

A Peopled Landscape: Bartholomew the Englishman on the Properties of Daily Life

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The Franciscan Bartholomew the Englishman's compilation of knowledge *De proprietatibus rerum* ('On the properties of things'), made before 1240, contains evocative descriptions of domestic and manorial life, indoors and out. These can appeal to the historian as ethnographic data on manorial life in Bartholomew's time and place, but marginal glosses transmitted in the earliest manuscripts show that such secular-seeming descriptions could be understood to hold lessons on the religious life – especially that of the mendicant preacher. They show that the underlying idea of fertility links Bartholomew's descriptions of the properties of a peopled and recognizable world. At the centre of this world is the lord and household, a refuge where men, women, children, servants, and animals go about their daily lives, working in the fields and vineyards by day and returning to the house at night. The glosses help the reader to connect this reality with the Gospel parable of the workers in the vineyard, and to perceive a web of connected spiritual meanings through the properties of people, animals, plants, and products found in the material world.

De proprietatibus rerum is a compendium of knowledge compiled before 1240 by Bartholomew the Englishman, a Franciscan teacher first in Paris and later in Magdeburg, eastern Saxony.¹ The work is a compilation of material drawn from the Christian scriptures and their commentators and glossators, from classical writings, earlier medieval authorities on the physical world, and near-contemporary writers and other compilers. Knowledge appropriate to clerics had been the object of systematizing efforts since the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the church and the Paris schools required scholastic texts to support the drive to educate an effective body of preachers. This need coincided with the production by scholars, including mendicants, of ordered encyclopedic texts representing, in

1 At the time of writing the only Latin printed edition available is Angelicus [sic], Bartholomaeus, *De rerum Proprietatibus* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1601), referred to hereafter as *DrP*. An edition of the earlier Latin mss is projected: see Baudouin van den Abeele, H. Meyer & B. Ribémont, 'Editer l'encyclopédie de Barthélemy l'Anglais: Vers une édition bilangue du De Proprietatibus Rerum', *Cahiers de Recherches Médiévales (13m–15m s)*, vol. 6 (1999), pp. 7–18. The manuscript of *De proprietatibus rerum* cited in this paper is Ms Lat. 67098 in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

various ways, orthodox Christian doctrine and cosmology. Juris Lidaka concludes that Bartholomew aimed to compile a useful manual for the evangelizing Saxon friars in the 1230s, not all of whom entered the order as well-educated recruits. Nevertheless *De proprietatibus* is documented as a text prescribed for students in Paris in the decades after its completion.² John Trevisa translated it from Latin into English in 1398 as *On the Properties of Things*.³ Research into the ownership of ‘Properties’ manuscripts suggests that the work’s readership soon came to extend beyond the boundaries of the Franciscan order, and into the domain of wealthy secular collectors.⁴ *De proprietatibus* can be considered, then, as one of a group of compilations of knowledge produced out of the church’s immediate need but which gained lasting prestige during the Middle Ages.⁵

A long record of responses reflects the outlook and cultural assumptions of successive readers. As a respected representative of the *compilatio* genre the work itself has had a long life, and for most of its seven hundred years readers have evidently treated it as a vehicle of both moral and practical authority derived from the ancients.⁶ ‘Properties’ was translated into several European languages besides English during the fourteenth century, and both translations and original were copied, adapted, and mined for material over the next two centuries. In the

2 Juris Lidaka, ‘Bartholomaeus Anglicus in the Thirteenth Century’, in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts. Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1996*, ed. Peter Binkley (Leiden: Brill, 1997) pp. 393–406 (p. 405).

3 The 1398 English translation is available in Michael Seymour, *On the Properties of Things*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

4 Michael Seymour, ‘Some Medieval French Readers of De Proprietatibus Rerum’, *Scriptorium*, vol. XXVII (1974), pp. 100–02; Michael Seymour, ‘Some Medieval English Owners of De Proprietatibus Rerum’, *The Bodleian Library Record*, vol. IX, no. 3 (1974), pp. 156–65; Donal Byrne, ‘Rex imago Dei: Charles V of France and the Livre des propriétés des choses’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 7 (1981), 97–113; Donal Byrne, ‘The Boucicaut Master and the Iconographical Tradition of the Livre des Propriétés des Choses’, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 92 (1978), 149–64.

5 Some near-contemporaries who all produced major compilations in the 1230–50s were Alexander Neckam, Thomas de Cantimpré, Vincent de Beauvais. See Michael Twomey, ‘Appendix: Medieval Encyclopedias’, in *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation*, ed. R. E. Kaske, Arthur Groos, and Michael Twomey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 182–215.

