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### Reading temporally:

#### *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy, Eleanor Hull's Commentary on the penitential Psalms, and Thomas Norton's Ordinal of alchemy*

Thomas Hoccleve's *Dialogue with a friend*, previously discussed in the Introduction as exemplifying a moment of participatory reading, incorporates several specific reading practices into the interaction described between Hoccleve and his friend. One of these participatory reading practices, which Hoccleve also represents in the poem, is the practice of reading temporally. Temporal reading emerges prominently in the poem when, in its prologue to 'Jereslaus' Wife', to which his interventionist friend and reader prodded him to add the final moralization, Hoccleve describes how the friend had previously visited him. After a discussion of Hoccleve's health, in which Hoccleve asserts he must return to study and writing to prove his recovered wits against the insults of a disbelieving public, the friend asks Hoccleve what the poet will write next. Hoccleve explains that he plans to take up the matter of a Latin treatise and translate it into English. The treatise 'lerne for to dye / I-callyd is', Hoccleve says, and explains that it might help others:

yf that hym lyke / rede and beholde,  
consyder and se well / that it is full hard  
delay accompts / tyll lyfe begyne to colde;  
short tyme is then / of his offencis olde  
to make a just and trewe rekenynge.<sup>1</sup>

The reader desirous of preparing well for death can, if he wishes, read Hoccleve's work. Reading about death and the necessity to prepare for it by addressing one's sins in advance helps prepare for the inevitability of the effects of time on human lives. Supporting this point Hoccleve explains that his own awareness of time presses upon him, for he has reached his mid-fifties and thinks often about how the sweetness of the world too easily turns to bitterness. In this passage Hoccleve illustrates several common notions of time

that developed over the course of the Middle Ages. He describes the effects of experiencing time that he conceives of as possessing an inevitable, linear force; he also addresses the circularity of time, which can predictably turn from sweetness to bitterness, and back again to sweetness. These two notions of temporality, as linear and as circular, had long affected medieval understanding of the repeating patterns of human history and experience, as discussed previously in [Chapter 2](#) when discussing the historical nonlinearity John Lydgate crafted into the *Siege of Thebes*.

Other concepts of time, such as agrarian and biblical, permeated the fabric of medieval culture.<sup>2</sup> Contrasts between sacred and secular, monastic and mercantile notions of time, the temporality of the zodiac, of agriculture, of the church, and more, have received much attention.<sup>3</sup> These multiplicities of temporality, of course, witness a medieval awareness of, and interest in, how different ways of attending to time shape perceptions of the world. Time did not simply affect human experience, however; it influenced life in ways that intersect with medieval literary culture. In literature, time could also be manipulated and trivialized. This treatment of time also emerges in Hoccleve's *Dialogue*, in which multiple social perceptions of temporality intersect and are represented as influencing both the writer's and, potentially, readers' experiences. Different ways of perceiving the value and practice of time also shape the treatment of multiple temporalities in the poem. Yet, despite the significance of time in late-medieval culture, and despite the attentiveness paid to different medieval schema for conceiving of time, and despite extensive study on the book of hours – as a text defined by time – and its role in constructing a popular understanding of sacred time in the late Middle Ages, little attention has been paid to how late-medieval perceptions of temporality intersect with reading experiences, and in particular how readers' engagements with time become reading practice. In this chapter, I draw on a range of texts across religious and secular genres to show how pervasively time becomes incorporated into reading experiences and participatory reading practice in late-medieval England. Different ways of engaging with and understanding time shape reading experiences and, consequently, textual interpretation, from the pace of reading to readers' creation of narrative sequence to the reader's personal orientation to historical time.

The workings of temporality have, as with the other reading practices discussed previously, also engaged the interest of critics, artists, and theorists working with digital media, alongside theo-

retical ways of understanding time, from the work of Stephen Hawking to that of Giorgio Agamben. Among critics of digital media, how the experience of time in and in response to digital media have gained the most attention. Such critics, seeking to apply concepts drawn from narratology, have sought to explain and analyse temporal phenomenal present in works like video games. Analysing such, contrasts of duration and speed framed through the work of Gerard Genette and others have occupied the primary focus of scholars of digital media.<sup>4</sup> Similarly to how digital media scholars study the processes of materiality, such critics' interest has focused on how digital media facilitate the manipulation of time through the properties of media. For example, 'system time' addresses how the permanency of the text can be affected by software and the formal materialities of a computer system, such as its processing speed. An example of 'system time' emerges through William Gibson's *Agrippa (a book of the dead)*, which was stored on a floppy disk and famously programmed to erase itself. The act of auto-erasure imposes limits driven by the programming, the system, of the work. These limits affect the time within which the work is available for a reader's perusal. Accordingly, system time contrasts with and can affect 'reading time', which refers to the temporal availability of a text to readers. An illustrative example of constrained reading time is that exemplified in William Poundstone's 'Project for Tachitoscope [Bottomless Pit]', which flashes image and text that disappear and are replaced within fractions of seconds.<sup>5</sup> Both system time and reading time intersect in Gibson's and Poundstone's works in ways that require readers to adjust the duration of their reading practice to respond to the limitations imposed by the reading and system times of these works.

Accordingly, digital media critics often view the treatment of reading time as an intrinsic property of types of media. This approach emphasizes fundamental differences between, for example, the experiences of reading time in digital and print media, since their formal materialities differ. As Markku Eskelinen explains, 'If system time and reading time were to be applied to print narratives, they would usually have both unlimited system time and unlimited reading time, because they are supposed to be permanent and there are no temporal limitations set to their reading'.<sup>6</sup> Eskelinen's influential argument treats the media form of a work as inalterably affecting reading experiences. This view, however, overlooks how social use can affect reading time both in print, manuscript, and digital media. Consequently, while such

criticism usefully directs attention to the qualities of a work that affect the reader's experience of and engagement with temporality, it also invites further scrutiny of time, particularly for how the cultural and historical contexts of media affect temporal experiences and engagements.

