3
Reading materially:
John Lydgate's 'Soteltes for the coronation banquet of Henry VI'

Allone as I went vp and doun,
I ane abbay wes fair to se,
Thinkand quhat consolatioun
Wes best in to aduersitie,
On cais I kest on syd myne e
And saw this writtin vpoun a wall:
'Off quhat estait, man, that thow be,
Obey and thank thi God off all'.

<div align="right">Robert Henryson, 'Abbey Walk'[1]</div>

Like other texts addressed in these chapters, the short lyric poem 'Abbey Walk', by the late fifteenth-century Scots poet Robert Henryson, engages the work of reading in ways that facilitate and even necessitate reader participation. A poem concerned with man's awareness of God's mercy, 'Abbey Walk' introduces a simple refrain at the end of each of its stanzas: 'Obey and thank thi God off all'. The poem gains its modern title from its first few lines, in which Henryson describes an occasion when, solitary and struggling to address life's adversities, the narrator of the poem goes out walking and unexpectedly sees a hymn written upon a wall. This positioning suggests an external origin for the hymn: rather than simply a composition of Henryson's, it can be viewed as a lesson the narrator must learn from an external source, one that surmounts his own troubled state. The source of the hymn as located on the abbey wall is repeatedly referenced by the narrator throughout the remainder of the poem. Provided by the stones in a place desolate of any human presence but the reader's, addressing humanity's transitory possession of royalty, goods, and gold, the hymn offers a text illustrative of the natural order of the world, one that connects that natural order to reading by the transmission of the hymn by means of natural objects, the stones of the wall.

'Abbey Walk' thus represents reading that emerges from the representation of an overlooked category of medieval textual media that I call 'extracodexical'. An extracodexical text is a written work that circulates outside the boundaries of the familiar codex, whether manuscript or print book. Heraldry, dishes, walls, tapestries, and embroidered or woven textiles and other objects are common surfaces for medieval extracodexical texts, which can also take the form of various charms and talismans. These and other examples invite scrutiny about how participatory reading practices emerge from interactions with such extracodexical texts. In addition to emendation and nonlinear apprehension, two primary and widespread modes of participatory reading reliant upon the written codex format, what modes of apprehension might be identified in participation with texts outside the codex? What experiences might contribute to shaping participatory reading in circumstances where texts are inscribed on objects people wear, dine from, walk around, or consume?

This chapter explores how extracodexical texts can illuminate participatory reading practices that emerge from works in and outside of manuscript contexts. In doing so it paves the way for subsequent analysis of other examples of extracodexical texts and their impact on participatory reading practice in the following chapter. Considering texts outside the boundaries of manuscripts as belonging to a shared category invites evaluation both of their parallels with each other, and also evaluation of how they differ from works in manuscript contexts. It is not simply that books mattered in the later Middle Ages: it is that texts mattered, and mattered in and across a variety of media. In other words, attending to extracodexical texts enables a de-centring of the book format in manuscript and print, and facilitates attention to and engagement with the variety of forms that medieval literary texts could assume. Furthermore, some texts can evoke extracodexicality by, in a manuscript context, relating or describing or otherwise circulating texts that were, in their original context, extracodexical. The movement of extracodexical texts into (and out of) manuscript contexts thus invites further evaluation of what is gained and what is transformed or obscured or multiplied by the changing medium of transmission. In these ways, assessing the roles played by extra-codexical texts enables the effects of a particular medium – whether manuscript or other – to be explored with greater nuance.

Critical to extracodexical texts is the role played by their mate-riality, for it is the material difference of medium that defines them

as a group. In 'Abbey Walk', the hymn engages the reader through several communicative modes predicated upon its materiality, its stone vehicle. The stone does not have pages that can be turned; it does not have rubrication or drawn margins or drawn lineation, typical hallmarks of books that shaped readers' literate practices. It cannot be apprehended nonlinearly, nor can it be emended with any degree of casualness. Nor can it easily be manipulated; the reader must concede to its location and permanency and approach it. Its extracodexical form requires or disallows certain behaviours and practices by readers. Yet the stone, durable and natural as it might seem, nevertheless requires the presence of a reader to engage it and make its meaning manifest. Without the presence of the narrator as reader before the wall, a presence that that allows him to apprehend the poem, it would not exist as a hymn to be represented by the poet. Without the wall, the narrator as reader would have to learn the lesson offered by the abbey wall text in a less visceral way. Crucially, the encounter between the narrator-reader and the poem on the wall – preserved in a manuscript text – serves to illuminate how reading shaped and was shaped by the materiality of the extracodexical text.

Materiality and extracodexical texts

Accordingly, this chapter focuses on participatory reading as understood through the critical framework of materiality. Materiality has flourished in medieval studies in recent decades, influenced by new materialisms and especially object-oriented ontology, which provides a framework for understanding the independent agency of things. Object-oriented ontology and speculative realism provide the means to approach medieval histo-ricity outside and around the perspective of the human, and have usefully intersected with ecocritical studies to generate ecoma-terialist analyses that consider the agency of, for example, water or fire.[2] Yet the materiality of objects that evoked or necessitated human participation can be assessed in ways that extend beyond the ontological focus. In particular, recent developments in the study of materiality in digital contexts offer approaches of use to the study of premodern, medieval materiality. Joanna Drucker, N. Katherine Hayles, and Matthew Kirschenbaum have been the leading voices discussing how to assess the materiality of digital media. In their approaches, they expand upon the understanding of materiality developed through the work of phenomenologists

and gender theorists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Judith Butler. The approaches of digital materiality studies also help to illuminate ways of thinking about medieval textual experience beyond that of the pages of a manuscript, which has dominated critical perspectives of literary materiality particularly in the wake of heightened consideration of the 'manuscript matrix', which 'involves cognitive perception as two kinds of literacy: reading text and interpreting visual signs'.[3] In counterpoint, Michael Camille asserts that attending to the manuscript involves more than confronting medieval reliance upon both word and image; it also requires assessing the sensory experiences manifested through the tactility of parchment.[4] Yet, as critics studying the materiality of digital media have shown, details like these that represent the 'forensic materiality' of works are only one among a number of ways that materiality constitutes meaning.