6 For a discussion of the work’s reception in later medieval and early modern England see Elizabeth Keen, *The Journey of a Book: Bartholomew the Englishman and the Properties of Things*, (Canberra: Australian National University Epress, 2007; http://epress.anu.edu.au/journey_citation.html).

fourteenth century, wealthy lay patrons adopted the work as a source of Solomonic wisdom appropriate to worldly rulers, and at the end of the fifteenth century it became commercially available (to a limited book-buying clientele) within the growing print culture of Europe. It was evidently seen as a valuable repository of factual knowledge compiled from ancient authorities. Thomas Berthelet, King's Printer to Henry VIII, who produced a truncated edition of *On the Properties of Things* in 1535, emphasizes in his preface to the reader its educational nature and practical utility. He adds a detailed index because: 'This werke is so profitable & the manyfold things therein conteyned soo nedefull to be knowen and had in a redynes'.⁷

Bartholomew can be very matter-of-fact, but it is no longer expected that the thirteenth-century encyclopedic text should meet the literary criteria we attach to a modern encyclopedia. There is evidence that readers close to Bartholomew in time took moral and theological meanings from it, and these now-recondite aspects of his compilation have become the subject of scholarly investigation over the last two decades.⁸ Christel Meier argues that we can understand the thirteenth-century *compilatio* genre as a mature product of centuries of Christian learning, coming to fruition out of the church's urgent need for evangelizing teachers and materials at the start of the thirteenth century; its function was to be morally as well as practically useful, as library substitute, compendium of knowledge, and

7 *Bartholomeus De Proprietatibus Rerum. Londini in Aedibus Thomae Bertheleti Regii Impressoris. Cum Privilegio a Rege indulto, 1535.*

8 Historians at the University of Münster have led this investigation: see Christel Meier, 'Grundzüge der mittelalterlichen Enzyklopädie. Zu Inhalten, Formen und Funktionen einer problematischen Gattung', in *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit. Symposium Wolfenbüttel 1981*, eds Ludger Grenzmann und Karl Stackmann (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1984), pp. 467–500; Christel Meier, 'Organisation of Knowledge and Encyclopaedic *ordo*: Functions and Purposes of a Universal Literary Genre', in Binkley, 'Encyclopaedic Texts', pp. 103–26; Bernard Ribémont, 'On the Definition of an Encyclopaedic Genre in the Middle Ages', in Binkley, 'Encyclopedic Texts', pp. 47–61; Heinz Meyer, 'Bartholomäus Anglicus, De proprietatibus rerum: Selbstverständnis und Rezeption', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 117 (1988), 237–74; Heinz Meyer, 'Zum Verhältnis von Enzyklopädie und Allegorese im Mittelalter, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien: Jahrbuch des Instituts für Frühmittelalterforschung der Universität Münster*, 24 (1990), 290–313; Heinz Meyer, 'Die Enzyklopädie des Bartholomäus Anglicus: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung und Rezeptiongeschichte von De Proprietatibus rerum', *Münstersche Mittelalter-schriften*, vol. 77 (München: Fink, 2000).

guide to salvation.⁹ This essay contrasts the work's later success among the laity as a source of authorized factual knowledge with the work's proposed early function as a spiritual and vocational guide for preachers. It asks if we need to read his work in a more nuanced way than a modern expository text requires, taking into account the circumstances of its production, the needs of its first readers and of the evangelizing church, and the metaphorical forms of discourse then deemed appropriate for salvatory texts. The topic of the household, extending beyond the walls of the house and into its service areas, allows us to compare Bartholomew's factual expositions of an everyday world familiar to his contemporaries with evidence for a moralizing and allegorical subtext relevant to readers' immediate lives and spiritual aspirations.

The sequence of the nineteen Books of *De proprietatibus* mirrors the hierarchy of the Christian universe, with God as the starting point in Book 1. Its arrangement represents levels of the cosmos as then understood: the divine (Books 1–3); the mortal (Books 4–7); the terrestrial (Books 8 and 9); the elemental and the 'ornamental' (Books 10–18). Book 19 on the senses, certain foods and drinks, colours, measures, and music forms a culmination of the work, reprising the theme of cosmic unity with which the work begins. Turning to the section on human life, Book 4 treats the composition of the human body in terms of the four elements and humours; Book 5 treats the body's component parts: head, limbs, and organs with their functions. In Book 7, the properties of diseases and poisons are linked with those of remedies. It is in Book 6 that Bartholomew treats the properties of the life of man 'in general and in particular':¹⁰

1. De etate	On life
2. De morte	On death
3. De creacione infantis	On the making of a baby
4. De infantulo	On the small child
5. De puero	On the boy
6. De puellis	On girls
7. De matre	On the mother
8. De filia	On the daughter
9. De nutrice	On the nurse

