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**'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12**

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'Ye that pasen by þe weye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

*Introduction – handkerchiefs, skin and sky-books*

*Lamed.* O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,  
attendite, et videte  
si est dolor sicut dolor meus!  
quoniam vindemiavit me,  
ut locutus est Dominus,  
in die iræ furoris sui.

*Lamed.* O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my  
sorrow: for he hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of his fierce anger.  
(Lamentations 1.12)<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Lamentations was understood by medieval people to have been written by the prophet Jeremiah and it tells the story of the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE.<sup>2</sup> The speaking voice in chapter 1, from which the above quotation is taken, is a survivor of an early pogrom and sometimes thought to be the personification of Jerusalem; she laments the loss of her community, her city and her children.<sup>3</sup> Her sorrow is modulated only by guilt at the sin that must have brought God's punishment. Late medieval Christianity read it, of course, typologically and in the spirit of affective devotion; the voice became the voice of Christ, a survivor of a different kind, a man who survives his own death.<sup>4</sup> This ventriloquism made Lamentations central to the liturgy of Holy Week; the old Hebrew poem was, thus, folded into the gospel story of Christ's crucifixion. Medieval interpretations were explicit about this Book's telling the grief of a number of different times. Paschasius Radbertus (d. c. 860), in a commentary which was to form the base text for the twelfth-century gloss by Gilbert the Universal, was clear that in Lamentations Jeremiah 'non solum praesentia, verum praeterita et futura lugeat' [laments not only the present, but also the future and the past].<sup>5</sup> It charted 'differentia lacrymarum' 'diversities of weeping': not just the desolation wrought by the Chaldean dynasty, but also the destruction of the second temple by the Romans under Titus (70CE), as well as other captivities in the here and now such as, in its allegorical interpretation, the captivity of the soul by the devil.<sup>6</sup> Whilst the Old Testament poem itself was not explicitly about time it was made so in medieval interpretation.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the Bible are taken from the Latin Vulgate Bible (<http://vulsearch.sourceforge.net/>); unless otherwise stated the English translation is taken from the Douay-Rheims Bible, which is also available through vulsearch.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview on the question of authorship, see S. K. Soderland, 'Lamentations', in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and rev'd by Melvin Grove Kyle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1915, rev'd edn 1929), pp. 65-68 (pp. 65-66).

<sup>3</sup> Survival is the main theme of the most recent full study of Lamentations. Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> For Lamentations as part of the affective poetic treasury of scripture, see A. J. Minnis, 'Literary Theory in Discussions of *Formae Tractandi* by Medieval Theologians', *New Literary History*, 11 (1979), 133-45 (p. 144). The relationship between this typological connection and Cistercian and Franciscan affectivity has been suggested by Ronald L. Martinez, 'Mourning Laura in the *Canzoniere*: Lessons from Lamentations', *Modern Language Notes*, 118 (2003), 1-45 (p. 4, footnote 10).

<sup>5</sup> Paschasius Radbertus, *Threnos sive Lamentationes Jeremiae*, in *Patrologia cursus completus [...] Series Latina*, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Migne, 1844-64), 120, col. 1063A (hereafter abbreviated PL). See, for a translation of parts of Radbertus' commentary as they were used in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Gilbert Universalis, *Glossa Ordinaria in Lamentationes Ieremie Prophete: Prothematia et Liber I: A Critical edition*, ed. and trans. by Alexander Andr e, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 52 (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 2005), p. 163.

<sup>6</sup> Radbertus, *Threnos*, PL 120, col. 1061C.

<sup>7</sup> This distinction between narratives that are 'of time' and those that are more specifically 'about time' is discussed by Paul Ricoeur and, after him, Mark Currie. Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 1-2.

'Ye that pasen by þe weye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

Whilst modernity constructs the repetitive nature of grief as a crisis of memory produced in response to trauma, the Christian Middle Ages identified it with the simultaneity of time itself.<sup>8</sup> The ways of scriptural reading and the circularity of the liturgical year layered time, enabling moments which were apparently temporally distant to touch.<sup>9</sup> Christian liturgy sets aside ordinary time, structuring the year (*temporale*), the week (*octave*), the day (*feria*) and the hours (*horae*) in ways which allows congregations to participate in typological cycles. In services as in prayer books, the days were divided into the hours which marked the Stations of the Cross; every week recalled, in a lesser way, Holy Week; the highpoint of the liturgical year was Easter. In both its smallest and its largest revolutions, Christian medieval time repeatedly told the story of the death of Christ. One of the Lamentations lyrics that concerns this essay appears in the *Fasciculus Morum*, where it is embedded in a discussion of the time and day of Christ's death. In so doing it gathers together an omnibus of significant Fridays:

In quo autem die primus homo fuit creatus, et eodem die tamquam dominus terrarum in paradiso collocatus, et tercio eodem die pro peccato ab illo expulsus ac multiplici miserie adiudicatus. Similiter isto die fuit angelus Marie missus et Filius Dei incarnatus.

[On that day also the first human being was created, and on the same day he was placed from it for his sin and sentenced to manifold misery. In like fashion, on the same day the angel was sent to Mary and the Son of God was made flesh.]<sup>10</sup>

In this essay I want to use a discussion of medieval temporality, through a consideration of the reception history of Lamentations 1.12, to extend Michel Serres' notions of the topological deformations of time. Serres has argued that time is best considered in topological terms – rather than those supplied by Euclidean geometry – because it folds back upon itself, producing unexpected points of contact. Here he offers an example by likening time to a handkerchief:

If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed. If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant. This science of nearness and rifts is called topology, while the science of stable and well-defined distances is called metrical geometry.<sup>11</sup>

Topology is concerned with the invariant properties of figures and surfaces even under structural deformation.<sup>12</sup> These distorting effects, though, must be historically contingent and this essay investigates the folds of medieval time and the particular ways that the Christian Middle Ages described temporal

<sup>8</sup> For a modern definition and history of trauma, see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), e.g. p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> See, for a discussion of the commentary tradition and the way in which the modes of scriptural reading were considered in relation to time and the Book of Lamentations, an idea which is first explicitly stated by Willam Alton c. 1259-60, Athanasius Sulavik, 'Principia and Introitus in the Thirteenth-Century Christian Biblical Exegesis with Related Texts', in *La Bibbia del XIII secolo. Storia del testo, storia dell'esegesi*, ed. by Giuseppe Cremascoli and Francesco Santi (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2004), pp. 269-311 (pp. 283-84).

<sup>10</sup> Siegfried Wenzel ed. and trans., *The Fasciculus Morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), pp. 214-15.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Serres with Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. by Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> For a fuller discussion of topology and Serres' interest in it, see Laura Salisbury, 'Michel Serres: Science, Fiction, and the Shape of Relation', *Science Fiction Studies*, 33 (2006), 30-52 (p. 33) and Steven Connor, 'Topologies: Michel Serres and the Shapes of Thought', *Anglistik*, 15 (2004), 105-17 (p. 106).

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

superimposition and corrugation. The relationship between medieval typology and topology has been suggested before, albeit briefly, by Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood:

The 'omnitemporal' scheme of history presupposed by figural thinking constituted an effort to adopt God's point of view, which grasps history all at once, topologically, not in linear sequence.<sup>13</sup>

Medieval poetic renditions of Lamentations 1.12 brought historic suffering – of the Lamentations' widow, of Christ – into the present of their audiences. Like the artefacts discussed by Nagel and Wood they 'stitched through time, pulling together different points in the temporal fabric until they met.'<sup>14</sup> These texts amplified the immediacy of the personal address in Lamentations, embellishing the observations about time in the commentary tradition, and making their rendition of the passage into an explicit consideration of the present and its place in larger understandings of Christian chronology. I have chosen this passage from Lamentations as a case study because of its familiarity and ubiquity.<sup>15</sup> Siegfried Wenzel has described the 'O vos omnes' theme as a 'meditative commonplace' in late medieval sermons and sermon manuals.<sup>16</sup> In this way it might serve to consider larger questions about the way in which people in the Middle Ages wrote and performed their perception of time.

The best figure for medieval time, though, I shall come to argue, was not the ripped and crumpled handkerchief but, rather, stretched and folded skin. In early thought stretch was the principle property of both time and skin. Augustine understood this shared elasticity when he discusses, together, Isaiah's prophecy that 'Coelum enim plicabitur ut liber' [the heaven will fold up like a book] and the statement in Psalm 104.2 that the sky is 'pellis extenditur super nos' [stretched above us like a skin].<sup>17</sup> This is the part of the *Confessions* in which Augustine, putting allegorical flesh on the skeletal narrative of the first chapters of Genesis, treats the elements of creation in turn, and here considers the firmament as an image for the authority of scripture: 'Aut quis, nisi tu, Deus noster, fecisti nobis firmamentum auctoritatis super nos in Scriptura tua divina?' [Who but you, O God, has made for us a solid firmament of authority over us in your divine scripture?].<sup>18</sup> The scriptural citations from Isaiah and Psalm 104 are natural partners because they, too, investigate the shape of the sky. In drawing them together Augustine also makes another association which suits his discussion of scriptural authority:

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, 'Toward a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism', *The Art Bulletin*, 87 (2005), 403-15 (p. 408).

<sup>14</sup> Nagel and Wood, 'Towards a New Model of Renaissance Anachronism', p. 408. They claim, though, that this is a property only of artefacts and not of texts.

<sup>15</sup> I am concerned here particularly with poetry in England but Lamentations has also been influential in other European literature. For example see, for a discussion of the Italian context, Ronald Martinez, 'Mourning Beatrice: The Rhetoric of Threnodi in the *Vita nuova*', *Modern Language Notes*, 113 (1998), 1-29 (*passim*) and Martinez, 'Mourning Laura' *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> Siegfried Wenzel, *Verses in Sermons: 'Fasciculus Morum' and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1978), p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Augustinus Hipponensis, *Confessiones*, Book XIII, ch. xv, in *PL* 32, cols. 0851-0852. The English translation comes from: Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). The Psalm is numbered 103 in the Vulgate Bible. Whilst Augustine reads the Latin 'pellis' and the Wycliffite Bible, with its reliance on the Vulgate, renders this as 'skyn', the Hebrew text is more properly translated as 'curtain'. Thus the King James, Geneva and Great Bibles all read 'curtain'. The Douay Old Testament offers something of a concession in its reading: 'pavillion'.

<sup>18</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, XIII, xv, *PL* 32, col 0851; Augustine, *Confessiones*, p. 282.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

between books and skin. *Pellis* is a word like *membrana* which could mean, at once, skin and parchment.<sup>19</sup> The two passages share, then, both the tenor and the vehicle of the figure; together they describe the sky as it is now and how it will be at the end: now it is stretched as if to make parchment, then it will be folded as into a codex. At the same time as the authority of the divine word was thus stretched out, humans were clothed in skin and became mortal. In these ways, the stretched skin is a sign of temporality. The shutting of the book predicted by Isaiah is the ending of created things: of time, of the firmament, of written authority, of bodily life. This is emphasized by the contrastive example of the angels who do not need to read the divine word in the firmament, being in unmediated contact with an eternal God. God is their book, a book which will never be folded shut; what they read there does not pass away like the words read aloud from temporal books.