One example of how such issues may be considered involves returning briefly to examples of the reading practice attended to in [Chapter 2](#), nonlinear reading. As previously discussed, when medieval writers and modern critics explicitly address how nonlinear reading functions, they often link it to the formal materialities and structural considerations of textual organization. The division of a work into lexia, such as chapters or parts, can facilitate nonlinear reading practices driven by the readers' association of passages of interest to themselves. Such associational reading has been related to time in the context of hypertext media, as critics suggest that nonlinear reading facilitates access to, and intake of, information in ways characterized as shallow and swift, as indicated by the dominance of the terminology used to describe hypermedia reading as 'browsing' and 'surfing'.<sup>7</sup> The shallowness of engagement with information was compensated for by the speed that allowed readers to apprehend greater amounts of information; hypertext media enable speed through the division of text into lexia and the provision of means for easily connecting one lexia to another via hyperlinks. For medieval writers, similarly connecting time to nonlinear reading, swiftness and shallowness are the opposite of the results achieved by nonlinear reading. For example, considering the *Orchard of Syon*, it is noteworthy that the translator links negotiation among textual nodes to the ability to spend 'o tyme in oon, anopir tyme in anopir' (1), which helps promote 'bisye & ofte redyng' (421). To read nonlinearly offers readers the opportunity to choose how and where to spend their reading time, and increases the frequency of reading practice. In the perspective of medieval writers, nonlinear reading, when practised with temporal mindfulness, affects both reading frequency, reading pace, and textual navigation: one structural and two temporal aspects of reading that intersect to produce particular cognitive results. 'Bisye' reading can be developed through reading multiple passages in whatever sequence the reader finds useful, a change to reading pace reliant upon textual organization; 'ofte' reading develops more easily when the text can be dipped in and out of at will, when passages can be read independently and placed in associational context with each other. Yet rather than producing the shallow apprehension of

‘surfing’, this temporal practice of nonlinear reading helps make the reading experience deeper and more productive for the individual. Participatory reading can thus involve readers manipulating their temporal practice in order to enhance a deeper, customized engagement with the text.

### Reading as temporal manipulation

By moving from *lexia* to *lexia* often and busily, readers manipulate the temporality of their reading practice in order to effect change in apprehension of a text. In the *Orcherd*, this practice of temporal reading is represented as relying on adjustments to reading pace and textual sequence in order to customize the text to the individual reader’s needs and interests. Yet temporal reading does not promote only the ability to customize reading pace and frequency in order to achieve ‘bisye’ reading. An interpretation of how temporal reading functions that contrasts with the view of the translator of the *Orcherd* emerges in the Middle English translation of the *Pseudo-Augustinian soliloquies*. In it, the translator notes instead that temporal reading offers an opportunity for refreshment of the reader. To this translator, the divisions of the text facilitate readers’ negotiation among passages, so ‘that where it lyketh hym he may begynne and also ende, ne lest often repeticion of one thing schulde make hevenesse’.<sup>8</sup> By moving among *lexia* according to preference and interest, readers may avoid the boredom of repetition. Changing one’s reading pace, frequency, and sequence in order to dwell over a passage through its rereading, in this context, would be viewed as a problematic practice enhancing boredom, and thus counter-indicated by the need to keep the reader’s attention engaged through encounters with fresh material. This perspective demonstrates how temporal reading could be viewed not only as a practice enhancing customization, but also as a practice of attentiveness. Temporal manipulation of reading pace and sequence could make apprehension of a text feel lighter or deeper. Neither the translator of the *Orcherd* nor that of the *Soliloquies* suggests a specific amount of time be spent on reading; rather, what they both emphasize is that readers’ temporal manipulation of reading practice shapes the subjective and affective experiences of reading and, consequently, textual interpretation.

The differing approaches of these writers to temporal reading, and the way these approaches contrast with modern critics’ views of the effects of reading on the temporal engagement with a text,

suggests that temporal reading is also a culturally constructed practice whose effects may be bound to a particular place and time. That nonlinear reading is today viewed as 'swift' and 'shallow' may say more about what scholars and users alike expect from reading digital media, and how we choose to read digital media, than it says about any transhistorical continuity about practices of nonlinear reading. Treatment of the same reading practice in different cultural and historical contexts should not be viewed as consistently producing the same results, which is to view the effects of a reading practice as predictable and constant over time. Instead, the same practice may produce different results because reading develops through culturally contextualized training and practice.

Yet some aspects of reading practices can be identified as similar across time and cultural difference. Through temporal manipulation, medieval and modern readers gain another way to interact with their texts and exert agency over the reading experience. As medieval readers chose how to attend temporally to the text, how much time to spend on a passage, and whether to reread one or briskly move on to another passage, they exerted agency to determine what aspects of temporal reading would most benefit their apprehension of the work. At the same time, however, as with other practices of participatory reading, writers advocating temporal reading practice did not view such readers as setting the agenda for their reading experience. Instead, writers treat their stated goals for the text, or the text's aims as determined by its genre, as predetermining readers' agendas and circumscribing the use of their agency. Readers should exert choices insofar as their choices support the effective interpretation of the work as stated by the writer or translator, or as implied by the genre of the text. Temporal reading, in this light, serves to make achieving the agenda set by a text or writer more likely and more accessible. That temporal manipulation becomes part of the work of participatory reading demonstrates how writers viewed time as a significant aspect of reading experiences, and the ability to affect time as crucial to readers' participation, although reading temporally does not change readers' abilities to affect the agenda set by the text or writer. For medieval writers, to read is to comply with the aims of the text read.

For readers, temporal reading under the guidance of writers' proleptic instructions enabled a mode of reading that facilitated textual customization and enhanced attentiveness and engagement. While writers also seek to predetermine readers' responses by

treating temporal reading as guiding affective responses to the text, temporal reading nonetheless requires the participation and compliance of readers, who can also choose to concentrate on whatever other aspect of interpretation suits them; furthermore, that writers represent the results of temporal reading as somewhat mutable may also indicate that its results might not be fixed, but could be adjusted to suit the goals of readers. That is, while texts like the *Orchard of Syon* that are designed for nonlinear apprehension can facilitate temporal reading by making a text more accessible to reading characterized by dwelling either briefly or lingeringly over short passages, these texts cannot make other reading practices inapplicable. That medieval writers nevertheless chose to advocate for temporal reading demonstrates how they viewed it, in its multifaceted application, as significant to the work of understanding a text. It made a difference to them that readers should approach a work in a particular mindset, and with the expectation of achieving particular results from their reading; writers turned to temporal reading to create a practice that would help achieve those results.

