

Theoretical and Pragmatic Dialogics in and through Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*

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Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (before 1410) is a remarkably important Middle English translation of one of the most internationally successful lives of Christ of the later Middle Ages, the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*. This accomplished meditative life was publically mandated by the ultra-orthodox Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel as a set text for the nation and for the confutation of heretics. The Archbishop would doubtless have particularly approved of how Love interpolates anti-Lollard polemic and copious mainstream exposition of the theology of the Eucharist into his text. Extant in more manuscripts than any Middle English religious prose work other than the Wycliffite Bible, the *Mirror* was printed nine times before 1535, and has been republished in every century since, including the twenty-first century.¹ Textual variants across the different

¹ Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. by Michael G. Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005). For historical and contextual information about this work, see Sargent's editorial introduction. This edition will from now on be cited by page and line numbers in the main body of the text. For the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, see *Opera omnia sancti Bonaventurae*, ed. by A. C. Peltier, 15 vols (Paris: Vives, 1864-71), XII (1868), pp. 509–630 (p. 510). This edition is used by Sargent for his edition of the *Mirror* because it is apparently closer to the version of the Latin source Love used than the text in the modern edition, John de Caulibus, *Iohannis de Caulibus, Meditationes Vite Christi, olim S.*

manuscripts and, later on, across the printed editions naturally constitute a significant area of enquiry in their own right. This article, however, does not discuss these, but will concentrate, rather differently, on some of the intriguing and culturally significant dialogical inter-relations observable in the textual pragmatics of the making and the likely reading of this work.

Sovereign Textuality: Diverse Manners and Diverse Purposes

In order to understand Nicholas Love's approach to the pragmatic dialogics of his work, it makes sense to start with the broadest context in which he himself placed his work and its agenda. This is made palpable at the outset of his work from his opening gambit of citing a famous and empowering biblical text. There was in the later medieval period a well-

Bonauenturo attributae, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 153, ed. by Mary Stallings-Taney (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). The major study of the *Mirror* is still Elizabeth Salter, *Nicholas Love's 'Myrroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ'*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 10 (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1974).

Excellent contextual information on a full range of topics is to be found in the introduction to Sargent's edition. See also Kantik Ghosh, 'Nicholas Love', in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. by A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), pp. 53-66. For a study of the Middle English life of Christ, see Ian Johnson, *the Middle English Life of Christ: Academic Discourse, Translation, and Vernacular Theology*, *Medieval Church Studies*, 30 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), especially chapter 3 on Love's *Mirror*, pp. 95-146.

established convention of citing St Paul's letter to the Romans 15. 4 in order to justify the reading or writing of any text whatever, religious or secular.² Love deploys it with gusto:

Quecumque scripta sunt ad nostram doctrinam scripta sunt vt per pacienciam & consolacionem scripturarum spem habeamus, ad Romanos xv^o capitulo. (Whatever is written is written for our doctrine/instruction, so that by patience and consolation of the Scriptures we may have hope. Romans, chapter 15.)

Pese ben þe wordes of the gret doctour and holy apostle *Powle*. (9/4-7)

Taking this celebrated licence, Love applies it in broad-brush fashion to everything written under the aegis of the church, but quickly singles out for special consideration anything written about Christ:

to this entent seying þat all thynges þat ben written generaly in holi chirche ande specialy of oure lorde Jesu cryste þei bene wryten to oure lore that by pacience and comforte of holi scriptures we haue hope that is to say of the Life & Blysse that is to come in anothere worlde. (9/17-21)

All texts written within the institution of the Church, being necessarily written for our instruction, are ecclesiastically sanctioned. The life of Christ, as a genre, is, Love tells us,

² For discussion of this convention of deploying Romans 15. 4, see Vincent Gillespie, 'From the Twelfth Century to c. 1450', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, II, *The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 145-235 (p. 200).

sovereign amongst such works, especially in moving souls in steadfast hope towards heaven and salvation. By appropriating Paul's *auctoritas*, he sets up and loads the terms of any dialogical engagement that his own life of Christ may encounter by pre-positioning it at a commanding height of unassailable sovereignty not only on an institutional but also on an intertextual basis. Allied to this, he proceeds in the official voice of the ordained priest, that is, as an authorized instrument of the Church. His holy *officium* exculpates and valorizes his every textual action to the exclusion of any frailty that he may have as a mere human being. As an enclosed Carthusian, Love was also obliged to 'preach with his hands' by making holy books.³ His textualized voice is the product and proof of obedience to his order and, by extension, to the Church. In other words, Love's obedient answerability (a dialogic response to institutional discipline embodied in textual action) adds to his power to be assertive and authoritative in his task.

Love's translation embodies another type of response -- in a purported dialogue with the commissioners or potential readers of his work. These are the devout souls who initiated his venture in the form of a request:

Wherfore at þe instance & þe prayer of some deuoute soules to edification of suche men or women is þis drawyng oute of þe foreside boke of cristes lyfe wryten in englysche with more putte to in certeyne partes and also wiþdrawyng of diuerse auctoritis and maters as it semeth to þe wryter hereof moste spedefull [*advantageous*] & edifying to hem þat ben of symple vndirstondyng. (10/17-22)

³ For this rule, see 'Guigonis Carthusiae Maioris Prioris Quinti Consuetudines', cap. 28, no. 3, PL 153, cols 631-769 (cols 693-94).

A consequence of his response to this petition is another response, this time by Love to his sources, to which he makes cuts and additions that he judges most advantageous and edifying for his relatively uneducated readership. Even at this early stage of the *Mirror*, the translator makes clear the nature of his dialogic relationship with his sources, which, amongst his other comments on his procedures, he defines as being treatable in three standard terms drawn from medieval literary thought: ‘partes’, ‘diuerse auctoritis’ and ‘maters’. The term ‘partes’ reflects the cut-and-paste mode of excerption (*modus excerptoris*) typical of medieval compilation, whereby texts do not simply replicate the main source, but may select, add, and re-order from other texts. As open-ended assemblages, compilations exercise themselves dialogically not only with and amongst their own re-orderable parts but also with re-scalable elements taken from elsewhere.⁴ The same dialogical sensibility of element-based textual reworking is expressed with further nuance in the collocation ‘diuerse auctoritis and maters’: ‘diuerse auctoritis’ are various authoritative statements, sanctioned persons and voices (such as the Church Fathers), which can be excluded, added or retained in negotiating the textual mix. The term ‘maters’, somewhat differently, refers not so much to structural parts or nameable authorities, but to subject matter, topics, or issues. These ‘maters’ may be discrete textual passages or intermittent themes. Whether a textual feature is at any point definable as a part, an authority or a matter (or a combination of these) is a question of what or whose perspective or rationale is operating in the dialogical interplay of textual elements.