This idea of the sky like a book made of stretched skin open above us is one Augustine returns to and defends in his attack on Manichaeism. Here he weighs in against the argument that the sky is not stretched flat, as suggested in Psalm 104, that it is instead a suspended dome:

Quid autem hinc allegorice senserim, Confessionum nostrarum liber tertius decimus habet. Sive igitur ita ut ibi posui, sive aliquo alio modo intelligendum sit coelum sicut pellis extentum; propter molestos et nimios exactores expositionis ad litteram, hoc dico, quod, sicut arbitror, omnium sensibus patet: utrumque enim fortasse, id est et pellis et camera, figurate intelligi potest; utrumque autem ad litteram quomodo possit, videndum est. Si enim camera non solum curva, sed etiam plana recte dicitur; profecto et pellis non solum in planum, verum etiam in rotundum sinum extenditur. Nam et uter sicut et vesica, pellis est.

My treatment of this in terms of allegory may be found in the thirteenth book of my Confessions. So whether the sky being stretched out like a skin is to be understood allegorically in the way I suggested there, or in some other way, still to satisfy the tiresome people who persist in demanding a literal explanation I will say that in my opinion should be obvious to anyone of sense. Each term, no doubt, that is both 'skin' and 'dome' can be understood figuratively; but what we have to see is how each can be explained literally. Well, if it is not only a curved but also a flat ceiling that can be called a dome, then assuredly a skin for its part can be stretched out round a curve as well as on a flat plane. After all, both wine containers and footballs are skins.<sup>20</sup>

This passage is principally concerned with the contours of the sky and, by extension, the literal veracity of scripture, but it also feeds back into Augustine's ideas in the *Confessions* about the shape and stretch of time, where the image of the sky as a parchment codex first appears. Here Augustine reminds his opponent that skin forms itself not just on a flat plane but in pockets and spheres, like the uterus (*uter*) and the bladder (*vesica*), which makes it useful, not just for pages and clothing but also for bottles and balls. Once stretched and processed into parchment and leather, skin can hold still other, indeed multiple, shapes. Augustine is thinking topologically here, contesting the geometric literalism of the Manicheans. A flat plane, an arch, an ampullar container and, if this is read as a commentary on the earlier *Confessions* passage, an open book are homeomorphic; stretch is not contradicted by curvature. That is to say, these shapes have an invariant structure and one can be mapped onto another. Augustine sees the contiguity between the forms of an open codex,

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of 'membrana', see M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 120. *Pellis* could also mean clothing and other things made out of skin. See entry in Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

<sup>20</sup> Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Genesi ad litteram*, Book II, ch. 9, dist. 22; *PL* 34, col. 0271; Augustine, *On Genesis*, trans. by Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2002), pp. 202-03.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

made of folded quires of stretched parchment, and a suspended dome, even though they are apparently geometrically dissimilar.

In its Old Testament context Lamentations 1.12 is not obviously about time but in its Christian use it was stretched and bent to accommodate time as a principle subject. For medieval Christians the moment of crucifixion and the all too literal stretching of Christ's skin distorted the ordinary passage of time, creating a complex and manifold present. Like Serres' handkerchief, though, Christ's skin was also punctured and in this idea of rupture there was a fantasy about direct contact with divinity and eternity. This essay as a whole is an investigation of the medieval 'now', of the patterns of stretching and suspension that take place within it, of its degraded replication of divine imminence. I shall begin in the first part of this essay with a discussion of sound, time and poetics, arguing that Old Testament poetry (and my case study is the Book of Lamentations) as it was received by a late medieval audience, participated in a culture of oral performance and, by extension, mimicked contemporary understandings of the movements and patterns of time, becoming (to borrow a phrase from Giorgio Agamben) 'temporal machines'.<sup>21</sup> 'Time is a universal feature of all narrative' Mark Currie notes, and we might add that poems, too, produce systems of resonance and expectation which make them synecdochic of the larger temporal regimes that they endorse.<sup>22</sup> This first section is also about the past of the Lamentations text, laying out its reception history, considering in particular Jerome's commitment to Hebrew phonics and poetics. Then, in the second part of this essay, I move to think about the medieval present and future of the Lamentations passage through an investigation of the fields of meaning around particular words, beginning with the language of remnant and residue which was crucial to St Paul's soteriology and coming to the language of passing, attending and stretching. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the way in which the Christian use of Lamentations inevitably brought Christianity into a strangely time-slipped encounter with Judaism and, in that encounter, into rivalries of grief.

*Part I: Sound effects: breath, voice and poetry*

'The poem – a prolonged hesitation between sense and sound' ~ Paul Valery, *Tel Quel* (1943).

The example that St Augustine continually returns to in order to think about time is the voice. The voice is sometimes speaking and sometimes singing, sometimes in plain speech, sometimes reciting a psalm, sometimes a poem or song. When in Book XI of his *Confessions* Augustine considers in what way God created heaven and earth through speaking ('dixisti, et facta sunt' / you spoke and it was made) he comes to ask 'quomodo dixisti?' (how did you speak?). The question arises because speech, unlike God, is necessarily temporal:

Illa enim vox acta atque transacta est, coepta et finita. Sonuerunt syllabae atque transierunt, secunda post primam, tertia post secundam, atque inde ex ordine, donec ultima post caeteras, silentiumque post ultimam.

<sup>21</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. by Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 79.

<sup>22</sup> Currie, *About Time*, p. 2.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

[That voice is past and done with; it began and is ended. The syllables sounded and have passed away, the second after the first, the third after the second, and so on in order until, after all the others, the last one came, and after the last silence followed.]<sup>23</sup>

This passage is full of resonance and rhythm as 'acta' becomes 'transacta', as each syllable gives way to the next, reaching a crescendo in the reiterated 'ultima(m)', a word which is appropriately saved up until last. The beat of passing time is marked by the anaphora 'atque', culminating finally in a silence ('silentiumque') which absorbs and stills the conjunctive pulse. In these ways Augustine imports acoustic effects even into this written consideration of them.

And the subject of poetic and musical metrics makes a percussive return throughout the book as, for example, when Augustine meditates on how to measure time:

Ipsum ergo tempus unde metior? An tempore brevior metimur longius, sicut spatio cubiti spatium transtri? Sic enim videmur spatio brevis syllabae metiri spatium longae syllabae, atque id duplum dicere. Ita metimur spatia carminum spatiis versuum, et spatia versuum spatiis pedum, et spatia pedum spatiis syllabarum, et spatia longarum spatiis brevium: non in paginis (nam eo modo loca metimur, non tempora), sed cum voces pronuntiando transeunt, et dicimus, Longum carmen est, nam tot versibus contextitur; longi versus, nam tot pedibus constant; longi pedes, nam tot syllabis tenduntur; longa syllaba, nam dupla est ad brevem. Sed neque ita comprehenditur certa mensura temporis, quandoquidem fieri potest ut ampliori spatio temporis, personet versus brevior si productius pronuntietur, quam longior si correptius. Ita carmen, ita pes, ita syllaba.

[How then do I measure time itself? Or do we use a shorter time to measure a longer time, as when, for example, we measure a transom by using a cubit length? So we can be seen to use the length of a short syllable as a measure when we say that a long syllable is twice its length. By this method we measure poems by the number of lines, lines by the number of feet, feet by the number of syllables, and long vowels by short, not by the number of pages (for that would give us a measure of space, not of time). The criterion is the time words occupy in recitation, so that we say 'That is a long poem, for it consists of so many lines. The lines are long, for they consist of so many feet. The feet are long for they extend over so many syllables. The syllable is long, for it is double the length of a short one.'

Nevertheless, even so we have not reached a reliable measure of time. It may happen that a short line, if pronounced slowly, takes longer to read aloud than a longer line taken faster. The same principle applies to a poem or a foot or a syllable.]<sup>24</sup>

With its emphasis on performance, the word 'carmen' exists on the cusp between poetry and music. This ambiguity reflects the premodern proximity of the forms. The translator, Henry Chadwick, has chosen to translate 'carmen' as poem here because Augustine then breaks that unit down into verses, feet and syllables, clearly discussing prosody rather than melody. Whilst Augustine is evidently thinking about verbal rather than musical sound, and perhaps in poem rather than song, his subject is nevertheless oral performance. The repeated use of 'pronuntio' emphasizes a sounding out, a public proclamation. The ephemerality of performance gives it for Augustine its similarity to time. Recitation can be different each time; the performer can rush or linger over his or her vocalization. So time and oral recital prompt the same speculation in *The Confessions*: do they and where do they exist? And nowhere was this hybridity – between poem and song – more obvious than in psalmody which becomes an explicit subject in Augustine's consideration of time and metrics (IX. 27. 38). Indeed psalms were often intoned or chanted, rather than sung, and so their compositional ambiguity was produced, too, in performance. In Book X of the *Confessions*, Augustine movingly discusses

<sup>23</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Bk XI, ch. 8, PL 32, col. 0812; Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 225.

<sup>24</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Bk XI, ch. 26, dist. 33, PL 32, col. 0822; Augustine, *Confessions*, pp. 239-40.



'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

anxieties he had previously felt about the psalms' musical setting which had sometimes seemed to him to decorate the words too sensuously to be edifying (X, 33, 50). Psalms bridge the song and poem format and it is this span which produces Augustine's early disquiet.

Mark Currie, in his book on time and narrative, has considered Augustine's example of the psalm, comparing it to the modern reader's experience of time in the novel.<sup>25</sup> But Augustine is explicit that the most time-like words are not written *in paginis*, they are sounded out and so take up time rather than space. Like Psalms, the Book of Lamentations was also a performance piece and one of the poetry books of the Old Testament. But in contrast to the Psalms, the commentary tradition on Lamentations is thin until a comparatively late date; the book was best known to the medieval audience via the main performance modes of the Middle Ages, first in liturgy and then, in literary response, drama and lyric.<sup>26</sup> Quotations from Lamentations in these various ways were spoken, intoned or sung.<sup>27</sup> It was this combination of text and sound which made Lamentations such a critical text for counter-reformation composers after the Middle Ages. Indeed, the composer Nicola Vicento (1511-76) was to echo Augustine's uneasiness about the psalms (and also that of the Council of Trent about liturgical music more broadly) when he wrote: '[e]very singer must take care that when singing lamentations he does not sing a single ornament, lest the sorrowful character turn into a joyful mood'.<sup>28</sup> The evidence that concerns this essay, then, preserves traces of Lamentations as an acoustic event as much as a written text.