Temporal manipulation in these ways is not exclusive to medieval reading practice alone. Temporality, for example, also emerges as an aspect of literary culture through the work of textual composition: to ‘abbreviaten’ or ‘abreggen’ was viewed as diminishing both length and time, as explained in the Middle English translation of *De re militari*: ‘Þese bookes of werre craft ... ben breueliche y-gedered oper schortliche abreged out of auctors apreued’.<sup>9</sup> Abridgement is an activity that can be both ‘brief’ and ‘short’, which unites perceptions of length and time. Linking length and time to textual composition further suggests that temporal manipulation functioned as a feature not of reading alone, but of both writing and reading. This view complicates Eskelinen’s notion of ‘system time’ by demonstrating how temporal manipulation may not only emerge from the formal qualities of an object, or through the experiences of a reader, but also, in the context of medieval literary culture, through the processes that writers, scribes, and readers enact through the practices that define them. The temporal manipulation of the length of the text also impacts what Genette refers to as ‘pseudo time’, which is the amount of text used to describe an event.<sup>10</sup> In other words, medieval writers and scribes who altered the length of a text engaged in a process of altering the temporality of a text, even as readers also manipulated temporal experience through the process by which they apprehended a text. Both writing and reading offered opportunities to

practice temporal participation with a text, demonstrating that temporality in medieval literary culture extends past the simple notion of narrative temporality to a much more complex and multifaceted perception of time.

Considering that time is not simply an aspect of narrative craft, but of readers' experiences, and of scribes' and writers' material, formal engagement with and contributions to a text invites further consideration of how time might be manipulated with consequences for readers' apprehension of a work. Abridgement introduces an example of how scribal emendation of a text could affect reading time, but reading time could also be effected through occasion and performance. The example of John Lydgate's 'Soteltes' discussed in the previous chapter exemplifies a text whose reading time was limited to the duration the subtleties entered the hall at Westminster at the end of each course of the coronation feast, and concluded when they were consumed or taken away in order to introduce the next course or end the feast. Ephemeral works like the 'Soteltes' thus impose limitations on reading time that are not responsive to the desires of readers to linger or not, but are, rather, responsive to the materiality of the text and the conditions of the occasion. Ephemerality may affect temporal reading in ways not restricted by events. For example, in the Percy family wall texts, the natural rhythms of the household create effects that would shape the way readers assess the work's temporality. The verses providing proverbs on the subject of music located in the garret above the New Lodge would be apprehended differently if read just before a music lesson as opposed to after it, or would be read differently again during seasons or years without such lessons taking place. The use of space thus conveys its own temporal effects on a work, effects which can be ephemeral even when not tied to a specific event. Ephemerality constrains reading time in a way that, as Eskelinen observed, the printed (or manuscript) text may not – with some exceptions.

One exception to the constraints on temporal reading imposed by ephemerality emerges through a work's remediation into another format. Such affected the Percy family wall texts and Lydgate's 'Soteltes' when the verses were included and resituated for readers in manuscript contexts. There, the imposed, event- and space-orchestrated temporal constraints disappear, in the sense that readers can choose to extend or shorten the experience of reading them according to their own wishes. Nevertheless, maintaining the 'Soteltes' verses within the framework of the banquet suggests that



limits on reading time can be constructed virtually, if not materially. This virtual representation of temporal limits is evoked by the location of the verses within the framework of the banquet: there, they are represented as if still part of a temporally finite experience. Providing the framework of the occasion does not contextualize the content of the verses alone; it also evokes the temporalities, including the temporal limits, of the occasion in the act of conveying the verses to readers. Preserving the temporality of occasional verse, however, imposes changes upon it. Emphasizing the temporal limits to the verses in their occasional context can evoke a sense of urgency applied to subsequent readings of the work, even as it also emphasizes connections to the past event, thus imparting a gloss of continuity and stability to the work's message.<sup>11</sup> Such treatment of time may be supportive of the message of the text in its original presentation. Yet this treatment of time does not belong to the original work, but emerges from its new context. Remediation of the text thus remediates its temporalities as well, even under the guise of maintaining the work's previous temporalities. Accordingly, reorganization of a text by the application of new schema, such as a work's re-organization into new chapters, can create new temporal effects. Consequently, examining a text for its engagement with time may require considering, for example, how manuscript witnesses represent various schema for dividing and organizing a text, as each schema may differently affect temporal manipulation.

### Reading as participatory temporality

For medieval readers, temporal manipulation does not represent the only way time becomes intertwined with the work of reading. Indeed, temporal manipulation can be seen as contributing to a practice of reading that might more broadly be considered as 'participatory temporality'. This term draws on the critical framework of participatory materiality as discussed in [Chapter 3](#), and also extends theorization of temporalities encountered in digital media. In digital media studies, Raine Koskimaa has elaborated on narratological understanding of temporality and contrasted it with assessments of temporality by scholars of digital media to distinguish four levels of temporality in narrative digital texts: user time (which is the time a person spends reading a text, and synonymous with reading time), discourse time (the time of the narrative discourse), story time (the time the narrative events take

place within the synthetic space of the narrative), and system time. Koskimaa notes that multiple levels of temporality can be engaged simultaneously, for system time operates in the same moments as story time and discourse time; this convergence of temporalities ‘merge together in a novel way’ in digital media.<sup>12</sup> Such merging of temporalities suggests a particularly interesting development, for it indicates that distinct modes of temporalities may, in intersecting, affect each other – and affect even the user or reader.

Although the convergence of multiple temporalities may take place differently according to particular types of media, such convergences are not unique to digital media. For example, consider the widespread and influential metaphor of the book as flesh of Christ, previously mentioned as an example of the intersection between materiality and embodiment in reading practice. The metaphor also possesses a temporal functionality. One of the more descriptive uses of the metaphor is provided by Richard Rolle in a passage on devotional reading. Rolle writes:

[S]wet Jhesu, þy body is lyke a boke written al with rede ynke; so is þy body al written with rede woundes. Now, swete Jhesu, graunt me to rede upon þy boke, and somewhate to undrestond þe swetnes of þat writynge, and to have likynge in studious abydyng of þat redynge.<sup>13</sup>

While Rolle does not explicitly address time, the metaphor he deploys here nevertheless evokes several temporalities that converge through it. First, calling attention to the nature of the book as flesh and body invites readers to consider the formal, material temporalities of the manuscript, which was once a living animal possessed of its flesh, but has since become remediated into the book. Next, comparing that manuscript body to the wounded body of Christ evokes for readers the historical temporality of his life. Other temporalities that converge through this metaphor are discourse time and reading time. A final temporality is that of story time: while Rolle does not relate a fictive narrative, he nevertheless narrates a micro-event, that of the development of his devotional practice in response to the book as body metaphor, which begins with the explanation of the metaphor, transitions into the development of a meditative practice based upon it, and anticipates the enactment of that practice.

