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Five Hundred Years of Discomfiture:
Modern Responses to
Medieval English Saints' Legends[1]

John SCAHILL

It is salutary for modern scholars of Middle English, with a firm sense of their field sitting comfortably between Old and Early Modern English, to be reminded that such an academic field did not exist until the second half of the nineteenth century, and that in the Early Modern period the their period could be vehemently distinguished from the present as one of 'horrible darkenesse' (Bale, qtd Shrank 2007, 179). That intense reaction against a recent past may seem remote from the modern study of Middle English, and yet it is what produced the periodisation and thus the period. The reaction is not simply to be equated with the Reformation: Manfred Görlach (1994, 422–3), tracing the decline of saints' legends from the fifteenth century, comments that 'the loss of their position in the Renaissance ... represents a very important indication of a "new age" approaching'.

Indeed, the reaction against the medieval period was particularly focussed on the legends — concerning the most influential of all medieval legendaries, Rudolf Kapp (1934 I: 36) speaks of 'the boundless hatred that the Reformers showed towards the *Legenda Aurea*' and calls it the both the most hated and the most loved book in the Reformation period[2] — and this is responsible for another notable feature of

their reception history. It is striking that they figure so little in David Matthews' *The Making of Middle English, 1765–1910* and the companion *The Invention of Middle English*; all the more striking when we observe that the genre most prominent in his account is the romance, even though the kinship of romances to legends has been recognised since at least the time of Sir Walter Scott (1834, 140-2). There is a good reason for this absence: in the formative period of Middle English studies, publications on the legends are notably scarce; moreover, until the First World War, most of them come from outside the English-speaking world. The reception of the Middle English saints' legends from the eighteenth century to the present fills out the picture of the development of the discipline of Middle English, all the more so as it is the genre that has most stimulated partisanship, discomfiture, and even hostility in those who study it.

This kinship of legends and romances is recognised in a back-handed way by one of the earliest contributors to the making of Middle English, Joseph Ritson. If there is a Middle Ages of the right as well as of the left, these allegiances governing most if not all of critical work (Patterson 1987, xi), Ritson is the most prominent early representative of the left, and to him legends and romances were bad in the same way.

> The gods of the ancient heathens, and the saints of the more modern christians, are the same sort of imaginary beings; who, alternately, give existence to romanceës, and receive it from them. The legends of the one, and the fables of the other, have been, constantly, fabricateëd for the same purpose, and with the same view: the promotion of fanaticism, which, being mere illusion, can only be exciteëd or supported by romance: (Ritson

1802, I: xxxii)

The right, however, was at the time was engaged in a sympathetic antiquarian recovery of romances, and there is a stark and instructive difference in its attitude to legends. The Roxburghe Club, for example, printed numerous romances from its foundation in 1812, but only three of its first fifty volumes included legends.[3] The introduction to one of them says of Osbern Bokenham's legends:

> [T]hey certainly go far to prove the necessity of that reformation in religion which was speedily to take place, and which has freed those minds, that are willing to be free, from the mental slavery that it was evidently the pious and heartfelt wish of our Austin friar to perpetuate (Herbert 1835, i).

The suspicion that such attitudes may help explain the scarcity of editions is supported by the introduction to another legend by W. H. Black (1830, iii-iv), member of the council of the Percy Society, antiquary and sometime Assistant Keeper of the Public Records Office:

> In the dark ages, when literature was almost universally confined to the cloister, where superstition held the place of religion, and social life was exchanged by the misguided soul for silence and solitude; the finer feelings of the human mind, though not altogether extinguished by monastic rigour, were hardly kept alive by the scantiness of intellectual food. The written poetry of the middle ages, for the most part composed by recluses, was chiefly narrative or sentimental; and, with few exceptions was dull, groveling, and worse than prose.... The lives of Saints.... were

> by degrees loaded with myriads of *miracles*, until they became
> loathsome, went gradually out of use, and were at length swept
> away by the Reformation of religion and literature.... Encum-
> bered as [the legend of St Edith] is with legendary fictions and
> superstition, the reader will be able to gather gold out of the rub-
> bish of this antiquated poet.

This deeply unenthusiastic endorsement of his text is grounded in the editor's unmistakable hostility to the culture that produced it.

