

10 A REVELATION OF PURGATORY

The anonymous writer of *A Revelation Showed to a Holy Woman* was a woman leading a secluded, devout life, probably in Winchester in the early fifteenth century (see Ogilvie-Thomson 1980). She was clearly not a nun, as she lived with only a maidservant for company; nor was she a strictly enclosed solitary (like Julian of Norwich), for she was free to visit local priests and to make a pilgrimage to a local shrine. She was presumably a widow who had taken vows, or a non-institutionalised devout woman like Margery Kempe.

The text takes the form of a letter (compare the opening and closing formulas with those of the Paston Letters, below, pp. 262–80) to the woman's confessor, John Forest, archdeacon of Surrey, who died in 1446. It records a series of dreams which took place in August 1422, in which the soul of her friend, the nun Margaret, appears, shows the dreamer her own sufferings in Purgatory and those of others, and asks for her friends' prayers and for masses to be said by various priests. After the dreamer has arranged all this, she witnesses Margaret's vindication by the Virgin and triumphant entry into heaven. Certain individuals mentioned by name have been convincingly identified by recent research, suggesting that this is an actual letter rather than a literary text making use of epistolary conventions and the letter form.

Comment: The literary account of a visionary journey to the other world is of course a well-established genre, of which the most notable medieval example is Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The content, however, of these dreams is entirely derived from popular piety and exemplifies the late medieval obsession with Purgatory. Fifteenth-century wills often make lavish provision for the kind of prayers and masses which Margaret requests, to ensure the testator's quick passage through Purgatory into Heaven (see Carpenter 1987; Keiser 1987a). Eleanor Hull (see below, p. 235) left instructions that a thousand masses should be said for the repose of her soul.

The text also makes clear the dependence of medieval women on the services of men, for it is priests who must say the masses to release Margaret from her sufferings. Paradoxically, though, only the woman dreamer is in touch with the dead (compare Mechtild, p. 59) and can act as intermediary, and finally it is the Virgin who routs the Devil, vindicates Margaret and presents her as a newly born soul to the Great High Priest, her son.

The writer's style is vigorous and unselfconscious. She tells her rather lurid story effectively, though the repetitious nature of her sentence structures – typically a succession of simple sentences introduced by 'and then me thought' and strung together with 'and' – suggests that she was an unpractised writer. Her imagination is vivid though crude; in her lively description of the pains inflicted on the unfortunate Margaret there is a horrifying undercurrent of grotesque, almost

pornographic violence. This may result as much from the dreamer's internalisation of her society's hostile attitudes towards women as from the more general late medieval preoccupations with death and suffering.

Manuscripts: Extant in three fifteenth-century manuscripts: Lincoln Cathedral MS 91 (the Thornton Manuscript), ff. 251^v–258; Longleat Hall MS 29, ff. 155^r–65^v; Oxford Bodley MS Eng. theol. c. 58, ff. 10–12^v. The three versions are not closely related. For an edition, see Harley 1985. The extracts here are edited from the facsimile of the Thornton Manuscript.

Further reading (for full details see Bibliography): On the development of the concept of Purgatory, see Le Goff 1984; on fifteenth-century attitudes towards it, see Carpenter 1987: 53–74 and Duffy 1992: 338–76; on the text itself, see Keiser 1987a: 143–52.

A Revelation Showed to a Holy Woman

a) *The Haunting of a Holy Woman* (Lincoln Cathedral MS 91, ff. 250^v–251^v)

Fadir, I do yow to wiete how grete trybulacyon I had in my slepe appone Saynt Lowrence Day at nyghte, the yere of Oure Lorde a thowsande fowre hundrethe twenty and two.

I wente to my bede at eghte of the cloke, and so I felle appon slepe; and
5 so bytwyxx nyne and ten me thoghte I was raveschede into purgatorye and sodanly I sawe all the paynes whilke was schewed me many tymes byfore, als ye, fadir, knowe wele be my confessyone and tellynge. Bot, dere syre, I was noghte schewede by no spyrite the syghte of tham on this nyghte of Saynt Lowrence, bot so sodanely, dere fadir, me thoghte I sawe tham; and

1 *I . . . wiete*] I am letting you know. *how*] what. *appone*] upon.

