

John Capgrave's « Life of St. Augustine »

I

In 1440 and 1445 John Capgrave, a member of the Austin convent at Lynn, Norfolk, and prior-provincial in Britain from 1453 to 1457, interrupted his exegetical commentaries to write long, rime royal lives of St. Norbert and St. Katherine. By 1451 he had turned to prose for his vernacular as well as his Latin works and found a medium more compatible with his natural inclination towards biography, theology, and moral instruction. His poetic lives are not insignificant examples of the genre, but the exigencies of rhyme and poetic decoration are foreign in many ways to the training he had undergone, to his interest in academic and theological issues, and to the literal mind and austere character he seems to have possessed.

There are several reasons why Capgrave might have been expected to choose the life of St. Augustine of Hippo for a subject and why he would have been prepared to undertake it. To begin with, his order claimed to have descended from the saint's original monastic establishment in Africa, and its members followed the rule they believed he had provided. Moreover, since Augustine is one of the four great Latin fathers of the church, his theological opinions, as they appear in his own works and as they influenced later scholastic commentators, were heavily impressed upon any student who followed the divinity course as Capgrave did. But, while his experience thus equipped Capgrave to adapt and expand his materials, he was not « meued » to compose this work by his own desires but by the request of an unnamed woman who happened to be born on Augustine's feast day ¹).

*) Internal references to Jordanus' *Vita* are from C. L. SMETANA's 1948 M.A. thesis which contains a transcript; those to CAPGRAVE's *Life* are from E.E.T.S., O.S., 140, ed. J. J. MUNRO (London, 1910). This volume contains both of the prose lives and the text is based on the only surviving manuscript, Capgrave's holograph, BM. Add. MS. 36704.

¹) In the prologue to *The Life of St. Augustine*, CAPGRAVE refers to his patroness only as « a gentill woman... browt forth in-to pis world in [Augustine's] solempne

Because Augustine's influence is so pervasive, any material concerning him draws scholarly attention, and Capgrave's *Life* has been no exception. However, commentaries on it have been basically limited to the enumeration of contents and the identification of sources. In addition, the old error describing the *Life of St. Augustine* as an original composition, begun by its E.E.T.S. editor Munro in 1910 and perpetuated by Gerrould in his history of the saint's life, is retained in even the most recent general studies ²).

One reason critical notice is minimal is that *The Life of St. Augustine* was virtually unknown until it passed to the British Museum from private hands in 1902 ³). In fact, although as early as 1748, Thomas Tanner had seen Capgrave's own reference to a vernacular life while he was examining the *Concordia* and suggested that it was related to Capgrave's other lost works dealing with Augustine and the Augustinians ⁴), none of Capgrave's other biographers mentions it.

Thirty-three years passed after the publication of Munro's edition before George Sanderlin and Rudolph Arbesmann separately and almost simultaneously identified Capgrave's source as Jordanus of Saxony's *Vita S. Augustini* ⁵). Certainly, the evidence of the parallel passages cited by Father Arbesmann seems conclusive, and, indeed,

feste » (p. 1, 11.15 - 16, 22). She is tentatively identified by C. L. SMETANA as a *generosa femina*, Katherina James, grandmother of the Edmund Rede whom Capgrave formally recognized as the Lynn convent's founder during his term as provincial. No confirmation is possible, and, if the woman did belong to this family of benefactors, the date of composition makes it more likely that she was Rede's mother or wife.

²) See for example, T. WOLPERS, *Die Englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters* (Tubingen, 1964), p. 405.

³) Ed. J. J. MUNRO, E.E.T.S., O.S., 140 (London, 1910), xi.

⁴) *Bibliotheca britannico-hibernica: sive De scriptoribus, qui in Anglia, Scotia et Hibernia ad saeculi XVII initium floruerunt* (London 1748), p. 152.

⁵) George SANDERLIN, « John Capgrave Speaks Up for the Hermits », *Speculum*, III (1943), 358-362 and Rudolph ARBESMANN, « Jordanus of Saxony's *Vita S. Augustini*: The Source of John Capgrave's *Life of St. Augustine* », *Traditio*, I (1943), 341-353. The major purpose of Sanderlin's brief article is to suggest that both Jordanus and Capgrave were motivated by an urge to press their order's claim to predate the Augustinian canons regular. Certainly in this longstanding dispute which ended only at papal command in 1484, the two friars would have supported their own group's opinion. On the other hand, neither the Latin nor the English version is argumentative in tone, and while there are a number of passages asserting Augustine's preference for the ascetic life he shared with his first chosen companions over the episcopal life where his closest associates were the recently instituted prototypes of the canons, they are not long or inappropriately introduced.

it is borne out by detailed analysis. It is strange that the connection went so long unnoticed, for Jordanus was a prominent fourteenth-century member of the Augustinian order, well-known for his executive ability, often given responsible assignments, and an important author besides ⁶). Although the *Vita* was not printed until 1686, several of Jordanus' homiletic works are *incunabula*, and the basic reference for Augustinian history, his *Liber Vitasfratrum*, was in print in 1587/88.

Perhaps those who had seen both versions failed to perceive the relationship because Capgrave's *Life* begins with a prologue and five chapters which do not appear in the *Vita S. Augustini*. The possibility that leaves are missing from the opening of Jordanus' work is unlikely for the whole codex deals with St. Augustine, his mother, and his writings; and the complete manuscript (Codex de l'Arsenal 251, Paris) is preserved in the author's holograph ⁷). Therefore, the abrupt opening must be regarded as intentional; but, if Arbesmann's conjecture that Jordanus prepared this collection as a preliminary to his *Vitasfratrum* is correct ⁸), his divergence from the model of the longer Latin saint's life becomes explicable. Interested only in Augustine's literary and religious career, he ignores the saint's antecedents and birth and begins with the sixteen-year-old Augustine's desire for advanced rhetorical studies. Because this was not his purpose, Capgrave restored the early part of Augustine's history.

