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THE SOUTH ENGLISH LEGENDARY AS ROSE WINDOW[1]

GREGORY M. SADLEK

"No one will claim that the *SEL* is a work of art," wrote Charlotte D'Evelyn in the introduction to her edition of that work, and I suppose that some people who have taken the time to trudge through both volumes of this substantial legendary would hold this "truth" to be self-evident (3:26). And yet, upon reflection, others may be tempted to ask, "Is this an adequate judgment?" After all, if by refusing the *SEL* status as "art" D'Evelyn meant to imply that it was not created to be enjoyed primarily for its aesthetic value, she would be applying an idea of art conceived in the eighteenth century to a work written around the end of the thirteenth century.[2] If, however, she is thinking of the medieval conception of art, then she is correct only to the extent that medieval theorists would probably have considered the *SEL* a *product* of art rather than art itself, for, in the words of Edgar de Bruyne:

> Toutes les définitions médiévales de l'art se ramènent au même type: l'art est un savoir faire. . . . la poésie [par exemple] est l'art par lequel le poète *sait* ce qu'il doit faire quand il veut réaliser un beau poème.

> [All medieval definitions of art are related to the following idea: art is know-how. . . . poetry (for example) is the art by which the poet *knows* that which he ought to do when he wants to fashion a beautiful poem.] (Bruyne 3:371)

Thus, a literary critic may agree with D'Evelyn's statement on technical grounds but still be interested in exploring the artistic merits of the legendary; that is, instead of asking, "Is the *SEL* art?" it may be more fruitful to ask, "Is the *SEL* well made?"

Surely the first problem that arises when a critic tries to specify the level of art in the *SEL* as a whole is the question of its unity. But with regard to the *SEL*, the question of unity itself becomes complex and ramified. First, in the absence of a definitive text one must decide which of the manuscripts of the *SEL* is to be used as the basis of discussion, for the number, the kinds,

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and the order of the narratives in some sixty-three manuscripts vary considerably.[3] Second, given a text to work from, is the *SEL* a single work, or is it merely a collection of smaller works? If a single work, how unified is the *SEL*? The answer to these questions will depend on the next: what kind of unity ought the critic be looking for in a legendary?[4] Here one is concerned not only with the definition of the genre, but also with the history of literary theory. It would certainly be anachronistic, for example, to look for organic unity in a medieval literary work. The answers to these latter questions must be based on an understanding of both the *SEL*'s macrostructure and the significance of that macrostructure. Here, it will be helpful to use a model in exploring these difficult questions.

With regard to the text of the *SEL*, the key study is Manfred Görlach's *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary* (1974), in which he constructs a schema showing the affiliations of major *SEL* manuscripts. Since 1974 there has been further research by Görlach, by O.S. Pickering on the *temporale* material, and by Thomas Liszka, who tested the manuscript affiliations suggested by Görlach. In the light of their work, I understand the early history of the *SEL* to be roughly as follows.[5]

The earliest state of the *SEL*, "Z," was written sometime during the 1260s in the area of Worcester. It probably already had its calendrical arrangement, or, if "Z" was never completed, at least a calendrical arrange-

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[3]With regard to the exact number of *SEL* manuscripts extant, Thomas Liszka in his "*The South English Legendary*: A Critical Edition of the Prologue and the Lives of Saints Fabian, Sebastian, Gregory the Great, Mark, Quiriac, Paul, and James the Great," Diss. Northern Illinois University 1980, p. 1, notes that he knows of sixty-two, but a sixty-third manuscript, sold by Sotheby in 1980 to Professor T. Takamiya of Japan, has recently resurfaced. This manuscript, MS Takamiya (Z), is described and evaluated in detail by Manfred Görlach and O.S. Pickering in "A Newly Discovered Manuscript of the *South English Legendary*," *Anglia* 100 (1982): 109–23.