The comments of Black and Herbert show that for these texts, romanticism had not yet made these texts more acceptable, and the problem was their religious outlook, aggravated by a persistence of the early-modern distaste for the medieval as such, still unmistakable in the following remark by William Blades in the 1860s. '[T]o Caxton may be given this praise, that in several places where the "worthy doctors of divinite" had inserted in their English version some stories more incredible or more filthy than usual, he very discreetly modified or alto-gether omitted them' (II: 154). The legends and the culture that produced them are here fitted into a history of a Whiggish kind.

However, Tory Anglicanism[4], Romanticism and the High Church movement brought the possibility of a more sympathetic approach, most clearly represented in the antiquarian period by the work of W. B. D. D. Turnbull. Ritson's pronouncement on legends and romances is quoted by him for refutation (viii-ix), in the polemical preface, with an Anglo-Catholic flavour, to his *Lytle Boke of Seyntlie Gestes* (1840).[5] There is a kinship with recent, vastly more scholarly, arguments for the vitality of the late medieval church in the work of Peter Heath, Eamon Duffy and others.

During the twentieth century, however, there is a realisation that

even a broadly Catholic outlook is separated by cultural rifts from the thought-world of the legends. Of the *Legenda Aurea*, George O'Neill observed in 1914 that 'the Jansenist party in the Church were scandalized by its frequent exemplifications of the Divine mercy towards sinners' (9), although he then, in observing that the legends 'open up for us the world of mediæval thought and feeling; and for such unveilings our time shows an honourable eagerness', exemplifies a twentieth-century interest in a sympathetic and scholarly revival of the medieval (also evident in Robertsonian patristic exegesis). But it may be precisely scholarship that has created the rifts, as Catherine Dunn (1976) observes:

> The medieval saint's legend is a scandal to the historian and a stumbling block to the man of letters. One of the most popular literary genres ever to spread over the European continent, it flourished for a thousand years before it encountered an adversary strong enough to destroy its vitality. The challenge came from the interior of Catholic culture, from a religious group that undertook the task of gathering, sorting, and critically editing the large corpus of hagiographical literature (357).

Of the Bollandists who from the counter-Reformation period attempted to retrieve the legends for current demands she continues: 'Neither [Rosweyde] nor the successors who so ably implemented his vision could realize that a genre of literature had died in the Renaissance and that they were filling its place with a new one, alien to the ethos of the medieval creative genius' (358). Even sympathetic modern scholars will seek to recuperate the genre by placing it on one side of a dichotomy between fact and fancy that is hard to detect in the texts. Thus, Beverly Boyd (1964)

declares of the miracles of the Virgin that she edits: 'The term "fanciful" is used advisedly, for these are legends in the modern sense as well as in the technical sense that classifies them as hagiography. Rarely do we find proof that people regarded any of them as factual' (3).

Another, related, recuperative move that often been made in the last half-century is to seek another kind of Middle Ages in the legends; not the universalist, institutional, conservative one, but a pluralist, primitivist, individualist version. (This formulation of the opposition is derived from Patterson 1987, 9-10.) Considering the English legends' typical lack of literary polish, and that already two centuries ago their generic cousins the romances were being valued for the light they shed on the manners and customs of 'our ancestors', such an approach to the legends seems slow to develop, and it is significant that the first scholar to clearly affirm their value on such grounds is a German, Carl Horstmann, in 1887. (The passage is quoted below.) Such an approach is adumbrated in the stated purpose of Thomas Heffernan's survey (1975) of Middle English versions of the Eustace legend: to 'come to some appreciation of the great variety possible within this neglected and "conservative" literary genre' (63). The implication is that the genre is better — i.e. more sympathetic to modern tastes — than it looks. In recent years the vindication of legends as in some sense popular literature has become widespread. Heffernan (1988) first claims that this 'popular' literature is more sophisticated and varied than is often thought: 'The *vitae sanctarum* contradict two persistent old saws: first, that "popular" non-courtly literature lacks sophistication and, second, that lower-class audiences were substantially alike' (261). He then argues that legends involve issues, for example of sex and class, that are of current concern:

The positive reception which greeted these vernacular narratives of the saints suggests some degree of sophistication on the part of its audience, an audience whose attitudes are not easily categorized despite the hegemony of orthodoxy, an audience in which men and women were aware of gender problems, an audience familiar with sexually explicit and deviant behavior, an audience who enjoyed stories which exploited class conflict, and an audience who believed that authority figures, whether clerical or political, often had feet of clay (265).

