, and then journey to the desert. Yet in other ways the nature of their conversions could not be more different. While Antony *hears* the impetus to convert in Matthew and this is narrated in a written biography that privileges orality, Augustine *reads* the same call to convert in Paul's epistles after his is told a story about the Athanasian biography's power. While both men are chained by worldly cares—Antony for position, status, and wealth—Augustine is imprisoned foremost by

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[93] Augustine of Hippo, *The Confessions* (NY: New City P, 1997), XVIII (15).
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., XVIII (17).
[96] Ibid., XVIII (29), cf. n.113

sexual appetites that he describes as "a craving…which fettered me like a tight-drawn chain."[97] Altering the convention even further is Ponticianus' story, which cements the link between Antony and conversion. This episode of conversion depends absolutely upon the book, namely, *The Life of St. Antony*.[98] In clear contrast, in Antony's third and final encounter with the pagan philosophers in *Antony*, conversion is not textually based nor intellectual centered. The pagans realize the truth from Antony's native wit and his ability to drive out demons.[99] Unwittingly, however, this third encounter allies Antony and Christianity with pagan ideals of knowledge and reasoning, as exemplified in Antony's use of the dialectic and his "Greek" view of letters.

Similarly Augustine locates his idea of conversion and books in a classical context, anticipating what Dante accomplishes with Virgil hundreds of years later. The Gospels, as a book, complete the journey for wisdom that, according to Augustine, begins with Cicero's *Hortensius*. In the context of genre, the true change in the deployment of Antony's now generic conversion is that Augustine does not quarrel with the veracity of the written word nor does he denigrate its power to lead the faithful to God. Perhaps the most jarring redeployment of Antony's exemplum is in a layered account of conversion that maintains the power of literary *and* oral exempla of "conversion and renunciation."[100] Further, it is clear that for every similarity that can be found between Antony and Augustine, a corresponding difference can be articulated, pointing to the ambiguity in Antony's materials.

Owing to its original aims of imitation and emulation, the Athanasian biography fits rather well in Augustine's account of his own conversion. While Antony functions as a locus of

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[97] Augustine, *Confessions*, XVIII (13). For a discussion of Antony's temptations see Brakke, *Politics*, pgs. 226-238. Brakke argues on pg. 233 that "Attachment to wealth and property constitutes the greatest obstacle to Antony's withdrawal." Sexual temptation, on the other hand, appears as a function of his adolescence, and as he ages, it disappears.

[98] Galt Harpham, 95. Galt Harpham, quoting John Freccero, mentions the "literary" quality of Augustine's conversion.

[99] Brakke, *Politics,* 214: "The Athanasian Antony, obedient to the clergy, puts philosophers to shame not with his learning, but with his victory of Christ over the demonic."

[100] Trout, 134. Trout quotes Phillip Rousseau when he describes the "persuasive power of literary descriptions of conversion and renunciation in the later fourth century." Yet, as Trout argues, "Augustine's own account in the *Confessions* is a reminder that orally transmitted models could be equally influential."

competing cultural energies for conversion and its literary and oral depictions in *Confessions*, in

On Christian Doctrine Antony serves a rather odd purpose of defense of illiteracy, and a hedge

against the pride of the enlightened and educated. In his prologue, Augustine addresses a litany

of different groups all of which will have problems with the "precepts" he will give in order that

men might understand the Scriptures.[101] To the group that has been given divine knowledge of

the Scriptures and needs no further assistance, Augustine writes that they are indebted to men

for the alphabet in which the scriptures are written.[102] He notes further that they should not

> feel themselves injured by Antony, the holy and perfect Egyptian monk, who is
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> said to have memorized the Sacred Scriptures simply by hearing them, without
>
> any training in reading, and to have understood them through prudent
>
> thinking.[103]

Attempting to stifle the criticism of those learned or privileged enough to understand the

Scriptures without his assistance, Augustine presents Antony as an idealized portrait of perfect,

yet unlearned, Christianity. Even in its presentation, Augustine's example is tied to orality, for it

is *said* and not written that Antony was a famous monk, perfect and holy, who mastered the

Scriptures without letters. Augustine follows the Athanasian text here closely, reproducing the

image of Antony that Athanasius created. Nothing seems problematic in Augustine's usage

except that in both cases two men of enormous erudition in written texts cite Antony as a perfect

example of Christian ignorance in service of their own motives. It is not surprising, then, that

directly afterwards, Augustine writes of the recent Christian slave who has mastered the

scriptures, for Antony is a slave in this account to the larger purposes of Augustine's textual

agenda. Augustine forces the illiterate saint to defend the highly literate text he has written to

increase biblical literacy, proving that Antony's legend has—at least as late as Augustine—

retained both its Athanasian character but also its ability to perform different functions.

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[101] Augustine of Hippo, *On Christian Doctrine.* Trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 3-5.
[102] Augustine, *Doctrine*, 4.
[103] Ibid., 4.

While Augustine reworks Antony's legend in order to pursue Augustinian ends, the material retains a distinctive Athanasian character, but this is not always the case. Aldhelm's *Carmen de Virginitate* presents a reduced version of Antony in a collection of brief saints' lives, in which purpose of composition is the celebration of chastity.[104] Aldhelm's work is distinctive in many ways, not least for the amount of leveling that occurs. Saints are combined with Old Testament patriarchs, and saints' legends are reduced to the "facts" of their narratives that fit most closely with Aldhelm's celebration of "chaste soldiers."[105] The leveling of detail and difference that occurs is understandable, given that Aldhelm produces an encyclopedic work that describes saints, patriarchs, and the battle between virtue and vice. Antony is no exception in the compendious work. The Athanasian biography is a work of considerable length commensurate with a narrative that describes the life of a saint who supposedly lives for one hundred and five years, the Aldhelm's work condenses the events of Antony's life into something that resembles a slogan. Beginning with Aldhelm's introduction that Egypt has "produced illustrious fathers," and that Antony—one of the most famous—"warned those meriting the Kingdom of Heaven to spurn pleasures and forsake the riches of the world, to follow the steep way and beware the sloping," the handful of lines on Antony ultimately point readers to find details of Antony's life in Athanasius' biography, "the little book in which his [Antony's] abundant virtues are written."[106] While Aldhelm elides any real difference among male saints and patriarchs in his celebration of "chaste soldiers," his invocation of the Athanasian biography aligns him with a tradition that is visible in Augustine's *Confessions*. Referring back to the Athanasian biography gives Aldhelm a status in writing not only about Antony, but all the saints. Jerome, Augustine, and Aldhelm share a tendency to employ Antony for their own ends, adopting Antony for their own personal aims in times of radical change and

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[104] For a substantial background of Aldhelm see Michael W. Herren, "Aldhelm the Theologian," *Latin Learning and English Lore*, eds. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard, (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2005): 68-89. Cf. Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), especially pgs. 2-5.