Forensic materiality contrasts with 'formal' materialities in assessing digital media, according to Matthew Kirschenbaum. Forensic materialities are those physical properties of a media's form, familiar to medieval studies as the 'manuscript matrix' to which New Philology directed such attention, and the sensation of the parchment page that Camille discusses. In contrast, formal materiality emphasizes the 'imposition' of multiple states on an object, which Kirschenbaum applies in particular to data or digital objects.[5] For example, the use of a text editor to delete symbols on the page of a digital document represents a formal materiality of deletion. Ensuring that the data is also deleted from the hard drive engages in forensic materiality. In a manuscript context, the erasure of a word or page can be an act of formal materiality; it is not necessarily also an act of forensic erasure, as contemporary technologies such as those applied to palimpsests can be used to recover traces of the original writing. Just as one example of how this might relate to studies of medieval manuscripts, even current materialist focuses tend to miss the layer of the forensic when attending to their materiality: such analyses see the 'words and not the ink with which they were written', as Tim Ingold asserts.[6] Against a 'poetics of parchment' and its corresponding material investigations, medievalists might also wish to investigate the 'poetics of ink'. Certainly, medieval writers distinguish between the qualities of red and black ink, for instance, which they respectively treat as representing the blood of Christ and the nails that pinned him to the cross. This association between nails and black ink might be extended further still if referring to ink written

evocatively with the highly acid ink made from oak galls, bitter and biting in its nature.

Such distinctions between forensic and formal materiality can also be represented in the literary imaginary. For Henryson's abbey wall, the forensic materiality would be that of stone, whereas the formal emerges in the relation between the materiality of the text and the apprehension of the narrator-reader as discussed above. Similarly interested in what Kirshenbaum would term the forensic materialities of a work, N. Katherine Hayles evaluates how the material instantiation of a work, particularly in digital media, represents the convergence of communicative modes once viewed as medium-specific, such as moving images united with audio and text.[7]

This convergence of communicative modes evoked through encounters with materiality resonates strongly with medieval media, both in manuscript and outside it, where orality, imagery, text, and other modes may intersect and mutually affect each other, even as the emphasis on forensic materiality also invites consideration of the effects and types of formal materiality. It is these that engage Joanna Drucker, who offers the concept of 'performative materialities' to consider how 'the cognitive capacities of the reader make the work through an encounter' that 'is always situated within historical and cultural circumstances and expresses ideology at every level of production, consumption, implementation, and design'. For Drucker, works cue readers' engagement and the performance of materiality, and such materiality is always historically and culturally dependent. Materiality is not inherent in the form, but emerges through participation with readers as acts of interpretation.[8] The materiality of Henryson's hymn on the abbey wall develops not through any essential properties consistently conveyed by the stone wall, but through the narrator-reader's apprehension of and participation with the stone-transmitted hymn.

In examining how materiality evokes participatory reading, this chapter marks a further turning point in relation to the studies of previous chapters. Whereas assessing corrective and nonlinear reading focused initially on the articulation of these practices by writers, in this and subsequent chapters the reading practices attended to are not the focus of instruction provided by medieval writers. Instead, particularly in the practice of material reading, participation manifests through the interpretive work initiated by how the texts function to create meaning.[9] Accordingly, further consideration of how materiality shapes reading through its

production in participation with the reader becomes a necessity, as evidenced by how the stones of Henryson's 'Abbey Walk' required the participation – even the performance – of a reader to make their hymn manifest.

Performativity in the context of medieval literature has gained increasing attention in the work of Robert Clark and Pamela Sheingorn, and through Jessica Brantley's work on British Library manuscript Additional 37049, a Carthusian miscellany. Brantley situates her analysis particularly in the context of and response to the effects of the texts and images that stimulate performative devotional reading of the manuscript's diverse collection of texts.[10] Performative reading is not produced by the text alone, as Brantley observes; it can be evoked by a wide range of literary genres, such as plays to paternosters. Yet the alignment of reading with performance, while it effectively highlights how reading and performing in the later Middle Ages could often overlap, can potentially overlook aspects of a work not traditionally considered performative, but which can certainly be a practice of participation and interaction – such as walking and even sitting, both practices discussed below. Focusing on the role of materiality in the context of participatory reading in manuscript also invites, as mentioned above, consideration of how different types of materialities shape participatory reading. Exploring how participatory reading can be elicited particularly through materiality, in a way that explores materiality's engagement with extracodexical texts, is the project of this chapter.

Consequently, this chapter facilitates the study of extracodexical texts, arguing that considering the materiality of texts emphasizes how medieval reading functions as embodied practice. That is, reading materially involves bodily, materially mediated modes of experience. These modes of experience not only include word and image and touch, but also sound, place, movement, gesture, and the material properties of texts often neglected as under- or unliterary. One such under-literary, materially dependent text is that of the 'Soteltes for the coronation banquet of Henry VI', composed for the 1432 coronation banquet by John Lydgate; this work will be the focus of the present chapter. Lydgate's work has been the subject of reinvigorated assessment of materiality in medieval literary culture.[11] Such materiality is central to the 'Soteltes', as the verses accompanied possibly edible, decorative dishes that concluded each course of the coronation banquet. Examining the verses and the materially dependent, embodied reading experiences

they occasion will illuminate the role of participatory materiality in the work of reading and pave the way for the tighter focuses on movement, architecture, and time in the following chapters.

