Langland’s Literary Syntax, Or Anima as an Alternative to Latin Grammar

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Anima’s Many Names

This essay will examine Langland’s second B-text iteration of Anima as a newly constructed and deliberately hybrid tool for abstract thought—an instance in which the combination of English and Latin surpasses either language alone. It begins, however, with what the Augustinian canon John Mirk calls “sory Laten”: Latin used by and for those who have not mastered it as a subject of academic study.1 At the low end of the continuum, sorry Latin extends to Mirk’s imagined worst-case scenario of a lay baptizer pressed into service in extremis but able to manage only the “pa of patris. fi of filij. spi of spiritus sancti” (1. 579). Stripped not just of the case endings that mark grammatical relationships, but also of their own medial consonants—not to mention the rest of the baptismal formula—pa, fi, and spi clearly derive most of their meaning from their non-Latin context. Nevertheless, Mirk holds that a midwife who pronounces this version of the baptismal formula scrapes together just enough Latin to be efficacious, as long as the syllables are pronounced in the correct order and the speaker has a genuine intent to baptize. High-end users of sorry Latin include the Lord in John Trevisa’s

Dialogus inter dominum et clericum, who can read and speak and understand Latin but asks for an English translation of Higden’s Polychronicon because he does not possess the advanced tools of “studyinge and auysement and lokyng of oþer bokes.” Like the midwife’s truncated baptismal formula but on a more sophisticated level, the Lord’s Latin relies on a vernacular context for a significant portion of its meaning. By definition, then, sorry Latin is situated within a vernacular grid that substitutes for the syntactic and intertextual connections that are integral to full-fledged clerical Latinity. In order to account for this hybrid Latin’s many forms, however, “vernacular” must be understood to encompass the wide range of “languages” that can be understood without specialized professional training, a list that includes verbal language, image, gesture, mise-en-page, and all of their combinations and permutations.

Anima, I would like to suggest, serves as a particularly clear manifestation of sorry Latin’s vernacular grid, designed for readers who fall between Mirk’s lay baptizer and Trevisa’s Lord on the continuum of latinity. My own opportunity to experiment with a comparable set of readers has been with undergraduates, though wiser heads warned against teaching Piers—and especially the Vita—at that level. In multiple iterations of my Piers course, Anima’s enigmatic appearance in passus fifteen, deep in the Vita, prompted some of the most productive class discussions. As my students were quick to point out, Anima is one of the strangest characters in the poem for a number of distinct but interlocking reasons. Most obviously, he pushes against the conventions of personification that we had painstakingly compiled earlier in the quarter. Personification allegory generally makes abstract nouns easier to grasp by assigning them human bodies, along with mothers, fathers, spouses, children, and wardrobes that situate them within a social and conceptual sphere. Anima, in contrast, visibly resists physical description. “A sotil þyng wiþ alle” and “Oon wiþouten tonge and teþ,” he is so unknown and unknowable that Will is reduced to conjuring him as though he might be a devil, “If he were cristes creature [for cristes loue] . . . to tellen” (B


3. This expanded definition is implicit in Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson’s anthology, The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), x–xi, which defines vernacular as a relative rather than an absolute quality; the anthology includes Harvey Hames, “The Language of Conversion: Ramon Llull’s Art as a Vernacular,” 43–56.
At the same time, Anima tests the limits of Langland’s vernacularity, not least because he is the only acting and speaking character in the B text with a purely Latin name. But neither is Anima’s name proper Latin, because it associates a grammatically feminine noun with a figure who is elsewhere referred to by the masculine pronouns “hym” and “he” (B 15.14–15). In Latin as well as in English, then, Anima can only make himself known through the fracture of language rather than through its normal operation: just as he brushes up against the limits of personification allegory, so he also brushes up against the limits of linguistic expression. Finally, as my students noted, Anima is the literary equivalent of a mulligan since he supersedes but does not replace Langland’s earlier, conventionally feminine personification of Anima as a lady in a tower in B 9. The very fact that the poem contains two full-fledged representations of Anima renders each one partial and provisional, opening the door for the second Anima’s replacement by Liberum Arbitrium in the C text. Thus the grammatical and rhetorical tools that should allow Will, and through him the reader, to get a grip on Anima instead emphasize his difficulty. Even a trope whose function is to provide bodies can barely make Anima tangible, and he constantly threatens to slip through the cracks of both English and Latin.

All these different currents converge in Anima’s extended act of self-naming in B 15.23–36, and this is the passage on which my undergraduates concentrated their attention. In doing so, they followed in the footsteps of late medieval scribes and readers, who often marked this passage with a red or blue paraph mark and used rubrication, variations in script, annotations, and other signs to flag it for particular attention:

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5. As A. V. C. Schmidt notes, the only such example in the C text is Anima’s replacement, Liberum Arbitrium. Schmidt distinguishes these figures from Langland’s many non-speaking and non-acting personifications with Latin names as well as from entities such as Fides/Faith/Abraham and Spes/Hope/Moses that are named in both English and Latin, attributing Anima and Liberum Arbitrium’s anomalous status to a lack of appropriate English equivalents for their names; see A. V. C. Schmidt, “Langland and Scholastic Philosophy,” Medium Aevum 38 (1969): 152.

6. Anima is not the only personification whose represented gender clashes with the grammatical gender of the underlying noun (see e.g. “Latro, luciferis Aunte,” B 5.476, and the pairing of the feminine Fides and Spes with the masculine Abraham and Moses). He is, however, the only figure who virtually forces the reader into a solecism, since he is prominent enough to warrant discussion and lacks any other nomenclature. On Latro, see Helen Cooper, “Gender and Personification in Piers Plowman,” Yearbook of Langland Studies 5 (1991): 45.
“The whiles I quykne þe cors,” quod he, “called am I anima;
And when I wilne and wolde animus ich hatte;
And for þat I kan [and] knowe called am I mens;
And when I make mone to god memoria is my name;
And when I deme domes and do as true techeþ
Thanne is Racio my riȝte name, reson on englissh;
And when I feele þat folk telleþ my firste name is sensus,
And þat is wit and wisdom, þe welle of alle craftes;
And when I chalange or chalange not, chepe or refuse,
Thanne am I Conscience ycalled, goddes clerk and his Notarie;
And when I loue leelly oure lord and alle opere
Thanne is lele loue my name, and in latyn Amor;
And when I flee fro þe flessh and forsake þe careyne
Thanne am I spirit spechelees; Spiritus þanne ich hatte.”

