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Table of Contents

"AN ANSWERE SUFFISANT": PROSERPINA AND THE *WIFE OF BATH'S PROLOGUE* AND *TALE*
John Kerr 1

"SARAZINS" IN "KING HORN" AND CHAUCER'S *MAN OF LAW'S TALE*
Muriel Brown 13

FALSE MASCULINITY, MARTYRED FEMININITY, AND HOMOSOCIAL COMPLICATIONS IN CHAUCER'S *LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN*
Michelle M. Sauer 23

MAGIC RINGS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES
Sarah Ochsner 33

'VENUS BE IN MY VERSE': THOMAS WATSON AND THE CULT OF ELIZABETH
Stephen Hamrick 41

HENRY PETOWE'S UNDERSTANDING OF CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE'S *HERO AND LEANDER*
Bruce Brandt 53

COMIC REFUSERS IV
Douglas A. Northrop 61

STAGING SHAKESPEARE'S *TIMON OF ATHENS*: MAKING THE MISANTHROPE PALATABLE IN PERFORMANCE
Gayle Gaskill 71

GEORGE HERBERT TALKS BACK: REWRITING LOVE POEMS
Robert J. De Smith 85

"an answere suffisant": Proserpina and the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale*

by **John Kerr**

Proserpina, the Roman counterpart of the Greek Persephone, accumulated an impressive complex of associations by the time Chaucer incorporated her into his poetic oeuvre. First and foremost, she was the virginal maiden raped from a pre-Christian Eden by the diabolical Pluto. Her loss of innocence and descent to the underworld marked the loss of the Golden Age, inaugurating the cycle of the seasons and the necessity for human art, first figured through the labor of agriculture. Furthermore, through Virgil in particular, the Middle Ages received and elaborated upon a sophisticated triple-aspect construction of the goddess: she was Luna or Lucina as the moon, Diana as the goddess of the forest and hunt, and Proserpina as infernal queen, although these names could be used more or less interchangeably. Medieval commentators and mythographers repeatedly gloss Proserpina as grain, as the moon, and as a figure governing over *sapientia et eloquentia*.[1] With respect to the latter, the goddess was specifically linked with the commission of philosophy to memory on the one hand, and with the limits of human reason on the other.[2] As the divinity presiding over the entire sublunary realm—the infernal regions in the neoPlatonic sense—Proserpina was a figure par excellence of the human experience.

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[1] So Fulgentius, *Exposition of the Content of Virgil*, ed. and tr. Leslie George Whitbread (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), 122; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, tr. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), Book VIII.11; Remigius of Auxerre, *Commentum in Martianum Capellam*, ed. Cora E. Lutz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1962-1965), 133; multiple references by the anonymous *Commentary on the First Six Books of Virigil's Aeneid*, tr. Earl G. Schreiber and Thomas E. Maresca (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); multiple references by Vatican Mythographers 1, 2, and 3, in *Scriptores rerum mythicarum Latini tres Romae nuper reperti*, ed. Georgius Henricus Bode (Hildesheim: George Olms, 1968); multiple references by the anonymous author/s of *An Aeneid Commentary of Mixed Type: The Glosses in MSS Harely 4946 and Ambrosianus G111 inf.*, ed. Julian Ward Jones, Jr. (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1996); and John de Foxton, *John de Foxton's Liber Cosmographiae*, ed. John B. Friedman (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 243-244.

[2] See particularly Fulgentius' *Exposition*, which seems to have inaugurated this tradition, carried out rather elaborately in the 12th-century *Commentary on the First Six Books of Virgil's Aeneid* attributed to Bernardus Silvestris, the anonymous commentary on the *Aeneid* contained in MSS Harley 4946 and Ambroisianus G111 inf., and John de Foxton's *Cosmographia*.

As I have suggested elsewhere, Chaucer exploits these various resonances in *The House of Fame*, whose philosophic flight parodies Dante's audacious enterprise in the Commedia; unlike Dante's pilgrim, Chaucer's Goeffrey does not pass beyond the human, but remains decidedly in the sublunary world of change and epistemological uncertainty, where authorities vie with each other not so much for truth as for survival.[3] It is precisely within the boundaries of Proserpina's realm that the poem creates its dubious meaning.

Chaucer's employment of the Proserpina myth becomes vaster in the *Canterbury Tales*. In addition to the classical and medieval continental traditions, the *Tales* subsume an insular current, found also in the *Sir Orfeo*, which fuses the queen of the underworld with the Celtic Fairy Queen. Surprisingly little work has been done on the goddess's role in the *Canterbury Tales*; apart from a few isolated studies, virtually all attention has been focused on the *Merchant's Tale*, where Proserpina enters the scene as part of the dramatis personae.[4] But the myth appears quite explicitly in the opening *Knight's Tale*, with the tri-partite goddess operating as one of the main players on the divine scale, and young Emelye re-enacting Proserpina's flower gathering under Palamon's Plutonian gaze in the human arena.[5]

Indeed, the larger trajectory of the poem's germinal stages subtly recasts the myth's main components, from the seasonal/botanical *reverdi* of the General Prologue, to the ravishment of Emelye by Palamon-Pluto at the hands of the Knight—who casts his tale-telling as an agricultural act—to the grinding and cooking of the grain through the character of the Miller and the story told by the Reeve. The structure of the poem takes an infernal plunge here

[3] See John Kerr, "The Underworld of Chaucer's *House of Fame: Virgil, Claudian and Dante*", in *Medieval and Renaissance Humanism. Rhetoric, Representation and Reform*, eds. Bert Roest and Stephen Gersh (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 185-202.

[4] Most notable are Marta Powell Harley, "Chaucer's Use of the Proserpina Myth in 'The Knight's Tale' and 'The Merchant's Tale', in *Images of Persephone: Feminist Readings in Western Literature*, ed. Elizabeth T. Hayes (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1994), 20-31; Jacqueline de Weever, "Chaucer's Moon: Cinthia, Diana, Latona, Lucina, Proserpina", *Names:A Journal of Onomastics*, 34.2 (June 1986): 154-174; and Elizabeth Simmons O' Neill, "Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 51.3 (Sept 1990): 389-407.

[5] See Harley ("Chaucer's Use"), who effectively notes the parallels between the *Knight's Tale* and the Ovidian account of Proserpina's story.

(signaled by the Cook's oath, "For Cristes passion"—I.4327) with the disintegration of the *Cook's Tale*, which culminates in the debauched sexual experience of the wife who makes her living by selling her body. The Man of Lawe resurrects the poem in the second fragment, worrying that he may be likened to one of the Pierides, who, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 5, are defeated in a singing contest by the Muses when Calliope performs the story of Ceres and Proserpina.

This last textual moment is particularly telling, for it catches us up in a cycle of ongoing descent and re-ascent. In fact, the *reverdi* in the opening lines of the *General Prologue*–both contextually and as a topos immediately recognizable as a member of a literary tradition–had already announced that we are not beginning, but rather re-beginning. It is spring again. After this penetration, in which the rain pierces and descends through the land, so that the flower may re-ascend, (the world returning, like Proserpina, to spring), we encounter not only the infernal world of the *Knight's Tale*, but also the mock descents in the *Miller's Tale* and *Reeve's Tale*, in which the suffering protagonists cry "Harrow," obliquely referring to Jesus' Harrowing of Hell, a concept that itself is indebted to the agricultural underpinnings of the Christian mythos. Thus, when the Man of Lawe alludes to Ovid's account of Proserpina, he is taking us back to where we have been beginning from again and again. We descend to the old, and re-ascend in the new, only to repeat the cycle at each turn.

We can see this temporal/textual movement in the shift from the pagan world of the *Knight's Tale* to the Christian milieu of the *Miller's Tale*, but also more broadly in the first fragment's orbit from Chaucer's modern England in the *General Prologue* to the pre-Christian world of romance and ultimately back to a debased London. Similarly the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* lead us from Alisoun's contemporary environment through the pre-Christian Fairy realm back to a de-romanticized England where Alisoun frankly reveals her use of sex as commerce, like the prostitute at the end of the *Cook's Tale*. This continuous cycling of perspectives, the old superseded by the new, is the DNA code for Chaucer's venture: amongst the pilgrims it assumes the form of *quyting*; on a literary level, it is evidenced in the incessant recall and reworking of prior texts. The human situation is never pure, but rather is always mediated by prior authorities and, as such, never fully present in the present. The beauty and curse of art is containment within experience, a constant awareness of and subjection to pastness. Proserpina's *raptus* serves as the threshold for the movement into temporal

awareness: with her loss of innocence, Jove inaugurated the cycle of the seasons and the necessity for human artistic enterprise.[6]

This condition of experience is precisely the Wife of Bath's opening gambit. The oft-quoted commencement of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* has generated considerable discussion on Alisoun's position vis-à-vis experience and authority, the two terms generally held in opposition with each other. Frequently, experience is identified with a female oral tradition or the thing/text itself, and authority with masculine interpretation of texts/things. At the center of this debate is Alisoun herself—perhaps as triumphant post-matriarchal, proto-feminist voice, as victim of patriarchal construction, or as reflection of Chaucer's own (failed) desire to imagine an alternative space for woman in his time.[7] I would like to make a significantly more transparent point, which the traditional polarity tends to obscure: experience and authority are *both* terms which emphasize the perspective of a post-virginal world. Alisoun is first and foremost a figure of lost innocence.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and *Tale* focus our attention on the loss of innocence through the raped maiden and through Alisoun herself. Like Proserpina, the Wife of Bath was introduced to the world of sexual experience at a tender age. In Book 5 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the young goddess is young enough to bewail the loss of her flowers more than that of her virginity when Pluto abducts her as his bride. Similarly, Alisoun tells us right off that she has been a wife "sith I twelve yeer was of age" (4). The ensuing several lines in the *Prologue* hinge upon the issue of virginity; typically, critical attention centers on the merits of the case made for "waxing and multiplying", but we should note more simply that Alisoun is obviously preoccupied with her own virginal loss. As Louise O. Fradenburg and others have pointed out, Alisoun displays an evident

[6] So Ovid and Claudian. For Ovid, see especially Books 1 and 5. Claudian opens his *de raptu Proserpinae* by comparing his own poetic attempt with the first nautical venture, clearly intending a further correspondence between the origination of art and the subject of his poem, Proserpina's rape. The encouragement of human (artistic) endeavor is the focus of Jove's speech at the beginning of Book 3. See *De raptu Proserpinae*, ed. J.B. Hall (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969), as well as the fine edition and translation by Claire Gruzelier, *De raptu Proserpinae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[7] For an insightful review of the crucial studies on Chaucer's feminism/antifeminism (and the complications involved in conflating Chaucer with his characters), see Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Rochester, N.Y.: D.S. Brewer, 2002), vii-xix.

nostalgia for her lost youth.[8] It is precisely at these moments that she becomes most botanical/ seasonal/agricultural in her language:

> But – Lord Crist! – whan that it remembreth me
> Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
> It tikleth me about myn herte roote.
> Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
> That I have had my world as in my tyme.
> But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,
> hath me birafte my beautee and my pith.
> Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!
> The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle;
> The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle. (469-478)

The "roote" is in the past, and now even the "flour"—to which the penetration of the rain in the *General Prologue* led—is lost; there is nothing but the bran to sell. Alisoun bids goodbye (again) to her youth and innocence in a brief verbal reenactment of the original diabolic violation/theft: "Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!" The use of the word "birafte" here is particularly telling, for the same verb is used a few lines earlier with reference to a husband murdering a wife, and it this same verb which will be used in the upcoming Arthurian tale to depict the knight's raping of the young maiden.

The Plutonian forces of sexual violation and death are transparent enough, but note also that the concept of theft in these passages is infernal: in the *Pardoner's Tale*, for instance, Death walks the land as a thief. As king of the lower regions, located underground where the earth's metals are contained, Pluto is conflated with Plutus, god of wealth.[9] The king of the underworld, as recipient of human souls, was thus figured both agriculturally as harvester (whence our own Grim reaper) and monetarily as a robber.[10] Most overtly in the

[8] Louise O. Fradenburg, "'Fulfild of Fairye': The Social Meaning of Fantasy in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale", *in The Wife of Bath: Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical and Historical Contexts, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Boston: St. Martin's, 1996), 205-220.

[9] For example, cf. Dante's *Inferno* 7.

[10] At the opening of Book 1 of *De raptu Proserpinae*, Claudian refers to the "greedy treasures" of the underworld (1.21). In the closing lines of Book 1, Pluto's horses stand awaiting the pleasure of coming spoils (i.e., Proserpina): "stabant . . . crastina venturae spectantes gaudia praedae" (1.288). *Raptor*, of course, means robber; we should keep in mind, then, that the fully-intended

Canterbury Tales, though, Pluto is a wealthy husband. Alisoun's first three husbands are, like Pluto (and like his counterpart January in the *Merchant's Tale*), "riche, and olde" (197).

This diabolical association with wealth was sometimes transferred to Proserpina herself. R.A. Shoaf points to a gloss of the goddess as "pecunia."[11] Of course, such an interpretation depends upon Proserpina's post-rape status; she gains aspects of the infernal along with her reign as Pluto's queen. Similarly, Alisoun's sexual diction has become markedly economic in her advanced experience. She no longer *is* the flower, but rather has become a purveyor of her once-virginal goods: she must "sell the bran." Sex, death, and wealth are repeatedly linked in the *Prologue*: the Wife gets control of her husbands' "nether purse," of their "cheste", a word used both for treasury and coffin.

The initial sexual-economic death/violation of Alisoun's youth re-occurs not once, but twice in Alisoun's lengthy vita. First, she tells of her flirtation with Jankyn during her marriage to her fourth husband. Like Proserpina, Alisoun performs a springtime wandering "into the feeldes," and dallies with Jankyn. Herself now the aged, experienced partner, Alisoun seduces Jankyn by fabricating a dream in which Jankyn "wolde han slayn me as I lay upright" (578). This threat of coital slaughter leads to the same economic emphasis encountered earlier: Alisoun claims that in her dream her "bed was ful of verray blood," and that she has been taught "blood bitokeneth gold" (579,581). The second convergence of sex/death/wealth occurs after Jankyn has become Alisoun's authority-wielding husband, in a scene parallel to the battle between Pluto and Proserpina in the *Merchant's Tale*. In response to Jankyn's (and his authorities') suggestion that women are shameful and unclean when they are no longer "chaast" (784), Alisoun rips three pages (or one page) from Jankyn's book, and is promptly beaten for it. She exclaims: "O! hastow slayn me, false theef? . . . And for my land thus hastow murdered me?" (800-801).

Given the cumulative Persephonic force of the *Prologue*, we should hardly be surprised at the tale Chaucer has chosen for Alisoun. It is the rape in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*—for long an insufficiently explained departure on Chaucer's part from his immediate sources—which helps us establish the more distinctly Proserpinean context of the mythic environment the *Tale* produces. The relevance of the myth here seems logical, if not inevitable, given that the sudden account of the *raptus* comes just after Alisoun's contrasting of her own contemporary world with that in which "The elf-queene"—that is, the Fairy Queen, identified with Proserpina in the upcoming *Merchant's Tale*—dances "with hir joly compaignye . . . ful ofte in many a grene mede."[12] The Fairy Queen and her retinue are directly linked with the foul hag the young knight later encounters; she sits surrounded by ladies who dance on the green and then vanish. It is no mere coincidence that the knight is compelled to undertake a year-cycle quest to find "an answere suffisant."[13] Like Proserpina in the *Merchant's Tale*, who offers May "a suffisant answere," the loathly lady provides the knight with a suitable response.

What are the implications of Chaucer's incorporation of this loss of innocence myth? According to some, the *Wife of Bath's Tale* takes us back to a magical time when life was less cluttered and more imbued with feminine power. Given the explicit magic and matriarchal authority in the tale, some critics have been led to read it romantically themselves, or at least attribute such romanticism to Alisoun. As Fradenburg suggests, the nostalgia Alisoun expresses in

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sexual force of the Proserpina story is intertwined with a strong economic current.

[11] See R.A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Pilgrim Books: 1983), 197. There is also a clear logic between Proserpina as "grain" (a typical medieval gloss) and a concept of wealth, when we consider the trading status of grain in pre-monetary as well as monetary cultures. The Roman harvest goddess Ops reflects this notion: *ops* more generally is employed for wealth, as it is by Claudian when he speaks of Avernus' "greedy treasures" (see n. 10). However, it should be noted that Proserpina is *rarely* glossed as money; the standard interpretations of the goddess in the mythographic and the commentary literature involve her role as the moon, as grain, as the infernal queen, as the tri-partite goddess, and as memory or philosophic guide more generally. It is Pluto that medieval writers consistently identify with *ploutos* and *dives*.

[12] Cf. the similar depiction of Fairy dancing in *Merchant's Tale* 2038-2041.

[13] For the significance of the "loathly lady"/vegetative cycle matrix out of which Alisoun's tale is constructed, see Susan Carter, "Coupling the Beastly Bride and the Hunter Hunted: What Lies Behind Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*", *Chaucer Review* 37.4 (2003), 329-345. Without specific reference to Proserpina, Carter notes the Persephonic heritage of this subgenre: "The loathly lady belongs in the configuration of goddesses who are transversers of stereotype, a group that includes Demeter, Hecate and Diana" (330). (Demeter is Persephone's mother, and Diana and Hecate are alternate name for Proserpina/Persephone.) For an archetypal reading of the knight's quest, see also Eric D. Brown, "Symbols of Transformation: A Specific Archetypal Examination of the Wife of Bath's Tale", *Chaucer Review* 12 (1978), 202-217.

her *Prologue* about her lost youth/virginity is present in the tale's opening depiction of a "land fulfild of fayerye" (859), with its many green meadows, in contrast with her contemporary England that is crammed with the buildings of Christian civilization.[14]

On the other hand, it is quite clear that the tale itself resists an easy opposition between matriarchal elf-queendom and friar-ridden Christianity. If Alisoun suggests that women have to watch out for the sexually-driven *limitour*, it is also to be remembered that the male friar is paralleled by the male incubus, and more importantly by the male knight who immediately proceeds to steal a young woman's maidenhood. If things are not any better in Alisoun's time, they don't necessarily seem any worse. To be more precise, Alisoun's evocation of the past must be tainted by the experience of the present. Like Dante's sight of Matelda in the terrestrial paradise, where he is reminded not of the virginal Diana, but instead of the raped Proserpina, so here the Wife's attempt to evoke a golden age inevitably becomes another loss of innocence story.[15]

As readers, we encounter that loss again at the end of Alisoun's performance. The rape at the commencement of the tale brings us back a year later to the bedroom, where the rapist and his new young bride are having sex. We may already be troubled by the rewarding of the rapist with a beautiful young wife, but even if we feel the story has fulfilled its justice, we must be disturbed by Alisoun's re-intrusion onto the scene, which dispels any remaining cloud of fantasy and reminds us that there are no conclusions in Chaucer's poetry, only re-beginnings. The potential note of concord between husband and wife, mirroring the culmination of the *Prologue*, is shattered by Alisoun's calling upon Jesus to send her more sexual partners and not old men who won't share their money.

The *Wife of Bath's Tale* reminds us from the outset (as we are always reminded in Chaucer) of the tale's status as mediated: "This was the old opinioun, as I rede" (862). As tellers and listeners/readers, we cannot conceive un-influenced spaces; rather, we move toward the future carrying our past, which in large part depends upon cultural authority. Chaucer emphasizes this epistemological reality by incorporating further authorities into the tale. The anachronistic inclusion of Dante, for example, heightens our

[14] See Fradenburg, "'Fulfild of Fairye'", 217-218. It should be noted, though, that Fradenburg sees Alisoun as calling up a *lost* world.

[15] This observation about Dante's post-lapsarian vision is made by Emerson Brown, Jr., "Proserpina, Matelda, and the Pilgrim", *Dante Studies* 89 (1971): 33–48.

awareness that Alisoun cannot recall an unmediated past. The problematic Midas episode similarly reminds us that stories are caught up in a process of time; Alisoun does not have Ovid's "original" account, but a skewed one (probably one she has heard from Jankyn, adjusted for antifeminist purposes). Put simply, the *Wife of Bath's Tale* reveals itself and its teller as experienced, both contextually and textually.

Like the *Merchant's Tale*, in which Proserpina and Pluto's battle of the sexes hinges upon textual authorities, or the *House of Fame*, in which Chaucer's catalogue of literary authorities descends ultimately to Claudian and his *De raptu Proserpinae*, so the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* serve as a ground in which old texts are appropriated to create further perspectives, *quitynges*. As Chaucer writes in *The Parliament of Fowles*,

> For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere. (22-25)

Not surprisingly, that poem, too, leads to the underworld, via its borrowing of Dante's gate of hell. For Chaucer, the text is a Proserpinean site where the poet descends to come back up with "newe science." The seasonal/agricultural motif helps to emphasize the on-going cyclical nature of this intertextual process: there is not a conclusion, only new "answeres" rooted in the past. (Notice that Proserpina and the loathly lady do not provide *the answer*, but simply "an answere suffisant.")

There is certainly a gendered aspect to this epistemological framework. Pluto in the *Merchant's Tale*, like January and Jankyn, attempts to codify reality by proscribing the universe (in a reductively misogynistic way). Proserpina, like May and Alisoun, provides a new way of seeing the world, of understanding a text, which challenges and even overturns authority. We must be careful here, though, not to over-generalize, for if we can roughly categorize these tendencies of perception as masculine and feminine—the former rigid, "rational," rule-oriented and the latter fluid, shifting, even magical—it is clear that Chaucer does not consistently ascribe these worldviews to his characters on the basis of gender. In the *Knight's Tale*, for instance, although it is Emelye who first wanders like Proserpina, Arcite also performs a May observance, and it is for him that Pluto eventually comes; in the *Merchant's Tale*, it is January, not May, who is

depicted as "ravysshed"; and while some women like Alisoun learn to manipulate reality, others, like Dorigen in the *Franklin's Tale*, fall victim to the human desire to fix reality in an unstable universe.[16] For Chaucer, the myth of Proserpina encompasses the richness of the human experience, and his characters express their perceptions or misperceptions of this openness in varying degrees.