9 Meier, 'Grundzüge', p. 470.

10 *DrP*, Book 6, p. 231: *De proprietatibus Aetatum ... restat dicere de proprietatibus eiusdem in speciali et generali, secundum etatis distinctionem, et rerum naturalium ac contra naturam multiplicem diversitatem.*

10. De obstetrice	On the midwife
11. De ancilla	On the serving maid
12. De masculis	On males
13. De viro	On the man
14. De patre	On the father
15. De seruis	On servants
16. De proprietatibus serui mali	On the properties of a bad servant
17. De proprietatibus boni serui	On the properties of a good servant
18. De bono domino	On the good lord
19. De domino et dominio malo	On the bad lord and bad governance
20. De illis que custodiunt corpus humanum	On those things that sustain the body
21. De potu triplici et primo de aqua	On three kinds of drink
22. De prandio siue conuiuio	On lunch, or eating together
23. De cena	On the evening meal
24. De sompno	On sleep
25. Item, de sompno	
26. De vigilia	On wakefulness
27. De sompno dormiencium	On dreaming
28. De excercicione	On exercise
29. De quiete	On rest

The household adumbrated in the chapters of Book 6 consists of ranks of members: the *dominus* and *domina* and children, and servants of different ranks and dispositions. The ordered sequence of chapters deals with the most commonplace and universal experiences – those of the nursery, of domestic relations, of mealtimes and bedtimes, sports and pastimes, sleep and dreams. Bartholomew stresses relationships between members of the household, and the responsibilities of each. The midwife swaddles the newborn infant, the child wilfully struggles under his mother’s hand as she tries to wash him, the daughter is cherished by the father, the negligent servant is punished and the good steward rewarded. The chapters on good lordship and good service spell out the ideal relationship, while chapters on bad lordship and bad servants present the reverse. In the chapter *De viro* the man woos a bride, gives gifts in exchange for her, takes her into his house and bed, looks after and corrects her, and makes her mistress over his money and *familia*.¹¹

11 *DrP*, Book 6, cap xiii *De Viro*, p. 246.

However the work as a whole draws in the members of the household who work the *desmenes*, especially those in the vineyard, busy with labourers at various times of year. In Book 17, for example, where each chapter treats a particular plant or plant product, Bartholomew evokes an outdoor world of forest, woodland, arable land, vineyards, and gardens, where we find many workers and artisans referred to: gardeners at various tasks; weeders, thatchers and reed cutters, builders and glaziers, millers, sowers and reapers, spinners and weavers, cooks, hoopers, broom makers, and vintners. In the chapter on the vineyard we find ‘earth-tillers’ and vinedressers; the throng that comes to ‘haunt’ the vineyard at harvest time; and keepers and wardens whose job it is to keep out foxes and other animals.¹² Book 17 also contains chapters on the products of plants that can be processed, such as strong planed timbers for building ships and houses; paper and straw; a kind of pesto made of *lappa*, nourishing porridge, raisins; bread-grains, yeast, wines, ointment, olives and their oil.¹³ From the vineyard and arable land come the good red wine and barley gruel fed to the children and old people indoors. In Book 9 on time, we find the vinedresser and gardener who trim and prune the vines in the month of March and who gather grapes in a basket in September, and an old man warming his feet by the fire in February. Men and women at other seasonal activities illustrate the other months.¹⁴

The world of *De proprietatibus* is peopled with normative but recognizable figures at indoor and outdoor tasks at various times of year. As if to embrace people of all walks of life and occupations within the notion of workers, references to many other ordinary folk abound in the work as a whole. Women are present in Book 17 implicitly in the throng but also in repeated references to plant remedies for their menstrual and other ailments. We also find them quarrelling with and being reconciled to their husbands; craving green fruit when pregnant; treating their sore breasts with chestnut paste; feeding their daughters and grooming their sons, eating leeks to prevent barrenness; and using the juice of wild grapes to ‘purge’ their faces, and in Book 16, protecting their babies by putting ebony in the cradle. Beyond the bounds of the *desmenes*, we find people who supply

12 *DrP*, Book 17, cap clxxx *De Vinea*, p. 952.

13 *DrP*, Book 17, cap clxii *De Tabula*, p. 937; cap clxiii *De Trabe*, p. 938; cap clxvii *De Tigno*, p. 939; cap cxxvi *De Papyro*, p. 906; cap clvii *De Stipula*, p. 935; cap ciii *De Myrrho*, p. 880; cap xciii *De Lappate*, p. 870; cap lxx *De Frumento*, p. 842; cap clxxxiii *De Uva passa*, p. 955; cap cxi *De Olea*, p. 887; cap cxii *De Oleo*, p. 890; cap cxiii *De Oleastro*, cap cxiv *De Olere*, p. 892.