St Jerome had taken a special interest in the cadences of Hebrew poetry and tried to retain them in his Latin translation of Lamentations. In the prologue to his commentary on the Book of Jeremiah, Jerome explicitly mentions (suggesting that he had some pride in the fact) that his translation is metrical rather than prosaic: 'et civitatis suae ruinas quadruplici planxit alphabeto, quod nos mensurae metri versibusque reddidimus' [he (ie Jeremiah) lamented the ruins of his city in a fourfold alphabet, which we have translated into measured metre and verse].<sup>29</sup> As part of that verse rendition, Jerome chose to transliterate and so preserve the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (*Aleph, Beth, Gemel* etc) which prefaced each verse in the first four chapters of the Book, even though they couldn't, then, work as an acrostic in an otherwise Latin text. These are not a feature of the Septuagint and offer the rawest demonstration of Jerome's return to the Hebrew Bible. The alphabet, the discrete and irreducible core of language, resists translation. And so, in a letter to Paula, Jerome sets out a crib sheet giving the names of the Hebrew letters that she would encounter in his translations of Lamentations, parts of Proverbs and the alphabet Psalms. So *Aleph* is given as 'doctrina', *Beth* as 'domus', *Gemel*

<sup>25</sup> Currie, *About Time*, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> On the ninth-century Carolingian commentary tradition see, E. Ann Matter, 'The Lamentations Commentaries of Hrabanus Maurus and Paschasius Radbertus', *Traditio*, 38 (1982), 137-63 (*passim*). For a list of other commentaries see Philip S. Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), pp. 69-70, footnote 66.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the musical setting for the liturgical use of Lamentations, see Nils Holger Petersen, 'Liturgical Representation and Late Medieval Piety', in *Liturgy and the Arts in the Middle Ages: Studies in Honour of C. Clifford Flanigan*, ed. by Eva Louise Lillie and Nils Holger Petersen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1996), pp. 181-204 and the Jewish Virtual Library, [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0012\\_0\\_11786.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0012_0_11786.html) [accessed 23.x.2009].

<sup>28</sup> Nicola Vicento, *L'antica Musica ridotta alla moderna pratica* (1555), cited by Paul Van Nevel, 'A Short History of Lamentations', trans. by Derek Yeld, in *Lamentations de la Renaissance* (Harmonia Mundi: 2008), pp. 12-16 (p. 14).

<sup>29</sup> Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Liber Jeremiae*, PL 28, col. 0848C.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

as 'plenitudo' and so on; there are twenty-two and Jerome gives a name for each.<sup>30</sup> The later ninth- to fourteenth-century commentaries, and their intertext, Gilbert the Universal's gloss on Lamentations, refer back to Jerome's catalogue, acknowledging that the abecedarian logic of Lamentations can only be understood with this supplementary apparatus.<sup>31</sup>

Jerome regarded the sound of Hebrew as at once alienating and necessary; although harsh and foreign, reading Hebrew aloud was crucial to Jerome's scriptural studies.<sup>32</sup> In his epistolary eulogy to Paula, Jerome admires her ability to sing the psalms in Hebrew without trace of an accent.<sup>33</sup> He is aware, James Barr suggests, of the relationship in Jewish scholarship between correct pronunciation and correct interpretation.<sup>34</sup> For Jerome, then, *Hebraica veritas* could equally reside in sound as in sense. Jerome claims that his first forays into Hebrew were motivated by a personal asceticism. The sounds of spoken Hebrew and the base simplicity of the alphabet, together, are a cooling tonic which Jerome says he applied to stave off unwanted desires in the desert heat:

Dum essem juvenis, et solitudinis me deserta vallarent, incentiva vitiorum ardoremque naturae ferre non poteram, quem cum crebris jejuniis frangerem, mens tamen cogitationibus aestuabat. Ad quam edomandam, cuidam fratri, qui ex Hebraeis crediderat, me in disciplinam dedi, ut post Quintiliani acumina, Ciceronis fluvios, gravitatemque Frontonis, et lenitatem Plinii, alphabetum discerem, et stridentia anhelantiaque verba meditarer.

[While I was young, and solitude entrenched me in the desert, I could not bear the provocations of vice and desire, which I broke with frequent fasting, nevertheless the mind was boiling with thoughts. In order to subdue it, I became a pupil of a certain brother, of the Hebrew faith, in order that, after the acumen of Quintilian, the fluency of Cicero, the gravitas of Fronto, and the smoothness of Pliny, I would learn the alphabet, and reflect on the rasping (stridentia) and panting (anhelanti) words]<sup>35</sup>

This claim for Hebrew as a technology of the self has been treated sceptically by modern scholars who have noted Jerome's clear admiration for the music he discovered in the Hebrew language.<sup>36</sup> The respiratory adjectives work against the sense in Jerome's reminiscence here, offering a point of identification between the young Jerome, beset by febrile fantasies, and the heavy breathing that he hears in Hebrew enunciated. Indeed, 'anhelare' can carry the extended sense of panting after something, of pursuing it with eagerness.<sup>37</sup> In contrast the decorous 'acumina', 'fluvios', 'gravitatem' and 'lenitatem' of the Latin rhetoricians, which rather suggest control, do not similarly mirror young man's raging passions. But for Jerome Hebrew, like the alphabet, is stripped bare, an *ursprache*, closer to breath and sound than meaning. Indeed, they both offer the poetic quality

<sup>30</sup> For discussion of the names for the Hebrew letters and Jerome's contribution to this tradition, see H. Tur-Sinai, 'The Origin of the Alphabet', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 41 (1950): 83-109 and H. Tur-Sinai, 'The Origin of the Alphabet (Continued)', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 41 (1950): 159-179 (esp. p. 160).

<sup>31</sup> Matter, 'The Lamentations Commentaries', pp. 156-57 on Hrabanus and Radbertus; Gilbertus Universalis, *Glossa Ordinaria*, pp. 54 and 167. On the *introitus* of Stephen Langton, William of Alton, William of Luxi in the thirteenth century, see Sulavik, 'Principia and Introitus', *passim*.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology: A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah* (London: Brill, 2007), p. 49, footnote 31; James Barr, 'St Jerome's Appreciation of Hebrew', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 49 (1967), 281-302 (p. 293).

<sup>33</sup> Hieronymus Stridonensis, *Epistolae*, PL 22, col. 0902, #108 ch. 26.

<sup>34</sup> James Barr, 'St Jerome and the Sounds of Hebrew', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 12 (1967), 1-36 (p. 35).

<sup>35</sup> Hieronymus, *Epistolae*, PL 22, col. 1079, #125 ch. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Barr, 'St Jerome's Appreciation of Hebrew', pp. 285-86; Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship, and the Hebrew Bible: A Study of the Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesis* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1993), p. 48

<sup>37</sup> See the entry in Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

which Agamben has termed 'the thought of the voice alone', in the space 'between the withdrawal of mere sound and the arrival of signification'.<sup>38</sup> The chaotic self is subjected to the primal discipline of stuttering aspirated noise rather than the rhetorical facility of Latin. Jerome's Hebraic studies were less a philosemitism than a fantasy about reaching into the past, about touching a time, a prelapsarian time, when language was less artful, closer to the inner life, and closer to God.<sup>39</sup>

Augustine also has fantasises about turning back time. He pictures himself speaking to Moses, the putative author of Genesis, about the creation. He worries, though, that he will not share a language with the patriarch:

Audiam et intelligam quomodo in principio fecisti coelum et terram. Scripsit hoc Moyses, scripsit et abiit, transivit hinc a te ad te; neque nunc ante me est. Nam si esset, tenerem eum, et rogarem eum, et per te obsecrarem ut mihi ista panderet; et praerberem aures corporis mei sonis erumpentibus ex ore ejus. Et si hebraea voce loqueretur, frustra pulsaret sensum meum, nec inde mentem meam quidquam tangeret; si autem latine, scirem quid diceret.

May I hear and understand how in the beginning you made heaven and earth. Moses wrote this. He wrote this and went his way, passing out of this world from you to you. He is not now before me, but if he were, I would clasp him and ask him and through you beg him to explain to me the creation. I would concentrate my bodily ears to hear the sounds breaking forth from his mouth. If he spoke Hebrew, he would in vain make an impact on my sense of hearing, for the sounds would not touch my mind at all. If he spoke Latin, I would know what he meant.<sup>40</sup>

The idea that Moses might speak Latin is a somewhat reedy hope and outweighed by the more realistic pessimism which precedes it. The text of Genesis can be translated into Greek and Latin but, like Moses himself, spoken Hebrew passes away before it has been properly understood. Even if Augustine could hold (tenerem) Moses and stop his passing through time, he couldn't grasp his sense from the noises he makes. Augustine describes a profound separation from the source to which Jerome claims ready access. Moses' words break forth (erumpentibus) in a way which causes a violent dis severance (and the word 'pulsaret' suggests a physical assault) between the listening ear and the mind, which cause, indeed, a deafness. Jerome and Augustine essentially agree that Hebrew offers a noisy, even ear-splitting key to the Mosaic past; but they disagree on the potential use-value of violent noise. Whilst Jerome sees the aggressive breathy otherness of Hebrew as a way of chastising his wayward self, Augustine fears that it will break him, and by extension the Church, apart. Hebrew operates beyond the reasonable limits of stretch, threatening to rupture continuous Christian isomorphism. Augustine's opposition to Jerome's extra use of the Hebrew Bible and also Jewish consultants had always been that it would bring schism to the Christian church.<sup>41</sup> Augustine's preferred base text for translation was the Septuagint which was purportedly insuflated by the Holy Spirit so that its seventy translators spoke with one

<sup>38</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 66.

<sup>39</sup> Michael A. Signer, 'From Theory to Practice: the *De Doctrina Christiana* and the Exegesis of Andrew of St Victor', in *Reading and Wisdom. The De Doctrina Christiana of Augustine in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edward D. English (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 84-98 (p. 89) has also rejected the idea of Jerome's use of Hebrew text and Jewish advisors as 'philosemitism'.

<sup>40</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Bk XI, ch. 3, dist. 5, *PL* 32, cols 0811; Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 223.

<sup>41</sup> Signer, 'From Theory to Practice', pp. 88-89.

'Ye that pasen by þe weye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

voice; again the imagery used to connect text to divine authority was breath and voice.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, spiration was the mode of the divine animus which accounts for the special emphasis on breath in Jerome's description of Hebrew as 'stridentia anhelantiaque verba'.