Yet I would still suggest that the Wife of Bath serves as a vortex for the fundamental issues of the *Canterbury Tales* in a way that fulfills the traditional female/male dichotomy, and here Alisoun can be seen to depart from the old lady of the tale. For whereas the latter figure employs Dante as an authority in her argument on nobility, the Wife shows—as Chaucer has already done in the *House of Fame*—that Dante's perspective is limited. It may be recalled that Jankyn's Book of Wicked Wives is bound in one volume, and that Alisoun takes, according to one passage, a leaf from the book, and according to another passage, three leaves. It seems to me likely that Dante's universe gathered into one volume in *Paradiso* 33, where the poet has his vision of the 3-in-1 Godhead, lingers in the background here. Alisoun opens up Jankyn's codification of the universe, leading us back to the instability of the human experience, like the infernal Sybil scattering her leaves a few lines earlier in Dante's canto, or like Claudian's Proserpina, who leaves her weaving unfinished when she goes out to play in the fields.

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[16] Dorigen prays that Proserpina will remove the coastal rocks that causes her to despair over her husband's return by ship. Interestingly, it is the male magician in that tale who—like Proserpina in the *Merchant's Tale*—makes "reality" appear other than what it is.

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"Sarazins" in "King Horn" and Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*

by **Muriel Brown**

Both the thirteenth century romance "King Horn" and Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* involve a good deal of sailing in rudderless boats as Horn and Custance move from country to country, surviving under the most incredible circumstances. Both stories also deal with the early history of Christianity in England and elsewhere as the protagonists encounter Saracens, who are variously described as "heathene hounds" and "payns" in "Horn" and as the tool of Satan and as hypocrites in Chaucer. While the author of "Horn" seems to have only a vague idea of his villains, Chaucer's treatment of the Saracens is much more individualized since the main antagonist in the first part of the tale is the Sultan's mother, a Muslim. Although his portrayal of the attitudes toward "Saracens" may be the result of remnants of the crusading spirit that was still present in fourteenth century England, his adaptation of his sources also reveals the complexity of his skill in focusing and developing his characters.

While stereotypes often become an impediment to seeing individuality, they are useful to authors because they provide a way to quickly delineate characters. Medieval writers certainly depend on their readers to have such stereotyped associations when they write about "Saracens." I became interested in this topic because of recent international events and what I knew of Chaucer and other medieval authors' portrayal of people from the Near East. I was also interested in the way these people were portrayed in Chaucer's sources as well as in other medieval works, hoping to gain some insights about the use and even the breaking down of stereotypes.

Checking the multiple meanings of the term "Saracen" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the oldest use of the word was by the Greeks and Romans for "nomadic peoples of the Syro-Arabian desert" with the general meaning of someone from the Orient, associated in the Middle Ages with a descendent of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maid, even though the word itself is formed around the name Sarah, Abraham's wife. The word in English subsequently came to represent someone who is a follower of Mohammed, a

Muslim, and then more generally "a non-Christian, heathen, or pagan; an unbeliever, an infidel."

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the first part of the *Man of Law's Tale* concerns Saracens although there are other brief indirect references elsewhere. Interestingly, a thirteenth century Middle English romance, one of the earliest, "King Horn," deals with some of the same motifs that dominate the Man of Law's Tale. "King Horn" uses the word "Sarazynes" to describe an attack on the coast of "Sudene" by fifteen ships "Of Sarazynes kene" (ll. 41-42). As these men are further described, they are called "schrewe" (villains) once (60), but "payens" six times within 50 lines of so. These pagans' primary desire is to slay everyone "That ever Crist leveth on" (48), including the king, Horn's father, and to destroy the churches as well, saving only those people who renounce their faith and convert to theirs. Horn's mother, Godhild, however, escapes by going into a rock, probably a cave, while continuing to pray for her son's safety. The Sarazyn leader is called an "admyrold" (95), usually annotated not with the expected "admiral," but with "emir,"and it is he who has mercy on Horn and his companions because of Horn's strength, youthfulness, and "feyrenesse" (93); they are not slaughtered but put in ship without a sail or rudder to wander the sea, making their survival unlikely. The emir notes that if he were not confident of Horn's death he would fear his vengeance for his father's death. In addition, at two other points, Horn encounters Saracens, one, an encounter with a boatload of "hethene hounde" (596), whose Saracen leader he beheads and whose forces lose a hundred men, thanks to Horn alone, and the second, Horn's meeting once again with those who killed his father and placed him on the rudderless boat. He and his men easily slaughter the "Sarazyns" showing no mercy (1387), and he immediately has built both a chapel and church, restoring Christianity to his land.

While the broad outline of the story suggests that these villains are of Near East origins, the geographical setting indicates that the actions all focus on parts of the British Isles and that the "Sarazynes" and their emir are in fact Vikings or Danes, raiders on the coast of England who might well be called pagans, and Godhild's retreat while remaining a faithful Christian has some basis in the actual history of England. The usage here of "Saracen" has the more general meaning of a "heathen, an infidel," and in fact, a quotation from "King Horn" is used to illustrate this meaning in the *OED*. Similarly, "admiral," i.e., "emir," besides associations with the Near East, is defined as "any Saracen (or 'infidel') ruler or commander."

However, the total impression of "Horn" reveals the inadequacy of associations with the Near East even as the villains' anti-Christian stance dominates.

A similar view of the Christian versus non-Christian is conveyed by Chaucer's portrait of the Knight whose battles focus on defending his faith, some of which involve fighting Saracens although that vocabulary never emerges in the General Prologue. Instead his enemies are called 'hethen[s] (Fragment 1.Line 66) while he fights his "lordes warre" (1.47); details of who he was engaged against are contained, not in specific religious identities, but in specific place names: "Gernade," "Algezir," and "Belmarye" in Spain; "Tramyssene" in Algeria; and "Lyeys," "Satalye," and "Palatye" in Turkey (1.55-65). Several of the latter places are connected to Peter I of Cyprus (also called Pierre de Lusignan), whose biography is one of those presented in the Monk's Tale (7.2391-98). The places above all identify the Knight's battles where Christian forces fought against Muslims during the fourteenth century.

Similarly, the *Man of Law's Tale* does not refer to Saracens, but religious identity becomes of paramount importance as Chaucer develops Custance's unwavering faith as she encounters and seeks to convert those from other faiths. His vocabulary becomes especially interesting in the light of his two principal sources for his tale: Trivet's "Life of Constance" from the Anglo Norman *Chronicle* (c. 1334), and John Gower's Middle English "Tale of Constance." In Gower's Tale, because Constance is "ful of feith" (l. 598), the merchants who have come to Rome from Barbarie are converted. Before they return home, they are

> Of Cristes feith so full enformed
> That thei therto ben al conformed
> So that baptesme thei receiuen
> And alle here false goddes weyuen. (607-10)

When they return back home to Barbarie, the Sultan asks why they have forsaken their "ferste feith" (615) but they defend their choice of Christianity as the "rihte feith" (617), leading to the Sultan's conversion and negotiations for his marriage to Constance. While some additional aspects of Christianity are mentioned, no details are included about the Sultan's former beliefs and the abandoning of "false goddes." The Sultan's mother pretends to welcome her new daughter-in-law at a special celebration and feast, but is more upset by the prospect of losing control over the kingdom. She plots the

death of all the Christians including her son, and it is she who is called "This olde fend, this Sarazine" (705), and who is responsible for placing Constance in a "schip withoute stiere" but with a five year supply of food (709). While there is a clash between two nations, Rome and Barbarie, coming in part from two religious views, details about the practices of Saracens are completely omitted.

In contrast to the minimal details about religion in Barbarie in Gower, Trivet makes multiple general references to such matters in the first fifth of this chronicle. Few details about the specific practices of the Saracens are mentioned although the Sultan is called upon to denounce his idolatry and wrong beliefs ("sez maumetz e sa mescreaunce" Trivet 166). In addition, no nation is identified as the homeland of the merchants who come to Rome, except to call them pagans, but the negotiations that result in Constance's marriage are also a way of negotiating peace between the two nations. One important part of the international treaty in Trivet, but omitted in both Gower and Chaucer, is the securing of safety for Christians to visit freely the Holy Sepulcre, Calvary, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the valley of Josephat and to abandon the city of Jerusalem to the Christians. In addition, the bishops and the clergy are granted freedom to preach, to teach the people of the land the right faith, to baptize and build churches, and "les temples of maumetz destrure" (166). Thus, the Saracens' control over these specific places suggests at least a general location in the Near East, and the religious identification is a mixed one with the use of the word "temple," suggesting the Jewish faith, and "maumetz," suggesting Islam.

After the marriage takes place, a fight ensues, as in Chaucer, with extremely high casualties. Similarly as in Gower and Chaucer, it is the Sultan's mother who is responsible for garnering the forces of her nation against the Christians so that almost all are killed, including the Sultan. Three youths escape to report the events to Rome, a detail unique to Trivet (167), and Constance is put on a boat without a rudder or sail, but with a three year supply of food. Like Gower, Trivet also calls Christianity the right faith ("dreite foy" 166); and his use of the word "maumetz" implies the idolatry of the Muslims (even though worship of idols is forbidden in Islam), an inaccuracy that is perpetuated in most of the versions of the tale (see the note to Chaucer's use of "mawmettrie" 2.236).

Chaucer chooses to include sharp contrasts between the two faiths in the first third of his tale of about 1100 lines even as he avoids the general label of "Saracens." From the very beginning Custance,

the Emperor of Rome's daughter, is described by "the commune voys of every man" as ideal (2.155):

> In hire is heigh beautee, withoute pride,
> Yowthe, withoute grenehede or folye;
> To alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde;
> Humblesse hath slayn in hire al tirannye.
> She is mirour of alle curteisye;
> Hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse,
> Hir hand, ministre of fredam for almesse. (2.162-68)

It is worth noting that in his description most of the qualities emphasized are qualities of character, internal qualities that can be discovered only by her actions or by testing. Because she is the emperor's daughter and beautiful (it is her external qualities that attract), she comes to the attention of Syrian merchants, who tell their Sultan about her. He decides he wants to marry her though he is advised that this is not wise because of their religious differences:

> . . . ther was swich diversitee
> Bitwene hir bothe lawes, that they sayn
> They trowe that no "Cristen prince wolde fayn
> Wedden his child under oure lawe sweete
> That us was taught by Mahoun, oure prophete.
> (2.220-24)

He is so determined not to lose her that he decides he will be "cristned" (2.226). Back in Rome, the Sultan's choice needs the approval of her nation so that his decision becomes a matter of Rome's consent:

> . . . by tretys and embassadrie,
> And by the popes mediacioun,
> And al the chirche, and al the chivalrie,
> That in destruccioun of mawmettrie,
> And in encrees of Cristes lawe deere,
> They been accorded, . . .
>
> How that the Sowdan and his baronage
> And alle his liges sholde ycristned be,
> And he shal han Custance in mariage . . . (2.233-41)

Similarly his nation accepts the accord. Custance and her retinue, including bishops, lords, ladies, and knights, and many others, leave Rome for Syria. What Custance could not prepare for is the reception of her mother-in-law who, while her son is negotiating with Rome, is unifying her own Muslim forces in opposition to the Christians and his new bride. She does not approve of her son's abandoning "his olde sacrifices" (2.325), and talks to her people:

> Lordes, . . . ye knowen everichon,
> How that my sone in point is for to lete
> The hooly lawes of our Alkaron,
> Yeven by Goddes message Makomete.
> But oon avow to grete God I heete,
> The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte
> Or Makometes lawe out of my herte! (2.330-36)

She is portrayed as devout and committed to her faith as Custance is to hers, promising her followers they will be "sauf for everemoore" if they follow her advice (2.343). They will pretend to accept baptism:

> Coold water shal nat greve us but a lite! . . .
> For thogh his wyf be cristned never so white,
> She shal have nede to wasshe awey the rede,
> Thogh she a font-ful water with hire lede. (2.352-57)

While to all external appearances, the Sultan's mother approves of her son's marriage, the narrator points out that she is an embodiment of the serpent disguised in "femynynytee" (2.360), and she is linked to Satan, "envious syn thilke day / That [he was] chaced from oure heritage" (2.365-66) and the cause of Eve's fall. She goes to her son and tells him that she will become a Christian, "Repentynge hire she hethen was so longe" (2.378).

The joy of the wedding feast arranged by the Sultan's mother, now described as a "scorpioun, this wikked goost" and "cursed krone" (2.404, 432), is brought to an abrupt end when all the Christians, with the exception of Custance, are killed including the Sultan, and we discover another reason for her disapproval of the marriage–she desires to be the sole leader of her nation. While Custance's life is saved, she is immediately placed in "a ship al steerelees" (2.439), her survival dependent on nature and God. What is emphasized in the details about the two women is the singular nature of Custance, her external and internal qualities match, while

the Sultan's mother represents a divided nature: what she pretends to accept does not match her secret actions.

Although, like Gower and Trivet, Chaucer still does not include a great deal of detail about religious practices in Syria, he does make the religious differences between Christians and Saracens much more specific. Syria, the geographical location, becomes the general descriptor for a group of people replacing the more stereotypical term of "Saracens." They are identified as Muslims who follow the guidance of Mohammed and the Koran. In addition, in what I think is one of Chaucer's significant contributions to the telling of this story, Chaucer embodies a practitioner of each faith in two individuals, each equally adamant in refusing to modify her commitment to her religious practice. Instead of each woman being described and her actions summarized as in Trivet, Chaucer greatly expands what Gower only begins. Chaucer uses detailed descriptions and direct quotations, showing each woman's feelings and thoughts as she responds to the tensions created by decisions made by others.

In choosing to make the religious references specific to Muslims, Chaucer compromises the historical accuracy of his tale. The historical time Chaucer's tale covers, given the references to the Roman Emperors of Tiberius and Mauricius, places his story just before the time of Mohammed. While his choices might indicate he understands Saracen to mean Muslim, they also might indicate a far greater concern about maintaining the focus of his tale of Custance and her devotion to her faith, emphasizing one of the places of great conflict in his own century.

Equally fascinating to think about is Chaucer's omission of the references to the securing of safety for Christians to visit freely various places in the Holy Land, and to abandon the city of Jerusalem to the Christians, important details in Trivet and a major concern of some of Chaucer's contemporaries. In the *Order of the Passion*, a fourteenth century French work that focuses on creating a new crusade to unite the Christian forces of the West, Philippe de Mézières writes extensively about the need to reclaim the Holy Land from the Saracens. Philippe, who spent time in England in the 1390s promoting his cause, points out that Jerusalem has not been under the West's control since 1244 as he insistently argues for the need for England and France to end the Hundred Years' War, for the schism in the church to be healed, and for the faith to be multiplied and defended. Like Chaucer, he writes of Peter of Cyprus and he calls the Saracens "soilleures et abhominacions du faulx prophete Mahommet"

(21). Chaucer's words of condemnation, in contrast to Philippe's, however, are not directed to the general group so much as they are toward the Sultan's mother.

While the antagonists of Custance in the first part of The *Man of Law's Tale* are Saracens, Chaucer does not get distracted by details about the Holy Land, what must have been a tempting choice at the time. Instead, throughout his narrative, his focus is on Custance, who represents exactly what her name indicates, Constancy. She is a character whose external and internal qualities match each other. As V. A. Kolve concludes in his discussion of the symbols of her tale, "Context and narrative image yield everywhere the same meaning" (358). Examining the vocabulary used to portray the Saracens in tales like "King Horn" and in Gower's and Trivet's narratives reveals Chaucer's achievement coming from his ability to modify his sources in a way that creates a unified focus and portrays a practitioner of each faith. While the concern with Saracens represents only a portion of The *Man of Law's Tale* and its sources, examining closely this small part provides insight into Chaucer's achievement. Not only does he maintain his focus on Custance, but he complicates her character by showing her thinking and talking as she expresses her fears and ultimately her confidence in the faith she follows.

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False Masculinity, Martyred Femininity, and Homosocial Complications in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*

by **Michelle M. Sauer**

> Hast thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok
> How that Crisseyde Troylus forsok
> In shewynge how that wemen han don mis?
> (G, ll. 264-66)

> But now I charge the upon thy lyf
> That in thy legende thow make of this wif
> Whan thow hast othere smale mad byfore,
> And far now wel, I charge the no more.
> (G, ll. 538-41)

These words, spoken by Alceste to the narrator of the *Legend of Good Women (LGW)*, set forth his task: in reparation for his "sin" against womankind—writing the tale of Troilus & Criseyde—he must now instead tell legends of *good* women. The problem with *Troilus and Criseyde* is, of course, how it ends, with the unfaithful Criseyde abandoning and betraying Troilus. Supposedly, she is convinced the Trojans will lose, and prefers the protection that Diomedes' charms will offer. However, this decision just might have been made easier because of Troilus' lack of masculinity, and not simply due to her innate fickleness.

Troilus' masculinity, or lack thereof, has been the subject of recent scholarly debate.[1] The underlying problem, discussed time and again, is his crippling submersion into lovesickness. Love done "by the book" in the Middle Ages results in a contradiction in gender. Lovesickness, inspired by true love, causes the feminization of the man. He weeps, he sighs, he moans, he languishes, he faints, he starves—he's pathetic. A male suffering such symptoms created

[1] Troilus' masculinity has been the subject of several recent studies, including: *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the* Canterbury Tales *and* Troilus and Criseyde. Ed. Peter G. Beidler. (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998); Zeikowitz, Richard E. *Homoeroticism and Chivalry: Discourses of Male Same-Sex Desire in the 14th Century*. (New York: Palgrave, 2003); and some essays in *Approaches to Teaching Troilus and Criseyde and the Minor Poems*. Ed. Tison Pugh and Angela Weisl. (New York: Modern Language Association, 2005).

complications and upheaval, as Mary Wack points out: "the symptoms of the disease 'unman' the lover. . . . The signs of lovesickness . . . .connote feminine and infantile behavior" (151-52). Yet, this very unmanning is absolutely necessary to becoming "manned." Love is not truly love without these feminizing characteristics; however, the object of desire remains (at least on the surface) female.

Like men, women could fall prey to the ravages of lovesickness. Unlike men, these victims do not swap genders. Suffering from lovesickness does not undo women's femininity; on the contrary, it reinforces it. As lovesickness grew into a pathologizing condition, women, who more easily fall victim to "passionate love," were initially seen as the primary sufferers. But after the thirteenth century, this attitude changed. Medical treatises and manuals on love alike began focusing their attention on afflicted men during the thirteenth century, until studies of the male in love eclipsed and subsumed studies of the female in love. Lovesick women just weren't as interesting as lovesick men, since the symptoms mimicked and/or heightened natural female tendencies, such as foolishness, submissiveness, and frailty.

Despite this general sense of "boredom," a problem, seemingly ignored by scholars, is the dual femininity of the lovers. If lovesickness feminizes men and reinforces women's already-extant feminine qualities, the resultant relationship would seem to be akin to what Judith Bennett has called "lesbian-like" situations. Such a relationship would be dangerous and unnatural, a potentially subversive position within a hegemonic patriarchal system.

The paradigm of the courtly love scenario initially seems to stave this dangerous possibility off. Commonly, the lovesick victim is alone in his or her sufferings, while the object of this affection remains blissfully unaware of the lover's pining. The lack of reciprocity prevents the double feminization inherent within the courtly love tradition. However, the love object often becomes aware of the situation, and sometimes returns the feelings. In these cases, the double bind of courtly love becomes potentially disruptive to social norms. The man is feminized, but a woman cannot be in love with another woman; therefore, the man must somehow undergo re-masculinization in order to preserve the stable patriarchal social order. Elaine Tuttle Hansen, who devoted part of the introduction to her *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* to an examination of *The Legend of Good Women*, ultimately claims that

> Heterosexual union is clearly presented as not a good or even attainable end, but as a serious, perhaps insuperable problem, a necessary yet perilous part of the quest for stable masculine identity and social bonds between men. What is most dangerous about heterosexual desire, according to the Legends, is the feminine position, itself a divided one . . . that men in love or lust for a woman seemed forced to assume. (3)

The "false men" of the Legends, she believes, are faulty not because they initially succumb to feminization, which is a necessary evil, but rather because they continue to yield. In order to overcome the feminized circumstances each hero finds himself in, he must become more feminine to escape them, and then continue down this destructive path by ultimately allowing, even embracing, further emasculation, particularly through acts involving wiliness and deception. In Hansen's interpretation, heteronormativity fails because of its self-contradictions. Still, she doesn't quite unravel the non-heteronormative threads, nor does she explain why this particular gendering so risky.

Being a feminized man is a dangerous subject position. In the Middle Ages, frameworks of masculinity and femininity were basically constructed as an opposition—whatever a man is a woman isn't, and vice versa. Being feminine meant being lower in status and importance; therefore, men had to resist any and all urges to exhibit traditionally feminine qualities in order to preserve their sense of masculinity and their status as "true men." Men who possessed any feminine urges, or displayed any feminine characteristics, were hindered from achieving their true manhood—that is outside the realm of courtly love. If any such urges and/or actions could not be pitilessly suppressed, then they had to be just as brutally covered up. Within this system, a permanently feminized man would have been more disruptive to the established social order than a masculinized woman. The femininity assumed during courtly lovesickness, however, was a temporary one. Indeed, it is more a veneer of femininity (supposedly) performed solely for the purpose of achieving a heteronormative relationship. Throughout history, the fundamental elements of manhood have remained relatively more stable than do the ideas surrounding womanhood, with men often being defined as men through the penetration, impregnation, and protection of women—and as a result, also generally through the

oppression of women. In such a case, then, the consummation of love becomes one of the defining moments of (re)masculinization.

