

**"Crucifye hem, Crucifye hem":**  
The Subject and Affective Response in Middle English Passion Narratives

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The quest for edification and spiritual enrichment in the late Middle Ages took many forms. One of the more important of these was the use of vivid "imaginative" texts on the life of Christ, especially the Passion, as devotional aids. Such texts encouraged readers or listeners to embellish the events of Christ's life with their own thoughts and memories, to "fictionalize" the Passion story and make themselves present and participant. Visualizing a written text and creating one's own mental picture of it may have been encouraged precisely because these activities were open to interpretation and personal involvement. A reading community could re-create those visual images in correspondence with familiar images, stained glass, paintings or statues, but the freedom remained for the reader to take part in the mental drama, to re-write the dialogue, and to be present at the scene described. The choice of details inserted by various authors in the Passion narratives, for instance, shows an awareness of the benefits of this type of personal involvement. Many of these accounts encourage individual, creative extrapolation on the scenes presented, so that each reader/listener can select, recreate or invent details, dialogue or mental images which best serve to elicit affective response or serve as doctrinal fortifiers. Such accounts provide a medium through which moral and theological precepts could be filtered. The main focus of this paper is an especially widely read and disseminated meditation on Christ's life, Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. I will examine the Passion segment of this work in the light of medieval and modern reader-response theories and in the context of medieval affective piety while considering some recent work on affectivity and on the efficacy of visualizing devotional scenes.

Affectivity in religious experience was not new to the later Middle Ages. What was new, however, was the growing concern with and focus on the humanity and suffering of Christ as the primary object of affective devotion. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the agony of the Passion was the guiding metaphor for a good Christian life; hence it became a primary focus in the quest for affective response. Literary concentration on Christ's suffering and death helped to further define the term "affective piety" as the meditation and concentration on Christ's wounds and sufferings as well as the sufferings of Mary in order to elicit an inner emotional, affective response. This in turn should encourage compassion and empathy for Christ's sufferings and thus lead one to contrition and deeper faith. The intended result is a didactic goal to which affectivity is a prelude and an aid. But how is the affectivity associated with the Passion of Christ portrayed as inherently didactic? How do affective, devotional texts construct their narrative frameworks and influence the role of audience response? Furthermore, how does affective response rely largely on "visual" reconstruction of, or involvement in events of Christ's life and Passion? These are some of the questions this paper is concerned with.

In visually reconstructing (that is, both imagining and fictionalizing) the Passion as a method of prayer or meditation, personal and domestic details place the believer within an intimate framework with the human Christ. Interpolation and recreation allow the subject to self-authorize the Passion, creating a mental image which is entirely subjective and which enables one to be present as both a participant and an observer in the unfolding drama. The literary products of affective response included meditative and devotional treatises, religious and secular lyrics and Passion plays.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, affective piety is not only a religious experience but also a literary experience in which affectivity is primary, a type of affective rhetoric. Modern attempts to categorize and label such texts rely on no set criteria, while indeed the texts themselves remain subjective constructs. The boundaries between genres and the uses of such texts overlap. For instance, meditative texts and gospel harmonies such as Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* were designed to promote piety, to stir emotions and encourage empathy, and to provide models which were to be emulated.<sup>2</sup>

By examining the Passion segment of Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, considering its dual affective and didactic role, and seeing it as having a clearly laid-out framework of response, I hope to show that medieval texts on the Passion are not only very "modern" in their subjectivity, but worthy of more critical consideration than has thus far been shown them. Such texts aim at and often prescribe moral and theological instruction and urge readers implicitly or explicitly to be

contrite for their sins and to lead a better life. But despite the sometimes individualistic character of devotional texts, they nonetheless assume a framework of communal, public worship which itself feeds the writing of these texts; thus they tell us both about communal norms of medieval religious experience and about the subjective nature of that experience. This paper will also look at several medieval prescriptions for attaining both affective and didactic aims, such as that found in *The Myroure of Our Lady*.

The rhetoric of affectivity varies from text to text, each work using different techniques and emphases to reach its audience. The element which sets affective response apart from intellectual, critical analysis is subjectivity. Response is by nature self-directed, initiated by external or internal stimuli, but so individual that it is nearly impossible to predict who will respond to any particular thing. Language is the common point of contact, but words are only a medium. It is what the individual brings to the text and the response-ability of that reader that determines the efficacy of that vehicle. Norman Holland states that, as readers, "each of us will bring different kinds of external information to bear. Each will seek out the particular themes that concern him. Each will have different ways of making the text into an experience with a coherence and significance that satisfies."<sup>3</sup> Many of the Passion texts encourage individual, creative extrapolation on the scenes presented, so that each reader or listener can select, recreate or invent details, dialogue, or mental images. Such experiential reading could serve to elicit affective response which would, medieval authors hoped, lead specifically to contrition and penance.

This visual component of Passion narratives and its connection to affectivity is especially relevant when considering the connection between affectivity and didacticism. References to the "mind's eye" or one's "inner eye" and instructions to "see" and "behold" are found throughout medieval texts on prayer, meditation and contemplation, as are encouragements to imagine oneself present at the Passion of Christ.<sup>4</sup> The eye was traditionally the most powerful sensory organ, affecting human response most directly. The "inner eye" lay claim to that same effect, only metaphorically and mentally. Just as artistic representation is a visual metaphor, so the mind's imaginative creation is parallel to an external scene.<sup>5</sup> The interweaving of perception and emotion helps to create a new, response-oriented and imaginative scene. This manipulation of traditional notions of image-retrieval specifically to maximize the emotional component of the elicited response is characteristic of devotional, affective literature of the late Middle Ages.

Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* is a representative text which combines affective and didactic aims. Written around 1410, the *Mirror* is an edited and somewhat expanded translation of Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, thought to have been written by Tuscan preacher Giovanni de Caulibus de Sancto Gemeniano in the late-thirteenth or early-fourteenth century, and translated into several vernaculars over the next few centuries. One of the most popular and influential was Nicholas Love's *Mirror*. The *Mirror*, like the *Meditationes*, encourages the reader to visualize and internalize the story of Christ's Passion. This book of meditative instruction focuses on episodes from the life of Jesus. Scriptural history is embellished with small details or entire episodes, including long homilies on Christian virtues drawn from the author's imagination, a sort of affective "gloss." Love's text comprises sixty-three chapters and a treatise on the blessed sacrament. As a gospel harmony, it draws on many sources and texts for material and structure, including Biblical and apocryphal stories.

Love's text credits the process of visualization with great power, emphasizing how it can be used to encourage heightened emotional awareness such as compassion and sympathy which in turn will encourage moral action. Most of his visualization exercises do not merely prescribe calling to mind an image to meditate on; rather, the image is often developed into a scene, a mini-play with characters, a plot, themes and imagery. The purpose of such meditation is to elicit love for Jesus, and stir the "affecciouns" into a state of emotional arousal necessary to fully create and benefit from "diuerse ymaginacions." The principles of elaboration which Love uses are set forth from the start, as serving a purpose "moste spedefull & edifying" to his primarily "symple" audience. Indeed, the text is quite consciously a teaching text, and accessibility predominates through repetition, comparison, and clarification. Love moves between "visual" and "verbal" cues, aiming to reach the variety of cognitive abilities represented by an audience. The English text, like its Latin source, promotes compassion and affective response as well as moral edification, and emphasizes both penitential and devotional themes. These two aims of the text are closely connected, and affective piety is used primarily as a didactic vehicle. Love foregrounds subjective experience but tempers it with didactic and objective perspectives, stepping back and forth between different layers of subjective involvement with, and response to, the text and the audience.

According to the *Mirror*, a crucial element in Jesus's suffering was the simple fact that he was willing to do so, and as it was through his human will that he suffered, so must we approach the godhead through that manhood, thus having "trewe ymaginacion & inwarde compassion of þe peynes & þe passion of oure lorde" (161). Such "trewe ymaginacion" of these pains implies personal viewing of the events which occurred, a visualization which is the necessary first step to feeling and reacting toward the events of the Passion. The narrator lays out clearly what benefit will result from such an exercise:

Wherefore hauyng þis in mynde, first to stiryng of þe more compassion. . . . For þe grete misteries & alle þe processe þerof, if þei were inwardly consideret with alle þe inwarde mynde & beholdyng of mannus soule. as I fully trowe, þei sholde bringe þat beholdere in to a newe state of grace. For to him þat wolde serche þe passion of oure lorde with alle his herte & alle his inwarde affeccione þere shuld come many deuout felynges & stirynges þat he neuer supposede before. Of þe which he shuld fele a newe compassion & a newe loue, & haue newe gostly confortes, þorh þe which he shold perceyue him self turnede as it were in to a newe astate of soule, in þe which astate þoo forseide gostly felynges, shold seme to him as a nerneste & partie of þe blisse & ioy to come. (162)

The Passion is a direct pathway to affective devotion. This can lead one to a new "astate of soule" which is highly conducive to penitence and moral edification, the "action" which follows feeling and re-action. The connection between emotion and knowledge, feeling and learning, might even be paralleled in the movements from sorrow to joy which prevail throughout so much of the story. By experiencing the sorrow of the Passion one can move beyond it to the joy of the resurrection and the knowledge of salvation. Such emotional and mental connection with Christ on the Cross requires intense concentration, "makynge him self as present in alle þat befelle aboute þat passion & crucifixione, affectuesly, bisily, ausily & perseuerantly and not passing li[gh]tly, or with tedious heuynes, bot with alle þe herte & gostly gladnes" (162). By being present "in mynde," the reader is participating in the events of the Passion. Thus through visualization and the arousal of "many deuout felynges & stirynges," one is urged toward virtuous action through what one learns of Christ and his sacrifice for us, "For þoo þinges þat bene harde & peynful shole sone passe, & þoo þinges þat bene ioyful & gloriose shole come after" (166).

This visual imaging component is in itself a fascinating element in medieval devotion. Discomfort with the use of images and icons as objects of meditation or prayer had been an issue since the inception of Christianity. Yet little or no objection to "imaginative" reconstruction based on textual objects of meditation or elaboration of sacred history is to be found, even when that reconstruction consists of "fictional" details reconstructed within an orthodox framework, and despite the sometimes virulent objections to images. Why, in an age of concern for images on the part of the heterodox, and a concern with lay reading of scriptures on the part of the Church, would imaginatively reconstructing a "fictionalized" version of a text be so widely encouraged? The answer may lie in the efficacy of subjective response and the deeply personal nature of one's relationship with the divine, despite the dangers inherent in just such a relationship.<sup>6</sup> Even in a community experience such as a drama, sermon or Mass, the dichotomy of public perception and private response remains. The flourishing of texts about the Passion both in Latin and in the vernaculars suggests that not only was this a very popular mode of personal devotion, but also a very effective one.<sup>7</sup> By the fourteenth century, there seems to have been a general consensus on the religious value of both images and visualization techniques. Seeing, says Margaret Miles about texts such as the Latin *Meditationes vitae Christi*, "whether by mental visualizations or by the lively illustrations that accompany nearly every page of the stories, generates feeling."<sup>8</sup> Emotions loosen inhibitors, tears are permitted to flow, the subject is made aware of and encouraged to seek resolution for past wrongs through penance. Emotion is a vehicle for learning which often prompts one to act. However, the stigma attached to emotional response from modern points of view, which see such response as irrational, a sign of weakness, or unsuitable for public display, creates boundaries which medieval scholars have, in the past several decades and especially within feminist studies, finally begun to cross.<sup>9</sup>