⁴ The classic study of mediaeval compilation is still M. B. Parkes, ‘The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book’, in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays presented to R.W. Hunt*, ed. by J. J. G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 115-41.

Such intrinsic alterability is a concomitant of the common medieval conception of textual diversity – be it the diversity of written works (especially texts of authority), or of elements of texts, or of readers, or of the expositions of texts. Such diversity means not only that different texts will speak differently to different people, but also that the same text may speak differently to different people – a complex and shifting dialogic with its own variable and contingent performability. This potential for diversity becomes, for Love, particularly important when he takes into account that not everything done by Christ and others found its way into Scripture. Humanity, because of this, is both obligated and permitted to imagine needful and devout things not written in the Bible. This inevitably makes for a diversity of interpretations, or as Love puts it, citing Gregory the Great:

Wherfore we mowen to stiryng of deuotion ymagine & þenk diuerse wordes & dedes of him & oþer, þat we fynde not writen, so þat it be not aʒeyns þe byleue, as seynt Gregory & oþer doctours seyn, þat holi writte may be expownet & vndurstande in diuerse maneres, & to diuerse purposes, so þat it be not aʒeyns þe byleue or gude maneres. (10/41–11/4)

In as much as more than one ‘manere’ may be deployed in the same operation or agenda, there will necessarily be a dialogical relation amongst them. Such is also the case with the turning of Scripture to ‘diuerse purposes’ – a diversity of uses with finally causal relations amongst each other. Moreover, the taking of the most important text of authority, the Bible, and diversely instrumentalizing it, will inevitably give new voices to scriptural discourse in new textual *loci*.

By the same scriptural token of inevitable dialogical diversity, any interpretation of the life of Christ, or of the Bible from which each *vita Christi* is derived and may be further

adapted in translation, is empowered to re-combine the words and voices of scriptural authors with those of accredited commentators. This can happen in intriguingly complex ways.

Whether in palpable conversation with each other or silently merged, these words and voices will, in changing each other whilst they are being changed themselves, have a profoundly dialogical relationship with each other. For example, when Love adds to his translating of Pseudo-Bonaventure words from one or more gospels, he thereby complicates both the voice of his Pseudo-Bonaventurean source and his own voice with enrichment and authority from the Vulgate. Text and gloss, already dialogical in the way they relate to each other in Latin, acquire a new dialogic when Love vernacularizes words from one Gospel but at the same time renders into English materials from a commentary on another gospel.

This agile renegotiation of originary and expository words and voices by means of the translation makes, for the most part, a text adapted better to its new vernacular circumstances and audience. Most of the audience would of course have been unaware of what the compiler was doing with his foreign-language sources, and had no means of witnessing how he recombined and edited materials which may variously have been in harmony or friction with each other. Only those knowing and understanding the Latin original and the commentary or other sources deployed on any given occasion would be in a position to appreciate the genesis of Love's working decisions. If they did so, they would necessarily engage in a relationship with the text different from the one experienced by readers and hearers without such access. The same words, then, may generate different voices able to be heard by some but not by others: same words, different dialogics.

Normally, a gloss is a one-off iteration of a portion of text. To be able to transfer a gloss to a different passage and into a different voice, however, is semiotically, rhetorically and performatively powerful, as it sets up new connectivities and tensions between two different manifestations and locations of a text. Feeding this dialogical surplus into the

vernacular text then creates new occasions of originary force and new capacities for meaning and further dialogic unarticulated amongst source texts.

The reader capable of appreciating such manipulation of Latin text and gloss in vernacular format will be in receipt not just of a new working of the narrative and its moral and spiritual interpretation but also a lesson about the nature of gospel harmony and about how currents of authorized meaning flow diversely around the four gospels and the texts derived from them. This is a profoundly intertextual lesson about the dynamics of scriptural dialogic beyond the biblical text, a dialogic that may be exercised and circulated further in the vernacular.

A learned reader able to recognise this kind of complex genesis of a passage of the *Mirror* is in all probability going to be someone of priestly vocation and authority – someone able not only to valorize the work for an audience of *symple soules*, but also, as a spiritual adviser or teacher, someone able to elucidate some of this particular dialogical complexity for a vernacular audience. In as much as the English work repeatedly signals its differences from the Latin (not only by identifying in the margin which are the words of the translator and which the words of the original, but also by making frequent comments about the nature of such matters in the flow of the prose), it would only be natural for any learned spiritual adviser familiar with the Latin original and capably observing Love's frequent self-comment about source treatment to focus on those parts of the English work making changes to the sources. Nicholas Love's carefully advertised decisions to change the original would therefore present themselves to such a mediator as having particular interest or significance suitable for being outlined or explained, even if only roughly, to the vernacular audience.

Nicholas Love took great care to account to his vernacular audience for the most important dialogical factor in his procedures – his pragmatic textual relations with the *Meditationes vita Christi*. Nearly all copies of the work contain an important notice to the

reader in Latin, the ‘lector’, who may not only be conceived of as someone reading the text through the eyes but also as someone reading out loud and providing the audience with comment deriving from Love’s self-comment:

Attende lector huius libri prout sequitur in Anglico scripti quod vbicumque in margine ponitur litera N: verba sunt translatoris siue compileris in Anglicis preter illa que inseruntur in libro scripto secundum communem opinionem a venerabili doctore Bonaventure in Latino de meditacione vite Jesu Christi. Et quando peruenitur ad processum & verba eiusdem doctoris: inseritur in margine litera B, prout legenti siue intuenti istum librum speculi vite Christi lucide poterit apparere. (7/1-8)

[Note, reader of the following book written in English, that wherever the letter “N” is placed in the margin, the words are added by the translator or compiler beyond those in the Latin book of the *Meditation of the Life of Christ* written, according to common opinion, by the venerable doctor Bonaventure. And when it returns to the narrative and words of that doctor, then the letter “B” is inserted in the margin, as will be readily apparent to whoever reads or examines this book of *The Mirror of the Life of Jesus Christ*] (Love, *Mirror*, ed. by Sargent, Introduction, p 38).