Well-acquainted with available materials, Jordanus relied on three lives — by Possidius, D'Harvengt, and Dacius — which he considered trustworthy, in addition to a number of genuine and spurious works attributed to Augustine ⁹). The careful selection and balance of materials evident in the *Vita S. Augustini* reveal that Jordanus and Capgrave were alike in their historical and concrete turn of mind as well as in education and career. In Jordanus' case, both the pedagogical technique of the divinity schools and the historian's desire for accuracy lay behind the identification of sources in phrases opening with Latin tags such as *hec ipse* or *ut ipse*; but the consistency of their use, like Capgrave's constant refusal to commit himself on uncertain issues, gives the piece a tone of detachment. This suggestion of a temperamental similarity between the

⁶) ARBESMANN, *ibid.*, surveys Jordanus' career pp. 341-344.

⁷) *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁸) *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁹) *Ibid.*, p. 345.

two authors is increased by Jordanus' clear decision to omit or abbreviate descriptions of Augustine's philosophical and emotional struggles. Similarly, though here as elsewhere he is ready to add physical details, Capgrave tends to excise lyrical and abstract expressions.

There is more than one explanation possible for Capgrave's acquaintance with Jordanus' work. From the point of view of neatness, it is attractive to adopt Arbesmann's suggestion that Capgrave paused at the Paris convent during his journey to Rome and either made his translation of the *Vita* then or procured a copy to take with him. It is equally likely, however, that transcriptions were made and disseminated as Jordanus had requested¹⁰⁾ during the hundred and thirty years which separate the two versions. Indeed, other copies of the *Vita* do exist¹¹⁾, and many French friars who could have brought manuscripts with them came to the Oxford and Cambridge *studia generalia*.

The second alternative has as a corollary, of course, the possibility that Capgrave's first five chapters may be the work of some unknown intermediary. Furthermore, it was not Capgrave's habit to make major rearrangements of material he was translating. He added commentaries and omitted passages, but he seldom altered the sequence of the narrative. Thus, the division of the material into chapters with descriptive headings and the fact that five of the chapters do not even correspond with the beginnings of new paragraphs in the *Vita* lend circumstantial weight to the theory that the transmission was not direct¹²⁾.

Nevertheless, apart from the addition of the five new initial chapters giving an account of Augustine's birthplace, parentage, and early schooling, and two later ones (12 and 24), all mainly derived from the *Confessions*, the Latin and English versions are basically congruent. Chapters six, seven, and eight concern his studies in Carthage and his nine-year adherence to the Manichean heresy; and

¹⁰⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

¹¹⁾ SAME, n. 33.

¹²⁾ The five chapters are 8, 15, 18, 36 and 45. They begin in what is the middle of a paragraph in the Latin version. It should also be noted that while nine of Jordanus' paragraphs do begin with a *de* or *qualiter* phrase equivalent to a chapter heading, only six accord with divisions Capgrave makes and only two of those have a marked similarity in the heading used.

chapters nine to twenty-four narrate the events of Augustine's sojourn in Italy, his reputation as a rhetorician, his conversion, his first compositions, and his decision to return to Africa. Of the remainder, three (26, 41, and 42) describe Augustine's writings; five (36-40), his characteristic behaviour and demeanour; and thirteen continue the biography with the institution of the various monasteries, his advancement to the episcopacy, and, finally, his death during the Vandalic invasions.

II

Such differences as the physical division of the contents and the inclusion of seven new chapters can be seen on the surface, but close analysis also reveals a wide range of minor deviations and alterations which change the direction of the work. Since his primary audience was a woman, educated enough to read the vernacular but not even a member of a religious community, Capgrave had a further reason to remove the scholarly apparatus. He would have regarded the citation of secondary sources as irrelevant to her education and his own purpose. Therefore, while he retains many of the references to Augustine's own works, Capgrave excises all those to Possidius and the *Legenda Famosa* along with the *hec ibi ipse* tags following quotations from Augustine's sermons¹³). There is only a single inconsistency in his practice¹⁴); otherwise, apart from occasions where he inserts his own notes from Augustine's work, there are only five pieces of documentation not found in the Latin. Moreover, as these additions cite Gregory's *Dialogues*, the Psalms and the Pauline epistles¹⁵), all well-known in the middle ages, they suggest

¹³) The following is a list of references in Jordanus' *Vita* omitted by Capgrave: p. 15, 11.10-11; p. 16, 11.11-12, 13-14; p. 18, 11.4-5, 11-12, 18-19; p. 20, 11.10-11; p. 22, 11.5-6; p. 23, 11.19-18; p. 28, 11.24-25; p. 29, 11.12-13, 15-16; p. 31, 11.5, 8, 11; p. 32, 11.8-9; p. 33, 1.16; p. 35, 1.24; p. 36, 1.4; p. 40, 11.8-9; p. 41, 11.5, 12, 15; p. 42, 1.21; p. 43, 1.10; p. 44, 1.7; p. 47, 1.23; p. 45, 11.6-7; p. 46, 11.4, 23; p. 48, 1.18; p. 49, 11.9-10; p. 50, 1.20; p. 51, 11.1-2, 9-10; p. 52, 1.19; p. 53, 11.1-2, 8-9, 15; p. 53, 1.24; p. 54, 1.1; p. 58, 1.8; p. 59, 1.19; p. 60, 1.10; p. 61, 1.22; p. 63, 1.1; p. 64, 1.7; p. 70, 11.5-6; p. 72, 11.24-25; p. 73, 1.7; p. 74, 1.21; p. 77, 1.19; p. 78, 11.7-8.

¹⁴) He preserves the reference to DACIUS, p. 26, 11.1-3.

¹⁵) These five occur p. 1, 1.1; p. 7, 1.8; p. 9, 1.22; p. 24, 1.27; and p. 52, 11.9-10. Capgrave's additional references to Augustine's works are: p. 2, 11.21-22; p. 4, 11.12-13, 23, 25-26, 29; p. 5, 11.6, 11-12, 23-22; p. 6, 1.31; p. 7, 11.14, 19-20, 26; p. 11, 11.30-31; p. 13, 1.10; p. 15, 1.6; p. 17, 1.22; p. 18, 1.22; p. 26, 1.10; p. 28, 1.25; p. 29, 1.23;

an author working to increase his audience's sense of familiarity with the material.