14 *DrP*, Book 9, caps viii–xix, pp. 445–51.

goods and services to the household from further afield: shipbuilders, merchants, masons, miners, and artists. Bartholomew shows in Book 16 that the properties of the earth's hard substances lend themselves to being worked and transformed by people for general benefit. The chapters on iron, clay, stone, cement, lead, salt, and sand all show how their properties involve people and their skills: glaziers, potters, builders in stone, metal workers, plumbers, and salt makers.¹⁵ In Book 17's chapter on wooden roof-beams, *tigna*, Bartholomew reminds his readers (who after all might, like Francis himself, need to throw up temporary shelters on their preaching journeys) that the beams are raised from wall to wall and joined at the highest point of a house. They hold up rafters, which are strong, square, and planed, and across which lathes are nailed. Slates, tiles, shingles, or thatch are hung on the rafters outside, and on the inside they are faced with boards. The man who fixes the rafters is called a carpenter (*tignarius*).¹⁶ Here we have an image that implies not only the builder at his workaday task but also the ordinary folk who will use such a domestic space. The cumulative result is a strong sense of a peopled and active world – a reflection, at times smoothed or distorted, of the actual world into which the friars would go as teachers, pastoral carers, and mendicants.

It is arguable, then, that Bartholomew sought to engage his mendicant students through images of the everyday world centred in the manorial household with its desmenses, outdoor workers, indoor servants, and the family itself at the centre of the institution. In Book 6, Bartholomew's vividly descriptive chapters *De prandio*, on the mid-day meal, and *De cena*, on the evening dinner, draw the reader into the heart of the household through straightforward and lively descriptions of food and drink, activity, music and laughter, expectation and repletion.¹⁷ The properties of the mid-day meal include its orderly sequence: food is prepared; fellow-diners are called; forms and stools are set in the hall; trestles, cloths, towels are organized. Guests sit down with the lord at the top of the table, and no-one sits down until the guests have washed their hands. Mothers and daughters take their place, and retainers take theirs. Spoons, knives, and salt-cellars are set on the table, then bread, drink, and various dishes. Menials and servants cheerfully

15 *DrP*, Book 16, *De proprietatibus gemmarum*, pp. 715–71.

16 *DrP*, Book 17, cap. clxvii *De tigno*, pp. 939–40.

17 *DrP*, Book 6, cap. xxii *De Prandio & convivio*, pp. 264–65; Bartholomew's description of the meal corresponds closely with C. M. Woolgar's reconstruction of later medieval mealtimes drawn from English household accounts see Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), Chapter 5, 'The Rhythms of the Household'.

keep bringing dishes and drinks and joke amongst themselves. There is music. Fruit and sweetmeats conclude the meal, then tables are cleared and moved from the centre of the room; hands are washed and dried. The lord and the guests say grace, drinks go round again. Finally everyone goes for a lie-down or back to their own homes. Bartholomew does not cite any external authorities, but he could be drawing on his own (and his students') experience of such occasions to create a normative description of lunchtime in a prosperous household.¹⁸ It can appear as an unequivocal vision of the layman's world.

Bartholomew brings us close to some individual members of the household. He discusses, for example, the properties of the nurse, who is ordained to nourish and feed the child in place of the mother. He tells readers what they might well already know: she responds to the baby, picks him up, suckles him, kisses him, keeps him happy and clean; teaches him to speak; gives him medicines, lifts him up on her shoulders, onto her knees and lap, and bounces him up and down if he's crying; she gives him chewed meat from her own mouth when he's hungry and gets him to sleep with whistling and singing; she bathes and oils him, then wraps him up to keep his limbs straight.¹⁹ The ethnographic value of such captivating glimpses of unrecorded medieval life has not gone unnoted by historians and commentators. Michael Goodich, in his edited version of selected chapters on the infant, child, girl, mother, nurse, midwife, and father, taken from Book 6, presents them as data on the history of childhood, on childbirth practices and upbringing of children, likely to appeal to a modern readership. He points out that Bartholomew draws on medical sources, Aristotle, Isidore of Seville, and the church Fathers.²⁰ However the compiler's main source in these chapters seems to be common observation, presented in a somewhat idealized light. A century earlier, Robert Steele, a colleague of William Morris, aimed to share with ordinary people of his

18 John B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Medieval Academy of America, 1977), pp. 65–69, suggests that gatherings of men and women, residents and visitors were part of life in the Franciscan house at Magdeburg in its capacity as centre for lay and military townspeople and for guests. See also Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900–1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 321–23, on the collective nature of the ideal medieval manorial community. On the manorial community in France and England at this time see Georges Duby, *Rural Economy and Society in the Medieval West*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 28–39.