But self-denial has never been antithetical to sensuous pleasure and Jerome displays an evident *jouissance* in his engagement with Hebrew scriptural poetry. His submission to alphabetic discipline was also a source of some satisfaction, offering him a sonorous structure for his translation. Jerome's account of the acrostic form in the letter to Paula is integrated into a description of the metre of each Biblical book in which it is found; for Lamentations he writes:

Habes et in Lamentationibus Jeremiae quatuor Alphabeta, e quibus duo prima quasi Saphico metro scripta sunt: quia tres versiculos qui sibi connexi sunt, et ab una tantum littera incipiunt Heroici comma concludit. Tertium vero Alphabetum trimetro scriptum est, et a ternis litteris, sed eisdem terni versus incipiunt. Quartum Alphabetum simile est primo, et secundo.

You have in the Lamentations of Jeremiah four alphabets, of which the first two are as if in Sapphic metre, of which three lesser verses, which are connected to one another, begin from only one letter, and conclude with a Heroic caesura. However the third alphabet is written in trimeter and from threefold (but the same) letters, begin threefold verses. The fourth alphabet is similar to the first and the second.<sup>43</sup>

Jerome's attention to patterning makes his a translation as much for the ear as for the reading eye. Although it is important for Paula to have a ready key to the meanings of the Hebrew letters, and in spite of a policy of translating *non verbum pro verbo*, Jerome nonetheless pays attention to poetic form.<sup>44</sup> This was less a purely literary conceit than an attempt to capture phonetically the authenticity that was apparently locked into the language of the Old Testament; Jerome found supernal power to reside in the harmonious coincidences of versified text.

Just as later Bible manuscripts made a special feature of the Hebrew letters, rubricating and sizing them larger than the rest of the script, the commentaries were universally enchanted by the alphabetic verse form.<sup>45</sup> The poetic form of Lamentations was also perceived to be integral to its literal sense in its medieval life.<sup>46</sup> John Lathbury's (d. 1362) popular commentary used the Roman alphabet as a chapter scaffold; in manuscript these letters were usually decorated.<sup>47</sup> Lathbury was explicitly interested in versification and his commentary included both an account of Jerome's verse analysis and an eclectic citational range from the

<sup>42</sup> On the myth of the Septuagint, see for example Signer, 'From Theory to Practice', p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> Hieronymus, *Epistolae*, PL 22, cols 0442-0443, #30.

<sup>44</sup> On Jerome as a translator, see Rita Copeland, 'The Fortunes of "non verbum pro verbo" or, why Jerome is not a Ciceronian', in *The Medieval Translator: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. by R. Ellis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 15-35 (esp. p. 29). For a consideration of the acrostic form and the literary possibilities of the Book of Lamentations in the later ordinary gloss, see E. Ann Matter, 'The Legacy of the School of Auxerre: Glossed Bibles, School Rhetoric, and the Universal Gilbert', *Temas Medievales*, 14 (2006), 85-98 (pp. 90-92).

<sup>45</sup> For a picture of a manuscript page of Lamentations 1.1 with a large rubricated *Aleph*, see Matter, 'The Legacy of the School of Auxerre', p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> On the medieval response to literary form in scripture, see A. J. Minnis, 'Literary Theory in Discussions of *Formae Tractandi*', p. 138.

<sup>47</sup> See for example the first initial in British Library manuscript, Harley 4665 spaces have been left throughout the manuscript for others.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

classical and medieval poetic canon.<sup>48</sup> The verse effects on display in Lamentations necessitated a special defence in Stephen Langton's (c. 1150-1228) *introit* to Lamentations. He first raises the concern that it might not be appropriate for so sorrowful a text to be rendered in verse, which is necessarily pleasurable, but counters with the assertion that poetry augments rather than counters mood, 'metrica delectatio quando inuenit animum dolentem, dolorem exaggerat; quando gaudentem, gaudium adauget' [when the sorrowful mind happens upon pleasing verse it exaggerates sorrow; when joyful it augments joy], doubling up the nouns *dolorem* and *gaudium* with their adjectival forms as if to prove the point.<sup>49</sup> Oddly in a defence of poesy, Lady Philosophy's denunciation of poetry, from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, is then cited to confirm that poetry does not heal but rather inures the sick man to his suffering. The repeated patterning of the four alphabets in Lamentations also encouraged numerological speculation; for Radbertus the four alphabets symbolized the four seasons, elements, climates, evangelists, excellent virtues and the rivers of paradise; for Langton, they corresponded with the number of days that Lazarus lay dead before his resurrection.<sup>50</sup> John Lathbury found Trinitarian significance in the fact that the third poem of Lamentations tripled the acrostic structure.<sup>51</sup> In these several ways the medieval commentaries accreted significances around the book, finding its poetry to be like numerology, fitted with magical portent. And there was poetry too in the liturgical use of Lamentations. For a culture that believed extensively in the mystical authority of Hebrew letters and words, the melismatic use of the Hebrew alphabet in the otherwise Latin liturgy must have provided a special numinous soundtrack to the gradual extinguishing of candles in the predawn *Tenebrae* services in the days before Easter.<sup>52</sup>

Giorgio Agamben has also discussed Jerome's sensitivity to Biblical poetry, although this time in his translation of the more ornamental parts of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.<sup>53</sup> Agamben's point is to observe the way that poetic form, and especially rhyme, is intimately connected to Christian ideas of messianic time after Paul:

The poem is therefore an organism or temporal machine that, from the very start, strains towards its end. A kind of eschatology occurs within the poem itself. But for the brief time that the poem lasts, it has a specific and unmistakable temporality, it has its *own* time.<sup>54</sup>

Aural effects are not only stylistic froth in scriptural translation. Instead they serve to 'transform chronological time into messianic time', which then returns, repeats and completes itself.<sup>55</sup> A poem encapsulates and enacts Paul's notion of the 'time that remains', the suspension of time before the eschaton. Agamben has connected

<sup>48</sup> For a full description of Lathbury's *oeuvre*, see Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), pp. 221-239 and 339-344; and, particularly on Lathbury's interest in versification, see pp. 228-29.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen Langton, 'Introitus super Threnos B', in Sulavik, 'Principia and Introitus', p. 301.

<sup>50</sup> Radbertus, *Threnos*, PL 120, col. 063A and Langton, 'Introitus', p. 301.

<sup>51</sup> Lathbury, *Liber Moraliū in Threnos Hieremias*, excerpts printed in Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity*, pp. 373-78.

<sup>52</sup> On the opacity and magic of Hebrew in the Middle Ages, see Naomi Seiman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 168. See also the discussion of the Tetragrammaton and other Hebrew talismanic inscriptions in Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Penn State University Press, 2006), pp. 25, 107, 112 and the discussion of the magical power thought to reside in the Hebrew alphabet, in the medieval use of Lamentations also see Norman K. Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, rev. edn (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 25.

<sup>53</sup> Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 87.

<sup>54</sup> Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 79, the emphasis here is Agamben's.

<sup>55</sup> Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 82 for this quotation.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

the development of tail rhyme in late antique and medieval poetics with the temporal objectives of the Pauline letters, considering typological millenarianism to be foundational in the emergence of 'semantic parallelism' in Christian poetry.<sup>56</sup> Augustine's discussion of poetry and time suggests exactly this exchange between verse form and philosophies of time and his special emphasis on hymnody demonstrates the importance of ritual performance in shaping that exchange. Liturgical music, one of the central elements of ritual enactment, also patterns time, suspending it in melodic circles.<sup>57</sup> The musical setting of Lamentations, indeed, effected a special suspension of time, symbolically replicating the days that Christ spent in between death and life before the resurrection. Other aspects of medieval verse, aspects which emerge in the early assessments of the poetic qualities of Lamentations, ought also to be considered as part of this soteriological machinery. The interest in numerology evident in the commentaries, for example, organizes the separate poems of Lamentations into overlaid groups. Further, not only is the alphabet a Hebrew relic which holds out the possibility of reaching back to an origin and meeting God in the past, it also offers another kind of straining to an end and, thus, an encounter with God in the future. Mary Carruthers has discussed the way in which the Hebrew alphabet could be used, like other alphabets, as a mnemonic set; alphabets suggested themselves as memory technologies in this way because they proceeded incrementally and predictably to their conclusions.<sup>58</sup>

Jerome translated scriptural poetry in versified ways, not for the sake of pattern only but in an effort to reflect enigmatic glimpses of God even in the temporal world in the manner suggested by St Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.12 'Videmus nunc per speculum in ænigmatē: tunc autem facie ad faciem' [We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face]. The apostle's statement here is, of course, about time, strung between now (*nunc*) and the future (*tunc*). Now is experienced as a resistant and reflective surface which needs to be penetrated in order to obtain unmediated contact with God. For Augustine the human ability to see the shape of a whole psalm as if from above while it is sung, the ability to remember back to its beginning and expect its future conclusion, resembles, however distantly, God's knowledge of the past and the future:

Certe si est tam grandi scientia et praescientia pollens animus, cui cuncta praeterita et futura ita nota sint, sicut mihi unum canticum notissimum; nimium mirabilis est animus iste, atque ad horrorem stupendus: quippe quem ita non lateat quidquid peractum, et quidquid reliquum saeculorum est; quemadmodum me non latet cantantem illud canticum, quid et quantum ejus abierit ab exordio, quid et quantum restet ad finem.

[Certainly if there were a mind endowed with such great knowledge and prescience that all things past and future could be known in the way I know a very familiar psalm, this mind would be utterly miraculous and amazing to the point of inducing awe. From such a mind nothing of the past would be hidden, nor anything of what remaining ages have in store, just as I have full knowledge of that psalm I sing. I know by heart what and how much of it has passed since the beginning, and what and how much remains until the end.]<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, p. 85. He has also offered a more detailed account of the problem of endings in poetry, given the disjunction of sound and sense, again connecting it to Christian theology in Agamben, *The End of the Poem*, pp. 109-15. Others, too, have connected up early Christian liturgy and thought with rhymed versification; see Michael McKie, 'The Origins and Early Development of Rhyme in English Verse', *The Modern Language Review*, 92 (1997), 817-31 (p. 817).

<sup>57</sup> On liturgical music as a representation of Christian time, see Petersen, 'Liturgical Representation', p. 196.

<sup>58</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 109-11. The idea of the Old Testament acrostics, and the one in Lamentations in particular, as *aide-mémoires* has been discussed by Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>59</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Book XI, ch. 31, dist. 41, PL 32, col. 0826; Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 245

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

This is Augustine's regular reading of human experience as a heuristic spur to an understanding of God, which had always been predicated on St Paul's idea of the mirror.<sup>60</sup> The mental experience of singing a psalm, of observing time pass, is a sign or part, albeit much degraded, of the divine intellect. The singing of the Psalm is like the Pauline mirror, reflecting those aspects of humanity which are made in the image of God. So the time of Augustine's psalm is like Paul's now (*nunc*), and now is a pale reflection of eternity. Time is not the same as eternity but offers a remote 'conceptual stimulus' an enigmatic mirror in which eternity might be glimpsed.<sup>61</sup> In this excerpt the years still to come and the remainder of the psalm still to be sung are both described with words – 'reliquum', 'restet' – which recall Paul's soteriological use of the imagery of remnant and residue that he found in the prophetic texts of the Old Testament (eg 1 Corinthians 7.29; Romans 11. 1-26 and cf Ezechiel 6; Isaiah 10.20). In the next section I shall be considering the use of this same imagery in the late medieval texts which used Lamentations 1.12, which were invariably in rhymed verse, showing the way that they operate as 'temporal machines', enacting the eschatology they describe.

