

Learning to Die from the Experts: Bishop John Russell's Lodging at the London Charterhouse

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Shortly before 1485, John Russell (d.1494), Bishop of Lincoln and Richard III's Chancellor, built himself a house within the precincts of the London Charterhouse. Already possessing an episcopal palace at Old Temple, his new house provided the somewhat frail bishop with an occasional retreat among the monks.¹ The Carthusians were traditionally diffident towards the receiving of guests.² Yet, Russell's building passed the scrutiny of the Order's General Chapter.³ He had the status of *conservator* in the Order (protector) which may have assisted this process.⁴ Though direct evidence for the bishop's objectives is unavailable, Russell fits a pattern of wealthy, aged and predominantly ecclesiastical men who drew upon Carthusian asceticism as part of their preparation for death. Carthusian monks were believed to have already begun the process of dying. Through ascetic circumscription of their bodies, they aspired to a mortified consciousness unattached to the material world and especially receptive of God's grace. Their elderly visitors sought to imitate this detachment so that they themselves could face death with patience and confidence. For the monks, Russell's house was a compromise grounded on the principle of *discretio*. This enabled them to mitigate the full force of their rules for some necessary cause or to avoid scandal. Although it was within the precinct, the house was largely independent from the monastery that contained it. By not using the Carthusians' guest accommodation, the bishop avoided

¹ I am grateful to Dr Anne Sutton for providing me with a copy of '*Verus cellhy je suis*' (True I am): a study of John Russell, Bishop of Lincoln and chancellor of England for Richard III', By A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, see above, and asking me to write this study. The reference to the building of Russell's house before 1485 comes from the bishop's register, see *ibid.*, pp. 14-15 and n. 58 above.

² Guigo, *Consuetudines*, in J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina*, 221 vols, Paris 1844-1864, cols. 631-757 (hereafter *Consuetudines* and PL); *Statuta Antiqua*, in *Statuta Ordinis Cartusiensis*, Basel 1510, sigs. [2]a1r-[2]p8r; *Statuta Nova* (1368), see *Statuta Ordinis Cartusiensis*, Basel 1510, sigs. [2]q1v-[2]t8r (hereafter *Statuta Nova*).

³ M. Sargent and J. Hogg, *The Chartae of the Carthusian General Chapter*, 57 vols, Salzburg 1982-, vol. 2, p. 214: 'We praise, approve and most graciously confirm the house built by the reverend father, the Bishop of Lincoln, the conservator of our houses which are in the English province of our Carthusian Order, within the bounds of the house of the said order near London and granted by the same [house] to the same [bishop] till the end of his life, requiring that neither in the life of the said bishop, nor after his death, should any married man or any other woman inhabit or rent the said house'.

⁴ Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, '*Verus cellhy je suis*', p. 21

draining the monks' resources. Russell's house therefore moderated the bishop's impact on the brethren's solitude even as he sought to penetrate it.

Carthusian solitude depended on patronage and therefore, paradoxically, on continued involvement with the world.⁵ This was not simply an ineluctable paradox, grudgingly accepted, but also a consequence and core constituent of Carthusian identity. The diverse roles that the Carthusians ultimately found themselves fulfilling in the Church outside their walls were frequently a result, rather than a contradiction, of their intense commitment to solitary life.⁶ The respect for Carthusian devotional writers, their esteem as monastic reformers and the regard given to them as intercessors for the dead were all contingent on their continued austerity and remoteness.⁷ For Russell, the Carthusians of London and Sheen acted as counsellors, guiding him through the early processes of dying. This activity tested the definition of solitude embodied in Carthusian statutes. However, it also depended on assigning a meaning to Carthusian solitude (that Carthusian life was a kind of death) that the Order deliberately cultivated. These guests participated in the Charterhouse's ascetic practices as outsiders: none of them became monks. Yet they formed part of a contiguous community of practice. By deferring to Carthusian *discretio* and drawing on the Carthusian mortifying practices, they reified and gave form to, rather than subverted, this aspect of the monks' self-image.

Even at the Order's inception, Carthusian solitude had entailed compromise. To overcome the difficulties of solitary life, the order's founder, St Bruno (1030-1101) and his companions were enclosed as a community in the valley of Chartreuse, just north of Grenoble. Originally, Carthusian cells were little more than huts, but as the order grew, the design of the Charterhouses became more formalised. Each member of the monastery occupied a two-storey cell, with a

⁵ For studies that emphasise the role of patronage in shaping the conditions of Carthusian life, S. Lindquist, *Agency, Visibility and Society at the Chartreuse of Champmol*, Aldershot 2008; J. Luxford, 'The space of the tomb in Carthusian consciousness', in Frances Andrews, ed., *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages*, Donington 2011, pp. 259-81; M. Damen and R. Steen, 'Collective memory and personal memoria: the Carthusian Monastery of Scheut as a crossroads of urban and princely patronage in fifteenth century Brabant' in J. Cauchies and P. Peporte, eds, *Mémoires conflictuelles et mythes concurrents dans les Pays Bourguignons (ca. 1380-1580)*, Neuchâtel 2012, pp. 29-48.

⁶ This is not, however, to deny the numerous cases of inconsistent or indifferent piety in charterhouses throughout Europe, as revealed in the ongoing project of Michael Sargent and James Hogg to edit the *chartae* of the Carthusian general chapters.

⁷ See Sargent, 'The transmission by the English Carthusians of some late medieval English spiritual writings', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 27 (1976), pp. 225-40; Note, however the caveats voiced in V. Gillespie, 'The haunted text: reflections in *The Mirrour to Devote People*', in D. Reveney and G. Caie, eds, *Medieval Texts and Contexts*, London, 2008, pp. 136-66; For monastic reform, see T. Gaens, 'Fons hortorum irrigans ceteras religiones irrigans religiones' in S. Molvarec, ed., *Fish out of Water*, Leuven 2013, pp. 52-103; D. Martin, 'Carthusians as advocates of women visionary reformers' in J. Luxford, *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism*, Turnhout 2008, pp. 124-57; For intercessions see Luxford, 'The space of the tomb in Carthusian consciousness', *passim*; C. Rowntree, 'Studies in Carthusian History in Later Medieval England', unpublished PhD thesis, University of York 1981, p. 132.

walled garden, surrounding the great cloister. Their needs were attended to by lay brethren occupying a *correrie* or lower house removed some distance from the monks themselves.⁸ Under normal circumstances, the brethren gathered once a week in chapter and each day to sing Matins and Vespers, the other hours being said alone in the cell. Every Sunday, after *nones*, the brethren gathered in the cloister for a colloquium to discuss practical needs and to practice the liturgy. The rest of their lives were to be spent in lonely contemplation.⁹