Lydgate's 'Soteltes' as materially situated extracodexical texts

The verses of Lydgate's 'Soteltes' poem take their name from their original material context. Subtleties were decorative or sometimes edible tableaux presented as the culmination of a course or as the high point of an entire feast.[12] While the shape, subject matter, and scale of subtleties could vary, they aspired to grand display and often evoked symbolism pertinent to the occasion of the feast at which they were served. For example, when the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund visited Henry V just after the feast of St George in 1416 and was inducted into the Order of the Garter, three subtleties were served at the celebratory feast that followed. These works depicted a lady arming St George, St George fighting a dragon, and a castle with St George and the king's daughter leading a lamb: fitting images for such an occasion.[13] The subject matter of the subtleties evoked the patron of the order and of England itself, and reflected chivalric values important to the order, such as martial prowess and courtly behaviour, that Henry V sought to have the order embody. Whereas these tableaux focused on their imagery for meaning, Lydgate's 'Soteltes' exemplify a work that, in its manuscript survival, points to its materially conditioned original state. Accordingly, the kind of participatory materiality that shaped the reading of the 'Soteltes' at the coronation banquet provides a case study through which the role of materially contextualized reading can be assessed. Doing so shows how reading the 'Soteltes' could produce a particularly affective reading experience that relies on the readers' bodies to fashion and emphasize display of the new king's power and authority.

While the text in its manuscript survivals could be considered only as possessing the formal materiality of the manuscript matrix – its paper or parchment, its ink, and so forth – the representation of the 'Soteltes' in several of the manuscripts nevertheless includes details evocative of the work's prior materiality.[14] First should be considered the textuality of the 'Soteltes' that make them readable, rather than wholly theatrical performances as discussed by Sponsler. In the manuscript context provided to the verses in London, British Library MS Cotton Julius B.i, each object constituting the subtleties is described as 'with this scripture suying', or

'with this resoun', and 'with this reason folowyng'. This empha-
sizes the provision of verses in writing, as scripture, and through
reasons, as mottoes, sentences, or verses.[15] These descriptions
attest to how the 'Soteltes' almost certainly offered their verses
in a textual format.[16] The textuality of subtleties accompanied by
words is made even more explicit in records of the coronation feast
of Henry VI's mother, Catherine of Valois. Her coronation in the
same place as Henry VI's preceded it by the slim margin of ten
years. Following each course of her coronation banquet subtleties
were served, displaying motifs of St Katherine of Alexandria.
The first subtlety consists of two tableaux, one with a pelican and
other birds, and the other of Saint Katherine holding a wheel in
one hand. A 'Reason [is] in hir [other] hande, *Madame le Roigne*',
explains a London chronicle. To this the pelican responds, 'Cest
enseigne' and the birds, 'Est du roy pur tenir joie. A tout gent il
met sentient'. ('This is a sign / It is for the king to take joy / For all
the people he makes [it] known'.) Here, the reason accompanying
the subtlety is clearly provided as written text.[17]

The banqueting context proves significant to the manuscript
witnesses as well, which reflect a continued interest in the original
banqueting context of the verses, such as exemplified by the intro-
duction to Lydgate's first verse for these coronation subtleties in
London, British Library Cotton Julius B.i.:

> This was the first cours at his coronacion, that is to say, first, ffur-
> mentie with venyson. Viande Royal plantid with losenges of golde.
> Borehedes in castelles of earmed with golde. Beef. Moton. Signet.
> Capon stued. Heron. Grete pike. A redde lech with lions corven
> theryn of white. Custade Rooial with a leparde of golde sittyng
> theryn. Fritour like a sonne with a flour de lice therynne. A sotelte,
> Seint Edward and Seint Lowes armed in cote armours bryngyng yn
> bitwene hem the Kyng in his cote armour. (623)

Immediately following this introduction is given the verse of the
first subtlety, introduced by explaining that it is provided 'with
this scripture suying'. By situating the verses within the order and
provision of food in a banquet, the subtleties become contextual-
ized by the spectacle and consumption of the banquet itself. Roger
Epstein, in writing on the textual nature of the subtleties, refers to
their presentation of the text in a public banqueting event as effect-
ing 'spectacular textuality'.[18] The manuscript witnesses emphasize
the combination of the subtleties' textual as well as visual elements,
couching both in the framework of the banqueting display. As

the hymn in 'Abbey Walk' functioned as an extracodexical text with which the reader-narrator interacted, the subtleties can be recognized as extracodexical texts integrated into the banquet, demonstrating the grounds of a reading practice dependent upon both forensic and formal materiality.

Formal materiality and the 'Soteltes'

Although the forensic materiality of Lydgate's subtleties is unknown, late-medieval subtleties could be fashioned from consumable items, such as bread or sugar, or from non-consumable items that might require the labours of craftspeople, including painters, carpenters, and metalworkers, to devise.[19] Despite the insufficiency of current evidence to indicate the formal materiality of Lydgate's subtleties, the material possibilities would nevertheless have evoked different interpretations for the original audience. They thus deserve brief address in that context, for their forensic materiality shaped how the subtleties' formal materiality conveyed meaning to readers. Subtleties could encompass a range of forms and materials; the less sculptural ones might be made from as simple a material as ground meat. An example of this style of subtlety is provided in descriptions of the coronation feast of Catherine of Valois, Henry VI's mother. At her banquet, the subtlety for the third course was made from a 'mete in paste with iiij aungels in fourme of Sent Katerine whele in the myddes with a Reason'.[20] The meat has simply been moulded into the shape of a Catherine wheel, either supported or being broken by angels; such a subtlety was clearly designed for consumption as well as admiration and reading. Lydgate's subtleties, along with the subtleties for the first two courses of the coronation of Queen Catherine, are more sculptural and thus required materials more suited for the purpose. Bread is a possibility, as is sugar, as are non-consumable materials. Given the details of Lydgate's subtleties, the likelihood of non-consumable materials having provided the support for the subtleties is strong. The probability of the use of some if not entirely non-consumable items may also be suggested by details of the subtleties' descriptions, such as the note that Edward and Louis are 'armed in cote armours', Emperor Sigismund and Henry V are 'armed' and both wear 'mantelles of the garters', suggesting that the heraldic armour and mantels may have been separate items, the armour perhaps even crafted by metalworkers. Yet if made of consumable items, the cultural background and figurative