*Part II: Remnants and residue, passing and stretching*

'Time doesn't change us it just unfolds us'  
~Max Frisch, *Sketchbook* (1946-49)

The medieval appropriations of Lamentations 1.12 resorted to the language of remains and remaining in a way which exceeded the literal sense of the text they translated. The 'Long Charter of Christ', the *Fasciculus Morum* and the Lamentations lyric in Friar Grimestone's preaching book, for example, all use the adjective 'abide' (remain/stay) to translate the imperative 'attendite' in their reference to Lamentations 1.12:

Yhe men þat gase by þis way  
Abydes & lokes on me to-day  
And redes on þis parchemyne  
If any sorow be lyke to myne  
*O vos omnes qui transitis per viam attendite & videte & cetera*  
Standes & here þis charter red  
Whi I am wounded & all forbled.<sup>62</sup>

A, 3e men, þat by me wendenn,  
Abydes a while and loke on me,  
3ef 3e fyndenn in any ende  
Suche sorow as here 3e se on me.<sup>63</sup>

Ye that pasen by þe weiye,  
Abidet a little stounde.  
Beholdet, all my felawes,  
Yef any me lik is founde.  
To the Tre with nailes thre

<sup>60</sup> See for example the use of the Corinthians passage in Augustinus Hipponensis, *De Trinitate*, PL 42, cols 1067-1071, Book XV, chs 8-10.

<sup>61</sup> The quotation comes from another discussion of Augustine's theories of time and their enduring influence, Friedrich-Wilhelm Von Herrmann, *Augustine and the Phenomenological Question of Time*, trans. by Frederick Van Fleteren and Jeremiah Hackett (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2008), p. 46.

<sup>62</sup> 'The Long Charter of Christ', in *The Middle English Charters of Christ*, ed. by Mary C. Spalding (Bryn Mawr: Furst, 1914), A-text, ll. 93-96.

<sup>63</sup> Wenzel ed., *The Fasciculus Morum*, p. 216.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

Wol fast I hange bounde,  
With a spere all thoru my side,  
To mine herte is mad a wounde.<sup>64</sup>

'Abide' was the word that the Wycliffite Bible, the *Midland Prose Psalter* and the *Northern Verse Psalter* used to translate the Vulgate's 'expectare' in Psalms 26.14, 39.1 and Isaiah 8.17.<sup>65</sup> These passages, which issued the instruction to wait for the Lord, were also those which informed St Paul's eschatology and both the Vulgate Bible and the Wycliffite Bible maintain that correspondence. The old prophetic texts had been fulfilled at the resurrection and were reissued by the apostle in anticipation of the messianic return. 1 Corinthians 16.11-13, for example, refers directly to Psalm 26.14 'Expecta Dominum, viriliter age: et confortetur cor tuum, et sustine Dominum' [Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord]. The apostle assures the Corinthians that he will join them in the wait for the Lord: 'exspecto enim illum cum fratribus... Vigilate, state in fide, viriliter agite, et confortamini' [For I look for him with the brethren ... Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened]. The Wycliffite Bible translates 'expectare' with abide in both cases. The use of 'abide' and the new insistence on the suspension of time in the medieval Lamentations passages, then, bound that text, too, into prophetic and Pauline chronologies.

I cite the 'Charter of Christ' from Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poetry 175, rather than other witnesses, because of its much clearer interest in time, in making the two imperatives, 'abydes' and 'look', relate to 'today' (perhaps with a look askance at the 'day of God's fierce anger' in the Vulgate text, askance because the word here is 'dies' not 'hodie'). Indeed, in the shift from 'day' to 'today', the Rawlinson MS 'Charter of Christ' much more emphatically collapses time into the extended present before the eschaton, a time which reflected God's a-temporality. Augustine used a similar distinction, between 'day' and 'today' to imagine eternity; 'Anni tui dies unus; et dies tuus non quotidie, sed hodie, quia hodiernus tuus non credit crastino; neque enim succedit hesterno. Hodiernus tuus aeternitas' [Your 'years' are 'one day' and your 'day' is not any and every day but Today, because your Today does not yield to a tomorrow, nor did it follow on a yesterday. Your today is eternity].<sup>66</sup> Both the Grimestone lyric and the verse in the *Fasciculus Morum* also embroider the word 'abide', giving a sense of the length of suspension by adding 'a while' and 'a little stounde'. These lyrics themselves occupy a 'little stounde', momentarily suspending the reader's time in mimesis of Christian messianism and the *hodie* of God.

A similar effect can be observed in the use of the same passage in the *York Pinners' Crucifixion Play*:

All men that walk by way or street,  
Take tent ye shall no travail tine.  
Behold mine head, mine hands, and my feet,  
And fully feel now, ere ye fine,  
If any mourning may be meet,

<sup>64</sup> R. T. Davies ed., *Medieval English Lyrics: A Critical Anthology* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), # 46, p. 125. This theme, and other related ones in medieval lyrics have been most fully discussed by Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 36-44. Woolf, though, is differently engaged in determining the literary quality of such verse.

<sup>65</sup> *Middle English Dictionary*, *abiden*, meaning 8.

<sup>66</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Bk XI, ch. 13, dist. 16, PL 32, col. 0815; Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 230.



'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

Or mischief measured unto mine.<sup>67</sup>

Staged in the street, the *Pinner's Play* makes the contemporary cityscape of York into Jerusalem, the site both of Christ's crucifixion and the Babylonian occupation to which the Lamentations' widow is witness, even doubling the Latin *viam* into 'way and street', particularly to stress the urban scene.<sup>68</sup> The word 'now' is specially enunciated in the middle of the fourth line here; the editor has placed a comma to indicate the caesura that the word signals. The action of the play is arrested and slowed by this speech; what has previously been black comedic banter switches into high liturgical tragedy.<sup>69</sup> That shift is written into the presentism of performance and encapsulated in the word 'now'.

This augmentation of the theme of time in medieval appropriations of Lamentations was suggested by the way that the passage already seemed imbued with the language of temporality. In particular, the language both of passing and attending spoke directly to medieval understandings of time in motion. The idea of time passing is still indelibly recorded in ways of speaking about time. Not least, a sense of passage is preserved in discussions of grammatical tense in the use of the word *past* - which adapts the verb 'to pass' in the same way that the French *passé* comes from *passer*, a relationship which is found, indeed, in all the main European languages. *Transire* is regularly the Latin verb used to describe the movement of time, emphasising this sense of time in motion. It is partly through discussion of *passing* time that Augustine makes his discussion about metrics and poetic rhythm into one about topology, space and shape, asking where is time, through what does it pass? How, he wonders, does the future diminish and the past expand? Thus he imagines both time past and time yet to come in continuous deformation (XI, xxviii, 37). He concludes by locating time within the mind, the past is held in the memory, the present in observation and the future in expectation; the element, then, that time passes through is the attention of an observer who concentrates on the singing or listening to a psalm as it sounds. The mind, then, gives sound a shape in time.

Lamentations 1.12 is also interested in the actions of passing and paying attention:

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam,  
attendite, et videte  
si est dolor sicut dolor meus!

[O all ye that pass by the way, / attend, and see / If there be any sorrow like to my sorrow].

And these interests were duly transferred to later medieval renditions as, for example, in the *York Pinner's Crucifixion Play*, which I cited above. The citation from Lamentations was apt here because the audience for the York drama *were* passers by, urban pedestrians like those addressed in the razed ruins of Jerusalem in Lamentations. No doubt whilst many stopped to watch the play, others must have drifted and travelled about even as the play was performed; their passing is written into the play: 'And fully feel now, ere ye fine' (l. 256). The word 'fine' can carry both the general sense of passing, but is also used in the more targeted sense of

<sup>67</sup> 'York Pinner's Play', ll. 253-58, in *The York Mystery Plays: A Selection in Modern Spelling*, ed. by Richard Beadle and Pamela M. King (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), p. 220.

<sup>68</sup> This urban theme also governs Dante's interest in Lamentations, according to Martinez, 'Mourning Beatrice', pp. 19-20.

<sup>69</sup> For a different discussion of the transformative effect of this speech, see Pamela King, *The York Mystery Cycle and the Worship of the City* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), p. 149.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

passing *away*, of dying.<sup>70</sup> In this ambiguity, the audience become symbolic humans, moving through a life, overseen by an omniscient God. The mortuary use of the Lamentations passage also exploited the playful possibilities in the different senses in which people can be said to 'pass'.

Vous qe passez icy entour priez pur lalme le cortays *viaundour* Qe Iohan de Cobham avoit a  
*noun* Dieux luy face uerray *pardoun* Qe trepassa lendemayn de seint *Mathi* Le puisaunt otrie a  
 demorer *one ly* En lan de grace Mil CCC L *qatre* Ces enemis mortels fist *abatre*.  
 (Tomb of John of Cobham, Cobham, Kent)<sup>71</sup>

[You who pass here about pray for the soul of the courteous host called John of Cobham.  
 God grant him true pardon. Who passed away the day after the feast of Saint Matthew and  
 the almighty took him to remain with him in the year of grace 1354 and cast down his  
 mortal enemies].

Vous qe par icy *passetz* pur lalme Thomas de Cobham *priez* Qe trespessa la veille seynt  
 Thomas le *Apostre* Tout puisaunt luy otrie ademorer en companie le *vostre* En lan de grace  
 M CCC LX *Septisme* Le haut Trinite luy soyt defendour denfern *abisme*.  
 (Tomb of Thomas of Cobham, Cobham, Kent)

[You who pass by here pray for the soul of Thomas of Cobham who passed away on the  
 eve of Saint Thomas the Apostle. Almighty may you permit him to remain in our company  
 in the year of grace 1367. May the Holy Trinity be his defence against the abyss of hell.]

These verse inscriptions are also addressed to passers by who are asked to pray for the souls of those who have passed on, over or away. The echo of *passetz* in *trepassa* offers the two kinds of passing as different degrees of the same motion. John's tomb states and Thomas's asks that the man they memorialize be taken to live or remain (*demorer*) with the Lord, a word which Richard Glasser has noted is related to time as well as space in Old French.<sup>72</sup> In their passing, then, they become part of an attendant remnant, survivors of time itself. The imperative to pray demands the viewer's stopping, which parallels the more profound cessation the dead have achieved in the company of God. Both viewer and deceased might be said to *abide* in the dual sense that the word carries in the Charter of Christ and the Grimestone lyric, in anticipation of the end time. Although these inscriptions are written around the edges of the slab in one continuous line, they nonetheless rhyme. Just in the way that the other versified versions of Lamentations use rhyme to mimic the temporal suspensions of the liturgy, these stones evoke similar paradoxical postponements of things that have already been accomplished.