[105] Aldhelm. *Carmen de Virginitate*. Rpt. in *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*. Trans. Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985). 102.

conversion to populations that are largely non- or newly Christianized.[107] Aldhelm's *De Virginitate* shares a degree of indeterminacy with the original Athanasian text in terms of pagans. Although *De Virginitate* is addressed to a Christian population, what are striking are the numerous references to "Olympus" and "Jupiter," as if he were addressing a classical Roman audience.[108] The effect is jarring. Is one to believe that equating Jupiter and Olympus with God and Mt. Sinai was innocuous? What is more believable is that Aldhelm's nomenclature of saints among pagan references equated more than just names, that in fact paganism became indistinguishable from the Christianity replacing it.

It is clear is that Antony's deployment is never for a singular purpose, but his continued use functions as a realization of God's promise to give him fame throughout the world. Antony endures a multiplicity of strategies, readings, and utilizations that at once reduce knowledge of the original Athanasian biography and increase a more cursory, yet more permanent, acquaintance with the *Life of Antony.* This is fitting, given that the Athanasian biography

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[106] Aldhelm, 119-120.

[107] See Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1956), especially Chapter III, pgs. 116-124 for a discussion of Anglo-Saxon pagan practices and efforts at conversion by Christians. Cf. Orchard, 1.

[108] Orchard, 6. Orchard presents the orthodox view of the audience for *De Virginitate*, stating that the opus geminatum (the metrical work has a "twin" prose version that is longer) was "addressed to Abbess Hildelith and others of her nuns at a monastery at Barking in Essex." For a different interpretation of the evidence, see Emma Pettit, "Aldhelm's *De virginitate*." *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*. eds. P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004), 10: "Indeed, it has been long assumed that the double treatise was intended specifically for Abbess Hildelith and the nuns of Barking Abbey in Essex, but Scott Gwara has recently made a persuasive case for Aldhelm's intended audience in fact being a whole "constellation" of double monasteries in Wessex."

simultaneous helps to create generic conventions that it and its later reflections will ignore, thus offering an opportunity for later texts to adopt or dismiss generic elements at will and creating a lasting influence upon clerical and secular literary output. The next chapter discusses the change found in a translation of the *Life of Antony* and how later authors deal with an Antony still on the periphery of culture, yet still important as ever.

CHAPTER 3

INVENTING ANTONY

> In all controversies between monks, as for example when the Cluniacs are in
> opposition to the Cistercians, each party appeals to St. Anthony and does so legitimately
> because what is remembered of his discourses is not the attacks against the Arians which were
> borrowed from him by St. Athanasius. What is recalled of his life, is neither its historical
> circumstances nor the details of his temptations and the diabolic imagery with which the
> biographer has adorned it; it is rather the spiritual themes and instructions which are valid for all
> monks, regardless of the observance under which they lived. St. Anthony represents for all, an
> ideal whose essential characteristic is its potential for realization in different ways. St. Anthony's
> life, then, for the medieval monks, is not simply an historical text, a source of information about
> a definitely dead past. It is a living text, a means of formation of monastic life.
> Jean LeClercq, *The Love of Learning and Desire for God*[109]

> The past is never dead. It's not even past.
> William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*[110]

Although LeClercq and Faulkner were discussing radically different subjects—the

longevity of St. Antony's legend and the tortured history of Temple Drake presented in

Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for A Nun*—their comments about the use of the past, and

its effect upon the present and future clearly, apply to the continued textual presence of St.

Antony. For LeClercq and Faulkner, the past functions as a palpable presence, both deployed

and transformed by a later society for many discrete purposes. LeClercq refers to St. Antony,

and to the factions that would, over the centuries, adopt his name and mantle in their own

internecine warfare, whereas Faulkner's quote, although not about St. Antony, has been utilized

as the saint was—this line, bereft of its context, has been seen as a commentary on the defeat

and shame of the South, or the resilience of a defeated culture, or the continued war over the

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[109] LeClercq, 125.

importance and implications of a watershed societal event.[111] The strongest connection between the quotations, however, concerns origins: tortured, incomplete, or non-normative beginnings that may blunt the power of a text or its subject in a narrowly defined way, but also transmit power and longevity.

In the same way, Antony's eternal life stems not from his faithfulness to a formulaic genre, but from his deviations, creating a textual practice that is absolutely invested in choice, change, and invention. Further examination of the ownership and exploitation of Antony's textual heritage and its mutability together with a turn to the vernacular Antony demonstrates how influential Antony remains by the end of the fifteenth century, enduring the processes of translation and development. This assessment of Antony's legendary tradition focuses on a later, Middle English version known as *Vita Antonius* and illustrates how *Antonius* attempts to reconcile expectations of general hagiographic and Athanasian conventions concerning saintly bodies and written texts. The element of the non-normative is key, for the ability to rewrite, reuse, and refashion is only possible due to the alterity of the Antony's origins in Athanasius' *Life of Antony*.[112]

Antony's touch and influence, however, is not relegated to strictly hagiographic texts, as his presence in the works of Dante and Chaucer illustrate. Dante, writing in the 13th century, finds the image of Antony still powerful, though exceedingly negative, as a result of the material practices of his followers. Antony appears in canto 29 of *Paradiso* in which Dante describes the way monks "preach with jests and buffooneries."[113] Critiquing both the gullibility of the people and the corruption of the monks who prey upon their simplicity, Dante writes, "On this the pig of

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[110] William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (NYC: Random House, 1951), 92.
[111] John B Padgett, "*Requiem for a Nun*: Resources." *William Faulkner on the Web*.
http://www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/faulkner/r_n_rfan.html
[112] For purposes of simplicity and clarification, *Antonius* refers to the Middle English prose legend and, likewise, *Life* does the same for Athanasius' *Life of Antony*.
[113] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*. trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1975) 29.115-117.

St. Antony fattens, and others also, who are far more pigs."[114] Dante invokes the pig of St. Antony, recalling his position as patron saint of swineherd, and also referencing the greed and sloth of pigs and Antony's followers. More a century later and thousands of miles away, Chaucer uses Antony, though in a decidedly more balanced matter. While the Pardoner possibly represents a negative view of Antony, the only direct, enumerated reference to Antony occurs in the *Parson's Tale* in which the Parson mentions St. Antony's fire—ergotism—a disease his monks were famous for healing.[115] In the *Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale*, scholars have suggested that Antony is a possible source for the old man and the greed of the three rioters, along with the Pardoner himself. Most damning, though, is the Pardoner's use of false relics, an anxiety surely on the mind of anyone familiar with the legend of Antony, a desert hermit who expressly forbids funeral rites and veneration, facts that cast doubts on the provenance of hidden relics from the desert. Antony's embodiment as participant in the spiritual economy of relics, with its attendant anxieties of veracity indicates that that position was expected, and the negative valences of that participation show the limits of Antony's inclusion into a canon of saints with more reliable relics and more predictable textual sources.