2 *Saynt Lowrence Day*] the feast of St Lawrence, 10 August.

2–3 *the . . . two*] AD 1422.

4 *eghte . . . cloke*] eight o'clock. *felle . . . slepe*] fell asleep.

5 *bytwyxx*] between. *me thoghte*] it seemed to me. *raveschede into*] transported to.
purgatorye] Purgatory, a place of purification for those souls which will ultimately be saved because they died in a state of grace but still need to be punished for their sins.

6 *sodanly*] suddenly. *paynes*] pains, torments. *whilke was*] which were.

7 *als*] as. *confessyone*] confession.

8 *noghte*] not.

by . . . spyrite] by any spirit; apparently on previous occasions the holy woman had had a spiritual guide (presumably an angel).

syghte] sight, vision. *tham*] them.

10 forsothe, dere fadir, I was never so evylle afferde when I woke for sche-
weynge of the paynes als I was than, and the cause was that I was noghte
ledde by no spyrite that I knewe before, that myghte hafe comforthed me,
and in this sighte of purgatorye me thoghte I sawe thre grete fyres, and me
thoghte ylk a fyre was at other ende. Bot, sir, there was no depertynge
15 bytwene tham, bot ylkane was eked to othir.

And thies thre fyres was wondirfull and horrybill, and specyally the
moste of alle was in the myddis. For that fyre was so horribill and so
stynkande that all the creaturs in the werlde myghte never telle the
wykkede smellynge thereof; for thare was pykke and tarre, ledde and
20 bromestane and oyle, and alle manere of thyng that myghte brynne, and
alle manere of paynes that man couthe thynke, and alle manere of crysten
men and women that hade lyffede here in this werlde, of whate degre thay
were.

Bot amange alle the paynes that I sawe of alle men and wymmen, me
25 thoghte that prestes that hade bene lechours in thaire lyves, and thaire
wymen with tham, whether thay were releygous men and wymen, or
seculer men and wymen of ordire, me thoghte in that syghte that thay
hade moste payne.

And in that grete fyre me thoghte I sawe the spiryte of a woman that I
30 knewe, the whilke woman was in hir lyfe a syster of ane house of relygyone,

10 *forsothe*] truly. *evylle afferde*] badly frightened.

11 *than*] then.

12 *ledde*] conducted, guided. *hafe*] have. *comforthed*] comforted, strengthened.

14 *ylk a*] every, each. *other*] the other, opposite. *depertynge*] separation.

15 *ylkane*] each one. *eked*] added.

16 *thies*] these.

17 *moste*] largest. *myddis*] midst, middle.

18 *stynkande*] stinking. *werlde*] world. *myghte*] could.

19 *wykkede smellynge*] evil smell, stench. *thereof*] of it.
thare] there. *pykke*] pitch. *ledde*] (molten) lead.

20 *bromestane*] brimstone, burning sulphur. *oyle*] oil. *brynne*] burn.

21 *couthe*] knows how to.

22 *lyffede*] lived. *whate degre*] whatever status, position in society.

24 *amange*] among.

25 *prestes*] priests. *lechours*] lechers. *thaire*] their.

26 *releygous*] religious, i.e. bound by religious vows.

27 *seculer . . . ordire*] seculars (priests who did not belong to a religious order but were still vowed to continence) and nuns.

30 *syster . . . relygyone*] i.e. a nun; the 'house of religion' was most likely the Benedictine nunnery of Nunnaminster, in Winchester.

the whilke woman the while scho lyffede was callede Margarete; whilke
 me thoghte I sawe in this horrible fyre, and had so grete paynes that for
 drede I myghte nott dyscryve tham at that tym. And in a dredfull fere I
 wokke, and by-tyme smote the houre of ten byfore mydnyghte. And for
 35 drede and for fere to slepe agayne I rose upe, and a littill mayden childe
 with me, and we two sayde the Seven Psalmes and the Letanye. And by we
 hade saide owte the Agnus Dei, I was so hevvy of slepe I myghte noghte
 make ane ende, bot made my childe go to bedde and so did I. And by that
 tyme it smate elleven of the klokke, and by I had tolde the laste stroke, I
 40 bygan to slepe.