Similarly, where Jordanus gives the titles of several sermons or quotes Augustine's works to document his generalizations, Capgrave often reduces the number of examples or makes a summary comment. In most instances, only one or two sentences disappear¹⁶), and the one long omission of this kind shows Capgrave critically choosing to avoid repetition. In place of more than three pages (p. 54, 1.2-p. 57, 1.19) filled with Augustine's own statements concerning the establishment of his three monasteries, all of which repeat details recorded earlier in the *Vita* from the chronicler's reports, Capgrave's *Life* has only :

Many pingis myth we plant in here, who pat he loued bettyr þe
felauchip of þe heremites þan of þe prestis in þe cathedral cherk,
and what grucching þe same prestis made a-geyn þis affection,
but all þis I ley be-side and wil procede to þe opir part of his lif.
(p. 44, 1.35-p. 45, 1.4)

before returning to the narrative.

If Capgrave's sensitivity to the needs of his audience is a reasonable explanation for these two large groups of excisions, it probably also accounts for most of the additions he makes. All his elaborations tend to deflect the main course of the narrative, but before examining the precedents for such disruptions, their various forms must be examined. In all his works Capgrave digresses to define ecclesiastical terms; here he also interrupts the narrative to define the contents of Augustine's works, to explain the beliefs of various heretical groups, and, indeed, to insert asides whose pertinence is not always immediately clear.

Certainly, Jordanus would not have felt such elaborations necessary, for he made his collection while resident in one of the order's *studia generalia* and intended it for his own later use and for his fellow friars, most of whom underwent intensive theological training and were, therefore, familiar not only with technical terms but also with the subject matter of the major theologians' works.

p. 30, 11.6-8; p. 31, 11.12, 27; p. 33, 11.4-5, 9; p. 34, 11.17-18; p. 36, 1.20; p. 37, 11.4-5, 24; p. 38, 11.12, 22-23; p. 38, 1.33 - p. 39, 1.2; p. 40, 11.11-13; p. 41, 1.12; p. 44, 11.16, 20-21, 34-35; p. 45, 1.10; p. 46, 11.26-27; p. 48, 11.10-11; p. 49, 11.3, 12-13.

¹⁶) See *Vita*, p. 23, 11.7-10; p. 30, 11.10-11; p. 34, 11.5-6, 7-8; p. 35, 11.18-24; p. 45, 1.5; p. 47, 11.1-18; p. 53, 11.15-24; p. 64, 11.1-2.

However, Capgrave's less-educated audience would not have found the mere translation of Latin terms and the catalogues of writings into English illuminating. Thus, if he wished these portions to be instructive, as he so obviously did, Capgrave had to elaborate.

All of the examples show that Capgrave intended his definitions to be objective; they never become speculative or abstract. However, his concreteness was not the result of his natural proclivity for the literal alone. First, Capgrave apparently thought that description of philosophical arguments would have been inappropriate, for when he mentions Augustine's «pe quantite of pe soule», he says «sotil pinggis ar touched whech long not to pis maner of wryting pat is cleped narratyf» (p. 31, 11.19-20). A similar, though less explicit statement occurs several pages earlier: «Mech mor ping is touchid in pis book, speciali of pe knowlech of God, whech ping as now we may not declar» (p. 24, 11.14-16). Moreover, he believed that it was dangerous to expose the unlearned to heretical opinions which they might not be able to combat. When he first refers to the Manichees, for example, he says, «Many mo heresies held bei whech were ful perilous to be rehersed, specially in our tonge» (p. 9, 11.32-33). Such a fear was common, and for Capgrave it was reinforced by the many attempts to suppress Lollardry in his time¹⁷.

In addition to these more general issues, of course, Capgrave had the particular needs of his patroness as a guide. Her desire to have a translation of the *Vita* attests to her piety, but it also suggests that she would not have been familiar with the details Capgrave explains. Moreover, theological questions were not the usual concern of a mid-fifteenth century «gentill woman»; she need only accept and adhere to the orthodox views. Therefore, not feeling that he had any reason to argue or explain philosophy, Capgrave simply stated errors and gave summaries of undefined terms.

The clearest cases of explanatory elaboration involve simple definitions. There are only two in *The Life of St. Augustine*; «cathecume»:

... a cathecume is as mech to seye as a newe receyuour of pe feith, for in elde tyme men had certeyn dayes assined be-twix her conuercion and here baptem pat bei myth lerne wel pe

¹⁷) The only contemporary reference other than those to his patroness in *The Life of St. Augustine* is to the immoral behaviour of the Wyclifites, p. 31, 1.15.

articales of our feith or þei wer bounde perto. And so schuld men do now, as I suppose, if þei schuld be baptized as þat age.
(p. 9, 11.1-5)

and « fluctuacion » :

Fluctuacion calle we her whan a man is broute fro an eucl entent, and zet þe same man stand in study wheither he schal to þe good wey or nowt. In þis plith stood our Austyn.
(p. 16, 11.20-22)

Interestingly, neither is a mere exegetical interruption. Instead, the final sentence of each digression serves to reintegrate the commentary into the main flow of the narrative, in the first instance by relating the event to the reader; in the second, by drawing attention to Augustine again. Similarly, when he expands the reference to Ambrose's sermon on the incarnation, Capgrave includes a definition but makes it subordinate to the theological principle; « who þat for þe special loue which he had to mankynde he disdeyned not to take þe flesch and blood of man with all þe infirmities, saue synne » (p. 15, 11.9-12).

The expansions associated with the titles of Augustine's works are much like the definitions. Though his alterations are not consistent with any discernible principles, Capgrave seldom uses a title without additional commentary. Apart from the Latin sermons, which he apparently regarded as a group and whose *incipits* he seldom translates¹⁸), Capgrave either gives only a Latin or an English title followed by a brief comment or he gives both and furnishes a longer note.

When the Latin alone appears, the summary of the subject which follows is, in fact, no more than a free and enlarged translation of the title¹⁹). Nevertheless, in doing so, Capgrave does provide his lay reader with important information²⁰). On the other hand, Capgrave's additions are less integral to the subject when he uses

¹⁸) Most appear in Latin : p. 28, 1.25; p. 29, 1.23; p. 30, 11.7-8; p. 37, 1.24- p. 39, 11.1-2; p. 40, 11.11-12, 13; p. 41, 1.12; p. 44, 11.2, 35; p. 46, 1.27; p. 48, 1.11; p. 49, 1.13. Two have English titles only : p. 36, 1.20 and p. 45, 1.10.