The lack of a physical body allows for the creation of a textual corpus that outlasts any relic from 4th century Egypt. Antony's continuing invocation suggests a deep well of meaning—negative and positive—that high- and late-medieval authors drew upon for their own purposes and aim. In light of this prolonged vacillation of meaning, Antony's appearance in late medieval vernacular writing warrants study, for not all of the special dead actually survive the millennium between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the beginning rumblings of the

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[114] Dante, 29.124-125.

[115] Moreover, Antony shares a connection with the Pardoner himself, as both clearly grapple with greed; once again, the metaphor of the pig is fitting here. The structure of the tale—the three rioters who find gold and death—follows the basic contours of Antonia Pulci's convent drama *The Play of St. Anthony Abbot* and the very similar Florentine guild drama, as all three versions involve silver and gold, a clear tie with the Athanasian biography. For a discussion of ergotism see Carol Hart, "Forged in St. Anthony's Fire: Drugs for Migraines," *Modern Drug Discovery* 2:2 (1999): 20-21, 23-24, 28, 31.

Reformation.[116] Especially difficult to understand is though he lives on through the nineteenth century, the evidence of a vernacular Antony in the Middle Ages is scant, illuminating another paradox of Antony's textual history: though his reach was enormous, and his legend popular, few materials are extant from the Middle Ages that feature Antony, and certainly, English (Old, Middle) is not the language of all.[117]

One available text is the aforementioned *Vita Antonius*, an anonymously written prose legend dating from around the mid-fifteenth century and found in British Library, *Royal* 17.C.XVII.[118] Several characteristics of this text are appealing and make it suitable for this investigation. While the manuscript text is plain and lacks the ornate decorations of an illuminated manuscript, the leaves are remarkably clear and well preserved, although short. Understandably, though, several leaves exhibit evidence of water damage, but, overall, the text reads very well. While its subject was certainly famous, the manuscript itself is not, and has received little scholarly attention, with the exception of a small corpus of philological and interpretative work carried out by the preeminent German philologist and scholar Carl Horstmann. Thus, the other advantage to the manuscript is that no critical edition of it exists in English, most likely as a result of its plain style and lack of a definite author. While modern critical studies have ignored the Middle English life, a number of reasons exist for further interpretation.

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[116] Proof of an ever-changing classification of the special dead can be found in the *Life of Martin* in which Martin discovers that a saint is a convict, and therefore, is unworthy of veneration. See Severus, 145: "Then, standing on the tomb itself, he prayed to the Lord to reveal who was buried there and what his special merit was. Then he turned toward to the left and saw an ugly and ferocious-looking shade standing near by. He ordered him to tell them his name and his special merit. He gave his name and confessed his crime: he had been a robber, executed for his crimes and mistakenly venerated by the people. He said that he had nothing in common with the martyrs since they were remembered for their glory, while he was remembered for his punishment."

[117] Though this list is not exhaustive, one would include here Domenico Cavalca's *Le Vite dei Santi Padri*, a Florentine guild drama that dates to the mid fifteenth-century, Antonia Pulci's fifteenth century Florentine convent drama, William Caxton's English translation of Jacobus de Voraigne's *Golden Legend*, and the fifteenth-century prose legend in *Royal* MS 17.C.XVII

[118] I point readers to John Scahill, *Middle English Saints' Legends,* vol. 8, *Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005) for a comprehensive listing of primary and secondary sources involving the Middle English versions of the saints.

In view of *Antonius*' late date (ca. 1450), Antony's viability as a locus of cultural and religious capital seems unquestionable. Coupled, however, with the nonconformity of Antony's legend, his lasting use becomes difficult to understand. Fractured and odd origins, and, by extension, the freedom to rewrite and remake his legend certainly account for his continuing presence in England and on the continent throughout the Middle Ages, but a more personal and regional answer may explain *Antonius*, the text in question. Examining *Antonius* in greater detail, in terms of its dialect, demonstrates a possible reason for its composition, because, in fact, while at least seven versions of the Latin life of Antony survive, only three versions of Antony are extant in Middle English.[119] Occurring years after a standard form of Middle English begins to take root, *Antonius*, as Wells observes in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1400*, is composed in the West Midlands dialect, the same used for *Ancrene Wisse*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *The Pearl*.[120] What is striking about the use of this dialect, in terms of Antony, is that the West Midlands dialect area included at least part of Mercia, and that Antony's legend shares so much in common with Saint Guthlac of Mercia.[121] Therefore, unsurprisingly, Antony might have remained somewhat of a touchstone for a literate, Mercian population whose hagiographic tradition, at least in part, was beholden to the Egyptian anchorite. Referencing the relationship between Antony and Guthlac provides an excellent beginning for the examination of English Antony and his multifaceted legend, illustrating how an English writer might utilize an Egyptian desert saint in a watery, but no less inhospitable, setting. As with *Antonius*, *Vita Guthlaci* takes the basic form of Athanasius' legend and rehearses and

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[119] John Edwin Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1400* (New Haven, CT: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1916), 308. Wells notes, "ANTONIUS [33] is dealt with in prose of the West Midland, in MS Royal 17 C XVII f. 124 v (15th century), in 1438 English *Golden Legend*, and in Caxton's *Golden Legend*." The British Library has in its manuscript collection seven Latin *vitae* and at least one Greek version.

[120] Fernand Mossé, *Handbook of Middle English*, trans. James A. Walker, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1952), 4. Cf. Wells, 308.

[121] Mossé observes that the greatest "innovation" between the dialectal maps of OE and ME is that for ME, Mercia is the site of both East and West Midland dialects. For a discussion of Antony's influence over Guthlac, see O'Brien O'Keefe, "Guthlac's Crossings," 1-26, especially pg.8; full citation is found in chapter one.

retells those parts that fit for the English audience, refashioning an ending that is more consistent with the role of relic culture and veneration of the saint: Guthlac does not want his body hidden, nor does he disdain veneration.[122]

Comparison of the Guthlac text and its Egyptian predecessor, Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, offers an opportunity to see how Antony's example is used in service of another sacred biography, yet how that same paradigm is altered to reflect the conditions and needs of the historical period in which the text is composed. The benefits of investigating *Antonius*—the Middle English life that occurs after the Athanasian text and the separate Guthlaci tradition—are similar, because *Antonius* at once follows the Athanasian model and diverges from it, adding an *inventio*, the discovery of a saint's body and/or miraculous power. The reasons behind this shift cannot be known for certain, but possibilities exist, as is demonstrated by Guthlac's example— merging Antony's powerful, yet iconoclastic exemplum with the more traditional contours of *inventio*. Thus, one can see that the inexorable march toward consolidation of the cult of the saints most likely produced an ever-expanding collection of relics and the need for textual verification of them, prompting the change in the middle-aged Antony.