The identifying initial ‘B’ announces the authority of the holy Doctor Bonaventure and the serious matter originally inscribed in the learned Latin tongue; it contrasts with the less prestigious offerings in the vernacular of a contemporary monk. The initial ‘N’ is a sign of humility in the face of Bonaventure but it is also a marker of outright assertiveness; it advertises the decisions of Prior Love, an ordained preacher licensed and sanctioned by archiepiscopal power in adapting a parabiblical source in a perfectly conventional manner,

sometimes remixing or repurposing it with materials drawn straight from the Vulgate or commentary tradition, or putting it into the compiler's own sacerdotal voice.

Initials, then, may therefore signal greater or lesser comparative authority or voice – sometimes simultaneously. The placing and distribution of them bring shifts in authorial perspective of significance or complexity. This is especially so with Love's intriguingly dialogical habit of combining his initials with those of Bonaventure in the hybrid format 'B.N.' in order to mark passages in which his words are co-mingled, with variable effect, with those of his source.

Even when operating against his own initial, however, Love does not always use his own words but sometimes translates from the *Meditationes*. At other times, when not operating against his own initial, he nevertheless inserts his own materials, taken from other works or composed by himself. This could reflect the fact that in the medieval learned tradition of translation it was common for translators to accommodate, without acknowledgement, a variety of explanatory texts in order to expound their complex authoritative sources. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that Nicholas Love uses his initials not only when he wishes to signal his particular assumption of responsibility over, against or in special confirmation of his source, but also when he wishes for his own ecclesiastically sanctioned decisions and/or voice to stand out better. Such is the case with his anti-Lollard interpolations and his newly introduced orthodox expositions of the Eucharist, not to be found in the Latin original.

Scripture and Homely Courtesy

One particularly interesting un-initialled passage, in which Love does not own up to a significant number of additions and changes, occurs in the chapter on the temptation of Christ

in the desert, and in particular in the episode in which Jesus, after his victory over the Devil, breaks his fast of forty days and forty nights with a meal brought to him from his mother's kitchen by angels, who hospitably and courteously entertain their Lord in the best medieval fashion as he sits humbly on the ground eating his modest repast from a cloth provided by the Virgin. Because this scene is not in the Bible, Love warns his readers against attempting to affirm the factuality of what follows in his text:

Here of spekeþ not holi writ, wherfore we mowe here ymagine by reson & ordeyne
þis worþi fest as vs likeþ, not by errour affermyng bot deuoutly ymaginyng &
supposyng, & þat aftur þe comune kynde of þe manhode. (72/36-39)

This authorization, specifying imagining by reason, the avoidance of erroneous affirmation, and the permission to suppose after the nature of the sacred humanity, is not annotated with a marginal initial but is nevertheless original to Love. It is not just an instruction for reading; it is also an indicator of what Love, as a compiler of meditations and as a re-reader and producer of texts, is permitted to write in response to biblical and parabiblical tradition. This licence to imagine what is not in the Bible emerges from a vacuum of authority and of materials. It involves a strange dialogue with absence, a distinctive mixture of permission and obligation to engage with the holiest of biblical lives beyond what the Bible itself provides.

The pragmatics of imagining in this scene entail a practice of 'supposyng'. Here, Love draws attention to suppositious discourse which by its very nature suggests more readily than does 'ymaginyng' the hypotheticality of putting in place something that may or may not be the case. By deploying 'supposyng', he draws particular attention to the fact that such 'ymaginyng' proceeds by hypothetical premises. The suppositious narrative starts with a dialogue in which the angels invite Christ to eat. He answers by instructing them to bring

food from his mother, and they return with the Lord's signature dish of a loaf and fishes. The conversation is a model of homeliness and courtesy:

And þen speken þe angeles & seiden þus, Oure worþi lorde 3e haue longe fastode, & it is now 3our tyme to ete! what is 3our wille þat we ordeyn for 3ow? And þan he seide, Gope to my dere modere, & what maner of mete she haþe redy : bringeþ to me, for þer is none bodily mete so lykyng to me as þat is of hir dightyng. (73/ 33-38)

In as much as Christ inherited his flesh on his mother's side, it is fitting that he should share with her, albeit remotely, his pleasure in bodily refreshment as well as his capacity to suffer.

The angels bring 'a lofe & a towel, & oþer necessaryes' and 'a fewe smale fishes'.

The polite hospitality continues, with added music:

And so þerwiþ þe angeles coming : spraddene þe tuwaile vpon þe gronde & leiden brede þeron, & myldly stoden & seiden graces with oure lord Jesu, abidyng his blessyng, & til he was sette. [...] take hede how curteysly & how soburly he takeþ his mete, not wiþstondyng his hungre aftur his longe fast. Þe angeles semed him as here lorde, perantere one of brede, anoþer of wyne, a noþer diht fishes, summe songen in þe stede of mynstrelsy þat swete songe of heuen & so þei reheteden & confortede hir lorde as it longed to hem with mich ioy meynede with compassion. (74/2-16)

The Bible tells us little more than that the angels serve Christ. The imaginative extrapolation here is elaborate; it ties Christ's eating to his meekness and to his self-degradation in assuming human form. The angels' rapturous reaction to Christ's victory, their enjoyment of his company, and their compassion for his fleshly self-humiliation exemplify how readers

should react in their imagining of this episode, and by extension in their subsequent personal conduct whenever they eat. Readers are thus recommended to join imaginatively with this community of angels beyond the confines of the text as part of their mealtime routines: ‘Dis felawship hast þou þouh þou se hem not, when þou etest alone in þi celle, if þou be in charite’ (74/ 16-17)’. This counselling is addressed to Carthusian brothers in their cells, who would customarily eat alone. Such discipline of the imagination, however, is significantly transferable to pious lay folk in their own social and household circumstances. This episode presents them with the opportunity for engaging over the long-term in a dialogic of the scriptural and the homely in their own enduring meditative interiority and in their own domestic practices.