Italicized in Kane and Donaldson’s edition, Anima’s Latin names are specifically emphasized in B text manuscripts, where various combinations of red lettering, larger lettering, red and black underlining, and red boxes define them alternately as keywords and as Latin interlopers in Langland’s English text (figures 1–2).7 By highlighting the relationship between Anima’s many Latin names and the alliterating English lines that surround them, the sheer density of such rubrication draws attention to the complex relationship between Latin and vernacular in Langland’s characterization of Anima, demanding that the reader slow down, take heed, and seek to remember. More than five hundred years later, through the medium of A. V. C. Schmidt’s modern edition, American undergraduates are still obeying these instructions. After a substantial discussion of what it might mean for a single personification to have so many names, I gave one set of students their first-ever pop quiz—and was astonished by the result. Every single student in a class of twenty-eight could provide a working English definition of each one of Anima’s Latin names, distinguishing Anima from Animus, Mens from Memoria, and so on. And when I reversed direction, asking them to move from English to Latin, 80 percent of the class still got a perfect score, correctly translating “spirit spechelees” as Spiritus, “lele loue (loyal love)” as Amor and all the rest. These percentages are all the more striking since none of my students had any formal training in Latin, though a few reported liturgical exposure through, as one of them put it, “years and years and years in

Catholic school”—a formation analogous, perhaps, to some medieval lay-
people’s experience of attending mass.

Wholly unscientific as it is, this anecdotal evidence suggests that Anima
is offered in part as a language-learning tool. That is to say, while Will—and
through him the reader—is learning what kind of a multi-faceted thing the
soul is, he is also mastering a Latin vocabulary that enables the necessary fine
distinctions. For Anima’s act of self-naming is arranged roughly in the man-
ner of a glossary, with Latin nouns equated with short definitional phrases
in English and accompanied by English synonyms in the relatively few cases
where these are available. Even when the synonyms are present, however, the
English noun doesn’t seem to be sufficient in and of itself. It must be ren-
dered more specific, and usually elevated, in order to function as a reliable
equivalent of the Latin. Thus “loue leelly our lord and alle oþere” becomes
“lele loue” and finally Amor, while “spirit specheles” becomes Spiritus. The
English terms and definitions provide an adequate periphrastic account of
the meaning of Anima’s various aspects, but the Latin transforms them into
tools for thought—more specifically, into tools for self-knowledge, for the
analysis of one’s own soul. When it comes to the nuts and bolts of think-
ing, short names are more useful than long, compound ones, and a handle
like Amor can be manipulated—subjected to a whole range of grammatici-
al and conceptual operations—in ways that “loue leelly our lord and alle
oþere” and even “lele loue” simply cannot. Certainly this generalization
holds true for Langland’s signature device of personification, where Piers
Plowman’s son, “Suffreþi-Souereyns-to hauen-hir-wille- / Deme-hem-noȝt-
for-ifþow-doostþow-shalt-it-deere-abugge- / Lat-god-yworþe-wiþ-al-for-so-
his-word-techeþ,” cannot be anything more than a nonce coinage, and even
short phrases like Do-wel and Do-bet cause all manner of problems as they
slide between proper names, imperatives and—as Anne Middleton famously
pointed out—examples of positive, comparative, and superlative grammatici-
al forms (B 6.80-82). When I suggest that Anima is a language-learning tool, however, I do
not mean that he teaches anything that resembles real Latin. If he did, every
reader who grasped his self-naming would also be able to understand the
chunk of undigested Latin that follows and authorizes it, a passage that is

8. Anima’s glossarial nature is reflected in Schmidt’s critical response, which he presents as a
schema rather than continuous text; see Schmidt, “Langland and Scholastic Philosophy,” 151–52.

(1972): 169–88. Benson and Blanchfield note that some scribes treat Do-wel, Do-bet etc. as impera-
tives, while other treat them as proper names and rubricate them accordingly; see Benson and Blanch-
field, The Manuscripts of “Piers Plowman,” 19.
based on Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* and is plainly a different kettle of fish:

*Anima* pro diuersis actionibus diuersa nomina sortitur: dum viuicat corpus anima est; dum vult animus est; dum scit mens est; dum recolit memoria est; dum iudicat racio est; dum sentit sensus est; dum amat Amor est; dum negat vel consentit consciencia est; dum spirat spiritus est. (B.15.39a)\(^{10}\)

*Anima* selects different names for different actions. As it gives life to the body it is *anima* [the soul]; as it wills, it is *animus* [intention]; as it knows, it is *mens* [mind]; as it recollects, it is *memoria* [memory]; as it judges, it is *racio* [reason]; as it senses, it is *sensus* [sense]; as it loves, it is *Amor* [love]; as it denies or consents, it is *consciencia* [conscience]; as it breathes the breath of life, it is *spiritus* [spirit].

Instead, Anima offers a limited number of abstract nouns, all presented in the nominative case and the singular number: a technical vocabulary having to do with the soul and the practice of introspection. In contrast to the *Etymologies*, these nouns are presented in a context that frees the reader from responsibility for declension, agreement, and conjugation—precisely the categories that most sharply distinguish Latin from English and make Langland’s C.3 grammatical metaphor all but impenetrable. Anima’s nouns can thus be assimilated to English in much the same way that one would assimilate any new vocabulary item, and they produce genuinely hybrid or macaronic thinking—an in-between status reflected in the manuscript tradition when Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201 (F) presents Anima’s names as a bi-colored compromise between ordinary black text and the red of full-fledged Latin quotations (figure 2). A reader who accepts Anima’s invitation to self-interrogation will thus do so with Latin nouns and English verbs and prepositions, achieving much of the sophistication and precision of Latin even if he does not know Latin grammar, even if—to borrow a category of economic privilege invoked by both Langland’s Will and Trevisa’s Lord—he did not have family or friends to fund his education.\(^{11}\)

Implicitly, then, Anima imports a certain number of abstract Latin nouns in order to remedy a deficiency in English, which does not have the right nouns, with the right shades of meaning, to represent adequately the human

\(^{10}\) As Mary Carruthers notes in “Allegory without the Teeth: Some Reflections on Figural Language in *Piers Plowman*,” *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 19 (2005): 34n, Amor and Conscience have been added to the seven qualities outlined in *Etymologies* 11.1.13. All translations are my own.