19 *DrP*, Book 6, cap ix *De nutrice*, p. 242.

20 Michael Goodich, 'Bartholomeus Anglicus on Child-rearing', *History of Childhood Quarterly*, 3 (1975), 75–84.

own day such insights into ‘medieval society ... under the influence of chivalry’, in his selections of extracts from Bartholomew’s chapters on the infant, the girl, the nurse, the servant woman or man, the married man, the lord, and meal times, under the heading ‘Medieval manners’. He states of Book 6, ‘Here all is true, and written with no other aim than that of utilizing knowledge common to all’.²¹ He makes it clear too that his socialist sympathies are with the servants – and with the late-nineteenth-century readership of working people for whom he and Morris aimed to provide educational reading.

Going back a few more years, the makers of the European translations and printed editions during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries also cast a contemporary interpretation upon the work to suit patrons, expected readers, and social conditions. In the late sixteenth century, the Protestant cleric Stephen Batman added his own printed comments in the margins of the English-language edition he produced. Batman, a hard-pressed married rector with family and parish to look after in the difficult later years of Elizabeth’s reign, responds out of his own experience to passages on childhood. For example, against Bartholomew’s words on the nurse he adds: ‘If the nurse have a stinking breath, it is not good to chaw the child’s meat fasting ... Cold pap made of rye flower is also dangerous, and beere that is over bitter with hoppes’. On the child: ‘It is very expedient for young people to take heed that they mach not with those that come of a corrupt or leprous stocke’. He makes another self-reflexive comment against Bartholomew’s assertion that small children do not dream before the age of five: ‘Yet laugh they in their sleep and make prettie countenances of the liking of something’.²² Batman seems to respond to the information as a father in the literal rather than the pastoral sense.

I would argue however that the properties of household and daily life could also convey moral and allegorical teachings for Bartholomew and his contemporaries. This is consistent with the useful and moral functions of the thirteenth-century *compilatio* adduced by Christel Meier – as library substitute, compendium of knowledge, and guide to salvation – but how far can we draw conclusions about the sacred meanings manifest in household matters? We can only glimpse a fragment of the scope and composition of Bartholomew’s readership during the thirteenth to

21 Robert Steele, *Medieval Lore from Bartholomeus Anglicus*, (London: De la More Press, 1893), pp. 52–54.

22 *Batman vppon Bartholome , his booke De proprietatibus rerum, enlarged and amended by Stephen Bateman*, (London: Thomas and Lucretia East, 1582. Facsimile edn Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976), fols 72^v–74^r; fol. 83^r.

sixteenth centuries. Later medieval adaptations and comments allow us to make some inferences supported by contemporary evidence, but we have no direct guide to the responses of readers before the 1270s. As historians we can understand the properties of domestic and rural life as normative visions of social realities attested elsewhere, but to assess their deeper significance we can also draw on our knowledge of medieval allegory and allegorical method used by Christian writers. In addition, we can scrutinize marginal comments made against Bartholomew's column-text in some of the earliest extant manuscripts of his work.

Bartholomew's stated aim is consistent with conventions attending the *compiler* and with the humility of his order – to teach the meanings of the scriptures hidden under the forms and properties of things in the created world, following the teaching of St Paul: 'For the invisible things of God ... are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are seen'.²³ In this spirit it is permissible for us to read Bartholomew's accounts of work, convivial mealtimes, mutual care, and fulfilment of roles as references to scriptural parables of Christian earthly labour and heavenly reward, and to the many mansions prepared for the faithful.²⁴ The panorama of the vineyard and rural scene described most fully in Books 9 and 17 provide a logical extension of and context for the household as an allegory of the Christian congregation – a trope derived from the parable of the vineyard in the Gospel of St. Matthew.²⁵ The very house being built by the *tignarius* referred to earlier, raising the roof-beams, might recall to the historian the imagery of

23 Andrew French and Roger Cunningham, *Before Science: The Invention of the Friars' Natural Philosophy*, (London: Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 209–12, put into thirteenth-century context the fundamental importance to the Franciscans of the text of Romans 1. 20.