This courteous and proper domestic scene closes with Jesus completing the social transaction as an ideal son, thanking God the Father and engaging in remote dialogue with his mother by sending the angels back with a considerate message telling her that it shall not be long before he visits her again:

oure lord Jesus hade eten & seide graces, þat is to sey þonkyng þe fadere in his manhede of þat bodily refeccion : he badde þe angeles here aʒeyn to his modere þat was laft, tellyng her þat he sholde in short tyme come to hir aʒeyn. (74/31-35)

Such imaginative extrapolation of a gospel scene into homely terms is not unknown in the texts of Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Bridget of Sweden, to name but a few. This episode also has, however, an intriguing dialogical structure and dynamic – an interplay of authentic Scripture with that which is permitted to be imagined of its absences – of Christ with the angels; of the reader with the text and its imaginable *mise en scène*; of the voice of

Nicholas Love with his Carthusian Brothers and with a wider audience, and by extension even of readers and hearers with their communities of angels.

The Incarnational Dialogics of Dying

With Christ's meal in the desert we saw a dialogic between codes of Scripture and codes of homely courtesy. In the next example, we will discuss the dialogic amongst the quoted scriptural words and voices that constitute not only the scene but also the very process of Christ's dying. The passage commences with the last of Christ's statements from the Cross, his seventh, in which he commends his spirit into the hands of his father:

Tandem addidit septimum verbum cum clamore valido et lacrimis Patri: *Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum. Et hec dicens, emisit spiritum, inclinato capite* super pectus versus patrem quasi gracias agens quod ipsum revocabat et *tradens ei spiritum* suum. Ad hunc clamorem conversus fuit centurio qui ibi erat, et dixit: *Vere Filius Dei erat iste*, audiens quod clamans exspirasset: nam alii homines, cum moriuntur, clamare non possunt: et ideo in eum credidit. Fuit autem ita magnus ille clamor, sicut a sapientissimo viro intellexit, quod usque in infernum fuit auditus.⁵

⁵ Here I am using an edition whose Latin in this passage seems closer to the source Love used: *Meditaciones de passione Christi olim sancto Bonaventurae attributae*, ed. by Sister M. Jordan Stallings, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin Language and Literature*, 25 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), pp. 115/39-16/48.

Finally, *with a loud cry and tears* (Heb 5:7), he added the seventh word: *'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.'* And saying this, *he breathed his last* (Lk 23:46), *with his head inclined* on his breast toward his Father, and *handing over* to him his *spirit* (Jn 19:30), as if giving him thanks for calling him home. Hearing that he had expired while crying out: the centurion who was on the scene was converted, and said, *'Truly, that was the Son of God* (Mt 27:54):' for other men are unable to cry out when they are dying; and for that reason, he believed in him.

Now, as I learned it from a very wise man, that cry was so loud that it was heard even in hell.⁶

And so atte þe last he putte þe seuene worde, with a stronge crye & wepyng teres seying þus, *Fadere I commende my spirite in to þi handes*, & þerwiþ he 3elte þe spirite, enclynyng his hede vpon his breeste towarde þe fadere as in maner of þonkyng, þat he clepede him to him, & 3iuyng him his spirite.

Atte þis crye þan was conuertede Centurio, þere beyng & seide, *Sopely þis manne was goddus sone*, by cause þat he sawh him so cryng dye. For oþer menne when þei dyene mowe not crie. Wherefore he beleuede in him.

Soply þis crie was so grete as holi men seyne: þat it was herde in to helle.
(178/16-31)

The first sentence of this passage dialogizes and mediates revoicings of Luke 23. 46, Matthew 27. 50, Hebrews 5. 7 and John 19. 30, as can be seen from the uses of italics in the

⁶ John of Caulibus, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, trans. by Francis X. Taney, Anne Miller, and C. Mary Stallings-Taney (Asheville: Pegasus Press, 1999), p. 256.

quotations above and in the editorial insertions of references in the modern English translation. The weaving together of the voices of three evangelists gives authenticity and authority to the narrative, whereas the embedding of Hebrews demonstrates the working of Providence and the fulfilment of the Old Testament in the New. Such scriptural revoicings, and, within them, actions articulated as verbs, are the pragmatic drivers of this narrative.

‘*Fadere I commende my spirite in to þi handes*’ is a performative enacting what it says, for ‘þerwiþ he ȝelte þe spirite’. The finite verbs ‘*I commende*’ and ‘he ȝelte’ are coactive in as much as both signal the same process of death performed by breath, voice, and the articulation of words. The dialogic between these arises from the former being a first-person statement in direct speech through which death happens, and the latter at one and the same time being a third-person declaration and witness of the fact and process of death as well as being a gloss on the words of Christ. These two verbs and the actions that they represent are, in a deliberate decision made by the translator, causally linked by ‘þerwiþ’.

In the Latin source, rather differently, the same two actions are not explicitly linked causally but are narrated as merely concurrent, in the form of a present participle and main verb: ‘*Et hec dicens, emisit spiritum*’. The vernacular is in this instance more theologically particular, because it signals causality more explicitly than does the original, although the original is no way lacking in subtlety or theological propriety. It is also noteworthy that in the vernacular text, Christ put (‘putte’) his words whereas the source rather blandly added them (‘addidit’). The greater interventionary physicality of the English verb befits better than does its Latin counterpart the willed physical process of dying by which Christ puts vocalized breath, words and spirit into the *mise en scène* with dialogically providential transactiveness.

The present participles accompanying the finite active verbs, ‘wepyng [...] seying [...] enclynyng [...] þonkyng [...] ȝiuyng’, also contribute to the governing of the action with which the meditating imagination has to engage. They supply their own degrees of

agency, intransitivity and transactiveness in an intriguing *gradatio*, teleologically moving step-by-step from intransitivity to resolving transitive completion in a developing cadence of cognitive subtlety helping to propel forwards the affective drama and the theological process that they enact. First, there is the nonlinguistic accompaniment to Christ's cry, 'wepyng'. Then, there is the expressive articulation, 'seyng', which in itself is not transitive as an action. This is carried further by the preparatory deixis of Christ 'enclynyng' towards an invisible Father on the other side of the gap between heaven and earth. This is followed by the action of 'ponkyng', which reaches out hopefully to another consciousness for contact. Finally, the 'ziuyng' of the spirit to God the Father completes the process transitively through offer and acceptance. This chain of participles, linked in a rhythm of participial *-ing* endings, forms a contrapuntal trajectory semantically elaborating and harmonizing with the finite verbs.