¹⁹) See references to *De Immortalitate Anime*, p. 25, 11.28-29; *De Genesi*, p. 34, 1.32 - p. 35, 1.1 and *De Vera Religione*, p. 35, 11.20-21.

²⁰) Except in the case of his reference to *De Ordine* (p. 23, 11.31-32) where his erroneous statement on the contents demonstrates that he was not personally familiar with the work.

only English. Possibly a lay person would not know that the Sermon on the Mount contained the *Pater Noster*, and Capgrave's expansion (p. 42, 11.18-20) is not mere prolixity. However, his remarks on « of musik » (p. 35, 11.2-14), « of þe quantite of þe soule » (p. 31, 11.17-20), and « of þe Trinite » (p. 56, 11.3-7) — interesting though they are as asides on literature and education — are not connected with the main direction or intention of the narrative ²¹).

Precisely the same distinction between the extraneous and the significant must also be made for his comments on the third group of titles, those containing both the Latin and an English translation. In every case, of course, the literal translation is useful, but only one of the additions is pertinent *per se*. Moreover, the kinds of irrelevance vary. For example, since *De Pulchro et Apto* was already lost in Augustine's time, Capgrave did not know it, and he could only elaborate by rationalizing the loss, « his bokes which he mad aftir he was cristen be more in deynte þan þoo which he mad be-fore » (p. 12, 11.12-13). Similarly, he had not seen *De Achademicis* ²²), and so he used the assumed derivation of the title for the centre of his development (p. 23, 11.24-29).

On the other hand, though he had more knowledge of the three works in this group which are related to the two major themes of this version of Augustine's life, his activities as a defender of the faith against heretics and his role in the establishment of religious orders, Capgrave did not markedly change his treatment. Only with *De Libero Arbitrio* where he notes the Manichean belief in co-eternal principles of good and evil does he focus on a primary issue. In the case of *De Moribus Manicheorum et De Moribus Ecclesie Catholici*, he discusses the licentiousness of the heretics (p. 31, 11.12-15), and his addition to Jordanus' description of *De Opere Monachorum* is a purely digressive account of the altered meaning of the word « monk » (p. 54, 1.26-p. 55, 1.7).

The same lack of a concern for absolute relevance seems to prevail in other additions. Some, like the brief statements on the opinions of the Arian, Donatist, Pelagian, and Manichean heretics ²³)

²¹) In the other two instances where English alone appears, p. 35, 11.15-19 and p. 56, 1.8 - p. 57, 1.2, Jordanus provided the commentary.

²²) In fact, the *De Achademicis* and *Contra Achademicos* he so carefully distinguishes are the same book.

²³) P. 27, 11.18-22; p. 31, 11.25-26; p. 42, 11.10-11; p. 52, 1.21 - p. 53, 1.11.

are not objectionable, for combatting such opinions was Augustine's concern; some, like the list of Roman gods (p. 56, 1.12), are too brief to be disruptive; others, however, like the pause to give the etymology and location of Hostie (p. 31, 11.31-33) and the passages on the origin of the Barbarian tribes (p. 58, 11.18-27) or Carthage's importance as a trading city (p. 34, 11.5-8), are by length alone too prominent to be read over or dismissed.

The intention behind what seems an undisciplined and irrational style begins to become apparent in the examination of the remaining short explanatory additions. Capgrave's constant aim is to clarify the meaning of his source. Thus, he stops to make certain that the importance of an event is not overlooked and that it is correctly interpreted, either to clear up a possible ambiguity before a question arises, or simply to make details more precise.

In the first category, for example, where Jordanus is satisfied to report the circumstances of Augustine's moves to Rome and Milan, Capgrave adds passages to show that God's providence, not fate, lay behind the decision (p. 13, 11.19-21; p. 14, 1.27). Similarly, he explains why Augustine used notaries when he debated with heretics (p. 42, 11.3-5), why Faustus was called to argue with Augustine (p. 12, 11.16-25), why God allowed Augustine to suffer illness (p. 25, 11.2-3), and why Ambrose composed hymns (p. 27, 11.10-16).

Occasionally, too, Capgrave foresees possible ambiguities and seeks to forestall them. Thus, because there might be some question about Augustine's right to make his first monastic establishment when he was not yet in holy orders himself, Capgrave states (p. 34, 11.23-25) that some of the hermits Augustine brought to Africa with him were priests. Later, when Jordanus notes that the hermits were permitted to preach and receive confession, Capgrave, perhaps mindful of charges of abuse in his own time, adds « not alle, but poo wech were lerned in diuinite and custumably vsed in good lyf » (p. 41, 11.10-11)²⁴.

Finally, Capgrave lengthens certain passages in order to make the stages of a process more clear or to make details more precise. Thus, for example, following the attribution of the *Te Deum* jointly to Ambrose and Augustine, Capgrave explains, « Ambrose began þe first vers, and Augustin þe secund, and þus þei said it to an ende »

²⁴) See also p. 34, 11.15-16.

(p. 25, 11.35-36). On many other occasions, the extra detail is only a clarifying phrase. Thus, when Jordanus refers to Augustine's desire to leave his school and notes that it is fall, Capgrave adds « whan skole is wone to cese » (p. 23, 1.11); so, too, though the seven psalms which Augustine reads constantly while he awaits death would obviously be the penitential psalms, leaving no room for error, Capgrave says, « poo same which we rede with þe Letanye » (p. 60, 11.4-5).

One further substantial group of additions must also be taken into account. Since all of these involve enlarged descriptions of other figures in the *Life*, it is tempting to credit Capgrave with a desire to humanize his central figure by making his associates more vivid. Such a conclusion would, however, distort the quality of Capgrave's work in favour of modern standards of realism in characterization unknown to him and directly opposed not only to his own aim but to the general purpose of hagiography. Even allowing that the portrait of St. Augustine still fails to achieve more than two dimensions after all of Capgrave's changes, it can be shown that the new statements are directed outwards to instruct the reader rather than inwards to reflect facets of Augustine's character.