24 Esther 1. 5–8; The Gospel of St. John 14.2.

25 The Gospel of St. Matthew 20. Pope Gregory IX expresses this idea in the Bull *Benedicimus Deum coeli* of 1233, at which time Bartholomew was at work in Magdeburg: 'the Lord is to be praised, for in this the eleventh hour He has led the Friars Preachers and Minors into His vineyard'. Quoted in Lawrence C. Landini (OFM), *The Causes of Clericalization of the Order of Friars Minor 1209–1260 in the Light of Early Franciscan Sources*, (Chicago: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1968), p. 64. Elizabeth Freeman has discussed the trope of fertility and pastoral labour as an overarching salvatory theme in a thirteenth-century Cistercian chronicle: 'Meaning and Multi-Centeredness in (Postmodern) Medieval Historiography: the Foundation History of Fountains Abbey', *Parergon*, 16.2 (1999), 43–84. On the parable of the vineyard as medieval metaphor for life see Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 80–81. See also Stephen A. Barney, "'The Plowshare of the Tongue": the Progress of a Symbol from the Bible to Piers Plowman', *Medieval Studies*, 35.263 (1973), 261–93.

Hugh of St Victor (*d.* 1142; who, as one of Bartholomew's cited sources, may also have been known to some of his readers). Hugh had used the idea of the vineyard, grapes, vine supports, sticks and building materials as a complex analogy for the reading and learning process as gathering and building, in his treatise on reading and preaching, the *Didascalicon* (*c.* 1128).²⁶

A complementary approach makes use of marginal comments added alongside the column text in some of the earliest extant manuscripts of Bartholomew's work. The glosses are sporadic, and absent in some Books, but since they were copied over time as a consistent accompaniment to the column text we must take them into account as near-contemporary responses to some details of Bartholomew's work. As the glosses postdate Bartholomew's life by a generation we do not know their source, but it seems safe to assume that they reflect the professional interests of preachers.²⁷ The later medieval translators ignored the glosses and modern commentators have only recently turned their attention to them as evidence for the moralizing function of the 'world book' genre in general and of *De proprietatibus* in particular.²⁸ The glosses indicate that, although Bartholomew does not openly explain the divine meanings underlying the properties of mundane things – as for example Hugh of St Victor had done – clerical readers recognized references to their own lives and predicaments.

The glosses point to professional matters, and to *exempla* useful for sermons, against Bartholomew's accounts of the properties of people of all ranks, domestic animals, travellers, workers, plants and materials within a panorama of rural labour in vineyard, woods, fields and ploughland. In Book 17 on plants, Bartholomew describes the properties of the root as the part of the plant that draws in nourishment to send to the leaves; roots vary in form; they accord with the nature of the ground in which they are hidden; a root is stronger the deeper it lies; it passes its quality on to the leaves and fruit of the plant, and thence to the seed; it can be edible, medicinal, or otherwise useful. But Bartholomew also overtly likens the root of a plant to a nurse who nourishes the growing child. The glosses against this part of the column text tell us that, for a thirteenth-century reader aware of the clerical connotations, the physical properties of a plant's root could signify clerical virtues and pastoral care: faith and humility, nurture and kindness, the study of the divine Word through reading and listening, the strength of charity, the remission of sin,

26 Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 54–58.

27 Lidaka, pp. 401–03.

28 See n. 8 above.

the choice between good and bad.²⁹ The glosses help us to see how the text creates a web of connected spiritual meanings through the properties of diverse physical things: roots supply nourishment to the growing plant; mothers and nurses give nourishment and guidance to the growing child; the preacher supplies nourishment and guidance to the growing Christian soul. In Book 6, against Bartholomew's lively and evocative sketch of the small boy resisting his mother's attempts to wash and comb him, the glossator strikes a sombre and warning note: 'take note concerning those who will not be told about eternal life; those who chatter; those who will not submit to discipline'.³⁰ Against Bartholomew's lyrical description in Book 18 of the colt allowed to run freely with its mother until the time for training comes, the glossator warns: 'take note concerning subordinates and novices; the wish of subordinates to be prelates; concerning preachers; why the world should be spurned'.³¹ The glosses show us that the both the small boy and the colt have properties that can point to an underlying lesson – that there are those who have not yet learned to submit to discipline, who are spiritually immature or recalcitrant, noisy or in a hurry, and who do not want to give up worldly things.³²

Like the friars, labourers and servants carried out their tasks out of doors as well as indoors. Bartholomew tells us that the custodian of the vineyard has to deal with weeds, bad soil, snakes and toads that hide in the foliage, caterpillars, invading pigs, dogs, and foxes. The glosses tell us a parallel story of moral hazards: in the chapter on the bramble that snatches at the legs of the unwary walker: 'Take note of the worldly and proud; of the secular; of the sons and disciples of wicked men and heretics; of the works of the wicked; of greedy prelates'.³³ Humans, plants, animals, stones, birds can all point to the same truths. In Book 18, Bartholomew

29 *DrP*, Book 17, *De proprietatibus plantarum* cap cxxxvii; *De radice*, pp. 915–18. The glosses in the margin (BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol.191^v) against these statements include: *Nota de fide et humilitate*; *Nota de benignitate*; *Nota de studio et auditu verbi divinis*; *Nota de fortitudine caritatis*; *Nota de remissione peccatoris*; *Nota de societate bona et mala*.

