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Edited by

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Preface

The thirteen papers collected in this volume were presented at the 14th Northern Plains Conference on Earlier British Literature, which was hosted by the English Department of South Dakota State University on April 7-8, 2006. They comprise half of the twenty-five papers presented at the conference. Some papers are not included because they are already scheduled for publication elsewhere. This includes the keynote address, "Magic and Theatre in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," which was given by Dr. Sara Deats, Distinguished Professor of English at the University of South Florida. The organizers are grateful for her participation in the conference.

Although the conference's title has undergone a number of transformations, it has been held annually ever since it was first organized by Dr. Jay Ruud at Northern State University in 1993. Hosted by a different institution each year, it invites papers on topics in English literature from its beginnings through the 18th century, a range fully reflected in the papers printed here. South Dakota State University hosted the third of these conferences, and we were very pleased to have the opportunity to host the fourteenth. The three conference organizers were Dr. Bruce Brandt, Dr. Michael S. Nagy, and Dr. Karen Zagrodnik, all members of the SDSU English Department.

The 14th Annual Northern Plains Conference on Earlier British Literature was supported generously by a New Ideas Grant from the Office of the Provost and Vice President of South Dakota State University, by the SDSU College of Arts and Science, and by the SDSU English Department. The organizers are very appreciative of this institutional support.

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Did Anglo-Saxons Have a Sense of National Identity? *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and *The Battle of Brunanburh*.

Stefan Thomas Hall
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What I wish to explore in this paper is the possibility that the poem *The Battle of Brunanburh*, the entry in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 937, is a nationalistic poem, one that promoted English nationalism and reenforced nationalistic ideologies that had been fermenting since at least the time of King Alfred the Great, the West-Saxon king who fought against Scandinavian armies in the late 800s in England. Further, I would like to give better definition to comments made about the poem by numerous critics who have noticed what they assume to be nationalistic qualities of the poem. Peter Hunter Blair, for instance, calls it ". . . a song of triumph, marking an event which was recognized even then as a great occasion in the movement towards national unity" (349). Swanton labels *Brunanburh* a Apatriotic" poem (xxi), and an Aofficial propaganda poem" (xxv). Fulk detects "unprecedented nationalism" in the poem (224), and Hill concurs (157-58).

This is a complex topic, however. Some modern studies of nationalism and national identity formation, such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, deny that such concepts as nationalism or national identity existed before the printing press. It is my belief, however, that nationalism is an old concept, much older than a modern scholar such as Anderson will allow. Nationalism and national identity both presume that a nation (or the desire for a nation) exists. Numerous definitions of these concepts have been attempted by numerous scholars, and little consensus has been reached. Defining the word *nation*, even, has proven problematic, and scholars have picked and chosen the parameters they like in the construction of their own arguments about nationalism and national identity. Using modern theories of nationalism and national identity formation as my guide, I believe I can demonstrate that nationalism clearly manifested itself in Anglo-Saxon England. The difficulty in studying this subject lies in the written sources with which we must deal. While there have been many writings concerning nationalism since the printing press, and especially in the modern European era, medieval texts are often the products of literate and upper-class men, and this has led some scholars to dismiss them as exclusive texts which cannot reveal the actual feelings of the majority. But texts written by upper-class literates can contain the voices of the community and can represent, however filtered through literary transmission they may be, the sentiments of illiterate common people.

I would like to start by looking briefly at the career and reign of King Alfred the Great, the only English monarch ever to receive this cognomen, before moving on to an examination of the career and reign of his grandson, Athelstan, and the poem *The Battle of Brunanburh* which celebrates Athelstan's military victory over a combined army of Scots and Scandinavians in the year 937. Anglo-Saxon England before the time of Alfred consisted of several separate kingdoms, historically tribal in origin, each with its own territory, its own king, its own dialect, and its own sense of identity.[1] What happened in Alfred's lifetime to bring these separate tribes together under one king, into one territory, and as one nation, was a series of military battles fought by English speakers against Scandinavians. Whether the legends about the great and ruthless Danish Viking, Ragnar loðbrók, and his sons Ívarr the Boneless *et cetera*, who invaded England in order to avenge their father's death, are true or not,[2] against the Viking armies Alfred emerged as an English hero. Alfred became the

> obvious leader of all those who, in any part of England, hoped for a reversal of recent disasters, and it was immediately followed by a general recognition of his lordship. In the words of the *Chronicle*, Aall the English people submitted to Alfred except those who were under the power of the Danes." The occasion marked the achievement of a new stage in the advance of the English peoples towards political unity. (Stenton 259)

A group of people under threat need leadership if they are to survive, and it was Alfred who provided that for the English. The threat to English sovereignty from the Scandinavian "other" led to a unification, a solidification of group identity (Ward-Perkins 531). While Scandinavian invaders were nothing new to the English in the late 800s, ambitious armies who aimed at major conquest, settlement, and governmental establishment in England were. Thorlac Turville-Petre writes, "Concepts of nationhood become dominant when the nation is perceived to be under threat from outside attack or influence . . ." (4), and it seems clear that a nation can indeed rise out of disparate groups of people uniting under one system of government, under one ruler, in opposition to an invading group. The various peoples living in what is now England already spoke the same language, and they had a common enemy against which they could measure themselves, a common enemy who made it easier to ignore the many minor differences in their tribal identities. As Turville-Petre writes, "By far the most satisfactory form of self-definition is in terms of language, wherever this can be achieved. A common language is a powerful part of that sense of belonging and (literally also) of being understood that is at the heart of nationalism" (19).