He further present legends as the literature *par excellence* of a largely silenced social class, with an '...abiding interest in furthering an ethic that was populist, more sympathetic to the lower classes than to the upper. Read in this light, such sacred tales become the poor man's equivalent of the *chanson de geste* and the romance enjoyed by a more privileged class' (271).

Such approaches have particularly focussed on one of the most extensively circulating works in Middle English, the *South English Legendary*. Less than fifty years ago, the EETS editors declared, 'No one will claim that the S.E.L. is a work of art' (D'Evelyn and Mill 1959, 26). And more recently, Derek Pearsall's literary-critical history (1977) was no more favourable: 'Accumulation is the whole principle of such a work: if one saint's life is good, three score are better, and the same with tortures and miracles.... Of shape or design there is no trace' (105).

But criticism has been reluctant to leave a work of such importance in literary history in the rubbish bin. One approach has sought to vindicate the *South English Legendary* by the different aesthetic standards of the age that produced it. Thus, in an article entitled '*The South English Legendary* as Rose Window', Gregory Sadlek (1984) concludes 'I

submit that with respect to its structure, the South English Legendary is "well made" and qualifies as the product of competent medieval art' (15). This is related to the alternative, non-modern aesthetic present in the notion of Gothic form.

Another approach, represented by Theodor Wolpers, in effect side-steps the question of literary quality by setting a closer reading of *South English Legendary* legends against contemporary religious developments. (His work is a German cousin of exegetical criticism, without its antihumanism or moralism.) Klaus Jankofsky (1986), without denying Wolper's contentions, wants to value the *South English Legendary* for a kind of social realism, and significantly sees this approach foreshadowed in the work of the nineteenth-century editor Carl Horstmann, which will be taken up below:

> One can agree with Th. Wolpers' historical-comparative assessment that the SEL manifests an effort toward edification which concentrates on the *amabile* and *mirabile* in the saints.... But, we must add, at the same time the SEL never loses touch with reality: it does not create a rarified atmosphere of sanctity, but rather the climate of a vigorous, down-to-earth, sometimes "muscular" Christianity (Horstmann).... The modern critic can see it as a success of translingual and transcultural adaptation and an object worthy of scholarly interest and study (329).

The defensiveness of the last sentence is significant. Jankofsky is an early representative of a recent tendency to argue that the *South English Legendary* is to be valued insofar as it presents life — and specifically that of the common people — in a realistic, unidealised way. Thus, Anne Thompson (1994), comparing a *South English Legendary* life

with its Latin source, finds that 'Whereas Robert's *Vita* depends on hagiographical conventions that stress the timeless and transcendent, *SEL* appears to approximate more nearly our own more earth- and time-bound apprehension of reality's unfolding' (42); and further that 'the poet regularly aligns himself not only with his characters, but with his audience as well' (45). Elsewhere, Thompson (1995) expresses reservations about Wolpers' meticulous tracing of the connections between changing religious ideas and the development of English legends.

> Too often, in my opinion, contemporary critics of the *SEL* have themselves been seduced by this idea of the permanence of the message and, like Wolpers, have privileged the fixed consensual meaning generated in conformance with the medieval "horizon of expectations." The self-proclaimed suspicions of medieval writers themselves regarding fictionality have lent further support to historicists like D.W. Robertson who perceived a uniform religious message simultaneously subtending and legitimating all medieval fiction (3).

These texts, then, are to be valued more for what they give us of contemporary life than for meanings imposed in a fundamentally ahistorical way.[6] Alternatively, one might regard the choice as one between two kinds of 'historical criticism': one aggressively moralist, and seemingly unique to medieval studies, the other of a progressive, politically engaged type familiar from work on other periods (Patterson 1987, 3).