30 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 52^r: *Nota de illis qui non auratur de eternis*; *Nota contra amatores mundi*; *Nota contra ingratos*; *Nota contra stultos consiliarios*; *Nota contra garrulos*; *Nota contra non recipientes disciplinam*.

31 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 223^r: *Nota de subditis et noviciis*; *Nota de affectu subditorum esse prelati*; *Nota de predicatoribus*; *Nota quare mundus est contempnendus*.

32 *DrP*, Book 6, cap v *De Puero*, pp. 238–40; Book 18, cap xi *De Poledro*, pp. 1058–60.

33 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol.198^r: *Nota de mundanis et superbis*; *Nota de secularibus*; *Nota de filiis et discipulis malorum et hereticorum*; *Nota de operibus malorum*; *Nota de cupidis prelati*. On brambles, nettles and other pests see *DrP*, Book 17, cap clxx *De Tribulo*, pp. 942–43; cap clxxx *De Vinea*, pp. 952–53; cap exciii *De Urtica*, pp. 965–66.

describes the properties of the ox and the oxherd, important members of the manorial workforce. Bartholomew describes the ox as a good animal but one that suffers a lot from outward and inward causes; it has to look at the ground because of the yoke but it loves its fellow, and is loved and cared for by its master.³⁴ The companion chapter on the ox-herd fills out the picture of obedient labour. Here, Bartholomew gives the reader a glimpse of the ploughman at work, yoking and driving his oxen to and fro, but coaxing them with whistling and songs and giving them refreshment at the end of the day.³⁵ There is a strong narrative and realistic feel to these chapters on the patient ox and the whistling ploughman working as a team on the land. Nevertheless the glosses confirm that clerical readers could understand the imagery of the ox to be about their own work, trials, and rewards: ‘Take note concerning the prelate’s piety and compassion; of the work of prelates and scholars; against those who disparage prelates; of the martyrs; of confessors and their office; of preachers; of preaching’.³⁶ Glosses on the ox-herd emphasize the disciplinary role of the prelate over subordinates: ‘Take note concerning the office of the prelate; of the correcting guidance of prelates; of the correction of subordinates’.³⁷

The celibate friar, like the castrated ox, was committed to lowly servitude among a non-celibate populace, in towns and within secular households. The glosses indicate that physical procreation could, ideally, be joyfully embraced as a metaphor for clerical office. For example, the glossator sees his own relationship with Christ and his own office reflected in the figure of the nurse who, according to Goodich, could hold a privileged position as surrogate mother and mistress of domestic staff: ‘Take note concerning the office of the prelate and the subordinates’.³⁸ Just as the midwife delivered a baby, so the preacher might deliver a newly converted soul: ‘Take note concerning preachers and their job;

34 *DrP*, Book 18, cap xii *De Bove*, pp. 1019–21.

35 *DrP*, Book 18, cap xiii *De Bubulco*, p. 1021.

36 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 214^v: *Nota de pietate et compassione prelati, Nota de labore prelatorum et doctorum, Nota contra illos qui detrahunt prelati, Nota de utilitate prelatorum, Nota de martyribus, Nota de confessoribus et eorum officio, Nota de predicatoribus. Nota de predicatione.*

37 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 215^r: *Nota de officio prelati, Nota de correctione prelatorum, Nota de correctione subditorum.*

38 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 52^v, *Nota de officio prelati et subordinatis*; *DrP*, Book 6, cap ix *De Nutrice*, p. 242; Michael Goodich, ‘Ancilla Dei: the Servant as Saint in the Late Middle Ages’, in *Women of the Medieval World*, ed. Julius Kirshner and Suzanne F. Wemple (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 119–36 (p. 122).

and compassion'.³⁹ In Book 18 on animals, there is a brief chapter on the foetus, against which we find the gloss: 'Take note concerning sons in the womb of the church'.⁴⁰ Perhaps we should not be surprised to find evidence for such an allegorical interpretation in the early life of the work, especially in the light of recent studies of female and male fertility as a complex metaphor for spiritual love.⁴¹ But Bartholomew seems to envisage a third gender – the celibate servant who has the strength to perform both masculine and feminine roles. In Book 13's long last chapter on the properties of fishes, Bartholomew cites Aristotle on the way some fishes reproduce by emission of sperm.⁴² The gloss alongside, 'Take note concerning the preacher', indicates that the preacher's verbal ejaculations might engender spiritual progeny.⁴³ In Book 12 on birds, Bartholomew emphasizes the rooster's masculine properties of vigour, aggressive display, and male ardour but also feminine compassion; the hen, feminine properties of submissiveness to the male, modesty, and maternal love. The glosses on the rooster include: 'Take note concerning the labour of good men and works of piety'; '... concerning womanly compassion'.⁴⁴ Glosses against the chapter on the motherly hen include: 'Take note concerning pastoral care'.⁴⁵ However, in the chapter on the castrated capon Bartholomew portrays a creature in which both masculine and feminine properties are absent or subverted; the capon is fleshy but sexless, and neither defends nor nurtures. In the end it is good only for taking to the oven and eating.⁴⁶ The glosses make explicit the allusion to ineffective, carnal prelates and hypocrites, and warn