The ability of the English speakers to unite, moreover, was in stark contrast to the factions within the Scandinavian armies at this time who seemingly had different ideas about the goals of their conquests. Some wanted to conquer as much of England as possible, some just to establish themselves in the traditionally Scandinavian strongholds in the north such as York. This actually played into Alfred's hands. With the military conquests of many of the earlier Anglo-Saxon kingdoms by the Viking armies, some of whom traditionally had been enemies of the West Saxons and Mercians, Alfred's unification of the remaining Anglo-Saxons against the Vikings was made easier. This, in turn, paved the way for an actual unified kingdom of English speaking people (Smyth 193). Reynolds points out that "A kingdom was never thought of merely as the territory which happened to be ruled by a king. It comprised and corresponded to a 'people' (*gens, natio, populus*), which was assumed to be a natural, inherited community of tradition, law, and descent" (Reynolds 250). The Venerable Bede had already used the term *gens Anglorum*, the race of the English, and the writers of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself frequently used the word *Anglecynn* (Ackroyd xxviii-xxix), suggesting a sense of shared identity amongst English speakers. Swanton ponders the question of when "kingship" can be "considered the equivalent of kingdom," and suggests that this concept in England, like *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself, very well could have arisen in the time of, and at the insistence of, King Alfred. He points out that tribal names are still used throughout the Chronicle, but the notions of *Anglecynn*, the English, and *Engla land*, the land of the Angles, are both recorded frequently, "marking a clear territorial assumption which can equate the people with a particular piece of land" (xxxii).

Alfred's campaign, moreover, went beyond military matters, beyond just establishing the Danelaw and a territory for the English to call their own. Many scholars have admired Alfred for his attempts to preserve the English language, history, and laws. He is credited with instigating the translation of a number of important texts he deemed important to Anglo-Saxon people, including Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (Stenton 273) and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Swanton xvii and xx). In general, it can be said that Alfred wanted to promote greater literacy and learning in English for the English people, and this, in turn, could have led to a greater sense that the English were one people with one language, under one king.[3] In his preface to Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, for instance, Alfred laments the loss of learning, the burning of monasteries, and the loss of documents and books, and he expresses the desire to increase learning and literacy in England. Every free born man in England should learn to read, he urges, if he has the time to do so, and "as long as they are not useful for some other employment" (Keynes and Lapidge126). So, it seems that from Alfred's time onwards, the Anglo-Saxons had a system of literates and illiterates working together in their own English language. If a document circulated, someone in the area must be able to read it himself and read it to others, so that the connectedness of the English people, English laws, and English thought in the English kingdom could be maintained and reenforced.

It is clear even to Modern English speakers that book writing and official formal documents are not representative absolutely

of how people speak, and this would have been no different in Alfred's time. M. T. Clanchy believes the book language of the Anglo-Saxons from Alfred's time forth probably did not represent the language of the common Anglo-Saxons exactly (211). The official language of the surviving state records and literature was mostly written in Alfred's West-Saxon dialect, but other dialects also existed in England, as surviving writings attest. An official state language (or dialect) suggests a conscious effort to promote English unity, if only in the language used in official writings. Folklorist Brynjulf Alver states, "Nothing contributes more to a sense of national identity than shared language and history" (19), and Alfred's attempts to unite the various areas of England under his control by using the common, formal language established in his own dialect by his own trained scribes would have done just that. According to Adrian Hastings, a nation must self-consciously identify themselves as a nation (2). Anglo-Saxon scribes clearly did this, and they did so through an Ꜳextensively used vernacular literature," another of Hastings's criteria for nationhood (2). Literature does indeed help shape notions of national identity, especially popular, widely read or circulated literature, and the Anglo-Saxons with their texts and oral traditions seem to have had this.

On the other hand, Benedict Anderson's quite influential idea that it was not until mass distribution of printed texts that people began to be capable of imagining the nations to which they belonged seems to fly in the face of the example of Anglo-Saxon oral tradition completely. It is difficult to believe, however, that with widespread distribution of printed books people suddenly started to become aware of all these other people like them, their countrymen, people of their nation, whom they had never imagined before. Even in a manuscript culture, such as Anglo-Saxon England, even with a great number of illiterate commoners, even with the members of the nobility and the church wielding immense power simply because they could read and write, even still people like Anglo-Saxons could and did imagine themselves as part of a greater whole, as part of a kingdom or community of people, as part of a nation even. The English, at least from Alfred's time onwards, had both a king and country, and they had a government and armies in which they could and did take active roles to remind them of this. They had their own language, they had folklore, legends, and poems, all in their language about their own people, sometimes about national heroes. Along these lines, Adrian Hastings argues, ". . . an oral literature too can be the medium for a people's self-imagining . . ." (23). Printed books, Anderson's main criterium for imagining a nation, it would seem, are not, in fact, utterly necessary for imagining one's people, one's nation. Hastings further adds that "the bond between the written language, perhaps used only by the few, with the oral language forms used by everyone, can ensure that a linguistically based nationalism quickly gains support even in largely non-literate communities" (Hastings 31). Once again, this seems to represent the conditions of Anglo-Saxon England quite well.