\(^{11}\) *Piers Plowman*, C 5.36; *Dialogus*, lines 67–68.
soul. The evidence for this phenomenon lies not only in the careful qualification of phrases like “lele loue” but in the one English term that stands alone in Anima’s speech, without a Latin equivalent. *Conscience* ultimately derives from Latin, probably via French, and is a close cognate of the Latin *conscientia*. By Langland’s time it was already well established in English,
Figure 2. Anima’s speech of self-naming. Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201 (F), fol. 61r
Anima’s decision to use conscience rather than conscientia, then, is an important indicator, because it suggests that his respect for Latin is largely pragmatic: he breaks into Latin when no appropriate English word is available but does not seem to value Latin per se. Where many grammarians and educational theorists considered Latin to be intrinsically superior because of its sacred history or claims of privileged rationality, Anima is mainly interested in what Latin can do. Anima’s position in B is all the more marked because it contrasts with the C text, where either Langland himself or a scribal tradition substitutes “Conscientia” for “Conscience” (C.16.192). Implicitly, the fact that most of Anima’s names were Latin created an expectation that they should all be Latin; by resisting that expectation, Anima presents himself as deliberately hybrid.

If Anima has no intrinsic preference for Latin words, then, why does he seek out translations for words like love and spirit, whose meanings are very close to their Latin equivalents? Once again Anima’s use of conscience offers a clue, since it implicitly supersedes Langland’s use of the venerable Anglo-Saxon term inwit, personified as the protector of the damsel Anima earlier in the poem. Although the Middle English Dictionary entries for conscience and inwit are practically indistinguishable—and Ancrene Wisse explicitly uses one to define the other—their generic associations in Piers Plowman could not be more different. Sire Inwit is a secular figure and a relatively straightforward personification. A knight and a constable, he defends the feminine Anima, enclosed in her castle of flesh, against the assaults of a proud adventurer, Princeps huius mundi or “Prince of this world.” The tools at Inwit’s disposal, figured as his sons and associates, are not aspects of the soul like memoria and spiritus but concrete senses put to good use in the world: “Sire Se-wel, and Sey-wel, and here-wel þe hende, / Sire werch-wel-wiþ-þyn-hand . . . / And sire Godefray Go-wel” (B 9.20–22). Thus, although Inwit is arguably assigned a Latinate task, in the sense that he must preserve one Latin concept from contamination by another, his means of doing so are resolutely vernacular. Indeed the entire scene, with Anima as the beloved of an absent

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12. MED s.v. conscience (n), sense 2a.
13. W. W. Skeat’s edition gives Conscience in B but Conscientia in C; see W. W. Skeat, ed., The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman in Three Parallel Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1886), B 15.32, C 17.192. The Athlone editions give Conscience in both instances, listing conscientia as a variant in eight C manuscripts. The scribe of F reorders the components of Anima’s name and gives memoria as the English memorye (figure 2). If nothing else, Anima is clearly a site of slippage between languages.
14. MED s.v. inwit (n), sense 4.
Kynde, besieged by a “proud prikere of Fraunce” and defended by one Do-
well, “duc of þise Marches,” draws heavily on the conventions of romance, a
genre whose very name is tightly linked to the vernacular (B 9.8, 11).

In this context, the poem’s implicit progress from inwit to conscience
seems to depend less on the terms themselves than on the company they keep. Anima’s use of conscience, though not Latin, is markedly Latinate. It
derives from and in turn supports a conception of the soul that emerges from
the thoroughly Latin realms of etymology and faculty psychology and from
the scholastic tradition of distinctio. Conscience is held in place, its mean-
ing fixed, by the Latin terms that surround it, even as it performs the same
service for them. Inwit, in contrast, is ultimately inadequate to the descrip-
tion and defense of the soul because the largely French and English genre of
romance is itself inadequate. A standard image that also appears in Grosse-
teste’s Chateau d’Amour and the Middle English Cursor Mundi and Castle of
Perseverance, the conceit of the soul besieged in her castle of flesh provides a
more or less instructive representation of the soul’s origins and place in the
world, but it does not offer vernacular readers new tools for carrying out
that defense. If Anima is saved it will be, as at the end of the Castle of Per-
severance, because of God’s surpassing mercy—not because of the individual
efforts of Sire Inwit, Sire Se-Wel, or the vernacular reader. Thus even before
Langland’s first representation of Anima fails, in the sense that it leaves room
for and even invites a second representation of the same concept, it already
sets itself up as engaged in a losing battle. It is a convention of romance that
impregnable castles are never actually impregnable, and the conventions of
romance themselves have already proved incapable of teaching Langland’s
readers what they really need to know.

Piers Plowman’s second Anima supersedes the first in another way, one
that specifically privileges its Latin-English hybridity over either of those
languages alone. The highly compressed romance at the beginning of B 9
depends on the femininity of Anima. That is, it depends on a correlation

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15. The French term romanç can be used at various levels of specificity to signify French, Romance
language, or any vernacular language, usually in implicit or explicit contrast to Latin, while in English
romance more specifically signifies French. Both British and French romance writers, including the
Gawain-poet, Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes, privileged the Welsh March as a setting for
their tales. See Frédéric Godefroy, Dictionnaire de l’ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du
IXe au XVe siècle (Paris, 1880–1902), s.v. romans (n), sense 1; Alan Hindley, Frederick Langley, and
romanç; MED s.v. romance (n), sense 3.