Medieval masculinity thus becomes a physical expression, based at least in part on sexual activity. According to Vern L. Bullough, medieval concepts of masculinity grew directly out of the classical tradition, on both an "anatomical and physiological" basis. (31) Aristotle was perhaps most instrumental in creating this view. He held that male domination was nature's will, as observation of animal pairs indicates that males of most species are larger, stronger, and more agile. Conversely, females appear to be weaker and dependent—and prepared to fulfill subservient roles. St. Thomas Aquinas subsequently drew on this Classical concept. As he writes, "In the arts the inferior art gives a disposition to the matter to which the higher art gives the form . . . so also the generative power of the female prepares the matter which is then fashioned by the active power of the male" (in Bullough 32). Women were thus relegated to being biologically inferior, and in this case, even their role in human reproduction was diminished—they became merely passive incubators of the male life force. These foundational concepts led directly to the overall belief that men were not only different than women, but inherently superior to them. Women were meant to be complementary counterparts to men, assisting the truly superior being to achieve his full greatness (and providing a means for conception). This was woman's "true place" within the social structure. Any sense of female agency is therefore "false" and fleeting.

Tales about lovesick heroes add to this collective masculine identity through a construction of a false sense of female power. In the courtly love scenario, the woman is imbued with fictitious agency. She supposedly holds the power to allow the hero to live (and flourish and be sexual) or to die (and waste away and be celibate). This is a fabricated and meaningless power structure, as the woman has no actual agency. Her authority rests solely on the single-mindedness of the man; it is dependent upon his entire self being consumed by thoughts of her—only if men are thinking about women all the time are they truly men. Male identity is then (re)constructed as masculine because any attendant feminization is a temporary means to the end of achieving heterosexual activity, leading inevitably to impregnation, protection, and oppression.[2]

[2] For more views about medieval constructions of masculinity, see *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West.* Ed. Jacqueline Murray (New York: Garland, 1999).

Turning to *Legend of Good Women*, we can see these principles of feminization and (re)masculinization at work, to the detriment of the "sainted" women, the martyrs of love. Assuming what should be their proper social role, the women in *LGW* act as ideal helpmeets, acting solely to aid and succor their chosen man, looking only to bolster his honor and reputation. Many of them suffer from lovesickness themselves. Cleopatra, who had Antony as "hire leste" (l. 615), went to war for him, gave him many gifts—even piling jewels upon his corpse —and finally, "she hire deth receyveth with good cheere/ For love of Antony that was hire so dere" (ll. 700-701). Thisbe disobeyed a family edict to meet Pyramus. Dido showered Aeneas with gifts, including horses, hounds, falcons, jewels, gold, and assorted trinkets. She also exhibited the classic signs of lovesickness, including sleeplessness, loss of appetite, mooning, weeping, and sighing. Hypsipyle also gave Jason gifts, and hung on his every word. Medea taught Jason her most secret and powerful lore, saving his life and winning him the Golden Fleece. Both Ariadne and Phoebe find Theseus attractive, watch him out the window, and conjecture his willingness to "give in." Phyllis gave Demophon all the aid and "sucour" he required, and Hypermnestra refused to kill her sleeping husband; instead, she wept over him, embraced his sleeping form, and awoke him "softe" before getting him to leap from the window to safety, and preserving his life at the expense of her own.

The men in the tales, however, don't seem to suffer from the same ravages of love that the women do. This is not to say that the men are not feminized throughout the poem, but rather than they are feminized *inappropriately* within the medieval social structure. For instance, Jason is feminized in both legends he features in, and in neither case is this process achieved through lovesickness. In the legend of Hypsipyle, Jason and Hercules scheme how to get Jason into the queen's bed and into her heart in order to acquire worldly goods. To lull the queen, Jason willingly feminizes himself. He answers queries "mekely and stylle"(l. 1491), pleasing the queen with his gentle manners. This feminizing process continues, as Jason allows Hercules to boast for him, while he remains "as coy as a mayde" (l. 1548). Hypsipyle is taken in by this show, only to be abandoned by Jason in the middle of the night. Continuing his self-feminization, Jason presents himself to Medea in much the same manner, begging her for her help: "Youre man I am, and lowely yow beseche/ to ben my helpe, withoute more speche" (ll. 1626-27). A true hero would not beg for help, nor would a true man (in the medieval sense) beg a woman for help. Other men are also feminized

outside of the acceptable courtly love parameters as well. Tarquinas is "lyght of tonge" (l. 1699). Demophon is "wayk, and ek wery" and "enfamyned" (l. 2428; 2429). Lyno runs from responsibility. Aeneas bursts into tears: "And with that word he brast out for to wepe/ So tenderly that routhe it was to sene" (ll. 1033-34). Theseus also weeps, but even more noticeably, he is linguistically castrated by the two sisters: "Lat us wel taste hym at his herte-rote, /that if so be that he a wepen have,/ wher that he dar, his lyf to kepe and save,/ fyghten with the fend, and hym defende./ . . . /If that he be a man, he shal do so./ And we shul make hym balles ek also/ of wex and tow" (ll. 1993-95; 2002-2004).

Although discussing the *Canterbury Tales* and not *LGW*, Glenn Burger raises some of these attendant issues about remasculinization and reintegration into the hegemonic social order.[3] Looking at the *Knight's Tale* and the *Miller's Tale*, Burger suggests that there are at least two types of feminization. "Good" feminization, such as the female body seeking regulation, or, I would add, the necessary feminization of courtly love, sets in relief both true masculinity (created through noble and heroic deeds) and "bad" femininity (including "male bodies sliding into effeminate confusion" [27]). Burger further suggests that men participating in "bad" femininity must undergo discipline in order to "restore the mind-body balance that constructs proper masculinity and the social and cosmic order that depends on it" (27). This disciplined and restored body is thus remasculinized.

Burger's recognition of men's participation in so-called "bad" femininity imparts a sense of agency to the accompanying gender constructions, one that has resonances within *The Legend of Good Women*. The men in *LGW*, unlike Troilus and other victims of lovesickness, are not "innocent bystanders," who are struck by the arrows of love. Instead, they actively seek to appropriate the feminine. Carolyn Dinshaw makes the claim that the overarching appropriation apparent through *LGW* is the male narrator's passivization of the powerful women in the original stories. As she points out:

> Passive women, weak martyrs of love, thus populate the *Legend*, and we witness in these tales not only the suppression of female characters in the making of individual narratives but the appropriative and

[3] For the complete discussion, see Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation*, pp. 23-36.

> exclusionary processes of masculine literary tradition in its entirety. (75)

On the surface, it would seem that in "cleaning up" the original stories—glossing over murderous plots and adulterous liaisons, for example—the narrator has successfully accomplished part of the task Alceste has charged him with (he has made these women "good"). In actuality, however, by "softening" the details found in Ovid, the narrator succeeds in "stealing" female power and agency. Nevertheless, this strategy also backfires, in that the men remain firmly feminized instead of reintegrating themselves into the construct of masculinity through these actions.

Throughout the poem, male appropriation of the female abounds, including female bodies, female stories, and female wit. Dinshaw rightly indicates two of the more obvious places in which this occurs—*The Legend of Medea* and *The Legend of Ariadne*. Medea teaches Jason how to acquire the fleece, and through this knowledge, he preserves his honor and acquires his masculine identity: "And saved hym his lyf and his honour;/ and gat hym a name ryght as a conqueror,/ ryght thourgh the sleyghte of hire enchauntement" (ll. 1648-50). He then goes on to appropriate further her feelings as well as her knowledge, appropriating even her bout of lovesickness: "'My ryghte lady . . . that ye han of my deth or of my wo/ my reward, and . . . me honour'" (ll. 1620-22). Similarly, Ariadne and Phaedra, not Theseus, solve the riddle of the maze, saving his life and securing his reputation.

Moreover, every man depicted in *LGW* asks for help from women, and needs her help to continue. These are men that aren't merely feminized through participation in an acceptable social scheme of courtly love. They are men that are repeatedly feminized through actions and reactions. They are penetrated, castrated, emasculated—to be female means to be invaded (all the legends involve a stranger coming to woman's land) and to not have male parts (all the legends are emasculating, and many demonstrate castration or threats thereof). Further, by removing all traces of progeny from *LGW*, the relationships that the men and heroines engage in appear to be sterile and unproductive, meaning false and unworthy.

Appropriately, the heroines in *LGW* attempt to make the men remember their masculinity, but they never quite manage to. Instead, without meaning to, these powerful women, despite attempts made by the narrator to "neutralize" them, are continual reminders of the

men's failure to achieve stable masculinity. For instance, each time Jason looks at Medea, he does not see a beautiful, desirable woman who has given him sons, nor does he even see the princess who betrayed land and family for his benefit; rather, he sees only a constant token of his failure to fulfill his quest. Similarly, Aeneas witnessed evidence every day that Dido was more powerful than he. With constant reminders of failure and femininity surrounding them, the men cannot complete the remasculinization process so crucial to maintaining the hegemonic patriarchal social structure. The only way to complete the process is to remove the obstacles blocking the success of the system—in this case, the heroines.

Dinshaw believes that the heroines had to die in order to regain any sense of agency: "Good women gain their identity—become significant—only by dying. In killing herself . . . the good woman takes her only strong action, *constitutes herself*" (76, original emphasis). While this point is certainly valid, I feel it is also reductive. The women need to be eliminated from the legends not only to gain subjectivity, but also to allow the men to begin the process of remasculinization. While still bound to the women who assisted them in achieving their goals, the men remain feminized, and thus the relationship is unbalanced—both partners are feminine. Death of the heroine releases the men from the unnatural (feminine-feminine) relationships and from the continual reminders of their failures and femininity.

This violence towards woman-woman relationships is apparent throughout *LGW*. "Women are divided from their men," Dinshaw points out, "and women are divided from one another as well" (80). Woman-woman relationships of every kind are destroyed by the narrator, who takes particular glee in separating sister from sister: Dido's sister, Anne, attempts to dissuade her sister from pursuing Aeneas; Tereus rapes Philomela, his sister-in-law; Theseus runs off with Phaedra, Ariadne's sister. This last example is particularly poignant, as the sisters plotted together to save Theseus, planning to share the rewards as well: "'Now, syster myn,' quod she [Ariadne],/ 'Now be we duchesses, bothe I and ye'" (ll. 2126-27). Other female communities are also shattered: Dido's kingdom lies in ruins, as do Cleopatra's and Phyllis' realms. This may indicate a fear not only of female leadership, but also of the extended female community. Women together must be divided in order for men to properly conquer and rule.

Bennett's concept of the "lesbian-like" situation allows us to analyze the tales within *LGW* in a new way. She writes, "in playing

with the possibilities of 'lesbian-like,' I am more comfortable applying it to *practices* than to *persons*" (16, original emphasis). Her range of "lesbian-like" practices recall "certain affinities" to modern lesbians, but are not dependent upon sexual practices or on proximity to other women. In truth, applying the actual term "lesbian-like" to the relationships in *LGW* may be stretching the term a bit too far.[4] Yet, the analytical tool provided by such a term allows us to examine this text through a new lens, that of the non-heteronormative, with an additional filter of "lesbianism." Certainly, the men in *LGW* remained physically men; however, through their own actions, they became—and remained—feminine throughout their initial relationships. Does this make them transgendered, or simply "bad" men? In either case, I believe it is worthwhile to consider Bennett's "lesbian-like" theoretical framework. Instead of *LGW* being about the women, and repairing their reputations, the text is truly about the perils of extended feminization for men, and the even more serious perils of relationships that pair feminine and feminine.

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[4] Bennett sets her term up in opposition to Adrienne Rich's 'lesbian continuum': "unlike Adrienne Rich, I do not wish to label all woman-identified experience—from material nurturance and lesbian sadomasochism to the esprit de corps of an abortion rights march—on a lesbian continuum," (15) and further warns that her term does not present "an endless set of possibilities" (16). Still, she also acknowledges that use of the concept of 'lesbian-like' offers the opportunity to "imagine possibilities and plausibilities" (24).

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Magic Rings in Middle English Romances

by **Sarah Ochsner**

The most arresting type of magic is perhaps not that which is entirely outer-worldly and fanciful, but that which commands power just beyond the ordinary, possessing enough realism to remain grounded in the immediate world, yet occult enough to carry the hero beyond existing circumstances. The utilization of such magic can transform the hero's environment into a realm where a wistful dream to accomplish the impossible becomes an actual driving will–in essence, where his visions can become his reality.

As these type of magical objects, magic rings are pervasive and significant in Middle English Romances, wielding real power and exerting considerable magic force to achieve a favorable outcome for the chivalrous hero. A magic ring is often central to the events in a romance, as the plot may hinge on the power of a ring to give the hero strength, health, or rejuvenation to complete an arduous task for his beloved. The ring may make the wearer invulnerable, assuring victory and vanquished enemies, or it may cause the wearer to become invisible, allowing the captive hero to escape. Ring bearers are further protected and warned against poison, fire, devils, and even the worst malady of all: infidelity! A protective magic ring in all cases of impending mayhem or death is, in a word, indispensable.

The utilization of a magic ring is problematic, however, because of its distinct inconsistency with chivalry and chivalric ideals. The idea of fairness in combat, for example, is compromised when one knight achieves an unfair advantage over another by the use of a ring. The quality of fidelity and faithful fighting for a particular set of allegiances is challenged by the ring giving, the opportunity for the hero to become self-fulfilling and self-sufficient, causing allegiances to become superfluous. The values of courage and perseverance are undermined when a ring granting supernatural aid renders such values unnecessary. Employing the power of a magic ring can therefore lead a chivalrous hero to unchivalrous actions that prompt discrepancies in character and moral values that discredit the label "chivalrous." Nevertheless, rings are prevalent in the romances despite such problems. In particular, the heroes in *Floris and Blancheflour*, *Ywain and Gawain*, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, and *Sir Gareth of Orkney* all employ magic rings, yet the authors maintain chivalry as a unifying theme and driving force. One explanation for this, as suggested by William Jones and implied by George Kittredge,

is that magic rings are merely plot advancers. This explanation, followed to its logical conclusion, necessitates that authors were unaware of their implicit contradictions; however, to suggest that authorial ignorance be the guiding principle by which to interpret such contradictions is to make medieval authors unable to control the form of their artistry. I offer another explanation, then, which assumes concerted authorial purpose and centers around this question of controlled artistry: of what literary value is a magic ring such that the contradiction with chivalry doesn't seem to matter?

Two extraordinary details in the aforementioned romances suggest an approach to this problem: first, that the ring bearer will poignantly, deliberately choose not to utilize the ring; second, that even in romances where the ring is utilized, it will appear briefly but then disappear from the narrative without explanation. I believe that these details notably demonstrate that rather than a primary function of plot advancement, rings are a symbol of psychological interaction and a means to develop an inner realm of motives and relationships. The ring, thus, is a psychological indicator providing depth to medieval writing by allowing characterization to occur within the confines of the Middle English romance genre.

Let us first explore the poem *Floris and Blancheflour*. The ring appears when Floris' mother, the Queen, gives it to him before he embarks on his adventure to retrieve Blancheflour. The Queen is fully aware of the power of the ring, but she acts as if he is going to his death even though the ring grants invulnerability (ll. 372-82). The ring at this point seems to be a symbol by which she shows her love for her son and releases her maternal grasp. Such an overconcerned response enhances her character as a mother and she is no longer a queen only, stoically taking her place beside the king who makes all the decisions, issues advice, and provides the means by which Floris can begin his journey to reunite with Blancheflour. This ring is the queen's one contribution as a mother and serves as her emergence as a two-dimensional character in this narrative.

When Floris is at last able to locate Blancheflour, they are unfortunately captured, at which point Floris hurriedly attempts to bequeath the Queen's ring upon Blancheflour. She refuses to accept it, however, saying she would rather renounce life than live without him. Clumsily, they shove the ring back and forth until it falls on the ground between them. They leave it lying there, as it can only disrupt their goal of unity. It is at this point that the ring clearly becomes more than a plot device. At this apex where the ring would be most useful, it never serves its purpose; in fact, the lovers never touch the

ring again, never speak of it, and never wish they would have used it when they had the opportunity. Instead, a king overhears their conversation, picks it up, and realizing the plight of the lovers, subsequently informs the Emir about the ring. The Emir summons Floris and Blancheflour to be executed, but pardons them when Floris relates his entire adventure. Amidst all this bedlam, however, what has happened to the ring? The text never finalizes its whereabouts, even though a ring with such protective virtues would be unlikely to fall by the wayside or have its existence and function forgotten. The ring dropping out of the narrative suggests that the focus should be on Floris and Blancheflour, who are at last together, and the fact that their own unifying love is stronger than the life-preserving supernatural aid that the ring can provide. Through the deliberate refusal to utilize the valuable protective forces of the ring, the unassailable devotion between the lovers is emphasized.

A similar operation of a magic ring is found in *Ywain and Gawain*. The ring first appears when Ywain barely escapes death when a portcullis on a castle crashes down on him, impaling and killing his horse. A maidservant, Lunet, emerges from the castle, and becoming concerned that the knights of the castle will quickly find and kill him, she offers her protection through a ring that will render him invisible so that he may safely hide inside the castle (ll. 735-47). Surprisingly, this is not a ring of invulnerability, even though that particular quality would be most logical, as it would allow Ywain to remain outside, meet his foes as they came, and fight nobly as an esteemed knight. Instead, the ring grants invisibility, an important characteristic that focuses on a captivating inversion of chivalry. Invisibility means that Ywain is cowardly and hiding, basking in the glory of being in the company of two beautiful women, his chivalric conscience never pricking him to action. This is the first instance of Ywain's inability to balance important factors in his life and value system. In the meantime, Lunet is taking over the chivalrous role of pacifying the knights and providing asylum to Ywain.

The lady Alundyne now steps into the story and the first ring is forgotten as she gives him another ring that brings his chivalry into further question and conflict. After Ywain has married Alundyne, he entertains Arthur, Gawain, and other knights at his castle. Urged by Gawain's tales of personal glory and fame, and perhaps to reassert the chivalry he relinquished earlier, Ywain decides to depart from the castle for adventures of his own. As a parting gift, Alundyne gives him the ring that, coming from his true wife and not merely a lover or usurping chivalric lady, is a symbol and promise of fidelity. Alundyne

allows him the time span of a single year to go forth on his adventures, but if he fails to return at the end of the year, she will cease to love him. The verses after this proceed very quickly–he embarks on his journey, competes in numerous tournaments, and becomes much acclaimed. He achieves personal glory just as Gawain said he would. Too quickly, however, the year is finished, and he unfortunately forgets both the date and his wife, at which point the hero goes into immediate decline. Most importantly, in the passing of the year he does not use the ring whatsoever. Although he engages in many tournaments and battles in which the ring would have been extremely useful, he doesn't touch it. Since this ring seems particularly relevant and valuable to the nature of Ywain's quest, the deliberate non-use of such a magical object is an especially clear indicator of the subordination of magic to characterization and interaction. The absent-minded disregard for the ring indicates that he is absolutely unable to balance his fidelity with his chivalry. Ywain's chivalry was first called into question earlier with the invisibility ring, but now it is shattered, and his commitment to fidelity is shattered as well when he is called a "traytur untrew and trouthless" (l. 1626) outright. Alundyne takes the ring from him, and Ywain is left with no chilvaric ideals at all. The invisibility ring insinuated his decline in chivalry, and the invulnerability ring his waffling fidelity, but now he is left with no ring of any kind, no lady, and a reputation for being a hedonistic glory-seeker.

Another romance involving a single knight, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, includes two rings working in a complex manner. Perceval's mother gives him a ring for reasons of future identification as he is leaving home and she is unsure of when she will see him again. On his journey through the woods seeking knights he had seen the day, before he finds a castle. Wandering around inside, he discovers a lady sleeping in her chamber. He kisses her and carefully exchanges his ring for her ring; two rings are now at play. One year later, after many adventures, he finds this same lady bound to a tree in the forest. He frees her, which summons the Black Knight, her lord. Perceval and the Black Knight engage in combat, but the lady intervenes and brings the knights to a diplomatic dialogue in which Perceval suggests that both rings be returned to their original owners. This is not possible, explains the Black Knight, as he gave Perceval's ring to a giant. The giant, incidentally, has been trying to seduce Perceval's mother in the meantime by trying to force the ring on her, which she assumes the giant has taken by killing her son.

A central concern is why the rings were exchanged in the first

place. The exchange occurs in lines 470–477 and does not appear again until line 1860. The omission of any type of mention in the 1400 lines in between seems, until the very end, to figure as a narrative gap since the text never explicitly mentions the use of the ring in Perceval's knightly exploits. Rather than a narrative gap, however, the delay in explaining the ring emphasizes the change in Perceval's self-awareness and exhibition of power and pride. Perceval was not prideful or power-hungry when he left his mother, and the desire for the power of the ring does not figure as a motivating factor in the theft. No one is aware of the fact that it is a ring of invulnerability until the end of the poem; therefore, his motive cannot be one of seeking magic power for himself. Instead, Perceval's motive resides in the fact that he is unable to resist the temptation of the sleeping lady. As he exchanges the rings he says, "Forsothe, a tokyn to wedde sall thou lefe with mee," revealing that while he may have been ignorant of the power of the ring, he was fully aware of the power of the marriage ritual that such an exchange of rings suggests (ll. 471-72). The rings here express a power-seeking instinct; that is, Perceval, as the nephew of King Arthur, desires sovereignty. The ring exchange is carried out without any consent from the lady, and he thereby obtains sovereignty, authority, ownership, and control over a woman, which is antithetical to the purpose behind the original ring given to him by his mother, binding him to her authority. The one-sided exchange is only the beginning of the adventures that, with each victory, compound Perceval's pride. The ring indicates a growing sense of invincibility as it allows him to complete such exploits.