[4]In this essay I am more interested in the *SEL*'s structure than in its content, but Klaus Jankofsky has argued for the unity of the legendary on thematic grounds. See his "Entertainment, Edification, and Popular Education in the *South English Legendary*," *JPC* 11 (1977): 708.

That the term "legendary" did not enter the English language until the Renaissance does not preclude the possibility that rules for such a genre existed well before. See Paul Strohm's "*Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende*: Some Generic Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative," *ChauR* 10 (1975): 62–75, 154–171, for a philological analysis of the basic Latin and Middle English terminology involved in medieval hagiography. The *SEL* is called *legenda* in at least two of its later manuscripts: MS Laud Misc. 463, f. 156r, and MS Lambeth Palace 223, f. 296r (in the colophon).

Laurel Anne Nichols Braswell in "*The South English Legendary Collection*: A Study of the Middle English Religious Literature of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," Diss. University of Toronto 1965, writes that the genre of the *SEL* is "hagiography," which "is more concerned with content than form" (p. 295). Her discussion here centers on the individual narratives, however, rather than on the macrostructure of the legendary. The same focus can be seen in the treatments of the hagiographical genre in both Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater (New York: Fordham U P, 1962), 49–55, and Gordon Hall Gerould, *Saints' Legends* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), 1–16. The history of the form of the medieval saint's legend has also been treated in detail by Theodor Wolpers in *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1964).

[5]Manfred Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s., no. 6 (Leeds: The U of Leeds, 1974). The schema, p. 304, is not, however, to be taken as a stemma: see p. 303. Liszka's dissertation, an edition of eight *SEL* narratives, was designed in such a way as to test various manuscript affiliations suggested in Görlach's work, especially those of the "J" family of manuscripts. O.S. Pickering's work includes "The *Temporale* Narratives of the *South English Legendary*," *Anglia* 91 (1973): 425–55; "Three *South English Legendary* Nativity Poems," *LeedsSE* 8 (1975): 105–19; and "The Expository *Temporale* Poems of the *South English Legendary*," *LeedsSE* 10 (1978): 1–17; as well as an edition of *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, Middle English Texts, 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1975).

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ment was clearly intended. *Temporale* texts, narratives having to do with biblical history or with movable church feasts, were not added to the collection until later, but these, with the exception of "Circumcision" and "Epiphany," were probably kept outside of the *sanctorale* in "Z2." A major revision of the *SEL*, "A," was undertaken sometime in the 1270s in the area of Gloucester. This revision was effected under the influence of Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, which had been recently introduced into England from the continent. The "A" redactor revised and expanded some of the "Z" legends, but he also added legends that were longer and further removed from their liturgical sources than those in "Z." Finally, it was in the "A" redaction that a good part of the *temporale* material was first placed within the calendrically ordered *sanctorale*. Thus the D'Evelyn-Mill edition, which is based on four manuscripts from the "A" family, presents "Septuagesima," "Lent," and "Easter" after "Annunciation," and "Rogationtide" after "St. Mark." A third major state of the *SEL*, "L," was formed when another redactor apparently conflated a "Z" manuscript with one from the "A" family.[6]

There were further revisions of the *SEL* during the two hundred years of its manuscript tradition. There was "U," for example, which Görlach describes in his book *An East Midland Revision of the South English Legendary*. However, the earliest states of the *SEL* are found in the "Z," "A," or "L" traditions. Liszka has pointed out that, if Görlach's conclusions prove to be true, we may never be able to reconstruct "Z," but must be content with either "A" or "L." When Horstmann chose Bodleian Library MS Laud 108 as the basis of his *SEL* edition—because it is the earliest extant *SEL* manuscript—he was producing the *SEL* in what Görlach would later call the "L" version. Noting the strange order of the narratives in that manuscript, Horstmann argued that Laud 108 preserved the legendary in an early, unfinished state. We now believe, however, that a calendrical order was intended for the collection from the beginning and that this order had somehow lapsed into disarray in Laud 108. Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna Mill, basing their edition on British Library MS Harley 2277, Corpus Christi, Cambridge, MS 145, Bodleian MS Ashmole 43, and British Library MS Cotton Julius D.IX, produced the *SEL* in the "A" version. Neither of these two editions is definitive, but together they give a good idea of the maximum variance in the *SEL* text. According to Görlach, they "represent the extreme textual positions, especially with regard to the early history of the *SEL*."[7]