The London Charterhouse was a product of the move to urban foundations that began in 1271 with the foundation of the Charterhouse of Vauvert, on the outskirts of Paris.¹⁰ Such foundations led to a reorganization of how charterhouses were financed and thus how Carthusian solitude was practised. They departed from an economy based on the large agricultural 'deserts' surrounding rural houses.¹¹ The initial founding and continued financing of an urban charterhouse necessitated the opening of that house's doors to benefactors.¹² In the case of the London house, the original donation of Sir Walter Manny (1310-1372) and Bishop Northburgh of London (1300-1361) financed only the first cell. It took thirty years before a frater, an infirmary and a precinct wall were built. The Great Cloister's quadrangle of cells was not finished until 1419. Completion depended on donors such as the fishmonger and former mayor, William Walworth (d. 1386), who founded five cells in 1371 and Adam Fraunceys (c. 1310-1375), who founded a further five in 1374.¹³ The house's need for benefaction did not end with the completion of the house's fabric.¹⁴ The London Charterhouse's survival depended on continual engagement with secular benefactors. Reliance on such patronage transformed the Carthusian way of life. The monks had to cultivate the goodwill of their neighbours and provide services. To do this, they went beyond the normative solitude prescribed by the *Consuetudines* to attract benefactions. Masses for individual dead, the burial of outsiders within the cloister, allowing gifts (both of items and money) to be made to individual monks all transgressed the boundary with the *saeculum* that Guigo envisioned. All came to be tolerated

⁸ The number of monks was usually twelve plus the prior, unless it was a double house as the London Charterhouse, in which case the number was twenty-four plus the prior, see *Guigo*, ch. 78, art. 1.

⁹ Guigo, ch. VII, art. I and IX.

¹⁰ S. Molvarec, 'Vox clamantis in eremo', in S. Molvarec, ed., *Fish out of Water*, pp. 13-49, p. 43.

¹¹ Urban space constraints also compressed upper and lower houses into one complex. This plan was quickly taken up for all new foundations.

¹² J. Hogg, 'Everyday life in the Charterhouse', in H. Appelt, ed., *Klösterliche Sachkultur Des Spätmittelalters*, Vienna 1980, pp. 113-46, pp. 127-128.

¹³ D. Knowles and W. Grimes, *Charterhouse*, London 1954, pp. 24-26.

¹⁴ For the economy of the London Charterhouse, see E.M. Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England*, London 1930, pp. 193-97.

within the London Charterhouse and the Carthusian Order as a whole over the course of the fourteenth and particularly the fifteenth-century.¹⁵

These concessions to secular demands were the products of *discretio*.¹⁶ In its late antique context, it was a communal hermeneutic (or casuistry) deployed by groups of hermits to resolve the ambiguities of solitary life. It could be an individual virtue, but was usually centred on the relationship between superior and subordinate. Human frailty required an extrinsic source of immutable authority; the subordinate depended on his superior's *discretio*.¹⁷ Combining reason, experience and divine inspiration, the superior identified a 'middle way' between potentially dangerous alternatives.¹⁸ By this virtue, the dangers of excessive observance could be avoided and safe compromises achieved. *Discretio* could be applied to virtually any situation. John Cassian's (360-435) examples ranged from the discernment of divine and diabolical spirits, to the question of whether to accept bread from bandits.¹⁹ Though little apparent in the Order's foundational documents, *discretio* was much vaunted by Carthusian spiritual writers.²⁰ It was exercised at every level of the Carthusian hierarchy. The General Chapter and its deputies had the last say but the prior arbitrated most of the decisions affecting the day-to-day running of a house and each monk was expected to cultivate the virtue in himself.²¹

The greatest secular beneficiaries of the Carthusians' *discretio* belonged, like Russell to a spiritual and social elite. The London Charterhouse did provide for the population of London at large, especially in their liturgy.²² More personal interactions, however, were generally reserved for wealthy benefactors who could contribute to the house's fabric or upkeep. What evidence exists for

¹⁵ Molvarec, 'Vox clamantis in eremo', p. 14; for requiem masses, see Hogg, 'Everyday life in the Charterhouse', pp. 131-32; for burial of outsiders in the monastery see Luxford, 'The space of the tomb in Carthusian consciousness', pp. 259-81, p. 267; for the accepting of gifts see G. Coppack, "'Make straight in the desert a highway for our God": the Carthusians and community in late medieval England', in J. Burton and K. Stöber, eds, *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the Later Middle Ages*, Woodbridge 2008, pp. 168-79, pp. 36-37.

¹⁶ D. Martin, 'Reform without revolution: *discretio* as the legacy of the Carthusians', in J. Ganz and M. Früh, eds, *Das Erbe der Kartäuser*, Salzburg 1999, pp. 170-84.

¹⁷ See P. Brown, *Body and Society*, New York 1988, pp. 129-31, 236-37 and 277-78.

¹⁸ A good exploration of the concept is to be found in C. Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection and Imperfection*, Berkeley 1988, pp. 22, 72-74; Martin, 'Reform without revolution', passim; *ibid*, *Fifteenth Century Carthusian Reform*, pp. 115-34.

¹⁹ See discussion in Cassian, *Collationum*, in *PL*, vol. 49, cols. 477-1328, cols. 523-34.

²⁰ Guigo invokes *discretio* only once in his *Consuetudines*, see Ch. 19; for a Carthusian treatment of *discretio*, see Denis the Carthusian, *De vitiis et virtutibus*, pp. 216-18.

²¹ For the range of *discretio*, see the comments of the Austrian Carthusian Nicholas Kempf (1416-1497), *De discretione*, in B. Pezii, ed., *Bibliotheca Ascetica Antiquo-Novo, tomi I-IV (V-XII)*. [*A facsimile of the edition published at Ratisbon, 1723-40*], 12 vols, Farnborough 1967, 12 vols, vol. 9, pp. 380-532, pp.385-87.

²² J. Gribbin, 'Ex oblatione fidelium: the liturgy of the London Charterhouse and the laity' in J. Hogg, ed., *The Mystical Tradition and the Carthusians*, Salzburg 1996, pp. 83-104, p. 91.

those who, like Russell, were admitted to England's Charterhouses suggests that they were primarily aristocrats and wealthy churchmen. Russell's successor in the house was the former treasurer of Calais and book collector, Sir Thomas Thwaites (1435-1503), who took possession of the property in 1500.²³ He was succeeded by the churchman Robert Langton (1470-1524), whose will left the contents of 'my house here at the Charterhouse' to the Carthusians. To these may be added examples from Sheen Priory (Richmond). In 1514, John Colet (1467-1519) constructed for himself a 'very splendid' retreat ('nest') for himself within the precinct. A young Reginald Pole (1500-1558), formerly a student of the priory school at Sheen, was resident there between 1527 and 1528 after his return from Padua.²⁴ It subsequently became a retreat for Cardinal Wolsey (1473-1530) in Lent of 1529, from which he would go by a 'secret gallery' to the Chapel and would visit 'oon or other' of the monks 'in his sell'.²⁵ In short, the Carthusians were open to visits by either churchmen whose rank meant that the monks were obligated to admit them, or those wealthy enough to be major benefactors of the house. Emblematic of this deference are the comments in a unique commentary on the *Statuta Antiqua* that was written in an English charterhouse (though it is uncertain which) and which is contained in British Library MS Cotton Julius A ix.²⁶ This declared, in contravention on the rules of access that 'We admit kings and princes and counts and great lords and their chaplains and canons, as well as notable persons *at least* into the church'.²⁷ Carthusian openness, however, should not be overstated, their overriding goal was to remain dead to the world.²⁸

Russell's dwelling was just one instance of the long term secular presence within Carthusian monasteries. This presence, while it tested the rules of

²³ This was the Thomas Thwaites implicated in the Perkin Warbeck conspiracy, who escaped with his life in 1495; see A.F. Sutton and P.W. Hammond, eds, *The Coronation of Richard III*, Gloucester 1983, p. 405; J. Backhouse, 'Founders of the Royal Library: Edward IV and Henry VII as collectors of illuminated manuscripts', *England in the Fifteenth Century*, ed D. Williams, Harlaxton Symposium 1986, Woodbridge 1987, pp. 23-41, esp. pp. 30, 34-35, 36-38. For his will below.