In terms of this textual refashion, what should be made clear is the role of historical events. Much could be written about the similarities between the historical periods in which writers employ Antony's legend and, although much has changed about the historical period that this chapter investigates, as opposed to that of chapter one, certain tensions and anxieties in fifteenth-century England resonate with those of Late Antiquity. While late medieval England and Athanasius's Egypt seem far distant—culturally, linguistically and geographically--the existence of an intransigent heresy in the form of Lollardy, and a political entity wracked by the

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[122] Felix, *Life of Guthlac*. Ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 155: "'My son, since the time now draws near, listen to my last commands. After my spirit has left this poor body, go to my sister Pega and tell her that I have in this life avoided her presence so that in eternity we may see one another in the presence of Our Father amid everlasting joys. Tell her also to place my body in the coffin and wrap it in the cloth which Ecgburg sent me. While I was alive I was unwilling to cover my body with any linen vestment, but out of affection for the virgin beloved of Christ who sent me this gift I have taken care to keep it to wrap my body in."

49

tumult of war testify to the ways in which Egypt and England shared more than just texts about Antony.[123] The dramatic political and social upheaval that characterizes the years 1399-1500—the so-called Late Medieval period—mirrors, in some ways, the convulsions of the early Christian world. Indeed, as early as the fourteenth century, England experiences a period of great social and economic mobility, a fact recorded by Chaucer through the number of characters, and their respective occupations, in the *General Prologue* of *The Canterbury Tales*.[124] But this phenomenon of transformation was not only in the realm of economics. As John Aberth writes in *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages*, England, and the rest of Europe were "confronted with a series of epic disasters" which included famine after years of unproductive growing seasons, the plague, and a Hundred Years' War between England and France followed by the War of the Roses, a civil war in England that lasted almost ten years.[125]

The need exists, however, to balance this tumultuous view of the vaunted century of change with the possibility that events in London were just that—in London and surrounding environs. What is unknown at this time is whether *Antonius* was composed in Mercia, farther from the center of upheaval, or whether the scribe made a conscious choice to write in a dialect, writing from some other locale in England. However, the implication, in the context of enormous social change, that the genre of saints becomes more fossilized and less open to change over time is tempting. One can understand that in the midst of radical change, the saints no doubt provided comfort and succor to a population, shocked with the horror of war, hunger, and death,

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[123] The involvement of Lollardy is important, because, as Nicholas Watson has observed in "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409." *Speculum* 70:4 (1995): 822-864, but especially 823-826. See 826 where Watson makes the point that, in order to stamp out the heresy of Lollardy, the prohibitions and rules enacted against the vernacular theology of the Lollards—religious writings written in the vulgar tongues—affected "texts and writers not aligned with Lollard views." The connection with late-antique Egypt is that Athanasius favored the simple, illiterate Christianity and its forceful proponent Antony in order to defeat the Arians.

[124] Paul Strohm. *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989), pgs. 144-145.

[125] John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2 and 6.

for one cannot underestimate the extent of the influence of the cult of the saints in medieval England.[126] And this influence could only increase with the development of the printing press, the first printed English Bible, and William Caxton's English translation of Jacobus de Voraigne's *Legenda Aurea*, an extremely well-known collection of saints' legends.

While the *Vita Antonius* predates Caxton and his press, it is composed in the thick of these late medieval transformations and benefits from the some of the same factors that make Caxton so successful—such as the development of vernacular literacy earlier and far more comprehensively than other countries.[127] Indeed, the examination of vernacular works is a possible strategy only because literate culture in England, although controlled more centrally by the clergy, was far more widespread, prompting Andrew Galloway to argue that, as early as the beginning of the fifteenth century, "at least half of the merchants in London" could be considered literate, a fact that is promising in its implications for literacy.[128] Literate merchants and a surprisingly robust vernacular culture does not guarantee knowledge of an audience for a text, which can only clearly be identified with evidence of literary patrons, records of performances or references in other works, and number of copies of a manuscript.

These problems are illustrated in the discussion of the *Vita Antonius*, a modest work, consisting of approximately one thousand lines, and separated into three sections, with the first section narrating the basic facts of Antony's early life, the second describing the *inventio* of Antony's body, and a third much shorter section recounting his *translatio*. Beginning with a preamble of five lines, *Antonius* not only announces the discovery of Antony's body, but attributes the original provenance of Antony's text—at least the Latin translation, and, even in this, incorrectly—to Saint Jerome. The next twenty or so lines mirror the beginning of

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[126] Sarah Salih. "Introduction: Saints, Cults, and Lives in Late Medieval England." *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*. Ed. Sarah Salih (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), 1. The beginning summarizes the influence of the saints well: "The saints were at once the superheroes and celebrities of medieval England. They pervaded the landscape: their names, images, and narratives were attached to buildings, geographical features, parishes, guilds and towns. Saint-cult was multimedia and interactive."
[127] Andrew Galloway, *Medieval Literature and Culture*, (London: Continuum, 2006), 36.
[128] Ibid., 36-37.

Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, in which the author describes Antony as a child of "nobulle 7 religyous fader 7 moder" who often went to church and avoided the games of the other children.[129] While Athanasius is not mentioned until the *translatio*, what is clear from *Antonius* and its heavy borrowing from Athanasius is that the author of *Antonius* knew Athanasius' text in some form. The author maintains not only the bulk of events from Antony's early life and monastic journey, but also the order of the events. After explaining Antony's childhood, the author then describes, in quick succession, the small black boy/demon (Athanasius, chapter 6), Antony's first grievous injuries (chapter 8), the catalog of beasts who attack Antony (chapter 9), God's promise of fame to Antony (chapter 10), Antony's proposed co-habitation with the old hermit (chapter 11), the temptation of silver and gold (chapter 12), Antony's deserted fort (chapter 12), and the appearance of Antony's supernaturally beautiful and young body (chapter 14).

At the end of this sequence, however, the parallels with Athanasius end, as the Middle English author begins laying the foundation for the *inventio*. Curiously enough, here the author inserts—almost verbatim—the original beginning of *Antonius*, only adding words describing the date, and the word "cyte," and segues into a description of Emperor Constantine's prayers to God for a "sone" and God's fufillment of those prayers with a "dogter."[130] Sadly, and perhaps predictably, tragedy strikes at the heart of the royal family when, at the age of "ten ʒere" and "so wele lerned," Constantine's daughter Sophie is possessed by demons in an orchard.[131] Unable to help her, Constantine locks his daughter in an iron cage, out of fear for her own safety, and that of his court. God then forces the demons within her body to shout that only Antony, great hermit of Egypt, can exorcise them, and Bishop Teophile—knowing Antony's body is lost—journeys to find it.

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[129] *V.S. Antonius. Royal* MS 17.c.xvii. Although I have studied the manuscript in the "flesh," I cite from exclusively from Carl Horstmann's "Prosalegenden: V.S. Antonius (vitas, inventio, translatio). Aus ms. Reg. 17 C XVII, fol 124b," printed in *Anglia:Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* (1881): 109-138, and will do so through page number of the journal.

[130] Horstmann, 122.