When Perceval discovers the lady tied to the tree and she finally reveals that the ring is an invulnerability ring, Perceval's entire quest is undermined, and he realizes suddenly and distinctly the true source of his abilities. Anger and confusion erupts within him when the Black Knight reports that he has given away Perceval's original ring. The hero now faces depressing circumstances indeed: his ring is in possession of a giant, his mother suffers from the giant's seduction and attempted rape, the invulnerability ring is back in the hands of the Black Knight so that Perceval will be fully vulnerable in any upcoming battles with the giant, the Black Knight calls him a liar, his right to sovereignty is entirely undermined, and he can no longer claim humility as a trait. Resolution in this romance can only come when Perceval defeats the giant without the aid of the ring and at last takes back his own ring, thereby becoming his mother's son once again. Having exhibited superiority, sovereignty, and prideful self-infatuation throughout the middle of the narrative, his return to his

mother through the recognition ring expresses a return to humility.

The ring plays its most pronounced role as an indicator of a state of the mind and characterization in Thomas Malory's tale of *Sir Gareth of Orkney*. In this tale, Gareth's lover, Lyones, before the tournament betokens upon him a ring, which she requests be returned at the end of the tournament. She says the power of the ring is to change the knight's colors, and it will keep the wearer from being killed. Unlike Ywain and Perceval, Gareth takes full advantage of the ring, as his colors change constantly during the tournament, rendering him unrecognizable, and all are amazed as Gareth meets several knights and defeats them. The entire assembly is agape at his skill. During a lull in the tournament, he removes his ring while drinking water and fixing his helmet. At the request of his dwarf, Gareth gives him the ring for safekeeping. The dwarf is all too glad to take it because he thinks Gareth ought to be identified, and when Gareth accidentally leaves the ring with the crafty dwarf before participating in the tournament again, the dwarf says nothing. Even though Gareth is unknowingly missing the protective ring, he performs just as gloriously on the field, only now spectators are able to identify him because he remains a single color: yellow. Furious, Gareth locates the dwarf, tows him quickly into the forest, and coerces the ring from his hand. At this point, Gawain comes into the forest looking for Gareth, and not wanting to be seen, Gareth slips the ring on his finger, and suddenly, the ring causes him to be invisible. The danger past, Gareth removes the ring and asks the dwarf for advice. The dwarf says to return the ring to the lady, which Gareth does by means of the dwarf, and then the ring drops out of the story. Apparently he no longer needs it to conceal his identity, render him invulnerable, or make him invisible on occasion.

The essential question, then, in *Gareth* is, why the ring at all? Gareth has proved himself more than capable of dealing with knights in all situations without any magic aid prior to the tournament as he escorts the lady Lyonet to her castle. He maintains a minimized identity consistently throughout the tale, and for a great deal of the story, no one except Lancelot knows who he is. Gareth explicitly states that he wants the ring to maintain his formulated identity: "Sir Gareth prayed . . . that in no wyse there sholde none of them telle his name . . . 'for' he seyde, 'I woll nat be known of neythir more ne lesse, nothir at the begynnynge nother at the endyng'" (Malory 213 ll. 37-8).

In consideration of the important issue of identity, the ring operates as an integral piece in developing a definition of the identity

and character of a knight. Gareth willingly surrenders old identifiers and seeks to frame a new identity. In the beginning, his circumstances change drastically as he purposefully shifts from being the brother of Gawayne, son of the Queen of Orkney, born of noble blood, and raised in an elite social class, to a mere kitchen knave who is ridiculed by rough-tongued Kay and called Bewmaynes, or Pretty Hands. Gareth removes all prior identifiers and reconfigures himself in his adventures, and while the events themselves are classically romantic, the use of the ring to aid in this identity building is unusual. Medieval literature includes many instances of a ring proving identity–it is dropped in a glass, worn on a chain, worn on the hand, or delivered and verified by messengers. Gareth's ring, however, confuses identity. To focus on the ring in this story in order to assert that the ring is significant because of the power it exerts to make a knight change colors and protect him from all bodily harm is to miss the point. The misidentification and reidentification process through the use of the ring is an important dimension in Gareth's tale because it determines the legitimacy of his identity as a knight.

In all of these romances, characters can be better understood in terms of the role of the magical ring and the coordinates within which it operates. Floris and Blancheflour's deliberate non-use of the ring emphasizes the extreme devotion between the lovers, and Ywain's non-use augments the hero's moral decline. The ring in *Sir Perceval of Galles* indicates a circle of discovery and truth in the character of Perceval, and the ring in *Sir Gareth of Orkney* expresses part of an inner domain of seeking identity. The use or non-use of the rings focuses our attention on the subtle yet remarkable realm of psychological interaction between characters much more than on the plot-advancing power of the rings themselves, and it provides for a means of characterization within the confines of the Middle English romance genre. But perhaps most importantly, the use of magic rings conveys something of the mystery of human motivation, serving as a powerful image of unity, possibility, and the inevitable kaleidoscopic experience of self-discovery.

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'Venus be in my Verse': Thomas Watson and the Cult of Elizabeth

***by* Stephen Hamrick**

Edmund Spenser complimented the poet, playwright, traveler, tutor, and translator Thomas Watson, yet this accomplished and respected writer remains underappreciated.[1] Remembered chiefly as a fellow spy, (potentially) Catholic friend, and dueling defender of Christopher Marlowe, Watson nevertheless should be considered in a comprehensive study of Elizabethan courtly rhetoric.[2] In addition to generating a solid reputation for tragic and comic plays (now lost), he was considered one of the best Latin poets of his generation. Clearly, Watson's contemporary reputation has suffered in the intervening centuries. Circulating in manuscript in the same circles as Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* poems, the poems that make up Watson's 1582 *Hekatompathia* or *Passionate Century of Love* helped to reintroduce the continental modes of petrarchan poetry to England after Wyatt and Surrey and helped to initiate the vogue of reading such love poetry. Watson could count a wide range of the most powerful men in England as his patrons, and, as he stated, he wanted Queen Elizabeth to read his petrarchan sequence and reward him, yet scholars have not explored his earliest participation in the multivalent cult of Elizabeth.[3]

Regardless of his modern critical fortunes, Watson indicates that his petrarchan poetry should be read within a courtly context. In "The Author's Exhortation to His Little Book," written in Latin, Watson enters the cult of Elizabeth by sending his "timid book" of "trifles" out into the world, hoping that

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[1]On Spenser's opinion of Watson, see Ringler, "Spenser and Thomas Watson," 484-487 and Huffman, "Watson Once More," 407.

[2]Critics primarily remember Watson as the dueling defender of Christopher Marlowe. See, for example, Riggs, *The World of Christopher Marlowe*; Kuriyama, *Renaissance*; Nicholl, *The Reckoning* and Eccles, *Marlowe in London*.

[3]The extensive critical literature on the cult of Elizabeth continues to grow, but the most important studies include Montrose, "Idols of the Queen;" Hackett, *Virgin Mother;* Levine, *Heart and Stomach;* Frye, *The Competition;* King, *Tudor Roya;* Berry, *Chastity and Power;* Montrose, "Shaping Fantasies;" *Astrae*; *Cult of Elizabeth* and *Gloriana;* Wilson, *England's Eliza*.

Perchance you will enter the shrines of our goddess, the many shrines with [sic] Diana maintains amidst roses, the Cybele of our heavens, the unique glory of our realm, the sole Sibyl of her land. She applies polish to our poets, she is more learned than the learned, a Juno in riches, a Pallas in morals, a Venus in beauty. She surpasses sovereigns, as the oak overtops the tamarisk. No bugle of Fame can sing enough of her. Should she cast an eye on your verses, o how blessed will you be thanks to her twin suns! (149)[4]

Here, Watson provides both a manifesto of his courtly hopes, namely that Elizabeth will "polish" him or improve his courtly, public luster with her "learned approval" and an interpretive key to the identity of his unnamed mistress. Throughout *The Passionate Century of Love*, Watson deploys each of the allegorical appellations applied here to the "goddess" Elizabeth, including "roses," "Juno," "Pallas," "Venus," "the oak," and "the twin suns," to construct his unnamed mistress.[5] Using these images and other contemporary, popular symbols widely used to describe Queen Elizabeth, Watson provides an extended petrarchan allegory of courtly service in the cult of Elizabeth, in which his unnamed but exemplary beloved can be read as representing the Queen. As part of a larger project reconsidering the overlapping religious and political uses of Petrarchanism in the long English Reformation, my purpose is to present the relevant evidence supporting such a reading.

Following Dante and Petrarch's two-part bifurcation of the sonnet sequence, the first eighty passions, as Watson names his eighteen-line poems, detail the hopes and frustrations of the besotted but dedicated lover. After passion 80, the lover rejects love as a passionate mistake that leads only to unhappiness. As scholars have shown, Watson strongly foregrounds his continental sources in the didactic headnotes prefixed to each poem, but his translations are anything but slavish imitations – his creativity abounds in the additions, transpositions, and modifications of his continental sources.[6] In addition to these headnotes, Watson often provides other

[4]All citations from *Passionate Century of Love* are from Sutton, *Complete Works* . Note also, in "An Eglogue Upon the death of the Right Honorable Sir Francis Walsingham" (1590), Sutton, *Complete Works*, v. 2, Watson overtly identifies Elizabeth as the allegorical figure Diana.
[5]Watson writes "He feele the pricke, that seekes to pluck the *Rose*" (16.12)
[6]On Watson's translations and poetic style, see Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry*, 133-139. See also, Huffman, "Watson Once More," 406, who writes,

notes to explain the texts of his poems. At least two distinct voices, then, appear in the sequence: the humanist headnote speaker who avidly instructs readers in the many rhetorical possibilities of petrarchan discourse, and the befuddled lover who stumbles through an unfulfilling relationship, serving a deified beloved that takes on a myriad of superlative qualities.

Although a few scholars have noted the kind of hyperbolic and allegorical imagery Watson uses throughout *Passionate Century*, they have not explored his early participation in the cult of Elizabeth. For example, in her indispensable, award-winning modern edition of Watson's work, Dana Sutton notes that in the prefatory passage on Elizabeth Watson "seems to transfer to the queen images he usually applies to erotic objects in the poem" and that "the love affair of this cycle is wholly imaginary."[7] Sutton, however, does not develop the potential significance of these observations. Watson stresses exactly the "imaginary," "fictitious," or perhaps allegorical function of his love story throughout the text, asserting that the story is only "supposed" (145). The combination of courtly petrarchan rhetoric with Watson's stress on the fictive nature of the sequence seems to draw specific attention to the allegorical function of the text.

By the time Watson published his collection of "imaginary" love poems, moreover, both the cult of Elizabeth and the political language of Petrarchanism had combined to make such images and "erotic objects" into political symbols used allegorically to construct the Tudor queen. As we have increasingly come to recognize, in Elizabethan England "erotic objects" represented more than private emotional states or artistic constructions, because they were also regularly used within the political discourse of "patronage" (145), which Watson directly evokes. That Watson would enter into the cult of Elizabeth in this fashion should not surprise modern readers. In 1591, nine years after publishing *Passionate Century*, he collaborated on or wrote songs for the Queen's Entertainment at Elvetham,

"Surrey has set a course for writing a poem not only about love, but one also, and perhaps chiefly, about love poetry. Watson followed this double course." See also, Coldiron, "Lyric Translation," 12, 22, who writes "the sequence sets out not to tell a story but rather to teach poetry and to reconstruct a familiar concept, the change in the lover's state" and "Watson seems much more willing to force the sources to accommodate to his structures than the other way around, since he so variously rejects replicativity and so often subordinates sources, chopping them up an altering their essential features, even while putting them on display."
[7]*Passionate Century*, v.1, 240, n. 18 and 254.

perhaps even handing Queen Elizabeth a presentation copy, and thanking her for a pardon he received for killing a man in defense of Christopher Marlowe.[8]

Watson's sense of love as an allegory for political courtship aptly vacillates between hope and despair, and this multivocal language of political Petrarchanism permeates his *Passionate Century*. Watson shapes the ostensibly erotic pursuit of his unnamed beloved by the use of distinctly political terms that recall his prefatory self-positioning as a place-seeking courtly writer. In terms that move outward from the erotic and personal, Watson's didactic commentator interprets passion 18 as a text that "partlie describeth her worthines, and partlie his owne estate" (167).[9] Combined with the lover's description of his beloved as a "tyrant" (10) and "light" (15) and the narrator's didactic description of the lover's "blaspheamous rage" (167), Watson's beloved takes on the allegorical qualities of a sacred monarch.

Evoking the lover's political estate, the headnote to passion 36 asserts that the lover "neither obtaineth any favour at the handes of his Mistres for his good thought or speech, nor by his loving lookes, or presents, nor for his humilite in writing, or long sufferance in servitude." (181). Through the synecdoche of the beloved's "handes," Watson evokes the multivalent trope of "servitude" or service, which carried political, religious, and erotic connotations in Elizabethan England.[10] Each of the descriptors used to fashion the bemoaning lover, moreover, match the specific skills or abilities of the consummate courtier: virtuous thought, beautiful "speech," "loving lookes" or demeanor, munificence, artistic achievement, and steadfastness.[11] The verse of passion 36 continues such symbolic construction of the lover-as-courtier, as he complains:

> My giftes [are] as great as mine estate affordes

[8]On Watson's collaboration with Lyly, see Phillips, *Facsimile Edition*, v.1, 20-23.

[9]Compare Watson's use of "estate" at headnote 79: "mislike of his wearisome estate in love to enter into a deepe discourse with him selfe touching the particular miseries which befall him that loveth."

[10]On the trope of service in petrarchan poetry, see Hamrick, "*Tottel's Miscellany*," 341. For other examples of Watson's use of the concept of service, see 16.9, headnote 19; 26.18; 27.6-.8; 29.14; headnote 36; 46.15; 82.16 and 85.5.

[11]The classic text, of course, for English courtiers is Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, which was translated in 1561 by Thomas Hoby.

> My letters tell in what a case I stand,
> Though full of blots through fault of trembling hand;
> I dewly daunce attendance as I may,
> With hope to please, and feare to make offence;
> All sov'raintie to her I graunt for aye. (36.4-9)

Offering proof of his frenzied love, the lover evokes the political power of "sov'raintie" appropriate to political or courtly relationships and proceeds to shape his fictional relationship by using the characteristically courtly metaphor of "dwely" dancing "attendance" upon a patron.[12]

Elsewhere in the sequence, this potentially satirical trope of "dancing attendance" upon a patron prefigures a kind of Jonsonian ridicule of courtly sycophancy, whereby Watson's lover describes love and his service as consisting of "Fawning hoapes" (39.14), "A *Flattring Sycophant*" (98.5), and "A right *Chameleon* for change of hewe" (98.9). In addition to such toadying performance regularly attributed to courtiers, the lover aptly describes the maddening suspense of the lover-courtier's state as uncertain: "I live her bond, which neither is my foe, / Nor frend; nor holdes me fast, nor lets me goe" (40.5-6). Even in the face of such vacillating imprisonment and the fact that the beloved seems to be "drawing back from a dewe acceptance of his service" (165), Watson's lover continues to hope for such courtly employment, and, as the lover complains in passion 45, envies "other lucky lads, whom sweet Venus has rendered fit for loving" (1). If we recall that Watson wanted to be "polished" or "rendered fit" by Elizabeth, whom he also dubbed "a Venus in beauty," this consistent construction of the lover as a political figure working specifically for Venus strongly suggests an allegory of service in Elizabeth's cult.

Potentially evoking Elizabeth's position as "governor" and not "head" of the Church of England, Watson continues to construct the courtly and political position of the lover as dominated by "the onely governesse and subject of his thoughtes" (179). Before the turning point of passion 80, when he rejects love entirely, the unnamed beloved remains the "governour of his will" (201; see also

[12]At 33.17-18, Watson also evokes this metaphor of courtship: "If so it be, let me attend my chaunce, / And fortune pipe when I beginne to daunce." "*To daunce attendance*: to wait (upon a person) with assiduous attention and ready obsequiousness; orig. to stande wating or 'kicking one's heels' in an antechamber" (OED 5). Note that the constitutive examples from Skelton and Shakespeare are court and political references.

179) who maintains her "sovereintie which she hath over him" (165). Speaking directly to the Queen's governing power, Watson had constructed Elizabeth with just this kind of political language. In his prefatory exhortation, Queen Elizabeth "surpasses sovereigns, as the oak overtops the tamarisk." In the face of such power, the lover's naiveté abounds, suggesting moreover that he can overcome the unnamed beloved's resistance, for

> In time small wedge will cleave the sturdiest Oake;
> In the time that Marble weares with weakest shewres:
> More fierce is my sweete *love*, more hard withall,
> Then Beast, or Birde, then Tree, or Stony wall. (47.3-6)

Identifying Elizabeth as a "stately" oak at the beginning of his text, here in passion 47, Watson asserts that the lover's continued service and "dancing attendance" will "cleave the sturdiest Oake," or, in the political register he has developed, his "courting" will overcome the patron's hard heart, and he will move forward. Here, then, the lover describes his beloved with the same political petrarchan rhetoric used by Watson to construct the Queen.

Defining the lover in passion 8 as a threatened courtier, the text continues to use political rhetoric by deploying the popular petrarchan trope of the lover-courtier as hunted deer. As part of his popularizing translation of the petrarchan discourse of love, Watson refers readers to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* wherein "Actaeon for espying *Diana* as shee bathed her naked, was transformed into a Hart, and sone after torne into pieces by his owne houndes" (159). With the translation of petrarchan discourse to England by Wyatt and Surrey, allegories of hunting were used as political symbols representing the search for power and place in the courts of the powerful.[13] In his "exhortation," we recall, Watson had evoked this political petrarchan discourse, describing Elizabeth as the virgin "goddess Diana." Corresponding to this overt allegorical identification of Elizabeth, passion 8 compares the lover's experience to Actaeon's:

> *Actaeon* lost in middle of his sport
> Both shape and life, for looking but awry,
> *Diana* was afraid he would report
> What secretes he had seene in passing by:
> To tell but the trueth, the selfe same hurt have I

[13] On the petrarchan allegory of the hunt, see Kerrigan and Braden, "Milton's Coy Eve," 42-45.

> By viewing her, for whome I dayly die. (1-6)

Here and elsewhere in the sequence, Watson's lover positions himself as a kind of secret-carrying spy in Actaeon's unfortunate shoes, and since he had allegorically cast Elizabeth as Diana, Watson obliquely identifies courtship as a dangerous sport and himself as subject to the virgin Queen he has envisioned.[14] In political terms, Watson's lover ends passion 8 complaining,

> When service cannot have a due reward:
> I dare not name the Nimph that works my smart
> Though love have grav'n her name within my hart. (16-18)

While poets of medieval courtly love often or regularly worked to protect the identity of their mistresses, such a move is not characteristically petrarchan. Watson's lover maintains the beloved's anonymity precisely because his courtly service has not received its "due reward," and, if he reveals the penury of his mistress, such a revelation would only make things worse. The use of the allegorical figures Diana and a nymph, along with the focus on courtly service, however, does suggest that Watson uses the anonymous mistress as an allegorical representation of the Queen and that he wishes to protect himself by maintaining the ostensibly fictive nature of his sequence.

In passion 48, Watson extends his use of courtly rhetoric by characteristically likening his beloved to a "heavenly sight" (9) with eyes that form a "wondrous flame" (11) and a "Virgins face" (13). In addition to referring directly to Elizabeth as Diana, Watson's exhortation had also imagined her palace as populated by "pious nymphs." Can we, then, detect a clear reference to the Queen in passion 48 when he asserts that his virginal beloved forces him to "confesse she hath more grace / Then all the *Nimphes* that haunt *Dianaes* chase" (17-18)? Such popular associations of the beloved with Diana or a "sacred" and "fairest" Nimph (17.6) or virgin continue in *The Passionate Century* (70), informing Watson's ongoing engagement with popular allegories regularly applied to Queen Elizabeth and her train after 1580.[15] In the highly evocative

[14] For other examples of Watson likening himself to Actaeon, see Passions 10.10-12; 48.17-18 and 74.1-2.

[15] King, "Virgin Queen," 43, argues that Elizabeth only came to be identified with Diana as virgin later in her reign, after 1580, when she was no longer capable of bearing children and thus unlikely to be married.

passion 17, for example, the poet equates the beloved with a nymph as well as with the phoenix, Juno, and Venus – the last two allegories used specifically by Watson to represent the Queen. The equation of Elizabeth to a nymph was also apparently widespread in Elizabethan culture, as evidenced by his friend and dedicator George Peele's *The Judgment of Paris* (ca. 1582), wherein Venus addresses Elizabeth as "this fair nymph, not earthly but divine."[16]

Watson's desire to be "polished" by the popular nymph and virgin Elizabeth and his desire to provide both pleasure and "profitte" (145) places him in a category of artists warning of courtly inequities within the cult. Passion 33 uses the story of the Judgment of Paris as such an allegorical conceit to further construct the beloved, writing "if either she had been borne, when *Paris* was to give sentence upon *Ida* for bestowing the Golden Apple; she had (as he supposeth) bene preferred before *Juno*, *Pallas* and Venus" (179). Once again signaling the fictive or "supposed" nature of his love story, Watson draws attention to his allegorical use of this mythological allusion, recalling also his parallel prefatory figuration of Elizabeth as "a Juno in riches, a Pallas in morals, a Venus in beauty." If such a reminder does not adequately serve to equate Watson's apple-winning beloved with Queen Elizabeth, the verse of passion 33 makes the comparison between Paris and the lover explicit, wondering

> If she for whom I still abide in paine
> Had lived then within the *Troyan* soile,
> No doubt but hers had bene the golden ball (33.4-6)

Elsewhere, Watson refers to Elizabeth as the "beauteous Queen of second Troy," and, here, the courtly speaker echoes such an invocation of the Queen by imagining his beloved as living in "the *Troyan* soile" (20)[17]

Elizabeth's complete superiority to the three goddesses Juno, Pallas, and Venus had been given pictorial expression in Joris Hoefnagel's "Elizabeth and the Three Goddesses" (1569), which Frances Yates dubs "a revised Judgment of Paris." In the painting, the artist depicts the Queen holding the royal orb (an imperial stand-in for Paris' apple) as Juno, Pallas Athena, and Venus look on and celebrate her victory.[18] The "Three Goddesses" was displayed at

[16]Horne, *Life and Works*, 5.105-160.
[17]The description of the queen from the Entertainment at Elvetham and a discussion of the entertainment are at Phillips, *Facsimile Edition*, v.1, 20.
[18]*Astraea*, 63.