connotations of the foodstuffs would affect interpretation: if made from sugar, for example, the expense and foreign origin of sugar would have – as the banqueting dishes did themselves – attested further to the king's might and wealth.[21] Bread could have been viewed as attesting to the king's ability to support and nourish his people. The forensic materiality would, consequently, have added to the formal materiality of the subtleties, based on the participants' understanding of the figurative implications of the subtleties' material supports. Yet in the manuscript witnesses' silence on the details of the subtleties' material, the one aspect of formal materiality that we can point to is the presence of the textual 'scripture', even as we can only speculate about the specific details of its formal materiality (was it written with edible vegetable inks? On an edible or nonedible vehicle?).

The description of the subtleties in the manuscript witnesses, in their absent commentary on the subtleties' formal materiality beyond the presence of the textual 'scriptures', asserts the primacy instead of formal materiality. The manuscript witnesses' descriptions demonstrate how – perhaps regardless of the subtleties' formal materialities – the material context of the subtleties nevertheless shaped their formal materiality. First, the convergence of the subtlety with the feast dishes indicates that each subtlety and its verse function as figurative consumables, their messages internalized in the bodies of the banquet audience.[22] Understanding the text in this way demonstrates how cuisine functions as a materiality affecting the work's apprehension. The verses become works to be savoured virtually, if not also literally, and in that savouring their ideology is taken in by the reader through the vehicle of consumption, a bodily practice. Participatory materiality thus shapes a reading of the 'Soteltes' that is both affective and visceral. Second, linkage of the 'Soteltes' to food also evokes the medieval practice of *meditatio* in the reception of the subtleties. Through *meditatio*, 'reading is memorized and changed into personal experience', a practice that Mary Carruthers notes that Jerome links to consumption. Jerome argues that 'Consumption of the book is the foundation of reading and the basis of history. When … we store away the book of the Lord in our memorial treasury, our belly is filled spiritually and our guts are satisfied'.[23] Reading functions as an act of consumption that alters the formal materiality of the reader's own body. By imbricating consumption with the 'Soteltes' objects and verses, the subtleties themselves become works that readers internalize, forming the sacral yet secular foundation of the

new history brought forth by the coronation of a new king. Third, beliefs about medieval food practice connected consumption to changes worked upon the body of the person eating. Even virtual consumption of the subtleties thus construct the bodies of readers as supporters of the Lancastrian ideology promoted by the subtleties. In this way, the formal materiality of cuisine contributes to the reading of the subtleties through the process of figurative and possibly even literal consumption.

As an aspect of the subtleties' formal materiality, the physical conditions of the Great Hall at Westminster as the place of the banquet also invite consideration for how they could shape participatory reading of the 'Soteltes'. As the manuscript matrix provides a textual and material context for texts transmitted in codices, extracodexical texts enjoy as their 'matrix' not only the materiality of their own physical form, but the context in which they can be situated, through which they act, or in which they were transmitted through readers. For the 'Soteltes', their matrix extends to the Great Hall at Westminster as a socially significant place in which they were presented and read. While the relationship between architecture and readers will be explored at greater length in the following chapter, it is key here to address how the physical, material surroundings of an extracodexical text could impact its reading. Spaces are not only physical settings, but also become – through the human valuation and articulation of space – transformed into culturally constructed places that convey meaning and shape identity.[24] Space influences reading in physical ways, and place contributes to the meaning and practice of reading within a space.

The Great Hall of Westminster Palace, rebuilt only three decades prior at the instigation of Richard II, provided the traditional space for coronation banquets. As not just a space but also a place, it drew on religious traditions as well as spatial status to establish its social meaning. At the time of Henry VI's coronation, it was the largest hall of its size in Europe. Borrowing extensively from sacral architecture, the hall measured an immense 240 by 68 feet, and was able to host thousands for coronation feasts.[25] Merchant stalls and shops typically lined the Great Hall during legal term-times, but for Henry VI's coronation event, these additions were swept away and the bare masonry was covered with decorative hangings, perhaps some of the Flemish tapestries collected by Richard II or, for a more unified look, decorative woollen hangings similar to those used for the coronation of Edward III in 1327.

The hall thus functioned as a grand, imposing, and extensive place that emphasized the authority of the king. The arrangement of furniture for the feast stressed this point still further, for Henry VI sat behind the centre of a table on a raised dais located before the south wall, opposite the main ceremonial entrance to the north. Polychrome stone statues of England's kings occupied niches flanking the lofty south window above the dais, reinforcing the assertion of power and grandeur offered to Henry VI in his central, elevated seat.[26] To either side of Henry sat some of the more illustrious members of the nobility. Perpendicular to this table, along the length of the Great Hall, were arrayed other tables in two long rows.

The scope of the hall materially influenced the subtleties themselves, and attendees' participatory reading of the subtleties. Few objects could be large enough that all those assembled at the coronation could read them. The issue of size relative to the physical space of the hall consequently indicates that those seated by the king, along with the king himself, to whom the subtleties would have been served, would have been their most intimate readers. In contrast, the rest of the court, clergy, and prominent London citizenry seated at the tables, and even the common citizenry assembled to watch from galleries, most probably heard the verses as they were read aloud, perhaps as the subtleties were processed into the hall. That reading aloud of the subtleties adds a vocal aspect to their materiality, one that could intersect with the acoustics of the hall. In these ways, the materiality of the Great Hall at Westminster affects the material process of engaging with the subtleties by creating contexts for reading the subtleties in ways differently affected by place and the arrangement of the people within it. Some of the readers could engage, through proximity to the objects, in intimate acts of reading where they apprehend the subtleties directly. For others, whose reading of the subtleties relies on aural apprehension of the verses, distance shapes their interpretation of the subtleties in various ways, giving greater emphasis to the visual cues of the subtleties and the performance of the verses, and making their reading more public in its effects.