Only one of these temporal levels, user/reading time, specifically examines reading experiences, such as that of temporal manipulation. Yet the convergence of other temporalities intersects with

reading time in ways that affect interpretation. This convergence marks the capacious medieval *now*, the all-encompassing sense of the present that asynchronously enfolds the past.<sup>14</sup> This convergence also relies on the act of reading: to understand the book as body metaphor, readers recognize the convergence of temporalities as they consider their own relation not simply to their devotional practice alone, but also to the temporalities of that practice. To read the book as body metaphor, as described by Rolle, necessitates that readers recognize the various temporalities that converge in and through the metaphor, and interpret the metaphor through that understanding. The way the metaphor unites embodiment with temporality further suggests that embodied reading may always also be temporal reading, even when the temporality may not be emphasized in the text read. That is, embodiment is temporally contextualized as the body itself exists in and is subject to time. This engagement with time comes to the forefront of readers' attentions when, as Hoccleve illustrates above, a text connects awareness of time to its effects on the human body. To engage in embodied reading consequently also evokes the temporality of the body that characterizes medieval human experience.

Thus, as with materiality, and as with the temporal manipulation of writing discussed above, convergence of such temporalities requires readers to engage in temporally structured processes as they read. In effect, these processes contribute to how readers perform and thus understand temporality. Accordingly, participatory temporality offers a comprehensive term useful for considering both how temporalities converge as part of the reading experience, and also what the convergence of those temporalities achieves. Accordingly, considering participatory temporality involves assessing how temporalities function as processes with which the reader participates. The remainder of this chapter will discuss three fifteenth-century works, one a secular, prophetic poem; one a devotional work translated by Dame Eleanor Hull, a *Commentary on the penitential Psalms*; and the third marking a return to Thomas Norton's Chaucerian treatise on alchemy, the *Ordinal of alchemy*. Assessment of these works will demonstrate how participatory temporality functions across late Middle English literary genres as a widespread reading practice that shapes readers' work.

Prophecies cluster around the figure of Thomas of Erceeldoune, a thirteenth-century Scots poet; many of these prophecies, few if any of which can be attributed to the historical figure of Thomas, were collected in *Thomas of Erceeldoune's prophecy* following its initial

romance-styled prologue that explains Thomas's rather fantastic experiences. This prologue and the prophecies form *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy* survive imperfectly in three fifteenth-century manuscripts and one from the sixteenth century, and in shortened fragments in several others. Two of these manuscripts include the text alongside other prognosticative or prophetic works, reflecting the compilers' strong interest in history and temporality. In *Thomas of Erceldoune*, the story of the prologue follows Thomas as he rests beneath a tree on a May morning. He then sees a richly dressed lady riding nearby, whom he initially takes to be Mary as Queen of Heaven despite the demurrer of the lady, who says she comes from elsewhere. After Thomas pressures her into having sex, she takes him with her under the hill to her land, where Thomas spends what seem to be three days, only for the queen to explain that three years have passed. She then returns him to the tree where they first met, and at his importuning grants him a gift and shares five prophetic pronouncements. These five pronouncements include multiple prophecies, and form the subjects of the second and third parts of the poem. The work is thus deeply engaged with the multiplicity of time and temporalities people experience.<sup>15</sup> Its prophecies, in particular, require readers' temporal participation in order to effect interpretation.

How the prophecies elicit readers' temporal participation begins with the narrating perspective of the poem. Identifying the speaker requires readers to immediately assess the chronology of the poem, work that the shifting identity of the speaker complicates. All witnesses to the prologue of *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy* begin in the first person, using 'I' to summarize the subject matter of the poem. From the mid-fifteenth-century Lincoln Cathedral Library MS 91, compiled by the Yorkshire gentleman Robert Thornton in his northern dialect of Middle English, the narrator explains, 'Lystyns, lordyngs, ... I sall ȝow tell al strew a tale / Als euer was herde by nyghte or daye', which shall include his telling of 'Batells donne sythene many a jere; / And of batells pat done sall bee'.<sup>16</sup> Such a conventional opening invites identification of the narrator as a poet providing a traditional oral performance of the work, whose written form includes those legacies of the oral tradition. This first-person becomes attributed to Thomas explicitly not many lines later: 'Als I me went', and sat under the tree, 'I herde þe jaye ... als I laye'.<sup>17</sup> Thus the initial 'I' of the poem becomes, for the reader of the text in manuscript, retroactively identified as that of Thomas. Thomas may occupy the role of the performing poet,

which would represent the poem as not only about his experience, but also as relating his experience through his own authoritative voice. That identification thus requires readers to locate the poem and its speaker in time, requiring interpretation of the poem depending upon reading temporally.

As the speaker's perspective does not remain constant throughout the prologue, its inconsistency invites further temporal work on the part of readers. Only a few dozen lines after the first-person description of Thomas beneath the tree, the perspective shifts to third person as readers learn that 'Thomas laye' and 'He sayd' (73, 75). This shift may represent malleable, multiple narratorial identity, or it may represent the autographic textual voice.<sup>18</sup> Regardless of the view of the narrator that one adopts, however, the narrating perspective represents two temporal moments. The third-person narrator relates Thomas's activities as if they occur in the present, creating a sense of proximity and immediacy; the first-person narrator depicts events viewed as past developments on which the first-person narrator reflects. This shifting perspective adds a degree of mobility to the temporalities of the poem. The temporal mobility implied by the shifting perspective of the narrating point of view thus challenges readers to orient the poem temporally in relation to themselves. Is the poem contemporary to a reader, or from the recent past, or from further back in history? As the subject matter of the poem focuses on prophecy, determining its temporal orientation relative to readers is a necessity.

Reading temporally may seem like a typical reading practice that all readers engage in while reading any text. Yet not all texts require this work. For example, those set in the present moment, such as the prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, do not require readers' temporal orientation until factors external to the text, such as changing linguistic practice and religious culture, make the present-day setting of the poem a historical artefact to its readers. Thus, while reading temporally may be a necessity for any reader engaging with a text outside of its original historical context, temporal reading is only a necessity for some readers encountering the text as its initial and intended audience. In such cases, temporal reading can be – as *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy* demonstrates, along with the other texts to be discussed below – planned for and crafted as an aspect of the text designed to elicit readers' participation in order to promote particular ways of apprehending the text, interpreting it, or otherwise participating with it.