Even a cursory perusal of a modern edition of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, such as Michael Swanton's, reveals that we are dealing with several separate chronicles, copied in different locations, yet several chronicles which are remarkably coherent with regards to content. The unity of content in the various separate versions of this great work of English history would appear surprising were it not for the realization that King Alfred had played a role in commissioning their composition. English history, like the English nation, needed to be consistent throughout the English speaking nation. The *Chronicle*, as Swanton points out in his introduction, also reveals that "From the 890s onwards entries are fuller, syntactically more complex, and occasionally linked one with another. . . ." (Swanton xvii). Once again, this is not surprising since it was at Alfred's instigation that the *Chronicle* was made an important aspect of the English nation's history-making and identity-forming endeavors. Swanton also suggests an interesting possibility that there were official "West-Saxon bulletins" sent round to various centers of power from the central center of Winchester (xxii). In this way, the content of the various *Chronicle* manuscripts could be made consistent throughout the kingdom. Poems such as *The Battle of Brunanburh*, the *Chronicle* entry for 937, may have existed in bulletin form, sent round the kingdom to the various monasteries in charge of copying and updating the *Chronicle*, and inserted by the scribes into their own copy of the *Chronicle*. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was a chronicle in English for the English:

It is significant that so fundamental a cultural document of English history should have been composed in English. Alfred may not have been exaggerating when he lamented the decay of Latin scholarship in his day. That English prose was considered of sufficient status to be regarded as an appropriate medium for documentary record at this time is not surprising; but this is the first continuous national history of any western people in their own language; at this time no other European nation apparently felt confident enough in its own language to record its own history. (Swanton xx)

Even with texts which we might call "national" such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, scholars like Benedict Anderson would deny the existence of nationalism in medieval times. Anderson, however, betrays a modern scholarly tendency to privilege print culture over oral (or even manuscript) culture. A nation, he argues, can not be imagined by a group of people ruled by a divine-right king, by a people whose state's official language was not their own vernacular (such as Latin in the Middle Ages), or by a people who believed in the temporality of the world "in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical" (Anderson 36). Thinking like this, we can rule out the possibility that any medieval people were capable of imagining their nation—except possibly the English. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was written in English after all, the vernacular language of the English people. Anderson calls medieval kingdoms merely "highwater marks of dynastic expansionisms" (Anderson 46), "sacred imagined communities" (41), or the "imagined community of Christendom" (42).[4] Notably confusing here is Anderson's assertion that medieval kingdoms could be Aimagined communities," but not Anations." Anderson believes that groups of people were not able to Aimagine" a "nation" until some time in the eighteenth century, after a couple hundred years of printing press operation and the mass distribution of printed texts. For Anderson, only with the rising number of literates was the ability to imagine a belonging to a community of people possible.

Anderson's refusal to look beyond the printing press barrier for developed notions of nations, national identity, and nationalism seems to be, as Patrick Wormald writes, a mental stumbling block: "Historians are properly creatures of their evidence, so suspicious of notions that anything happens without leaving significant documentary tracks. The inescapable corollary is that states are inconceivable in the West until bureaucratically organized . . ." (3). Adrian Hastings also counters Anderson's theories regarding national identity formation, arguing

What we have to look for in nation-spotting is a historico-cultural community with a territory it regards as its own and over which it claims some sovereignty so that the cultural community sees itself with a measure of self-awareness as also a territorial and political community, held together horizontally by its shared character rather than vertically by reason of the authority of the state. (25)

Clearly, from Alfred's time onwards, Anglo-Saxons had all the ingredients (apart from Anderson's print culture) for a developed sense of national identity. One might counter that Alfred's kingdom was merely that, a kingdom, a ruler ruling not a nation but an ethnic group who would have rather have had another king other than Alfred if another king were to come along. But Hastings argues that

Nations grow out of ethnicities, out of wars and religious divisions, out of the emergence of literatures and nationalist propaganda and administrative pressures, but they do so bit by bit . . . . One cannot say that for a nation to exist it is necessary that everyone within it should want it to exist or have full consciousness that it does exist . . . . It does not invalidate the existence of a nation in early modern Europe that many of the peasantry had little sense of being part of it. (25-26)

So, if we break this down, along the same lines as Hastings does, we could say that nations must have territory, a vernacular literature, a common religion, and their own historical tradition (Hastings 30-31). The question of nationhood really becomes a question of how people identify themselves, whether they consciously identify themselves as a nation or not, and these criteria all seem to have been in place for such an identity to have developed in King Alfred's England. Whether all of the English speaking people agreed with Alfred's agenda or not, a sense of national identity was being promoted by the monarch,[5] and nationalism can in its most basic definition be concerned simply with the development of the nation, with pride in one's nation, with an ideology which

promotes the nation's development, or "a movement with national aspirations and goals" (Smith 24).[6] Goals such as Alfred had for his kingdom and people seem to fall under this category, and it was left to his grandson, Athelstan, to further carve out the territory of the English kingdom by reclaiming lands to the north of the Danelaw which had been conceded to Scandinavian rulers.

From Alfred's day to Athelstan's, there was continual fighting with the Scandinavian and Scottish enemies to the north. Alfred's son Edward and his grandson Athelstan managed to reclaim for English speakers much of the territory which Alfred had conceded at the treaty of Wedmore of 878 which established the Danelaw. This military struggle to preserve and augment the English kingdom culminated with a battle fought at a now unknown location called Brunanburh in 937, a battle between Athelstan's English army and a combined force of Scots and Scandinavians. What historian Athelweard, writing some fifty or more years after the event, portrayed as a sort of battle for Britain that "galvanised" the English nation (Hill 154), was indeed a culmination of a set of relatively complicated circumstances. It is clear that Athelstan's army was up against a multi-national force of Scots and Scandinavians at the very least. The thirteenth century Old Icelandic *Egils Saga,* however, suggests that there were Scandinavians fighting on both sides, a fact which the Anglo-Saxon poem either ignores or suppresses completely. In other words, Athelstan either had mercenaries in his army, or else he had Scandinavian retainers in his court. Stenton notes the number of Scandinavian names amongst Athelstan's retainers and sub-kings who attended his court (351). These Scandinavians need not necessarily be Egil and his brother Thorolf who were both Icelanders, but it is clear that Athelstan had Scandinavian connections. He fostered the Norwegian King Harald Fair-hair's son Haakon, for instance, and there seems to have been plenty of contact between the English king and the continent as well (Stenton 349). His contacts with Europe, especially Harald Fair-hair of Norway, who considered Athelstan an equal, were impressive (Loyn 50). Egil Skalla-Grímsson (or perhaps we should say Snorri Sturluson, if he is taken to be the author of the saga in the thirteenth century) had heard of Athelstan, and of all the kings in *Egils Saga*, Athelstan stands head and shoulders above the others in dealing honorably with Egil (*Egils Saga* chapter 55; Hines 26). Athelstan, likewise, seems to have thought of himself as the king of the English nation, if the numerous royal coins with Athelstan's image as well as many charters declaring Athelstan not only "King of the English" but also "King" or "Ruler" of all of ᚪBritain" are considered (Stenton 349 and 353).[7]