The legends' apparent assumptions about women have, like their assumptions about the social order, recently become a source of discomfiture. In this regard as elsewhere, scholars — who have after all, committed time and energy to the texts in question — have almost

unanimously argued that they are less offensive to modern sensibilities than their reputation might suggest. Katherine Lewis's title, 'Model Girls? Virgin-Martyrs and the Training of Young Women in Late Medieval England', indicates one line of research, concerned with women as the audiences of legends, and Lewis argues for an educational function, noting the exceptionally wide circulation of the legend of the highly educated Katherine of Alexandria, and suggesting that some of the manuscripts including virgin-martyr legends might have served 'as comprehensive books for woman as household managers' (1999, 37). As Lewis acknowledges elsewhere, modern scholars have seen such legends as pornographic (2000, 69), but in her view 'This sort of approach may tell us more about the reactions of the scholars than of the contemporary medieval audience as it elides the two without further argument' (70). This argument is in accord with her reception-historical approach, and her observation that the most popular of ME virgin-martyr lives, that of St Katherine, is also 'by far the least gory' (71). Still, the thrust of Lewis's treatment is to reconcile modern sensibilities to such legends, highlighting the way the same critical moves can be construed both as historical contextualisation and as transhistorical, universalising humanism. Heffernan (1998), in a different way, also finds that the legends in this regard answer to both current feminist concerns and presumed medieval expectations when he claims that in legends of female saints 'the rebellious behavior, even the rejection of the deepest ties, is subsumed into a larger pattern of obedience to the divine will' (298).

Osbern Bokenham's *Legends of Holy* Women has attracted particular attention not only for its choice of saints but also for its information about his female patrons and dedicatees. Sheila Delany's various publications on Bokenham have identified other 'protofeminist' (Delany 1998, 197) traits: omission of misogynistic elements found in

other versions of the same legends (182), a general vindication of the nature and capacities of women, and a concern with the female body that is neither 'a lyric-erotic exaltation' nor a 'sadistic demystification' (118). On the other hand, Karen Winstead, who has written extensively on John Capgrave, claims that '[Bokenham's] work stands as a conservative rejoinder to Capgrave's newly completed Katherine legend, which has the saint deriding tradition and quoting scripture like the stereotypical Lollard wife' (1997, 181). More generally, she finds that Capgrave is not the mouthpiece for conventional late-medieval attitudes that he is sometimes taken to be (e.g. by Seymour, 1996): rather, he 'eschews conventional pieties' (1996, 396); his *Life of St Katherine* contains 'most audacious transgressions against hagiographical convention' (394), and 'daring elements', including 'its politics and theology, its odd morals' (397). Interestingly, while it is Bokenham that Delany (1992 and 1998) seeks to associate with Chaucer — from the beginning of Middle English studies the one securely established canonical author — it is Capgrave that Winstead (1996) seeks to associate with him.

Matthews has shown the importance of nationalism as a stimulus to the making of Middle English. If one wonders why it did not simulate more work on the legends, their 'foreign' religious position might be cited. But much work was stimulated in another quarter. A survey of the relevant scholarship (Scahill 2005) lists 133 publications between 1867 and 1919 by scholars from the German-speaking world, as against only 63 from the English-speaking world.[7] Moreover, the German-speakers apply notions of Englishness to the legends at a time when German identity was a pressing question.

In 1876, Carl Horstmann found in the manuscripts of the Middle

English legends of St Alexis 'endless capriciousness ... quite in keep-
ing with the specific character of this nation, which is founded on indi-
vidualism and realism, and where a veritable flight from unity,
universality and method prevails' (Horstmann 1876a, 391).[8] In the fol-
lowing year he observed that early English literature comes from a
'brother-nation, so similar to us and so different, which deserves above
all our special study, as we can and must learn from it' (1877, 3).[9] Here,
the concerns of a recently unified Germany are evident. The notion that
shared Germanic traits are to be found in English legends surfaces else-
where; to Horstmann the Middle English Gregorius legend is a 'roman-
tic-religious folk-epic on an Old Germanic foundation' (Horstmann
1876b, 420)[10]; and even after the First World War, Karl Plenzat (1926)
finds the English legends much closer to German ways of feeling than
French poetry: 'in them lives Germanic individualism, which knows
how to find the way to God without "ecclesiastical" and outer form'
(251).[11]

But greater emphasis is placed on the distinctive elements of Eng-
lishness. To Horstmann, one of them is religiosity, both of the nation
and of the literature, which he interestingly connects with the individu-
alism already mentioned:

> A special peculiarity of this literature is the clear dominance of
> religious and legendary material.... The reason lies in the deeply
> religious predisposition of this people, whose distinctive indi-
> vidualism requires of necessity firm commitment, the strong
> anchor of an absolute, as a counterbalance in order to maintain
> equilibrium, and saturated in emotion by the peaceable steadiness
> of feeling that the climate engenders, surrounded by emotion,
> excludes the cold light of emotionless abstraction and negation.