16. On the traditional imagery of the soul in a castle, see Roberta Cornelius, The Figurative Castle:
A Study in the Medieval Allegory of the Edifice with Special Reference to Religious Writings (Bryn Mawr,
PA, 1930).
between the grammatical gender of the Latin word *anima* and the represented gender of the corresponding personification. Anima is female here just as Philosophia is female for Boethius and Natura is female for Alan of Lille. Like these authors, Langland relies on Anima’s femininity to activate a host of gender-inflected plot lines and stereotypes that he can put to work immediately, sketching the entire story of the lady in the tower in just a few sentences. As a woman, Anima is equipped to enter into a hierarchical, heterosexual union with God but must depend on her loyal retainers to protect her from knights errant. In contrast, Langland’s second version of Anima is resolutely formless, and presumably lacks not only tongue and teeth but sex characteristics as well. After this carefully neutral introduction, Anima is assigned a gendered personal pronoun—an assignment that, according to Morton Bloomfield’s definition of personification allegory, is necessary to prevent him from sinking back into the mass of ordinary common nouns. Like the name Anima itself, however, this gender seems to be a label that Will assigns for his own convenience in order to humanize the creature he encounters and thus make him understandable. Anima does not identify his own gender, instead using first person pronouns and the modest and universal term “creature,” nor does he—in contrast to the passage from the *Etymologies*—privilege any one of his many names over the others. Some of these names, moreover, are masculine and some feminine according to the rules of Latin grammar. Langland’s second Anima thus does not become masculine in the way that the first Anima was feminine, nor does his gender immediately suggest a plotline or dictate a sequence of behavior. Instead, Anima’s

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17. Beginning with Joseph Addison in the eighteenth century, critics have often claimed that the grammatical gender of a noun determines the gender of the corresponding personification, with the fact that most abstract nouns are feminine in Latin and the romance languages accounting for the preponderance of female personifications. More recently James Paxson and Barbara Newman have argued convincingly (though from very different perspectives) that the feminine gender of most personifications is in fact overdetermined. Newman notes specifically that a feminine embodiment of the soul has little grammatical justification: the masculine noun *animus*, with its emphasis on higher intellectual and spiritual functions, is if anything more semantically appropriate than *anima*. See James Paxson, “Gender Personified, Personification Gendered, and the Body Figuralized in *Piers Plowman,“ *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 12 (1998): 65–96; and Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), esp. 35–38.

18. Paxson suggests, however, that Anima’s mouth without tongue or teeth is a euphemism for the human vagina; see Paxson, “Gender Personified,” 85.


20. Many critics note in passing that Anima changes gender between B 9 and B 15, including Joan Baker and Susan Signe Morrison, who consider the later Anima as strongly masculine, in contrast to the earlier lady in the tower; see Joan Baker and Susan Signe Morrison, “The Luxury of Gender: *Piers Plowman* B 9 and the Merchant’s Tale,” in *William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*: A Book of Essays*,
deliberately indeterminate gender seems to serve as proof that he constructs himself according to English rules of grammatical gender (which allow such behavior, if only barely) rather than according to Latin ones (which prohibit it completely). He can exist beyond or between genders—and thus provide a more powerful, and nuanced, vision of the soul—precisely because he is governed by a Latin vocabulary but an English grammar.

All of this has been by way of arguing that Anima's extended act of self-naming in B 15 is a true Latin-English hybrid, drawing on the strengths of both languages to illustrate a concept that is possible within the confines of neither. English does not have an appropriate vocabulary, so Latin supplies that, along with traditions of faculty psychology and scholastic distinctio. But English syntax, with its limited requirements for the agreement of case, gender, and number, allows Langland to depict a personified soul that, by its own account, participates in neither bodily sex nor grammatical gender, thus marking its distance from everyday modes of thinking and being. The personification of Anima holds this difficult concept together, and in fact serves its own grammatical function. That is to say, Anima's speech of self-naming makes sense only because the character Anima is saying it. In the quotation from Isidore of Seville, there is no gender ambiguity because the entire passage refers back to a single definition, like a dictionary entry. In Langland's hybrid passage, in contrast, Anima's gender ambiguity can persist because the referent is not described but speaks, using the gender-neutral first person pronoun. At the same time, the task of simultaneously adding eight new Latin terms to an English vocabulary is feasible only because all the terms refer back to a single, already-imagined entity. Instead of memorizing Anima's names as a list, my students remembered them because they describe aspects of a personification they had already spent some time trying to get their minds around. Although Langland's description of Anima is negative in the sense that it mostly describes what Anima is not, it is strange and striking enough to lend itself to memory work. More prosaically but more fundamentally, the personification of Anima provides a structure around which the different aspects of the soul can be organized, and without which they would not easily cohere. Linked to each other and to


21. On the importance of striking images in memory work, by now well established, see, e.g., Mary Carruthers, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
Anima, the aspects of the soul signify more richly than they would if presented as a simple list.

Indeed, for Langland the B 15 Anima seems to serve as a new kind of grammatical unit or unit of thought. Anima’s cultivated ambiguity represents not only a carefully adumbrated vision of the human soul, but also a self-conscious revision of the earlier Anima as a lady in a tower. Here, the poem seems to promise, we have a new and better way of thinking about the soul’s workings, its capacity for judgment, and its relationship to God. By resisting positive description, moreover, the B 15 Anima reveals the Dreamer’s most basic efforts at linguistic classification to be arbitrary and inadequate. As we have seen, Will uses a single name and masculine pronouns to gesture toward a personification who insists on many names and uses “I” and “creature.” In assigning a masculine pronoun to an entity he calls Anima, Will also commits a solecism that must have grated on Langland’s most Latinate readers, including his coterie readers in London and Westminster. Like the annotations and rubrication that flag Anima’s self-naming in the manuscripts, this dissonance alerts such readers to pay careful attention to the relationship between Latin and English and the strengths and limitations of each. Having established that Anima exceeds both languages, Langland then uses them to create a new language whose basic unit is the personification—a language that, by its very difference from both Latin and English, allows Langland’s readers to understand, and work to improve, something as ineffable as their own souls. Anima thus calls on both high-end and low-end readers to exercise ever more acutely the skills they have been developing over the course of reading *Piers Plowman*. Having watched Liar dissolve back into the local population of friars and pardoners at the end of passus two, readers become accustomed to thinking of personifications as conceptual tools rather than imaginary beings, and so it becomes possible to think of them as grammatical units as well.