In the *Mirror*, it is understood that the message of Jesus's life not only provides excellent didactic and moral material, but that it is inherently didactic and serves as a model for believers. In this way, Jesus's life is "þe Mirror of temperance & alle oþer vertues" (12). What becomes clear is that access to the message has many paths, including that of affectivity. The feelings evoked when meditating upon Christ's life and death would then serve to strengthen the messages being received by inhabiting them with personally relevant, affective overtones. And so the reader is instructed how to "read" and enact the following meditations: "þou most with all þi þought & alle þin entent, in þat

manere make þe in þi soule present to þoo þinges þat bene here writen seyde or done of oure lord Jesu" (12-13). More than merely meditating on or visualizing the events, believers should internalize them and use them as individual models of behavior and devotion. The text requires the full attention not only of one's eyes and ears, but of one's soul and heart, "identification" not only with the content of the text, but with the layers of interpretation, narrative and affectivity therein.<sup>10</sup> Thus rather than absorbing merely the didactic content of the gospels, one is also encouraged to "feel" and "respond" to the affective triggers in the human story, imprinting the image and its lesson on the "mind's eye."

This process of reading builds an active, vibrant and intimate relationship between reader and text. In a similar instruction on reading holy books, the late fifteenth-century *Myroure of Our Ladye* tells its reader how efficacious such texts are meant to be: "For some bokes ar made to enforme the vnderstondynge. & to tel how spiritual persones oughte to be gouerned in all theyr lyuynge that they may knowe what they shall leue. & what they shall do. how they shulde laboure inclensyng of theyr conscyence."<sup>11</sup> One's devout reading should lead one to devout action. *The Myroure of Our Ladye* also suggests that different texts use different techniques to achieve the above virtuous introspection: "Other bokes ther be that ar made to quyken. & to sturre vp the affeccyons of the soule, as som that tel of the sorowes & dredes of dethe. & of dome. & of paynes. to sturre vp the affeccyons of drede. & of sorow for synne" (68-69). The emphasis on subjective reading, response and action is paramount. Some books, we are told, concentrate on educating the reader, and others combine the affective and didactic: "There be also some bokes. that treate bothe of maters to enforme the vnderstondynge. and also of matters to sturre vp the affeccions. Somtyme of the tone, and some tyme of the tother. And in redynge of suche bokes, ye oughte to dyspose you to bothe as the matter asketh" (70). The latter is the model Love employs—to affect and instruct, often using the former as a vehicle for the latter, "And in the selfe seruyce your affeccyons ought to be sturred. sometyme to loue and ioye. and praysynges of oure lorde Iesu Criste. & of hys moste holy mother, sometyme to drede, sometyme to hope, and sometyme to sorow & compassyon" (70).

In the *Mirror*, the Last Supper provides especially clear instances where Love spells out his jointly affective and didactic agenda. Various rhetorical tones of exhortation, appeal and warning serve to keep the reader involved with the text. The reader is told to "haue in mynde" the events to come, that is to visualize and thus remember them for future meditation. The meditative process is laid out carefully:

Now take hede & beholde with alle þi mynde þou þat redest or herest þis, alle þat folowen, þat bene tolde, spoken or done, for þei bene ful likyng & stiryng to gret deuocion. For in þis processe is þe most strengþe & gostly fruyte of alle þe meditaciones þat bene of þe blessed lif of oure lord Jesu, principaly for þe passyng tokenes & shewyngis in dede of his loue to mankynde, wherefore here we shol not abregge as we haue in oþere places bot rapere lenth it in processe. (147)

Love's editorial intent is clear. He wishes to provide an intensely didactic experience, and does so by first engaging the reader in affective experience with the text. And so the reader is instructed to mentally "beholde" the unfolding drama and let it stir him/her to "gret deuocion," a process which will reap "strengþe & gostly fruyte"—visualize the scene, feel the response it evokes, and learn its message. Hand in hand with love and compassion for Jesus, he emphasizes orthodox instruction. The intent and process of the text is to instruct readers and encourage them to "feel," and thereby urge them to act.

This sequence of "know—feel—act" corresponds with Gregory the Great's instructions, and with the principles of penance, and continue the program laid out at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215.<sup>12</sup> Gregory, in his *Moralia in Job*, tells his readers that they must internalize and transform what they "read" so that it can stir their minds, and so that they can use what has been learned in determining future actions: "We should transform what we read into ourselves, so that when the mind is aroused by that it hears, one's life may concur by putting into effect what has been heard."<sup>13</sup> Gregory's phrase is useful to begin to understand how affective response (and not necessarily Christological response) is a pathway to moral perfection. There is a sense of didacticism inherent in "feeling" which is prioritized in many devotional texts. Not only is the mind aroused, but educated and given the spiritual tools with which to perform devout actions. Within a medieval Christian context, didactic and moral purpose go hand in hand with devotional, affective experience: feel, know and act. In fact, Denise Despres suggests that while a process of "vicarious participation in gospel events" may not lie within the provenance of many modern audiences, this form of devotion