$(1877, 3-4)^{12}$

And he sees the legends as particularly characteristic of England:

> In no literature of the Middle Ages did the legends achieve such a
> flowering, as in the English. England is the classical land of the
> legends. This is in accord with the overall character of medieval
> "holy" England.... It was precisely here that the legends, the
> crystallisation of Christian ideals, which combined narrative
> interest with ethical content, found their most fertile ground, all
> the more so in that their development coincided with that of the
> nation's poetry.... It was in England that the legend became truly
> popular. $(1883, 3-4)^{13}$

Other specifically English traits that he finds in the religious poetry are
'dramatically lively treatment, individual characterisation and humor'
$(1877, 4).^{14}$

A little later, and after greater experience of England, Horstmann is
more aware of the distaste for the legends prevalent there in the nine-
teenth century, presenting it as a manifestation of a persistent trait in
the English character, claiming that the outlook of the legends is
healthier than that of the present day, and giving early expression to
the view that the legends are to be valued because of their closeness to
popular life.

> I know most Englishmen consider it not worth while to print all
> these Legends; I know they regard them as worthless stuff, with-
> out any merit, because they are wholly absorbed in questions of
> the day, of politics and no end [sic], in the fade [sic] poetry of

poets laureate and lady authors, which to an intellect of the mid-
dle ages would have appeared infinitely more insipid (as turning
on momentary interest, the "self" and its lust) than these Leg-
ends may appear to the present generation. The English mind is
always running into extremes with full steam, with brutal
energy, from Popery to "no Popery", now into the grossest
superstition, and again disclaiming and holding in abhorrence
what their own fathers revered and held in awe; it only sees its
present objects, and is blind to everything which lies behind or
around; it want the *juste milieu*, the repose of a contemplative
mind, and forgets that in the eyes of eternity every epoch, every
faith, has its *raison d'être*, and every true poetry its beauty. If the
present English public cannot see any merit in these Legends, it
does not follow that there is no such merit. To be appreciated,
they demand an intellect more robust and sane, a heart more wide
and enlarged, a mind more truly Christian and less hypocritical
than the present generation is able to supply.... The style of
these legends is, no doubt, coarse and rude to the modern taste;
but it is popular, adapted to the subject, to the public, and to the
occasion.... Everywhere we find dispersed sallies of wit and sar-
casm, which spare no class, no sex, not the clergy itself. So the
Collection deserves attention, not only from an hagiologic, but
also from a poetic and literary point of view (1887, xi-xii).[15]

The more critical attitude to present-day England conveyed here is
mild in comparison with a slashing footnote by Hermann Knust (1890,
220 fn.):[16] Sabine Baring-Gould's account of the sources for Mary of
Egypt is as muddled as his *Germany Past and Present*, 'one of the many
disgraceful books disparaging Germany that currently besmirches the

English book market'. Knust points out that Baring-Gould is a cleric, whose narrow views contrast with the freer outlook of his fellow-clergymen in Germany, and that he seeks out stories 'with which he can denigrate German Protestants in the eyes of his orthodox compatriots, whereas the truth is that English scientific theology lives off the crumbs that fall from the rich table of the Germans'; further ridicule of the Anglican clergy follows.

A century later, an account, reminiscent of Horstmann's, of English characteristics to be found in the legends is given by another German-born scholar who migrated to the English-speaking world: 'The lessons to be learned from the stories of the saints seem to have been enacted in reality. That these deaths are characterized by steadfastness, Christian humility, patience, and not infrequently by a certain cheerfulness, even gallows humor, seems to be a typically English phenomenon' (Jankofsky 1977, 715).[17]