In their presentation at the coronation banquet and in the way the verses were likely recited for aural apprehension by the audience at the banquet, the verses of the subtleties deserve recognition for how they participate in the realm of the public theatrical spectacle, as Claire Sponsler addresses.[27] While many of the aspects of the subtleties can be viewed as performative – particularly their

consumption and spectacular, public display – performance can also obscure the participatory role of the text itself as described above. Considering the subtleties within the framework of performance can emphasize their reception as the performative effort, with the subtleties providing the script provoking performance by the audience. In contrast, participation offers the framework for considering agency on the sides of both reader and text: the text can be an agent that interacts with readers, their mutual, co-constitutive participation constituting acts of reading.

In addition, medieval concepts of reading, as discussed in previous chapters, acknowledge that reading experiences could engage both the single reader directly apprehending the text for himself as well as audiences apprehending the text by hearing it read aloud by others. Both modes of apprehension represent acts of reading. Such aural apprehension contributes to the participatory work of reading. It also serves as a reminder to audiences today of how the medieval boundaries that distinguished between the status of a reader and that of an audience were much more diffuse and interchangeable in late-medieval England. It is in this light that the subtleties are considered here as readable, extracodexical literary works. Considering their function as readable works further underscores the necessity of adopting a framework for assessing the participatory materiality of reading, as participation can encompass the shifting interchanges between audiences and readers. Considering the evidence offered in the manuscripts for the subtleties' original context provides details that allow extrapolation of the forensic materiality of the verses as extracodexical works presented at the banquet. This materiality, together with the textuality of the verses, converges to engage the reader in the subtleties' participatory materiality. Yet the participatory materiality of the subtleties is not conditioned by these aspects alone. The specifics of the coronation location, the person reciting the verses aloud, the audience who reads these verses through aural apprehension, and the king who is positioned to read the verses directly, show how the verses invite participation as a mode of reading through interaction between many distinct circumstances shaped or defined by materiality. In this way, material reading becomes an embodied, participatory practice. The participatory materiality of the subtleties enfolds the interacting bodies of readers and texts into the work of reading.

Participatory materiality and mobility

Having addressed the issues of textuality, cuisine, and place, it still falls to address other aspects of the participatory materiality of the subtleties. Related to place is the issue of mobility. Almost exclusively studied in the context of medieval cycle plays and their movement through civic space, mobility conveys material force through its performance in space, through its affects in space and on bodies, and through the meaning and significance of place.[28] The subtleties were moved into the hall and processed under the eyes of all to the king's table, as was customary with subtleties and feast dishes more generally.[29] Where the subtleties entered from also deserves note. The dishes for the feast were conveyed into the Hall from the Great Kitchen and temporary, improvised kitchens, all buildings outside the Hall. While the entrance to the Great Hall nearest the Great Kitchen was located midway along the western length of the hall between its main entrance on the north end and the king's seat at the south end, it is more probable that the feast dishes – and the subtleties – were brought through the main entrance at the north end of the Great Hall. Indeed, contemporary chronicles and coronation records indicate that the main north entrance was chosen for other major entries during the coronation feast, and it therefore seems most likely that this entrance was also chosen for the feast dishes and subtleties.[30] Use of the main entrance would have allowed these officials to process the dishes up the length of the Hall, passing between the long tables, at right angles to the king's, that seated the attending nobility, clergy, and prominent citizens of the city; the subtleties would have processed to the king's table beneath these gazes. Accordingly, the entrance of subtleties into the hall took part in the carefully orchestrated display that surrounded grand feasts in general and Henry VI's coronation in particular.

How the subtleties participated in this orchestrated display must be understood as again engaged with participatory materiality: Subtleties moved as household officers carried them into the feast hall and presented them to those dining at table. As the subtleties entered, guests witnessed their movement from their own seats at tables in the Great Hall. Especially apparent in the chronicle description of the subtleties, their textual and imagistic focus on their own movement erases the movement of the officers bearing them into the Great Hall. This emphasis is made apparent through how the chronicle depictions focus only on the subtleties' move-

ments. The first subtlety, for example, is described as 'A sotelte, Seint Edward and Seint Lowes armed in cote armours bryngyng yn bitwene hem the Kyng in his cote armour'. Edward and Louis are recognized as the agents moving the king through space in an ideologically evocative manner. This omission of the means by which the subtleties entered the hall thus elides the movement of their bearers. Such erasure transfers the agency of movement to the subtleties themselves.

Accordingly, mobility of the subtleties offers an additional participatory materiality conditioned by the subtleties as extra-codexical texts, one that relies upon the bodies of the readers to enact. For the audience of the coronation feast, the movement of the 'Soteltes' into the Great Hall, their procession amidst the tables toward the king's dais, and the public reading of their texts, enjoin stillness upon their audience, who are called upon to listen, heed, and learn the lessons imparted by the subtleties' mobility and their own immobility. Emphasizing the mobility of the subtleties and the consequent stillness of their readers suits the political and performative needs of Henry VI's coronation event, where reader-viewers and even king are the focal points of political messages designed for public reception. Showcasing the mobility of the subtleties thus contrasts with immobility of the readers, fashioning their seated performance as one of attentive listening that marks them as receptive to the instructional message of the subtleties. Such a move rhetorically positions the audience as the recipient, not the origination, of meaning – even as that meaning could not be enacted without the audience's participation. This relationship between the meaning of the subtleties and the audience who both help create that meaning through their participation and are also the objects of that meaning complicates the conventional understanding of participatory materiality, which recognizes both the human and the object participants as interacting subjects in the evocation of meaning.[31] The message of the subtleties, however, is designed to shape and even constrain the subjectivity of the audience, as it simultaneously also relies on their participation in the creation of meaning, in order to represent that audience as ideologically compliant subjects of the king. Movement becomes an aspect of reading practice that is simultaneously material and political.