**Anima’s Many Shapes**

In emphasizing Anima’s status as a personification allegory—albeit one that tests the limits of the form by testing the limits of human and grammatical gender—I have been in some respects deliberately obtuse. In 2005, Mary Carruthers asserted that Anima is nothing of the kind. Instead, Anima is an instance of another sub-type of allegory, *pictura* or *depinctio*, whose function is “to summarize major subject matters, to organize these for study, and to find one’s way through their complications.” As Carruthers sees it, “Ani-
ma’s role is to introduce and dispose in summary fashion the matters upon which human knowledge rests, namely the powers of the soul.” Anima thus responds to Will’s stated desire to know Do-wel with a narrative map that outlines the cognitive terrain he must traverse in order to find the answer to his question. From this angle, Anima’s closest cognate in *Piers Plowman* appears to be the allegorical itinerary to Truth that Piers provides to the pilgrims, which Carruthers likens, in turn, to the common practice of using pilgrimage routes to organize sermons and other texts so that each topic is formally “located” at a stop along the way. From here it is a small step to the visual rather than narrative *picturae* of a work like the *Speculum theologiae*, which consists of a series of three-dimensional grids connecting, for instance, the ten commandments with the ten plagues of Egypt and the ten offences against Mosaic law (figure 4). According to Carruthers’s reading, Anima thus remains a cognitive tool but of a quite different kind than previously supposed. It belongs not with Langland’s other personifications but with a series of inanimate maps and diagrams made up of imagistic language, captioned images, and every conceivable combination of the two.\(^{22}\)

Although Carruthers’s careful distinctions offer a valuable corrective to current, often muddled discussions of medieval allegory, I think that in the case of Anima she overstates her position. By the time we reach passus fifteen of *Piers Plowman*, Will’s habit of encountering personified interlocutors—specifically, interlocutors who more and more closely resemble his better self—is too ingrained to be discarded without more narrative upheaval.\(^ {23}\) Instead, I propose that Anima is at once a *pictura* and a personification, in much the same way that the destroyed Ebstorf *mappamundi*—with the head, hands, and feet of Christ marking its four compass positions—is at once a representation of the deity and a map of the world (figure 3). (As if to confirm this double nature, the place where Christ’s navel should be on the Ebstorf map corresponds to the position of Jerusalem as the *umbilicus mundi*. ) On a less exalted plane, we can recognize that Langland’s Anima is a cognitive map without ceasing to see him as a personification. Indeed, it is a measure of the reader’s progress through the first fourteen passus of the poem that Anima can be both kinds of allegory either sequentially or simul-

\(^{22}\) Carruthers, “Allegory without the Teeth,” 34.

\(^{23}\) Lavinia Griffiths argues that Langland’s personifications are influenced by the nature of the “prevalent codes” that surround them. That is, “one personification tends to give rise to more personifications. They appear in branching complexes, and by a sort of metonymy confer a status similar to their own on those around them.” While she speaks here of local groupings, such as Meed’s wedding party, the same logic applies on a larger scale to *Piers Plowman* as a whole. See Lavinia Griffiths, *Personification in “Piers Plowman”* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 15–16.
taneously. Like a viewer manipulating the hinged belly of a *vierge ouvrante*, the reader can move back and forth between views as best suits his or her reading trajectory and Langland’s didactic purposes. Such manipulation in fact classifies Anima as a sub-type of *pictura* consisting of moving rather than static images, a category that includes Hugh of St. Victor’s *Archa Noe* and the image of the confessional cherub often attributed to Alan of Lille. Carruthers considers both of these moving images to be machines for inven-
tion, *ars inveniendi*, rather than mere schemas, and the same holds true for Anima.²⁴

What, then, does the personified Anima look like when we open him up—just as one literally opens a *Madonna lactans* to reveal the Trinity, or imaginatively opens Christ on the cross to reveal the Ebstorf map of the world? Following up on one of Carruthers’s suggestions, we may compare Anima to the *Speculum theologiae*, a collection of diagrams or cognitive maps compiled by the Franciscan John of Metz in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. A kind of visual anthology, the *Speculum theologiae* incorporates well-known diagrams such as the Tree of Virtues and Tree of Vices, the Bonaventuran Tree of Life, and the confessional cherub (probably produced by the Augustinian Clement of Lanthony rather than Alan of Lille), placing them alongside at least one moral diagram of John of Metz’s own devising and often a smattering of scientific images.²⁵ The *Speculum theologiae*’s originality lies not in its raw ingredients but in its work of re-contextualization, in extracting diagrams from the treatises they originally accompanied and arranging them as a catechetical or meditational series.²⁶ Thus abstracted, the diagrams enjoyed considerable popularity. Lucy Freeman Sandler lists thirty-eight manuscript copies from France, Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, and all parts of England (I note one more in the British Library).²⁷ An accurate census is hard to achieve because the *Speculum theologiae* carries various titles and author attributions—or more frequently none at all—and was sometimes added as prefatory material to existing Bibles, Psalters, and the like.²⁸ That was the case with Robert de Lisle’s Psalter, which he gave to his

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²⁶. Of course, medieval diagrams that accompany texts do not necessarily illustrate them in a straightforward way. On such diagrams as independent works, despite superficial appearances to the contrary, see Evans, “Geometry of Mind”; and Evans, “An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus’s ‘Summa’ of Vice: Harleian MS. 3244,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982): 14–68. On the treatise *De sex alis* as a brief aide-memoire, subordinate to the diagram of the cherub, see Carruthers, “Moving Images,” 296.


²⁸. More generally, Evans notes that diagrams are “more widespread in medieval manuscripts than is usually realized, but difficult to locate through catalogue entries, since their neglect by art historians
daughters Audere and Alborou in 1339, and after their deaths to the priory at Chicksands where they most likely lived as nuns. It was also the case with a much less beautiful and considerably more typical fifteenth-century example prefixed to a thirteenth-century Bible, along with Peter of Poitier’s diagrammatic Arbor historiae and various reading aides, including a concordance to the Gospels and list of lections according to Sarum use. These two manuscripts contain overlapping but not identical sets of diagrams that encompass the basic elements of the archiepiscopal syllabi drawn up after the Fourth Lateran Council: the twelve articles of the faith, the ten commandments, the seven virtues and seven deadly sins, the seven sacraments, the Lord’s Prayer, and so on. Both also include diagrams of a more naturalistic or scientific nature that cohabit with the explicitly religious material much as the “realistic” local detail of the Ebstorf map cohabitates with its sacred content. While the De Lisle Psalter diagrams are, among other things, exquisite works of art (figure 4), I will focus on the Bible manuscript, London, British Library Royal 1.B.X, in part because its palette, restricted to black and red, captures some of the visual and structural similarity between these diagrams and the visual representations of Anima in manuscripts of Piers Plowman.