Christ's commending of his spirit to his father as the Son of God is confirmed by the Centurion's observation, '*Sopely pis manne was goddus sone*' (Matthew 27:54). In sending on his spirit in a cry maintaining strength and unbroken control, unlike other dying men, for whom the instant of death is an involuntary loss of capability and life, Christ demonstrates his divinity. Christ's 'strongge crye' does not falter throughout its articulation, transcending the normal fading cadence of mortal expiration. Whereas God answers Christ's self-commendation by accepting him into heaven and into his arms, the Centurion's response is a contemporaneous earthly observation in a fallen human voice, upraised dialogically through the voice of the divinely sanctioned Gospel by whose report we hear his words. This eyewitness evidence of Jesus being indeed the Son of God is a matter of empirical verification beyond mere opinion. The miraculous role of the Incarnation in this scene is further articulated by Nicholas Love in a theologically particular formulation, more elaborate than the Latin source, when he replaces the neutral specifier '*iste*' with '*pis manne*' -- a

collocation reconfirming Christ's humanity and thereby the paradox of two natures in one person – tellingly placed in the Middle English text in correct incarnational apposition to '*goddis sone*'.

Love makes one more change to his source on the subject of the cry of Christ. Whereas in the Latin the reader is told that the hearing of Christ's cry in Hell was told to the author 'by a very wise individual' ('*sicut a sapientissimo viro*'), the Middle English text cites holy men, guaranteeing itself 'as holi men seyne'. Love here chooses the support of a community of sanctity rather than of one wise individual. Perhaps he knew of several holy sources that made this claim and felt it more advantageous to cite their accumulated or collective authority. We do not know if any of these alleged holy men gained his knowledge through revelation or through concluding from his own wits that a divine cry uttered to be heard in heaven would also be heard in Hell, especially if it were also announcing, in effect, the imminent harrowing of souls from Satan's infernal clutches.

Voices and quotations in this scene negotiate a variegated topography of hermeneutic levels, imaginable *matters* and spiritual phenomena. The scene is shaped and progressed by the interplay of scriptural quotations and by the agency, reactivity and mixing of voices and gestures. Here the interaction of heaven and earth and of humanity and divinity are accorded a theologically and dramatically complex dialogic in Christ's body and voice acting and meaning divinely. The voices of God the Father, Christ, the Centurion, the Evangelists and their scriptural quotations, and the holy men confirming Christ's cry being heard in Hell, are all reworked in relation to each other by the translator as elements amongst which readers may and must engage their imaginations.

The climax of this chapter is the closing paragraph, marked with an 'N' to denote the voice of Love himself, who informs his audience that the Passion is a piteous sight for the hard suffering it involved, but a joyful sight for the matter and effect of our redemption.

When telling us about the power of ‘þis siht of oure lord Jesu hangyng so on þe crosse by deuoute ymaginacion’, he seems to present Christ’s hanging as being dependent upon the imagination, intensifying this suggestion of dependency by his use of the adverb ‘so’:

Sobely þis siht of oure lord Jesu hangyng so on þe crosse by deuoute ymaginacion of þe soule, is so likyng to sume creatours : þat after longe exercise of soroufol compassion : þei felen sumtyme, so grete likyng not onely in soule bot also in þe body þat þei kunne not telle, & þat noman may knowe, bot onely he þat by experience feleþ it. (179/11-16)

This sight of the Passion in the well-exercised meditating imagination, in which sorrow and pleasure flow together, replicates the experiences of those blessed with grace during the taking of the Eucharist, as shall be seen in the discussion below of Love’s treatment of the Last Supper.

Reading and Imagining

Nicholas Love draws eloquently on the commonplaces of medieval theory of imagination for a protocol for how the reader should deal with textual materials in the practice of devout imagination. Such rules of reading and imagining are about how to respond to the matter, and how to make the matter respond to them.⁷ Medieval theory of imagination, as articulated perfectly conventionally by Love, allows the use of corporeal human discourse and imagination to refer provisionally, for the purposes of stirring devotion, to spiritual

⁷ For Love’s concept of devout imagining, see Johnson, pp. 102-14.

substances and things of heaven, as long as one does not believe in the images themselves: for spiritual substances may only be understood in likeness, not as they actually are -- which is beyond human understanding, or as Love puts it:

wherefore it is to vnderstande at þe bygynyng as for a pryncipal & general rewle of diuerse ymaginacions [*divers imaginings/meditations*] þat folowen after in þis boke þat þe discryuyng [*describing*] or speches or dedis of god in heuen & angels or opere gostly substances bene [*are*] only wryten in þis manere, & to þis entent þat is to saye as devoute ymaginacions & likenessis styryng [*stirring*] symple soules to þe loue of god & desire of heuenly þinges. (10/30-36)

This licence to imagine extends to the provision of a facility for a ‘generale’ meditation, in the form of a technique for beholding Christ in all circumstances: ‘And so what tyme þat singulere [*individual*] meditaciones bene not specified: þis generale shale suffice.’ (76/16-18). This general meditation may apply beyond the *Mirror* whenever the reader encounters gospel narrative or references, or dwells on scenes from the life of Christ in his or her memory (a habit extending from St Cecilia to Margery Kempe). It is a portable method that transcends the *Mirror*; it invests the narratable with affective return, and is intrinsically dialogic and empowering in making gospel matter respond anew in the imagination for the purpose of stirring the soul towards divine love, better spiritual understanding and feeling, and hope of heaven.