When Capgrave unites Simplician and Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, Augustine's two chief guides through his conversion, by adding that the bishop both supported the hermit during his life (p. 19, 1.1) and chose him as his successor (p. 19, 11.3-5), he is interested not in their relationship to Augustine but in them as further examples of the holy life, and his purpose here is consistent with the other additions he makes when they are mentioned. His method is similar when he elaborates on the activities of contemporaries closely associated with Augustine. When he describes Poncian's visit to Alipius and Augustine, Capgrave propounds a general moral precept — « cam on-to hem to se her welfar, as þe maner of men is which he bore in straunge cuntre and dwelle fer fro hom » (p. 20, 11.2-3) — instead of elaborating the character presented. Moreover, the lengthy passages on Alipius' seizure for theft (p. 17, 1.20-p. 18, 1.24) and Vitalis' discovery of a bag of gold (p. 30, 11.5-27) neither provide insight into personality nor relate to the main themes of the *Life*. Capgrave says the purpose of the first event was « for to lerne him which schuld be aftirward a iuge of mennes soules in þe cherech þat he schuld not deme ouyr sone of signes outward » (p. 18, 11.22-24),

and of the second to teach « What-so-euer pou fyndist and gyuyst not a-geyn, pou stelist » (p. 30, 11.26-27). Coming as they do at the end of the incidents, these are certainly statements of ethical principles to the reader rather than relevant comments on the characters concerned.

This didactic tone which was not present in Jordanus' work is even more emphatically revealed in Capgrave's last major series of changes — the elevation to prominence of Augustine's mother, Monica. The alterations are so many and so thoroughgoing that there can be no doubt that they were intended to increase Monica's role; and it may well be that Capgrave set out to provide a figure with whom his patroness could identify. Monica becomes an ideal of resolute piety in feminine form, and the traits Capgrave chooses to enlarge from the basic portrait are her grief for her son when he is in a degenerate state, her joy at his conversion, and her own deep and abiding faith.

In those early chapters which have no parallel in Jordanus' *Vita*, Capgrave fixes the characterization; and no elements enter later to alter or complicate it. In chapter two he says, « sche was a cristen woman fro hir childhood, and norchid in þe best condicions and most plesaunt to God and to man » (p. 4, 11.20-22), and the major portion of the third chapter is devoted both to the good effects which the « governauns » and « moderacion » naturally found in such a woman have on her husband, other local matrons, and her mother-in-law and also to her desire to see her children become good Christians. It is this last aspect, chiefly manifested in her concern for Augustine, the Capgrave intensifies in later chapters.

To obtain his ends, Capgrave either expands with additional details and direct speech while excising Jordanus' more generalized statements, isolates Monica by placing her activities in separate chapters, or combines these two methods. Often the elaborations themselves seem slight but the change in tone is marked. For example, in the description of Augustine's riotous behaviour during his student days in Carthage, both the Latin and English lines contrast the responses of his parents. However, whereas Jordanus notes that Augustine dismissed his mother's admonitions as those of an old woman, *at ille matris monita quasi anicularia reputans* (p. 15, 11.8-9), Capgrave ignores this denigration and instead emphasizes Monica's own feelings as she rebukes her son « with ful sad countenauns » (p. 8, 1.29). So, too, the changes in the account of her daily devotions

after Augustine deceives her and leaves for Rome, though they amount only to a spelling out of ideas implicit in the Latin, place greater stress on the fact that all her actions are directed towards procuring the spiritual well-being of her son ²⁵).

Though the relationship between mother and son is obviously assumed to be a close one, it is never Monica's emotions which Capgrave develops. Instead, he demonstrates her natural wisdom and acceptance. For Jordanus, *De Beata Vita* is a scholastic topic separated from his immediate subject, and he summarizes the discussion in the phrase *et tandem diffinitum est inter eos quod beata uita non nisi in dei cognitione consistit* (p. 29, 11.10-11). Capgrave, on the other hand, not only corrects the reported definition in accordance with Augustine's actual words in his book — « All þe cumpany saue his moder saide it is a blessed lyf a man for to haue all þat he desireth » (p. 24 11.10-11); he also adds Monica's pious amendment « he hath a blessed lyf whech hath al þat he desirith and eke þat he desire no-þing but good þing » (p. 24 11.12-14). Her own belief in this premise is expressed in the short addition to the beginning of Chapter 21. There Jordanus reports only that Monica was the cause of Augustine's decision to return to Africa *instigante eius pia matre* (p. 34, 11.16-17), while Capgrave adds, « for sche had all her desire whech sche desired in þis world whan sche wist þat he was a trewe cristen man » (p. 29 11.12-13).

²⁵) Vita

hoc mater nesciebat, sed pro illo orabat absens et maiore sollicitudine eum parturiebat spiritu quam carne pepererat, cottidie elemosinam faciens et obsequia sanctis nullo die pretermittens oblacionem. Bis in die mane et vespere ad ecclesiam sine ulla intermissione veniens non ad vanas fabulas, sed ut dominum audiret in suis sermonibus et deus illam in suis oracionibus pro salute filii sui. Recreatus ergo ex illa egritudine cepit sedit agere propter quod venerat ut doceret romae artem rethoricam, et congregabantur ad hospiciū eius multi. (p. 20, 11.12-21)

Life

pou3 he were absent sche prayed for him deuly þat our Lord schuld send her ioie of hir son, for in þis mater sche had mor sorow for him þan euyr sche had to bryng him forth on-to þe world. Euery day sche offered for him at þe auter; euery day sche gaf elmesse. Twyes on þe day went she to chereh, not for to telle veyn tales, but for to here tydingis of our Lord of heuene in deuoute sermones, or elles for her diuine seruyse that God schuld accept hir prayeres, whech wer principali for þe goostly helth of hir son Augustin. Be hir prayeres Austyn is now rered fro his seknesse and hath begunne for to do þing for which he was come, þat is to seye, to tech rethorik; many disciples be gadered on-to his skole, ... (p. 14, 11.9-19)

Chapter 24 is the only one dealing with Monica which is new to Capgrave's life, but even here the prayer given by Augustine emphasizes not his sorrow or sense of loss at her death but rather her purity in life :

Thi seruaunt, Lord, whom pou hast now take on-to pi mercy, as pou knowist & as I be-leue, aftir pat tyme pat sche had take pi feith and pi baptem, sche defouled neuer hir lippis with no vnclennesse which schuld be offense on-to pi lordchip; no lesingis wer founde in hir tonge, no slaunder, no vice which longith on-to pat membir... Sche bond hir soule on-to pe prys of thi blod whil sche lyued, for þere was no day left but sche wold be present where þe sacrificise and þe memory of pi holy blod schuld be had in mynde.