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[6]For a good summary of textual scholarship on the *SEL* see Liszka, 1–5. Pickering, "Expository," 1–2, also summarizes Görlach's reconstruction of the early history of the *SEL*. For a fuller treatment, of course, see Görlach, ch. 2. Pickering offers a very helpful table on "The Positioning of the Expository *Temporale* Poems in the Different Manuscript Traditions" on page 14 of "Expository."

[7]See Görlach, Introd., *An East Midland Revision of the South English Legendary*, Middle English Texts, 4 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1976), 8–50. Liszka, 53. Carl Horstmann, Introd., *The Early South English Legendary*, E.E.T.S., 87 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1887), x–xi. For the opinion that Laud 108 is not the *SEL* in "an unfinished state," see Minnie Wells, "*The South English Legendary* in its Relation to the *Legenda Aurea*," PMLA 51 (1936): 340–42. Görlach, *Textual*, 5.

Liszka writes that, if he were editing the definitive *SEL*, he would choose to attempt a reconstruction of "A" (54). Scholars agree that "A" represents an earlier stage in the history of the legendary than "L" and may have been recognized as the standard *SEL* text in its day. But this is not all: in the "A" redaction the *SEL* first achieved some basic level of stability; from this point on the legendary was, in Görlach's words, "normally left unaffected by further large-scale revision." He goes on to explain:

> What variation there is in the extant manuscripts is due either to the survival of early pre-"A" versions and their fusion with the revised texts, or to somewhat inconsistent efforts to replace dialect forms, improve the rhymes ("P"), regularize the metre ("E"), or cut down on the repetitions ("M")—just enough variation to distinguish the different strands of the textual tradition, but nothing compared to what one finds in romances, or even individual legends from the east of England (Görlach, *East Midland* 9).

For these reasons, then, when speaking of the *SEL*, I will be referring to the early "A" redaction as available in the D'Evelyn-Mill edition. It was calendrically ordered, included *temporale* material, was relatively stable, and seems to have been regarded as the standard version.

Now, is this "A" state of the *SEL* a unity in its own right, or is it merely an aggregation of smaller literary works? The word "collection" is often used by critics when discussing the legendary, but does this imply that the *SEL* lacks wholeness altogether? For Beverly Boyd, apparently, it does. In her article "A New Approach to the *South English Legendary*," she writes:

> In summary, the ecclesiastical writings now called the *South English Legendary*, extant in many manuscripts which differ in contents, arrangement, style, and dialect, are better described as a corpus of versified Middle English writings for the ecclesiastical year than as a single work (498).

Görlach, however, would not go so far: he insists that, despite the great variety found in the *SEL*'s manuscripts, the legendary "must be considered as a whole" (Görlach, *Textual* 1). Indeed, the *OED* defines "collection" as "a number of objects collected or gathered together, viewed as a whole" (def. 3).

But what exactly is a "whole"? Addressing this problem, Jean Piaget, in his book entitled *Structuralism*, writes that wholeness implies that complete structures have properties that are distinct from the properties of the sum of their constituent elements. Aggregates, on the other hand, are composites "formed of elements that are independent of the complexes into which they enter (7). Piaget's formulation, which I take to be representative of twentieth-century opinion, does not quite fit, however, the medieval view of the matter, for medieval art allowed the elements of the "whole" to have a certain independence, even while the properties of the whole remained greater than the properties of the sum of its parts. Thus complete medieval art works can be seen as existing somewhere between Piaget's aggregates and his whole units.