39 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 54^r, *Nota de predicatoribus et eorum officio; Nota de compassione; DrP*, Book 6, cap x *De Obstetrice*, pp. 242–43.

40 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 226^r, *Nota de filiis in utero ecclesiae; DrP*, Book 18, cap xlix *De Foetu*, p. 1070.

41 Stephen Wessley, 'Female Imagery: a Clue to the Role of Joachim's Order of Fiore', in *Women of the Medieval World*, eds J. Kirchner and S. Wemple, pp. 161–78 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 161–78; Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

42 *DrP*, Book 13, cap xxvi *De piscibus*, p. 580, *Quidam enim generantur per ovationem, & quidam per coitum et spermatis emissionem. Unde dic. Arist. li. 5.*

43 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 127^r, *Nota de predicatore.*

44 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 117^r, *Nota de labore bonorum et operibus pietatis; Nota de compassione mulierum; DrP*, Book 12, cap xvi *De Gallo*, pp. 535–36.

45 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol. 117^v, *Nota de solitudine pastorali; DrP*, Book 12, cap xviii *De Gallina*, pp. 537–38.

46 *DrP*, Book 12, cap. xvii *De Gallo gallinaceo*, p. 537.

of their ending: ‘Take note concerning bad prelates ... useless prelates’.⁴⁷ These comments imply that to be merely neuter is to be useless. The celibate preacher must ideally have the strength and valour of the randy farmyard rooster as well as the feminine compassion of the hen. Thus the properties of the household and its members, within doors and without, held lessons for those who depended on the households of others for their physical needs, but who were encouraged to find solace in the idea of final reward within the family of God.⁴⁸

In conclusion, the responses of some of Bartholomew’s readers in the later medieval and early modern period indicate that his accounts of the properties of society, household, and well-filled domain struck chords with readers and patrons from nobility to professionals and gentry. Successive readers and re-writers saw their own lives reflected in passages on servants and service, lords and lordship, workers and materials. We have no direct guide to how far such passages reflected the physical or spiritual lives of Bartholomew’s contemporaries, but marginal comments made a generation later confirm that the properties of the household, its affairs and activities indoor and out, could be and were interpreted as morally significant and useful for preachers.

The friars and especially the Franciscans were excluded by their vows from full participation in secular domestic life. Bartholomew’s cumulative picture of the *familia* complete with marriage, money, and orderly housekeeping seems an appropriately comforting one for the Franciscan committed to a life in the secular world but without fixed abode or domestic comfort. The range of *dramatis personae* in Book 6 could have allowed readers of all social backgrounds and aspirations to identify with Bartholomew’s portrayals of roles in the lord’s *familia*, even the friar or preacher whose mandate obliged him to live in poverty and celibacy alongside laity of all ranks. Bartholomew mirrors the secular world in which mendicants will work (and in which successive later readers would reinterpret his text) but he also provides an explanation and validation of their religious vocation. The moralizing subtext had affective power and piquancy because of its relevance to readers’ own lives and needs: to work, travel and preach, but above all to live within the household of the faithful under God the father; in the embrace of the

47 BN Ms Lat. 67098, fol.117^v, *Nota contra malos prelatos; Nota contra prelatos inutiles*.

48 The Franciscan Archbishop of Canterbury John Pecham (*d.* 1292) gave a sermon denouncing non-preaching bishops in terms of useless capons, fit only to be carried head-down and cheeping to the marketplace. He probably studied at Paris from the 1250s, by which time *De proprietatibus* was already a prescribed text: G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 39.

church; and engaged in the task of rearing Christian souls. For the compiler and his contemporaries, the *familia*, extending outwards from the centre of the house into its fertile demesnes where servants of the lord labour in his fields and vineyards, could be a secular or religious economic and reproductive body. It could also be a visionary one, where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were joined by the Virgin as Christ's mother and the church as his bride, in whose womb lay souls waiting to be nurtured by priests and preachers, to expand the household of faith.

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