And onone me thoghte come to me the speryte of this woman
 Mergarete, the whilke I sawe byfore in paynes, and me thoghte scho was
 full of stronge wondes als scho hade bene drawn with kames, and so me
 thoghte scho was wondede and rent; bot specyaly at hir herte me thoghte
 45 I sawe a grevous and ane orybillle wounde, and owte of that wonde come
 flawme of fyre. And scho said, 'Cursede mote thou be and wo worthe the,
 bot if thou haste the to be my helpe.' And me thoghte by scho hade saide
 that worde, I was so ferde I myghte noghte speke, bot ever I thoghte

31 *scho*] she.

33 *drede*] terror. *myghte . . . dyscryve*] could not look at, discern. *fere*] fear.

34 *wokke*] woke. *by-tyme*] promptly. *smote*] struck.

35 *for*] because of. *rose upe*] got up. *mayden childe*] girl.

36 *Seven Psalmes*] i.e. the Penitential Psalms, often used as a private devotion (see Eleanor Hull, below, p. 233).

Letanye] Litany, a long series of invocations of various aspects of God and the saints.
by] by the time that.

37 *saide owte*] recited completely.

Agnus Dei] the liturgical formula 'O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world'.
hevvy of] heavy with. *myghte noghte*] could not.

38–39 *by . . . tyme*] by the time that.

39 *smate*] struck. *tolde*] counted.

40 *bygan*] began.

41 *onone*] immediately. *come*] came. *speryte*] spirit, ghost.

43 *stronge*] deep. *wondes*] wounds. *als*] as if.

drawen . . . kames] maltreated with combs, i.e. toothed implements of torture.

44 *wondede*] wounded. *rent*] torn.

45 *orybillle*] horrible.

46 *flawme*] flame. *mote*] may. *wo worthe the*] woe betide you.

47 *bot if*] unless. *haste the*] hasten, hurry (reflexive). *by*] when.

48 *ferde*] afraid. *ever*] constantly.

in myn herte, 'Jhesus passioun be my helpe', and with that I was
50 comforthede in my spyrte.

And than me thoghte scho wolde hafe casten fyre appon me, and styrte
to me to hafe slayne me, bot me thoghte scho hade no powere, for the
passyone of God comforthed me; bot the grysely syghte of hir afferdede
me. And me thoghte scho had a littill hounde and a littill catte folowyng
55 hir, alle one fyre brynnyng. And than me thoghte I said to hir, 'What arte
thou, in Goddes name, that thus sore travells me? And I conjure the in the
Fadirs name and the Sone and the Haly Gaste, thre persouns and o Godd
in trynyte, that thou telle me whate thou arte that thus travells me and
whethir thou be a sperit of purgatorye to hafe helpe of me or a sperit of
60 helle to overcome me and to trobble me?'

And than scho said, 'Naye, I am a spirit of purgatorye that walde hafe
helpe of the, and noghte a spirit of helle to dryche the; and if thou
will wiete whate spirit I am that suffirs grete paynes in purgatorye for my
synnes, I ame the spirit of Margarete, the whilke was syster in a systems
65 house of releyon, as thou knewe wele, and also thou knewe me when
I duelledede therin. And in the name of God I aske helpe of the.'

b) *Margaret's Sufferings in Purgatory*
(f. 253^{r-v})

Now, fadir, the nexte nyghte appon that folowyng, I went to bede and
felle one slepe, and so sodaynely was schewede to me hir paynes in

49 *Jhesus . . . helpe]* may the Passion of Jesus be my help.

50 *comforthede]* strengthened.

51 *wolde hafe]* would have. *casten]* thrown.

51-2 *styrte . . . me(2)]* rushed at me to kill me.

53 *grysely]* grisly, grim. *afferedede]* terrified.

54 *hounde]* dog. *catte]* cat.

55 *one]* on.

56 *sore travells]* bitterly troubles. *conjure]* solemnly charge.

56-7 *in . . . Gaste]* in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

57 *o]* one.

59 *to hafe]* (wanting) to have.

61 *walde]* would.