The last trio of participatory materialities intersect through the mode of the visual: the imagery of the subtleties, the gestures made by the figures represented in them (in the object and the verses), and the heraldic language of their appearances that make them

easily recognizable as specific individuals. These details converge
in both the description of a subtlety and its verses. Lydgate
provides each subtlety with an accompanying verse, provided in
the manuscript witnesses after description of the subtlety imagery.
The scripture that accompanied the subtlety following the first
course reads:

> Loo here twoo kynges righte perfit and right good,
> Holy Seint Edwarde and Seint Lowes:
> And see the braunch borne of here blessid blode;
> Live, among Cristen moost souereigne of price,
> Enheretour of the floure de lice!
> God graunte he may thurgh help of Christ Ihesu
> This sixt Henry to reigne and be as wise
> And hem resemble in kyghthod and virtue. (1–8)

Gestures are prominent here in the imagery of the subtlety object
and its verse, giving a bodily force to the message that is designed
to be recognized by those assembled in the hall at Westminster. In
this way, bodily work gains material function: even those unable
to read the verses can recognize the body language of its message:
The two sainted kings of England and France, Edward and Louis,
support between them a figure of Henry VI himself. The verse
elaborates on and makes this message of support clear, couch-
ing that support temporally in the hopes Lydgate offers for the
potential excellence of the king. Politically, the dual support of the
kings also reminds the audience of Henry VI's claim to the thrones
of two countries. The emphasis on gesture is evident in the way
Edward and Louis are 'bryngyng yn bitwene hem' the figure of the
king. Their figurative support is conveyed through their material,
embodied gestures, their action of carrying their heir who embod-
ies England's hopes, reinforced by the easily identifiable heraldic
imagery with which their armour is depicted. This prominence of
an imagistic, gestural mode of the subtlety tableau enhances the
force of its political message: the choice to usher Henry VI forward
is one that has been made by Edward and Louis. In this context,
their gestures in support of Henry VI perform an endorsement of
the new reign.

   The gestures also serve another function in that, although they
are physically immobile in the object of the subtlety, the language
used to depict them in the description of the subtlety and in the
verses emphasizes the animated nature of the gestures. In the
description of the first subtlety, Saints Edward and Louis are

'bryngyng yn bitwene hem the Kyng'; in the second subtlety, the king is 'knelyng before' Henry V; in the third, the Virgin Mary is 'holding in hir hand a crowne', while Saints George and Denis are 'knelyng' beside her, 'presenting the Kyng, knelyng' (623–4). In this way, the subtleties viewed by the audience at the coronation represent a convergence of movement with fixed image. This convergence of movement and imagery is subsequently reiterated to the audience of the verses in their manuscript contexts. This intersection of movement and imagery describing the formal materiality of the subtleties presents a shifting of meanings that construct a performance of animated materiality. Animated materiality attributes agency to the objects so moved.[32] This contrasts with the traditional view of objects, in which their status as objects defines them ontologically as lacking in agency. Yet by simulating movement in the language of the verses, the subtleties nonetheless represent the objects as agentive subjects, carrying, sitting, holding, and kneeling. The subtleties thus simultaneously resist oversimplification into the status of static objects and images, even as they fall short of self-motivated movement. Their animation comes through performance, enhanced by hidden human agency of those carrying the subtleties into the Great Hall. This performance grants additional force to the ideology of the subtleties.

Such additional force is further reliant upon the bodily participation of viewers, evidencing an effect that reinforces the role of what digital media critics refer to as 'haptic visuality', in which the eyes facilitate touch.[33] Medieval optical theories resonate strongly with the concept of haptic visuality, for medieval theories on sight presuppose exchange between objects and viewers. In particular contiguity can be drawn between the medieval theory of extramission, in which the viewer's eyes send forth a beam that perceives the object upon which one gazes, and haptic visuality, which considers how the work of the eyes function in ways analogous to touch, for in haptic visuality sight is thought of as 'reaching out' to apprehend the object of a gaze. The way the performance of animated materiality engages haptic visuality means that the audience of the subtleties works to constitute the image. As Susanne Akbari explains, 'for the subject to know the object, the two must come into contact; the object must come to be, in some way, inside the subject'.[34] That inside-ness converges further with the materiality of cuisine that characterizes the subtleties as subtleties. But what haptic visuality makes explicit in ways overlooked in discussions of medieval optical theory is the reliance of visuality upon the body.

The act of an image's constitution, made possible through the reaching out of the gaze represents a mutual exchange and a reliance upon the body of the viewer, without whom no gaze would be possible. Considering the subtleties in this way further illuminates the processes involved in participatory materiality. Consequently, the participatory materiality of the subtleties provides multiple modes for internalizing the message of the work.

Examining the subtleties through the framework of participatory materiality highlights the labour involved in making readers work, for it emphasizes the processes by which the meaning of materiality becomes manifest in the extracodexical text, even in its manuscript preservation. Accordingly, it offers a useful nuance to ontological approaches to materiality, in which meaning can be seen as a property of the material form. In addition, considering participatory materiality of multiple works, such as the 'Abbey Walk' poem by Henryson that is referenced at the start of this chapter, as well as that of Lydgate's subtleties, reveals how these works foreground materiality in common ways that require the participation and work of readers in interaction with the material text. Like the 'Soteltes', 'Abbey Walk' focuses on a material context in which is situated an extracodexical text, and this material context supports the message of the text. Both emphasize the imagery through which the text's message is both constituted and extended. Space and place further add to the meaning of the work, as does the movement either of the object or the reader. Accordingly, the two poems evoke shared categories of meaning: text, imagery, space and place, movement, and even the spoken quality of the words all become meaningful aspects of the works. These aspects are figured through their materiality. Furthermore, these shared modes of materiality require a reader, one who does not simply recognize these modes of the text, but whose engagement with them makes these materialities and their significance interpretable.