Indeed, as A.C. Spearing in *Criticism and Medieval Poetry* noted,

medieval literary theorists wrote very little explicitly about the unity or the lack of it found in their works, even though, as we shall see, the concept of organization in literary compilations came to be quite important in the thirteenth century (55). Furthermore, Robert Jordan in his *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation* observes that "Gothic art is a panoramic survey. . . . Characteristically, the total form is determined by the accumulation of individually complete elements." Therefore he speaks of the "multiple unity" of Gothic works of art as opposed to the "unified unity" of modern art (130–31).

"Multiple unity" was possible, moreover, since medieval theorists did not believe that *the* unique, correct form must grow out of the content of the work, as is implied in the Romantic concept of organic form. Organic form, in the words of the early German Romantic August von Schlegel "is innate; it unfolds itself from within, and acquires its determination contemporaneously with the perfect development of the germ" (340). The medieval poet worked more mechanically, being more an architect than a gardener. In his *Poetria Nova*, for example, Geoffrey of Vinsauf compares the building of a poem to the construction of a house. He writes:

> If a man has a house to build, his impetuous hand does not rush into action. The measuring line of his mind first lays out the work, and he mentally outlines the successive steps in a definite order. The mind's hand shapes the entire house before the body's hand builds it. . . . Poetic art may see in this analogy the law to be given to poets. . . . To ensure greater success for the work . . . construct the whole fabric within the mind's citadel . . . [and only] when due order has arranged the material in the hidden chamber of the mind, let poetic art come forward to clothe the matter with words (16–17).

Thus medieval poets did practice an inorganic art; that is, "an art concerned with the management and disposition of the fixed elements constituting a [harmonious], preconceived whole" (Jordan 42).

Now there were two reasons why the constituent parts of a medieval poem kept a certain measure of independence. First, as has been so often pointed out, the fundamental principle for the shaping of form tended to be juxtaposition. Thus constituent parts were not so much "fused" as merely ordered. Second, medieval poetry was mainly oral in nature; up to the time of the printing press, books were usually written to be read aloud to an audience. Thus, since there is a limit to the amount of time that any audience can sit and pay attention, medieval poets were obliged to write their longer poems in discrete installments. Each of the constituent parts of a long poem had to have a certain integrity apart from the whole (Jordan 130, Spearing 25).[8]

And so it is that, for both theoretical and practical reasons, medieval works in general, and poems in particular, do not meet both requirements of

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[8]See also H.J. Chaytor, "Reading and Writing," in *From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1945), 5–21, on the oral nature of medieval writings.

Piaget's theory. A medieval work like the *Canterbury Tales is* greater than the sum of its parts, even though each of the individual tales retains a certain independence from the whole. This is due, in part, to the significance of the macrostructure of the *CT*. Ralph Baldwin, for example, discusses the meaning of the *CT* in terms of its linear progression: "thilke parfit glorious pilgrimage/That highte Jerusalem celestial (Chaucer 228, ll. 51–52). So too, if the *SEL* has properties beyond those of the mere sum of its legends, they might be rooted in the significance of its macrostructure. But to treat this question now would be to look too far ahead; for the moment we must return to the question of whether such a macrostructure actually exists. We are now in a position to affirm, however, that the discreteness of the *SEL's* hagiographical narratives does not in itself disprove the basic wholeness of the legendary.

Legendaries, states H. Leclercq, were either mere compilations of existing legends or products of both compilation and a thorough redaction of earlier materials (8: 2459–60). In either case, thirteenth-century hagiographers probably felt themselves to be performing a unique literary activity. A.J. Minnis has recently argued that the thirteenth century was the age of the newly self-conscious *compilator*. It is not that the genre was discovered in this century, but never before was there such a widespread practice and highly developed theory of *compilatio*. As Saint Bonaventure wrote:

> Quadruplex est modus faciendi librum. Aliquis enim scribit aliena, nihil addendo vel mutando: et iste mere dicitur scriptor. Aliquis scribit aliena, addendo, sed non de suo; et iste compilator dicitur. Aliquis scribit et aliena et sua, sed aliena tamquam principalia, et sua tamquam annexa ad evidentiam; et iste dicitur commentator, non auctor. Aliquis scribit et sua et aliena, sed sua tamquam principalia, aliena annexa ad confirmationem; et talis debet dici auctor.