62 *of]* from. *dryche]* hurt, destroy.

63 *will wiete]* wish to know.

66 *duelledede]* dwelt, lived. *therin]* in it.

67 *appon . . . folowyng]* following on that.

68 *one slepe]* asleep. *hir]* her.

purgatorye and other many one. Bot, fadir, nowthir scho nor none other
 70 spiryte led me therto bot, fadir, when I was one slepe me thoghte I sawe
 tham onone withowtten any ledyng. And onone me thoghte I sawe
 Margarete in hir werste clothes as scho wente one erthe, and in the
 gretteste fyre of thir the whilke I sawe byfore in purgatorye; and me
 75 thoghte I sawe abowte hir seven devylles, and one of tham clede hir with
 a longe gown and a longe trayle folowyng hir, and it was full of scharpe
 hukes withinn, and the gowne and the hukes me thoghte were alle
 rede fyre. And than the same devell tok wormes and pykk and tarre and
 made lokkes and sete tham appon hir hede, and he toke a grete longe
 80 neddir and putt all abowte hir hede and that, me thoghte, hissed in hir
 hede, as it had bene hote brynnynng iryn in the colde water; and me
 thoghte scho cryed when scho was so arrayede, als me thoghte that alle
 the werlde myghte hafe herde hir. And the littill hounde and the catt
 forfrette in sondir hir legges and hir armes.

And than sayd that devele that arayed hir thus, 'This sall thou hafe
 85 for thi foule stynkkyng pryde and boste that thou usede in the werlde
 agayne mekenes; and this hounde and this catt sall ever frete appon the
 the while thou erte here, for thyne unresonabille lufe that thou luffede

69 *other . . . one*] many others. *nowthir*] neither.

71 *withowtten . . . ledyng*] without any guidance.

72 *werste*] worst, i.e. shabbiest. *wente one erthe*] walked about on earth.

73 *gretteste*] greatest. *thir*] those. *the whilke*] which.

74 *abowte*] about, around. *tham*] them. *clede*] clad, clothed.

75 *trayle*] train.

76 *hukes*] hooks. *withinn*] inside.

77 *rede fyre*] fiery red. *wormes*] snakes. *pykk*] pitch.

78 *lokkes*] locks (of hair). *sete*] set, placed.

79 *neddir*] adder (a venomous snake). *putt . . . abowte*] twined it round. *in*] on.

80 *as . . . water*] as if it had been red-hot iron in cold water.

81 *cryed*] cried out, shrieked. *arrayede*] dressed. *als*] as.

82 *herde*] heard.

83 *forfrette in sondir*] chewed to pieces.

84 *sall*] shall, must.

85 *foule . . . boste*] foul stinking pride and boasting. *usede*] practised.

werlde] world, i.e. on earth.

86 *agayne mekenes*] contrary to humility. *frete*] bite.

87 *the . . . erte*] while thou art.

unresonabille lufe] unreasonable (excessive) love. *that*] with which.

luffede] loved.

tham in erthe. For I am the develle of Pryde, [. . .] I sall do myn ofyce in
this payne and qwyte the thi mede for the servyce that thou servede me.'

90 And me thoghte many develles were with hir.

And than onone me thoghte that thare come owte other seven devels.
And one pullede owte hir tunge and ane other pullede owte hir herte, and
me thoghte thay raked it wyth iryn rakes. 'And this,' thay sayd, 'thou sall
hafe for thi wrethe and thyne envy and for false forswerynge and for
95 bakbyttyng and sclandiryng, for all thies thou usyde in thi lyfe; and we
are the devels of Wrethe and of Envy, and all thies neddys and snakes
that thou seese with us, that sall tourment the for thi wykkede vyces that
thou usede in erthe, and dyde noghte thi penance or thou come here.'

And than me thoghte that there come owte other two develis, of the
100 whilke one had scharpe rasours and he ferde als he wolde forcute hir
flesche, and so he did to my syghte, and me thoghte he paride awaye all
hir lypes and he tuke a grete huke of yryn and smote thorowe-oute hir
herte; and that other devele melted lede and bromstane and alle manere
of stynkyng venym that man myghte thynke, and also he ordeyned hir
105 alle manere of lykenes of metis and drynkes that was delycate in this
werlde, the whilke that scho usede to styre hir more to syn than to vertu;
and those metis me thoghte was alle neddys and snakkes, and those thay

88 *do . . . ofyce*] carry out my duty.