The cultural and religious sympathies behind Horstmann's massive, pioneering labours on the English legends are clear, and it is unsurprising that in the Germany of the *Kulturkampf* not all scholars were sympathetic. Thus, in 1878, Julius Zupitza declared, with specific reference to Horstmann's work: 'Middle English literature offers so many tasks; why is nearly everyone eager to throw himself into the legends? This is however so much the case that the staff of English libraries are beginning to laugh at it.... I have often wondered why the romances receive so little interest' (392).[18] As indicated above, in this period scholars from the English-speaking world could hardly be accused of neglecting romances in favour of legends. Whether or not we can imagine the staff of English libraries laughing at German scholars for ordering up manuscripts of legends, Zupitza's feelings are plain. Another factor in such feelings is one evident earlier in England, the failure of legends to con-

form to notions of literary value. In a review of Horstmann's edition of Bokenham's *Legends of Holy Women*, Edward Schröder (1883, 393) calls Bokenham 'one of the most garrulous rhymesters that ever lived.... one of the most tedious and tasteless poets from Middle English poetry's phase of decline'.[19] He goes on to suggest that 'in the endless transcribing and correcting of Middle English legends Horstmann has lost practically all aesthetic standards', in a remark that, insofar as it is directed at the genre, is reminiscent of Zupitza's complaint.

The national project may not be concluded in either Britain or Germany, but it is no longer one in which the reception of Middle English literature has a role. But the legends retain a power to cause discomfiture unique among Middle English genres. A recent response by Sheila Delany (1998, 200) to work by Thomas Heffernan reflects that power:

> Heffernan attempts to transfer hagiography from the category of fiction or propaganda to that of biography or, better, of historical narrative whose function is to "chronicle the appearance of the inbreaking of the divine in the world". This is a fundamentally theological and deeply obsolete gesture, glossed though it may be with a sheen of the contemporary. Geertz, Foucault, LeGoff, Zumthor, Braudel, White, and LaCapra all make a brief bow, yet the occurrence of their names cannot disguise the antirationalist, antimaterialist, and finally antihistoricist thrust of Heffernan's project. To validate hagiography as genuine historiography, Heffernan must somehow account for its obvious fictions, and he does so by taking a whip once again to the long-dead horse of "truth versus fiction", with a moralistic and intentional notion of truth. The justification for hagiographical

borrowing and inventing is that no hagiographer ever intended to deceive. One might wonder how Heffernan knows this — but never mind. Their method was a consequence of their definition of the real and of their desire to convert an audience to belief and virtuous action. This, of course, is what hagiographers said about themselves, and although it may be refreshing to find a scholar so fully at one with his subject, I think we can learn little about the realities of the genre in this way.

This shows much of what is still at issue. Heffernan fundamentally accepts the outlook of medieval hagiographers; to Delany's materialist views it is false and consequently pernicious; in a review, Velma Bourgeois Richmond (1999, 1051-3) observes, 'Running throughout the book is Delany's antipathy to saints' lives — "the grotesque horror story typical of martyrological hagiography" ... She reaffirms her objections to her opposition, who put the medieval and Christian case that suffering can be fruitful.' The charge of antihistoricism crystallises conflicts explored above. Both Heffernan and Delany relate their texts to medieval contexts, and the disagreement concerns what medieval phenomena are relevant, and whether the texts are being judged by appropriate criteria, or smothered in their presumed contexts in an ultimately ahistorical way, as exegetical criticism is claimed to have done. As in the Reformation period, the question may really be whether there is a Middle Ages at all, in the sense of a safely past era that we are able to judge, or instead a culture and history that are still alive and challenging. James Simpson points to the element of choice in our periodisations:

Strict periodisation, especially between medieval and early mod-

ern, always implies a choice to be made. The passion with which
we reject one alternative necessarily determines the passion by
which we choose another. They are forms of each other, deter-
mining, often unconsciously, the forms of the work we do, and
committing us to repetitive rehearsal of a five-hundred-year his-
torical agon. (2007, 29)

That passion has been particularly evident in responses to saints' leg-
ends.

NOTES

1   Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Annual Conference of the
     Japan Society for Medieval English Studies and the Sydney University Centre
     for Medieval Studies, and I thank the organisers and audiences of both.

2   'Wir verstehen den maßlosen Haß, den die Reformatoren der Goldenen Leg-
     ende entgegenbringen. Ja, wir können sagen, es war der verhaßteste Werk,
     eben weil es das beliebteste Buch war ...'