There was in-fighting amongst the Scandinavians who opposed the line of Alfred, possibly, according to Smyth, between Norwegians (Ireland) and Danish (York), and this likely made the Scottish relations with them problematic. The in-fighting actually seemed to be a boon to Alfred, who "had seen the elimination of his traditional English enemies in Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria. The Vikings had cleared the boards, and by doing so had strengthened the hand of the West Saxons and the Scots, while the Scandinavians themselves held the middle ground based on a new York-Dublin axis" (Smyth 193). With the Dublin Scandinavians and the York Scandinavians at odds with one another, the Scots chose "to ally with the Dublin Norsemen," becoming "vulnerable to being caught up in feuds between the Norwegian Dublin and Danish York" (Smyth 193). This meant the Scottish-Scandinavian alliance in the north was not as surefooted as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* makes it seem, making Alfred's, Edward's, and, finally, Athelstan's tasks of subjugating the north under English rule, though by no means easy, somewhat easier to accomplish.

According to Smyth, Athelstan's father Edward had made an attempt at pacifying, or, at the very least, threatening the northerners, and this brought about some establishment of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the north, but not direct control of Scotland. "We can be certain, too," Smyth argues,

> that Edward's pacification of the north in 920 marked a stage in West-Saxon expansion which showed Wessex now capable of interfering in Northumbrian politics while not yet strong enough to dominate Northumbria by force. This new political strength of Wessex is shown by a whole series of treaties and submissions which the York kings were forced to enter into in their bid to hold on to Northumbria. Thus we have Sitric's baptism and marriage to King Athelstan's sister at Tamworth in 926; the defeat and (according to William of Malmesbury) the submission of Sitric's brother, Gothfrith, to Athelstan at a feast in 927 . . . . Not all of these treaties show Wessex in full control of the political, much less the military situation. (200)

Hostility was fostered between Anglo-Saxons and Scots and Scandinavians living north of Athelstan's realm, so much so that AAthelstan might well rule York by force, but he could never be certain of it as long as his rival at Dublin remained alive and was confident of Scottish support" (Smyth 201). Athelstan managed to cow all of his northern neighbors into submission, either with actual military force or simply with the threat of it. This included York and the surrounding area, now no longer in Scandinavian control (Stenton 340). Once in control of York, which he held for at least half a dozen years, Athelstan tried to force the northerners to be baptized and become Christians. In fact, he was successful in forcing the Scottish King Constantine's son to do so, but when the Viking king of Dublin, Gotfrith, died in 934, he was succeeded by his son Olaf, an unrepentant pagan who quickly solidified his rule in Ireland. Athelstan had to quell any new and reenforced alliance of Scots with this new pagan, Irish-Viking ruler, and so he launched an attack on Scotland, not designed to annex territory or bring Scotland under his control, but to send a message that the Anglo-Saxons were strong enough to penetrate into the north at will. Because he was in charge of York, a major irritation to Scandinavian dynastic aspirations, he could attack the Scots easily (Smyth 201-02). The year 924 saw Athelstan posturing, flexing his military muscles in the north, but no major battle was fought. The Scots refused to engage: ". . . the collapse of the Norse kingdom of York had brought the heart of the Scottish kingdom within striking distance of an English army" (Stenton 342).

An alliance was both natural and, perhaps, inevitable between Scots and Scandinavians, both of whom wanted to regain York and the surrounding territory from the English. When Scottish King Constantine married his daughter (a Christian) to Olaf Gothfrithsson of Ireland, it gave Athelstan all the more reason to fear an attack from the allied and hostile northerners (Smyth 192 and 203). Both the Scots and the Norse had their grievances against the English, and as Smyth writes, AThe battle of *Brunanburh*, when viewed from the standpoint of Scottish history, can be seen to have been as much an attempt by the Scottish king to curb the expansion of Wessex as it was part of Olaf's struggle to conquer York" (204). Smyth even suggests that the battle was "stage-managed by Constantine" (204). Loyn correctly points out that Athelstan's victory at Brunanburh Ainflicted a sharp check to the political ambitions of the Irish Scandinavian community" (51), a short-lived check, to be sure, but nevertheless an assertion of English dominance of the north during Athelstan's rule.[8] As the individual kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England were threatened and/or demolished by Scandinavian invaders before Alfred's time, they eventually came to be replaced "by the single kingdom of England"(Blair 87). And with Athelstan's victory at Brunanburh, the solidification of this state seemed complete.[9]

The Battle of Brunanburh, the poem in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which preserves the official Anglo-Saxon record of this battle, has been addressed by many scholars who typically treat it as a biased and poetic version of Anglo-Saxon history. Fulk attributes this nationalistic bias to

> the recent reconquest of the Danelaw and the unification of England under one monarch, Athelstan, the first king of all England in both name and actual authority. The new political structure, placing the multiple centers of power of the independent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the past and initiating the gradual centralization of power that was to fuel much of the political conflict of the later Middle Ages, thus seems also to have worked a transformative effect upon literary tradition predicated on an older conception of kingship and military structure. (224)

As a work of literature, the poem has received the praise and attention of numerous scholars as well, not just because of its nationalistic qualities or historical merits (or demerits).