"marks a fundamental historical and theological tie between affective piety and the developing sacrament of penance and is consequently a prominent factor in late-medieval penitential literature."<sup>14</sup>

The basis for Christocentric affective, imaginary re-constructive texts is sacred history, not fiction. On the other hand, much of the extrapolation and elaboration of "orthodox" texts as found in gospel harmonies and meditations on Christ's life and Passion rely heavily on "fictionalized" elements that serve to personalize the text and thus one's response to it. The audience-based notions which modern response theories embrace are, in some senses, very "medieval," and can be seen in the context of early theories of response and reaction. But not every reader will react precisely as the text suggests. Thus in Love's text, those who are moved to action through affection are provided with many opportunities. Those who learn best by doctrinal instruction are given just that; and readers who need constant encouragement and repeated lessons get what they need as well. In the *Mirror*, continual appeals to the audience's sight, emotion, and imagination as keys to meditative experience serve to instruct the reader how to create a visual forum for devotional experience. Constant exhortations to "have in mynde," "see," "beholde" and "think on" place the reader firmly in a creative role, a role which he/she may or may not choose to accept.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the closer Love's narrator in the *Mirror* gets to the crucifixion, the more affective and penitential the emphasis becomes. In fact, in keeping with the original precepts of Lateran IV, penance is portrayed as an important byproduct of affectivity as well as being crucial to the didactic agenda of Holy Church.

In the *Mirror* and other visually minded meditative texts, it is primarily the image one constructs in one's mind based on a written, oral or visual text that is the object of such meditation, and thus this "re-construction" is highly subjective and influenced by one's experience, imagination and personal faith. It is this very subjectivity that makes affective response unique. The "verbal"-cum-visual images and scenes described in these texts are themselves products of their authors' own faith and imaginative re-construction (an author who is also a reader), and the medieval reader is in turn able to reconstruct the narrative image on his/her own through a similar process. Visualization or reconstructing and experiencing a scene in the "mind's eye" is a form of meditation or discursive prayer. Images in the mind's eye are affective in nature, as the memories which serve to re-create the scenes have been emotionally tagged.<sup>16</sup> Successful recollection requires recopying the sensory and emotional composition which constructed the image in the first place, or in at least remembering, perhaps as a sensory "imprint," the sensation or feeling that first accompanied the event. Thus, the response elicited from these verbal/mental images is an emotional one. Emphasis is placed on the concrete and physical rather than on the abstract and incorporeal, on imagining as an act of creation which encompasses other experiences and memories, and re-creates a new yet analogous image. Emotions are often the trigger for the act of remembering, and aid the reader in constructing the mental scene which then becomes the "screen," if you will, on which the meditative focus is placed and the scene reenacted.

Every text is directed at an implicit or explicit audience. Love's tendency to invent his readers provides the audience with a fictional identity. The readers are invited to become characters in the story, to participate in the crucifixion, or engage in debate with the narrator. In this and other Passion texts, they are sometimes encouraged to take on the roles of other characters (such as the soldiers) or even inanimate objects (such as the nails used to crucify Christ). Each text can be seen as an author's attempt to subjectively engage the story of the Passion and to draw the reader into a joint and active participation in those events in order to elicit response which will lead to devout and virtuous action. The narrator also plays various roles in Love's text but is primarily an expositor/priest/spiritual director figure whose knowledge grounds the narrative in an orthodox framework. In clear narrative prose, he instructs, exhorts, chastises, appeals to and shares with his audience. The text shifts quickly back and forth between affective, didactic, hortatory and narrative modes of speech. The narrator proposes to tell the events of that life as they occurred or might have occurred, depending on the individual reader's imaginative interpretation of the events. This is a sort of conscious reader-response "writing." The reader is even given alternative renderings of events, another narrative and rhetorical technique which encourages closer relationship with the text and with the subject of the text. If all individuals were permitted to imaginatively "realize" events in their own way, the events would become intimate and personal, more easily recalled and more deeply connected with the spiritual self. It is precisely this permissive quality which renders the affectivity in these texts so highly effective, if at times dangerous. Despres suggests that in the Latin version of the *Mirror*,

the emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ takes precedence over strict adherence to the Gospels. In fact, in the *Meditations*, although imagination still refers to visualization or recollection, the rudiments of fiction

as we know it are certainly present. The *Meditations* legitimizes the re-creation of gospel events, and even supplemental or fictional events, if it increases devotion. The issue is not whether such occurrences actually happened but whether they are morally "true" and thus fulfill the primary function of meditation—to teach us how to live.<sup>17</sup>

The same agenda is followed by Love in his version of the text.

Margaret Miles explains that meditation has sometimes been described as a "free association" by which "one weaves together one's own experience with the scriptural passage or visual image that focuses the meditation, allowing each to examine and challenge the other." Meditation is a "play of the mind around stimuli; sometimes it is organized in stages by a process of moving from one stimulus to another."<sup>18</sup> I am here interested primarily in text-based visualization or "imagining" (a text read or listened to) and how such visualization and experiential reading elicits subjective response from the believer.<sup>19</sup> Christians knew the narrative content of biblical stories from popular drama, sermons, visiting preachers, visual media and their own reading. It is probably a sound assumption that no Christian went through his/her life having never seen a visual representation of the scriptural narrative, be it in the form of paintings, statues, stained glass, drama or woodcuts. The didactic purpose of such visual representation is reconstructed in the narratives which describe Christ's life and Passion. And, by taking on an affective tone, these narratives often reformulate the didactic message to be delivered and emphasize it via affective media. The result is a more memorable and effective didactic experience.