3   For comparison, the 105-volume Old Series of the more historically-focussed
     Camden Society's publications included two volumes of romances but none
     of saints' legends.

4   Which could encompass attitudes to the Reformation like that sympathetically
     burlesqued by Jane Austen, who grew up in a rural clergyman's household, in
     her *History of England*: '... nothing can be said in [Henry the Eighth's] vindi-
     cation, but that his abolishing Religious Houses & leaving them to the ruinous
     depredations of time has been of infinite use to the landscape of England in
     general, which probably was a principal motive for his doing it, since other-
     wise why should a Man who was of no Religion himself be at so much trou-
     ble to abolish one which had for Ages been established in the Kingdom'
     (1980, 142-3).

5   The tone is well represented by Turnbull's remark about the mutilator of the
     Auchinleck manuscript: 'Would to God that for his pains the Vandal had been
     served after a similar fashion, and been qualified to chant shrill treble within
     the choir of the Sistine Chapel!' (vi).

6   Frantzen (1990, 80) summarises the arguments on this point.

7   The figures are calculated from Scahill 2005. It is only on Caxton that the
        majority of publications come from the English-speaking world.

8   '... unendliche Willkür ... ganz im Einklang mit dem eigenthümlichen
        Charakter dieser Nation, im welchem Individualismus und Realismus die
        Grundlage bilden; da herrscht eine wahre Flucht vor der Einheit, Allgemein-
        heit, und Methode.'

9   'Die altenglische Litteratur ... ist der Ausdruck des beginnenden Lebens einer
        Brudernation, die, uns so ähnlich und doch so verschieden, unseres beson-
        deren Studiums vor allen werth ist, da wir von ihr lernen können und
        müssen.'

10   'Der Charakter des Gedichtes ist der des romantisch-religiösen Volksepos auf
        altgermanischer Grundlage.'

11   '... in ihnen ... lebt germanischer Individualismus, der ... ohne "kirchliche"
        und äußerliche Form den Weg zu Gott zu finden weiß.'

12   'Eine besondere Eigentümlichkeit dieser Litteratur ist das entschiedene
        Vorherrschen religiöser und legendarischer Stoffe.... Der Grund liegt in der
        tiefreligiösen Anlage dieses Volkes, dessen eigenthümlicher Individualismus
        starke Bindung, den festen Anker eines Absoluten, als Gegengewicht mit
        Nothwendigkeit erfordert, um im Gleichgewicht zu bleiben, und welches, bei
        der von Klima erzeugten ruhigstäten Gleichmässigkeit des Triebes ganz in
        Gemüth getaucht, von Gemüth umflossen, die lichte kalte Helle gemüthfreier
        Abstraction und Negation von sich ausschliesst.'

13   'In keiner Litteratur des Mittelalters ist die Legende zu einer solchen Blüte
        gelangt, wie in der englischen: England ist das klassische Land der Legende.
        Dies hängt mit dem ganzen Charakter des mittelalterlichen "heiligen" Eng-
        land zusammen. In keinem anderen Lande wurde die Frömmigkeit so ernst
        genommen, nirgends gab es eine solche Menge von Klöstern und Kirchen,
        von nationalen Heiligen und Festen, nirgends beherrschte die Kirche so das
        ganze öffentliche Leben, wirkten die großartigen Formen ihres Kultus so tief
        auf das Volksgemüt, wie bei diesem gemütreichsten aller Völker. Gerade hier
        fand auch die Legende, die Verkörperung der christlichen Ideale, die mit dem
        sittlichen Gehalt das Interesse der Fabel verknüpfte, den fruchtbarsten Boden,
        umsomehr als ihre Entwicklung mit der der nationalen Dichtung zusammen-
        fiel.... Erst in England wird die Legende wahrhaft volkstümlich.'

14   '... es traten die spezifisch englischen Züge, wie dramatisch bewegte Hand-
        lung, individuelle Characterisirung und Humor, auch in der religiösen Dich-

tung hervor.'