The poem begins with "here," the typical *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry, yet for 937 we have a poem instead of the usual prose of the *Chronicle*.[10] Athelstan is clearly marked as the king, the ring-giver, the lord of men, and he and his brother win not just a battle but "life-long glory," *ealdorlangne tir* (3). It might seem natural for a king named Athelstan, or "noble stone," to live up to his descriptive name and be noble and stalwart. Indeed, the names of the participants of the battle have come under scrutiny in the scholarly pursuit of the nationalistic tone of the poem. Taylor, for instance, argues that the names of Athelstan, "noble stone," and Anlaf, "lone-survivor," betray the political bias of the poet, but it seems just as likely that their real names simply have a literariness

to them. This is not a matter of history being forged or names being changed for literary reasons. King Athelstan's and his brother Edward's victory is described by the poet as natural. It was part of their genetic noble "heritage," *from cneomægum* (8), to be good in battle, and to fight Aagainst all enemies," *wiþ laþra gehwæne* (9), such as the AScottish people and vikings," *Sceotta leoda and scipflotan* (11). Their duty was to "protect" their Aland," *land ealgodon* (9), their "hoard and homes," *hord and hamas* (10). Enemies of these two great warriors are described by the poet as *fæge* (12),[11] or "doomed" to fail in their attempt to overcome the Anglo-Saxons. They were not meant to succeed. Ward-Perkins notes that the racial divide between the British (Welsh) and English was emphasized in chronicle writing of the time: "The tenth-century evidence of the *Brunanburh* poem and of the [Welsh] *Armes Prydein* comes from a time when 'Englishness' was being deliberately emphasized in the interests of a newly unified kingdom. In this context the hostile 'otherness' of the Britons/Welsh may have been deliberately stressed, in order to promote English unity . . . ." (516). The literary portrayal of the English race in opposition to the Scottish and Scandinavian "others" in *The Battle of Brunanburh* seems to clearly define the good guys and the bad guys, the English race versus the others.

The poet's description of the battle itself also reenforces Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and, though there is blood and violence in the poem, the only blood we hear of is the blood of the enemies of the Anglo-Saxons, and the violence is seen only in the impressive military might of the Anglo-Saxons. We are told the "field darkened with warriors' blood," *feld dænnede / secga swate* (12-13), but this is only seen after the Anglo-Saxon army has swept across the battle field, just as "in morning-time, marvelous star, / glided over ground, God's candle bright, / eternal Lord, until the noble creation / sank to its seat," *on morgentid, mære tungol, / glad ofer grundas, godes condel beorht, / eces drihtnes, oð sio æþele / sah to setle* (14-17) Frese notices a poetic, heroic, and clearly nationalistic parallel of Athelstan and Eadmund with Hengist and Horsa, the first Germanic conquerors of Britain in the Anglo-Saxon origin myth, developed by the poet's allusion to the Anglo-Saxon people's westward migration and conquest of Britain like the sun rising in the east and gliding west over the battlefield in the poem. The Anglo-Saxon victory is, thus, natural, like the sun rising and setting. This is an appeal to the past by the poet who wishes to connect the present victory with history, with the historical rightness of the victory, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is a natural place for this sort of historical reference to be made. Speigel sees the reflection on a nation's history as an attempt "to revive lost dreams of glory, to vindicate motives . . . . [I]t is the past that becomes the repository of those dreams and desires . . ." (Spiegel 1), and we can see in the *Battle of Brunanburh* that the glories of past English conquerors are not only referred to by the poet but are thought of as being continued by Athelstan's victory.

The enemies of the West Saxons are said to have had "enough of war," *wiges sæd* (20), in part because the West Saxons "hewed the war-fleers from behind severely," *heowan herefleman hindan þearle* (23), chasing what the poet describes as a "dreary remnant of spears," *dreorig daraða laf* (54) all the way to their ships. Five young kings are said to have been killed, and seven earls of Anlaf (28-32). Who these noblemen were, we can only guess, though we are told that Scottish King Constantine, described by the poet as an Aold and wicked man," *eald inwidda* (46), apparently lost his son in the battle (line 42). Anlaf/Olaf (Guthfrithsson) must return "embarrassed," *æwiscmode* (56) to Ireland with his survivors. He would be back in a couple of years to menace the English again, but only after Athelstan had died and left the West Saxon kingdom to his younger brother Edward. The description of Athelstan's victory is further enhanced by the mention of the enemy corpses left behind by the West Saxons for the beasts of battle often mentioned in Anglo-Saxon poetry, the wolves and ravens and eagles, to devour.[12]

In his chapter on "Germanic Legend and Heroic Lay," Fulk rightly sees a poet who ". . . employs conventions from heroic tradition . . ." and makes " . . . no attempt to portray the battle itself or identify participants other than the principals . . . ." and this with a Atone of exultation . . ." (223). Fulk, and others have noticed that this seems unusual for an Anglo-Saxon poet, or for Germanic heroic poetry in general, since "Athis body of literature traditionally takes tragedies rather than victories as its theme" (224).[13] This has led some scholars to attribute this tone of exulting in the defeat of one's enemies to something the poet had picked

up from Scandinavian skalds. John Niles, for instance, notes the Brunanburh-poet's tone of scorn towards enemies, and says this is typical of skaldic poetry rather than Anglo-Saxon poetry (258-59).[14] Indeed, it is reminiscent of, for example, Egil's father Skalla-Grím's gloating, revenge poem which he composes in chapter 27 of *Egils Saga*,[15] a poem which he orders one surviving enemy of their sea battle to go back and repeat to King Harald. This is his last laugh at Harald's expense:

Nús hersis hefnd	Now the chieftain's revenge
vi hilmi efnd.	with sword is exacted.
Gengr ulfr ok örn	Goes the wolf and eagle
of Ynglings börn.	over the sons of Yngling.
Flugu höggvin hr	Blows hacked the corpse
Hallvar s á s .	of Hallvard on the sea.
Grár slítr undir	The gray one slits apart,
ari Snarfara.	The eagle [Sigtrygg] Fast-sailor.