(p. 33, 11.12-17, 27-30)

The other four chapters (7, 9, 11 and 23) are all set off at least by paragraph divisions in the *Vita*, but they become testaments of Monica's faith and piety as Capgrave makes his characteristic expansions. The additions to Chapter seven, for example, provide illustrations of the three traits which dominate this portrait. The first reinforces the portrayal of her grief over Augustine by describing her appearance, « with ful heuy cher » (p. 10, 1.14); the second repeats her single, guiding desire, « pat sche hoped for to se him a trewe cristen man or sche deyd » (p. 10, 11.22-23); and the last reiterates her constant efforts on her son's behalf, « witz many menes and many exhortaciones was bisi nyth and day to bring him fro þis mischef » (p. 10, 11.7-8). Moreover, Capgrave emphasizes her steadfastness as he explains, « Thus was þe woman in her consolacion stabil and coude not be led oute for hir trewe beleue with no sophisticacion pat hir son coude make » (p. 10, 11.29-31). Finally, he excises the unfavourable suggestion found in the Latin that her importuning was tedious to the bishop (p. 18, 1.1).

Obviously, any work whose surface presents such eclecticism lacks unity and co-ordination of theme. And even if it is granted that nearly every addition can somehow be justified, their collective effect is nevertheless stylistically digressive, disruptive, and indiscriminate to the modern reader. If they are to be seen as anything more than the *minutiae* of detail collected by the voracious scholar and trained exegete, some artistic method, principle, or precedent must lie behind them.

Even a literate person in the middle ages heard rather than read much of the literature with which he came in contact, and, therefore, he did not demand the kind of precision so highly regarded by the modern reader. Further, as a genre, the saint's life tended to derive its internal unity from the eulogistic purpose of glorification, not from some controlling theme or thesis regarding the saint's personality or career. While many of them are extremely disorganized, both author and reader allowed the introduction of diverse elements because all redounded to the saint's honour. For the same reason the apparent lack of plan was not disturbing. Thus, though Jordanus' *Vita* appears to be unified because it follows a chronological order, in reality the continual focus on Augustine provides the centre which a plethora of quotation and citation of authorities cannot disrupt.

One medieval genre characteristically exhibits the particular combination of disruptive exegesis and moral exhortation found in Capgrave's *Life* — the sermon. It is precisely the appearance of this secondary motive, the preacher's desire to explain, which describes how Capgrave's work differs from the typical saint's life, and the following discussion will demonstrate that to call his technique dis-unified is to be governed by modern principles rather than by an understanding of the traditions within which he worked.

A brief comment on and an illustration from the contemporary vernacular sermon will make clear that such diversions from the narrative path would seem natural both to Capgrave, as a trained exegete and preacher, and to his reader. Many of the preserved Middle English sermons are as brief as the martyrologies, with their abbreviated accounts of the acts and passions of the saints, and they shed little light on Capgrave's style. However, sermons could also be, and academic ones were expected to be, highly structured.

Basically, this structuring consists of the elaboration and iteration of the main theme of the day — a Biblical text, the reasons for observing the feast, or praise of a saint. All the formal arrangements recommended in theoretical works²⁶) are seldom present in vernacular examples, but their influence is observable throughout. The effect of any of the preferred means of discussion — *exempla*, the four-fold method of exposition, logical argument, and word defi-

²⁶) See: *Middle English Sermons*, ed., W. O. Ross, E.E.T.S., O.S., 209 (London 1949), xliii-lv.

nition — is essentially static; the intended reference, the object of the digression, is always to get back to the original text after explaining it more fully; and thus, though there has been development, there has been no advance. Even when the major part of such a sermon is a saint's life, the narrative element is frequently checked by moral applications or admonitions, and it ultimately ends with an exhortation. In such cases the story, which itself is not the primary concern, remains subordinate to the ethical issues being presented.

A good example of the developed vernacular sermon is one on Christ's Ascension included in John Mirk's *Festial* ²⁷). After the initial announcement of the feast day and the explanation that this is why a light has been removed from the choir, the preacher describes Christ's final appearance to his disciples and the ascension. Here « to stegh up » (i.e., rise) becomes the keynote, and it is repeatedly used to recall the main text; but before the details of the ascension are given, a mention of the Mount of Olives calls forth a four-line digression on its suitability as a location, since olive oil « bytokenype mercy ». Then follow references to the angelic choir and the speed of the ascension accompanied by an interjection on Rabanus Maurus' calculation of the distance, a calculation which is scorned on the grounds that « he pat metype þis way, he can best telle þe myles and þe lengþe of hom » (p. 152, 11.26-28).

The preacher then gives two more details — Christ was accompanied by souls rescued from Hell and his wounds were fresh — before inserting Bede's five reasons why Christ appeared with his wounds still fresh. Then he moves to two additional reasons for man to rejoice on this occasion; he now has a « trew avoket » in heaven, and it increases his « dignyte » to have one of his own kind sit at the right hand of God. Returning to the narrative, he notes the marvelling of the lesser angels at the explanations of the higher orders, and at length he returns to the still upward-gazing disciples with whom his sermon began. And, finally, he exhorts his parishioners to ask mercy of Christ and provides one example of prayer rewarded.

Nowhere, of course, does Capgrave introduce such a disproportionate amount of digression into his narrative; but sermons like this one indicate that a model for his frequent lists of reasons or causes, for his interruptions on Alipius, Vitalis, Victorine, and for the prayer

²⁷) Ross, p. 151, 1.23 - p. 154, 1.23.

on Monica's death was ready to hand. Such a blending of purposes and techniques helps to explain Capgrave's method of composition in all of his English works, but more remains to be said specifically of his prose style.

III

The Life of St. Augustine may not appear to be the best work to discuss in this context, for it is a relatively close translation, and, as such, it is governed largely by the style of the *Vita*. However, since this is the only one of his sources extant in its entirety and in prose, it provides the soundest basis for studying the differences between his style and that of the originals. In addition, since translations from Latin and French comprise a large proportion of the extant literary prose of this transitional period, measuring Capgrave's skill as a translator in a sense provides an index to his talent for prose.