89 *qwyte . . . mede*] give you your reward. *for . . . me*] for the service you rendered me.

93 *iryn*] iron.

94 *wrethe*] wrath, anger. *false forswerynge*] perjury.

95 *bakbyttyng and sclandiryng*] backbiting and slandering. It is interesting to note the pre-
occupation with this sin among women; compare the praise of the Virgin's silence in Eleanor
Hull, ll. 155–6.

96 *thies*] these.

97 *seese*] seest. *sall*] shall.

98 *dyde . . . penance*] did not do penance for. *or*] before. *come*] came.

99 *other two*] another two, two more.

100 *rasours*] razors. *ferde*] acted. *als*] as if. *wolde forcute*] was about to cut off.

101 *to my syghte*] in full sight of me. *paride*] pared, sliced.

102 *lyppes*] lips. *tuke*] took. *huke*] hook. *smote thorowe-oute*] struck through.

103 *lede*] lead.

venym] venom, poison. *man . . . thynke*] one could imagine.

ordeyned hir] provided for her.

105 *alle . . . drynkes*] all kinds of imitations of food and drink.

was delycate] were delicacies.

106 *styre*] stir, provoke.

107 *snakkes*] snakes.

made hir to ete agayne hir will, and also thay made hir forto drynke alle
 110 maner of cursede venym, and said, 'Ete and drynke this for thi cursede
 glotonye and myspendynge, wastynge and takynge over-mekyll the while
 thou was one lyve.'

And than me thoghte this devele and that other devele cutt away hir
 flesche and hir lyppes, and thriste the huke into hir herte. And than thay
 drewe hir into a grete blake water and that semyd als colde als any ise, and
 115 mekyll therof was freside to my syghte; and therin thay keste hir and
 possede hir up and down and sayd, Take the this bathe for thi slewthe and
 thi glotonye.' And anone thay tuke hir owte of the water and threwe hir
 into a grete fyre, and thare thay lefte hir styll and that, thay saide, solde
 be hir bedde for the slewthe that scho lufed so wele here in erthe and
 120 wolde noghte come to Goddis servyce when scho myghte. And ther thay
 lefte hir styll with many wormes aboute hir.

c) *Margaret Explains her Sufferings to her Friend*
 (ff. 254^v–255^v)

And sone after scho come agayne to me, and than scho said to me, 'Now
 hase thou sene my bytter paynes that I suffirde in thiese grete fyres of
 purgatorye.' And than, fadir, me thoghte onone that scho come owte of
 125 the grete fatte and come to me; and than scho sayd, 'Thou may knawe by
 the devels that were my tourmentours and by the tourmentes that thay
 did me, what syn that I hafe done; and therefore thay sall never tourment

110 *glotonye*] gluttony, greediness. *myspendynge*] excessive expenditure.
over-mekyll] over-much, excess.

111 *one lyve*] alive.

113 *thriste*] thrust.

114 *drewe*] dragged. *blake water*] black lake. *ise*] ice.

115 *mekyll . . . syghte*] much of it was frozen as far as I could see. *keste*] cast, threw.

116 *possede*] pushed. *Take the*] take to yourself. *slewthe*] sloth, laziness.

118 *solde*] should, ought to be.

119 *bedde*] bed. *lufed*] loved, liked.

120 *wolde noghte*] refused to.

Goddis servyce] i.e. the round of liturgical offices nuns had to sing.
myghte] was able to.

121 *wormes*] snakes.

123 *hase*] hast. *sene*] seen.

125 *fatte*] vat, vessel (in which Margaret was tormented). *knawe*] know.

127 *therefore*] for that. *sall*] shall.

me more, God it the foryelde and all my helpers that hase sped me owte of my paynes.'