²⁴ C. Rowntree, 'Studies in Carthusian history in later medieval England', pp. 398-99.

²⁵ George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed, R. Sylvester, Oxford 1959, p. 130; Thomas More (1478-1535) is also reputed to have dwelt at the London Charterhouse for a short period, possibly as a potential applicant to the order. However, as Caroline Barron concludes, though he probably lived for a time near the Charterhouse, the evidence does not bear out the claim, see 'Thomas More, the London Charterhouse and Richard III' in Hannes Kleineke, ed., *Parliament Personalities and Power*, Woodbridge 2011, pp. 203-14.

²⁶ BL, Cotton MS Julius A ix, ff. 23-157, this is an incomplete fifteenth-century commentary, based on the marginalia in the 1510 Amorbach edition (see n. 2), written on paper. It has been bound, at a later date, with several other Carthusian texts and a letter-book from the Benedictine Abbey of Abingdon on parchment.

²⁷ BL, Cotton Manuscript Julius Aix, f. 75r; The *Statuta Antiqua* reserves access of this kind to churchmen only, *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. [2]i6v.

²⁸ See below.

Carthusian solitude, depended on and respected Carthusian austerity. In respecting the monks' eremitism, it joined a topography of art and architecture financed by seculars within the London Charterhouse that far from detracting from the Carthusians' retreat from the world, may have functioned to harden the brethren's self-image as men dead to the world.

Carthusian Hospitality and John Russell's House

The Carthusians were not famous for their hospitality. Though guest accommodation was usually available at Charterhouses, the Carthusians' legislation proscribed largesse and free fraternisation with outsiders. The limited details that can be gleaned of Russell's house suggest that its design was sensitive to the Order's diffidence towards visitors. Russell's dwelling was an independent household within the precinct. Other than residency and occasional meetings, the bishop required nothing further of the monks.

The exact position of Russell's house is conjectural. As yet, no archaeological evidence of the house has been discovered. It has been speculated by Philip Temple that it occupied a space to the south of the Great cloister and East of the conventual chapel.²⁹ He contends that it became the prior's new residence at some point after 1524 when the wall separating it from an unlettered cell on the Great Cloister's south walk was knocked through.³⁰ However no evidence of it was found by the MOLAS team that excavated the site between 1998 and 2000.³¹ Nevertheless, Temple's positioning of the house is probably fairly accurate. The indenture letting the house to Thomas Thwaites gives the fullest description of the house available:

This indenture [was] made on the seventh day of the month of August in the year of the Lord fifteen hundred and the fifteenth year of Henry the seventh after the conquest between brother Richard Roche, prior of the House of the Salutation of the Mother of God of the Carthusian Order on the one part and the honourable man Thomas Thwaites, knight, on the other. It attests that the said prior and convent, with one assent and consent, grant and transfer (as a farm let) to the said Thomas Thwaites a tenement next to the laundry of the said house, which John Russell of pious memory (until recently bishop of Lincoln) made and erected with houses and gardens, which the said Thomas presently holds and occupies. From the forthcoming feast of St Michael until the end of Thomas Thwaites life, and for one year after his death, the said tenement, with its houses and gardens and its appurtenances is to be had and held by the said Thomas, his heirs and

²⁹ P. Temple, *Survey of London: the Charterhouse*, New Haven 2010, pp. 24, 28.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 28.

³¹ B. Barber and C. Thomas, *The London Charterhouse*, MOLAS Monograph 10, London 2002, p. 37.

his commissioners exactly as they are, at present, enclosed with walls. For this, during the whole time of [his] life aforesaid, 53s 4d of good and legal English money is to be paid to the aforesaid prior and convent and their successors on the feasts of Easter and St Michael as equal portions, with the proviso that the said Thomas Thwaites, his heirs or his commissioners sufficiently repair, maintain and conserve the said house, with the walls pertaining to the same built for the same bishop during the time aforesaid. Likewise, in that place they may not admit, on any day, any woman within the aforesaid enclosure beyond the day's meals unless they do so for any cause or business of honesty, nor should any adult woman sleep in that place overnight ... Likewise, by the present indenture, the said Thomas agrees that before the forthcoming feast of Saint Michael, he will disclaim, relax, discharge and remit to the said prior and convent and their successors all right, claim, interest or title which he has or should have in the cell and in certain chambers joined to the little cloister of the said Charterhouse and in the mansion and house built over the east door of the great cemetery of the same house.³²

The Charterhouse's laundry was situated on the south walk of the Great Cloister but was contiguous with two cells on either side of it. For Russell's house to have been next to the laundry, it would have probably had to occupy some site in the approximately 80m by 20m piece of ground that separated the cells on the south walk from the outer wall separating the precinct from the outer cemetery. That Thwaites was given implicit permission to entertain women (possibly his daughter) there during the day suggests that it would probably not have been accessed through or have given access onto either of the Cloisters. The *Statuta* forbade monks from setting eyes on women. Lay brothers and *clerici redditii*, who dealt with them when necessary, were not even to receive money directly from women's hands; a servant was required to act as an intermediary.³³

The evidence that does exist suggests that the house must have been a substantial build. Russell's register shows that it was two storeys high, equal in height to the Carthusians' cells.³⁴ Though the details are hazy, the complex described in Thwaite's indenture suggests an enclosed space with gardens and more than one building within it. This may indicate a detached service building. Robert Langton's will, which appears to have been written while he was

³² TNA, E 326/2163, the remainder of this indenture provides for the reclamation of the property should the rent be unpaid and mentions one 'Richard Crook' who was resident in the property over the gate to the cemetery. Crook's identity is unclear but his occupancy of the apartment over the gate places him in an area that was in public use. It does not suggest he occupied a privileged space within the monastery.

³³ *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. [2]m2r.