Much of our evidence for the process of meditation and later for a vernacular process of affective devotion is found in monastic writings. We can see, for instance, how after the *lectio divina* which includes the act of committing to memory and internalizing and reworking a "text" image as one's own, this image combines with other images/texts and becomes imprinted on one's mind, much like a visual reader-response process. In the twelfth century, Hugh of St Victor defined the difference between *lectio* and meditation as follows:

Meditation is frequent reflection along with judgement, which prudently investigates the cause and origin, the method and usefulness of something else. Meditation takes its start from reading, yet is not constricted by the rules or precepts of reading. For it delights to wander around in a certain free/open space where it fixes its unhindered sight on the contemplation of truth, to draw together now this, now that cause of things, now to penetrate certain depths, leaving nothing dark or obscure. Therefore the principle of learning is in reading, its completion in meditation.<sup>20</sup>

Meditation begins in study, but involves the mind's free-writing an imaginary text based on recollected memories, combined with emotions and judgment. The start of learning lies in *lectio*, but its consummation lies in meditation, the process of internalizing what one has read, and the "agency" by which it is accomplished.<sup>21</sup> Medieval reading itself is not a passive act of absorption, but one in which the reader engages the text and interacts with it. Anne Clark Bartlett suggests that theories of reading in the Middle Ages are surprisingly consistent, contending that "audiences became progressively 'reformed,' both physically (through changed behavior) and inwardly (through mental, emotional, and spiritual alterations) as a result of their internalization of written material."<sup>22</sup> This is precisely what Gregory prescribes. Perhaps the gap between modern and medieval theories of response can be bridged without too much difficulty after all.

Likewise, the text which provides the raw material for *lectio* is just the starting point of learning. The reader must internalize and re-write the text according to his/her own personal needs and beliefs, and learn what this new reading presents. I think it would be interesting to consider the type of meditation encouraged by vernacular written texts primarily for a lay audience such as the *Mirror* as perhaps a later form of the monastic practice of *lectio divina*: slow, meditative reading, a form of devout prayer, only with a more prevalent, and Christocentric, element of visual imaging. With the growth in emphasis on the humanity of Christ, the visual emphasis, which had been a minor factor in early *lectio divina*, became central and shifted believers toward the physical manifestation of Christ's suffering. Meditation on Christ's death was intended to trigger a reaction and re-action achieved via affective response. The connection between emotional triggers and specific events in the lives of Christ (and of Mary, whose affective response is often set forth as the audience's model) is what affective piety strives to create, via a reworking of the traditional didactic life-models of Christ and his followers. Christ's wounds, the instruments of the Passion, and the

act of crucifixion all serve as devotional aids which are created and re-created on an intensely personal level through imaginative reconstruction of the events. The association of images with emotional "triggers" has long been manipulated, and so either external or imaginary pictures could be used to elicit empathy and pathos.

Medieval authors play many roles in the process of inviting their readers into a text. He or she is sometimes the narrator, the envoy whose role it is to explicate and clarify the meaning of certain events or words, sometimes just the writer who plays no tangible role in the text, or sometimes an active participant in the dialogue of the text. Bartlett identifies two main strategies used by narrators in Middle English devotional literature on the Passion (she notes primarily those texts written with a female audience in mind).<sup>23</sup> She develops what she calls a "pedagogy of participation" and a "pedagogy of transcendence" to define in particular the female reader's process of "imagining" herself into the events of the crucifixion and of mystical marriage:

(1) graphic appeals to the senses that allow the reader not only to visualize but also to imagine hearing, feeling, and even tasting aspects of the crucifixion; and (2) the use of narrators within the text (especially the Virgin Mary), who spur the reader on to a closer identification with the Passion, greater expressions of fervor, and ultimately to a contemplative transcendence of her sensory and cognitive processes.<sup>24</sup>

The narrator's function is to "heighten the reader's response to the Passion narrative. Some accounts gently lead their audience through the events of the crucifixion, signaling appropriate responses and providing explanatory digressions."<sup>25</sup> But in fact her definition of the strategies used by narrators is applicable to a much wider variety of devotional texts.

A great variety of rhetorical methods is represented in medieval Passion accounts. Some texts emphasize the time it took Christ to die, drawing out his time on the Cross for maximum affective benefit. Other texts emphasize and personalize the deposition, drawing on the literary personalities of Jesus's friends and family and concentrating on their sense of loss. Still other texts place the primary emphasis on Mary's own suffering and loss, and build on empathy for her motherhood as the crux of the story. Repetition, amplification, the convention of complaint, pathos and family dynamics all play a part in eliciting affective response.<sup>26</sup> There is, in essence, no stone left unturned in the search for affective vehicles and their ultimate goal—devout action. These are also elements which are found in the story of the Passion, and it is these, primarily human, familial and homely elements and the emotions they evoke which serve to elicit affective response.