130 And than I askede hir whi scho cryed so petously, 'Swete Lady, be myn helpe', and whi scho cryed more one Oure Lady than scho did one God Almyghty or one any other sayntes. And than scho said, 'Yis, for scho es hede of all other sayntes except God allane, and for scho es welle of mercy, I cryede one hir in my grete woo, and also for I solde the rathere be
135 delyverde thurgh hir bone and prayere, and also the whils I was one lyfe, I fastede hir faste.' And the sperit sayd me agayne there sulde never none fayle of Oure Ladys helpe that comes into purgatorye, that hase fastede hir faste byfore.

And than I askede hir whi scho cryede so dullefully in that grete fatte
140 that scho was in, and why I myghte noghte see hir. And than scho said, 'If thou had sene my paynes, thou sulde hafe bene so ferde that thi body solde noghte wele hafe borne thi sperit withowtten grete trybulacione of thi wittes, or ells strange seknes, for my paynes were so strange; and therfor I cryede so horribly.'

145 And than I askede hir whi that flawme of fyre come owte of hir mouthe, and why at hir herte come owte so many sparkes of fyre, and why hir herte was so woundide, and whi the littill honde and the cate folowed hir,

128 *God . . . foryelde*] may God reward you.

hase sped] have speeded (Margaret had asked her friend to have masses said for her).

130 *petously*] piteously, pitifully.

131–132 *whi . . . sayntes*] with the Virgin as 'Well of Mercy' who releases souls from Purgatory, compare Eleanor Hull's invocation of her as 'Mother of Mercy' (below, p. 240).

131 *one*] on.

132 *Yis*] Yes. *for*] because.

133 *es*] is. *hede*] head, principal. *allane*] only, alone. *welle*] well, fount.

134 *woo*] woe, sorrow. *solde*] should. *the rathere*] the more quickly.

135 *bone*] request, petition. *the whils*] while.

136 *fastede hir faste*] kept her fast. 'Our Lady's Fast' was kept on Saturdays, regarded as sacred to the Virgin because on Holy Saturday (the day between the Crucifixion on Good Friday and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday) she alone had kept faith with her Son.

sperit] spirit.

136–7 *there . . . helpe*] no one would ever lack Our Lady's help.

139 *dullefully*] dolefully, wretchedly.

141 *ferde*] afraid.

142 *solde . . . sperit*] would not have been able well to sustain your spirit.

142–3 *trybulacione . . . wittes*] troubling of your sanity.

143 *strange seknes*] strong, i.e. violent, sickness.

145 *flawme*] flame.

and what gude did these messes hir and these prayers hir that scho bade
 saye for hir? And than scho sayde, als towchyng the flawme of fyre at hir
 150 mouthe, that was for hir grete athes that scho usede in hir lyfe; and also
 towchyng the wonde at hir herte and the sparkelyng fyre thareof, it was
 for hir athes was mekyll by Oure Lordes hert, and that was the cause that
 the sparkes of fyre come owte at hir herte; and that was one, scho sayde,
 of the gretteste paynnes that scho hade. And as touchyng the lyttill
 155 hounde and the cate, thay were hir mawemetts the whils scho was one
 lyfe, and scho sett hir herte to mekill one swylke foulle wormes.

'And thare thay folowe me to encrease my paynes, ay till the bandes of
 syn be worne in sondir. And towching the messis-saying and the prayers
 that was done for me, thay hafe hasted me the tytter owt of my paynes,
 160 and also fro hethen-forwarde I sall never be tourment more with devels
 safe with one, and that es with my wykkede angelle, and he sall bryng
 me thurgh these two fyrs of purgatorye, and if thar be any drosse of syn,
 there sall I be clensed; and this honde ne this cate sall never folow me
 more.' And than scho saide, 'Fare wele', and nenned my name, and said
 165 scho suld never travelle me more in the syghte of paynes bot ane other
 nyghte. And than me thoghte scho went fro me, bot scho cryed noghte als
 scho dyd byfore. And than, fadir, I woke of my slepe; and than me thoght

148 *gude*] good, profit. *thase*] those. *messes*] masses. *hir*] her.

149 *als towchyng*] as regards.

150 *athes*] oaths.

152 *for*] because. *was mekyll*] were greatly.