As measured by the sheer frequency with which it appears, the core of the Speculum theologiae is the syllabic material, and this material shares not only Anima’s status as pictura but also, and more specifically, his role as a hybrid of Latin and vernacular. This assertion might seem unlikely, since except for what seems to be a one-off translation of one of the diagrams into early-fifteenth-century German, the text of the Speculum theologiae is entirely Latin. A closer look at the Royal 1.B.X Paternoster diagram should make this claim seem more reasonable, however (figure 5). The table is made up of four main columns which are labeled “7 Petitiones (seven petitions [of the Paternoster]),” “7 dona spiritus sancti (seven gifts of the Holy Spirit),” “7 Virtutes (seven virtues)” and “7 vicia et infirmitates (seven vices and infirmities)” —this last a list of the deadly sins coupled with the diseased states they were thought to provoke, with greed causing leprosy, sloth causing paralysis, and so on. This material is fairly basic Latin, though not quite as basic as in Anima’s self-naming: the vices and virtues, gifts and maladies are mostly single words, though some knowledge of grammar would be needed to puzzle out the rest. Even this requirement, however, is not as onerous as it might seem since so many of the elements in the diagram would have been familiar, indeed explicitly memorized—if not as a part of childhood religious

is generally matched by that of librarians, who omit them from codicological descriptions” (“Geometry of Mind,” 35).

29. I follow Sandler’s date (Psalter of Robert de Lisle, 109) rather than that of the Royal catalogue.
30. For a discussion of this manuscript, see Evans, “Geometry of Mind,” 39–49.
Figure 5. *Speculum theologiae*. Table of the Seven Petitions of the Paternoster. London, British Library, MS Royal 1.B.x, fol. 4r. By permission of the British Library.
education, then as a task imposed by a confessor. As a result, one does not read so much as recognize. Even for someone possessing only sorry Latin, the point of a diagram like this is not so much what it says as what it connects. It takes the dutifully memorized catechetical lists and literally gives them another dimension by connecting them to other, parallel lists in a three-dimensional grid.

The scribe’s seemingly inverted use of rubrication in this diagram tends to confirm my hypothesis about its intended function. For aside from the traditional red of the column titles, only the phrases that connect the columns are written in red ink. In a narrative, this would be equivalent to rubricating all the nonlexical connecting words and leaving the nouns and verbs and adjectives in black. The diagram-maker’s practice is all the more initially puzzling because the connectors in each column say the same thing. The first row reads: “‘Sanctificetur nomen tuum’: huic petitioni datur spiritus Sapiencie que ducit ad Castitatem que est contra Luxuriam/Fluens sanguinem (‘Hallowed be thy name’: [in response] to this petition is given the spirit of Wisdom, which leads to Chastity, which is against Lechery/Emitting blood).” In the second row the text changes to “‘Adueniat regnum tuum’: huic petitioni datur spiritus Intelligencie que ducit ad Abstinenciam que est contra Gulam/Leprosus (‘Thy kingdom come’: [in response] to this petition is given the spirit of Understanding, which leads to Abstinence, which is against Greed/Leper).” So the diagram continues, with the same syntactical elements linking each set of petitions, gifts, virtues, and vices. If these rubricated connecting phrases do not serve a differentiating function, what do they do? Most obviously, they encourage the viewer to read across the lists as well as within them, in much the same way that the placement of the rubricated column titles encourages the viewer to read from bottom to top as well as from top to bottom. Beyond that, however, I believe that the red lettering, together with the elaborate scrolls on which it is inscribed, serves a syntactical function. The grammar of the sentences read from left to right is overdetermined, since it is presented once in the usual way through conjugations and prepositions and case endings and then again, more conspicuously, through the visual language of rubrication and scroll work. In keeping with the Derridean understanding of supplementation, moreover, this visual grammar both supports the traditional grammatical links and threatens to supplant them, in the process making a reasonably complex set of associations between petitions, gifts, virtues, and vices available to an audience located somewhere on the continuum of sorry Latin. To put this another way, the diagram vernacularizes its own Latin text. Like Anima’s act of self-naming, it translates what would otherwise be an indigestible chunk of Latin
into a collection of known or knowable Latin substantives set within an easy-to-understand, non-Latinate framework. That, I think, is the point of these strongly emphasized connectors, and by extension of the diagram as a whole. It allows viewers to move beyond the rote memorization of lists required of all lay people to attain a complexity and depth of understanding usually associated with Latinity—and if in the process it teaches some viewers a bit more Latin, so much the better.

That, at least, seems to have been the intention. In practice, the language of the diagram in MS Royal 1.B.X is itself sorry Latin.\(^\text{31}\) Since the syntax of the diagram is so over-determined, none of its irregularities are actually confusing, but they easily could be in another context. In the examples cited above, the phrase “huic petitioni” is in the dative case where one would expect an ablative and the sins and infirmities are an inconsistent mishmash of nouns and adjectives, nominatives and accusatives. The latter problem probably arises because the maladies were not part of the original conception of the diagram, but rather were an addition inspired by Grosseteste’s *Templum dei*, which includes a diagram with the same collocation of vices and maladies, each joined to its analogue by straight lines.\(^\text{32}\) As a result, the *Speculum theologiae*’s sins are accusative, part of the original horizontal “sentence,” while the maladies are nominative because that is how they appear in the source text. The maladies are visually integral to the diagram, combining with the sins to balance out the Paternoster petitions on the other side of the page, but grammatically they make no sense, suggesting that the diagram’s visual language trumps its Latin. Attempts to correct this disjunction seem only to have made it worse, so that where the *Templum dei* reads “Fluens sanguine” and, later, “Ydropicus,” Royal 1.B.X reads “fluens sanguinem” and “Idropicum,” presumably by attraction to the accusative endings of the sins—thus rendering the list of maladies as a whole even more irregular. Collectively, these inconsistencies suggest that the Royal 1.B.X diagram upholds Mirk’s contention that the endings of Latin words cannot carry religious significance, if only because few people are capable of getting them right. In addition, the rubricated connecting phrase at the center of each line, “que

\(^{31}\) I am grateful to Richard Kieckhefer for his help in thinking about these irregularities.