A further manner in which the dialogic of devout imagining may be intensified is couched in the instruction to readers to believe themselves physically present in the narrative *mise en scène*: ‘make þe in þi soule present to þoo þinges þat bene here wryten seyð or done of oure lord Jesu, [...] as þei þou hardest hem with þi bodily eres, or sey þaim with þin eyen

don' . (12/42-13/3). In this, readers put themselves on the edge of being potentially perceptible within the *mise en scène*, or at the very least indubitably there, located in time and place and leaving all else. They engage with a fixed narrative as if it were unresolved in the present throughout the occasion of their contingent presence amongst its topography and events. Readers are thereby intended to inhabit and negotiate imaginatively a subtle cognitive dialogic between the fixity of narrated events and the irresolution of present experience.

The archetypal model reader of the *Mirror* is of course St Cecilia, as proclaimed in the *proheme*:

Amonge oþer vertuese commendynge of þe holy virgine Cecile it is writen þat she bare alwey þe gospel of criste hidde in her breste, þat may be undirstand þat of þe blessed lif of oure lord Jesu writen in þe gospel, she chace certayne parties most deuoute. In þe which she set her meditacion & her þouht niȝt & day with a clene & hole herte. And when she hade so fully alle þe manere of his life ouer gon, she began azayne. And so with a likyng & swete taste gostly chewyng in þat manere þe gspell of crist : she set & bare it euer in þe priuyte of her breste. In þe same manere I conseil þat þou do. (11/24-32)

The upshot of this passage is that the devout Cecilian reader should carry the Gospel everywhere and participate ceaselessly in cycles of dialogue with it in the heart, for it is a text that will never stop giving. Cecilia, like a compiler following the mode of excerption of this very work, is also selective, for she chooses certain parts of the gospels that are most devout, exercising the typical free will of the reader (known to medieval literary theory as *lectoris arbitrium*) according to need.

Passion Meditation and the Last Supper

We turn now to Love's treatment of the Last Supper. Alongside a brief narration of Jesus administering the Eucharist to his disciples (149/10-36), there is a careful exposition of the orthodox theology of transubstantiation as a dialogic of bread and wine with flesh and blood. Here, Love asserts the truth of the Real Presence in opposition to the Lollard belief that the bread and wine are no more than figurative:

Pe which feiþ is þis in short wordes, þat þe sacrament of þe autere dewly made by vertue of cristes wordes is verrey goddus body in forme of brede, & his verrey blode in forme of wyne [...] & verrey cristies body þat suffrede deþ vpon þe crosse is þere in þat sacrament bodily vnder þe forme & liknes of brede, & his verrey blode vndur likenes of wyne substancially & holely, without any feynyng or deceit, & not onely in figure as þe fals heritike seiþ. (151/31-152/1)

This passage matches up with the articles of faith articulated in the 'Treatise on the Sacrament', an original composition by Nicholas Love appended to the end of the *Mirror*. In this, Love reminds his readership of the comforting words of Christ to his Apostles that he would be with them until the world's end, dwelling with them

not onely by þe gostly presence of his godhede : bot also by þe bodily presence of his manhede, þat he giueþ to vs in þis forseide mete of his flesh & blode, in mynde of hees merueiles generaly as it is seide, bot moste specialy in mynde of þat blessedde passion, þat he suffrede for vs. (224/10-14)

This emphasis on the spiritual presence of the divinity and the bodily presence of the manhood in the sacrament makes for more than a memorial: both are present in the eucharistic sacrament but they may also be present or in reach in meditations on the Passion for the right kind of individual behaving in the right kind of way in devout imagination. Here, as elsewhere in this work, Nicholas Love proposes a transcendent eucharistic dialogic of the flesh and blood and divinity in the very process of devout imagination, one of miraculous commensurability. In this, Love follows his source, as he does here in his treatment of the Last Supper:

Pis is þat swete & precious memoriale þat souereynly makeþ mannus soule worþi & pleisyng to god, als oft as it is dewely receyuede, ouþere by trewe & deuout meditacion of his passion, or elles & þat more specialy in sacramentale etyng þerof.
(149/37-40)

In this passage, Love strengthens the bond between meditation and sacrament. He then shifts into the authority of liturgical discourse, in this case a paraphrase of the Nicene Creed strategically manipulated from its familiar first-person affirmative into a third-person declarative mode. The impact on the readers or hearers would be one of double voicing or double hearing, in as much as they would be negotiating this third-person adaptation through their intersubjective first-person familiarity with the Creed and accommodating both to the meditative process and their imaginative experience:

Wherefore by reson þis excellent 3ift of loue shold kyndeþ mannus soule & enflawme it al holy in to þe 3iuere þerof our lorde Jesus criste. For þer is no þinge þat

he miht ȝiue & leue to vs more derworþ, more swete, or more profitable : þan him self. For without any doute he þat we receyuen in þe sacrament of þe autere : is he þat self goddus son Jesus þat toke flesh & blode & was born of þe virgine Marie, & þat suffrede deþ on þe crosse for vs, & rose þe þridde day fro deþ to lyue & after stey vp in to heuen & sitteþ on þe fadres riht side, & þat shale come at þe day of dome, & deme alle mankynde. In whos powere is boþe lif & deþ, þat made boþe heuen & helle, & þat onely may saue vs or dampne vs euer without ende. (149/41-150/10)

Love makes considerable additions to the Last Supper section of his Latin source, one of which is a long and continuous insertion, over several pages, announced not only by his initial in the margin, but also by his invitation to readers to stay longer at the Last Supper (just as he himself is staying longer at the table than his Latin source) and to take heed of its imaginative and eucharistic nourishment: ‘Bot ȝit more ouere lat vs sitte a litel lengir at þis worþi lordes borde Jesus & take we hede inwardly to oure gostly foode & conforte more specialy’ (150/16-18). In this passage (with ‘contra lollardos’ duly entered in the margin), Love condemns those heretics who obdurately and unimaginatively cling to their bodily senses in denying transubstantiation, unlike the legions of martyrs, confessors and other true Christians who over the previous several hundred years have stood without doubt by this article of belief (151/19-30). In confronting the Lollard position head-on, he gives mock-voice to his allegedly scornful heretical opponents in indirect speech. Their discourse on sacramental theology is one of laughter and Love sets its authority and validity as no better than idle chatter, befitting those ignorant of the experience of the gracious working of the sacrament within:

here lawheþ þe lollarde & scorneþ holi chirche in allegence of seche miracles,

haldyng hem bot as maggetales [*idle chatter*] & feyned illusions, & bycause þat he tastē not þe swetnes of þis precious sacrament nor feleþ þe gracious wirching þerof in himself. Perof he leueþ not þat any oþere doþ. (152/8-12)