> [Fourfold is the manner of making a book. For one writes materials belonging to others, neither adding nor changing anything: and such a one is said to be merely a *scriptor*. Another writes materials belonging to others, adding, but not anything of his own; and such a one is said to be a *compilator*. Another writes materials both others' and his own, but (he writes) as if the materials of others were central (to the work) and his own added by way of explanation; and such a one is called a *commentator*, not an *auctor*. Another writes both his own materials and that of others, but (he writes) as if his own were central and the materials of others were added by way of confirmation; and such a one ought to be called an *auctor*.]

Thus, according to Bonaventure, the *compilator* was to be given a certain ranking in the hierarchy of literary agents above the scribe but below the *commentator* and the *auctor*. Minnis, however, comments that Bonaventure's formulation did not exactly fit thirteenth-century practice, for

> As we have seen, Vincent of Beauvais and his successors were perfectly willing to add material *de suo* provided that such personal statements were carefully distinguished from the statements of the *auctores* who were their

sources. Moreover, a compiler would regard the virtuosity of his *ordinatio* as a major part of his achievement, and this aspect of compilation is beyond Bonaventure's terms of reference in the above passage.

Minnis makes it clear that the thirteenth-century *compilator* felt himself responsible less for the content of the material than for the order that he imposed on his materials. He quotes, for example, Vincent of Beauvais, who in the prologue to the *Speculum maius* writes:

> Hoc ipsum opus utique meum simpliciter non sit, sed illorum potius ex quorum dictis fere totum illud contextui. Nam ex meo pauca, vel quasi nulla addidi. Ipsorum igitur est auctoritate, nostrum autem sola partium ordinatione.

> [This work, simply speaking, is certainly not my own, but rather (it is) theirs from whose sayings I have woven almost the entire (piece). For there is little or almost nothing of my own added. Therefore, with regard to authority it is theirs, only with regard to the ordering of the parts, however, is it ours.]

Never in the twelfth century, writes Minnis, was there such a concern for the organization of a literary work (385–421).[9]

The importance of *ordinatio*, therefore, shown by Minnis to be central to the concerns of the thirteenth-century *compilator*, suggests that the thirteenth-century *compilationes* were conceived as whole units by their makers. Minnis goes so far as to call *compilatio* a literary genre of the later Middle Ages. Now, although it is clear that he is here referring to compilations of philosophical and theological materials such as the *Speculum maius* of Vincent of Beauvais, there is no apparent reason why scholars could not assume the same spirit to be working in the creation of thirteenth-century legendaries like the *Legenda Aurea* or the *SEL*. Indeed, the "A" redactor of the *SEL* not only selected, edited, translated, and versified his material, but fixed its order as well: a blend of *temporale* and *sanctorale* texts that followed the church calendar, beginning, however, at New Year's Day rather than on the first Sunday of Advent.

In the long history of legendaries, which began perhaps even before that found in the *Codex Velseri*, assigned to the seventh century, hagiographers ordered their creations in several different ways, the most popular of which was that of the calendar, the method used in the *SEL*.[10] The guidelines for this inorganic structure are found in the "A" prologue, lines 63 to 70:

> Hoso wilneth moche to here talen of swyche thynge
> Hardy batailes he mai here here that nys no lesyng
> Of apostolis and martires that hardy kny3tes were

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[9]See also Malcolm B. Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* in the Development of the Book," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to R.W. Hunt*, ed. J.J.G. Alexander and M. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1976), 115–141. The quotation from Bonaventure is taken from the Proem to his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* in *Opera theologica selecta S. Bonaventurae*, ed. Leonard Bello (Quaracchi: College of St. Bonaventure, 1934), I, 12. Minnis, 416. The quotation from Vincent of Beauvais is taken from Minnis, 387.