\(^{32}\) Robert Grosseteste, *Templum dei*, ed. Joseph Goering and F. A. C. Mantello (Toronto: Centre for Medieval Studies, 1984), 5.6. Grosseteste’s much less visually elaborate diagram contains, in addition to the sins and maladies, the entity offended by each sin (God, one’s neighbor, or one’s self), the astrological sign that governs it, the sin’s executor (Demons, World, or Flesh) and the wound or symptom associated with each sinful malady. It lacks the gifts and the virtues of the *Summa theologiae* diagram, which are associated with the petitions of the Pater Noster in Grosseteste’s next diagram, 6.5. It is quite possible that the relationship between the *Templum dei* and the *Speculum theologiae* diagram is one of shared parentage or indirect rather than direct influence.
ductit ad,” should modify a feminine noun, and in the examples given above it does. But in the third and seventh rows “que ducit ad” modifies the neuter consilium and the masculine timor. Implicitly, the Speculum theologiae lies beyond grammatical gender in much the same way as Langland’s Anima. The diagram’s Latin text is crucial, but it is subsumed within and transformed by the diagram’s visual structures to produce a Latinate space that becomes the new and primary unit of analysis.

A glance at the disposition of Speculum theologiae manuscripts seems to corroborate the work’s status as a hybrid of Latin and vernacular. To be sure, many copies of the Speculum theologiae are preserved in traditionally Latinate contexts, rubbing shoulders with academic, medical, historical, and devotional texts. This last category is by far the largest, and many such Speculum theologiae manuscripts can be traced to monastic libraries. In addition, various of the Speculum theologiae’s constituent diagrams survive as wall paintings in exclusively clerical spaces, including a confessional cherub in the chapter house of Westminster Abbey. An important number of copies of the Speculum theologiae, however, address audiences somewhere on the continuum of sorry Latin. Judging from its context, the Royal 1.B.X diagram I have been focusing on seems intended as an aid for preaching, part of a program for updating a thirteenth-century Bible and making it

33. I used Sandler’s handlist of Speculum theologiae manuscripts and, wherever possible, the catalogues and other sources she lists to compile lists of contents and indications of provenance for each manuscript. I am grateful to my research assistant, Jenny Lee, for her invaluable contribution to this undertaking.

34. Chambéry, Bibl. Municipale, MS 27 contains the Speculum theologiae, six treatises by Aristotle, one each by Boethius and Porphyry, and a short love poem. Florence, Bibl. Mediceo-Laurenziana, MS Plut. 30.24 is a computistic miscellany; London, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, MS 49 contains medical and anatomical drawings; London, Gray’s Inn, MS 9 contains works on the history of England. For Speculum theologiae manuscripts containing devotional material and associated with monastic houses, see Aarau, Kantonsbibl., MS Wett., fol. 9; Darmstadt, Hessische Landesbibl., MS 535; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibl. MSS Clm. 8201, 11465, 16104a; New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, MS 416; Paris, Bibl. Mazarine, MS 924; and Paris, Bibl. Nationale, MS lat. 14289. Other manuscripts that preserve the Speculum theologiae in a clerical and Latinate context but without clear institutional provenance include Cambridge, Jesus College, MS 24 (Q.B.7); Rome, Bibl. Casanatenese, MS 1404; and Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibl., MS St. Peter perg. 82.

35. Miriam Gill discusses the Westminster Cherub in “The Role of Images in Monastic Education: The Evidence from Wall Painting in Late Medieval England,” in Medieval Monastic Education, ed. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 117–35, arguing that “such art was not a substitute for a book, but reproduced the form and content of an illuminated manuscript on a monumental scale for simultaneous communal study. The bookish quality of this art not only characterizes and justifies its display in a monastic context, but also functions as an extension of monastic lectio” (125). While this may generally be true, such reading was not limited to monks. Bolzoni, Web of Images, 119, mentions in addition Trees of Life in the chapter house of the Church of San Francesco in Pistoia and the refectory of the monastery of Santa Croce in Florence.
more usable. It thus remained in clerical hands but served a mixed clerical and lay audience. This pattern is typical of an important subset of *Speculum theologiae* manuscripts, many of them bilingual or trilingual: Cambridge University Library MS Gg.IV.32 is a priest’s personal miscellany containing syllabus prayers in English, French, and Latin and Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal MS 937 is a preaching anthology with texts in French and Latin. London, British Library MS Arundel 507, seemingly compiled by the monk Richard of Segbrok, associates the *Speculum theologiae* with Latin theological tracts but also with John Gaytryge’s English translation of the syllabus of basic religious knowledge compiled by John Thoresby, Archbishop of York, in 1357. Yet other copies of the *Speculum theologiae* survive in contexts that suggest they were used as visual aids for preaching, classroom instruction, or both, along the lines of the confessional cherub diagram St. Bernardino of Siena apparently used to illustrate a sermon in 1423. This may have been the purpose, for instance, of Cambridge, University Library MS 111.56, a roll containing the Peter of Poitier’s *Arbor historiae* on the recto and *Speculum theologiae* images on the verso, or of the similar but more extensive Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal MS 1234. London, British Library MS Additional 17,358 is a *vademecum* small enough to fit into the palm of the hand, containing the *Speculum* and the *Arbor* alongside calendar and almanac material. With its pages opened out six-fold for instruction or private study, it becomes quite literally a portable sacred space, space that a preacher or reader can take with him wherever he goes. On a more monumental scale, John of Metz’s Tower of Wisdom is painted in the church portico of Averara in Italy, where it was accessible to the public and presumably served as a preaching aid. Collectively these pastoral tools invite lay viewers to join the clergy in a Latinate conceptual domain. Indeed, the fact that the *Speculum theologiae* was at times a purely monastic and clerical text seems to constitute

36. Other preachers’ miscellanies containing the *Speculum theologiae* include Paris, Bibl. Nationale, MS lat. 3445, and possibly MSS lat. 3464 and 3473 as well.

37. Bolzoni, *Web of Images*, 132–33. Bolzoni carefully distinguishes between sermons that use the seraph as a rhetorical figure and those that seem to require the display of an actual image, placing Bernardino’s 1423 sermons in the latter category.

38. Oxford, St. John’s College, MS 58, an easily portable pamphlet of eleven folios containing the *Arbor historiae* and the *Speculum theologiae*, seems to have served a similar purpose.