These tombstones radically excerpt the Lamentations passage, excising its mournful tone. Usually the *O vos omnes* citation was used on mortuary inscription as a *momento mori*; passers by were asked to remember that they too would come to resemble the decomposing cadaver that addressed them.<sup>73</sup> In this way they shared with the scriptural passage and its liturgical use a sepulchral association between mortal audience and the crucified Christ. In contrast, all that is preserved in the Cobham tombs is the address to the passerby and the idea of the

<sup>70</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, *sive* v1. meaning 2.

<sup>71</sup> The inscriptions of this tombstone and the one that follows can be found in J. G. Waller, 'The Lords of Cobham, Their Monuments, and the Church', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 11 (1877), 49-112 (p. 66). The Italics are mine and they indicate the rhyme scheme. These inscriptions are part of a tradition of tombs which address the passer by in a way which imitates Lamentations 1.12. For examples and further discussion see George Gilbert Treherne, *Eghwys Cymmin: Epitaphs* (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell, 1920), pp. 13-15. What is more there is a connection between this funeral use and the 'Charter of Christ' poems. According to the marginal note below the 'Charter of Christ' in British Library MS Sloane 3292, fol. 2: 'Mr Lambert a Justice of Peace in Kent found this on a grauestone in an Abby in Kent bearing date Ao Dni 1400'.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Glasser, *Time in French Life and Thought*, trans. by C. G. Pearson, first published 1936 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, the examples given in Treherne, *Eghwys Cymmin*, pp. 13-14.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

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3 survivor, although it is not the survivor who now offers the address; the imperative to pray seems instead to be  
4 issued by a third, disembodied voice. Whilst the Tenebrae office borrowed the funeral force of Lamentations  
5 for the re-enactment of the death of Christ, the Cobhams' funeral inscriptions, abandoning these liturgical  
6 associations, are further ahead in the story and presume the resurrection. In this way they rather oddly evade  
7 the obvious elegiac possibilities of the text. The triumphalism of these inscriptions retains none of the  
8 survivor's guilt from Lamentations. The extraordinary description of the deceased John as 'cortays viaundour'  
9 dispels any self-abasement in favour of a celebration of the gentry household and its cultures of hospitality.<sup>74</sup>  
10 The boundary between the household and the church here becomes indistinct; both are spaces influenced by  
11 Cobham generosity and patronage. There is an interesting literalism in this interpretation of the Pauline idea of  
12 the remnant. St Paul's urges: 'Unusquisque in qua vocatione vocatus est, in ea *permaneat* (1Corinthians 7.20) [Let  
13 every man abide in the same calling in which he was called]. Whilst St Paul's apparent support for the social  
14 status quo is more properly a negation of earthly social distinctions, which grow immaterial given the  
15 imminence of the end, John Cobham's tomb finds a pride in residual estate identifications which, it imagines,  
16 survive all mortal endings.<sup>75</sup> The Wycliffite Bible renders the Vulgate's *permaneat* as 'dwelle' (rather than 'abide'  
17 in the way that the later Rheims New Testament does), echoing the Old French *demorer* on the Cobham tombs.  
18 'Dwell', 'abide' and 'remain' were words which could work literally to pause an audience – those passing a  
19 pageant wagon in the street, reading an inscription in a church or listening to a lyric intoned – but they also  
20 invoked the suspension of time before the *parousia* and the resurrection of the dead.  
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31 The passer by is only a passer by in their relation to a stationary object or viewer. So the audience of  
32 the York cycle are passers by only in respect of the still point that is the crucified Christ, who speaks with the  
33 voice of the Lamentations' widow. The staging of the crucifixion offers, then, an attentive observer – Christ –  
34 with a vantage point who can see both from, and to where the audience move. The audience resemble the  
35 syllables of the psalm, passing before the attention of the psalmist. At the same time and in empathetic  
36 reflection, the audiences of all the Lamentations citations are asked to cease passing by and to pay attention.  
37 The York play renders it as 'take tent'. 'Tent' is an aphetic rendering of *attent* and so 'take tent', a faithful  
38 translation of *attendite*.<sup>76</sup> But this is also a part of the play's technical vocabulary and it is used repeatedly in the  
39 soldier-labourers' banter elsewhere (ll. 180, 185).<sup>77</sup> The pinners' guild is here advertising their 'nails large and  
40 long' (l. 30), used (amongst other things) to hammer animal skins onto the *tenture*, the frame used to stretch  
41 (*tent*) skin in parchment making. 'Attention' is itself a word about stretching, coming from the Latin *ad+tendere*.  
42 Gregory the Great famously imagines attention, a straining to comprehend, as a literal stretching in his famous  
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49 <sup>74</sup> The unusual character of this inscription is noted by Waller, 'The Lords of Cobham', p. 66. These tombs are also  
50 discussed in the context of the Cobham family and medieval cultures of memorialisation in Nigel Saul, *Death, Art and*  
51 *Memory in Medieval England: The Cobham Family and their Monuments, 1300-1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), see  
52 esp. p. 96.

53 <sup>75</sup> On St Paul's thinking here and its significance in terms of later Marxist ideas about the imminent abolition of class, see  
54 Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, pp. 29-34.

55 <sup>76</sup> OED, *Tent*, n2.

56 <sup>77</sup> Beadle, 'The York Cycle', pp. 209-21 and, for a broad discussion of late medieval and early modern properties and  
57 product placement, see Jonathan Gil Harris, 'Properties of Skill: Product Placement in Early English Artisanal Drama', in  
58 *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. by Natasha Korda and Jonathan Gil Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge  
59 University Press, 2002), pp. 35-66.  
60

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

simile of the preacher as a harpist, plucking the taut strings of his *intent* flock.<sup>78</sup> The instruction in the York play is to stretch the mind in an apprehension of the crucified Christ. This speech is the *peripeteia* of the 'Pinner's Play' and at this moment itself effects a kind of dramatic stretching out as the workmen's colloquial, choppy badinage is replaced by sustained and measured scriptural citation.

And stretch was an acknowledged property of time. The act of attending to passing time was, Augustine argued, a kind of interior stretch as he elaborates in his discussion of psalmody:

cantantis notumve canticum audientis, exspectatione vocum futurarum et memoria  
praeteritarum variatur affectus, sensusque distenditur

[A person singing or listening to a song he knows well suffers a distension or stretching in feeling and in sense perception from the expectation of future sounds and the memory of past sound.]<sup>79</sup>

One of Augustine's central conclusions was that time was a threefold *distentio animi*, a mental stretch between the past, the present and the future. The idea of stretch and time may have been suggested by St Paul whose letter to the Philippians describes the effect of waiting as a stretching forward:

si quo modo occurram ad resurrectionem, quæ est ex mortuis: non quod jam acceperim,  
aut jam perfectus sim: sequor autem, si quomodo comprehendam in quo et comprehensus  
sum a Christo Jesu. Fratres, ego me non arbitror comprehedissee. Unum autem, quæ  
quidem retro sunt obliviscens, ad ea vero quæ sunt priora, extendens meipsum, ad  
destinatum persequor, ad bravium supernæ vocationis Dei in Christo Jesu.  
(Philippians 3.11-14).

[If by any means I may attain to the resurrection which is from the dead. Not as though I  
had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means  
apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count  
myself to have apprehended. But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and  
stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of  
the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus.]

In this Vulgate version, St Paul's *ἐπεκτεινόμενος* (*epeteinomenos*) is rendered fairly faithfully as *extendens*. Here Paul describes a mutual apprehension between God and the believer which causes this interior lengthening, a lengthening which covers the contracting time that is left. Thus time shrinks and meets the extension of the self. For Augustine this is where time exists: in the mind which is expanded to look at it. To look at time, to consider the whole span of a psalm while it is being sung, is to look at God who looks back at us; because time is a sign or simile for eternity and our observing it a sign or simile of God's knowledge of us past, present and future. This mutual looking is a regular theme in Middle English devotional lyrics, like those which cited Lamentations. Indeed, addresses from the cross which asked the reader or listener to behold, to see, to look were ubiquitous in lyric and mystical writing. Manuscript illuminations to such lyrics often literalised the instruction, providing an image that a reader could also see.<sup>80</sup> These held the pious attention in suspended time, perpetually bringing the suffering of Christ into the reader's present.

<sup>78</sup> Gregorius Magnus, *Regulae Pastoralis*, PL 77, col. 0049, Bk III, Prologue.

<sup>79</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Bk XI, ch. 31, PL 32, col. 0826; Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 245.

<sup>80</sup> See for example, British Library MS Harley 7322, fol. 109v, where a simple pen drawing sits above a lyric, asking the reader to 'behold me' in an otherwise unillustrated manuscript.

'Ye that pasen by þe weiye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

But Augustine does not choose exactly St Paul's sense of lengthening, opting instead for *distentio*. A great deal has been said about this *distention* of the mind and especially its influence on modern philosophies of time.<sup>81</sup> As Mary Carruthers has noted, *distentio* carried the extra sense of a distortion, recommending it over the more neutral *extensio* which implies an easier action, a smoothing out. *Distentio*, Carruthers reminds us, also suggests pain. *Distentio* is the Latin word for torture on the rack, as it is in the Vulgate's Hebrews 11.35, for example. This difference between distention and extension is like, I suggest, the difference between a thing which is stretched out flat like a parchment skin, and another which is both stretched and curved like the suspended dome of the firmament, the topological example with which I began.

Although Augustine compares the human psalmist and omniscient God, the divine mind is not distended: 'Sicut ergo nosti in principio coelum et terram sine varietate notitiae tuae, ita fecisti in principio coelum et terram sine *distentione* actionis tuae.' [Just as you knew heaven and earth in the beginning without bringing any variation into your knowing, so you made heaven and earth in the beginning without that meaning a *tension* (between past and future) in your activity].<sup>82</sup> But the incarnation, as Calvin L. Throup has remarked 'integrates time and eternity'.<sup>83</sup> And Christ experiences both time and pain, stretched, distorted and punctured at the crucifixion. Part of the soldiers' labour in the York play is to stretch Christ out before hammering nails through his hands and lifting the cross into its stay: 'Fast on a cord / And *tug* him to, by top and tail' (113-14), '*Lug* on ye both a little yet' (137). It is into the vocabulary of pulling and tightening that the word 'tent' fits. The word *tent* had another related but surgical meaning in Middle English, referring to an object used to stretch open a wound in order to clean and investigate it. This extra resonance offers a special intensity and particularity to the next line of the 'Pinner's Play': 'Behold mine head, mine hands, and my feet' (l. 255) as the audience is asked to scrutinize the wounds with a surgical thoroughness to look upon, into and beyond them. The dialectic of stretching and rupturing operate together to describe the temporal effect of the crucifixion.