Oure . . . hert] devotion to the Heart of Jesus increased during the Middle Ages (see Mechtild of Hackeborn, above, p. 52); clearly Margaret had come to treat it too casually.

155 *mawemetts*] idols, false gods. It is interesting that the nun Margaret is specifically punished for her devotion to her pets, earlier described as an 'unreasonable love': cf. Chaucer's Prioress and her love of her little dogs (General Prologue, *CT A* (I): 146–9).

156 *sett . . . wormes*] set her heart too much on such disgusting vermin.

157 *thare*] therefore. *encrease*] increase. *ay*] constantly. *bandes*] bonds, chains.

158 *worne in sondir*] worn through. *messis-saying*] saying of masses.

159 *done*] i.e. carried out. *hasted*] hastened. *tytter*] quicker.

160 *fro . . . forwarde*] from now onwards.

tourment] tormented.

161 *safe with*] except by.

162 *drosse*] dross, impurity.

164 *nenned*] named.

165 *travelle*] disturb. *syghte*] vision. *bot ane other*] except for one more.

166 *went fro*] left. *cryed*] cried, shrieked.

167 *of*] out of.

I was full wery and full evylle afferde. And, fadir, thus mekill me thoghte
I sawe on that nyghte.

d) *Margaret is Released into Heaven*
(f. 257)

170 And than scho said, 'Now hafe I tolde the all thynges als God will and
made ane end of purgatorye. And now take gud hede what thou sees me
doo now; and if thou had noghte gone to Sowthwyke one pilgremage for
me in the wyrchipe of God and of Oure Lady, for I had voweде it and
myght noghte do it and thou hase done it for me, and ells I sulde full foule
175 hafe bene lettide of my passage when I solde hafe bene weyhede oute of
these paynes, and that sall thou sone see.' And me thoghte sone after that
thare come a fayre lady and a fayre yonge man with hir, of the age of
twenty wynter, and he broghte weyhes in his hand, and he was cled alle
in whytte clothes; and me thoghte this lady was cled in white clothe of
180 golde, and sternes of golde was in hir garment, and a royale crowne scho
had one hir hede of gold, and a sepre in hir hande, and on the ende of
the sepre was a lyttill crose.

And than scho spake to the man in white, 'Sone', scho said, 'take this
woman and late hir be weyhed.' And anone sodanly scho was in the wey-
185 hes; and onone the devele weyhed agayne hir, and a grete lange worme
with hym. And twyse scho felle down to the develle and the devele
rehered all hir synnes whilke scho hade bene in paynes fore. And than

168 *evylle afferde*] badly frightened. *thus mekill*] this much.

171 *made . . . of*] finished with. *take . . . hede*] pay particular attention to.

172 *Sowthwyke*] Southwick in Hampshire, where there was a shrine of the Virgin at the
priory of Augustinian canons.

173 *wyrchipe*] honour.

174 *and ells*] otherwise.

174-5 *sulde . . . of* (1)] should have been very badly hindered from.

175 *when . . . weyhede*] when I had to be weighed in the balance.

178 *weyhes*] balances, pair of scales. *clede*] clad, dressed.

180 *sternes*] stars. *in*] on.

180-1 *a . . . gold*] she had a regal crown of gold on her head.

182 *sepre*] sceptre. *crose*] cross.

184 *late*] let.

185 *agayne*] against, opposite. *lange*] long.

186 *twyse*] twice. *felle*] dipped.

187 *rehered*] repeated, enumerated.

said the man in white, 'Hir synnes ere forgeffen, for scho hase done hir penance therfore, and scho es gyffen to the Welle of Mercy that es present, the Qwene of heven and of erthe, Empryce of helle and of purgatorye, and the blyssed Modir of God, and scho es gyffen to hir. Whate cane thou saye to this woman?'

And than me thoghte the devele tuke owte that grete worme and saide, 'Here es the worme of consyence, that yit sall travelle hir for a thyng that es byhynde, and that es scho made a vowe to a pilgremage and fulfilled it noghte.' And than me thoghte that that faire lady said, 'Here es one that hase done it for hir, and my sone and I hase gyffen this woman mercy. And fy one the, foule Sathanas! Thou and the worme of consyence sall never dere hir more.' And with that worde, me thoghte scho weyhede even down to the faire lady. And me thoghte the devele and the worme made a grete crye, and anone thay voydede awaye.