³⁴ Barber and Thomas, *The London Charterhouse*, p. 18.

resident in Russell's house, suggests that it had its own kitchen. He left his 'pottes and pannys' to the Charterhouse and a bequest to his cooks to tide them over while they searched for a new employer.³⁵ The only evidence that exists for the internal layout of the house is the reference to two oratories on both storeys from Russell's register.³⁶ The size of the household that this building could accommodate is unclear. As a retreat, Russell would have been unlikely to bring a large entourage. When (the admittedly more modest) Langton made his will, he had it witnessed by 'all my houshold serv[a]unts'. He records only five names (not including his two cooks, two stewards, laundress or his chaplain).³⁷

Prima facie, Russell's house represented the tiered guest accommodation provided for visitors according to their social status. The prescriptions of Carthusian legislation constrained what the monks could provide for outsiders. Guigo's *Consuetudines* stressed that guests should always be reminded how spare Carthusian resources were.³⁸ Even in giving alms, the monks were to remember their commitment to solitude and let no pauper under the Charterhouse roof:

We fled to the solitude of this desert not to care for the bodies of strangers but for the eternal health of our souls ... am I by undertaking to feed seculars to become secular myself?³⁹

The *Statuta Antiqua* of 1258 did not much ameliorate this injunction, requiring that guests be offered only 'such beds and food as we use'.⁴⁰ The anonymous commentary on the *Statuta Antiqua*, expanded on this rule. It was intended, the commentator argued, to remove the temptation to seek patronage through providing worldly things:

[it is] against those who delicately and very carnally prepare for guests in the hope of some temporal benefit. And to entice them by such carnalities into such [generosity] is contrary to the health of souls [and] inappropriate to persons of [our] order.⁴¹

Their preparedness for guests notwithstanding, there is conflict in the Carthusian stipulations on the treatment of outsiders. The commitment to solitude did not sit well with the obligation to defer to social rank. The commentator expressed this anxiety clearly. While the Carthusians were to receive outsiders austere this regulation was to be ameliorated in cases where the visitor was someone who should be 'well received'. In this case following

³⁵ Langton's will, PROB 11/21, ff. 165v-166r, f. 165v.

³⁶ Russell's Register, LAO, Reg. 22, f. 77, as cited Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, 'Verus celuy je suis), p. .. n. 58.

³⁷ PROB 11/21, f. 166r.

³⁸ Guigo, ch. 19, art. 1.

³⁹ Ibid, ch. 20, art. 1.

⁴⁰ *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. [2]i6v.

⁴¹ BL, MS Cotton Julius A ix, f. 75v; c.f. *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. i6v.

the rule would be inappropriate and might even scandalize the guest. Yet even this relaxation was qualified with a reference the *Consuetudines*: 'we shall never be compelled to wander or quarrel on their [guests'] account'.⁴²

The best evidence for this variation is to be found at the Charterhouse of Mountgrace, Yorkshire. There, Glyn Coppack identified the most complete remains of Carthusian guest ranges in England, which show at least three levels of lodging. On the ground floor there was a set of four 'cells' at the south end, a common guest hall for dining, a screens passage and a servery. On the first and second floor, however, was a much larger apartment with its own hall and chamber at the south end and the procurator's rooms at the north (he was a monk who acted as the steward of the house). In the 1470s, further guest accommodation was constructed within the precinct which had a similar ground floor layout, but a common dormitory on the second floor. Lacking both a fireplace and a latrine (those facilities were only to be found in the procurator's apartment), the spaces were socially stratified but none of them would have been especially comfortable.⁴³ The common dormitory suggests that, in an ideal world, accommodation 'as we use' was to represent the higher end of what the Carthusians would offer.⁴⁴ Mountgrace, however, must be considered an exception to the rule. The quantity of accommodation on offer represented its importance as a stopping off point on the pilgrimage route from York to Durham, rather than the normative practice of the Carthusian Order.⁴⁵

The London Charterhouse seems also to have kept to the spirit of the Guigo's admonitions. There was guest accommodation on the little cloister. The form it took is unknown. However, when he took residency in the bishop's house, Thomas Thwaites gave up his claim to a 'cell' on the little Cloister.⁴⁶ That it was a cell may imply that it was accommodation 'as we use'. Yet there is also evidence that the guest accommodation could also be rather more sumptuous. Assuming that they did not come from Sir Edward North's (1496-1564) post-Dissolution conversion of the house into a mansion after 1545, the

⁴² Ibid, f. 75v; Guigo, ch. 19, art. 3.

⁴³ G. Coppack, *Christ's Poor Men*, Stroud 2009, pp. 111-12.

⁴⁴ A similar accommodation may have existed at Witham. In his *Itinerarium*, the antiquary William Worcester (1415-c. 1482) refers, opaquely, to a 'dormitory' built by Bishop Thomas Becketon (1390-1465) of Bath and Wells at the Charterhouse of Witham (Som). William Worcester, *William Worcester Itineraries*, trans. J. Harvey, Oxford 1969, pp. 296-97: 'He built a dormitory near the church of the Charterhouse of Witham'.

⁴⁵ See also the apartment adjoined to the conventual chapel built by the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold (1342-1404) at Champmol: E. Lotz 'Secret rooms: private spaces for private devotion in late medieval Burgundy', in J. Luxford, ed., *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism*, pp. 163-176; Lindquist, *Agency Visuality and Society*, pp.36, 192-200.

⁴⁶ Thwaites gave up his interests in both a 'cell' and in 'certain chambers' joined to the little cloister and to a house built above the great western door. This may have represented accommodation both for Thwaites and his servants. See above TNA, E 326/2163, cited above n. 32.

guest quarters contained brightly decorated tin glazed tiles.⁴⁷ A fragment was found, in the far west of the precinct, of a hexagonal tile in an Italianate *maiolica* style; almost certainly from a Flemish workshop run by Italian emigrants such as Guido di Savino (d. 1541). That a similar style of tile was used in the the Vyne Chapel pavement (Hampshire) and Hampton Court Palace suggests their provenance may have been earlier than 1545.⁴⁸ Such tiles were a fashionable luxury in the early sixteenth century. Their sensitivity to wear also made them an expensive way to pave floors. They strongly contrast the drabber tiling of the cloister. Excavation of the north walk revealed undecorated tiles, also Flemish, with a yellow, green or brown glaze arranged in a chequerboard pattern.⁴⁹ It is possible that Thwaites's cell and the expensive tile represent both sides of Carthusian hospitality at London; the austerity of the cell and the necessity to provide for visitors of status. It is also clear that this accommodation was frequently in use. Making allowances for differences of diet between outsiders and the brethren, who could eat no meat, was routine. The Charterhouse had an offsite flesh kitchen called 'Egypt' and surviving procurators' accounts show considerable expenditure on meat in the early sixteenth century.⁵⁰

If a range of accommodation options already existed at the London Charterhouse, then Russell's choice to build his own accommodation represents a conscious decision not to use these facilities. The kitchen strongly suggests that Russell's house and its inhabitants lived largely independently from the hospitality of the Carthusians. They were not the Carthusians' guests in the strict sense of being subject to the rules set down by Guigo's *Consuetudines* and the *Statuta Antiqua*. None of those who took up residence in Russell's house, or the house very like it at Sheen, appear to have possessed anything equivalent to a corrody.⁵¹ Thwaites's indenture did not mention a stipend or food privileges. The semi-annual rent he paid suggests that these residents were expected to live of their own resources, which were clearly substantial.

Discretio can be seen governing Russell's house in the grant of the General Chapter and Thwaites's indenture. The Carthusians discerned what was essential to their solitude and what elements could be safely compromised. Though unspoken, the key attraction of this arrangement for the Carthusians

⁴⁷ Barber and Thomas, *The London Charterhouse*, pp. 98-99.