It is not until the narrator of 'Abbey Walk' approaches the wall that he then sees the text. Reading it, he understands how the stones offer a message that solves the matter he has been contemplating. Its solitude mirrors the poet's own as he walks alone; its formal materiality, the stone wall, testifies both to how the message came into being – through human agency – even as the durability of stone suggests the durability of the message, a counterpoint to the theme of the abbey wall text that suggests all human works fall into decay. Similarly, it is not until the audience

at the coronation read the subtleties that the significance of their materiality becomes effected. The subtleties' mobility contrasts with the audience's presence and stillness, the readers' degrees of proximity and intimacy with the subtleties, the visual imagery and the textual message: all these constitute processes of participatory apprehension that support interpretation. Reading materially also engages in virtual enactment, for an object provokes its materiality, and an object's significance is not inherently in its forensic qualities, but constituted through culturally situated meaning and social ideology that is enacted by the reader. Materiality can thus effect an encounter with the virtual.[35] Consequently, to assess medieval materiality in the context of reading practice requires understanding that it does not make meaning ontologically, but through potentialities in action. It must be understood by what it does, not what it is.

Finally, participatory materiality represents a reading practice tied to making readers work. This work is occasioned through an encounter with a text, and interpretation of the text is provoked by various aspects of a work's materiality. As Joanna Drucker asserts, reading becomes a 'constitutive interpretation of act' deeply affected by the materiality of a work in a particular historical context.[36] Assessing the relationship between readers and materiality in Lydgate's 'Soteltes' and Henryson's 'Abbey Walk' shows how materiality cannot be identified simply and solely through the embedded properties of an object – its forensic materialities. Materiality is also conveyed and constituted through reception of its formal materialities, which are culturally produced. Accordingly, for medieval audiences, reading materially is a practice embedded in the moment, in the space, place, and other material conditions that shape the act of reading. In addition, how these qualities – and in particular the qualities of space, place, and movement – constitute a reading practice points not only to how reading functions as a materially bound practice, but also to how reading functions as a practice reliant upon a person's bodily presence, senses, and physicality. This suggests that a related reading practice is embodied reading, which contributes to the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1 Denton Fox, ed., *The poems of Robert Henryson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), lines 1–8.

2 In an influential work contributing to medievalists' recent discussion of materialism, 'Medieval materialism: a manifesto', Kellie Robertson emphasizes how medieval definitions of matter can contribute to historicization of medieval materialities (*Exemplaria* 22:2 [Summer 2010], 99–118). Carolyn Walker Bynum, in *Christian materiality: an essay on religion in late medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), has contributed an invigorating study of the intersections between medieval materiality and religious and devotional practices. For examples of materialist studies inflected by object-oriented ontology, see the special issue of *postmedieval* edited by Jeffrey Cohen and Lowell Duckert, *postmedieval* 4:1 (Spring 2013), *Ecomaterialism*; and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone: an ecology of the inhuman* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

3 Stephen G. Nichols, 'Introduction: philology in a manuscript culture', *Speculum* 65:1 (Jan. 1990), 1–10, at 8. The essays collected in *Imaginary worlds in medieval books: exploring the manuscript matrix*, ed. Martha Rust (New York: Palgrave, 2007), offer thoughtful explorations attending to the manuscript matrix.

4 Michael Camille, 'Sensations of the page: imaging technologies and medieval illuminated manuscripts'. *The iconic page in manuscript, print, and digital culture*, ed. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 33–53.

5 Matthew Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: new media and the forensic imagination* (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 2008), 13.

6 Tim Ingold, 'Materials against materiality', *Archaeological Dialogues* 14:1 (2007), 1–16.

7 N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing machines* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

8 Joanna Drucker, 'Performative materiality and theoretical approaches to interface'. *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 7:1 (2013), www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/7/1/000143/000143.html, paragraph 23.

9 For discussion on how texts work in ways that seek to engage readers' responses, emotional and intellectual, see Paul Alpers, 'Mode in narrative poetry', in *To tell a story: narrative theory and practice*, ed. Robert M. Adams (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Library, 1973), 25–56.

10 See Clark and Sheingorn, 'Performative reading' and 'Visible words'; for Brantley, see *Reading in the wilderness*. Brantley sees the manuscript as collecting together a wide range of texts marked by their reliance upon modes of performative reading.

11 See, for example, the essays collected in *Lydgate matters: poetry and*

material culture in the fifteenth century, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (New York and London: Palgrave, 2008) and Claire Sponsler, *The queen's dumbshows: John Lydgate and the making of early theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 160–5.

12 In France during this period, the conclusion of a course ushered in the *entremet*, a much more dramatic spectacle than that accompanying subtleties in England (see Bridget Henisch, *Fast and feast: food in medieval society* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976], 229).

13 Critical consensus has not determined whether these subtleties were purely decorative or edible in nature; evidence suggests that some were both decorative and edible, while others only decorative. See, for instance, Anne Lancashire (*London civic theatre: city drama and pageantry from Roman times to 1558* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 125).

14 The text of the 'Soteltes' survives in nine manuscripts, most of which situated it amidst the passages of London chronicles; two manuscripts present it in miscellanies focused on literary collections. For an assessment of these manuscripts and their relationships, see Sponsler, *The queen's dumbshows*.