The major contribution of medieval translation, as S. K. Workman sees it, was the shift from the composition of single phrases and clauses, frequently leading to such structural anomalies as changed subject and lack of parallelism, to organization by broader, more complex units ²⁸). Further, he establishes and demonstrates as a general rule that skill in complex sentences is directly proportional to the literalness of translation ²⁹). Interestingly, however, Workman singles out Capgrave's other prose saint's life, *The Life of St. Gilbert*, as an exception, wherein the style often improves rather than degenerates when the source is treated freely ³⁰). This evidence of Capgrave's skill is confirmed by an examination of *The Life of St. Augustine*.

This praise does not mean that Capgrave is never guilty of Latinisms or that his subordination and co-ordination are always perfect. There are a number of examples of incorrect or awkward structure based on a too literal translation. On the final page, for example, with «standyng his breperin about him, and commendyng his soul to God, he zald» (p. 60, 11.14-15), the ablative absolute which so often caused English translators difficulties leads Capgrave into a

²⁸) S. K. WORKMAN, *Fifteenth Century Translation as an Influence on English Prose* (Princeton 1940), p. 35.

²⁹) *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³⁰) SAME.

dangling modifier whose meaning is ambiguous. Elsewhere, however, he easily turns such constructions into « with » phrases. Secondly, the automatic urge to supply the missing personal pronouns for Latin verbs often leaves Capgrave with a pleonastic pronoun insertion. Some of these are as simple as « *Seynt Ambrose, whan he lay at his last ende* » (p. 51, 1.15) from *Beatus enim ambrosius cum in extremis esset* (p. 67, 1.6); but most are complicated by the intervention of modifiers between the subject and the pleonastic repetition. Occasionally, these modifiers occur in the Latin, as when Capgrave adds an extra « *pei* » in translating *ut et ipsi qui centum annorum sunt et amplius, pater noster sedendo in lectulo dicant* (p. 64, 11.3-5) as « *bat þei* bat drawe to þe age of a hundred zere, *þei* schal sitte stille in her beddis and sey her Pater-noster » (p. 49, 11.24-25). More often, however, it is Capgrave himself who introduces the modification of the subject, and as he fails to excise the repetition, he reveals in these places at least that the characteristic unit composition was still very much a feature of his style ³¹). Similarly, the awkward placement of some of the other modifiers derives from the Latin. For example, « *Faderles childyrn and widowes whan þei wer in ony tribulacion he wold visite* » (p. 48, 11.31-32) comes from *Pupillos et viduas in tribulacione constitutos et egrotantes postulatus visitabat* (p. 62, 11.17-18) ³²), but many are his own afterthoughts disrupting the flow of the sequence.

On the other hand, the very errors he makes in changing structures or adding parallel members show Capgrave's conscious desire for subordination and thus mark him as a prominent transitional figure. Removing the rhetoric of Augustine's sermon *In omnibus operibus vestris* by abbreviating the *numquid* series (p. 34, 11.4-12), for instance, Capgrave fails in parallelism; the two sentences *Numquid non ipsi vere pauperes? ... Numquid non mundum et pompas eius conculcauerunt?* become « *Be not þei very pore men in Crist, and for his loue have for sakyn al þis world?* » (p. 28, 11.32-33). The tension between the old and new methods is sometimes evident too when Capgrave tries to subordinate a series of events which he perceives as having a causal relationship to the following statement

³¹) See p. 10, 11.5-6; p. 12, 11.26-27; p. 13, 11.2-4 and p. 57, 11.13-14 for some obvious examples.

³²) The awkward construction, p. 36, 1.34 - p. 37, 1.2 also comes from the Latin.

and finds he cannot extricate himself from the structure which he has begun. One example is the translation of

ipse simplicianus... audiuit famam celeberrimam de augustini sapiencia et eius admirabili doctrina, eumque episcopum esse factum. Propter quod sibi misit quasdam questiones subtiles de sacra scriptura soluendas.

(p. 70, 11.12-17)

as

And *whanne he herd sey* pat Augustin was bischop at Ypone and famed porw þe world as for þe grettest labourer in study and þe grettest dissoluer of qwestiones þat was leuand, — *heryng al þis* he sent to him certeyn questiones.

(p. 54, 11.6-10, italics added)

Later, Capgrave uses the same structure when he sees Augustine's final sickness as the result of the destruction the barbarian invaders brought to Africa (p. 58, 1.33-p. 59, 1.5).

Thus, obvious as some of these errors are, they are all evidence of concern with prose style. Moreover, smooth rehandling and skilful transition are much more common marks of Capgrave's translation. The omissions and additions discussed earlier resulted from the differences in Capgrave and Jordanus' purposes, but there are two groups of changes which are primarily stylistic: transitional introductions to chapters and re-arrangement of material on more logical bases.

As has already been shown, the only chapter break which does not seem immediately necessary is that between chapters fourteen and fifteen; and even then, the former recounts the event which provides the impulse for Augustine's final acceptance of the orthodox faith in the latter. More important, however, is the fact that in eighteen of the thirty-eight openings Capgrave introduces some transitional statement. Of the remainder, eleven already contained an expression of time in the Latin, chiefly *inter hec*, *post hec*, *eo tempore*, or *interea* (chapters 6, 10, 11, 14, 19, 30, 32, 41, 43, 44, 45) and in six more cases the time and place are stationary (chapters 15, 22, 36, 37, 38, and 39).