Teophile travels to Jerusalem, Alexandria, the Egyptian desert, and Constantinople as *Antonius* then moves into the *translatio*—the liturgy accompanying the saint's found body to a specifically prepared tomb or church for veneration. After the body of Antony is found, returned to Constantinople, and used to heal Sophie, Jacelyn, a noble staying with the emperor and very dear to him, after deciding to leave court, is offered any treasure he desires, and chooses the body of Antony. The emperor relents and allows the precious body of Antony to leave, and for some time the body travels with Jacelyn and his descendents wherever they go, including into the heat of battle. The pope orders the body of Antony to be taken to "sum abbay of monkes dredyng god," where it will be safely kept away from "armed men in batayle."[132] "Gwido," one of Jacelyn's descendents, at first defies the pope, but then acquiesces to his demands, giving Antony's body to "þe monkys of Mownt Maiour" along with lands and tithes in perpetuity. Antony's relics were supposedly kept at Saint-Antoine-l'Abbaye in southeastern France, beginning in the 12th or 13th centuries, and this *translatio* perhaps is meant to explain the movement of Antony's body from the Thebaide in Egypt, to Constantinople, and then to France. What is worth noting is that no record exists of any relics surviving in the Athanasian biography, besides the text as relic. In short, both the *inventio* and *translatio* represent radical additions to a textual tradition that is—arguably—known to the *Antonius'* author, and the merging of respect for and repetition of the Athanasian source with a certain poetic and theological freedom in *Antonius* marks it as a text that simultaneous follows and defies genre.

What is clear from the use of the Athanasian material in *Antonius* is that the role of the past and its shaping of the future is integral in the formation of the Middle English life. Of course, in relation to the Athanasian biography and to Antony as a literary phenomenon, the pull of the past, and its continual reinvention in the present could be articulated as genre. It was a concern for chapter one, but only in an ancillary or incidental fashion, because the range of texts discussed there—though large—consisted of the Athanasian biography that directly

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[131] Ibid., 123.

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portrayed Antony, and then a group of texts that only considered Antony in part. Though the juxtaposition of the *Life* and *Antonius* offers the chance to write about medieval genre and its effect on the composition and reception of *Antonius*, that investigation, in fact, assumes certain tenets about medieval literary culture and uncovers areas in which the study of generic conventions is impractical and inapplicable.

Genre cannot be used without qualification to classify and study medieval texts. Hans Robert Jauss, writing in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, observes, "the structural characteristics of the literary forms—from which the history and theory would begin—themselves first have to be worked out from texts that are, chronological, highly diffuse."[133] The varied production of medieval vernacular literature over such a prolonged period of time renders a taxonomic system that is developed from a tightly controlled sampling of classical literary models useless.[134] Instead, the study of expectations and reception offer a model, which in its possibilities for multiplicity and universality, can be used to understand and critique every work of art historically.[135] Christening this phenomenon the "horizon of the expectable," Jauss notes that it constitutes the optimal way of aligning the past experience of the reader with the current work. Rather than accept as universal a genre that is based, more often than not, on the aspects of texts that are exceptional and foundational, Jauss would have the medieval critic assume a historicist attitude toward what happens with texts, not a fossilized idea of classical genre that is then expanded ever exponentially. Antony's textual tradition, in particular, benefits from a critical strategy that is phenomenologically centered, owing to its own non-normative beginnings and inability to follow the genre it creates. Further, the later incarnations of this tradition, such as the Middle English version, offer ample opportunities to examine the "horizon of the expectable" in terms of both Athanasian conventions and more general hagiographic paradigms, clearly with the expectation that they will not agree.

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[132] Horstmann, 137.
[133] Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1982), 77.
[134] Ibid., 76-77.

To find the differences in the "horizon of the expectable" for the Athanasian and larger hagiographic traditions, one would need look no further than the treatment of Antony's body in *Antonius* and the *Life*. Indeed, to anyone versed in the original *Life of Antony*, the added *inventio* and *translatio* mark *Antonius* as a text that is a translation in both senses of the word. Certainly, translation can mean the movement from one language to another, as it does with the change from Greek to Latin to Middle English in the case of Athanasius, Evagrius, and the anonymous author of *Antonius*, but translation also has a meaning that is more specialized and refers specifically to the cult of the saints. In his study of St. Swiðun, Michael Lapidge writes that a translation, in this hagiographic sense, consisted of the

> discovery (*inventio*) of the saint's location and miraculous power; the formal liturgical ceremony of translation (*translatio*); the provision of a reliquary to serve as a focal point for the cult; the reconstruction of the church in which the reliquary was housed, in order to allow increased public access to the shrine; publicity for the shrine; and provision of the various prayers for mass and Office needed for liturgical commemoration of the saint.[136]

The narrative arc of *Antonius* indicates that the author knew this paradigm, and in describing the narrative action of *Antonius*, I will argue that the author simultaneously translates the Athanasian life, but also the body of Antony. In short, *Antonius* benefits from a sense of translation that is both linguistic and textual, and also corporeal. *Antonius* and its reinvention and retelling of a seminal saintly text is only possible because the original, foundational text— Athanasius' *Life of Antony*—creates a paradigm that is, in retrospect, non-normative; of course, as one of the earliest texts, one cannot hazard that normativity was in any sense fixed at the time of Athanasius's writing.[137] By 1450, however diffuse the hagiographic tradition, the stock

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[135] Jauss, 79.
[136] Michael Lapidge, *The Cult of St. Swithun* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 2003), 8.
[137] The case of St. Stephen, the protomartyr, does prove that the model of *inventio* and *translatio* was available and widespread by this time. See Lapidge, 13-15 for a discussion of the necessity of divine revelation in the act of finding relics—the *inventio*—and the beginning of that paradigm in Lucian's

formulation of *Antonius* seems to have been the rule, rather than the exception, prompting what is non-normative in light of the Athanasian tradition to appear normative in the view of a larger and later context.[138]

The disdain for veneration that Antony clung to in his final hours was, even in the Athanasian source, a locus of contradiction and confusion, considering that God's promise to make Antony famous was given very early on, and was used to buttress his resolve in battling demons, pagans, and Arians. It is worth recalling that the relics were the primary manner in which fame was given and maintained, pointing to the existence of the Athanasian text as a relic of a sort, inasmuch as the *Life* extends the life of Antony through later, more normative sources.[139] The same energy and impulse to continue the fame of the textual relic leads to a reinscribing of Antony's found body in *Antonius* along the lines of an *inventio* and *translatio* tradition that is well established during the mid fifteenth century, with the *inventio* in *Antonius* attempting to maintain the Athanasian background and join with it the discovery of a saint, the overriding characteristic of late-medieval hagiography. According to E. Gordon Whatley, in his introduction to the *inventio* of the True Cross and the legend of St. Helena, as early as the fifth century these *inventii*

> exhibit an array of shared narrative motifs, including visions or other divine
>
> promptings initiating the search for long-buried relics; episodes of obstruction,

inventio of St. Stephen. Cf. also "Constantine the Great, the Empress Helena, and the Relics of the True Cross," ed. E. Gordon Whatley for another possible source and transmission of *inventio*, printed in *Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Thomas Head, (New York: Routledge, 2001): 77-95. In his introduction, Whatley notes, "Early examples of the *inventio* genre survive from shortly before and after the turn of the fifth century and provide vivid evidence of the increasing commitment of the Christian hierarchy to relic cults. The *inventio* texts, which appear both as separate compositions and also as episodes embedded in larger literary contexts such as histories, sermons, and letters, exhibit an array of shared narrative motifs, including visions or other divine promptings initiating the search for long-buried relics; episodes of obstruction, delay, and resistance; inscriptions and documents; prayers and miracles (including expulsion of demons) that facilitate the discovery, or help authenticate the relics; and the enshrinement and/or distribution of the precious remains."