Whitehall, the "golden house" (149) to which Watson refers in his prefatory letters, and would have been available for his review. In evoking the Judgment of Paris in his poem and in stressing the sovereign characteristics of the beloved, Watson appears to connect his beloved to the Queen.

In addition to identifying his beloved mistress as Elizabeth by using the goddesses he names in his exhortation, Watson repeatedly identifies his beloved as a phoenix, a popular Renaissance allegorical representation directly applied to Elizabeth as early as the 1570s to symbolize her power.[19] In passion 11, Watson's lover praises the beloved, "O Goulden Bird and *Phenix* of our age (1).[20] Watson's use of the golden-colored phoenix to represent Elizabeth participates in a broadly popular discourse in which artists concurrently construct the Queen with other terms used by Watson. For example, in *An Epitaph upon the death of the honorable, syr Edward Saunders Knight* (1576), the ballad writer extols Elizabeth through the knight's imagined farewell:

> Here *Cuma* is, here Sibil raignes, on *Delphos* seate to sitte,
> Here shee like *Phoebus* rules, that can *Gordius* knotte unknitte . . .
> O peerlesse pearle, O Diamond deer, O Queene of Queenes farwell,
> Your royall Majestie god perserve, in England long to dwell.
> Farwell the Phoenix of the woorld, farwell my soveraigne Queene,
> Farwell most noble vertuous prince, *Minervas* mate I weene.[21]

Watson's passion 39 strikingly replicates the *Epitaph*'s popular construction of the Queen as phoenix. Evoking the bedazzling power of his beloved, the lover asserts that,

> When first these eyes beheld with great delight
> The *Phoenix* of this world, or Second *Sunne*

[19]On the use of the Phoenix as a personal emblem for Elizabeth, see Strong, *Gloriana*, 82-83.
[20]These references to the Phoenix can be found at 17.10; 34.18; 39.2; 44.1; 44.15-1 and 51.17.
[21]Collman, *Ballads & Broadsides*, 175. For a discussion of the ballad and other references to Elizabeth as a phoenix in writings before 1582, see Wilson, *England's Eliza*, 23, 27, 79.

Her beames or plumes betweitched all my sight. (39.1-3)

In passion 39, the ballad writer's "Phoenix of the world" becomes Watson's "*Phoenix* of this world," but both call upon the contemporary allegory of the sacred and eternal bird to construct the Queen. Watson's description in 1582 of Elizabeth as "the unique glory of our realm, the sole Sibyl of her land" significantly echoes the ballad writer's earlier assertion that "here Sibil reignes" as "peerlesse pearle."

In passion 16, the didactic narrator focuses attention upon the lover's courtly "estate" and "service," with Watson's lover also equating his unnamed beloved to another golden bird or phoenix and thereby Queen Elizabeth. In this subtle allusion, the poet glances at what many men in England identified as the central problem of the reign: Elizabeth should be married – a concern that remained a slight possibility when Watson published the poem. In passion 16, Watson's bewitched lover again combines compliment with complaint, writing

> Her feathers are of golde, shee wants a mate
> And knowing wel her worth, is proud of mind:
> And wheras som do keep their birds in cage
> My bird keepes mee, and rules me as hir page. (16.3-6)

The oppression of courtly service, evocatively allegorized in line 12 as feeling a prick when one "seekes to pluck the *Rose*," resonates throughout Watson's sequence, never fully balanced by the lover's own sense of his seemingly powerful rhetorical ability. Although a common concern to the male body politic in England, Watson had first-hand experience of Elizabeth's marriage intrigues, because in 1580 he apparently delivered messages to Sir Francis Walsingham in Paris, when Sir Francis was investigating possibilities of the Tudor "rose" Elizabeth marrying the Duc d'Anjou.[22] Regardless of Elizabeth's marital status, Watson recognizes that his own imprisonment in a courtly cage ruled by a golden bird and rose-like beloved "proud of mind" would not be necessary if she had married and become subject to a "mate."

Finally Watson combines his extended use of petrarchan political allegories with the rhetoric of traditional religion to offer a complex examination of the cult of Elizabeth. Throughout the sequence, Watson deploys images of traditional religious practice and fashions a lover who "adores" his "saint" in "*Cupid's* Church," hoping "the *Saint* I serve" (52.8) "sacrifice" (76.5) would give him grace and/or "helpe in time" (52.8). Watson's ostensible Catholic lover conveys both the visual piety of traditional religion and the broader cultural assertion that lovers are actually religious devotees by commanding others to "Hang up your votive tables in the quire / Of *Cupids* Church, in witness of the paine" (91.14-15) they experience in love. In identifying the unnamed and worshipped saint-mistress as the Queen, Watson offers the observation that traditionally Catholic modes of worship had been transferred to a new cultic saint, Elizabeth Tudor. While it may be a coincidence that in 1580-1581 Puritans had been indicted for asserting that the celebration of the Queen would maker her into an idol, Watson's coded but similar assertions justify a reexamination of his participation in the cult of Elizabeth.[23]

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[22]On this meeting, see Phillips, *Facsimile Edition*, v.1, 7. See also Sutton, *Complete Works*, v.1, xxli.

Work Cited

Watson, Thomas. *The Complete Works of Thomas Watson (1556-1592)*, v.1., ed. Dana Sutton. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996.

[23]In 1580-1581, Puritan Lord Rich and his chaplain Robert Wright were brought before a church commission for slandering the Queen and the celebration of her Accession day, November 17. As John Strype records, "great proofs were brought against them [i.e., Rich and Wright] concerning their speech about solemnizing the Queen's day, *viz.* November the 17th; against Wright, for asking if they would make it an holy day, and so make our Queen an idol." Strype, *John Aylmer*, 56. For a discussion of these charges, see Strong, *Cult of Elizabeth*, 125-126.

Henry Petowe's Understanding of Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*

by **Bruce Brandt**

Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* was first published in 1598, and two continuations of the poem were published within the same year. The first, by George Chapman, has become canonical. The second is largely forgotten. Henry Petowe's *The Second Part of Hero and Leander, Conteyning their further Fortunes*, describes a series of unhappy adventures that befall Hero and Leander after the events described in Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. Though Petowe himself is an unskillful and uninsightful poet, I would suggest that his continuation more usefully illuminates aspects of Marlowe's achievement in *Hero and Leander* than has been appreciated. What Petowe saw in Marlowe's poem is not what modern critics and readers see in it, but one suspects that many of Marlowe's contemporaries valued what Petowe valued. Understanding this perspective can thus heighten our understanding of the cultural context of Marlowe's poem, and it may even add an additional dimension to our own perception of Marlowe's achievement in *Hero and Leander*. In particular, I would like to look at Petowe's praise of Marlowe, the relationship between the two poems, their differences in tone, and Petowe's understanding of Marlowe's poetics.

The Second Part of Hero and Leander

Since few people know Petowe's poem, a brief synopsis may be helpful. It opens with one of the characteristic devices of the erotic epyllion, an Ovid-like myth of Petowe's own creation: We are told that Apollo has angered the immortal beauties of heaven by singing of Hero's beauty and suggesting that this mortal is the fairest of all. Venus jealously suggests transforming Hero into a Medusa-like creature with snaky locks, and Juno threatens to unleash a second Phaeton whose mismanagement of the Chariot of the Sun would fry the heavens and the earth. Jove restrains them, saying that he will not permit the overthrow of such beauty. However, to placate Juno he commands Apollo to stop singing his praise of Hero, and Juno then takes Apollo's lute, breaking two of the golden strings into a thousand parts and throwing them into the cell of Oblivion. Petowe explicitly explains this aspect of his myth. The silenced lute represents Marlowe, whose praise of Hero's beauty has been silenced by his

death. Hero, whom Petowe's myth has shown to be endangered because of her beauty, has lost her greatest champion:

> Oh had that king of poets breathèd longer,
> Then had fair beauty's fort been much more stronger;
> His golden pen had closed her so about,
> No bastard eaglet's quill the world throughout
> Had been of force to mar what he had made ....
> (71-75)

But sadly, Marlowe is gone, and the harsh singing of Mercury replaces the sweet sound of Apollo. Apollo (i.e., Marlowe) has exhausted what can be said of Hero's beauty, so Petowe is only able to relate the unhappy adventures that befell them after they fell in love:

> He wrought a full discourse of beauty's treasure,
> And left me nothing pleasing to recite,
> But of unconstant Chance and Fortune's spite.
> Then in this glass view Beauty's frailty,
> Fair Hero, and Leander's misery. (118-122)

The subsequent tale of Hero and Leander's miseries is a courtly romance, a tale of knights and ladies. When Petowe's tale begins, Hero and Leander are deeply in love, and both are happily dwelling in Sestos. Unfortunately, Hero's beauty attracts the interest of the cruel Duke Archilaus, the ruler of Sestos, who woos her with both threats and mild entreaties. When Hero steadfastly refuses to forsake Leander, the Duke banishes him, hoping that Hero will be more tractable when he is gone. When Hero continues to reject him, Duke Archilaus suddenly dies from unrequited love in the midst of an increasingly bitter and angry tirade: "Wanting my wish, I die for my desire" (300). Duke Euristippus, the new ruler, blames Hero for the death of his brother. He imprisons her and condemns her to death at the end of three months unless she can find a champion to defend her.

In the meantime, the banished Leander has arrived at Delphos and learned from the Oracle that his true love will be slain if he does not return to Sestos. He hurries back, but remains disguised. When the time of Hero's trial arrives, she is placed where she can look down upon the combat, and Duke Euristippus appears "in armour of pure beaten gold, / Mounted upon a steed as white as snow" (526-7). When the trumpets sound, Leander issues forth from the tent where he has privily concealed himself. They fight on horseback, and Leander kills the Duke. He reveals his identity to Hero, and the lovers

are happily reunited. They live a long and happy life together, and when the time for death arrives, they undergo an Ovidian metamorphosis:

> They were transformed by all divine decrees
> Into the form and shape of two pine trees,
> Whose nature's such, the female pine will die
> Unless the male be ever planted by:
> A map for all succeeding times to come
> To view true love, which in their loves begun.
> (623-28)

Continuation or Sequel

Clearly Petowe's vision of Hero and Leander is not Marlowe's, and the obvious question is in what way can Petowe's work be seen as a continuation of Marlowe's. Of course, since the mid-twentieth century a number of highly influential critics, including Muriel Bradbrook, Louis Martz, William Godshalk, and Roma Gill, have suggested that Marlowe's poem was not unfinished, that it only seemed so to those who assumed that Marlowe had intended to depict the entire story as presented by Musaeus, his primary source.[1] The argument has perhaps lost steam in recent years, and in any case it is not the traditional answer. The perception that Marlowe's poem is incomplete dates back to its first edition in 1598, in which Edward Blunt's dedication to Sir Thomas Walsingham (1598) describes it as an "unfinished tragedy." The phrase *desunt nonnulla* (indicating that the work was not entire) was printed at the end, and the fact that George Chapman and Henry Petowe published continuations of the poem has been taken to mean that contemporaries saw the poem as incomplete. Such is clearly the case with Chapman, who divided Marlowe's poem into two chapters, or Sestiads, and added four more that complete the story as depicted in Musaeus. Petowe's dedication also makes explicit reference to Marlowe's poem being unfinished

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[1] The most important arguments for this interpretation appeared in M. C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); Louis L.Martz, ed., *Hero and Leander by Christopher Marlowe: A Facsimile of the First Edition. London 1598* (New York: Johnson Reprint Organization, and Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1972); Roma Gill, ed., *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, Vol. 1. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); and W. L. Godshalk, "The Sense of an Ending," in *"A Poet and a filthy Play-maker": New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance B. Kuriyama (New York: AMS Press, 1988), 293-314.

because of his death, and says that he has "presumed to finish the history" (91). As we have seen, however, his romance has nothing to do with Musaeus or any other classical version of Hero and Leander. Nor, in fact, does he make any significant reference to events in Marlowe's poem. For him, it seems that the story of Marlowe's poem is simply that Leander has successfully courted Hero and that they have fallen in love. This is essentially a completed story, and Petowe's promise to "finish the history" means taking these characters and creating a sequel filled with new adventures rather than finishing the story as given in Musaeus. The inference to be drawn is that what Petowe saw in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* was not the beginning of a tragic story, but simply a celebration of beauty and true love. If so, one wonders if his reading of Marlowe is entirely idiosyncratic, or if many early modern readers saw the poem in this same way.

The Heavenly Marlowe

As he appropriates Marlowe's characters, Petowe expresses great admiration for Marlowe, "whose honey-flowing vein / No English writer can as yet attain" (59-60). Two such passages are particularly interesting:

> Marlowe late mortal, now framed all divine,
> What soul more happy than that soul of thine?
> Live still in heaven thy soul . . . . (63-5)
>
> But Marlowe, still admired Marlowe's gone,
> To live with Beauty in Elysium . . . . (83-4)

Overall, I suppose that the intent is simply to affirm that Marlowe was a great poet, and Petowe was scarcely alone in this opinion. Still, the image of Marlowe happily dwelling in heaven may seem surprising given Marlowe's reputation for transgressive and atheistic thought.[2] Most praisers of Marlowe's poetry were either more skeptical about his personal beliefs or made no reference to them, focusing solely upon his literary merits. Petowe's equation of heavenly happiness and artistic merit thus interestingly resides at a far side of the spectrum of contemporary opinion over Marlowe's reputation.

[2] The Puritan reaction to Marlowe's death is nicely summed up by Constance Brown Kuriyama, *Christopher Marlowe: A Renaissance Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 153-55.

Petowe and Marlovian Poetics

In spite of Petowe's clear admiration for Marlowe, he does not seem to have much understanding of what happens in Marlowe's poetry. For example, Petowe clearly knows that a number of Ovidian plot elements are characteristic of the genre. As noted above, he incorporates a myth of his own making into his poem, and he has an Ovidian metamorphosis at the end, when his lovers turn into pine trees. He also inserts two long laments into the middle of his poem after Hero and Leander have been separated (an Ovidian feature not used in *Hero and Leander*). However, if Petowe sees the presence of these Ovidian conventions, he does not seem to understand what Marlowe has done with them. Thus, Petowe's opening myth merely tells us that Marlowe is dead, albeit in a complicated way, and once the main narrative is under way, he does not interrupt it. He has not seen that witty digression is the point of Marlowe's interpolated tale of Mercury's attraction to a shepherd girl, and he has not understood that the ostensible point of the story, an explanation of why scholars are poor, is scarcely the main point of connection to the larger plot.

More importantly, he appears to completely miss the comedy and sexuality of Marlowe's Ovidianism. This is evident in the difference in tone between *Hero and Leander* and *The Second Part of Hero and Leander*. Despite the tragic ending of its classical source and despite the reminders of this tragic potential that can be found within the poem, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is rich with comic detail.[3] Think, for example, of the deluded bees that seek the honey promised by Hero's sweet breath (I:21-2), or of the grotesque imagery underlying such allusions as Marlowe's use of Pelop's ivory prosthesis to describe the beauty of Leander's neck, or of Marlowe's use of comic rhymes like "tell ye" and "belly" (I:65-6). Such comedy is alien to Petowe. His goal is pathos. He wants us to commiserate with the plight of the lovers, and the bulk of the poem is comprised of their lengthy laments when they learn that they will be separated, while Hero is imprisoned, and when Leander is wandering in exile. This difference in perspective is strongly manifest in the two poems' portrayals of the lovers. Petowe's poem is about "true love"; Marlowe's is about sex, and much of what he has to tell us is presented comically. The naive Leander, it becomes clear, may know something about the rhetoric of seduction, but he knows little about

[3] An important early articulation of this argument appears in Clifford Leech, "Marlowe's Humor," in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), 69-81.

actual lovemaking. When first alone with Hero, "he as a brother with his sister toyed, / Supposing nothing else was to be done" (II:52-3). Other dimensions of sex are also comically beyond his understanding. Thus, when Neptune attempts to seduce him as he swims the Hellespont, the naive Leander can only conclude that the god has mistaken him for a woman. Petowe, in contrast, never asks us to laugh at his characters, and as for sex, there isn't any. The post-coital sadness felt by Hero at the end of Marlowe's poem has no counterpart in Petowe's poem, and there is no seductive language, no wooing, and no physicality at all. Marlowe's poem is frequently risque; Petowe's is G-rated.

Perhaps no one element reveals the difference between Petowe's poetics and Marlowe's more than the way in which Petowe emphasizes Hero's beauty. It figures in the opening myth summarized above, it lies at the root of the true love between Hero and Leander, and it is what attracted the unwelcome attentions of Duke Archilaus. Clearly one of the things that Petowe sees in Marlowe's poem is this sense of her beauty, and Marlowe's skill in evoking it is central to Petowe's praise of Marlowe. For all of this, Petowe seems to have misunderstood how Marlowe creates this effect. In his complaint that Apollo (Marlowe) has left Mercury (Petowe) nothing to say about Hero, Petowe in fact undertakes a description of Hero's beauty:

> Her pretty brows, her lips, her amber hair,
> Her roseate cheek, her lily fingers white,
> Her sparkling eyes that lend the day his light . . . .
> (112-15)

In tired, trite language, what Petowe gives us is a traditional blazon that focuses on Hero's physical traits. Marlovian criticism has often noted that Marlowe uses this technique to evoke Leander's beauty, but not Hero's.[4] When Marlowe first introduces "Amorous Leander, beautiful and young" (I:51) we learn about "His dangling tresses that were never shorn" (I:55) and that "His body was as straight as Circe's wand" (I:61). We learn how soft and white his neck was, how smooth his breast, and how white his belly. We learn about "That heavenly path with many a curious dint / That runs along his back" (I:68-9). Denying the ability of his "rude pen . . .to blazon forth the loves of men" (I:69-70), Marlowe goes on to describe eyes, cheeks, and lips. Clearly the ability to evoke beauty through a catalog of physical traits is a part of the Marlovian discourse. Marlowe likewise creates a powerful sense of Hero's attractiveness when he first introduces her, but he does so almost entirely through a description of her garments. We know that Apollo courted her for her hair, but we are not told if it was long or shot, straight or curly, blonde or brunette. Instead we have a wealth of detail about what she is wearing:

> The outside of her garment were of lawn,
> The lining purple silk, with gilt stars drawn;
> Her wide sleeves green, and bordered with a grove . . .
> (I:9-11)

We have similar detail about her blue kirtle, her myrtle wreath, and her veil. Surely no reader has any doubt that she is beautiful, but Marlowe evokes this feeling without providing specific detail. It is often suggested that Marlowe may have been particularly attracted to the male body. Perhaps so, but clearly (and as the contrast with Petowe emphasizes), his creativity included both applying old conventions in new ways and reinventing them to apply to their traditional objects. Once again, Petowe sees the convention, but not the subtleties of its use. And once again, his pedestrian efforts help to illuminate the nature of Marlowe's achievement.

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[4] See, for example, Brian Morris, "Comic Method in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*," in *Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Brian Morris, Mermaid Critical Commentaries (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1968), 116.

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Comic Refusers IV

by **Douglas A. Northrop**

I have argued over the past few papers that Shakespeare uses the role of the comic refuser to sharpen the sense of comedy and to highlight the particular issues of the play by having one character conspicuously absent from the comic resolution and from the festivities that signal the resolution. Thus Jaques remains a spectator, not a participant in life, and will not return to court in *As You Like It*; Malvolio maintains his delusion of grandeur and will not accept his assigned position in the household in *Twelfth Night*; and Shylock will not accept that mercy is a higher value than justice in *The Merchant of Venice*.[1] The refuser often functions as a critic of the emerging society. To some degree that is true of the three refusers just mentioned, but is more explicitly the case in the next three. Shakespeare makes Lucio a spokesperson for licentiousness and accommodation of our baser elements in *Measure for Measure*, uses Paroles to critique the hollowness of achievement and thus the futility to attempt to be other than we are in *All's Well That Ends Well*, and offers Thersites as a satirist of idealistic pretensions in *Troilus and Cressida*. In that last case the refuser comes as close to overturning the comedy as any in the canon; Thersites provides an almost acceptable alternative to the military code of behavior which finally defines the comic or common spirit of the play.[2] Other explorations of the role occur in *Love's Labor's Lost,* where the plot is turned upside down: the comic community that emerges at the end is based on separation, and the refuser of that separation is Don Armado, who achieves union with his mate which is the usual comic resolution. Another extreme is reached in *The Tempest* where all of humanity will be forgiven and packed into the reclaimed vessel to sail back to Naples and Milan, leaving behind only those beyond humanity: Ariel and Caliban. And finally we can see in *The Taming of the Shrew* all characters in the play accept their proper roles, except Christopher

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[1] These plays were treated in my first paper on this topic: "Shakespeare's Comic Refusers," *Proceedings of the Ninth Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature.* Black Hills State College, 2001.

[2] These plays were treated in "Shakespeare's Comic Refusers, II," *Proceedings of the Eleventh Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature.* Minot State University, 2003.