[10]Leclercq, cols. 2456–57. On the ordering of legendaries see also René Aigrain, 238.

That studefast were in bataile and fleckede nowt for fere
That soffrede luther men all quik 3are lymes to tere
Telle Ich welle by rewe ech on as 3are dawes falleth in the 3ere
Verst bygynne atte 3eres Day for that is the ferste feste
Fram on to other so arawe the wile the 3er wol leste.[11]

It is clear from this passage that the basic structural pattern of the *SEL* is circular, that it involves a juxtaposition of the lives of God's "hardy kny3tes" — in a row — according to the position of their feasts in the church calendar, beginning on New Year's Day. No matter how varied the manuscripts in the "A" family happen to be, at least theoretically this structuring principle remains common to all of them. Thus critics who insist that the *SEL* is not a single work must downplay the implications of these lines.

To imagine how the legendary's circular structure functions, one might picture the *SEL*, and other legendaries like it, as spoked bicycle wheels without any outside rim. The individual lives, like the spokes, are held together in their pattern from the center, even though there is no connection between the individual legends along the circumference. This is to say that the coherence of the legendary is assured by the *typological connection* of each of the saints to a mental image of Christ at "the center of the wheel." Thus it is possible for legendaries to be wholes even though they lack narrative frames like those employed by Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* or by Gower in *Confessio Amantis*.

Critics often call the associative level of meaning in a literary work its vertical structure, whereas they call the temporal or causal thread of events its horizontal structure. Claude Lévi-Straus, for example, in his 1958 article entitled "The Structural Study of Myth," uses these two levels in his discussion of the Oedipus myth (428–44), and Jordan uses these same two levels in his treatment of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (61–110).[12] These terms work well if the most basic structure of a work is the linear narrative, as in the epic or the romance; however, they seem inappropriate if the most basic structure of a work is circular. Thus the "typological connection" in the *SEL* is better called its *centripetal* structure. (The term comes from physical science, where centripetal forces are those which pull a rotating object toward the center.) On the other hand, the *SEL*'s narrative, the temporal thread of events found in each individual legend, is more correctly called the *circumferential structure*.

A model for the *SEL* that is perhaps more apt than the bicycle wheel is the rose window, or *rota* (wheel) in medieval Latin terminology. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries stained-glass windows came into prominence in religious architecture, replacing the wall frescoes of the Romanesque period. They were used not only to decorate and illumine the inside of

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[11]"Banna Sanctorum," in D'Evelyn-Mill, I, 3.
[12]Richard Leahy in "The Divine Plan for Salvation in the Medieval Saints' Legends," which concerns the *SEL* almost exclusively, speaks of the "double view" of all events in the *SEL*. This, I take it, is something akin to positing a horizontal/vertical structure in the legendary.

the cathedrals, but also—as was the *SEL*—to instruct the faithful (Johnson 3). As Abbot Suger wrote: "The images in the church windows are put there for no other purpose than to show simple folk ignorant of the Scriptures what they ought to believe" (Aubert 7).

John Leyerle in his article "The Rose-Wheel Design and Dante's *Paradiso*" discusses the significance of the rose window in itself and with relation to its use in Dante's poem, where *la rosa sempiterna* (XXX, 124) was Dante's image for the heavenly choir of saints (280–308). Though Leyerle explains how Dante probably used the rose window of San Zeno in Verona as a model for the poem's image of Paradise, he does not claim that Dante used the rose window as a structuring device for the poem itself. I, however, would like to argue that, although the *SEL*-poet—or the "A" redactor—never mentions the *rota,* the unity of his work can best be appreciated by seeing the rose window as a likely structural model.