The 'Charter of Christ' poem, and the larger charter of Christ tradition within which it fits, remind us that stretch is one of the main properties of skin, using the elaborate metaphor of Christ stretched on the cross, just in the way that skin is stretched in the process of making parchment. And I think the 'Pinner's Play' implicitly alludes to the charter tradition, finding its range of parchment metaphors convenient for its product placement. The passage from the *Fasciculus Morum* which contains the Lamentations lyric also refers to the making of Christ's charter; these uses are clearly very closely intertextual.<sup>84</sup> The apparent swap, of Christ's human skin for the animal skin out of which parchment was more usually made, was apt because Christ's skin was a kind of sheep's skin and Christ the paschal lamb, an image which recalled yet another sense of passing

<sup>81</sup> Mary Carruthers, 'Meditations on the "Historical Present" and "Collective Memory" in Chaucer and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Time in the Medieval World*, ed. by Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 137-55 (pp. 153-54). On the question of Augustine's influence, see also Throup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom*, p. 93 and Herrmann, *Augustine and the Phenomenological Question of Time*, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> Augustinus, *Confessiones*, Bk XIII, ch. 31, PL 32, col 0826; Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 245. The English translates a different manuscript version, hence the extra thought which I have put in parenthesis.

<sup>83</sup> Calvin L. Throup, *Temporality, Eternity, and Wisdom: The Rhetoric of Augustine's 'Confessions'* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), p. 104.

<sup>84</sup> *Fasciculus Morum*, pp. 214-15.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

over. The 'Charter of Christ' offers the Christ's skin-as-parchment idea with a double repetition of the word 'stre(y)ned', deliberately to strain the point:

Till a pyler I was pyght  
 Tuged & tawed all a nyght  
 And waschen in myne awen blode  
 And straytely *strened* on þe rode  
*Streyned* to drye on þe rode tre  
 As parchemyne aw for to be<sup>85</sup>

The same emphases are on display in the larger tradition as in this example from the 'Charter of Oure Heritage', an item which was often included in the prose compilation, *The Pore Caitiff*:

And was þe(re) neuer skinne of shepe ne calfe so harde *strained* upon the tentoure or upon  
 þe harow of a parcheme(n)t maker as was þe blessid bode of oure lorde ihu criste for ou(r)  
 love *strained* upon þe gebet of the crosse.<sup>86</sup>

These texts played with the form of the charter, always incorporating the conventional charter opening: 'Sciant futuri et presentes', which was another direct address, this time issued both to a contemporary and a future audience.<sup>87</sup> The 'Charter of Christ' poems placed this preamble just after the 'O vos omnes' citation from Lamentations; thus the charter form extended the imperatives of the Lamentations passage with yet another temporal device and, conversely, the scriptural quotation enhanced the sense of legal and ritual formality provided by the charter diplomatic. The charter's parchment is made from Christ's skin, which is tattooed with his blood and Jews' spittle, the charter is sealed with wax from his melted heart. The manuscript pages on which these texts were written were thus grotesquely transformed into the body of Christ, connecting the reader's present with the crucifixion, through the cutaneous materiality of the page.

Sometimes the poem was depicted on the manuscript folio as if laid out like a charter, with its seal attached to the tongue or *queue*, giving a sense of a material object like a *trompe d'oeil*. In at least one instance this is held out by a wounded Christ, as it is in British Library Additional MS 37049, fol. 23r.<sup>88</sup> Christ is at once shown in his skin and, at the same time, holding it out for the reader's inspection. We might compare Christ's holding out of his own legible skin with the way that flayed skin is represented elsewhere: in the same frame as the unflayed or partially flayed body as if both could be true at the same moment. Whilst from the mid-sixteenth century the story of the martyrdom of the flayed St Bartholomew (the patron saint of tanners) gave anatomical artists a narrative frame for their *échorchés*, conventionally the saint had always been shown *in* his skin; most often he was holding the knife that would, in time, be used to flay him or, sometimes and more gorily, with his skin draped over his arm.<sup>89</sup> In the most common images of the saint with the emblem of the

<sup>85</sup> 'The Long Charter of Christ', ed. Spalding, ll. 78-80.

<sup>86</sup> British Library MS Harley 4012, fol. 69v.

<sup>87</sup> The documentary and bureaucratic form of the 'Charters of Christ' has been most fully considered by Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5.

<sup>88</sup> The image is printed in Douglas Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (London: Routledge, 1972), plate 5. This example is actually of the 'Short Charter of Christ'. For an example of a charter which stands alone, see British Library, Stowe MS 620, folio 11v.

<sup>89</sup> For discussions of St Bartholomew and the culture of anatomy, see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), esp. pp. 186-87 and Daniela Bohde, 'Skin and the Search for the Interior: The Representation of Flaying in the Art and Anatomy of the Cinquecento', in *Bodily Extremities: Preoccupations with the Human Body in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. by Florike Egmond and Robert Zwijnenberg (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 10-47 (p. 10). St Bartholomew is discussed in relation to manuscript culture by Sarah Kay,

'Ye that pasen by þe weye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

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3 knife, Bartholomew wears heavily draped clothing and, at a time where so much clothing was made of skin, this  
4 offered a clear visual prompt for an audience versed in hagiography. Robert Mills, in his discussion of  
5 representations of the flaying of the corrupt official Sisamnes has noted the similarity to those of St  
6 Bartholomew: the relationship between skin and draped clothing is pronounced and the removed skin appears  
7 in the same image as the body either intact or in the process of being skinned.<sup>90</sup> In Gerard David's late  
8 fifteenth-century painting of the scene, Sisamnes' son sits on the seat of justice spread with the skin which is  
9 being removed from his father in the foreground of the same picture. Both parts of the picture are crowded  
10 with people in copious drapery; blood-red fabric lies swathed and crumpled beneath the bench on which  
11 Sisamnes is flayed.<sup>91</sup> Mills has also read images of the flayed body as, amongst other things, ones which 'traded  
12 in motifs of temporal postponement', the skinned body hangs between life and death, 'resisting the demands of  
13 history'.<sup>92</sup> The removal and treatment of skin in medieval representations symbolizes a folding even in the  
14 fabric of time as skin in its natural, living state anachronistically touches itself in its treated, dead state. Skin  
15 offers an opportunity to explore synchronicity because a medieval audience readily understood the 'before and  
16 after' that was living skin and treated leather or parchment, eliding the industrial processes that effected those  
17 transformations. Medieval time, then, is less like a woven handkerchief and more like the leather pocket in  
18 which it is kept.  
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28 As well as stretching, then, both skin and time could fold and undulate. The 'Charters of Christ' are  
29 not represented or thought of as folded up – they are letters patent rather than letters closed and aim at eternity  
30 and rather than temporality – but the manuscripts in which they were written could be so closed. In the process  
31 of book production, once stretched into parchment, skin was folded and gathered into quires. Augustine's  
32 image of the sky as a temporal codex relies on both the stretched folio of the open book, signifying the 'now',  
33 and the lamellar form of the closed book, signifying the end of time. For Augustine, the open book that would,  
34 in time, be closed offered a temporary glimpse of the angels' book – God – which never would. The creaseless  
35 images of the Charters of Christ extended this idea, enlarging the medieval reader's impression that, on opening  
36 their manuscript, they were, however temporarily, in physical, indeed dermal proximity to the incarnation and  
37 the closest earthly reflection of the angels' eternal book.  
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#### 46 Conclusion: Judaism and the folds of Christian time

47 'It is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between  
48 us like a looping string, the distance being the doubled accretion of the thread and not the interval between'  
49 ~ William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1929).  
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52 'Original Skin: Flaying, Reading and Thinking in the Legend of Saint Bartholomew and Other Works', *Journal of Medieval and*  
53 *Early Modern Studies*, 36 (2006), 35-73. Kay has also compared the parchment metaphor in 'The Charter of Christ' (pp. 45-  
54 46).

55 <sup>90</sup> Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2005), chapter two,  
56 pp. 59-82.

57 <sup>91</sup> Mills, *Suspended Animation*, p. 68. There are numerous echoes between clothing and flayed skin in the images he discusses,  
58 see especially plates 67-68.

59 <sup>92</sup> The quotations come from Mills, *Suspended Animation*, pp. 61 and 82.  
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'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

Today people mostly experience the past first, then the present; whilst medieval Christians experienced time like that too, the future was also prefabricated – it already had a shape and duration – and the present, and after it the past, took on the same shape for the same duration. Human beings might pass one way but time passed the other. Anteriority and posterity depended upon view point, upon who, God or man, attended to the act of passing. The future was always already shaped and described by the prophetic texts; and if the future was hard to grasp it was only as insubstantial as the past, which was stored in the all too fallible memory. In another system of reversal, typology described how one event was an inversion of another, which occurred at a different time, which it cancelled or completed. The New Testament books folded over and covered the Old Testament texts, repealing and renewing their sentiments. And in these *volte-faces* the medieval Christian world always encountered its own Judaic origins. I have discussed the way that both Jerome and Augustine saw contemporary Jews and the Hebrew language as gate keepers to the Judeo-Christian past. The Jews were also, though, implicated in the Christian future; the Hebrew Bible foretold the things that were still to come. And, further, it was a commonplace of Christian thinking that the Jews would be converted during the end times and so were implicated in the future the Old Testament prophesied.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, it has often been noted that Christian attitudes towards Judaism were always embedded in discussions about time.<sup>94</sup> Kathleen Biddick has thus discussed the temporal effects of Christian typology arguing that:

Early Christians straightened out the unfolding of temporality (with its gaps and vicissitudes) into a theological timeline fantastically based on two distinct but related notions. First they posit a present ('this is now') exclusively as a Christian present. They cut off a Jewish 'that was then' from a Christian 'this is now'. They also imagined a specific direction to Christian time. They believed that the Christian new time – a 'this is now' – superseded a 'that was then' of Israel.<sup>95</sup>

I hope that I have shown in this essay that the Christian colonization of the Jewish text was neither straight, nor uni-directional. The example of Lamentations 1.12 shows the way in which Christian time was stretched, yes, but contorted at the crucifixion, folded over itself into multiple layers. Judaism was enfolded in these deformations, rather than being cleanly dissevered in the way that Biddick suggests. Christian liturgy staged its meditation on grief as a competitive advancement on the sufferings of Israel but it did so in vacillating turns. To conclude this essay I want to think about this schizoid past-future encounter with Judaism, through a reading of a story from the *Chronicon de rebus gestis Ricardi Primi* by Richard of Devizes (c. 1150 - c. 1200). There is a citation of Lamentations 1.12 in this text too and it offers, I suggest, a concentrated account of the themes that concern this essay and it is explicit about their being bound up in Judeo-Christian relations.