Shippey too remarks that it is "Not that the poet feels any sympathy for them [the defeated Scots and Scandinavians]. He is attracted rather by the suddenness of their downfall, and he observes it with a touch of grim humour and a run of variations to express the totality of their disillusionment . . . ." (185). Whether or not the Anglo-Saxon poet derived his exulting and gloating tone from Scandinavian models, it does seem ironically fitting that an Anglo-Saxon poet would compose such a poem to celebrate an English victory over Scandinavian opposition.

It should go without saying that literary representations of historical events are rarely completely accurate. Lipp sees a contrast of literary heroism typical of Germanic formulaic poetry with the historical and national portrayal of the battle which speaks in terms of nations rather than individuals. The rhetoric of the poem makes it seem natural that the Anglo-Saxons won the battle, and that the English won the battle on their own merit and by their own might, a stark contrast to the version of the battle at a place called Vinheith recounted in *Egils Saga*, in which there were Scandinavians fighting on both sides, and in which, naturally, Egill and his brother Thorolf play the most prominent roles in winning the battle for the English king. Magnús Fjalldall suggests that much of the account in *Egils Saga* borders on what we might call historical fiction, though the English poem about the same battle is guilty of the same. The Anglo-Saxon poet's portrayal of the battle as a battle between the good guys (Athelstan and company) and the bad guys (everyone else) seems typical of nationalistic rhetoric.

The poet ends with a stirring statement that this, the battle near Brunanburh, was the greatest battle ever fought on the island of Britain since the time the Angles and Saxons first came to Britain from the east and had "overcome the Welsh," *Wealas ofercoman* (72). The poet augments his claim by saying that "books," *bec* (68), perhaps the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* itself amongst these, composed by "old and wise men," *ealde uðwitan* (69) back him up on this statement. The result is that these Anglo-Saxon leaders, "glory-whetted," *arhwate* (73), "founded a nation," *eard begeatan* (73). By placing this battle in such a broad historical context, the poet is appealing to the heritage and rightful supremacy of the English on the island of Britain. And while we still have no clear indication of where the place Brunanburh actually was, it does not matter in the grand scheme of things because Brunanburh represents England, the land of the English, from which not only the Welsh had been banished by the Anglo-Saxon invaders at the beginning of English history in Britain, but also the Scots and Scandinavians at the poet's time in English history.

It could easily be argued that Athelstan commissioned the poem to further his own dynastic interests rather than the English national interests. Some people do indeed use nationalism for their own interests as a "justification for the pursuit of self-interest" (Kellas 24). But this still suggests that the ideas of nationalism and perhaps a sense of national identity amongst the English did exist for Athelstan to use. "Membership of both national and ethnic groups is a matter of belief . . ." Johnson suggests (12), and carefully crafted poetry, such as *The Battle of Brunanburh*, can create this sort of belief in a people, even if it is being used by a self-serving monarch. Stories, legends, even myths about a monarch are part of national identity formation. A monarch spreading stories

about his victory over an enemy of the nation, whether true or not, whether self-serving or not, is a clear attempt at national identity formation or bolstering an identity that already exists, and it is clear that "the formation of nations involves collective myth-making and ethno-historical elaboration, ethnic territorialisation, cultural assimilation and mass public education, economic unification, and legal standardisation" (Smith 37), all activities that both Athelstan and his grandfather Alfred before him had engaged in with the English people.

The historical accuracy of the battle's portrayal by both the Anglo-Saxon poet of *The Battle of Brunanburh* and the Old Icelandic author of *Egils Saga* can be questioned, as Magnús Fjalldall has pointed out. No scholar has been able, for example, to prove beyond reasonable doubt where the battle even took place (Hill 140-53). In *Egils Saga* the battle is fought at Vinheith, or "Vin-heath," hardly a Brunanburh, or "Brown-burgh." Yet the Anglo-Saxon poet tells us that the battle was fought "around" or "near" (*ymb*) Brunanburh, and the author of *Egils Saga* may be on the right track here with his identification of the actual battlefield as a heath. A heath is where a battle such as this could be fought, not in a burgh itself. Still, the location is a mystery, a legendary place in English history. "Legends," folklorist Brynjulf Alver suggests, "have historical interest not so much by virtue of their authenticity, but by virtue of the folk's perception of their own history. Thus legends can supplement what is revealed by conventional historical sources, and they allow us to connect local with national history" (16).[16] Writing about the various documents which survive dealing with the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England, Stephen Justice makes this remarkable statement: "The chronicles and the indictments simply *are* the rebellion for us, because they alone record it" (255). If we agree with Justice and Alver, then, legends and texts are themselves events in time which influence the thinking and beliefs of both contemporary and later audiences about the subjects which they recount. Texts become *the* event for later readers because the event cannot in any other way be revisited or understood. Therefore, the wealth of fictions which become attached to events in history, like the actual battle at Brunanburh, emerging from individual subjectivities and biases (like nationalism), can influence the thought and beliefs of contemporary audiences and later generations. A nation's notions of its own history and its own identity are based in large part on texts and stories. Poetry, then, especially when it is of the national hero/history variety, to a certain degree, helps create a nation's identity. Indeed, poetry about historical figures instrumental in shaping a nation perpetuates an identity which has already formed to some extent. Hastings offers this explanation:

> Some may be disturbed by the idea that, in a sense, texts produce peoples. But there really is no alternative. A community, political, religious, or whatever, is essentially a creation of human communication and it is only to be expected that the form of the communication will determine the character of the community. (20)

By way of conclusion, then, let me say that *The Battle of Brunanburh* was composed as the entry for the Chronicle in verse specifically so that it could circulate not only in written form but also orally, this beyond merely filling in the required entry for that year. How much the commoners in England were exposed to the contents of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is open to doubt. How much one could remember of this material and repeat to illiterates is also doubtful. But poetry is obviously easier to remember and repeat, and so it would have been a wise move to compose a heroic poem about Athelstan's great victory at Brunanburh in order that the news about the victory and the ideologies therein could spread amongst the entire population and not just the literate churchmen or nobility. This, in turn, served to strengthen the national identity which, it seems by all accounts, had been developing in England for some time before the battle of Brunanburh.

Notes

[1] My discussion follows Stenton in general unless otherwise noted.
[2] See Loyn 40-41; Blair 69; Stenton 241-50; Hill 62ff.
[3] See Stenton 270-75.
[4] Like Hastings (185ff), Kellas rejects Anderson's notion that nationalism can only rise out of a Adecline of religion" (48).

[5] Breuilly sees nationalism "as a form of politics" (1), but political nationalism could also become the popular will of the people to forge their own nation.

[6] As Kellas argues, "Identity is partly imposed on people from outside their own group. Politics enters into this, since it is often the state which classifies people according to ethnic group, nationality and race. This may, or may not, be accepted entirely by the people concerned . . ." (15).

[7] Hill too notes Athelstan's coinage practices (121) and provides a lengthy list of documents in which Athelstan is styled as anything from King of the West Saxons, the whole of the English people, the Scots, and even all of the isle of Britain (209-11).

[8] Blair, too, remarks, ". . . Athelstan's victory over the combined Scandinavian, British and Scottish forces seems to mark the climax, if not quite the end, of an epoch in English history" (87).

[9] The English victory at Brunanburh was only a brief respite from the aggression of Olaf Gothfrithsson, however, and "On Athelstan's death in October 939 he returned to make himself master not only of York but of the Five Boroughs of the southern Danelaw." It was only Agradually" that AAthelstan's successor and younger brother, Edmund," eventually "recovered his position south of the Humber . . . ." (Smyth 205).

[10] All citations of *The Battle of Brunanburh* in this paper are by line numbers from the edition of Krappe and Dobbie.

[11] This word is used again in line 28 in reference to the enemies of the Anglo-Saxons.

[12] See Honneger.

[13] Dean notes, " . . . victory is not as promising a poetic theme . . ." for Anglo-Saxon poets (105).

[14] See also Townend 358; see also Harris.

[15] Ed. Guðni Jónsson. The poem is on page 67.

[16] As Kellas points out, "National myths . . . are the substance of nationalism . . ." (Kellas 49). Turville-Petre writes, "The construction of the nation was, indeed, founded on a series of myths and loaded interpretations of the past" (6).

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Heroic Humor in the *Battle of Maldon*

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I n the year 991, a Viking fleet sailed up the river Blackwater and routed the English fyrd near Maldon in Essex. The E-Text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* laconically records this auspicious event in the following fashion: "Her wæs G[ypes]wic gehergod. 7 æfter þam swiðe raðe wæs Brihtnoð ealdorman ofslægen æt Mældune" (I, 227).[1] Having combed through the imposing amount of scholarship on the *Battle of Maldon*, the Old English poem which commemorates this battle, one cannot help but wish that scholars of Old English literature shared the E-Text chronicler's verbal economy. For this reason, I am not going to enter some of the more heatedBand often unresolvableBscholarly shoving matches that dominate or influence so much of the discourse concerning the poem. *Maldon*'s relative historicity, for example, a subject which animates some of the poem's earliest editors, like E. V. Gordon, and which crops up as recently as seven years ago in Craig R. Davis's justifiably cautious "Cultural Historicity in *The Battle of Maldon*," defies firm resolution or even rational discussion, for scholars seem unable even to agree upon what they mean by "historicity."[2] But as I said moments ago, I don't wish to discuss this. More perilous still is the philological and philosophical hornets' nest that J. R. R. Tolkien stirred up with the 1953 publication of his fanciful diatribe about "ofermod."[3] In it, he willfully mistranslates two lines of *Maldon*Bthose involving Byrhtnoð's allowing the Vikings to cross the land bridge and to engage the EnglishBand compares them to a passage taken out of context from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in order to cast aspersions upon Byrhtnoð's character.[4] This influential essay stands as a monument to Tolkien's rhetorical prowess but not to his critical acumen, for by interpreting *Maldon* on the basis of two lines, he completely ignores 323 lines of particularly fine Old English poetry.[5] What's worse, one needn't look particularly long nor far to find recent articles that follow Tolkien's example, ones that bob around the meaning of "ofermod" in line 89 like bloated corpses in a fetid pond. But this, too, I do not wish to discuss, and not without reason. Only by resisting the admittedly strong temptation to step into *Maldo*'s two biggest interpretive traps in this fashion can one remain at liberty to savor the savagery, the desperation, and the subtlety of the finalBand finestBOld English battle poem, and to find in its lines something quite unexpected: humor.