In the case of *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*, readers temporally orienting themselves to the poem engage in one mode of temporally interactive reading practice. Readers' different temporal orientations lead to different ways of interpreting the work and its topicality. In other words, viewing the poem as contemporary suggests that some prophecies are more likely to be as yet unfulfilled; a poem situated with greater temporal distance suggests that readers might expect some prophecies to have been fulfilled already, and some perhaps yet to be fulfilled. Readers' temporal participation thus shapes interpretation. Such reliance upon readers, as with other reading practices discussed previously, seems not to have suited all writers equally well. For example, a fifteenth-century prophecy attributed to Merlin in Trinity College Dublin MS 516 clearly indicates uncertainty about how readers will orient themselves temporally to the prophecy. This uncertainty perhaps arises because the character of Merlin would have been recognized as a character of the past, temporally distant, which could then have prompted readers to perceive the prophecy itself as applying to a temporally distant past. Yet attribution of the prophecy to Merlin clearly added to its authority, and provided a context and authority worth maintaining. Accordingly, to address this problem and still encourage readers to orient the prophecy to their present moment, the writer of the Merlin prophecy adds the year. The poem begins with phrasing echoed by other versions of the prophecy, 'When lordes wille is londes law', then concludes the stanza with, 'Then schal the lond of Albyon torne into confusioun! / A M CCCC lx and on, few lordes or elles noone'.<sup>19</sup> When the law of the land is the will of its lords, the land will fall into confusion; by 1461, few lords stand against such calamity. Adding the date diminishes the need to rely upon readers' ability to orient the poem temporally to themselves. Supplying the date explicitly encourages application of the prophecy to the readers' contemporary political situations. Consequently, the presence of the date in the Dublin MS 516 version of the prophecy indicates the significance of the absence of dates in other works. Undated prophesies rely on other cues to encourage readers to orient such writings temporally, and rely to a greater degree upon readers themselves.

How readers temporally orient the poem consequently shapes expectations regarding the focus and applicability of prophecies. As a result, by challenging readers' temporal orientation through its varying and multiple narratorial perspectives, *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy* begins to make readers work to locate

it temporally in history. It also begins to develop expectations regarding the prophecies, even as this challenge of temporal orientation underscores the slippery multiplicity of time in the text. That such temporal orientation relies on readers' efforts underscores the participatory function of temporal reading. As previously discussed in the context of reading materially, what a reader does, and how a text proleptically invites the application of a reader's work, functions as part of the process that enacts the participatory nature of the reading practice. Temporal participation is cued by the text, but occurs through the actions of readers that affect interpretation.

This emphasis on temporal participation continues throughout the text in its provision of the prophecies themselves. Although many of the prophecies describe recognizable historical events, they do so – as is conventional for prophetic writings – allusively. These allusions require work on the part of the reader to sequence, thus situating further temporal participation as a prelude to understanding the subject matter and relevance of the prophecies. Furthermore, recognizing the events referred to in the prophecies as historical occasions that have already transpired again points to the processual function of temporality in the poem, as readers must distinguish them from forecasted events that have not yet occurred. Readers' understanding of these aspects of the poem becomes further complicated by the presentation of the prophecies in temporal clusters that, within each cluster, proceed chronologically, even as the clusters themselves are not presented in chronological order.

The first prophecy related by the queen to Thomas exemplifies how the presentation of the prophecies could influence readers' temporal performance. At the start of the second fytt, after the queen presents Thomas with the gift of truth-telling, she also provides him with a marvel, a prediction, at his request. At the conclusion of the prediction, she states,

Thomas, herkyne what I the saye:  
 Whene a tree rote es dede,  
 The leves fadis þane & wytis awaye;  
 & froyte it beris nane þane, white ne rede.  
 Of þe baylliolfte blod so sall it falle:  
 It sall be lyke a rotyne tree;  
 The comyns, & þe Barlays alle,  
 The Russells, & þe ffresells free  
 All sall þay fade, and wyte awaye.<sup>20</sup>

The provision of family names make the historical allusion of the queen's prophecy readily identifiable to readers familiar with the Second War of Scottish Independence. The resolution to the First War (which lasted from 1296 to 1328) had left various families denied access to the lands in Scotland that they viewed as their own; through allegiance with England, they pursued their claims in what became the Second Scottish War of Independence, which began in 1332 and lasted until 1357. These families included that of Edward Balliol, who claimed right to the throne of Scotland, and led the families of his faction – which included the Comyns, Frasers, and Barclays and were known collectively as the Disinherited – in the first of several campaigns in Scotland.<sup>21</sup> This exemplifies one of the more recognizable temporal allusions in the poem that readers have to decipher in order to understand the implications of the prophecies.

This prophecy centres on events from the first to second quarters of the fourteenth century, and focuses particularly on events that took place in 1333: the failure of Balliol's party when confronted with forces supporting David the Bruce's hold of the throne.<sup>22</sup> Next, the queen's second prophecy discusses the Battle of Halidon Hill, also in 1333, a bloody defeat for the Scots. She then moves back temporally to reference the 1298 battle at Falkirk, in which Edward I of England defeated Scots led by William Wallace. After Thomas importunes her again, the queen moves forward temporally to the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 during the First Scottish War of Independence, and after a few more events from the First War, on to the partial successes of Edward Balliol in 1332 during the Second War. The sequence of prophecies thus moves from events of the Second War to events of the First, after which follow earlier events from the Second War that precede the previously referenced Second War events. The poem concludes with prophecies about the future, extending even to an allusion that could be interpreted as referring to the return of King Arthur, unifying all Britain.

This organization of events within the prophecy clusters presents the past not as ordered, but as intersecting and branching in a rhizomatic network, and further represents the future as malleable and subject to interpretive ambiguity.<sup>23</sup> No one prophecy is presented as providing a single key to unlocking the future; no single event dominates and imposes a linear narrative to history. The text thus invites readers' participation by providing them with the prophecies as temporal puzzles. In solving them, the



reader orients the relation between past and future events, and further orients himself temporally: what is future for the poem's Thomas the Rhymer and the Fairy Queen becomes past for the knowledgeable, alert reader. Such work in reading emphasizes again how late-medieval writers anticipated readers on whose interpretive labour they could rely. Such work also suggests how the text might have interested its readers. Robert Thornton, gentry landowner and copyist of the Lincoln Cathedral manuscript copy of *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*, may well have turned to the poem for reminders of the recent past that he could recognize and, in considering them alongside the future prophecies, assess how he might respond to developments in the tense political situation in Yorkshire and Scotland of the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the presentation of the intermixed sequence of past events followed by predictions about the future creates an impression of social and political chaos. Identifying and contextualizing the past events referred to in the prophecies from events that had not yet occurred requires readers' temporal participation. In effect, readers of the prophecies have to assemble mental chronologies of the events in order to draw order and meaning from chaos. In doing so, they distinguish past events from future events, which they can then interpret in ways consonant with their individual political ideologies. Through temporal participation with *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*, the reader emerges as a figure whose efforts bring order to history and clarity to time. Participation through temporal reading positions readers as both vehicles for and agents of temporality.