The transitions Capgrave makes are of four kinds. In the opening sentences of chapters 7, 9, 13, 21 and 33, Capgrave supplies the reason for the actions or feelings of the person who is the subject. Thus, while the Latin says only *Mater autem eius pro eo multum flebat* (p. 16, 1.15), Capgrave gives the cause of Monica's grief — « His

modir, *whan sche herd þat he was falle on-to þis heresie*, sche wept» (p. 10, 11.5-6, italics added). At the beginnings of chapters 23, 25, 26, 27 and 31, on the other hand, he reiterates the main events of the preceding chapter. Sometimes he is merely expanding a condensation in the Latin, as when *Quibus peractis* (p. 38, 1.16) becomes « Whann his moder was ded and byried at Hostie, as we seid be-for» (p. 34, 11.3-4); sometimes he provides a new summary of what went before, as « Dwellyng þus in his own possession he wrot» (p. 34, 11.31-32) or « Thus lyued our maystir in holy study and contemplation» (p. 35, 1.22). Thirdly, Capgrave has a group of openings which suggest the passage of time; two chapters (34 and 42) use a phrase comparable to the Latin ones previously cited (p. 43, 1.31, and p. 56, 11.5-6) as a relevant aside. Two of the others (16 and 17) begin with a new statement focusing on Augustine's changed habit of mind, and chapter 28 makes the shift to the establishment of the monasteries with the bishop's help less abrupt by stating that « He had not longe dwelt at Ypone or he fel in aqweyntauns of Valery» (p. 36, 11.32-33). Into the fourth group fall the openings of chapters 8, 18, 35 and 40, only the second of which, giving the history of his liaison with Adeodatus' mother, seems altered for transitional purposes. The other three reflect Capgrave's own reading of the work before him, and all are minor³³).

It is the freedom from slavish literalness these changes indicate which is the dominant feature of Capgrave's prose and which suggests his assurance as he works. The preceding examples illustrate the ways Capgrave amplified or reduced his source, changes he introduced to improve transition, and occasional failures as he tried to increase subordination. Further examples will demonstrate more clearly how the improvements overshadow failures.

Both large-scale revision and minor alterations figure in these changes; most often they are towards concreteness and conversational tone, leaving less to be inferred by the reader. Two variations he makes in the report of Monica's visit to the African bishop (p. 10, 1.31-p. 11, 1.23) serve to illustrate his techniques. First, Capgrave reduced the finite verbs and adds nouns so that *legendo et intellegendo quam fugienda esset cognovi et fugi* (p. 17, 11.22-23) becomes « with

³³) P. 11, 1.26; p. 45, 11.7-9 and p. 52, 11.9-12. The last contains a metaphor studied in Arbesmann's article, « The 'Malleus' Metaphors in Medieval Characterization », *Traditio*, III (1945), 389-392.

long redyng of her bokes, I aspied pat it was a secte rather to be fled than folowid» (p. 11, 11.15-16). The nouns make the actual activity more concrete and the other changes both emphasize the perception of error and support it with alliteration of parallel forms. Second, with his repetition of the dismissal and explanation of the metaphor *filius... tantarum lacrimarum*, Capgrave makes the final speech more colloquial³⁴).

The same principle of change towards concreteness, homeliness, expansion and moral exhortation which is evident in these examples, is also apparent in longer passages in *The Life of St. Augustine*. Thus, a large section of chapter 36 is altered. The single Latin sentence with careful parallelism and antecedent reference,

Religiosis quippe honeste maturus, secularibus vero mature iocundus aderat, ut illos in sanctitate cepta exemplo sui confirmaret et istos ad sanctitatem congrua hylaritate inuitaret.

(p. 59, 11.5-9)

becomes four with equal structural balance, the additional length deriving only from a care that his meaning be comprehended.

To religious men and women he was in his exhortaciones sad and sobir, zeuyng hem grete ensaumple who þei schuld do. To othir seculer men þat were occupied in þe world he was familiar, and in his talkyng had on-to hem in maner of mery langage with stedfast cher of sadnesse. The o puple coumforted he with sad talking to conferme hem in her holinesse. The opir puple gadered he on-to a perfeccion with goostly myrth and deuoute iocundnesse.

(p. 46, 11.9-16)

A similar re-organization occurs at the beginning of chapter 43 (p. 57, 11.10-18) where Capgrave presents Augustine's three reasons for re-reading and revising his works in parallel form while the Latin has a less logical structure (p. 73, 11.8-15).

³⁴) Thus, *Vade... securo; impossibile enim est ut filius tantarum pereat lacrimarum* (p. 18, 11.2-3) becomes « Go fro me, woman, go fro me with þis sikyrnesse. It is impossible that a child which hath so many teres wept for him schuld perisch » (p. 11, 11.19-21). Obviously, many of the other examples discussed in other connections demonstrate this method too. More which are concrete and literal compared to their sources are found: p. 15, 11.6-8; p. 15, 1.28 - p. 16, 1.5; p. 20, 11.4-7; p. 24, 11.22-25; p. 27, 11.5-7; p. 35, 11.8-10; p. 40, 11.16-19; p. 44, 11.3-5; p. 50, 11.17-18; p. 51, 11.1-7; p. 55, 11.19-24.

Finally, there are instances where Capgrave considers the rhetorical effect as he translates and re-orders his passage accordingly. For example, while he rejected the *numquid* series in his translation of one of Augustine's sermons as too shortened and abrupt, in this example Capgrave not only adds two iterations of the verb *came*, he also moves the verb to the beginning of his sentences, and divides the third sentence of the Latin so that the repetition becomes more prominent.

Ego, sacerdotes dei altissimi, ut multi vestrum viderunt et audire potuerunt, *veni* ad hanc ciuitatem cum karissimis meis amicis, euodio, simplicio, alipio, nebridio et anastasio. Securus denique *ueni* quia sciebam presulari sanctum senem valerium. Propterea securus *accessi* non ut haberem in uos potestatem, sed ut abiectus essem in domo domini omni diebus uite mee, non ut ministrari deberem, sed ministrare et pacifice uiuere optabam in solitudine, ...

(p. 42, 11.4-12, italics added)

and

As 3e know, *I cam on-to þis cyte* with my welbeloued frendis Euodio, Simplicio, Alipio, Nebridio & Anastasio. *I cam hidir* with a maner of sikirnesse, for I wist wel þat þe good fader Valerius was bischop her. *I cam hidyr*, not for to haue powere ouyr 3ou in dignite, but for to dwelle as an outcast in þe hous of our Lord all þe dayes of my lyf. *I cam hidir*, not for to receyue seruyse of oper men, but for to lyue pesibly in desert with my breperin.

(p. 37, 11.5-12, italics added)

Such examples from the one work which can be compared to its source show that Capgrave was a careful composer despite his lapses and, above all, that he was aware of his audience. Such features of his style as the exegetical elaborations, translations, and references to authority figure in all of the prose works. But the differences in the nature of their sources and in the persons to whom they were directed make their surface effects highly varied.

JANE C. FREDEMAN