The chronicle as a whole narrates the story of Richard I's coronation and his failed crusade to the Holy Land. A strange digression, however, concerns the fortunes of two young Christian boys, one of whom is

<sup>93</sup> This idea is discussed in many places. See, for example, Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 20; David E. Timmer, 'Biblical Exegesis and the Jewish-Christian Controversy in the Early Twelfth Century', *Church History*, 58 (1989), 309-21 (esp. p. 315) and Steven F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, *Medieval Cultures*, 40 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> See for example, Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, pp. 1-8.

<sup>95</sup> Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 1.



'Ye that pasen by þe weye': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

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3 apprenticed to a Jewish Parisian Shoemaker.<sup>96</sup> This Shoemaker sends the boy, with a letter of recommendation,  
4 to a fellow Jew in Winchester. The boy and a companion work their passage to England and are separately  
5 employed on their arrival. When one day the first boy fails to return home from his labours, his friend raises  
6 the alarm:  
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9 'Tu,' inquit, 'fili sordide meretricis, tu latro, tu traditor, tu diabole, tu crucifixisti socium  
10 meum. Hei [sic] michi, modo quare non habeo uires hominis? Ego te manibus meis [sic].'  
11 Audiuntur in platea clamores uociferantis in ede; concurrunt undique Iudei et Christiani.  
12 Puerulus instat, et iam pro turba constantior, interpellatis presentibus cepit allegare pro  
13 socio. 'O uos,' ait, 'uiri qui conuenistis, "uidete si est dolor sicut dolor meus." Iste Iudeus  
14 diabolus est; iste cor meum de uentre meo rapuit; iste unicum sodalem meum iugulauit,  
15 presumo etiam quod manducauit. Filus quidam diaboli Iudeus Francigena, nec intelligo nec  
16 experior, Iudeus ille dedit sodali meo litteras mortis sue ad hominem istum. Ad hanc urbem  
17 uenit inductus immo seductus. Iudeo huic sepe seruiuit, et in domo eius nouissimo uisus  
18 est.'

19 'Thou son of a sordid harlot,' said he; 'thou robber, then traitor, thou devil, thou hast  
20 crucified my friend. Alas, me! wherefore have I not now the strength of a man! I would  
21 tear you to pieces with my hands.' The noise of his quarrelling in the house is heard in the  
22 street, Jews and Christians come running together from all quarters. The boy persists, and  
23 now, deriving courage from the crowd, addressing those present, he alleged his concern for  
24 his companion as an excuse. 'O you good people,' said he, 'who are assembled, *behold if there*  
25 *is any sorrow like my sorrow*. That Jew is a devil; he has stolen away my heart from my breast -  
26 he has butchered my only companion, and I presume too that he has eaten him. A certain  
27 son of the devil, a Jew of French birth, I neither know nor am acquainted with; that Jew  
28 gave my comrade letters of his death-warrant to that man. To this city he came, induced, or  
rather seduced. He often gave attendance upon this Jew, and in his house he was last  
seen.<sup>97</sup>

29 In this histrionic appeal the boy cites Lamentations, placing it at the centre of its allegation of Jewish murder.  
30 His grief is figured in relation to a text which was central both to Jewish and to Christian liturgy.<sup>98</sup> This text had  
31 always been thus situated between the two faiths and their respective cultures of grief.<sup>99</sup> The boy's speech is  
32 formulated in relation to Christian liturgical performance culture, borrowing from the Tenebrae office the  
33 combination of grief and anti-Judaic anxiety. In that office, the text was used to lament not only the death of  
34 Christ but also the error of the Jews, the darkness created by the extinguishing of candles symbolized the way  
35 that truth was interred before the light of Christian resurrection and revelation. Each sung section of  
36 Lamentations was followed by the words: 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, conuertere ad Dominum Deum tuum'.<sup>100</sup> The  
37 late medieval examples I have discussed in this essay are a closely related group, they share a proximity to the  
38 liturgy and to each other; furthermore they regularly betray an attachment to the anti-Judaic possibilities in the  
39 Easter rite.<sup>101</sup>  
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47 <sup>96</sup> On the connections between this digressive story and the body text, see Anthony P. Bale, 'Richard of Devizes and  
48 Fictions of Judaism', *Jewish Culture and History*, 3 (2000), 55-72 (*passim*).

49 <sup>97</sup> Richard of Devizes, *Chronicon Richardi Diuisionis De Tempore Regis Richardi Primi*, ed. by John T. Appleby (London: Thomas  
50 Nelson, 1963), pp. 68-69; the English translation comes from Richard of Devizes, *Chronicon de rebus gestis Ricardi Primi*, in  
51 *Chronicles of the Crusades, being Contemporary Narratives of the Crusade of Richard Cœur de Lion*, trans. by J. A. Giles, (London:  
52 Bohn, 1848), pp. 1-64 (p. 52).

53 <sup>98</sup> For a précis of the liturgical use of Lamentations in both traditions, see Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, p.  
54 113.

55 <sup>99</sup> On structures of Jewish grief and the use of Lamentations in Jewish liturgy, see for example Gottwald, *Studies in the Book*  
56 *of Lamentations*, p. 65; Linda Weinhouse, 'Faith and Fantasy: The Texts of the Jews', *Medieval Encounters*, 5 (1999), 391-408  
57 (*passim*) and Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations*, pp. 119-20, 130-32, 143-44.

58 <sup>100</sup> Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations*, p. 68.

59 <sup>101</sup> *Fasciculus Morum*, p. 214 and 217 and 'The Long Charter of Christ', l. 84.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

Whilst the disappearance of the Christian boy in Devizes' story is specific, located both temporally and geographically (it is clearly partly an interest in the history and influence of Winchester which drives the narrative), it is also a tale which can be read metonymically, patterned to reflect the Christian account of, and interaction with, Judaism. The two Jews stand as emblems of their faith and culture, and likewise the boys of the Christian society on which Devizes' *Gesta* is an ambivalent commentary. The boy's use of the word 'crucified' hangs this symbolic confrontation on the story of Christ's death. The boy disappears at Easter/Passover and the references to crucifixion and the Jew's eating of the boy figure him as the Paschal lamb. The religions are here presented in generational difference and Christianity was, literally, a younger religion. This excerpt alludes to the letter which the missing boy carried from Paris and elsewhere in the narrative Hebrew words are mumbled and indistinct, signalling the inherent power which was thought by both Jews and Christians to reside in the Hebrew language. Because the boys have no Hebrew they do not know what is arranged for their future in just the same way that the Hebrew Bible was thought to lock up Christian destiny. The Parisian Jew sends his apprentice off, advising him to go manfully and to take courage in an allusion to Psalm 26, a text that has already been discussed in this essay. And this, of course, was precisely what typology did: it erased the empirical specifics described in histories like the Book of Lamentations or, indeed, the gospel narratives of the life of Christ, absorbing them into doctrines of universality. And the typological citations from the Book of Lamentations 1.12 do this even whilst relying, for their poetic appeal, on the apparent authenticity, particularity and intimacy of the impassioned address.

Devizes does not, though, tie up the ends of his story in a way which makes it into a conventional ritual murder account. The Hebrew letter is not translated and so may not be the 'death warrant' so alleged; the boy's body is not produced and no objective explanation for his disappearance is supplied; a crime is not discovered.<sup>102</sup> There is no dénouement here like that in Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, for example, where the guilty Jews are executed and their little victim miraculously survives his own death to sing 'O Alma Redemptoris', witnessing to the power of liturgical text and music in quite another way. The pull to the universal in the narrative expects a resurrection and, without it, the *remaining* little boy is a rather mundane survivor whose use of the Lamentations passage bathetically fails to transcend time in any complete way. Although the Jew is tried, there is insufficient evidence to convict him. (Paradoxically the charges fail to stick because of the court's prejudice against a witness because she works in the Jew's house). The Winchester Jew rests on his good contacts in the civic administration, paying compensation in return for his continuing right to live and operate in the city. Seemingly telling the well-known story of Jewish error and violence and Christian innocence and victimhood, Devizes' account frustrates these conventions. The urbanity of the contemporary Jew disrupts the allegorical narrative, keeping hold, even in the face of typological force, of the unresolved details and intricacies of a particular case. Finally the use of Lamentations, a book which told the story of the destruction of Jerusalem, offers an oblique critique on Richard's military advance on that same city.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> These equivocations are also discussed by Bale, 'Richard of Devizes and Fictions of Judaism', pp. 62-64.

<sup>103</sup> Bale, 'Richard of Devizes and Fictions of Judaism', p. 65.

'Ye that pasen by þe weie': time, topology and the medieval use of Lamentations 1.12

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Whilst Jews saw the Lamentations text as one which prefigured the destruction of the second temple, Christians used it as a part of a much more thorough-going 'reorganization of history'.<sup>104</sup> Richard of Devizes is, of course, also organizing history, writing the chronicle account of Richard's *gesta*. He is self-conscious about the way that anti-Judaic narratological patterning governs Christian time telling. This self-consciousness is produced by allowing symbolic generalities to counteract eccentric singularities and vice versa. In what is thought to be the author's holograph copy, the story of this 'ritual murder' begins in the manuscript's margins but, as one exasperated editor complains, by folio 40v 'things have got so far out of hand that the margin is entirely filled, and the space left blank for the text is used for an addition to the margin'.<sup>105</sup> Anthony P. Bale has seen this odd subversion not as a failure to plan the codex but instead as a visual impression of the way in which the Chronicle as a whole fails to fulfil 'its promise to excrete and expel Judaism' making 'the Jewish *topos* integral in its conception of Christian history and historiography'.<sup>106</sup> We might also use this curious textual layout to remember that medieval Christian time could be represented physically and materially, realized graphically and seen from above. This cartographic imagination found the shapes of time in the contiguous cultures of text and performance, in the imagery of voice and parchment and in the impression of its stretching, passing and remaining. Just in the way that Richard's story hovers between historicity and allegory, the medieval 'now' tended to spread out in imitation of eternity, albeit in imperfect distentions. In the *Chronicon*, the peace is disturbed and society haunted by the crucifixion event. It was through this event that the Christian now was ruptured and people aspired to see through its frayed aperture beyond time. Ordinary time, in contrast, stood in gatherings, like those in skin and, by extension, books and clothes, folding at its *puncta*, repeating itself in potentially unlimited facsimile.

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<sup>104</sup> Kruger, *The Spectral Jew*, p. 1. This quotation is the heading to the chapter.

<sup>105</sup> Appleby, 'Introduction' in Richard of Devizes, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes*, pp. xx-xxiv. There are only two manuscripts of this text; the relationship between the main text and margin is unruly in both.

<sup>106</sup> Bale, 'Richard of Devizes and Fictions of Judaism', p. 68.