In Chapter 18 of Love's text Jesus is held up as a "mirror of the virtues" (84). The narrator describes how the disciples beheld Jesus, "lowely & mekely" sitting on the hill,

& hees disciples about him & with how lowely & sadde chere, he spekeþ þo wordes full of edificacione & techeþ þat noble lesson of souereyn perfeccion. And also how mekely & entently hees disciples beholden his blessed face & heren þo swete wordes, & setten hem bisily in hir mynde. And so haue þei gret ioy & gostly likyng boþe in his speche & in his siht. (85)

They "setten" Christ's words "bisily in her mynde," obviously engaging in interpretation, thinking how best to apply the lesson to their own lives and actions. The didactic undertone is the crucial nature of listening, for it is through Jesus's words that the disciples are instructed. Yet the visual reconstruction of the scene, the demeanor of the disciples in Jesus's presence, even the way the reader chooses to imagine the tilt of Christ's head, provide the tableau on which the words are printed and the means by which they are internalized and remembered. The conflation of sound and sight, of ghostly hearing and ghostly vision, emphasizes the didactic and affective nature of the exchange. Nicholas Love writes for an audience who, he hopes, will recreate and participate in the types of experiences he describes, using the techniques of visualization and recreation to, in St Gregory's words, think on a text, feel it, and act upon it.

Love carefully dictates the affective responses of his audience, but he encourages full expression of such response only when the appropriate didactic lesson and resulting action are perceived. He sometimes uses a didactic approach alone; he sometimes follows the didactic with an affective passage; he sometimes starts and ends a segment with affectivity alone, or emphasizes the didactic message which arises from it. The continual oscillation between moral and doctrinal teaching serves to draw the reader back and forth between "thinking" and "feeling," further emphasizing both elements. The purpose of these various "reversals" goes hand in hand with the oscillation between sorrow and

joy. Many subtle and implicit messages are delivered to the reader about the availability of affective vehicles of compassion and empathy, such as the behavior of Jesus or his disciples. The reader is "taught" the principles of a good Christian life equally through direct teaching about the precepts of Christianity, positive examples and through the evil behavior of characters such as Jesus's prosecutors and the soldiers. The narrator is quite careful and specific in inviting his audience to partake in creating the events spoken of—"behold we inwardly" and "þenk we deuoutly by ymaginacion"—because they will stir our devotion, and because he knows that the path to salvation is paved not only with feeling, but with knowing.

Brought before the high priests, Jesus is, as told in the scriptures, mocked and reviled, interrogated and beaten:

gladde were þei þan examinyng him & aposyng sotelye in many questiones, & procuryng fals wisse  
a[y]eynus him, & spityng on hys holiest face, & hidyng hese eyene, þei buffetede him scornynge . . . & he in alle  
shewede hie pacience. Wherefore here we oweþ to haue inwarde compassion of alle þat he suffrede so for vs.  
(168)

By including himself among "we" who "oweþ to haue inwarde compassion," the narrator builds a bond of trust with his readers which encourages them to follow him into the darkest parts of the story. By controlling his readers' reactions and at the same time placing himself among them, Love's narrator is in a very powerful rhetorical position, a position from which he can dictate both the text and the audience's response. At the same time, he leaves the details of many scenes open to the reader's imagination, implying only that events were witnessed by many, whose own "retellings" are as individual but also as "accurate" as the reader's own.

In addition to the narrator's own silence on many matters, the reader is told to take heed of Christ's silence throughout the physical trial, as "oure lorde as shamefast paciently in silence haldyng his pees to alle þat þei putte vpon him, kastyng done towarde þe erþe his chere, as þei he were guilty & taken in blame, & here haue [inwardly] compassion" (168). The dramatic scene of Jesus's quiet acceptance of his fate has already been constructed through his earlier discussion with God in the garden. Subsequently, Jesus's silence throughout the mocking, trial and crucifixion is prescribed by his acceptance of his fate and the recognition of its necessity. While the scene in the garden ought to elicit compassion tinged with horror at Jesus's mental struggle to come to terms with his fate, this scene engenders a more tender compassion. Jesus remains "bonden vnto þat pilere vnto þe morowe" (168), patient and silent. During these last hours, it is Jesus who remains as solid a pillar of strength as the "pilere" to which he is bound, and the narrator who becomes Jesus's suffering voice.

Jesus is led again to the hall where he had been beaten, and is stripped of his mantle. The effectiveness of the narrator's call to "take hede" and "haue wondre" in order to "conforme þe to folowe" Jesus's example is accomplished through the empathetic framework continually being constructed and revised. The reader is told to "go forth" with Jesus, not only to accompany him, but to participate in both his suffering and his condemnation" (173). Jesus as the innocent lamb and tender, patient suffering servant of mankind is contrasted with the horror of the events unfolding and the heavy weight of the Cross, which is at once the instrument of death and the instrument of salvation. The narrator's own sorrow at the events transpiring adds a more overt affective dimension which rhetorically adds to the overall tone of the text: "Oo gude lorde Jesu what shame done þei to [y]owe, þei þat sholde be [y]our frendes, þei maken [y]ow felawe to þefes, [y]ei & [y]it þei done worse. for þei maken [y]ow to bere [y]oure crosse, þat is not radde of hem" (173). The theme of betrayal operates on three levels: Jesus has been betrayed by both his friends, his people, and us, his audience.

The "visual" language used by the narrator during the actual Passion and the insistent exhortations to "se" and "beholde" lead the reader explicitly through the events. The narrator continues to point out relevant details, and is conscious of a hoped-for response, while encouraging visual reproduction and moral action. "Take hede now diligently with alle þi herte, alle þo þinges þat be now to come, & make þe þere present in þi mynde, beholdyng alle þat shale be done a[y]eynus þi lorde Jesu & þat bene spoken or done of him. And so wiþ þe innere eye of þi soule beholde" (176). The events of the crucifixion are similarly peppered with reminders to pay attention, watch carefully and remember. Love alternates between affective and didactic "readings" of events, providing all readers with a personal inroad into the text which also serves to emphasize the events while creating dramatic tension: "Now take hede diligently to þe maner of crucifyng" (176). The image of Jesus climbing the ladder to the erect Cross is

powerfully affective.