⁴⁸ A. Lane, *A Guide to the Collection of Tiles*, London 1960, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁹ Barber and Thomas, *The London Charterhouse*, p. 98.

⁵⁰ TNA, SC6/Henry VIII/2112, mm. 2-3: 21li 12s 1d spent on meat 1515-1516; TNA, SC6/Henry VIII/2114, m. 2: 13li 13s 10d spent 'in Egypt' 1526-1527; given that statute (6 Henry VIII cap. 3) fixed the price of beef and pork at 1/2d per pound, this suggests that over four and a half tons of meat may have been consumed at the Charterhouse between 1515 and 1516.

⁵¹ For corrodies see B. Harvey, *Living and Dying in Late Medieval England 1150-1540*, Oxford 1993, pp. 179-80.

was the autonomy of the house. Its independence from the monastery's facilities would have protected the monks from having to breach the spirit of their rules by providing lavish accommodation for a guest of Russell's high status.

Learning to Die from the Carthusians

Russell's decision to build this house close to the monks was probably informed by his consciousness of his own mortality.⁵² The thread connecting almost all those seculars who took up temporary residence at English charterhouses (and indeed many of those who interacted with the Order) seems to have been the anticipation of death. Russell was suffering with a long-term illness when he built his house, aged around fifty-six. In 1486, he requested the pope's permission to retire from his bishopric.⁵³ Earlier in the century, in around 1446, Cardinal Henry Beaufort (1375-1447), then seventy-one, had sought the advice of William Mede, a Carthusian of Sheen, following a period of illness.⁵⁴ Thomas Thwaites was sixty-five when he made his indenture. Colet, Langton and Wolsey were all in their fifties by the time that they are known to have been resident at a Charterhouse. When old age begins is relative and subjective rather than absolute.⁵⁵ However, actions concomitant with their withdrawal also fitted a broader pattern of death preparation.⁵⁶ The most direct evidence for this is Erasmus's description of Colet's retreat to Sheen, writing that he built it for 'when he might be past work, broken in health and obliged to retire from the company of men'.⁵⁷ That Colet drew up his will at the Charterhouse in the same year that he began construction of his residence lends credence to his friend's eulogy. Langton is only known to have been resident at the Charterhouse in 1524, the same year he made his will. That his second home was at God's House Hospital in Southampton may indicate that he was suffering with some longer-term illness.⁵⁸ Thomas Thwaites and Cardinal Wolsey faced quite a different prospect of death. Both were in serious disgrace, when they came to the Charterhouse. One had recently escaped execution for treason, the other was facing it. Indeed, the only period in which Russell himself can be said with any certainty to have been resident in his house was in

⁵² Similar to those observed in A. Fizzard, 'Retirement arrangements and the laity at religious houses in pre-Reformation Devon', *Florilegium*, vol. 22 (2005), pp. 59-79, passim.

⁵³ *Cal. Papal Letters*, vol. 14, 1484-92, p. 12.

⁵⁴ A. Gribbin, 'Tribularer si nescirem misericordias tuas: Cardinal Henry Beaufort and his Carthusian confessor' in J. Luxford, ed, *Studies in Carthusian Monasticism*, pp. 73-106, p. 77.

⁵⁵ For the bewildering variety of ways in which old age was categorised, see D. Schäfer, *Old Age and Disease in Early Modern Medicine*, trans. P. Baker, London 2011.

⁵⁶ S. Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages*, London 1997, p. 12.

⁵⁷ R. Mynors, ed, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, Toronto 1975, 84 vols, vol. 2, p. 237.

⁵⁸ Langton's will, PROB 11/21, ff. 165v.

1485 when, following the accession of Henry VII, he was himself under suspicion, having been Richard III's chancellor.⁵⁹

Retirement to a monastery, either in old age or at the point of death, was a well-established tradition, going back into late antiquity.⁶⁰ Yet the action here does not fit the twelfth-century pattern of monastic conversion; none of these men became monks. A cursory examination of the ages of Englishmen professed as Carthusians, or who considered profession, in the second half of the fifteenth-century and early sixteenth, who are recorded in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, suggests a tendency for profession in the mid-twenties. The severe regime may have been regarded as too harsh for older bodies not already used to it. Indeed, when older men did join it was often as a *clericus redditus*, for example John Blacman (1408-1485), a former fellow of Eton College Oxford and dean of Westbury-on-Trym, Gloucestershire, who joined in 1457.⁶¹ This meant that they occupied a cell on the great cloister but, unlike their inmates, were allowed to own property and to leave the order with good reason.⁶² Furthermore, none of those who resided at these houses were permanent inhabitants. Unlike Russell, they did not apply to retire from their priestly responsibilities.⁶³

Correlation, of course, is not causation. No evidence survives to confirm that this was Russell's specific motive for seeking this contact with the monks. However, fragments of the exchanges between the monks of Sheen and other guests do exist. These suggest that these visitors received instruction that was broadly consistent with the *artes moriendi*.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, 'Venus celluy je suis', pp. ...

⁶⁰ C. Bouchard, *Sword, Miter and the Church and Burgundy, 980-1198*, Ithaca 1987, p. 56; J. Lyon, 'The withdrawal of aged noblemen into monastic communities: interpreting the sources from twelfth century Germany', in A. Classen, ed, *Old Age and the Renaissance*, Berlin 2007, pp. 143-69, passim; G. Minois, *A History of Old Age*, trans. S. Tenison, Cambridge 1989, pp. 141, 167.

⁶¹ BL, MS Sloane 2512, ff. 3r-4v; see also Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.53, ff. 25r-26v; Oxford Bodley MS 131, ff. 144v-145v; see also M. Sargent and M. Hennessy, 'The Latin verses over the cell doors of the London Charterhouse', passim; a *clericus redditus* was a sort of half monk who was allowed to own property and leave the order with good cause.

⁶² *Statuta Nova*, sigs. [2]t4r-[2]t4v.

⁶³ For priestly retirement see K. Salonen, 'What happened to old Priests in the late middle ages', in C. Krötzel and K. Mustakallio, eds, *On Old Age*, Turnhout 2011, pp. 186-95, passim.