Sly, who is unawakened from his dream of lordship and never becomes aware of the role he plays.[3]

We can even see some of the functions of the comic refuser in Tybalt, who turns the comedy that is underway in *Romeo and Juliet* into a tragedy by refusing the spirit of love offered by Romeo. And we can contrast Tybalt with Benvolio, who with his common sense and rational control avoids, at least personally, the tragedy that sweeps up so many. In fact we can begin to define in Benvolio's character a related role of tragic refuser as developed in Horatio in *Hamlet* and Kent in *King Lear*, and brought to a self-destructive climax in Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Indeed, it is that role which Iago plays with a villainous intent and tragic result in *Othello*. It is his position as plain speaker and confidante, rational counselor of the hero, the one who does all he can to thwart the approaching tragedy, that makes his function in the play so frightening and so effective. One other glance forward before returning to the comedies. David Crane in The New Cambridge Shakespeare says that in *First and Second Parts of Henry the Fourth*, Falstaff "is the refuser of chivalry, of honor, the refuser of fictions that decorate and sometimes transform the lives of lords and kings . . . " (7).[4] I agree, but would rather say that Falstaff is the character who in those plays might properly be called the historical or heroical refuser. He rejects the historical movement of the plays, offering other, sometimes loveable, qualities, but ones that always oppose his wit and will against the directions and patterns that give political meaning to the flow of historic events. I hope to explore such refusers of history as I suspect there is much to be learned by comparing Falconbridge, who rejects commodity in *King John*, to Bolingbroke, who rejects ceremony (the imagery/metaphor of royalty) in *Richard II*, to Falstaff, who rejects "grinning honor" in the two parts of *Henry IV*.

Having sketched this broader background, I can focus these criteria on the specific plays. I want to compare *Comedy of Errors* to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and then *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* to *Much Ado about Nothing*. These are the comedies which, when I first began this investigation, I found the clearest in the use of a comic refuser and yet for several reasons raising interesting and complicating problems.

The one person excluded from the gossips' feast to which all, that is all on stage, are invited at the end of *Comedy of Errors* is the schoolmaster, Doctor Pinch. He has been placed in charge of exorcising the madness from Antipholus of Ephesus, who certainly appears to be possessed, as he claims to have been excluded from his own house for dinner when his wife and her sister know he was there, and claims never to have received a chain of jewelry when the goldsmith has seen him wearing it. Dr. Pinch uses the standard treatment of seclusion and darkness, equally ineffective with Malvolio, even if a better case could be made for Malvolio's need for purgation. Malvolio didn't know who he was, while Antipholus didn't know who he wasn't: that is that he had a twin brother roaming the city and taking his place and possessions. The temptation to bring Pinch on stage in the final scene to show how he has been singed and plastered has been yielded to in some productions I have seen, but I believe it should be resisted. Pinch has pretended to a role he does not have, to a skill he does not possess. His problem is not confusion about external conditions, but an assertion of inner falseness. Shakespeare at this point is not willing to extend the comic inclusiveness quite that far. Pinch is the scapegoat whose suffering must redeem the faults and follies of the others. He has knowingly mistaken himself while the others have only acted in accordance with the limited knowledge they have. Errors in this comedy of errors can be forgiven, and all who erred can feast together. He who deliberately misleads is excluded.

It is revealing to compare this resolution to that which concludes *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. There the intentional deceiver, Falstaff, is subject to a ritual of pinching and singeing which does rid him of his pretensions and rob him of his disguises. But the play is full of those who are willfully deceiving others, beginning with the merry wives, Mistresses Ford and Page, who practice upon Falstaff for their merriment and his correction. If intentional deceivers were excluded from the final festivity, it would be a small party indeed. Sir Hugh Evans and Doctor Caius have deceived the Host into thinking his horses were stolen in return for his deceptions of them during their efforts to duel. Ford has disguised himself as Brook (or Broom) to attempt to catch his wife in adultery. Both Master and Mistress Page are practicing deception to get their daughter Anne married to the mate they have chosen, while Anne and her chosen mate, Fenton, are deceiving the others to achieve their union. And there is finally the grand deception of Falstaff when the whole community dresses as fairies to enact the final humiliation or purgation of Falstaff. Jeanne Addison Roberts in her book length

[3] These plays were treated in "Shakespeare's Comic Refusers, III," *Proceedings of the Twelfth Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature*. Augustana College, Sioux Falls, SD, 2004.
[4] *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Ed. by David Crane. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Gen. Ed. Brian Gibbons. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1997.

... everyone in [the play] except Anne Page is tricked in some way" (119).[5]

The usual argument is that Falstaff is of the court and is an outsider who refuses the community standards. While my sense of the play is that Falstaff is the comic refuser, perhaps we can be more explicit about what he refuses. Certainly if deception is a key element, the community seems as eager and as competent in deception as the outsider. Furthermore, not only is Falstaff invited to join in the final reconciliation as were Jaques in *As You Like It* and Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, but in distinction to them, he apparently accepts the invitation and enters into the comic spirit of the occasion.

It is not just that Falstaff is an outsider, for Fenton is also, and Evans and Caius make clear by their language that they have some claim to being outside the linguistic fold. It is the self-asserted sense of superiority that marks Falstaff as the rejecter of community. The presumption of sending identical letters to the two wives, his self-congratulations on learning that both are attracted to his offer, the assurance of his wit in answering the complaints of Shallow and of Slender, all of these occasions declare his sense of superiority to these locals. In the culminating scene when his pretensions are humbled, he is forced to recognize that he has been tricked by foppery and gross foppery at that. He has "to stand at the taunt of one that makes fritters of English" (5.5.129-30),[6] and he has no wit to answer. His only moment of happiness is when it is revealed that the Pages have also been tricked in the marriage of their daughter. Now he is happy to be at a level with these citizens, when before he felt exalted above them.

Why should the most important character be the refuser? Largely because he feels he is the most important character. Falstaff refuses the society because he believes he is above it, and he can only be accepted into it when he is brought down to its level. The movement is not only one way, however. Each character is also revealed as a deceiver, and as Roberts points out, each is tricked. It is important that this commonality be established, and the final scene is very explicit in emphasizing this community of awareness and reformation. Evans insists that Ford leave his jealousy. And Page urges Falstaff to be cheerful and "to laugh at his wife who now laughs at thee" (5.5) when he thinks he has tricked her by marrying Anne to Slender. But as the deceptions and their miscarriages are progressively revealed, each mistake binds the group more firmly together. Falstaff sums it up: "When night-dogs run, all sorts of deer

[5] Jeanne Addison Roberts, *Shakespeare's English Comedy: "The Merry Wives of Windsor" in Context*. Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1979.
[6] All quotations are from the Crane edition for The New Cambridge Shakespeare, previously cited.

are chased" (5.5.209). Page urges that they accept the resolution: "What cannot be eschewed must be embraced" (5.5.208), and all are included in the invitation from Mistress Page to celebrate: "let us every one go home, / And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire, / Sir John and all" (5.5.212-14). It is left to the production to decide how to stage the final exit. Does Falstaff hang back with wounded dignity, refusing the offer and maintaining his pretended superiority? Or, does Falstaff become one of the group, as I have argued, mingling with the others, arm in arm in comradely fashion as they go off to enjoy a posset and laugh by the fire?

I am trying to resist the temptation to call *Comedy* and *Merry Wives* less serious comedies. There is a strong tendency in modern productions to present both plays as simply farces with as much slapstick in stage action as possible. The plays, however, are being defended by scholars recently as having some important themes of identity or concerns with time or appearances in *Comedy* and issues of real life or the importance of a scapegoat in unifying a community in *Merry Wives*.[7] I do not find them as thematically determined as most of the later comedies; even *The Taming of the Shrew* appears to develop a more consistent and a more sophisticated thematic unity, although it, too, has a stage history of being treated as simple farce, in part to avoid the difficult questions it poses about the relative roles of husbands and wives in marriage.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona also has, at least for modern readers, its difficult moment when Valentine apparently offers his fiancée, Silvia, as a token of his friendship to Proteus. And this is just after Valentine has had to intervene to forestall the attempted rape of Sylvia by Proteus. The problem, however, is not simply that Valentine seems to treat Silvia as disposable property; Turio and the Duke do the same in that scene. Valentine says to Proteus, "All that was mine in Silvia I give thee" (5.4.83).[8] Later Turio claims "Yonder is Silvia and Silvia's mine" (120). And the Duke, her father, concludes the apparent exchange of possessions by saying to Valentine, "Take thou thy Silvia, for thou hast deserved her" (143).

[7] Bloom describes the theme of *Comedy* as mildly metaphysical questing for identity. Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. London: The Fourth Estate, 1999, 21-27. Whitworth cites both time and identity as important themes in his introduction: *The Comedy of Errors*. Ed. Charles Whitworth. The Oxford Shakespeare, Gen. Ed. Stanley Wells. Oxford: Oxford U P, 2002. Crane in his introduction to the New Cambridge edition urges that *Merry Wives* is about "the untransformability of real life" (70).
[8] All quotations are from The New Cambridge edition: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Ed. Kurt Schlueter. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Gen. Ed. Brian Gibbons. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1990.

Silvia maintains a steady silence throughout these exchanges. Again, directors face significant blocking decisions and actors have significant intonation, expression, and movement decisions in order to indicate what they think is going on or should go on in this scene. Two general possibilities for interpretation of Valentine's comment can be offered. The first, and highly offensive one not only to audiences now but also to Sylvia and audiences then, would be "I have the right to assign her as property and I assign her to you." The other sense is: "Proteus, you are not restricted by me from making formal and gentlemanly addresses to Sylvia."[9] We know by Valentine's earlier intervention that he is not simply handing Sylvia over to the desires of Proteus; that is what the challenge was about just moments before. Sylvia's consent is not for Proteus to force or Valentine to dispense. Nor is it for the Duke, her father, to command, as we know by Sylvia's refusal of Turio and her escape from the city. Thus, the Duke's statement is not a demand on Sylvia. He says, "Take thou *thy* Sylvia" not "Take thou *my* Sylvia" (emphasis added). In effect the Duke is saying that Valentine has demonstrated his worth and that the Duke is withdrawing his objection to the addresses Valentine has offered to Sylvia. The Duke is equally clear that Turio has lost the Duke's support by Turio's cowardly behavior. It is only Turio whose statement does not seem to require Sylvia's assent, for he already knows her reluctance and still claims possession.

Our age may take military valor less seriously than Shakespeare's, and Shakespeare may take it more lightly as he matures. But this is a play about callow youth and, finally, shallow virtue. Thus the Duke sounds a clear and significant note when Valentine challenges Turio for the right to address Sylvia and Turio refuses to fight. Indeed, the Duke's speech sums up the central quality of the comic resolution:
First to Turio,

> The more degenerate and base art thou
> To make such means for her as thou hast done
> And leave her on such slight conditions.

Then to Valentine,

> Now by the honor of my ancestry,
> I do applaud thy spirit, Valentine,
> And think thee worthy of an empress' love.
> Know then I here forget all former griefs,
> Cancel all grudge, repeal thee home again,
> Plead a new state in thy unrivalled merit,
> To which I thus subscribe: Sir Valentine,
> Thou are a gentleman and well derived;
> Take thou thy Silvia. For thou hast deserved her.
> (5.4.132-43)

Turio, and before him Eglamour, has refused the conditions for inclusion in the society that forms at the end of the play; he is the comic refuser for his failure of courage. Turio's action clarifies the nature of the resolution and the conditions for inclusion in the emerging society. Proteus can be forgiven for his motions toward rape. Valentine can be forgiven for his effort to elope with Sylvia. The outlaws who have committed "suchlike petty crimes" as stealing away a lady or stabbing a gentleman in the heart can be forgiven and reintegrated into the service of the commonweal (4.142 ff.). The decisive factor is that they have the spirit or courage that Turio lacks and which the Duke has eulogized. Proteus has risked his life to save Sylvia from the outlaws, and Valentine has offered to fight both Proteus and Turio in defense of his love. Sylvia has dared to run away, and Julia has ventured on her own, disguised as a page, in pursuit of her love. All those reconciled to society and included in the resolution have shown courage, or as the Duke calls it "spirit." The spirit, which has led Valentine to attempt to steal a daughter from a Duke, has led Proteus to attempt to steal a lady from his friend, has led Sylvia and Julia to take extreme measures to follow their loves, and has led the outlaws to live outside society, can be fitted to the needs of society, but cowardice can not. Valentine says of the outlaws: "They are reformed, civil, full of good, / And fit for great employment" (5.4.152-53), and the description fits all who join in the "triumphs, mirth and rare solemnity" which mark the comic ending.

A recent book by Michael Friedman, *"The World Must Be Peopled": Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness*, argues that there is a series of plays in which Shakespeare offers a less than ideal hero and pushes the action to a less than ideal marriage.[10] He cites Proteus

[9] We can compare Lysander's ceding to Demetrius of his interest in Hermia: "In Hermia's love, I yield you up my part," *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2.165. Again, it is not a transfer of rights, but a comment on the attitude of the suitor.

[10] Michael Friedman, *"The World Must Be Peopled": Shakespeare's Comedies of Forgiveness*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2002. He notes, for instance, of *Two Gentlemen* that critics expect "that the play endeavors to bring Proteus and Julia together in an ideal union; however, given the obvious shortcomings of the groom, this marriage fails to appear ideal. Alternatively, if we view *Two Gentlemen* as a comedy of forgiveness, striving primarily to heal ruptures in the world of male camaraderie

in *Two Gentlemen*, Claudius in *Much Ado*, Bertram in *All's Well*, Petruchio in *Taming*, and Angelo in *Measure for Measure* as examples. His title is taken from one of Benedick's rationales of why he will forget his principles of bachelorhood and succumb to marriage with Beatrice; he muses: "Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humor? No, the world must be peopled. When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married" (*Much Ado* 2.3.197).[11] Friedman's argument highlights an important theme in Shakespeare's comedies -- the theme of accommodation, a theme that Kenneth Branagh emphasizes in his movie version of *Much Ado*. There is a wonderful introduction to the text of the play as the women of Messina bathe and change clothing and the men returning from battle ride into town, doff their war clothes, bathe, and put on their more sociable outfits. The scenes contain a great deal of motion, and much exposed flesh. It is full of animal spirits and naked pleasure as it moves from the free flowing energy of pure expression to the disciplined and properly clothed encounter of the two sexes. The pace becomes measured, the spirits restrained, and the greetings formal. Then the play begins. The image of human energy brought under control of convention is powerful and sets the general theme quite clearly for this play. Friedman's argument and Branagh's insight concur in highlighting Shakespeare's theme that the unruly passions must be disciplined into conventional forms for the business of the world to go forward. But that theme extends beyond the defective suitor: it is not only Claudio who must be brought into social conformity, but Benedick and perhaps Don John as well. Similarly, it was not only Proteus whose actions had isolated him from the society, but also Valentine, Sylvia, Julia, Eglamour, Turio, and the band of outlaws, all of whose unruliness placed them at least temporarily outside the dominant society.

At the end of *Much Ado* Benedick has taken control. He has stopped Beatrice's mouth with a kiss, insisted on a dance before the marriages, and when Don John's capture is announced, he again asserts control, stating: "Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll devise thee brave punishments for him. Strike up, pipers" (5.4.127-28). While Beatrice and Benedick have consumed the attention of most critics, as well as general admirers, of the play, I would urge greater

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sustained during the transition from bachelorhood to husbandry, it becomes clear that Julia's swift forgiveness of Proteus, though neither laudable nor psychologically plausible, is necessary to the generic framework" (49-50).

[11] All quotations are taken from The New Cambridge edition: *Much Ado about Nothing*. Ed. F. H. Mares. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Gen. Ed. Brian Gibbons. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003.

consideration of the connection between Benedick and Don John. The first controls, indeed defines, the nature and form of the comic resolution; the other has worked to prevent that resolution and is excluded from it. It is an opposition like that between Berowne and Don Armado[12] or between Petruchio and Christopher Sly,[13] where the hero and the comic refuser present the opposite poles of the conflict.

Don John, who is certainly the most intentionally evil of the comic refusers, makes it clear that he is not bound by conventions; he directly expresses his feelings and will not disguise his mood: "In this (although I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man) it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain" (1.3.22-24). Thus to be "not of many words," as Don John claims of himself, is to present oneself without the covering of conventional language, without the mask of speech. He would properly be the only person at the masque in act one without a mask to cover his identity. Beatrice has seen Don John and Benedick as opposites from the beginning of the play. She says "He were an excellent man that were made just in the mid-way between him [Don John] and Benedick: the one is too like an image and says nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling" (2.1.6-8). But Anne Barton calls our attention to the connection of both Beatrice and Benedick to Dogberry, for they all use words as "a way of keeping people at a distance, of protecting and isolating a vulnerable inner self" (365). Thus, while Don John and Benedick are opposites, they are opposite ends of the same continuum. Don John with few words and Benedick with too many are both trying to allow their idiosyncrasies and egotism to create a unique lifestyle and to avoid the center.

That center is the wholly conventional young couple whose marriage both expresses their wishes and has the support of the older society as represented by Don Pedro and Leonato. Hero and Claudius remain the center of the comedy, bringing the society together when they are harmonious and driving it into segments when they fall out of harmony. Like Anne and Fenton in *Merry Wives*, they have an importance beyond their lines in their representative power. Benedick

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[12] While Berowne and Don Armado are both extravagant users of language, Berowne will reform and give his allegiance to plainer speech. Don Armado is unreformed throughout. The continuity is language, but the opposition is in the achieved awareness and ability to change.

[13] Petruchio has full awareness of the roles he plays; Sly, through drunkenness, gullibility, and sleep, is wholly unaware of his role. Thus, they are diametrically opposed in terms of the central theme of the play, role-playing.

and Beatrice will try to differentiate themselves from this model of life and Don John will try to act directly at disrupting it, but finally the business of the world will pull the others toward that center, moderating their differences and bringing forth a new society bound by marriage and bending the individual desires into established patterns of behavior. What better image for it than a dance where our energies are brought into patterns of conformity and mutual gracefulness? And thus the world will be peopled, not by ideal marriages but by accommodation and conformity, not the happiest message to offer, but a decidedly comic one.

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Staging Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*: Making the Misanthrope Palatable in Performance

by **Gayle Gaskill**

Drama critics have lately made a cliché of expressing astonishment at successful productions of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, the c.1606 tragedy that is at heart an unpalatable catalogue of misanthropic curses. Nearly a century ago, George Bernard Shaw condemned the script for "intellectual bankruptcy," insisting Shakespeare "tried once too often to make a play out of cheap pessimism which is thrown into despair by a comparison of actual human nature with theoretical morality, actual law and administration with abstract justice, and so forth" (122). Shaw could not, however, accuse the play of failing to please critics and audiences in well wrought performances. Recalling his pleasure in hearing the famous Canadian actor Brian Bedford in the title role, Harold Bloom writes, "Perhaps the curses wearied the playwright, they tire one on the page, but Bedford thrilled with them in the theater" (588). Indeed, under Michael Langham's direction, Bedford's 1993 New York restaging of the 1991 Stratford, Ontario, production achieved three Tony Award nominations. A decade earlier, critics regarded Robin Phillips's 1983 Edwardian-era production in London, Ontario, as "strikingly courageous" and "a director's challenge," but nonetheless found it "perfectly successful" (Berry 465-66). That year a silver-haired William Hutt played the title role, and the small but satisfying part of Flaminius, Timon's servant who curses one of his master's grasping beneficiaries for thirteen lines, was performed by Peter Donaldson, who was destined to play Timon in twenty years. In 1999-2000, when an RSC production emphasized and updated the homosexuality and extravagance of Shakespeare's contemporary Jacobean court, *The London Daily Telegraph* wrote, "The biggest compliment I can pay Gregory Doran's fine production of *Timon of Athens* is that the play's neglect seems incomprehensible while you are watching it" (Albemarle, para. 5). Again in 2004, when the Stratford, Ontario, Festival set the play in the current year and promoted Peter Donaldson to the tile role, the *London Ontario Free Press* wrote, "No one expected . . . the surprisingly effective staging given to *Timon of Athens*, considered to be the Bard's least popular work" (Gallagher, para. 2). Evidently the Stratford director, Stephen Ouimette, had learned the art of making the misanthrope palatable in performance.

The play is often compared to *King Lear* both for its arbitrary misogyny and for the eloquence of Timon's rage. A reviewer of an "enjoyable . . . modern dress" production at the 2003 Edinburgh

Fringe Festival wrote, "Nobody curses better than old Will, and certain scenes of this play are chock-full of it" (Dixon, para. 4). Nonetheless, it lacks the most moving element of *Lear*, the redemptive presence of a woman. In 2004, Stephen Ouimette addressed this issue when he expanded and dignified the existing women's slight roles by promoting two camp followers to officers and introducing one of them, Timandra, in Act I as a silent, elegantly pant-suited dinner guest. For her scripted entrance in Act 4, Timandra changed to combat gear, so her costume belied Timon's cursing her as a whore, and Ouimette staged that element of the scene as one of Timon's hallucinations. Even these gallant directorial efforts, however, could not transform Timandra to Cordelia. The script's only women--apart from prostitutes, dancing girls, and the well-born, off-stage bride that Timon's money wins for his servant Lucilius--are Mother Earth and Lady Luck. In the opening scene, a Poet explains the parable of fickle Lady Fortune, and at first Timon attempts to play her role by distributing gifts to his guests, as Coppélia Kahn remarks, so when Timon later curses all women he is really cursing Fortune (Kahn 136-42). "It's tempting to speculate," wrote a recent Canadian reviewer, "what would have happened if Timon had been married!" (Malvern, para. 15), but Timon's exclusive reliance on masculine fellowship and material wealth leaves him isolated in each of the play's five episodes. First, Timon prosperously displays his generosity in an ostentatious banquet; then his friends refuse to pay his debts; next in a pair of scenes the Athenian senate exiles its boldest captain, Alcibiades, while Timon serves a new banquet of hot water and fiery invective; fourth, Timon rants colorfully from the woods outside Athens, where he discovers more gold; and finally, the disgruntled Alcibiades, who pays his insurgents with Timon's new treasure, conquers Athens and learns of Timon's lonely death. A cautionary tale of greed and profligacy, the plot outline reads more like an unpalatable sermon than a riveting drama.