[138] Heffernan, 15: "Indeed one of the paradoxes of the genre is that out of such diversity the tradition has wrought what for some is such a stifling sameness."

[139] Galt Harpham, 5: "The value in the text lies in its capacity to replace and extend the life of Anthony; the poetic function even enables the text to be superior as a 'picture of ascetic practice.'"

delay, and resistance; inscriptions and documents; prayers and miracles (including expulsion of demons) that facilitate the discovery, or help authenticate the relics; and the enshrinement and/or distribution of the precious remains.

When one examines the story of Antony's *inventio*, the common elements described by Whatley—"obstruction," "inscriptions and documents;" "prayers;" "miracles;" and, often, "explusions of demons;" and the "enshrinement" of relics—are all present. The *inventio* in *Antonius* shares these general characteristics, but employs them in a manner that is not completely orthodox, pointing, in fact, to a textual freedom bequeathed by a non-normative textual tradition.

Athanasius apparently noticed the schism early between his view of the saints and martyrs and a more bodily-centered incarnation of the cult of the saints, and the latter was something of which he could not approve. However, he did not win the argument, for when saints' bodies are discussed, they are truly bodies that matter. In fact, according to David Brakke, "Without a body there can be no cult of Antony, no centre of holy power apart from the parish altars, no access to Antony apart from this biography," and, as effective as the Athanasian biography was for Antony's longevity, the presence of a rewritten ending, along with "found" relics, communicates ultimately the need for a body.[140] In *Antonius*, the *inventio*—this finding of a body—begins with a possession of Constantine's daughter by demons who are forced by God to invoke Antony's name and miraculous powers: "Bot god, þat wold not his maydyn be parysched bot sawed, made þe deuels wyt-in hyre body to cry wyt grete woyce be þe mowthe of þe maydyn" and they cry that Antony can expel them.[141] Here, one can see clearly that divine agency given through the satanic is prompting the search for the lost body, and further, through the voice of these demons, is indicating that a miracle is coming. These

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[140] Brakke, *Politics*, 246: "Later in his career, Athanasius vigoriously condemned cults that grew up around the bodies of martyrs, especially those which had been removed from 'the cemeteries of the Catholic Church."

ventriloquized demons prove how many connections exist between the Athanasian and Middle English texts in terms of agency and imitation. Lack of agency in the Athanasian text was indicated by the self-conscious narration of Antony's miracles as God's efforts through Antony, but the absence of active intervention by anyone but God in *Antonius* occurs in the forced confession of the demons.[142]

Constantine and his court believe the demons, unsurprisingly when one remembers that the imitative abilities of the Devil and his minions are substantial and convincing. In the *Life*, Antony instructs his fellow monks to maintain vigilance, because demons "assume shapes familiar to us so that they may harm us through their resemblance to virtue."[143] Sophie's demons are unmistakably evil, yet they perform a function—advising the Christians how to rid the court and the daughter of demons—that is patently inimical to Antony's explanation of their imitative powers. Even though *Antonius* reforms the demons, they are still forced to imitate servants of God, fusing Athanasian views of agency and imitation, and offering a reimagining of demons. Moreover, this emphasis on demons reinforces the central role of the Athanasian biography, even as it morphs into a more acceptable form. LeClercq has written that Antony's "spiritual themes and instructions" constitute his cultural, literary, and religious patrimony as St. Antony ages, and the temporal distance between Late Antiquity and the following centuries grows, but this episode in *Antonius* betrays a recognition of the role of Antony in demonic warfare, a clear nod to the Athanasian text and its "diabolical imagery."[144]

Dependent as it is on diabolical imagery, *Antonius* also presents an *inventio* that features divine assistance in a more traditional, angelic form. After much arduous praying and fasting, Bishop Teophile and Constantine are greeted in a vision by archangel Gabriel, who has "commen to telle þe how þu sall fynd þe body of saynt Antony 7 bryng it to Byȝance, to þe hele

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[141] Horstmann, 123.
[142] Antony does appear at one point on the journey through Egypt—the image is short and the identification of Antony given by the narrator. While he does appear, Antony's presence in this instance is no more than a cipher.
[143] Athanasius, 25.

58

of þi dogter."[145] The author, in a momentary rupture of the narration, explains Gabriel's appearance, writing that God can no longer accept the concealment of Antony's body. Besides adhering to the generic conventions described by Whatley, the vision of Gabriel and God's sentiments concerning Antony's body point to the existence of another connection between *Antonius* and the *Life*: Antony's refusal to accept post-mortem veneration that is immortalized in the ending of Athanasius' text. The use of a vision to find or *explain* the existence/discovery of relics was not unusual, as evidenced by its inclusion in Whatley's catalogue of common *inventio* elements; relics were collected furtively by early Christians and often hidden, damaged, or unavailable.[146] This presence of an urge toward discovery, equally matched by a general resistance or obstruction, is only unusual in *Antonius* because the resistance originates from the saint himself—he is the resistance. Plotting this triangulation of effort—demons, angels, and Antony—visually would have the effect of placing Antony and his wishes in opposition to the *combined* efforts of angels and demons. One cannot argue that Antony is somehow not holy or pure in the estimation of the author, only that Antony's Athanasian words about problematize the retelling of his legend in a genre that is fully formed and, in some ways, diametrically opposed to the original materials.

Part of this fully-formed *inventio* tradition, evidenced anecdotally by the sheer number of translations and Michael Lapidge's study of St. Swiðun, is the presence of a *translatio*, the liturgical translation of the saint's body. Examining the blending of the original Athanasian tradition and the widespread, yet radically different, characteristics of a more general hagiographic tradition, one would be remiss in neglecting the *translatio* of Antony's body after Teophile returns it to Constantinople. After a perilous journey through Alexandria and Jerusalem in which countless sufferers of demons and disease find relief in the body of St. Antony, Constantine places Antony's body in a

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[144] LeClercq, 125.
[145] Horstmann, 124.
[146] Lapidge, 9.