⁶⁴ The *ars moriendi* can refer both to the tradition of texts surrounding the *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi* and to the broader fourteenth and fifteenth century genre of texts instructing readers on how to die well. The *Tractatus*'s progenitor seems to have been Saint Anselm's (1033-1109) *Admonitio moriendi*, a collection of questions to ask a dying individual to prepare them mentally for the afterlife. See Anselm, *Admonitio moriendi* in PL, vol. 158, cols. 685-687. However it also drew fairly heavily on Ambrose's (340-397), *De bono mortis*, especially in its characterisation of life as a prison and death as a release. See Ambrose, *De bono mortis*, in PL, vol. 14, cols. 539-68, esp. cols. 539-43. The immediate antecedent, however, was the *Medicin de l'ame* by Jean Gerson (1383-1429), Chancellor of the University of Paris, which elaborated Anselm's questions and added an exhortatory preface and a collection of prayers, see Jean Gerson, *Medicin de l'ame*, in P. Glorieux,

The *artes moriendi* combined two complementary approaches to dying: penance and asceticism.⁶⁵ Both obtained soteriological security in a slightly different way. Penance reconciled *moriens* to God through satisfactory works. The question of how to make appropriate satisfaction dominated the letters between Cardinal Beaufort and William Mede discussed below.⁶⁶ Asceticism, by contrast, was not meritorious *qua* itself but rather moulded the emotional and affective constitution of its practitioner. By renouncing sensual or profane gratifications and worldly attachments, *moriens* mortified his will and reconciled himself with death. By the congruence between his will and that of God (who had ordained his death), *moriens* made himself receptive to divine grace. Ultimately an appropriately desiring penitent was necessary for any act of penance to be effective (as per the doctrine of *facere quod in se est*).⁶⁷ Yet the focus on congruence of wills was especially important for those faced with immanent death, for whom penance was unfeasible. The consolation of the Anselmian questions and those that formed the second part of the *Tractatus de arte bene moriendi* was essentially of this ascetic type.⁶⁸ It was for mortification that Colet and Wolsey would come to Sheen. Writing to Erasmus, Colet characterised his retreat among the Carthusians using an ascetic commonplace. When his friend next saw him, Erasmus would find Colet 'dead to worldly things'.⁶⁹ Similarly Wolsey's biographer reported that he retreated to the monks to be 'perswadyd frome the vaynglorye of this world' and that from them he received a hair shirt that he often wore thereafter.⁷⁰ Given the circumstances in which these three churchmen turned to the Carthusians for penitential and ascetic advice, it can be adduced that their interest in such things was occasioned by their anticipation of death.

Their commitment to mortification won for the Carthusians a special reputation for preparedness for death outside their cloisters.⁷¹ For the monks,

ed, *Jean Gerson Oeuvres Completes*, 10 vols, Paris 1963-70, vol. 7, pp. 404-07; see N. Beaty, *The Craft of Dying*, New Haven 1970, p. 1ff.

⁶⁵ A. Appleford, *Learning to Die*, p. 103.

⁶⁶ See below.

⁶⁷ The formulation *facere quod in se est* was extremely important to fifteenth century preaching. In essence, it summarised the idea that God had freely committed himself to give grace to those who did what is in them, who truly desired salvation, even though their acts (penitential or otherwise) had no condign value. For the origins and detailed analysis of this idea in theological writing, see Heiko Obermann, '*Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat Gratiam*', Robert Holcot, O.P. and the beginnings of Luther's theology', *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 55, no. 4 (1962), pp. 317-42. For the role of this doctrine in the *Artes moriendi* see A. Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying*, Aldershot 2007, p. 18ff.

⁶⁸ A. Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying*, pp. 19-20.

⁶⁹ R. Mynors, ed., *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 2, p. 48.

⁷⁰ Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, p. 130.

⁷¹ For a full exploration of this theme, see Luxford, 'The space of the tomb in Carthusian consciousness', pp. 275-78.

mortification was conceived of as a kind of ‘insensibility’, a death of the mind before the death of the body by which the contemplative was freed from the sensory content of the world.⁷² As a poem in a Carthusian manuscript opined: ‘[th]e celle is the grafe fro [th]is trobyld lyfe vexacion, And of heuenly lyfe [th]e entre & consolacion’.⁷³ This mortification was forcefully represented to the laity in the *Dance of Death*. This combination of words and images originally decorated the cloisters of the Cemetary of *Les Innocents* in Paris, but was known in England by the second quarter of the fifteenth Century.⁷⁴ The *Dance of Death* depicts the triumph of mortality with cadaverous figures seizing members each of society’s estates and leading them to their graves. The Carthusian, resigned to his fate, was almost unique in that he was greeted with courtesy by death, who usually expressed only scorn for his victims. The monk’s response to death’s invitation expressed the mortification of his will:

I am, to the world, already dead,
By which I have less desire to live.
Why is it that all men fear death?
Because the flesh has been enslaved.
May it please God that my joyful soul
May be in Heaven after my demise.
All things in this life are nothing,
So he who is today, is nothingness tomorrow.⁷⁵

A very similar image of the Carthusian was probably depicted on the walls of St Paul’s Pardon Churchyard. John Stowe reports that during the reign of Henry VI, London’s common clerk, John Carpenter, arranged for a dance of death cycle to be ‘curiously painted on board, about the north Cloister’.⁷⁶ The version used there was based on John Lydgate’s (1370-1451) translation. Though he

⁷² In this the Carthusians took their cue from the seventh-century monk, John Climacus, see *Scala paradisi*, cols. 679-680: ‘The goal, therefore, is to be free from every experience of struggle and every motion of distress; St Bruno, *Expositio in Epistolas Pauli*, PL, vol. 153, cols. 11-568, col. 236: ‘This mortification is Jesus ... the life of Christ is manifested not only in the soul but also in the body, granting to is immortality and insensibility’; Denis the Carthusian, *In Scalam paradisi* in Denis the Carthusian, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 28, pp. 11-496, p. 96: ‘The goal [of mortification], however, is to be unmoved by outer things and insensible to sorrows, that is the perfection of this mortification consists in great stability and peace of mind thereafter’.

⁷³ BL, Additional MS. 37049, f. 22v. For the Carthusian provenance of this manuscript see D. Gray, ‘London, British Library, Additional MS 37049 – a spiritual encyclopedia’, in H. Barr and A. Hutchinson, eds, *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale*, Turnhout 2005, pp. 99-116.

⁷⁴ E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, New Haven 2005, pp. 103-05.

⁷⁵ P. Vaillant, ed, *La danse macabre de 1485*, Grenoble 1969, f. 6v: *Je suis au monde pièça mort/ Par quoy de vivre ai moins e[n]vie/ Ja soit que tout ho[m]me craint mort/ Puis que la char est assouinie:/ Plaise a dieu que lame rauie/ Soit es cielex apres mon trespas./ Cest tout neant de seste vie/ Tel est buy: qui demain nest pas*, compare to the complaints and despair of the cardinal, the various degrees of bishop and the priest, *Ibid*, ff. 2r-3v, 8r.

⁷⁶ John Stowe, *A Survey of London*, ed C.L. Kingsford, Oxford 1908, vol. 1, p. 109.

made some minor changes to the Carthusian's response to death but the sentiment was identical. While others feared mortality, the monk of the Charterhouse faces his fate without distress.