And than that faire lady tuke a white clothe and wrapped all aboute hir and than this lady saide, 'Come one, dogheter, with me and thou sall ressayve the oyle of mercy and thi consyence sall be made clene. And full grete mede sall thay all hafe that hase helpede the so sone out of thi paynes, and when thay sall come to purgatorye thay sall sone fynd the grete mercy of Almyghty God and the sonere be spede owte of thaire paynes for thi sake.'

188 *ere forgeffen*] are forgiven.

189 *therfore*] for them. *gyffen*] given.

190 *Empryce*] empress.

193 *tuke owte*] took out, i.e. produced.

194 *worme of consyence*] the 'worm (i.e. snake) of consyence', a symbol of remorse, is usually metaphorical rather than literal, as here.

yit] yet, still. *travelle*] torment.

195 *byhynde*] still to come.

195–6 *scho . . . noghte*] medieval writers often warned the devout against making rash or unnecessary vows – cf. *The Faits and the Passion of Our Lord Jesu Christ* (below, p. 222) – precisely because of the spiritual dangers if they were not fulfilled.

195 *to*] of.

198 *fy*] shame. *Sathanas*] Satan.

199 *dere*] hurt, hinder.

199–200 *weyhede . . . to*] balanced evenly and then sank down towards.

201 *voydede*] vanished.

202 *tuke*] took. *wrapped . . . aboute*] wrapped (it) all around.

204 *ressayve*] receive.

oyle] oil (used for cleansing, soothing and also sacramentally in baptism, etc.).

205 *mede*] reward.

And than onone this fayre lady ledd hir ovre a strong brygge and at the
 210 brygges ende was a faire white chapelle, and me thoghte thare come owte
 mekill multitude of pepill that come agaynes hir with faire processione
 and mery sange. And than this faire lady and this procession broghte hir
 to a fayre welle and thare all hir body was weschen. And sodanly besyde
 215 the welle was a white chapelle and this lady and this procession broghte
 Margarete therin. And anone come in thirtene men and one of tham
 sange a messe, and me thoghte this faire lady offirde Margarete to hym,
 and sodanely me thoghte ther was a crown sett one hir hede and a sepre
 in hir hande. And than said the man that sange the messe, 'Dogheter, take
 here the crown of grace and mercy and this sepre of victorye, for thou
 220 erte passed all thyn enemys.' And me thoghte this man sange owte the
 messe, and when the messe was saide, thay wente owte of the chapelle
 ylkane, and this man that sange the messe toke Margarete with hym and
 broghte hir tyl a goldyn yate, and the procession with hym. And he saide
 to Margarete, 'Dogheter, go in at this yate and ressayve the blysse of
 225 paradyse and of heven, whilke that es thi kynde heritage, and that Adam
 was in.' And anone, fadir, I woke and all thyng was vaneschede.
 No more, fadir, at this tyme, bot God bryng us to his kyngdome. Amen.

Textual notes

7 *Bot*] *Bod*.

27 *seculer*] *seculers*.

78 *lokkes*] *lokedes*.

88 [. . .] not legible in MS: Horstmann reads 'and thare [fore]'.

109 *thi*] *this*.

209 *ledd*] *led*. *ovre*] *over*. *brygge*] *bridge*.

211 *agaynes*] *towards*. *faire processione*] *a beautiful procession*.

212 *mery sange*] *joyful song*.

213 *weschen*] *washed*.

216 *offirde*] *offered, presented*.

217 *crown*] in 'Pearl', too, the souls of the blessed are dressed as queens (ll. 205–6, 447–52).

220 *erte passed*] *have surpassed, overcome*. *owte*] *i.e. to the end*.

222 *ylkane*] *each one*.

223 *tyl*] *to*. *yate*] *gate*.

224 *blysse*] *bliss, glory*.

225 *whilke that es*] *which is*. *kynde heritage*] *natural inheritance*.

227 *No . . . tyme*] *no more for now, father*. *God bryng*] *may God bring*.