15   There are hints that Horstmann's career in England somehow ended unhap-
pily. He was working on manuscripts in English libraries by the early 1870s,
published copiously in England from the mid-1880s, and lectured at the Uni-
versity of London in the 1890s, while his last publication in Germany appar-
ently dates from 1889. But he seems to disappear without trace (I thank Hans
Sauer and Manfred Görlach, p.c., for confirming this), and in the Note (v-vi)
prefaced to a late publication, the 1901 edition of the *Nova Legenda Anglie*,
there are suggestions of difficulties with the delegates of the Clarendon Press,
and in the Introduction the following passage (I: xxix) slips from Geistes-
geschichte to problems that may have arisen from his country of residence —
or may have been purely personal:

> The spirit ('trieb') of a time will produce questions, or tasks, which
> evolve in the brain: but the answer, and whether there be an answer,
> will always lie with the individual.... The community, society, mass —
> the human beast — is always slow and mediocre, and may not be ripe,
> or may slumber — or may not deserve him.... [O]ur author ... found the
> libraries open, information ready for the asking, friendly compeers, and
> no jealousy — from a mistaken sense of fame — which often defeats
> the best intentions.

16   'Es ist dies derselbe Herr [Sabine Baring-Gould], welcher eins jener vielen
Schandbücher zur Verunglimpfung Deutschlands, mit denen der englische
Büchermarkt sich jetzt beschmutzt, zusammengestohlen hat unter dem Titel:
Germany Past and Present. Auch hier verfährt er wie beim Auffinden der
gleichzeitigen Quelle für die ägyptische Marie. Um also unparteiischer
Beobachter für seine absprechenden Urtheile ein günstiges Vorurtheil zu
gewinnen, spendet er Lob, oft sogar hohes Lob. Natürlich schenkt ihm der
vollständig unzurechnungsfähige englische Leser ohne Weiteres Glauben.
Nur wenige Engländer dürften überhaupt jetzt dem Einflusse der systematis-
chen Herabwürdigung alles dessen was deutsch ist entgehen. Da Herr Baring-
Gould seines Zeichens ein Geistlicher ist, so erregt bei seinen beschränkten
Ansichten der freiere Standpunkt seiner deutschen Amtsbrüder seine Galle.
Als in der Welt herumfahrender Zionswächter weiß er nicht genug Erzählun-
gen zu sammeln, mit denen er die deutschen Protestanten in den Augen seiner
orthodoxen Landsleute heruntersetzen kann, während doch Thatsache ist, daß
die englische wissenschaftliche Theologie von den Brosamen lebt, welche
vom reichbedeckten Tische der deutschen abfallen. In Deutschland z. B.

würde es nicht vorkommen, daß irgend eine Behörde bei Veröffentlichung einer Bibelübersetzung, wie in England 1881 Bischöfe bei Herausgabe der *revised version of the New Testament*, sich genöthigt sähe, die Geistlichen vor jedem Urtheile über das Buch zu warnen, da sie ja das Original nicht verständen. Um dies dem deutschen Leser verständlich zu machen, muß ich hinzufügen, daß noch heute (ich könnte ein Beispiel anführen) junge Leute ohne Kenntniß des Greichischen und Hebräischen, dafür aber mit Frau und Kind beladen, Prediger der englischen Staatskirche werden können. Die weiße Cravatte ist bei ihnen natürlich untadelhaft.'

17   Jankofsky, it appears, spent the first thirty years of his life in Germany before emigrating to the United States.

See http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/usen/040429sen.html (accessed 3/9/2008).

18   'Die mittelenglische literatur bietet ja der aufgaben so viele, warum zeigt nun fast jedermann lust, sich auf die legenden zu stürzen? Dies ist aber so sehr der fall, dass schon die beamten der englischen bibliotheken darüber zu lächeln anfangen. Man lasse also Horstmann zeit, mit seiner arbeit vor das publikum zu treten und verderbe ihm seine lust an ihr nicht durch teilweise vorweg-nahme derselben. Ich habe mich schon oft gewundert, warum die romanzen so wenig teilnahme finden.'

19   'Osbern Bokenham ist einer der schwatzhaftesten reimschmiede, die je gelebt habe.... der verf. ... hat bisher ... für einen der langweiligsten und geschmack-losesten poeten aus der zeit des verfalles der me. kunstpoesie gegolten. H. ist anderer ansicht.... ich habe schon früher einmal geäußert dass H. bei dem ewigen abschreiben und corrigieren von me. legenden beinahe jeden ästhetis-chen maßstab verloren habe.'

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