Vn-to the worlde/ I was de[d] ago ful longe
Bi myn ordre/ & my profession
[Thowgh] eueri man/ be he neuyr so strong
Dredith to deye/ bi naturall mocion
Afftyr his Flesshely/ Inclynacioun
Plese it [the] lorde/ my sowle for to borwe
Fro fendes myht/ & fro dampnacion
Som arn to-day/ that shal nat be to morwe.⁷⁷

There is no indication of how Russell, or indeed Colet or Wolsey, expected mortification to function. No relevant books survive from Russell's collection to provide a guide. They were only ever temporary residents of the Charterhouse and therefore unlikely to gain the full benefits of withdrawal. The *Tractatus de Arte Bene Moriendi* and its English translation, *The booke of the Crafte of Dying*, listed the five temptations that grieve a dying man. The fifth admonition was especially to carnall ... and sec[u]lar men' and warned of 'ov[er]moche occupacyon and besynesse owtewarde abowte temp[or]all thing[s]'. Anyone who did not put out of their mind all earthly things, risked losing the benefits that could accrue from suffering infirmity and death willingly. If *moriens* exhibited patience, his sufferings would satisfy God 'for all veniall sins'.⁷⁸ In this context, detachment from material things was therefore a contribution to satisfaction for sins rather than an aid to contemplation. The discomfort caused by Wolsey's hair shirt would have provided him with a tool for orienting his mind. Voluntarily eschewing comfort, Wolsey learned to endure pain in readiness for the discomforts of death. Indeed, if Cavendish's report may be believed, Wolsey was discovered to be wearing his hair shirt when he died.⁷⁹

It is this role, as a complement to good works, that asceticism played in the advice that Mede's letters gave to Cardinal Beaufort. Mortification was an undertone among instructions that were essentially penitential. The monk's especial concern was that the cardinal should try to make full satisfaction for the sins he had committed in the amassing of his great wealth:

Attend [to me] diligently and see that restitution may be done of all
the things [that you] have acquired wickedly, under whatever title,

⁷⁷ John Lydgate, *The Dance of Death*, ed F. Warren, London 1931, pp. 48-49.

⁷⁸ BL, Harleian MS 1706, f. 30v.

⁷⁹ Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, p. 182; Gavin Schwartz-Leeper has recently pointed out that, given Wolsey's love of spectacle, he may have affected the hair shirt more from the desire to present an image of piety to posterity than actual commitment to asceticism. Even if this was the case, this image of piety depended on the mortification of mind that the hair shirt symbolised, see *From Princes to Pages: The Literary Lives of Cardinal Wolsey, Tudor England's 'Other King'*, Leiden 2016, pp. 110ff.

cause or form you have acquired [them], because as Augustine says:
 ‘the sin is not diminished, unless the things taken are restored.’⁸⁰

The nearest that Mede came to advising the cardinal to observe ascetic self-discipline was in the matter of how he should make his bequests. The monk warned that the intention of the mind affected the contribution of a good work to salvation. If he allowed worldly affections to influence his gift giving, he would not only fail to accrue benefits, but would become like the worldly men he would reward.⁸¹ Therefore, quoting Saint Jerome, he advised that Beaufort renounce such worldly attachments and approach the task of making a will with a mortified mind: ‘he easily despises all things who thinks himself to be already dead’.⁸²

Significantly, there was very little distinctively Carthusian about the advice that Mede gave the cardinal. Mede’s advice was a largely conventional instruction about satisfaction, effectively identical to pastoral advice that circulated outside the cloister. This conventionality is perhaps most strongly shown in the second letter where he accentuated a point about the fickleness of executors with an exemplum drawn straight from the *Legenda aurea*. In his short story a knight of Charlemagne’s is forced to spend an extra seven days in Purgatory because his executor kept a horse that he was instructed to sell for alms money.⁸³ This same exemplum appears in sermons written for parish priests to use such as John Mirk’s *Festial* and the *Speculum sacerdotale*.⁸⁴ The broader point about not relying on executors may be found in the mid fifteenth-century devotional poem *Pety Job*.⁸⁵ Mede does not seem to have been offering a special Carthusian perspective on Beaufort’s problems but tailoring his counsel to the cardinal’s secular status. This should not surprise if the cardinal sought out the Carthusians specifically for their expertise in mortuary matters. Though Beaufort, Russell and the others presumably admired the austerity of the monks, none of the visitors who are listed above expressed any interest in becoming Carthusians. They came as seculars, for limited periods seeking a solution to the problem of attachment to the world. The solutions, therefore, had to be appropriate for those living in the world. Carthusian austerity was channelled and directed by their patrons’ needs.

⁸⁰ Gribbin, ‘Tribularer si nescirem misericordias tuas’, p. 95; the reference is to Augustine, *Epistolae*, in *PL*, vol. 33, cols. 61-1094, col. 662.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 95-96.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 96; See Jerome, *Epistolae*, in *PL*, vol. 22, cols. 325-1224, col. 549.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 98-99; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. W.G. Ryan, Princeton 1993, p. 676; another reference to Voragine appears earlier in the letter, see Gribbin, ‘Tribularer si nescirem misericordias tuas’, p. 96.

⁸⁴ John Mirk, *Festial*, ed T. Erbe, London 1905, p. 227-228; *Speculum sacerdotale*, ed E. Wetherby, London 1936, p. 227.

⁸⁵ BL, Harleian MS 1706, f. 15r.

If the function of Russell's dwelling was to facilitate this kind of contact, then it is fitting to conceive of it as part of the broader mortuary landscape of the London Charterhouse. Like the tombs that littered the cloister walk and conventual chapel, the house imposed seculars' expectation on the monks. Benefactors who bequeathed their bodies to the monks self-consciously moulded and exploited the monks' behaviour. Hence the strategic positioning of tombs such as that of the London clerk John Payn (d. 1466) who wanted to be buried 'in the cloister, before the choir door' so that the prominence of the tomb might ensure regular intercessions as the monks filed in and out.⁸⁶ Surveying the 'sepulchral topography' of the London Charterhouse and Carthusian death culture more generally, Julian Luxford pointed out the scant evidence of serious objections to the presence of secular tombs within charterhouses in the fifteenth century. His broader point was that far from violating Carthusian space, tombs could easily have been integrated into the Carthusian *habitus*.⁸⁷ Sir Thomas Thwaites asked to be buried in the chapel of St Jerome, where he had already built his tomb and to which he left the furnishings of his own chapel.⁸⁸ Each tomb a *memento mori*, they could potentially have concentrated the monks' minds on their own living death. They reified the monks' status as a liminal community occupying the border between the living and the dead.

The landscape that the monks inhabited was, after all, already full of reminders of death. The Great Cloister was dominated by the (often morbid) inscriptions on or over the cell doors. The texts were recorded, in a small manuscript compilation of *Artes moriendi*, by John Blacman. The verses over the prior's door, for example mocked vain pride with the promise of immanent death. These read:

You may aspire to the Kingdom of Heaven with a faithful mind [but]
you should not exalt, however many you may be a master to, because
you may die tomorrow.⁸⁹

Similar lines were placed on the doors of other cells, most reminders to the reader that he might soon die. Some explicitly link the habitation of the cell with death:

The cell is the seat of God in which you may give yourself well, here,
when you die, you will leave a victor with praise.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Sir W. St John Hope, *The History of the London Charterhouse*, London 1925, p. 96: *in claustrum Cartusiensi London ante ostium chori*; see also Luxford, 'The space of the tomb in Carthusian consciousness', pp. 274-75.

⁸⁷ Luxford, 'The space of the tomb in Carthusian consciousness', *passim*.

⁸⁸ Thwaites's will in the Perogative Court of Canterbury (PROB 11/13, f. 199v) is incomplete, but it survives complete in Lambeth Register F, ff. 185v-86v and in Corporation of London Hustings Roll, HR 237 (38). I am indebted to Dr Sutton for these details.