39. Bolzoni also mentions a Tree of Life in the nave of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo but notes, “What is so striking about the Tower of Knowledge in Averara . . . is the fact that a schema as intellectually challenging and complex as this could have been addressed to a wide public, very few of whom would have been capable of deciphering the Latin inscriptions. It may be inferred that many analogous examples in other towns have been lost, or remain hidden under frescoes executed in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries” (*Web of Images*, 119). The destruction of such images would have been even more likely in England than in Italy.
part of its appeal, since it guarantees that the diagrams move beyond the syllabus required of lay people into a higher realm of knowledge.

Beyond these preaching texts, a number of *Speculum theologiae* manuscripts address themselves directly to readers who, because of their gender or lay status, would most likely have commanded only sorry Latin. As mentioned above, the most famous copy of the *Speculum theologiae* belonged to an aristocratic layman, Robert de Lisle, and was later intended for his two daughters who were nuns.\(^\text{40}\) Assuming that de Lisle’s instructions were carried out, this copy would ultimately have functioned as a kind of “nun’s Latin,” bridging the gap between religious vocation and supposed feminine weakness.\(^\text{41}\) As such, it perhaps occupied the same domain as the Vernon manuscript, which contains a Paternoster diagram similar to the one in the *Speculum theologiae* as well as an A text of *Piers Plowman*.\(^\text{42}\) Another small but significant subset of the audience of the *Speculum theologiae* would have spoken sorry Latin only temporarily, as a step toward full grammatical mastery. One of the preacher’s volumes already mentioned, the fourteenth-century Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal MS 937, includes a grammatical tract written in both French and Latin and thus presumably designed for boys who were not yet fully Latinized.\(^\text{43}\) Finally, a pair of manuscripts introduce vernacular elements into the *Speculum theologiae* itself. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS français 9220 adds to the usual contents of the *Speculum* text.

\(^\text{40}\) Sandler, *Psalter of Robert de Lisle*, 12–13. Other aristocratic copies of the *Speculum theologiae* include the Howard Psalter and Hours of the Passion, now bound with the De Lisle Psalter in London, British Library, MS Arundel 83 and containing the arms of John Fitton of Wiggenhall (d. 1326) and an obit for Theodore of Malinton, Baron of Wemme (d. 1405). In Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 1037, the *Speculum theologiae* is paired with instructions for using an adresceoir, an instrument for measuring time, and inscribed to a “tres haute dame,” presumably an aristocratic laywoman, while Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 1100, a fifteenth-century miscellany including the *Speculum theologiae* and material on the abbots of Cluny, is inscribed to Dame Alfons Mansoys; the binding is stamped with the arms of the convent of the Minimes de la Place Royale.


\(^\text{43}\) David Thomson’s *A Descriptive Catalogue of Middle English Grammatical Texts* (New York: Garland, 1979) finds that only elementary grammar books were written in the vernacular, and that at least one author produced beginners’ work in English and a more advanced grammar school treatise in Latin (43). There is a more circumstantial case for thinking that Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 156 may have been a school text. Containing the *Speculum theologiae* and a Bible dictionary, it belonged to the library of the Hospital of St. John Baptist in Exeter, which included an important regional grammar school.
theologiae diagrams with explanatory verses in French and Latin, while Jenkintown, PA, Alverthorpe Gallery, Rosenwald Collection MS 3 includes two copies of the Tower of Wisdom, one German and the other Latin. The Tower is one of the most text-heavy of the Speculum theologiae diagrams, and this may be why a translation was considered helpful. If so, it suggests a reader who felt comfortable with short, familiar snippets of text but not with longer, unpredictable ones. More broadly, all of these manuscripts suggest an audience that sought to rise toward perfection but had not satisfied the traditional clerical prerequisites. With its multiplication of trees, paths, grids, and ladders, the Speculum theologiae thus becomes, both literally and metaphorically, a scaffold for making the ascent as well as a locus for meditative dwelling. It serves as a new kind of common language—a lingua franca if not a vernacular—that defines a community of devout laypeople, religious women, and traditionally Latinate clerics.

Both Anima’s act of self-naming and the Speculum theologiae diagrams thus participate in Nicholas Watson’s category of “vernacular theology”—but with a twist.44 For while neither text nor diagram is fully Latin, neither is fully vernacular either. Although the Speculum theologiae is arguably the more elementary of the two, it presents the fundamentals of the faith in a way quite distinct from, say, the aggressive vernacularity of the Wycliffite Pierce the Plowman’s Creed, which culminates in and authorizes a stand-alone English version of the Creed. In contrast, the Speculum theologiae diagrams demand that their viewers project themselves into a markedly Latinate and sacred space. Just as, according to Paul Gehl, a grammar student “translate[s] himself, or at least his active intelligence . . . into the original language of the great inherited texts,” so a viewer of the Speculum theologiae translates himself—projects himself—into the diagrams.45 The caveat is that the space of the diagrams, like the space created by Langland’s Anima, is Latinate without being rigorously Latin. Both kinds of pictura work to separate the language itself, with all its grammatical complexity, from the religious complexity, or religious seriousness, it traditionally denotes. Each pictura—and, by extension, the works that contain them—purports to be a kind of portable cloister available to lay people as well as clerics, to part-time as well as full-time religious. Almost incidentally, they assert that the category of “part-time religious” is a perfectly acceptable and coherent one.


I do not claim that Langland’s Anima is reducible to a diagram like the one in MS Royal 1.B.X, or even to a diagram like those in the De Lisle Psalter—though the Psalter, like Piers Plowman, has an inescapable, even virtuoso, aesthetic dimension. I do claim, however, that the function of vernacular literature in late-fourteenth-century England—here encapsulated in Langland’s aesthetically and conceptually complex allegory of Anima, the human soul—overlaps that of a work like the Speculum theologiae. Both Anima and the Speculum theologiae are tools for advancing upon the basic spiritual knowledge required of laypeople without requiring a concomitant advancement in formal education or curricular knowledge. Instead, they seek to define their own languages at the intersection of Latin and vernacular, languages that quite literally open up a new dimension, another axis along which to think and progress. Even though Langland’s literary language is clearly distinct from the Speculum theologiae’s visual language, the logic governing them is additive rather than zero-sum. Collectively, the new languages seek to create a self-consciously “higher” meditative or imaginative realm open to all serious-minded Christians. At once Latinate and vernacular, religious and secular, serious and recreative (that is, capable of being done in one’s spare time rather than as a vocation), this new cultural space is very much the space of “public poetry” as Anne Middleton so magisterially defined it.⁴⁶