In these ways, reading temporally in late-medieval England involved temporal manipulation, the assemblage and orientation of the reader with regard to differing temporalities, and the convergence of multiple layers of time that readers engaged with and which shaped how readers interpret the work. Such aspects of temporal reading become explicit both in works that address time in relation to reading, and in works whose focus specifically involves time. Examples of these modes of temporal performativity can be identified in the descriptions of reading practice included in the *Orchard of Syon* and the *Pseudo-Augustinian soliloquies* described above, and in more literary works such as *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*. Aspects of temporal participation may also affect reading experiences in different ways, as temporal manipulation of the sort discussed in the *Orchard of Syon* and the *Pseudo-Augustinian soliloquies* seeks to shape affective responses to the work read,

while temporal orientation in *Thomas of Erceldoune* influences how readers orient themselves and the texts they read in relation to multiple conceptions of time. Such modes of temporal participation can also be identified in works less explicitly engaged with time or the practice of reading as these, and across the divide of devotional and secular literature. Examples of texts that demonstrate further engagement with temporal performativity these ways include Eleanor Hull's *Commentary on the penitential Psalms* and Thomas Norton's *Ordinal of alchemy*. A brief description of how each text represents temporal participation will contribute to a more nuanced picture of its workings as a reading practice, and demonstrate how temporal reading can intersect with other participatory reading practices previously described, such as nonlinear reading.

Eleanor Hull translated her *Commentary on the penitential Psalms* in the 1420s, when she, widowed, was living at least part of the time at Sopwell Priory, a house of nuns dependent upon the powerful and influential Abbey of St Albans. Her *Commentary* survives in a single manuscript collected and owned and partly copied by Richard Fox, the steward of St Albans. Following after the *Commentary* is Hull's translation of the *Meditations on the days of the week*. There, Hull demonstrates her interest in and sensitivity to temporal participation by addressing readers' temporal manipulation. Expanding on and altering the sense of her Anglo-Norman French source, Hull writes that it is unnecessary for readers to follow the linear arrangement of the text. Instead, they should negotiate the text according to their needs and interests: 'Nere it nedyth allweys to begyn at euery tyme at the begynnyng hereof but þer as hym best lykyth and hath most devocyon to rede', and adds, 'by cause the redyng shold not turne hem to enoye for to long redyng'.<sup>25</sup> That is, Hull suggests to readers that starting at the beginning is not an absolute necessity; starting where they most prefer helps produce a reading experience that is not overlong and therefore annoying. Hull thus indicates that devotion can be enhanced through readers' application of nonlinear apprehension of the text, and nonlinear reading shapes the affective consequences of reading pace. Nonlinear reading thus facilitates deeper understanding of a text by giving the reader a practice through which they can temporally manipulate their experience with the work by adjusting the length of the text and, with it, their reading time. In contrast to the shortness of temporal performance Hull advocates in the *Meditations*, however, her *Commentary* demonstrates an alternative approach focused on lengthening text and

time. Hull achieves this by taking a single verse, and on occasion a single word of one of the penitential psalms, and expounding on it at length. Thus Hull's commentary on verse 1 of Psalm 6 extends from folio 7r of the manuscript to f. 8r, from lines 275 to 314 of the commentary.<sup>26</sup> Hull derives this practice from the source she translates; in making it accessible to the reader of Middle English, her text exemplifies and performs temporal manipulation for readers in ways that extend their engagement with the text of the psalms. Explication becomes a temporal practice that influences readers' devotional experiences.

Such temporal manipulation further converges for readers of the *Commentary* through their awareness of Christian history, brought forth into the present by the texts of the psalms. This convergence is enhanced not by the work of the reader alone, but also by textual references to such history, as when the commentary for Psalm 6 discusses how the psalm reflects events from the life of David. Hull also provides encouragement that heightens still further how other types of participation may contribute to readers' understanding of the psalms, as for example when she leads into a discussion of Psalm 6:1 with, 'Then lete ous al crye as he dyd, *Domine ne in furore tuo*' (275). Readers may join in with the text more profoundly if they vocalize their reading, joining in with David himself and a virtual community of other readers engaged in the same act. In this way, temporal participation converges with readers' temporal perception of history to affect the readers' awareness of the relationship between moments of Christian history.<sup>27</sup> Hull shapes her text in such a way as to encourage readers' expression of agency through temporal participation, and shapes that agency to produce a particular devotional effect of affective response, for temporal reading becomes a means for furthering affective response to the text through the encouragement of vocal reactions to reading the text. In this way, the reader's time converges with David's time through the unifying medium of the voice.

One further detail related to the *Commentary* deserves note for how it implicates the afterlife of the reading practices enjoined upon readers through their temporal apprehension of the text. Eleanor Hull is atypical both in her role as a woman translator writing in late-medieval England, and also because a probate copy survives of her will. She wrote the original copy in 1458, as the will states, 'with myn owne hande'.<sup>28</sup> It thus authoritatively speaks to what Hull thought important to bequeath to others without the intermediating influence of another writer's composition of

the document. Most relevantly, her will refers to several books in Hull's ownership. She bequeaths all of them to her spiritual director, Robert Housewife, an ordained priest and long-term friend of Hull's who lived nearby the abbey at Sopwell manor. She writes, 'Also I bequethe to my fader Housewyf my greet portous and my litel portous and my sauter... Also I bequethe my fader Husewyf my blue bible of Latyn' (203–4). Hull directs that a large breviary, a small breviary, a psalter, and a Latin bible be given to Housewife. Striking in their absences are references to Hull's *Commentary* or *Meditations*. Hull mentions these four books alone, and no other books, papers, or written documents of any kind. The absence is telling particularly given her gifts to Housewife, who in his role as friend and priest might be most interested in possessing copies of Hull's works on spirituality. The absence of any reference to written texts further suggests that, at the time of her death, Hull may not have owned a copy of the works she had translated several decades before. This absence of reference to surviving copies of Hull's works in her own possession casts an interesting light on how medieval writers may have viewed their literary output. While it may comment on the expense of paper and parchment exceeding what a writer might wish to spend simply to retain a copy of their work, it also suggests that writers may have focused less on retention and ownership of what was only beginning to be thought of as their intellectual, creative property, and more on the value of its circulating in copies that could be read by others.