Seen from the outside, says Leyerle, the rose window is very clearly the image of a wheel, with spokes, hub, and rim. Seen from the inside of the cathedral, however, the rose window looks more like a *rosa* than a *rota* because from this vantage point no "rim" can be seen; the eye sees only disconnected "petals" from which one's attention is inevitably pulled to the center.

Now, it seems to me that the rose window is a very good example of the "multiple unity" that Robert Jordan found in medieval art. Each of the individual medallions, for example, seen in the great rose window high on the west facade of the Cathedral of Chartres, "The Last Judgment," obviously has an independent beauty and coherence and can be considered a complete work of art (Figures I–III).[13] Yet one glance at the entire window suggests that "The Last Judgment" does have an aesthetic unity of its own (Figure IV). It is circular, of course, patterned after the perfection of the Divine Plan. Seen from the inside of the cathedral, however, the individual medallions are not connected along the circumference. From this perspective its unity follows from the fact that the eye is pulled centripetally from any point in the rose toward the image of Christ in the center (Figure V). A similar argument can be made for the rose window in the south transept of the Cathedral of Chartres, "The Glorification of Jesus Christ" (Figure VI). Analogously, then, the *SEL* can be seen as a circular collection of saints' lives whose center is an image of Christ, toward which the mind is constantly, centripetally pulled by means of typological gestures in the various independent narratives. This model is not inconsistent, for example, with Gregory of Tours's idea of the legendary, for in the prologue to his *Vitam Patrum* he argues that the title of his collection should be written in the singular instead of the plural: "although there is a diversity of merits and virtues [among the

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[13]A description of "The Last Judgment" can be found in Yves Delaporte, I, 519–21. A description of "The Glorification of Jesus Christ" is found in Delaporte, I, 434–36. Reproductions of the rose windows here are taken from Delaporte and used with permission.

Figure I
"Michael Judging the Actions of the Good and the Bad," medallion, center ring of "The Last Judgment."

Figure II
"The Damned Being Pushed toward Hell," medallion, center ring of "The Last Judgment."

Figure III
"Angel Carrying Christ's Lance, Crown, and Three Nails," medallion, outer ring of "The Last Judgment."

Figure IV
"The Last Judgment,"
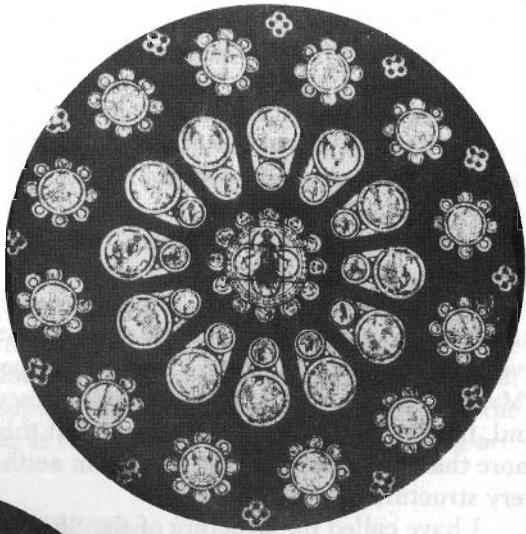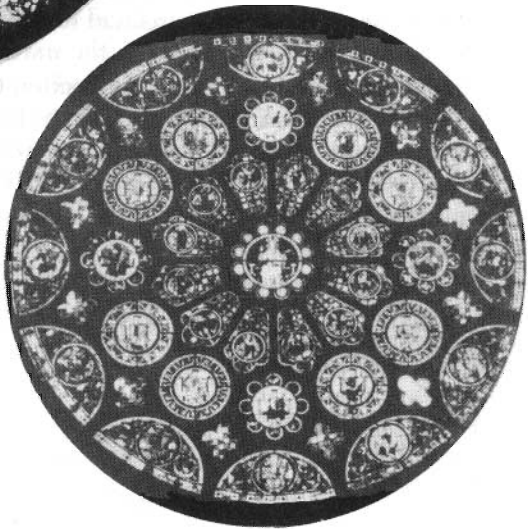west facade,
Chartres Cathedral.