This polemic is not in the original; neither is the Carthusian's subsequent production of evidence in favour of orthodoxy in the form of someone personally known to him who, on receiving the Eucharist, not only has sight of the Passion but also regularly experiences transports of spiritual joy and equally joyful bodily heat. This happens, together with a sensation of melting and corporeal union with Christ, 'whanoure lorde Jesus vouchsafe, to touch him of his grace in trefyng of þat blessed sacrament, with þe inwarde siht of his soule, & deuout meditacion of his precious passione' (152/23-26). This is all proof, for Love, of the mutuality of the Eucharist and the devout imagination of the life and passion of Christ for whosoever 'feleþ þat blessed bodily presence of þe, in þat precious sacrament' (152/36-37), when 'in his soule lihtenede þorh speciale grace, he seep inwardly with souereyn ioy þat blessed body of Jesu riht as he heenge on þe crosse, withoute any deceyte' (153/28-30).

In as much as devout imagination is in a dialogical relationship with the sacrament, Love's *Mirror* itself is made mutual with the Eucharist. No wonder then that Love shifts from narrative, exposition and meditation addressed to his readership to apostrophic, rhetorically questioning prayer addressed, in front of his readership, to Christ himself, in which Love asks Jesus what 'delectable paradise' beyond expression must such an individual feel: a paradise unknowable to all except whoever 'in experience feeliþ it' (152/35-40).

Personal contemporary confirmation of the mutual efficacy of the devoutly imagined Passion and the bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament is one thing; devoutly imagined extrapolation concerning the efficacy of the sacrament generated from circumstances within biblical textuality is something else. This occurs when Love makes an addition to his Latin source in which he tells us, with the inclusion of a concisely orthodox formulation of

transubstantiation included in the narrative, that on Low Saturday Mary Magdalen and the Virgin Mary first heard of how the sacrament was made at the Last Supper. Their reaction of pleasurable sorrow and sorrowful pleasure – the same composite reaction that Love earlier claims is typical of one meditating by grace on the Passion -- valorizes the sacrament in a powerful way from within the biblical *mise en scène*, albeit that this proof by consequence is a devout imagination and not in the biblical text itself. The reactions of Magdalen and the Virgin to an episode of the life of Christ that has been narrated to them also show that they are in effect behaving as model hearers and meditators of the life of Christ:

when she & Maudeleyn herde of þe making of þe sacrament, & how he gaf hem in þe forme of brede his owne body to ete, & in þe forme of wyne his blode to drynke :
sobely I trow þat with souereyn merueile : hir hertes meltede in to likyng sorrow & soroufol likyng, brekyng oute on wepyng & shedyng swete teres, for þat hye brennyng loue, þat he shewede to man souereynly in þat excellent & passyng dede of charite. (190/33-39)

Here, Love supports an orthodox view of the Eucharist not by theological argument but by re-imagining the reactions of the two most faithful Christians ever when they hear about the Last Supper and imagine it for themselves. For all its licensed provisionality, this imaginary episode is decorous and credible for stirring the affective piety of the kind of audience that the compiler envisages. It is also telling, that in the same additional passage (albeit that his words are mixed with those of the source, as the marginal attestation ‘B. N.’ would indicate), Love makes sure to tell his readership that, though the followers of Christ are at this time at their lowest ebb of dread and grief, their sole comfort is their narrative sharing of the words and deeds of Jesus: ‘confort bot onely in þat comunyng of þe wordes & dedes of hire lorde

Jesu'. Tellingly, by narrating the words and deeds of Christ amongst each other they are doing much the same as Nicholas Love's text does, and by listening and by reflecting on what they are told, they are doing as Love's readers should do.

Comfort and Confusion Thrice

Our final example concerns an important statement, voiced three times in the text and paratext of the *Mirror*, proclaiming the intention of confusing/confounding Lollards and comforting/edifying the faithful.

The first time Love deploys this statement (*italics mine*) is in his treatment of the Last Supper, in which he points out that the profound spiritual feelings experienced by those receiving the sacrament, especially when accompanied by the devout beholding of the Passion and an awareness in the soul of Christ's very body, constitute an effective refutation of heretics and Lollards:

Bot here *in confusion of alle fals lollardes, & in confort of alle trewe loueres & wirchiperes* of þis holi sacrament & principaly to þe louyng & honour of þe hye auctour & makere þerof oure lord Jesus: I sal say more ouer sumwhat in special þat I knowe sobely of þe gracious wirching in sensible felyng of þis blessed sacrament.
(152/13-18)

At the very end of the translation, Love places a 'Transition Paragraph', which introduces an added Treatise on the Sacrament, composed by himself as an orthodox polemical exposition of the Eucharist to counter the Lollards:

perfore with þe grace of þe holi goste & of him of whom þat feeste is : we shole
speke sumwhat *more to confort of hem þat treuly byleuen, & to confusion of alle fals
lollardes & heritykes* Amen. (221/2-5)

The version of this statement in the chapter on the Last Supper is very much in Nicholas Love's voice. For all this, however, the theological sensibility of Love's added vernacular materials on the Eucharist in this chapter is utterly consistent with the original, and is part and parcel of the management of the reader by a responsible cleric, speaking confidently in a priestly first-person singular instruction. The voice of the Transition Paragraph, however, for all its undoubted authority, draws the reader into the treatise more companionably through the first-person plural. This iteration of the statement is also more prayerful, invoking as it does the grace of both the Holy Spirit and of Christ to assist procedures in a transcendent economy of divine licensing and upraising typical of devout textuality. Such invocations were common at the outset of sacred literary labours like this. The Transition Paragraph's recycling of words from the Last Supper chapter has the effect of signalling that the following treatise will be a confirmation and enrichment of what is so central to the preceding *Mirror*.