Shakespeare found Timon's story in Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, where it forms a sidebar in the history of Marc Antony, who after his defeat at Actium "said he desired nothing but to live the life of Timon; as . . . the ingratitude and injuries, which he suffered from those he had esteemed his friends, made him hate and mistrust all mankind" (377). For Plutarch, Timon is simply an icon of misanthropy. An Athenian during the Peloponnesian wars, he entertains only his fellow Cynic, Apemantus, and shows affection only to young Alcibiades, saying "he knew this young man would one day do infinite mischief to the Athenians" (376), a prophecy that proves true. On the other hand, Plutarch rated Alcibiades a whole chapter, which portrays the charismatic, proud,

and feckless young man's talents for military leadership and cruel practical jokes. Alcibiades repeatedly switches loyalty between Athens and Sparta during their internecine conflict and eventually escapes to Persia, where he is assassinated, and where his mistress, Timandra, buries him in drag, "in her own robes" (146). Along with Timon's mysterious double epitaph, Timandra accompanies Alcibiades from Plutarch into Shakespeare's play, where her presence foreshadows the grim fate Lady Fortune holds for every victor.

The play's success in performance demands a nuanced delivery of Timon's highly poetic curses in Act 4. "The curse extends beyond Athens to the world at large," writes Frank Kermode; "the whole of society is poisoned by greed for gold. . . . Gold becomes the sole test of honor, replacing that native worth in which Timon had formerly trusted" (1491). In the woods outside Athens, where Timon exiles himself, his visitors provide new topics for his misanthropy: he equates human sexuality with disease, military heroism with brutal murder, and the natural order with relentless destruction:

> Piety and fear,
> Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
> Domestic awe, night rest, and neighbourhood,
> Instruction, manners, mysteries, and trades,
> Degrees, observances, customs, and laws,
> Decline to your confounding contraries,
> And let confusion live! (4.1.21)

The language is operatic, and in 1990 Stephen Oliver transformed the play into an opera for male voices (Oliver, para. 1). For other productions, Henry Purcell and Duke Ellington each contributed an interpretive score. In 1983, the Canadian actor William Hutt restrained Timon's rage and delivered his lines "in a 'peculiar robotic hesitation,' or 'almost sotto voce, as if attitudes and insinuations were all that counted'" (Jowett 110, citing Gina Mallet from Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Shakespeare Around the Globe*. New York: 1986, 730). In 1991 and 1993 Brian Bedford imparted "an appealing light touch--a look of impish delight . . . even at inappropriate moments" (Gerard, para. 5). In 1999-2000 at the RSC, "musicality was strongly in evidence" in Michael Pennington's performance. "His intonations sometimes opened towards an almost enraptured state of mind, suggesting that anger and hatred could become attenuated into a quasi-religious lyrical agony" (Jowett 110). In 2004 Peter Donaldson, according to Canada's *National Post*, played the tirades with "a superb vein of gnarled humor . . . [and] unforgiving laughter" (Cushman, para. 11). He initially cursed Athens with incredulity, but

the flood of invective soon seemed unstoppable (para. 5). This approach suggests no division in Timon's characterization between prosperity and remorse, but rather the dramatic development of a coherent psychology.

Psychological realism, which has long dominated English-speaking theater, invites the audience to identify with a complex dramatic character. Plutarch's Timon is a one-dimensional misanthrope whose virulence is incomprehensible, but the play gives Timon a happy and generous past, as well as the key to his misanthropic psyche: "The middle of humanity thou never knewst," declares Apemantus, Timon's perpetually cynical alter ego, "but the extremity of both ends. When thou wast in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for too much curiosity; in thy rags thou know'st none, but art despised for the contrary" (4.3.300-03). With or without his gold, Timon lacks the golden mean. Furthermore, his intractable pride leaves him in perpetual psychological isolation. Katherine Eisaman Maus notes that in his heyday, "by always giving, never receiving, Timon attempts to force his beneficiaries into an endlessly grateful and therefore subordinate role" (2246). This unmerited, unmatchable generosity begets defensive greed and hypocrisy. On the other hand, as David Bevington and David L. Smith point out, "Timon's need to blame others . . . masks in him any realization that his own approach to generosity has always been a reciprocal one, and that such a view of gift-giving is bound to lead to disappointment" (79). Shakespeare's Timon is psychologically convincing because he is contradictory. Proud of his power to free a man from debtor's prison, to bestow a bride by paying off her father, and to entertain a celebrated captain, Timon basks in his guests' applause. The 2004 Stratford Festival production cast most of Timon's guests from the young members of Stratford's Birmingham Conservatory. The obvious age difference between host and guests implied that Timon naively enjoyed "showboating," as the *Toronto Sun* put it, to youngsters who were equally naive in accepting expensive treats without reckoning an implied obligation (Coulbourn, para. 5). When Timon learns he cannot maintain his guests' loyalty, he explodes in impotent rage.

Timon's soliloquies display his rage magnificently, but they never question it. Maria Prendergast writes,

> Unlike many of Shakespeare's soliloquies, these lead to no internal insight or external action. Timon's all-encompassing hatred leads to a stark demonstration of what happens when man rejects all attachments--to women, men, gold, or even

> exchanges of language--the dissolution of self.
> (Sec. 3, para. 6)

Timon's curses display the psychology of the compulsive, articulate, unreflective public man, newly humiliated and newly impotent, the outsider who cherishes his cynicism, ashamed to have been confounded in his own overpriced self-deception. Chiefly, the misanthrope hates himself.

Fortunately for the audience, a spectacular musical number contrasts with the barrage of bitter speeches at the play's core. In the second scene, a Cupid presents what the script calls "a masque of Ladies [as] Amazons, with lutes in their hands dancing and playing" (1.2.123 s.d.). Directors regard this stage direction as an invitation to do some showboating of their own. The Restoration substituted an opera for the masque, and the Victorian era a ballet, while late twentieth-century productions--including Michael Langham's at Stratford, Ontario, in 1963, and Michael Bogdanov's in Chicago in 1997--inserted strip shows. In 1993, separate productions in New York and San Francisco reprised the Duke Ellington score that Stratford, Ontario, had commissioned in 1963 (Hurwitt, para. 11), and in 1999-2000 the RSC used it again for sensational effect:

> Cupidesque "Amazons" were played by men wearing thongs and little black masks and large white feather wings. They descended from aloft to the accompaniment of Ellington's music, firing flirtatious arrows from silly bows at Timon's guests, then taking partners in an all-male dance. (Jowett 113)

The 2004 Canadian production, more conventionally gendered, turned up the volume as Timon's guests discoed energetically to the recorded sound of Prince:

> U don't have 2 be rich
> 2 be my girl
> U don't have 2 be cool
> 2 rule my world. (St. 2)

The irony of that lyric complemented the ironic commentary with which Apemantus undercut Timon's display of wealth for the amusement of his young guests: "Hey-day! what a sweep of vanity comes this way!" (1.2. 124). Whether describing the jazzy number sardonically like a journalist in a tuxedo, as he did in the 1999-2000 RSC production (Jowett 113), denouncing it righteously "as an

unheeded fire-and-brimstone black Baptist preacher," as he did in the 1993 San Francisco production (Winn, para. 3), or while laconically munching carrot sticks at the opulent feast, as he did in 2004 Stratford (Vineberg, para. 3), Apemantus memorably instructs the audience to squirm pleasantly in suspense throughout the lavish entertainment.

Timon's second feast, a liturgy of his outrage, is another highly palatable spectacle. In 1996 at the New York Shakespeare Festival, Timon's servants spun his dining room table and chairs on casters until the hungry, greedy guests grew dizzy. According to the *New York Times*, "The vignette becomes a wild, gratifying revenge fantasy, and the audience cheers the way it might when Ramses' troops are swallowed by the Red Sea in Cecil B. DeMille's *Ten Commandments*" (Brantley, para. 4). The display was equally comic and disturbing, the frenetic gesture of both self-assertion and defeat. In 1983, William Hutt's Timon staged a hunt supper that exploded with "hurling crockery and a quite alarming fire breaking out in the flambé equipment" (Berry 466). In 2004 Peter Donaldson's Timon used a similarly incendiary visual metaphor to show his guests the door to hell when he came "close to using their coats to start a bonfire" (Gallagher, para. 14), and "you actually think he's going to burn them alive" (Ouzounian, para. 12). The paired banquets form compelling, entertaining theatrical business, and Timon takes the audience with him from patron to misanthrope by playing both parts with gusto.

Probably recognizing that a rural misanthrope, however eloquent, is ultimately unpalatable for any audience, Shakespeare worked with a younger collaborator, Thomas Middleton (b. 1580), whose specialty--like Ben Jonson's--was city satire. After careful linguistic analysis, scholars attribute over a third of the play to Middleton, including the humorous irony of Timon's erstwhile friends making excuses to his servants when they ask for money to pay the debts their master incurred when he was generously entertaining those friends (R. V. Holdsworth, "Middleton and Shakespeare" [unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Manchester, 1982] cited in Jowett 136-44). Middleton's characters are stereotypes of casual greed, whose arrogant refusals stir Timon's servants to denounce them in bold defiance of social rank. At the same time, the false friends' self-serving rationalizations are recognizably comical. Directors individualize the excuse-makers to play up the bitter comedy of their abandoning their old patron. In 1983, Ontario director Robin Phillips "extract[ed] considerable fun from a Turkish bath location, and a barber's" (Berry 466). In 1991 and 1993, Stratford and New York director Michael Langham had one man "padding off huffily into a sauna with some muscular

attendants" (Lyons, para. 2). Recalling Langham's emphasis on the rascals' narcissism, in Stratford in 2004 one of Stephen Ouimette's actors played "a great scene reclining on a massage table with cucumber slices on his eyes" (Malvern, para. 10). Debtors and creditors, their sly moral manipulations still recognizable, are reliably amusing figures in city satire, and the audiences laugh at these cardboard comics with the safe satisfaction of laughing at Vice in a morality play.

Middleton's second contribution to making the play palatable is his development of Timon's Steward, Flavius, in a sentimental appeal to audience sympathy. Ignored by his master in prosperous days and blamed when prosperity vanishes, the Steward, though often frustrated, is always loyal, both to Timon and to his fellow servants. Deserted by the newly misanthropic Timon, Flavius insistently shares the last of his own money with the staff before embracing them and parting forever. Though Timon is probably less deserving of Flavius's service than his own guests were of his earlier hospitality, Timon nonetheless remains the whole focus of the Steward's attention:

> I'll ever serve his mind with my best will.
> Whilst I have gold I'll be his steward still. (4.2.50-51)

Offering his small remaining savings to Timon in the woods, Flavius earns only a backhanded compliment:

> I do proclaim
> One honest man--mistake me not, but one,
> No more, I pray--and he's a steward. (4.3.488-90)

Proudly cherishing his despair, Timon resorts to class consciousness to dismiss his last chance at the solace of friendship.

Both the stalwart John Woodvine, who played Flavius at the RSC in 1999-2000, and Bernard Hopkins, who played him at Stratford, Ontario in 2004, portrayed the Steward as Timon's mature contemporary; this implied a long-standing relationship in contrast to Timon's association with the young sycophants who devoured his hospitality. Both productions expanded Flavius's role at four crucial points. First, they introduced him in the first scene, replacing the anonymous messenger who reports that Timon's friend has been arrested for debt. Next, they emphasized Flavius's renewed commitment to the fallen Timon--"I'll be his steward still"--by making it the last speech before the interval. Near the end of the play, both substituted Flavius for the illiterate soldier who discovers Timon's tomb, and finally both brought Flavius into the last scene to

report Timon's death as Athens falls to Alcibiades. This expansion of the role of the faithful Steward encourages the audience to regard Timon with comfortable compassion and lends Timon's history a tragic dignity.

The last speech--the last word on Timon, including the reading of his epitaphs--belongs to Alcibiades, Timon's victorious beneficiary and foil. Though Shakespeare's contemporary audiences, as Katherine Duncan-Jones indicates, would have "included a growing number of individuals who were interested in [Plutarch's biographies]" (181-82) and who would consequently have recognized the opportunistic captain's capture of Athens as a critical step toward that city's doom, directors have often made the closing scene palatable by treating Alcibiades as a heroic figure. In 1694, Thomas Shadwell's adaptation had Alcibiades march with his army into Timon's woods in musical procession. By the nineteenth century, they concluded the play by marching back to Timon's tomb for a solemn tableau (Jowett 115-17), and the Captain's amorous, undignified female attendants vanished. Current directors restore them and sometimes cast a particularly attractive actor as the Captain. For example, a stunning young blond Rupert Penry-Jones played Alcibiades in 1999-2000 for the RSC, and at least one critic found him, with "youth and looks on his side, the play's true hero" ("Timon of Athens," para. 2). The next year director Michael Kahn at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington DC cast Michael Genét, a very handsome young black actor, as the quiet man of action and self control (Baker, para. 7). A good-looking guy in uniform projects a highly palatable concept of moral authority in the theater.

Other directors emphasize the moral ambiguity of military action. In 1983, Robin Phillips staged the defeat of Athens as

> unforgettably ominous, disturbing, rather than the simple triumph of the revolution. Four Senators, dark, top-hatted, parleyed behind a screen, passing a megaphone from mouth to mouth. Alcibiades spoke in ringing tones, without aids, and to him the gates of Athens opened. He strode through, without looking at the Athenian crowd, and his soldiers followed him: dark, unquiet, the crowd drifted noiselessly toward the light, in the wake of Alcibiades. A surrealist nightmare, one reviewer called it, and the ending contained only a hint of hope. (Berry 467)

Though Alcibiades offers his Athenian victims peace, the dramatization of military vengeance, though technologically compelling, is disturbing. In the early 1990's, Michael Langham's

Alcibiades entered Athens "on a crane . . . [amid] flashing war-lights and exploding war-bangs and wafting war-smoke" (Lyons, para. 3). This conqueror demonstrated he could terrorize Athens, but his politically expedient pledge to cleanse it of moral corruption was never enacted. Like Michael Langham's productions of the early 1990's, Gregory Doran's in 1999-2000 used multiple stage levels for a spectacular martial ending:

> Alcibiades directed an onslaught against Athens from a gangway hung over the main stage. After the dry ice cleared and Alcibiades established order, the Athenians on the main stage departed, leaving Alcibiades above, the Steward centre stage, and Apemantus downstage by the proscenium wall.
> (Jowett 118)

Each of these isolated figures was, by implication, reflecting on the deceased Timon, but each apprehended Timon--if at all--solely from his own idiosyncratic creed: military power, antiquated loyalty, or practiced cynicism. Deliberately, the scene offered no clear or unified interpretation.

Post-modern audiences are trained to appreciate moral ambiguity partly by Theater of the Absurd, such as Samuel Beckett's plays, where the dramatic structure is not a conflict but a series of images, and the characters are not identifiable protagonists but bewildered, sometimes comic figures whose existence has no meaning. In 1963, Michael Langham staged Timon's scenes in the woods as a conscious allusion to Beckett's *Happy Days*, whose central character, Winnie, is waist-deep in sand at the beach. Winnie speaks long monologues, but like Timon, who also speaks from exile in a pit, she takes no action. In a more subtle reflection of Beckett's beach, Robin Philips in 1983 sent Timon's greedy artistic beneficiaries, the Poet and Painter, to visit their old patron in his trench in a tropical woods indicated by a glass screen that "glowed with orange heat. Flies buzzed intermittently. . . . [The Poet and the Painter wore] white tropical suits with white homburgs, a striking image of fake civilization in the wilderness," and each carried a white umbrella against the sun (Berry 466-67). The beach umbrella turned up again in the 2004 Stratford Festival production, though Timon had become the mercilessly sun-burned and blistered opposite of the serenely cool host. The umbrella was a symbolic stage property that reminded audiences not only of Mother Nature's unremitting harshness, but also of a whole philosophical, theatrical outlook that makes the play palatable in ways that realism and romanticism cannot: Timon's futility is an end in itself; it is the human condition.

Thus Stephen Ouimette in 2004 did not need to invent some stage business to account for Timon's discovery of buried gold when he digs for edible roots. Unlike Trevor Nunn, who in 1990-91 opened the play with thieves burying their gold before being shot by the police (Jowett 55), an absurdist interpreter escapes verisimilitude by focusing on the bewildering uselessness of any design.

Finally, directors make *Timon* palatable with contemporary allusions that turn it into a modern morality play by inviting audience to wince knowledgeably at the sins of celebrities. Shakespeare's contemporary audience would have recognized Timon's lavish banquet and masque as mirrors of King James's court--and the courts of Europe as well--for the king, newly arrived from poor Scotland, defied Queen Elizabeth's conservative precedent by leading his heavy drinking courtiers in arbitrary largesse and expensive, grand-scale entertainments. Modern banking did not exist in those days of fledgling capitalism, so loans, like gifts, were complex personal arrangements. In the past half century, nearly all productions have emphasized contemporary relevance by costuming the play in twentieth-century dress. In 2004, the Stratford, Ontario, costume designer called her *Timon* "the Armani show" after its high-fashion, expensive-looking contemporary suits (Teahen 4), but in 1983 Robin Phillips garbed William Hutt's Timon in an Edwardian smoking jacket, in 1991 and 1993 Michael Langham put Brian Bedford into "a chic cream suit" of Noël Coward's era (Lyons, para. 2), and in 2000 Michael Kahn in Washington, DC, dressed Philip Goodwin's Timon in a royal blue suit of 1980's design. "There was an obvious decadence about the 80s," explained Kahn's designer. "People were flashy back then, they wore bold, bright colors. It's very different these days" (Agurre-Sacasa quoting Elizabeth Clancy, para. 4). Whether that difference is real or imaginary, each production ominously invoked specific moments in twentieth-century history to signal the audience that the conspicuous consumption foreshadowed the characters' ruin.

Further costume and production details give audiences the satisfaction of recognizing contemporary parallels. In 1963, the Cupid who introduced the masque of Amazons was made up to resemble "the sophisticated go-between Dr. Stephen Ward, who introduced the cabinet minister John Profumo to prostitutes" (Jowett 104). Richard Pasco, who played Timon at the RSC's Other Place in 1980-81, simply regarded Timon's diatribe against gold "as an indictment of our own society: the acquisition of more and more, the underlying worthlessness of so much of today's virulent commerce" (135). In 1993 in San Francisco, Alcibiades made his eloquent but unheeded Senate plea for his soldier's pardon "to a distracted table of paper-

pushing officials that recall[ed] the obtuseness of the powerful at the Hill-Thomas Senate hearings" (Winn, para. 9). In 2004 Stephen Ouimette explained that his choice of a contemporary setting for his production illustrated government corruption, favoritism, threats of war, "where people can lose vast fortunes in an afternoon," and he pointed to "Conrad Black--gone. And Martha Stewart--gone. Internet fortunes vanish in a day" (Crew, paras. 2-3). Canadian critic Richard Ouzounian wrote "Timon's wealth vanishes with Nortel rapidity" (para. 11), and the list of modern instances grows daily. "With its luxury-loving lords living on credit, influence, loans, and gifts," writes Marjorie Garber, *Timon* "is possibly the most pertinent [of Shakespeare's plays] to modern and postmodern life" (634). The pleasure of recognizing these contemporary parallels in the performance--along with the nuanced delivery of Shakespeare's poetry, the exploration of Timon's psychology, astonishing spectacles, satirical comedy, and sympathetic, heroic, or ominously anti-heroic characterizations of supporting roles, as well as theater of the absurd--converge to make the misanthrope's history not only palatable, but delicious.

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George Herbert Talks Back: Rewriting Love Poems

by **Robert J. De Smith**

> *Roses* and *Lillies* speak thee; and to make
> A pair of Cheeks of them, is thy abuse. (6-7)[1]

With these lines, embedded in two sonnets sent (according to Izaak Walton) to his mother as a New Year's gift, the seventeen-year-old George Herbert distinguishes between secular love poetry and sacred praise. In the letter sent with the poems, which Walton quotes, Herbert declares his resolution "that my poor abilities in poetry shall be all and ever consecrated to God's glory" (Pasternak Slater 344). The first of these sonnets begins,

> My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee,
> Wherewith whole showls of *Martyrs* once did burn,
> Besides their other flames? Doth Poetry
> Wear *Venus* livery? only serve her turn?
> Why are not *Sonnets* made of thee? and layes
> Upon thine Altar burnt? (1-6)

This sounds like an ardent, teen version of Herbert's "Jordan" poems and even hints, with the mention of an altar, at one of the controlling images of Herbert's collection, *The Temple*. A poem titled "The Altar" (as everyone knows) is the first in the main section of that volume, where it collects into its shape Herbert's heart as an offering, his method of typology, and the idea of his poems as a sacrifice of praise to his God. The young student, writing to his mother regarding his promise and his intention, has become the poet whose works burn with heavenly love.

Now, perhaps this introduction sounds too much like Walton's hagiography. Walton, after all, continues,

> and as he grew older, so he grew in learning, and more and more in favour both with God and man—insomuch, that in this morning of that short day of his life, he seemed to be marked out for virtues, and to become the care of Heaven. (Pasternak Slater 344)

[1] Herbert's poems are cited from C.A. Patrides's edition. This poem is labeled "Sonnet II" and is included in an appendix of poems not found in *The Temple* (205).

But Walton, writing in 1670, is not the only one to suggest that Herbert—in his life and his art—drew a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular. Henry Vaughan, lamenting the flood of idle, secular poetry in England,[2] writes in the preface to his (1655) *Silex Scintillans*,

> The first, that with any effectual success attempted a diversion of this foul and overflowing stream, was the blessed man, Mr. George Herbert, whose holy life and verse gained many pious converts, of whom I am the least, and gave the first check to a most flourishing and admired wit of his time.