Yet in considering Hull not only as a writer, but also as a reader, the will provides further insight about the application of the reading practices discussed here. That is, three of the four books Hull mentions – the breviaries and the psalter – collected the psalms as their centrepieces. Hull clearly harboured an ongoing and intense interest in reading the psalms. That Hull maintained multiple manuscripts collecting the psalms, but may not have retained a copy of her own translation of commentary on the psalms, suggests that maintaining a copy of the *Commentary* may also have been unnecessary to her not only as a writer, but also as a reader. If Hull's practice may be indicative of other readers' practices, then learning the lessons provided by the *Commentary* rendered continued ownership of a copy less necessary. In this light, reading the *Commentary* effectively entailed learning its matter so thoroughly that subsequent reading of the psalms in other contexts could evoke the lessons and give application to the practices taught by the *Commentary*. This point is further supported by the text

itself, which does not restrict its explicative work to the texts of the psalms themselves. Indeed, matters like how a title functions are also explained. Such treatment of the role of titles suggests that Hull anticipated the work would be accessed by unsophisticated readers for whom the explication of the paratextual function of a title was new information. It also suggests that Hull expected readers would need this explanation because they would encounter psalms in other places bearing titles unaccompanied by explanation. In other words, readers of the *Commentary* were expected to read psalms again in other contexts, bringing to those subsequent acts of reading the lessons and practices modelled and guided by the *Commentary*. These lessons and practices include both the substance of the commentary, and also its practice of temporal performativity. Readers apprehending the psalms in other contexts could thus focus on them in ways that involved their now-practised manipulation of time, dwelling over and lengthening the experience of a text, and considering how the convergence of the psalms' many temporalities reminded readers of their place in history. Such convergences would also serve to remind readers about their place in Christian temporalities. These Christian temporalities look in the present moment always to the past in order to anticipate the future, and perceive time as both circular and linear, repeating and simultaneously always on the cusp of rupture through the expectation of linear history brought about by the Second Coming and Apocalypse.

Another mode of temporal participation emerges in the act of rereading. In his *Ordinal of alchemy*, Thomas Norton depicts his interest in reading practices when he threatens his readers with alienation from God should they change even 'oone sillable' of his text.<sup>29</sup> Instead of changing the text, he explains, they should reread it: 'Therfore trust not to oon reding or twine, / But xx. tymes it wolde be ouer-sayne' (176–7). Re-engaging a work through rereading it invests and engages readers in a process of temporal extension. This extension of duration is not meditative or affective in its practice as that afforded by temporally reading the psalms in the ways described above, but intellectual. Norton emphasizes this function of reading temporally when he explains that his work 'conteynyth ful ponderose sentence' best understood by reading 'many bokis, & then this with-alle' (178, 181). While Hull and the translator of the *Pseudo-Augustinian soliloquies* seem to have found rereading conducive to experiences of boredom and annoyance, Norton is not alone in encouraging rereading and thus

encouraging temporal participation through re-engagement with a text. Similarly, while the majority of emendation invitations are located in prologues or otherwise near the beginning of a text, some are located near the end, which provokes rereading as a strategy of corrective reading. Corrective and temporal reading intersect in the practice of rereading, further nuancing the work of readers' participation.

The temporal performance of rereading is multiple and varied; it affects and is effected by readers in many and different ways. For example, reading performs temporal convergence. By rereading, the reader moves forward in interpreting the text while looking backward to passages already encountered, recalling in the present the knowledge gained through past reading. Readers thus, through rereading, create a personalized temporal experience. Furthermore, considering rereading in terms of temporal structure points to how rereading is, in a way, a participatory temporality of productive disruption: rereading disrupts linear engagement with a text by introducing knowledge gained through previous acts of reading, and relies on that knowledge to transform the reader's present engagement with the text. Temporal participation applied to rereading thus applies a kind of palimpsest effect to reading the text, in which the recollection of previous readings layer over each other and the present text.<sup>30</sup> This palimpsestic experience of reading is not exclusive to rereading, however; it collects with it, as Norton points out, not simply a rereading of a single text from a single moment, but the application to a text of the 'many bokis' a reader has apprehended over many occasions. Commentaries of the psalms overlay subsequent readings of the psalms, and readers bring to the twentieth reading of the *Ordinal of alchemy* every insight gained over the previous nineteen readings, layered over and under and overlapping with any other reading accomplished between and since previous rereading. Such reading is simultaneously focused on memory and temporality, using memory as the vehicle through which multiple times of reading and the multiplicity of things learned converge in the present moment of reading, applied to the present text. Consequently, the temporality of rereading emerges as a productive process, deepening readers' understanding of the text, and contributing to the readers' intensive engagement with it.

Finally, temporal participation in late-medieval England – whether enacted through manipulation, orientation, or rereading – provides readers with strategies for shaping their affective and

intellectual responses to texts. Furthermore, temporal participation also invites consideration of the processes of historicizing the self through reading, in which reading provokes confrontation of multiple temporalities, such as the grand historical narrative of Christianity, but also with more private, local temporalities like those developed and experienced by individuals recalling their own histories as readers. At the same time, writers sought to shape temporal reading toward particular ends, thus contributing to the effort to educate England's growing audience of readers. Yet, even as writers sought to shape such reading experiences, and with them develop particular reading practices that built towards intensive engagement with texts, readers could nevertheless exercise their agency to counter such practices, or engage with a text by not reading it at all.