Love goes to great lengths to emphasize his obedience and passivity. The scene of the actual crucifixion is described in very concrete terms by the narrator, and the reader is able to construct the physical layout of Calvary based on his description:

And þan he þat was on þe laddere behynde þe crosse. takeþ his riht hande & naileþ it fast to þe crosse. And after he þat was on þe lift side draweþ wiþ alle his miht þe lift arme & hande, & driueþ þerþorh a noþere grete naile. After þei comen done & taken away alle þe laddres & so hangeþ oure lorde onely by þoo tweyn nailes smyten þorh hees handes without sustenance of þe body, drawyng donwarde peynfully þorh þe weiht þerof. (177)

Even the details of the setting up and removal of the ladders on either side of the Cross (which are later paralleled in the deposition scene) add to the verisimilitude and the visual immediacy of the scene while the affective aspect is emphasized as Jesus is left, hanging solely by the weight of his hands nailed to the arms of the Cross. The gruesome scene is drawn out, and the pause between the nailing of the hands and feet, when the weight of Jesus's body rests on his crucified hands, lasts an eternity. Love's narrator alternately explains that Jesus may have been crucified while lying on the Cross on the ground. Then the narrator proceeds to extrapolate on this version of events, providing yet more imaginary and imaginative material for his audience to draw on.

More work needs to be done on the response of lay or clerical audiences whose experience of the divine was not privileged like that of mystics or visionaries, but whose resulting actions are just as prescribed by devotional texts as those of the privileged few. Unfortunately, this is an audience which has left us little to reconstruct. So we must turn to the texts themselves. Wolfgang Iser suggests that reading is an active, creative process in which the "literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality."<sup>27</sup> This dimension is the coming together of text and imagination. No text is a fixed, static entity, but a product of ever-changing realizations. The text combines with the reader's own thoughts and with the faculty of imagination to produce a new meaning of that text. It is thus nearly impossible to trace the process of response in an individual, and so it is easier, if perhaps less accurate and too tainted by subjective assessment, to look at the texts themselves.<sup>28</sup> One can trace the degrees of verisimilitude within the text itself, degrees which are dependent upon the author's own response and response-ability with regards to the subject matter. And audience response is guided by authorial response.

It is clear that for Nicholas Love, emotion is very important in experiential learning. The text is meant to elicit an empathic response through visualization, recreation and participation, thus ensuring the emotional involvement of the reader, which opens the door to spiritual involvement. Any orthodox means which serve that end are justified; orthodoxy must both precede and emerge from a rhetoric of persuasion, and affective response must be grounded in orthodox doctrinal teaching. Through the elicitation of empathy and compassion, affective piety became a vehicle for didacticism and thence for penitential expression.

As Gregory instructs, internalize the text, act on it and make it your own. Thus what one reads is transformed into the self and becomes part of one's own inclinations and responses. But the "text" is a fluid entity, and a variety of "textual" readings can be inferred from aural, pictorial and dramatic texts as well as from the written word. Affective devotional texts urge the readers to invent scenes which place them in the role of participants in the events of Christ's human life. These scenes not only create a sense of intimacy between man and God and may elicit affective, compassionate and empathic response, but also serve a didactic purpose. Experiential faith is deeply personal. Moreover, the text that urges its reader to "see" or "behold" invites participation in a visual-imaging component which more strictly theological or didactic texts do not.

[*Editor's note to on-line edition*: letters [y] and [gh] in brackets have been substituted for Middle English yogh.]

1. Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 51, characterizes this and other Passion texts, especially the Latin texts, as "products of a productive and complex textual community built upon mutual relationship and interdependence in which many works reveal the textual traces of many other works, and in which the texts themselves are not static, but, attributed

to various authors, subject to revision, recension, and modification."

2. *Nicholas Love's Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (New York, 1992). All references to this edition are given by page number within the text. See also Elizabeth Salter, Nicholas Love's "Myrrou of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ," *Analecta Cartusiana* 10 (Salzburg, 1974); Salter, "The Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's Myrrou of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ and Related Texts," in *Middle English Prose: Essays on Bibliographical Problems*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall (New York, 1981), pp. 115-28.

3. Norman N. Holland, "Unity Identity Text Self," in *Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore, 1980), p. 123.

4. Such classifications range from their simple use as visual metaphors for meditation, as in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford Brown Meech (Oxford, 1940), to more theologically complex treatments of different types of interior sight, such as that found in Hugh and Richard of St Victor. As Alastair Minnis points out in "Affection and Imagination in 'The Cloud of Unknowing' and Hilton's 'Scale of Perfection,'" *Traditio* 39 (1983), 323-66, at 348 n. 85, Hugh and Richard identify "the eye of bodily sense, the eye of reason, and the eye of the understanding." Visual metaphors are often closely connected with discussions of meditation and contemplation. Margery Kempe refers continuously to seeing Christ "in þe syght of hir s[owle] as yf Crist had hangyn befor hir bodily eye in hys manhode" (70), conflating and embellishing her spiritual vision with an intensely visual manifestation of Jesus's suffering.

5. However, on the acknowledged dangers of trusting the sense of sight, see Susan Warrenner Smith, "Bernard of Clairvaux and the Nature of the Human Being: The Special Senses," *Cistercian Studies* 30 (1995), 3-13.