> precyus tumbe, of Iwery 7 gold 7 precyus stons wnddyrly made: in-to þe wylke
>
> þis holy body wyt grete solempnyte þai putte in; and locked it vnder XII lokkes,
>
> 7 put obowne a titule wretyn wyt letteris of greu 7 ebru: 'Here þe body of Antony
>
> confessor 7 hermete lyes 7 restes, fro dyshert of Egypt translatyd of Teophile
>
> þe byschop.[147]

Considering our corporeal purposes, the ornate tomb for a supposedly lost body intrigues. While the presence of the Greek and Hebrew inscription—written words commemorating an avowed illiterate—is, by itself, an element of this *translatio* that is wildly incongruent with the Athanasian tradition, what is familiar is the presence of silver and gold, pointing to the temptations of gold and silver plates, which for Antony comprised the greatest temptation in the *Life*, a fact communicated by Antony's reaction: he runs from the gold as if from a fire, a metaphor that fixes concretely in the reader's mind the danger of and draw to money and treasure.[148] Yet the author retains the simplicity of Antony, in the proclamation that he was a great hermit, along with the markers of wealth and power in the fashioning of a grand tomb.

Antony's final resting place is near Vienne, France, and not Constantinople, so one can be sure that the *translatio* continues, as the narrative jumps forward in time to the Crusades and the story of "Erylle Gwillem" and his son "Jacelyn." Jacelyn was a beloved of the later emperor who, after staying at the court at Constantinople, was offered treasure of his liking and, of course, chose the body of Antony, which was given reluctantly.[149] Antony's body is handed down through the generations, until the pope decides, hearing it has been taken into battle, that the body must be given to a monastery.[150] "Gwido," the descendent in possession of the body at the time, does as he is ordered, once again reluctantly, and funds a new church with monies

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[147] Horstmann, 135.
[148] Athanasius, 17. Cf. Brakke, *Politics*, 213 for a discussion of the hierarchy of Antony's temptations and his belief that the economic was the most obdurate.
[149] Horstmann, 136.
[150] Ibid., 136-137.

and tithes given in perpetuity.[151] Although the origins of this *translatio* are historically untraceable, it is clear that events in a material world affected the textual version of those events, illuminating the reciprocal relationship between audience and text.[152] The most likely scenario would seem to be that "relics" from an age in which relics are impossible to authenticate needed a form of textual proof.

This need to authenticate the relics is not mere conjecture, as the author of *Antonius* actually verbalizes the anxieties about the relics that his text is meant to combat. At the beginning of the second, and more substantial *translatio*, the author remarks that

> To summe it semys in-possybulle þat a body, in so fer a cuntre beryed 7 in so
> perlyus a place, 7 only not knawen bot to two persons 7 to all oþer men
> vnknawne, 7 after-warde takyn vp 7 to þis cuntre of Vienense wyt many 7
> vnhard merueles broght. Bot þis sal not be trowed in-possybulle, for oure lord
> Jhesu, as in þe texst of þe lyf of þis blyssyd man es rede, þe coflute of duelles
> ourecommen, wysybullk apperyng to hym 7, how swete he was, schewyng,
> emong oþer thyngys he be-hyght hym þat he suld make hys name to be
> knawne be al þe warld.[153]

Here, the author begins with an enumeration of the reasons why this *inventio* and *translatio* seem impossible, and ends appropriately with a reference to God's promise to make Antony famous. Anticipating Brakke's argument that Antony's body was absolutely necessary for the growth of a cult, this defense of the imaginative refashioning of Antony's end points ultimately to the fruition of God's efforts to transmit fame to Antony while also exhibiting a knowledge of Athanasius' original legend, referred to here as "þe texst of þe lyf of þis blyssyd man." More importantly, just before this statement upholding the veracity of Antony's *inventio*, the author

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[151] Horstmann, 137.
[152] Heffernan, 19: "As a result of this secondary interest in a text's art, the major anticipation which unites author and audience is how the text reflects the received tradition, a tradition whose locus is in the community. Such tradition is neither monolithic nor frozen but changes as the community selects and reinterprets anew from within itself."

mentions Athanasius and his text by name, and the need to chronicle the movement of the relics to France.[154] Clearly the author is acknowledging the insufficiency of Antony's textual tradition, but also highlighting the way in which the incompleteness of Antony's legend allows this freedom to invent an *inventio*. Even as the author of *Antonius* is willing to admit the difficulty of belief in this *inventio* and the far-fetched nature of his own tale, he maintains that nothing is impossible for Jesus Christ—a move that simultaneously creates and dispels doubt—and grounds this knowledge ultimately in the promise of fame given to Antony in the Athanasian text.

The *Life of Antony* struggles with the explication of an uneducated Antony, a militant illiterate, and Athanasius' desire for his textual product to have lasting fame. At the end of *Antonius*, through a similar process of alignment of fame, Antony, and emulation, the Middle English author attempts to solve the obdurate tension of text, body, and desire. In the Athanasian source, Antony chose illiteracy, and this fact remains in the later text, even as it creates a story and provenance for Antony's forgotten corporeal remains. Through this rewriting of an end that doesn't exist *Antonius* privileges textuality, or at the very least, recognizes the importance of textuality for late-medieval culture. Antony is still illiterate, but *Antonius* is marked by several important changes that mirror the development of this new textual culture in England.[155] Books, letters, and written language define the story of Antony found in *Antonius* proving that, at least for some texts, the importance of textuality for English culture has increased exponentially by the fifteenth century.[156] *Antonius* uses texts and the new textuality to

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[153] Horstmann, 135-136.

[154] Ibid., 135.

[155] See Brian Stock, *The Implications for Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), 3-11.

[156] Stock, 3. Cf. also *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints,* ed. Rev. Walter W Skeat, M.A., (London: EETS, 2003), originally published in 1890 by the Early English Text Society. In particular consult the *Life of St. Agnes* that begins with a reference to her legend "found (written) in old books;" *Passion of St. Julian and His Wife Basilissa* with its invocation of the book in the chaste marriage bed—"there came to the bed a book from the Saviour" and the failings of pagan books—"Then he [the pagan to whom Basilissa is promised] threw away his book of instruction, and with (full)/ belief ran/ to the holy man;" *Passion of Chrysanthus and His Wife Daria* and its distinction between the books of the pagans and the holy gospels—"'thus long

tease out certain new concepts in Antony's legend, and, while some elements clearly cannot be altered in Antony's life, these intransigent characteristics of illiteracy, closed to any sort of narrative negotiation, survive alongside a radically different understanding of literacy, orality, and textuality.[157]