Figure V
"Christ as Judge," center
medallion, "The Last
Judgment," west facade,
Chartres Cathedral.

Figure VI
"The Glorification of Jesus
Christ," south transept,
Chartres Cathedral.

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Church Fathers], nevertheless, one life of the body [Christ's] nourishes all [other lives] in the world" (III, 134).[14]

Thus, each life in the *SEL* contains a number of significant gestures performed by one of the saints: rejecting the pleasures of the world or false faiths, accepting penance or martyrdom, or both, and passing on the gospel. Each of these gestures supposedly happened in the course of time—and the narratives of each individual life give us a feeling of time passing—but the full significance of each gesture can only be appreciated by seeing it fulfilled in the life of Christ.

The medieval audience, listening to the animated friar preaching on successive days, superimposed the various gestures one on another and thus, over the course of the year, composed a personal image of Christ in his "Mystical Body"; that is, Christ as he is present in the totality of his church, and, indeed, in the totality of history. But this imaginative construction was more than just a religious act; it was an aesthetic act as well, implied in the very structure of the *SEL*.

I have called the structure of the *SEL* inorganic throughout this essay, but I do not mean to imply that there is no connection whatsoever between its form and its content. Indeed, the *SEL*'s form is very well suited to its content. If narrative always implies a movement in time, what could be more suitable for a literary work dealing with the saints, beings having both a historical and an eternal existence, than a structure that combines movement and stasis, narrative and juxtaposition?[15] Thus, the individual legends with their narrative movement present the saint in history, while the larger circular structure of the legendary, with its legends juxtaposed, timelessly, side-by-side, elegantly presents these same saints as they now exist, eternally, in Dante's *rosa sempiterna*.

Still, the *SEL* does not have a perfect structure. It is possible that poems like "Michael III" and "Lent" are flaws in its circle, because there are no grand gestures in these poems related to the mystical Christ. This qualification would not, however, apply to the narrative *temporale* poems: the Old Testament stories have a figural connection to the mystical Christ, the New Testament narratives a direct, literal one. In any case, the presence of flaws does not preclude the possibility that, by and large, a unified structure does exist. And the fact that the *SEL*'s unifying structure is centripetal rather than circumferential goes a long way in explaining why scribes might have felt it acceptable to add, substitute, or rearrange the individual narratives. None of this would disturb the basic rose-window design. This activity over the long course of two hundred years, then, should not, in my opinion, force us to discard the idea of a unified *SEL*.

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[14]"Quia cum sit diversitas meritorum virtutumque, una tamen omnes vita corporis alit in mundo."

To treat medieval typology fully is well beyond the scope of this essay. See Erich Auerbach, "Figura," 53, 72; Auerbach's "Roland against Ganelon," 83–107; and James W. Earl. This entire issue of *SLitI* is devoted to typology in medieval literature.

[15]On the linking of narrative and time in medieval art, see Otto Pächt 1–4.

Thus, by using the idea of the saints' typological connection to the mystical Christ, I hope to have demonstrated that the *SEL* as it is found in the "A" tradition is a single work. It does not have a modern organic unity, but this is not to be expected in works conceived before the advent of Romantic critical theory. It does not even have the type of unity found in certain medieval works such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales;* that work is built on a linear model, the pilgrimage, and thus naturally calls for a narrative frame to hold its tales together. The *SEL,* on the contrary, continues the tradition of the circular legendaries, for which narrative frames are unnecessary. The workings of this juxtaposing structure—altogether suitable for the subject of saints' lives—can best be understood by comparing it to the structure of medieval rose windows such as those found in the great cathedral of Chartres. Thus, I submit that with respect to its structure, the *SEL* is "well made" and qualifies as the product of competent medieval art.

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