6. On support for the use of images as didactic tools, see Bonaventure, *Commentaria in tertium librum sententiarum M. Petri Lombardi* 9.1.2, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, ed. Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 10 vols. in 11 (Rome, 1882-1902), 4:203: "Dicendum quod imaginum introductio in Ecclesia non fuit absque rationabili causa. Introductae enim fuerunt propter triplicem causam, videlicet propter simplicium ruditatem, propter affectuum tarditatem, et propter memoriae labilitatem." The first purpose of constructing images follows on Gregory's comparison of images to books, primarily used to instruct the unlearned. The third purpose, to keep the memory from "slipping," serves to further internalize the image-and-response and contribute to long-term re-enacting of a visual, experiential state which is inherently didactic. The second purpose, to excite the emotions (affectuum) because they are tarditatem, delayed or impeded, is of special interest because the association of images with emotional "triggers" could be manipulated, and either external or imaginary pictures could be used to elicit empathy and compassion. In the later Middle Ages, when this empathy was focused toward Christ's humanity and suffering, not only affective but didactic aims as well were being met.

Gregory's three reasons were derived from John of Damascus (d. 749), *De fide orthodoxa* 86: "Quia vero non omnes noscunt litteras, neque lectioni vacant, patres excogitaverunt velut quosdam triumphos in imaginibus haec scribere, ad velocem memoriam. Quapropter multoties non secundum mentem habentes Domini passionem, imaginem Christi crucifixionis videntes et salutaris passionis in rememorationem venientes, procidentibus adoramus" (cited by E. Ruth Harvey, "The Image of Love," in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain Marc'Hadour and Richard C. Marius, 15 vols. in 19 [New Haven, 1981], 6:727-60 [Appendix A], at 751 n. 2).

There is also much literature concerning Gregory's statements in support of images. See for instance Celia M. Chazelle, "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate: Pope Gregory I's Letters to Serenus of Marseilles," *Word & Image* 6 (1990), 138-53; Lawrence G. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?" *Word & Image* 5 (1989), 227-51.

The theory of the efficacy of images was challenged not only by the Lollard controversy, but by reformers as well. See the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, 1993); William R. Jones, "Art and Christian Piety: Iconoclasm in Medieval Europe," in *The Image and the Word: Confrontations in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Missoula, 1977), pp. 75-105; and Cynthia Hahn, "Purification, Sacred Action, and the Vision of God: Viewing Medieval Narratives," *Word & Image* 5 (1989), 71-84.

7. As a caveat, the presumptuousness of assuming that the "affective" qualities of these texts had a similar effect on everyone, or even that the majority of believers pursued this sort of religious practice, must be acknowledged. But consider Hugh of St Victor, *De modo orandi* (PL 176:978-79); and Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum: Two English Versions*, ed. John Ayto and Alexandra Barratt, EETS o.s. 287 (London, 1984).

8. Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston, 1985), p. 70. See also Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: Form and Function of Early Paintings of the Passion*, trans. Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New York, 1981), esp. pp. 54-57; Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1972).

9. Such works include Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982); Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987); David Aers and Lynn Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* (Pennsylvania, 1996).

10. Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London, 1993), pp. 212-28, at 225, describes "identification" as "the establishment of affinities between oneself and someone outside oneself—a familiar ground on which we are able to experience the unfamiliar . . . a stratagem by means of which the author stimulates attitudes in the reader."

11. *The Myroure of Our Lady*, ed. J. H. Blunt, EETS e.s. 19 (London, 1873), p. 68. Further references to this text are given by page number in the text.

12. Leonard Boyle, O.P., "The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology," in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville, 1985), pp. 30-43.

13. *Moralia in Job* 1.33, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143 (Turnhout, 1979), p. 43 (PL 75:542C): "In nobismetipsis namque debemus transformare quod legimus; ut cum per auditum se animus excitat, ad operandum quod audierit vita concurrat."

14. Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK, 1989), p. 20.

15. Iser, "The Reading Process," p. 218. As with any "literary" text, the reader must picture the invisible: "the written part of the text gives us the knowledge, but it is the unwritten part that gives us the opportunity to picture things," to fill the gaps.
16. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 60.
17. Despres, *Ghostly Sights*, p. 37.
18. Margaret R. Miles, *The Image and Practice of Holiness: A Critique of the Classic Manuals of Devotion* (London, 1989), p. 127.
19. The term "imagining" is to distinguish it from the philosophical and medical theories of imagination and the bodily senses. See E. Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. E. H. Gombrich and J. P. Trapp, Warburg Institute Surveys (London, 1976). I am here concerned with the "inner eye" and the spiritual imagination as a literary metaphor for the vehicle of response.
20. *De modo dicendi et meditandi* (PL 176:878A): "Meditatio est frequens cogitatio cum consilio, quae causam et originem, modum et utilitatem uniuscujusque rei prudenter investigat. Meditatio principium sumit a lectione, nullis tamen struitur regulis aut praeceptis lectionis. Delectatur enim quodam aperto discurrere spatio, ubi liberam contemplandae veritati aciem affigat, et nunc has, nunc illas rerum causas perstringere, nunc autem profunda quaeque penetrare, nihil anceps, nihil obscurum relinquere. Principium ergo doctrinae est in lectione, consummatio in meditatione."
21. See Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, pp. 162-63.
22. Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca, 1995), p. 17. See also Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. Catharine Misrahi (New York, 1982).
23. Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, p. 122.
24. Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, p. 123.
25. Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, p. 124.
26. See Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, esp. pp. 26-68.
27. Iser, "The Reading Process," p. 215.
28. See Stanley E. Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics," in *Reader Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore, 1980), pp. 70-100.