## Notes

- 1 From the *Dialogue*, in *Hoccleve's works: the minor poems*, ll. 530–1.
- 2 Aron Gurevich, 'What is time', in *Categories of medieval culture*, translated by G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 93–152, at 102.
- 3 See for example the seminal and still-influential Jacques Le Goff, *Time, work and culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Roger S. Wieck, *Time sanctified: the book of hours in medieval art and life* (New York: George Braziller, 1988); Simona Cohen, *Transformations of time and temporality in medieval and renaissance art* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).
- 4 See Raine Koskimaa, whose influential work on digital temporalities includes, 'Playing with time in digital fiction', *International journal of transmedia literacy* 1:1 (2015), 19–33; and 'Approaches to digital literature: temporal dynamics and cyborg authors', in *Reading moving letters: digital literature in research and teaching*, ed. Roberto Simanowski, Jörgen Schäfer, and Peter Gendolla (Bielefeld: Verlag, 2010), 129–44. For Genette's work on time and reading, see *Narrative discourse: an essay in method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), where Genette discusses the difficulty of measuring the "duration" of a narrative to that of a story', which is a difficult endeavour 'for the simple reason that no one can measure the duration of a narrative. What we spontaneously call such can be nothing more ... than the time needed for reading; but it is too obvious that reading time varies according to particular circumstances, and that ... nothing here allows us to determine a "normal" speed of execution' (86). However, the inability to determine a 'normal' speed of

reading did not stop late-medieval writers from seeking to manipulate it nevertheless, as will be discussed here.

- 5 Published in *Electronic literature collection*, vol. 1 (2006), ed. N. Katherine Hayles *et al.* <http://collection.eliterature.org>. For discussions of system time and reading time, see Markku Eskelinen, *Cybertext poetics: the critical landscape of new media literary theory* (New York and London: Continuum, 2012), at 135–6.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 136. Eskelinen's work has shaped discourse on temporality in new media for years, and still reflects the pervasive influence of second-wave digital media criticism, which sought to distinguish the practices of new media as a rupture from previous practices.
- 7 Gervais, 'Is there a text on this screen?'; Silvio Gaggi, *From text to hypertext: decentering the subject in fiction, film, the visual arts, and electronic media* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Landow, *Hypertext 3.0*.
- 8 See Appendix B for the full quotation.
- 9 *Middle English Dictionary*, 'abreggen', 2, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>, 2017. The phrase can be translated into modern English as, 'These books of war-craft have been briefly gathered or shortly abridged from authoritative sources'.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 34–5.
- 11 See Karen Elaine Smyth, *Imaginations of time in Lydgate and Hoccleve's verse* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).
- 12 *Ibid.*, 'Approaches to digital literature', 137.
- 13 Richard Rolle of Hampole, *English writings of Richard Rolle*. Ed. Hope Emily Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), at 36.
- 14 Carolyn Dinshaw, *How soon is now? Medieval texts, amateur readers, and the queerness of time* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
- 15 Roseanna Cross argues that the different way time flows for Thomas in the fairy world compared to the human world represent heterochronias, a feature *Thomas of Erceldoune* shares with other romances. For Cross, heterochronias represent to readers how the natural world can be regarded from multiple perspectives. This treatment of temporality in the contrasting places of the poem, although not directly bearing on reading temporally, nevertheless contributes to how the poem repeatedly marks and depicts different layers of temporality. See "Heterochronia" in *Thomas of Erceldoune, Guingamor, "The Tale of King Herla," and the story of Meriadoc*, *Neophilologus* 92:1 (2008), 163–75.
- 16 All quotations here and following come from *The romances and prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, ed. J. A. H. Murray, Early English Text Society OS 61 (London: N. Trübner, 1875), lines 1–4 and 16–17. Murray provides the text of the Thornton MS in parallel with three other versions. For a description of the contents of the Thornton



- MS, see *Robert Thornton and his books: essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton manuscripts*, ed. Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston (Woodbridge, UK: University of York Press, 2014).
- 17 Lines 25, 33ff.; I have regularized 'I' for Thornton's 'j'.
  - 18 A. C. Spearing, *Medieval autographies: the 'I' of the text* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).
  - 19 From *Medieval English political writings*, ed. James M. Dean (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 9, lines 1 and 5–6.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, lines 325–33. Modernized, these lines read: 'Thomas, hearken to what I tell you: / When a tree root is dead, / The leaves then fade and wither away; / And it bears no fruit then, neither white nor red. / Of the Balliols' blood so shall it fall: / It shall be like a rotten tree; / The Comyns and the Barclays all, / The Russells, and the Friseals [Frasers] free / They shall all fade, and wither away'.
  - 21 For a general orientation to the background of the Scottish Wars of Independence that form the primary subject matter of the queen's prophecies, see Michael Brown, *The wars of Scotland, 1214–1371* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Andy King and Michael A. Penman, eds, *England and Scotland in the fourteenth century: new perspectives* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2007); and Andy King and Claire Etty, *England and Scotland, 1286–1603* (London: Palgrave, 2016).
  - 22 *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*, xxvff.
  - 23 My use of 'rhizomatic' here follows development of the term in Deleuze and Guattari's *A thousand plateaus*, referring to a non-hierarchical assemblage. The term has also been usefully explored in medieval studies in relation to manuscript studies, as providing an alternative to the traditional stemmatic view of manuscript relations; see Michael G. Sargent, 'Organic and cybernetic metaphors for manuscript relations: stemma–cladogram–rhizome–cloud', in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran lives of Christ*, ed. Johnson and Westphal, 197–263.
  - 24 For further discussion of Robert Thornton's interest in *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*, see Lesley Ann Coote, *Prophecy and public affairs in later medieval England* (York: University of York Press, 2000), 183–6.
  - 25 Quoted in Alexandra Barratt, 'Dame Eleanor Hull: the translator at work', *Medium AEvum* 72:2 (2003), 277–96, at 284, from folio 148r of Cambridge University Library MS Kk.1.6.
  - 26 From *The seven Psalms: a commentary on the penitential Psalms translated from French into English by Dame Eleanor Hull*, ed. Alexandra Barratt. Early English Text Society 307 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
  - 27 For a discussion of the performativity of the penitential Psalms in Hull's and other versions, see Anne Sutherland, 'Performing the

penitential Psalms in the Middle Ages', in *Aspects of the performative in medieval culture*, ed. Manuele Gragnolati and Almut Suerbaum (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 15–38.

- 28 Text of the will is included in Barratt's edition of *The seven Psalms*, 203–4, at 203.
- 29 Thomas Norton, *Ordinal of alchemy*, 174. See Appendix A for the full passage in which Norton discourages corrective reading.
- 30 'Palimpsestic reading' is a concept developed by Inge Boer, who argues that analysis of palimpsestic reading helps identify stereotypes in contemporary French culture; see *Disorienting vision: rereading stereotypes in French orientalist texts and images* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), 18–19. Although anachronistic in its application to contemporary society, the palimpsest metaphor seems particularly apt as a way of describing the effects of reading temporally in late-medieval England. It is also worth noting that explicit instructions in any reading practice can reflect stereotypes about its audience, as I note in [Chapter 2](#).