⁸⁹ BL, MS Sloane 2512, f. 3r.

Now read, now pray, now work with fervor, for time is short and the work is light.⁹¹

The origins of these couplets are various and many were doubtless obtained through books of *sententiae*. Two, those for cells F and G, came from the anonymous, twelfth-century *Carmen Paraeneticum ad Rainaldum*, a long poem on contempt for the world.⁹² Another, for cell S, came from the thirteenth-century poet, Matthew of Vendome's metrical paraphrase of Tobit.⁹³ Cumulatively they provided cues for meditation on the vanity of life and the inherent need to prepare to die.

Though clearly pertinent to monastic life, these lines may have been intended for the consumption of outsiders or newcomers.⁹⁴ That the door inscriptions were integral to new encounters with the cloister is also suggested by Blacman's manuscript. Blacman wrote his text as a newly professed *clericus redditus*.⁹⁵ The lines were part of his conversion narrative, which he characterised as a death; throughout he quotes Daniel 13 and the apocryphal story of Susanna and the Elders, 'if I do this thing, it is death to me'.⁹⁶ It is the moment of encounter that the lines come into play, as 'teachers' to the new monk. Acutely aware of the need to construct a new subjectivity appropriate to his surroundings, Blacman set out 'to align the steps of death with those of his mind'.⁹⁷ The space itself structured his transition to a mortal train of thought. Such was the subject of the meditations and *Artes moriendi* that filled the rest of Blacman's manuscript. Yet, the topos was one that the Carthusians' shared with the *saeculum*, that of preparation for death. For visitors, provided they had internalised the Church's message of preparation for death, the cloister would act as a prompt to familiar patterns of mortal thought.⁹⁸

So might it have been with Russell, who would have had to enter the cloister to meet the monks. Provided that the Carthusians kept their statutes diligently,

⁹⁰ Ibid, f. 3r.

⁹¹ Ibid, f. 3v.

⁹² Anon, *Carmen paraeneticum ad Rainaldum*, PL, vol. 184, cols. 1308 & 1309: 'Fools are deceived by the love of this world/But the wise man knows how full of sorrow it is; 'The glory of newborns is their sweet delight/All shall be left behind and never found thereafter'.

⁹³ Matthew of Vendome, *Paraphrasis metrica in librum Tobiae*, PL, vol. 205, cols. 927-979, col. 948: 'May the law of God be rest unto you, the flesh a sacrifice, the world/a place of exile, heaven a homeland, and God [be your] life'.

⁹⁴ Michael Sargent and Marlene Hennessy have suggested that the admonitory tone of the lines was intended for novices, Sargent and Hennessy, 'The Latin verses over the cell doors of the London Charterhouse', p. 184.

⁹⁵ Blacman occupied cell M.

⁹⁶ BL, MS Sloane 2512, f. 3r.

⁹⁷ Ibid, f. 4r.

⁹⁸ C. Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England*, pp. 65-86; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 301-27.

contact between the brethren and their guests could have taken only a few forms. Excepting the prior and the procurator, the monks were not able to leave the great cloister. Guests who stayed in the 'lower house' or the lay-brethren's side of the monastery, would have had very little contact with any of the choir monks. Though the procurator was to receive them, they probably had most frequent contact with the Kitchener (a lay brother), who required to provision them.⁹⁹ As a bishop, Russell would have had the right to enter the choir and to say the mass at the high altar.¹⁰⁰ He was also permitted to dine in the *frater*.¹⁰¹ However, since the Carthusians dined under conditions of strict silence, with a lector reading some edifying texts, there was no opportunity for conversation.¹⁰² Not only that, if the commentary on the *Statuta* is to be believed, most of the monks would have absented themselves from any meal where there were outsiders present.¹⁰³ In normal circumstances, the only opportunity for discussion was the weekly colloquium held in the great cloister on Sundays. This was the moment envisaged by the Carthusians' statutes for contact with outsiders.¹⁰⁴ This is likely what took place in the London house. The 1492-1501 rental of possessions contains a note on payments made for the installation of 'diverse seats for the convent to sit' in the 'communal garden', presumably the cloister garth.¹⁰⁵ In which case, interlocutors would have been surrounded by reminders of death. Not only these inscriptions, but also the funerary slabs both on the cloister walk and in the garth, which served as the house's own primary burial site.

Conclusion

To ask whether the morbid environment of the Great Cloister was a product of secular needs or Carthusian self-identity would be something of a chicken and egg question. A Carthusian monastery could not exist without fulfilling needs of both parties. The Great Cloister reflected both the ascetic death culture of the Carthusians and the commemorative anxieties of the wider community. This duality did not straightforwardly detract from a notional ideal of Carthusian observance, at one with the spirit of the Order's legislation. Rather it represented the interpretation and application of that ideal in its London form. The alternative to seeing these graves and Russell's house as violations of the Carthusians' rules is to consider how they respected the boundaries of

⁹⁹ *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. [2]g1r.

¹⁰⁰ *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. [2]i6r.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, sigs. i6v-k1r.

¹⁰² *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. [2]k3r-[2]k4r.

¹⁰³ BL, Cotton MS Julius A ix, f. 76r: *q[uam]diu hospites co[m]medu[n]tur nullus monachus audeat praesens e[ss]e*, *Statuta Antiqua*, sigs. i6v-k1r.

¹⁰⁴ Unsurprisingly it came with considerable prophylactic legislation, *Statuta Antiqua*, sig. k.1.v.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, SC/25/55, m. 55.

Carthusian solitude and how outsiders could affirm and reinforce the Carthusians austere self-image.

Russell's dwelling represented a mutually satisfactory arrangement by which the Carthusians obtained benefactions and patronage and their guests learned to die with grace. Yet, in acknowledging the Carthusians' macabre identity it also helped confirm and reinforce it. Ultimately this article has offered only a narrow perspective on the relationships between the Carthusians and outsiders. The analysis has been limited to a comparatively narrow range of guests whose motives can be tentatively explained, it does not claim to describe the full range of roles and relationships that the Carthusians had with outsiders. It has also not considered this evidence in relation to information from the order on the continent, which would doubtless expand our understanding on the role of death in Carthusian interactions with visitors. It is also clear that arrangements such as this were not wholly unique to the Carthusian order, as the tunnel connecting Richmond Palace and the chapel of the adjacent house of Observant Friars demonstrated.¹⁰⁶ These omissions notwithstanding, the Carthusians of London and Sheen provided their patrons with places for limited participation in Carthusian living death. Dwelling among the sepulchres, these visitors learned mortification from the monks and so began the business of dying well.

¹⁰⁶ There is undoubtedly a parallel to be drawn with Champmol, which was conceived by its founder, Philip the Bold as a mortuary, and which included a private chapel with a 'squint' enabling the duke to observe the Carthusians' liturgical observances, for both this private room and Richmond see above note 48 and J. Neuchterlein, 'The domesticity of sacred space in the fifteenth-century Netherlands' in A. Hamilton and S. Hamilton, ed, *Defining the Holy*, London 2006, pp. 68-69.