15 Henry MacCracken, *The minor poems of John Lydgate: part ii, secular poems*, Early English Text Society (EETS) o.s. 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 623–4. All quotations from the text are drawn from this edition.

16 Walter Schirmer suggests that Lydgate's 'Soteltes' verses were displayed on a tablet or scroll; see *John Lydgate: a study in the culture of the xvth century* (London: Methuen, 1961), 132.

17 A description of the coronation feast and subtleties are printed in *A chronicle of London: from 1089 to 1483*, ed. Nicholas Harris Nicolas and Edward Tyrrell (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827), 162–5, at 164.

18 Robert Epstein, 'Eating their words: food and text in the coronation banquet of Henry VI', *Journal of medieval and early modern studies* 36:2 (Spring 2006), 355–77, at 371.

19 Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Food in medieval times* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 75.

20 Nicolas and Tyrrell, *A chronicle*, 164. The materials for the subtleties concluding the first two banquets are not specified.

21 Sidney Mintz, discussing fourteenth-century European marzipan subtleties involving sugar, suggests that they could have similarly demonstrated wealth and power; see 'Color, taste, and purity: some speculations on the meanings of marzipan'. *Etnofoor* 4:1 (1991), 103–8; and in more recent work discussing the figurative implications of marzipan and other sweets in nunneries, see the chapter on 'Sweet traditions and the martyrdom of Saint Agatha', in Cristina Mazzoni's

The women in God's kitchen: cooking, eating, and spiritual writing (New York and London: Continuum, 2005), 77–8.

22 For an extended discussion of how the banquet's foods function as consumable signs, see Epstein, 'Eating their words'.

23 Quoted in Mary Carruthers, *The book of memory: memory in medieval culture*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), at 53.

24 The 'spatial turn' in literary and cultural studies, as well as in social sciences, from which the distinction between space and place described here has been drawn, has flourished in recent decades. Some of the major theorists and critics contributing to how we understand space and place include Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and others. For a general introduction, see Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin, eds, *Key thinkers on space and place*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2011). In the field of medieval studies, foundational contributions include Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kilbialka, eds, *Medieval practices of space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Mayke de Jong, Frans Theuws, and Carine van Rhijn, eds, *Topographies of power in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Virginia Chieffo Raguin and Sarah Stanbury, eds, *Women's space: patronage, place, and gender in the medieval church* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), and Geraldine Heng, *Empire of magic: medieval romance and the politics of cultural fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

25 Mark Girouard, *Life in the English country house: a social and architectural history* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 33. For the sacral borrowings of Westminster Hall, see Christopher Wilson, 'Rulers, artificers, and shoppers: Richard II's remodelling of Westminster Hall, 1393–99', in *The regal image of Richard II and the Wilton Diptych*, ed. Dillian Gordon, Lisa Monnas, and Caroline Elam (Coventry: Harvey Miller, 1997), 33–59. (In contrast, the now-destroyed Archbishop's Palace at Canterbury, itself the location of significant feasts, measured 126 by 42 feet – half the length of Westminster Hall [Girouard, 34].)

26 For discussion of the statues and their placement, and more broadly the decorative programme of the hall, see Wilson, 'Rulers, artificers, and shoppers', 41–2.

27 See Sponsler, *The queen's dumbshows*.

28 See Andrea R. Harbin, *Space and movement on the medieval English religious stage* (Ph.D. dissertation, Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America, 2006), and Sarah Beckwith, 'Work, markets, and civic structure: organizing the York Corpus Christi plays', in *Signifying God: social relation and symbolic act in the York Corpus Christi plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

29 Roy Shipperbottom, 'Precious metals on food', in *Look and feel: studies in texture, appearance and incidental characteristics of food: proceedings*

of the Oxford symposium on food and cookery 1993, ed. Harlan Walker (Devon, UK: Prospect Books, 1994), 211–14, at 212.

30 Although later architectural modifications to Westminster's Great Hall have a limited ability to comment upon the medieval fabric of the building, in Francis Sandford's 1687 work, *The history of the coronation of the most high, most mighty, and most excellent monarch, James II*, Sandford includes a diagram noting the layout of the Great Hall for the coronation feast, which depicts the placement of tables, tableware, and king's dais (108–9). This layout is consistent with that used for the coronation feast of Queen Katherine in 1421 (*A chronicle of London*, 162–3). In particular, the diagram for James II's banquet identifies the location of entrances added to the Great Hall after the fourteenth century and descriptively labels these entrances. At the north end of the Great Hall are the two doors, the first of which is described as, 'The door through which the Meat was brought in from the Chequer yard' and the second of which is, 'The Passage into the Hall from the Cellars'. The location of these entrances suggests a routine or ongoing plan for feast items, which included subtleties, to enter the Great Hall from close by its main north entrance. One effect of bringing the items in at this end of the Great Hall is that it affords those assembled the best and longest view possible as the items moved towards the king's seat.

31 Sydney J. Shep, 'Digital materiality', in *A new companion to digital humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman and John Unsworth (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2016).

32 Alfred Gell, *Art and agency: an anthropological theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

33 The distinction between haptic and optical has been proposed by Gilles Deleuze as multiple functions of perception, rather than representing different senses. Building on this, Laurie Marks's work on haptic visuality in video images has been particularly influential. Marks argues that haptic visuality encourages a 'bodily relation' that relies on connections between the viewer's body, the object, and vision. See *Touch, sensuous theory and multisensory media* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 17.

34 Susanne Akbari, *Seeing through the veil: optical theory and medieval allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 24.

35 For further consideration of virtuality, see Órla Murphy, who addresses these blurred boundaries through the lens of intermediality in, 'Intermediality: experiencing the virtual text', in *Readings on audience and textual materiality*, ed. Graham Allen, Carrie Griffin, and Mary O'Connell (London and Brookfield, VT: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), 155–62.

36 Drucker, 'Performative materiality', paragraph 17.