In overtly introducing an outright polemical text, the voice of the Transition Paragraph is perhaps more explicitly Arundelian in intensity than that of the earlier statement. Nothing, however, could be more Arundelian in ostensible outlook and intent than the Memorandum appearing in a number of copies of the *Mirror*:

Memorandum quod circa annum domini Millesimum quadringentesimum decimum,
originalis copia huius libri, scilicet Speculi vite Christi in Anglicis: presentabatur
Londoniis per compilatorem eiusdem .N. Reuerendissimo in Christo patri & domino,

Domino Thome Arundell, Cantuarie Archiepiscopo, ad inspiciendum & debite
examinandum antequam fuerat libere communicata. Qui post inspeccionem eiusdem
per dies aliquot: retradens ipsum librum memorato eiusdem auctori: proprie vocis
oraculo ipsum in singularis commendauit & approbavit, necnon & auctoritate sua
metropolitica, vt pote catholicum, publice communicandum fore decreuit & mandauit,
ad fidelium edificacionem, & hereticorum siue lollardorum confutationem. Amen.

(7/9-21)

Memorandum: that around the year 1410, the original copy of this book, that is, *The Mirror of the Life of Christ* in English, was presented in London by its compiler, N, to the Most Reverend Father and Lord in Christ, Lord Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, for inspection and due examination before it was freely communicated. Who after examining it for several days, returning it to the above-mentioned author, commended and approved it personally, and further decreed and commanded by his metropolitan authority that it rather be published universally *for the edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics or Lollards.* Amen (Love, *Mirror*, ed. by Sargent, Introduction, 36-37)

One effect of this Memorandum, with its narrative of how the Archbishop ceremonially mandated a set text for the nation, is, from one perspective, to make the other two versions of the statement look like they are doing no more than parroting Arundel. This would also bestow upon the Archbishop a degree of ecclesiastically sanctioned efficient causality and authority in the project of the *Mirror* above Nicholas Love himself. One irony of this, however, is that the Memorandum did not appear in manuscripts until well after Arundel's death, which could have meant that although words originally uttered by Love came to

ventriloquize the Archbishop in the confected narrative of the Memorandum, the users of the manuscripts containing the Memorandum could have been forgiven for thinking that it contained the Archbishop's official words. We may have, in other words, a dialogic in which Love is made to spin Arundel and Arundel is made to spin Love.

Conclusion

In the examples explored in this article, various dialogical inter-relations have presented themselves through the different socio-textual modalities of the *Mirror*. These occur at the levels of production and reading, with special regard to certain aspects of medieval literary thought, especially author functions and the provisional exercise of devout imagination. Pragmatic relations amongst actants, discourses, structures, voices, ideological and transcendental forces and sources have also been variously traced. Attention has been paid to the functions and behaviour of persons and actants envisaged and engaged within and outwith the text and to Nicholas Love's various literary, political and spiritual roles.

We have seen how Nicholas Love loads the terms of engagement by which he takes on the world, the Bible and contemporary culture by pre-positioning the *Mirror* at the commanding heights of authority in alliance with his ordained priestly office and its institutionally compelling voice. The dialogical agency and latitude that this gives him is reflected in the complexity of some of the textual actions he negotiates.

We have seen how the *Mirror* is in intertextual dialogue with parts and details of other works (be they *meters*, authorities, voices, parts, or glosses) in a dialogic of elements rather than of wholes. This is something well suited to the medium of compilation as well as to the sanction of diversity of interpretation necessary to elucidate the Bible and to benefit from its superabundance of spiritual fruit. A repertoire, complementary to this, of protocols

for reading is correspondingly set up by Love to govern the different circumstances in which biblical matter may and must be reimagined, and in which the reader is meant to be both receptive to the narrative and also to engage actively in it with affective discretion. Hand in hand with this there is also a concomitant dialogic mixing the absolute and the provisional – on the one hand, an ostensible obedience to the Bible and on the other hand the necessary freedom with which Nicholas Love and his readers are obliged and permitted to imagine what is not in the Bible. A corollary of this is the imaginative projection of the meditating subject into the biblical *mise en scene* in order to create a dialogic combining the observing of predetermined narrative with the contingently implicated imagining of oneself present at unfolding and unresolved events.

Each of the episodes discussed in this article exemplifies differently productive dialogical configurations of voice, actant, theological causality and contingent imaginability. In the desert, a parabiblical dialogue and scene are devised to help readers conduct themselves correctly in the company of an invisible community of angels. In this scene, codes of Scripture and codes of homely courtesy are made to render each other in pious synthesis through devout imagination. In the account of the dying of Christ, re-voiced scriptural quotations are both subject matter and performative vectors of action and meaning, impacting variously on hermeneutic levels, imaginable *matters* and spiritual phenomena with palpable theological and emotional return. The paradoxical dialogic of the Incarnation governing the process of the account of dying is accorded a different perspective and function in the chapter on the Last Supper, in which sacrament and meditation are cast as mutually illuminating and supportive, each giving access to each other despite the categorical differences between the two. Another remarkable dialogic between two otherwise incompatible categories – the contingent provisional imagining of the sacred humanity and

the transcendental realism of the divine presence -- is also entertained in this work with purpose and eloquence.

Nicholas Love, then, has many roles. Christ, at a rather more exalted level, not only has in this work an extraordinary repertoire of roles, he also dialogically transcends categories in a unique fashion – something Love treats with expository discretion and theological tact. Christ, as *materia*, addressee, actant and *auctor* of providence within and beyond the text, is the multiple occasion of protean dialogic amongst a heterarchic diversity of categories. For example, he mediates incarnately between heaven and earth; he is the author, through his determining divine will, of the events of the narrative; he is also a provisionally imaginable sacred humanity, in all its contingency – and yet is also the Real Presence of the *signum efficiens* of the Eucharist. Not only is Christ the originary voice, listening ear, transcendent awareness, occasion and purpose of the *Mirror*, he is also an efficient cause through grace. All of these factors engage with each other in a Christological economy involving writer, text and readers, across which consciousness and desires are distributed heterarchically. The articulation of such diversity is, of course, variable, being contingent on readers in all their differences.

Taken together, the features discussed in this article configure a network of phenomena and connections serving variously to observe and generate Christological meaning and experience – a collectivity of desire and interpretation variously engaging actants, voices and discourse types articulated within the *Mirror* yet ultimately pointing beyond it in a transcendent dialogic passing understanding.