The first indication that a new textual ethos governs the world of the Middle English text is the emphasis upon different languages such as Greek, Hebrew, and Latin in *Antonius*. Notwithstanding the fact that Athanasius wrote Antony's life in Greek, and Evagrius translated that text into Latin, Athanasius is at pains—as seen in the three episodes (chapters 72-75) of conflict between learned pagans and Antony—to assume not the learned stance of a Greek-writing bishop, but a communicator and adherent of a simple, unlearned Christianity,.[158] On one hand, although the primary text Athanasius' *Life* is invested and written in languages of privilege and learning, both demonstrate a certain self-consciousness in their ultimately self-deprecating use of the culture of those languages. On the other hand, a full flowering of the power and significance of these languages only comes in a later, vernacular version. Direct and indirect use of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew proliferate in *Antonius*, beginning with Constantine's daughter, Sophie.[159] Named after the church St. Sofia where she is christened, Sophie is described as "so wele lerned" at age ten that all men could speak of nothing but her "prudence."[160] The meaning

have I learned faithless books/ filled with darkness;" *Saint Cecilia, Virgin* and the power of a text to convert—"Then the angel raised him, and bade him read/ the golden letters which God had sent to him;" and *St. Swithun, Bishop* and its recognition of the importance of books, especially when the saint's background is missing or incomplete—"neither have we found in books how the bishop lived/ in this world, before he departed to Christ./ Such was their carelessness who knew him in life/ that they would not write down his works and conversation for future generations who knew not his power." Although Ælfric is writing centuries before the rise of a textuality that Stock investigates and the writing of *Antonius*, what is clear is that this process was beginning as early as the late 10th century.

[157] Stock, 7. The following is indicative: "Literacy is not textuality. One can be literate without the use of texts, and one can use texts extensively without evidencing genuine literacy."

[158] Brakke, *Politics,* 213: "The Antony of the letters is manifestly literate and well educated, as many Egyptian monks were. But in his biography Athanasius will present an uneducated Antony whose philosophical brilliance is not due to any training he received, but to his innate knowledge of God preserved through discipline. The Athanasian Antony, obedient to the clergy, puts philosophers to shame not with his learning, but with the victory of Christ over the demonic."

[159] Sophie here is most likely a variant spelling of Sophia or Sofia (σοφία), Gr. For wisdom.

[160] Horstmann, 122-123.

of the church and the daughter would probably not have been lost upon the audience, as both mean wisdom, and, while Sophie is learned and literally the epitome of wisdom, she is ultimately saved by the efforts of a rude and unlearned Christianity in the form of Antony's body. Conflating a learned tradition, in the person of Sophie, and a more simple, direct practice, in the form of Antony's body, this text attempts a reconciliation of the former and latter, in a rather unsurprising way in that the preferred audience is clearly one that, like monks, can reference the highly educated and more simple forms of Christianity.

The idea of a preferred audience is intriguing, pointing as it does to the number of ways in which this text could be deployed. What seems likely is that the invented *inventio* benefits a group of people for whom the relics are unquestionably powerful and efficacious, and the liberal use of authorizing languages and self-conscious explanation of the *translatio* appeal to an audience for whom the paradoxes of Christianity and the cult of the saints were a concern. The proof of the dual audience possibly is found in the use of Latin quotations and their immediate glosses in the Middle English dialect. The first occurs when the author is rehearsing the Athanasian sequence of Antony's sacred biography and Antony faces the demons right before the promise of fame. Calling to the demons, Antony says, "si consistant aduersum me prelia, non timebit cor meum" and the Latin is followed immediately by its gloss, "þat es to say: of ȝe take agayne me batylles, my hart sall not dreden."[161] If the Latin is glossed as soon as it is given, then what is its purpose? One possible explanation is that the Latin, like the entire corpus of Antony—both textual and corporeal—has a range of appeal, a continuum of meaning that offers limitless possibilities and uses, one that might offer a clerical audience a place of privilege in reading/hearing the text or awe the audience with the author's erudition. Either explanation is difficult to fully accept, considering the rejection of such displays of learning in the Athanasian tradition.

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[161] Horstmann., 120.

Complicating the issue further is the fact that the author again writes a Latin phrase that he immediately glosses in the last part of the stock material from Athanasius' text. At the moment that a mob comes to Antony's deserted fort, expecting (almost hoping) to find him dead, Antony sings "Exurgat deus e.c.," which is followed by the Middle English gloss that reads, "'God ryse he vppe, 7 hys enmys be þai disparpyled 7 fle þai fro hys face, alle hys enemys fle þai away as smoke, 7 as wax flees þe fyre, so fle þai fro þe syght of god."[162] The same concerns are valid for the second instance of Latin in the Middle English text as were attendant on the first, but this second occurrence introduces a new anxiety. The Latin is truncated, indicating that, because of the gloss that follows and the memory of the preferred audience, the full citation of the line is not needed; however, the omission of the full line marks this second instance as possibly a feature meant only for the more educated and literate part of the audience. The limits of what can be known about a medieval audience are highlighted in this discussion of Latin lines within English texts, but the important point to note is that the Latin only assumes a role of such importance in texts that are primarily vernacular.

These Latin lines appear only in the section that is directly influenced by the Athanasian source. While the entire text is indebted to the *Life*—the author can only create an *inventio* and *translatio* ex nihilo because Athanasius does not deal with Antony's body after death—the early life of Antony would seem the perfect place to experiment with Latin and other languages of learning, as the original sources are written in Greek and Latin. Yet the reliance on Greek and Hebrew occurs in the sections that are, strictly speaking, vernacular in character. One reads about Greek and Hebrew in descriptions of the first two tombs of Antony.[163] *Antonius* mentions the desert, royal, and French tomb, and in the commonality of foreign characters of the first two, one can see how *Antonius* again attempts to blend the idea of relics and textuality. The move from the desert to Constantine's royal court is a translation of Antony's body, but not of the text that announces the *inventio* and *translatio*, which instead retains a common textual element that

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[162] Horstmann, 122.

65

possibly safeguards against charges that the relics are false. Often the relationship between text and relic was formulated and maintained in order to commemorate the saint in monastic communities with the effect that this link "fostered interior devotion" and "legitimatized the symbolic veneration of relics."[164] No saint needs legitimatization of his relics more than St. Antony, due to his own obstruction and denial of post-mortem veneration.

In spite of Antony's original wish, that his body be forgotten, the corpus of texts that proliferate around the saint with no body prove that Antony's legend is at once open to revision and beholden to multiple traditions. The supposed failings of his foundational text, Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, demonstrate the way in which non-normative expressions of sanctity and hagiography offer new strategies and opportunities to recreate Antony. An incomplete ending and loss of the corporeal entity of Antony force later authors to paper over the incongruent portions of Antony's tradition as happens in the nineteenth century, with the publication of Gustave Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. It is here that Antony's textual body finally completes the journey that his "literal" remains have made: from Egypt where Athanasius narrated the life of the desert saint and the loss of his body, to Antony's final resting place in France where his relics are kept at Vienne, and his final textual performance occurs, the trajectory of the text mirrors that of his body. The final *translatio* from Egypt to France is fitting given that God promises Antony, flush with victory over the demonic horde, fame throughout the centuries and around the world. The anxious treatment of Antony's body and his textual heritage prove overwhelming that the promise given was fulfilled.

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[163] Horstmann, 129 and 135.
[164] Stock, 72.

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