Earlier and more generally, Robert Southwell, Jesuit missionary executed in England in 1595, had complained in the preface to his *Saint Peters Complaint* (1595),

> Poets by abusing their talent, and making the follies and faygnings of love the customarie subiect of their base endevours, have so discredited this facultie, that a Poet, a Lover, and a Lyer, are by many reckoned but three words of one signification. (Martz 179)[3]

Southwell goes on to suggest a project of reforming contemporary poetry to religious ends. Louis Martz calls this project "sacred parody" (186) and argues that Southwell is the seminal influence on

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[2]Vaughan begins his preface:

> That this kingdom hath abounded with those ingenious persons, which in the late notion are termed Wits, is too well known. Many of them having cast away all their fair portion of time in no better employments than a deliberate search, or excogitation of idle words, and a most vain, insatiable desire to be reputed poets; leaving behind them no other monuments of those excellent abilities conferred upon them, but such as they may—with a predecessor of theirs—term parricides, and a soul-killing issue, for that is the Βραβείον and laureate crown, which idle poems will certainly bring to their unrelenting authors.

Later, he adds that while he himself once "languished of this very sickness; and it is no long time since I have recovered. But, blessed be God for it, I have by His saving assistance suppressed my greatest follies."

[3] Thurston, in the *Catholic Encyclopedia,* notes "while it is probable that Southwell had read Shakespeare, it is practically certain that Shakespeare had read Southwell and imitated him. In *Midsummer* (dated 1594-95; published in Quarto 1600), Theseus says, "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet / Are of imagination all compact" (5.1.7-8).

emerging devotional poetry in the seventeenth century.[4] For Martz, sacred parody is a program, a "campaign" initiated by Southwell and carried on by Herbert.

While Martz brings considerable insight to seventeenth-century poetry, his conclusions have been questioned, especially by those who, like Richard Strier, argue persuasively for a distinctly Protestant temper to Herbert's verse (see Strier xvi-xvii). Nonetheless, we have come to our topic: did Herbert engage in "sacred parody"? What was his attitude toward the non-religious verse he read and used in his verse? Was it his goal to reform such verse? How then did he make use of contemporary verse, particularly secular lyrics?

The answers to these questions would seem to be easy. As Rosemond Tuve comments, "An interest in this displacement of the profane by the sacred has been widely accepted in modern times as a prime motivation for much of Herbert's writing of religious poems" (253).[5] Herbert's youthful promise, made in his early sonnets, is

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[4] Martz writes,

> but first came Robert Southwell, seeking to reform English poetry by bringing to it certain arts that he had found flourishing on the Continent: the practice of religious meditation, and the conversion of the methods of profane poetry to the service of God. In establishing these arts on English soil, Southwell became the first significant writer of a new kind of English poetry, a kind which at its best blended religious meditation with Elizabethan lyric. (183)

He adds, "Southwell's campaign to convert the poetry of profane love into poetry of divine love had, it seems, a strong impact upon the seventeenth century" (184).

[5] Similarly, Patrides in his edition of Herbert's poetry writes, "Herbert's aspiration to curtail poetry's excessive attachment to the secular muse . . . involved in particular an attempt to re-dedicate the poems of his predecessors to a sacred muse" (209). Patrides includes five models on which Herbert based parodies.

Tuve argues at length by examining Herbert's poem titled "A Parodie," that what Herbert meant by the term "parody" was probably much more prosaic. Herbert's poem imitates a love poem by the Earl of Pembroke (William Herbert, George's cousin) called "Soules joy," but without any sense of what we might call parody or revision. In fact, Tuve suggests that "parody" in this case has a specific musical meaning: simply the creating of new words for a musical setting which was associated with the original poem. Essentially, "A Parody" means "to the tune of." Tuve's argument is more elaborate than this—for instance, she summarizes what she calls "a long history of formal imitation and exchange, unself-conscious and ordinary, provocative neither of ambiguities nor ironies" (271)—but she concludes, "It is a disappointingly common sense explanation compared with

fulfilled in his "Jordan" poems, as well as others, like "The Forerunners" and "A True Hymn," which disparage secular versifying in favor of plainness. "Jordan I" even seems directed at least two kinds of contemporary poetry: the pastoral of "sudden arbors" (7) and "honest" "Shepherds" (11) and the witty, metaphysical mode where "he that reades, divines, / Catching the sense at two removes" (9-10). "Jordan I," recalling those earlier sonnets, asks, "Must purling steams refresh a lovers love?" (8): must earthly love be the subject of poetry?

But this poem, and others on similar topics, are less about finding a new poetry—or a new plain style—than about giving up on any style whatsoever. Lines from "The Forerunners" illustrate this idea well, when Herbert asserts that God "will be pleased with that ditty / And if I please Him, I write fine and witty" (11-12). Here the intentionally sappy rhyme seems designed to illustrate both Herbert's divesting himself of any self-centered pretense to please God by means of his own invention and, as Strier puts it, that "Devotional art is not to be judged by aesthetic standards" (202).[6] What is aimed at is not so much reforming one's style—or seeking to reform the style of secular poetry—but losing style altogether as a metaphor for giving up one's self and one's intentions. Thus these poems may use contemporary love poems as examples of one's self-centered ambition to please, but it is not so much the poetry that is under scrutiny as the self.

I am suggesting then, that Herbert's use of contemporary love poetry—secular verse—is complex but also consistent with his poetic practice. Fundamentally, he was not so much reacting to secular verse as he was using it to further his own ends.

It might make sense to consider first Herbert's "Vertue," a poem that while it does not imitate any particular non-religious poem, seems rather to catch up whole volumes of poems of praise—it's a poem in which the subject of love is trying to break out. The poem's title suggests not just moral uprightness but something more like rock-bottom, animating power (the poem ultimately asks, "What lasts? what has staying power?"—but that is reading the end of the poem into the beginning). When the poem begins with "Sweet," and when that word is repeated as the first word of the first three stanzas, this sense of virtue is quickly diverted to what is beautiful or pleasant:

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the picture of a Herbert torn by anxieties and determined to turn all secular love into sacred channels, but it suits the man better" (279).

[6] Strier makes a similar point regarding "A True Hymn" (202). In another context, he summarizes, "Herbert did prefer the pious heart to the thinking mind" (197).

> Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
> The bridal of the earth and sky. (1-2)

Indeed, the poem presents series of diversions which become evident as each stanza turns and then ends abruptly. The first stanza ends, "The dew shall weep thy fall to night / For thou shalt die" (3-4). Its shortened last line, of course, communicates rhythmically what the words convey: things are cut off.[7] The stanza illustrates one of Herbert's most common devices, his catechism (if I may use Fish while taking issue with him) by which he constantly invites us (and often his speaker) to reconsider his subject and to find *within* his subject a new meaning, one which has been present—like God's grace—all along. Here what seems "sweet," "calm," and "bright" is rather brief and chilly as dew is transformed into tears.

Herbert repeats this pattern twice, next by addressing "Sweet rose," which lasts longer than a day and has a bold beauty that would seem to be more compelling than the softness of early morning. But, "Thy root is ever in its grave" (7). By the time we reach the third stanza, we are wary of being given something pleasant only to have it removed or altered—all the more so when "Sweet spring" is introduced as that which is "full of sweet days and roses" (9). We know this will not end well, for we understand that spring is made up of nothing more than the days and roses which were found wanting in the previous stanzas—and that is the point.

We are ready, then, for a new way of seeing, which Herbert gives us in his final stanza:

> Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
> Like seasoned timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal,
> Then chiefly lives. (13-16)

"[S]easoned timber" and "coal"—and indeed the glimpse at apocalypse—revise our understanding of sweetness. Traditionally beautiful images have been replaced by that which seems dead and dark. What is sweet is what lasts, and what lasts—what has virtue—is the soul alive to God and dead to self.

Is this poem in any sense a parody, or a response, to secular love poetry? Yes and no. It does not so much challenge love poetry as suggest its limits. "Roses and Lillies speak thee," as the young Herbert wrote. In his poem "The Flower," which extends the image of the "Sweet rose" from "Vertue," Herbert concludes,

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[7] Summers would call this metrical variation, aptly I think, an emblem or hieroglyph.

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
Which when we once can finde and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide. (43-46)

The lesson of the flower leads us from one kind of love to another. Thus "Vertue" and "The Flower" both illustrate that Herbert is always engaged in rewriting—in revising the notions he and his readers seem loath to shake off.

So it should not surprise us when Herbert invites us to turn around our ideas about love. He is always experiencing in his poems—and conveying to us—the ideal that all things must be subsumed under the lordship of Christ. Central to this project in *The Temple* is bringing the self under such lordship. Ideas about love—and roses, spring, and everything else—are simply natural and available examples of doing so. In other words, sacred and secular are, for Herbert, inadequate polarizations. Everything is sacred, and when Herbert invokes (parodies!) the situations of secular love or love poetry, his goal is not to drive a poetic wedge between them, but to reinvent the one in the terms of the other.

Consider Herbert's "Dulnesse," a poem, like "The Bunch of Grapes" and many others, about the Psalm-like situation of finding one's self unwilling or unable to praise God:

Why do I languish thus, drooping and dull,
As if I were all earth?
O give me quicknesse, that I may with mirth
Praise thee brim-full! (1-4)

In this state of "Dulnesse," Herbert's speaker compares himself unfavorably with the love poet:

The wanton lover in a curious strain
Can praise his fairest fair
And with quaint metaphors her curled hair
Curl o're again. (4-8)

Surely the "wanton lover" is portrayed as misguided here: we hear an echo of Herbert's "Jordan II" in which "Curling" metaphors are part of his speaker's pretense, and the curling here becomes comic, as if the poet's praises work like humidity on the hair of the beloved. But the derision is not directed at the lover, but at the speaker, who, though he has a higher reason to offer praise, finds himself unable.

The next two stanzas clarify the comparison. The speaker finds God to be his "lovelinesse . . . life . . . light" (9); Christ's "bloudy death" reinterprets the "red and white" of the Petrarchan contraries into something more "Pure" (11-12). And, in a hint at the solution to one who is "all earth" (2), Christ makes "very dust" into "beauties" (15-16). Love is being reinterpreted here—better, its true object is made clear.

Love poetry is part of the poem mostly as contrast, not as subject. The contrast brings clarity in the next stanza, when Herbert's speaker says, "But I am lost in flesh, whose sugred lyes / Still mock me, and grow bold" (21-22). As "flesh" and "sugred lyes" suggest, the speaker learns from the "wanton lover" his own condition before God. Thus he, as Herbert's speakers so often do, must give up his own efforts and wait on God: "Lord, cleare [that is, make good] thy gift" (25). Even what appears to be reticence at the end of the poem, where he asks God that he may "*Looke* onely" and not "love," since love is beyond any human, recognizes his human condition (as "earth" and "flesh") and acknowledges that even his own loving comes not from himself but from God.[8]

A close look at "Jordan II," a poem which could be described at a "parody" of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 1, will help us develop our understanding of Herbert's use of contemporary love poetry. We can begin with the similarities, which suggest that Herbert had Sidney's poem in mind (and may want us to have it in mind as well). Both poems are about love—earthly and heavenly, though Sidney's characters' names blurr those distinctions. And both are about finding proper or effective expression of that love. Astrophil's "Loving in truth" (1) becomes Herbert's condition of experiencing "heav'nly joyes" (1). Astrophil's "Studying inventions fine" (6) becomes Herbert's "I sought out quaint words, and trim invention" (3).

Both poems also mention the speaker's "brain"—Astrophil's is "sun-burn'ed" (8) and Herbert's is experiencing meltdown from "Thousands of notions" (7). In terms of narrative, both poems build to a frustrated climax of inarticulateness: in the same line of each poem Herbert "often blotted" (9) his attempts to write, and for Astrophil "words came halting forth" (9); Herbert also "bustled" (12) while Astrophil finds himself "helpless in my throes" (12).[9] This climax is answered in each poem by an outside voice—Astrophil's "Muse" (14)

[8] Stein writes, "The speaker is neither 'all earth' nor all spirit, and the poem has had the task of reconciling him to a difficult human state, to which neither intellectual detachment nor the immersion in sensation (whether 'drooping' or elated) can provide a workable adjustment (100).

[9] Astrophil is also "great with child to speak"; his pen is "truant"; he beats himself "for spite" (12-13).

and Herbert's "friend" (12), which redirect the speaker's activity toward something more natural and effective.

If that last comparison sounds strained, it is because by the end of each poem, differences emerge which point to how Herbert consciously transforms Astrophil's position toward his own goals in the poem. It turns out that Herbert's problem is that he has been following the advice of Astrophil's Muse to "'look in thy heart and write'" (14). As Herbert puts it, "So did I weave my self into the sense" (14). As so often in the rhetoric of Herbert's poems, Herbert must lose his sense of self—and particularly his sense of self-initiatied attempts to praise, to love, to do good. Thus the voice of his "friend" (who could be a friend in Christ, but since the action of the poem is interior, it is more likely God's direct voice to him)[10] tells him to leave "pretense"—of which Astrophil is full—for "love" (16-17), to leave doing for what has been done for him and to him. God loves him; these are the "heav'nly joys" of the poem's first line: he needs only to recognize that and offer this truth up as "a sweetnesse readie penn'd" ([17]—solving, by the way, the problem of Astrophil's "truant pen" [14]).

Other differences between the poems confirm both that Herbert used Sidney as a model and that he revises him. What for Sidney's Astrophil is an external process ("Oft turning others' leaves" [7]) is for Herbert an internal one ("Thousands of notions in my brain did runne" [7]), with this interesting connection that for Herbert what is internal—his brain—has the same relationship to himself as the external means Astrophil seeks: it doesn't work. By a witty reversal, Herbert makes his own efforts as misdirected as the love poet's seeking outside himself for "Invention, Nature's child" (10). That Astrophil's search is misguided helps us to see that Herbert's is, too.

Strier remarks that Herbert, like Donne, likely learned the "technique of comic first-person dramatization from Sidney" (210 n. 88). Thus it makes sense to suggest that in this set of poems Herbert uses Astrophil's foolishness to expose his own. Here we might notice that Herbert, perhaps following the lead of Astrophil, is working backwards: one should seek invention (idea, concept, what Sidney calls "foreconceit"; [see Duncan-Jones 216]) before words: Astrophil reveals this when he says his "words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay" (9). Herbert and Astrophil suffer from the same problem, even affectation. Indeed, the crowning wit of the poem from this perspective is that Herbert is acting no differently than a love-struck youth, which is to say he as acting as a fallen human being and, in some ways, quite naturally. We laugh at Herbert's bustling in part

[10] Compare the end of "The Collar" for the best example.

because, as *Astrophil and Stella* 1 teaches us, the situation is common.

Herbert has made use of Sidney in more complicated ways in his "Love I" and "Love II," poems which, unlike others in *The Temple* which share a title ("Jordan," for instance), are printed successively. The pairing of these poems—as well their form as sonnets—suggests that Herbert may have thought of them as a more mature handling of the themes of his earlier sonnets to his mother. "Love II"'s "then shall our brain / All her invention on thine Altar lay" (6-7) develops "Why are not Sonnets made of thee? And layes / Upon thine Altar burnt?" ("Sonnet" I; 5-6).[11] More importantly, "Love" I and II evoke Sidney's twin-sonnet palinode which ends his collection *Certain Sonnets*. Sidney's epigram, "*Splendidis longum valedico nugis*"—"I take long leave of these splendid trifles"—captures the theme and tone of both poems. In the first, Sidney gives "Desire" a long scolding ("Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen snare, / Fond fancy's scum" [1-2]) but then illustrates how difficult it is to lay desire aside. The second sonnet suggests progress along a different path as "love which reachest but to dust" (1) is contrasted with an "Eternal Love" (14) which must consume him instead of his being consumed by lust.

Indeed, the movement which leads to Sidney's final "Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me" (14) is perfectly consonant with Herbert's reminders to himself and to us that trying and striving must always yield to God's ways. If Herbert approved of the sentiment of Sidney's poems—themselves complex responses to love and the lover's situation[12]—he seems also to have made use of their development and ideas. In fact, Herbert seems in this case of "sacred parody" to have swallowed Sidney's poems whole and digested them. He borrows key words and images, including "dust," "fades," "desires," and the images of light, seeing, and fire. (Such borrowings could simply have come from exploring similar topics or from a

[11] Both pairs of sonnets distinguish writing love poetry from writing sacred poetry (making the title of the later poems part of the wit). Martz compares these sets of poems (263).

[12] Duncan-Jones writes,

> The melancholy and stagnation of Sidney's lovers may have psychological roots which will never yield themselves to our scrutiny; they may form part of an artistic strategy to lend "forcibleness" to his poetry; or they may express a deliberate pose, part aesthetic, part didactic, assumed to show the vanity of human wishes and the emptiness of merely human longings. (xiv)

She goes on to say that Fulke-Greville would have agreed with this latter perspective (xiv); it makes sense to suggest that Herbert would have been amenable to seeing a similar pose in Sidney.

shared poetic diction: still, placed side by side, the parallels are striking).

More subtle are the ways Herbert seems to have transmuted Sidney's images: the "smoky fire" (11) of desire in "Thou blind man's mark" becomes the "lesser fires" (II 2) of Herbert's second poem, consumed by the "greater flame" of "true desires" (II 1, 4). This consuming fire, called "Immortal Heat" (II 1) by Herbert is Sidney's "heav'nly breath" ("Leave me" 12)—in each, suggestive of the Holy Spirit. As if interpreting Sidney, Herbert renames "Desire, desire!" ("Thou blind man's" 5) as "mortall love" (I 5) and calls Sidney's "mangled mind" (6) that which possesses his "heart and brain" (7). In Sidney, the lover has purchased Desire's "worthless ware" ("Thou blind man's" 6); this seems to be the source of Herbert's economic image: "Thou shalt recover all thy goods in kinde / Who wert disseized by usurping lust" (II 11-12). Further, in Sidney God's light "That doth both shine and give us sight to see" ("Leave me" 8) becomes in Herbert, "Our eies shall see thee, which before saw dust" (II 9). And Herbert's "Wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit" (II 9) reproduces the tautological reasoning that characterizes worldly thinking—represented in Sidney's poem by "Desiring nought but how to kill desire" ("Thou blind man's" 14) and characteristic of Sidney's poetry.

What I am trying to suggest by noting these parallel ideas and images is that Sidney's two sonnets may well have been Herbert's inspiration. If so, he felt free to develop a shared idea—the need to turn from earthly to heavenly love—in his own way. That freedom is evident in how Herbert plays with the structure of the paired sonnets. While Sidney's second poem climaxes by naming (finally!) his subject—"Eternal Love"—that subject is mentioned in Herbert's *first* line as "Immortal Love." Conversely, whereas Sidney begins by addressing "Desire," Herbert delays his references until—perhaps spinning on Sidney's "Desiring nought but how to kill desire"—he suggests how "true desires . . . may consume our lusts" (II 4-5). Herbert has, in effect, reversed the process of Sidney's poems. One reason for doing so would be to *continue* the circle begun by Sidney, illustrating (as other poems by both poets do) how these kinds of comings and leavings are not simple, straight lines. But if this is so, Herbert also provides a way out of the cul de sac: his poems make the growth of "Immortal Love" and "Immortal Heat" in him part of a larger consummation whereby

> All knees shall bow to thee: all wits shall rise,
> And praise him who did make and mend our eies. (13-14)

This concept of fulfillment is perhaps the best way to understand Herbert's goal in "sacred parody." Rather than reacting to the excesses of unholy love poetry, Herbert saw in contemporary verse images and ideas that needed to be seen anew—reformed if you will—toward a sense of culmination and fulfillment. To cite one of his titles, he is always attempting to write "At True Hymn," a process that very often involves finding the true nature of his images, his narrative, his motives.

Two brief examples will help illustrate this movement. In Herbert's "Dooms-day," he takes over the traditional "Come away" of countless loves poems towards its ultimate fulfillment. "Come away, come sweet love / The golden morning breaks" (1-2) begins Dowland's song, as an example of the trope. Herbert echoes the call with

> Come away,
> Make no delay
> Summon all the dust to rise
> Till it stirre, and rubbe the eyes;
> While this member jogs the other
> Each one whispring, *Live you brother?* (1-6)

The refrain "Come away" begins each stanza of Herbert's poem, an evocation of the lover's call which fulfills it. It is as if Herbert is saying, "Do you want to know what it really means to 'Come away'—well, it's consummation in Christ, as at his return."

Similarly (and at nearly the other end of *The Temple*), Herbert includes in his poem "Easter" these lines: "Awake, my lute and struggle for thy part / With all thy art" (7-8). To cite just one example, Wyatt begins a poem, "My lute awake!" Borrowing this image, Herbert transforms the lover's struggle to put his feelings into words into a response to the overwhelming reality of the resurrection. Is it proper to think of Herbert as jilted in "Easter" as the lover is in Wyatt's poem? Perhaps in this sense, typical of Herbert's pose:

> I got me flowers to straw thy way;
> I got me boughs off many a tree:
> But thou wast up by break of day,
> And brought'st thy sweets along with thee. (19-22)

Herbert is late, like the foolish virgins or a sleepy lover, but that fact only points to the overwhelming power and reality of Christ's work—a reality that transcends any lovers' song and even every loving believer's song.

What I have been working to illustrate is that Herbert's relationship to contemporary, secular love poetry is complex. If he saw himself engaged in any program of revising or sanctifying such verse, his "sacred parody" was not about a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular but about transcending the latter with the former. Consonant with Herbert's poetics, he adapts and adopts the images and situations of secular love in order to discover insight into them and, in a sense, to fulfill them. His use of "sacred parody," then, is an integral aspect of his poetic.

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