Part of the problem with finding humor in an Old English text, however, is that if surviving records are at all reliable as cultural artifacts, the Anglo-Saxons were a brooding, dour lot. They simply paled in comparison to the Norse. In the Old Icelandic poem *Locasenna*, or the *The Quarrel of Loki*, for example, all of the Norse gods are gathered at a sumptuous feast when Loki, the god of discord, enters and begins hurling abuse at them one by one. By the time he makes his way to Oðinn, however, the one-eyed god is ready with some invective of his own. He says,

átta vetr	eight winters
vartu fyr iorð neðan	you were under the earth
kýr mólcandi oc kona,	a milk-cow and a woman,
oc hefir þar born borit	and you bore children there,
oc hugða ec þat args aðal.	and I think that is a coward's nature.[7]
(St. 23)[6]	

In the post-feminist 21st century, it is perhaps difficult to read as humorous a passage that apparently insults a male god by calling him a woman, but to dismiss this excerpt as medieval misogyny is to misunderstand Norse culture and to miss the point. Oðinn's jibe has less to do with any Norse predisposition against women than it does with their conservative beliefs about manhood. Simply put, if a man played the part of a woman in a relationshipBparticularly in one that occurred underground with giants or trollsBthen he was not manly. Viewed in this light, then, nearly every line of this passage is calculated to cast aspersions upon the extent of Loki's manhood, and the level of his discomfiture (combined with the images that almost assault the senses) provide the humor. As

a general rule, the Anglo-Saxons are nowhere near this overt or this amusing. One typically finds their humor to be a bit more reflective, wry, even moody, as in their frequent use of litotes, or extreme understatement, or in their penchant for sudden dramatic reversals of fortune. Indeed, even the somewhat randy riddles of the Exeter Book require sufficient thought that by their very nature they defer laughter's release. One of these riddles, for example, gives the following cluesB"a certain object grows, rises and expands. . . . A proud wife carried off that boneless marvel@ (246-7).[8] The obvious answer, of course, is a loaf of breadBso readers should get their minds out of the gutter. These brief, versified *double entendres*, however, are in short supply and in both form and technique they resemble nothing else in Old English literature. As humorists, then, the Norse clearly seem to win the field.

Despite the rather subdued Anglo-Saxon mind-set outlined above, the *Maldon*-poet is nevertheless capable of delivering moments of genuine humor, and of doing so in a fashion resembling that of the passage above from *Locasenna*. Oddly enough, one such moment occurs in the passages leading up to and including the last stand of the leaderless Englishmen. At first blush, this portion of the poem is far from funny, though, for the grim determination of the English thanes to fight on and to avenge their lord seems the clearest representation of the heroic code that Tacitus outlines in his *Germania*. In this oft-quoted work, Tacitus maintains that "infamy and lifelong scandal await the man who outlives his leader by retreating from the battle-line; to defend their chief and guard him. . .is their foremost oath. The leaders fight for victory, the retainers for their leader" (82-3).[9] Perhaps for this reason, few indeed are the scholars who do not pause in their discussion of *Maldon* to pay homage to this section of the poem. Ralph W. V. Elliot, for instance, nearly rhapsodizes that "everything in the poemBevery speech, every action, every allusionBis directed to the stating and illustration of the central theme of heroic obedience" (56). What Elliot asserts here is certainly accurate as far as it goes, for the word "hatan," or "command" dominates the first half of the poem when Byrhtnoð is still alive, and "bieldan," or "incite" governs the poem's second half when his leaderless thanes lack sufficient rank to give commands.[10] Still, if we are to follow either Elliot or George Clark and read *Maldon* as a work whose central conflict is between obedience and disobedience, or courage and cowardice, we should explore the extent to which the poet is willing to go in order to defame those who flee the battle and run to the relative safety of the woods.[11]

Perhaps the easiest way to begin such an exploration is to examine the putative turning point of the poem, for there the poet tips his humorous hand for the first time. Surrounded by Viking invaders, Byrhtnoð fights valiantly but ultimately dies as any true Germanic hero must. In four short lines, the poet pointedly allows us to witness Byrhtnoð's death, the posthumous abuse of his body, and the death of two of his loyal retainers, then shifts our attention without benefit of transition to the flight of three brothers:

> Hie bugon þa fram beadwe þe þær beon noldon.
> Þær wearþ Oddan bearn ærest on fleame,
> Godric fram guðe, and þone godan forlet
> þe him manigne oft mearh gesealde;
> he gehleop þone eoh þe ahte his hlaford,
> on þam geræðum þe hit riht ne wæs,
> and his broðru mid him begen ærndon,
> Godwine and Godwig, guðe ne giemdon,
> ac wendon fram þam wige and þone wudu sohton,
> flugon on þæt fæsten and hira feore burgon. (185-194)[12]

> [Then they who did not wish to be there turned from the battle. Godric, the son of Odda, was the first in flight from the battle there, and he abandoned the good man who often gave him many a horse; he leaped [on] the horse that his lord owned, into the trappings so that it was not right, and his brothers both galloped with him, Godwine and Godwig, they did not care for war, but they turned from the battle and sought the woods, flew into that fastness and saved their lives.][13]

This is a decidedly strange little passage for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the brothers' names. Godric, Godwine, and Godwig, for example, ironically translate as "Good Kingdom," "Good Friend" and "Good Battle," respectively, and this makes

them seem more like allegorical figures in a morality play than characters in a heroic poem. It should also alert the reader to the fact that the poet is at some pains here to besmirch these brothers' characters in any way he can.[14] Yet another curious detail emerges in the poet's apparent obsession with horsesBByrhtnoð gave Godric many a horse; Godric stole Byrhtnoð's horse; and his two brothers galloped with him. All of this horsiness may amount to little more than the poet's attempt to associate the three brothers with horses, the fastest means of flight, and therefore with cowardice, but the details of both the passage and the poem suggest that the poet is tapping into a carefully coded Germanic means of insult known as *nið*.

     Prior to discussing this passage as the beginnings of an extended *nið*, however, perhaps some definition is in order. In his magisterial study of sexual defamation in early Northern vernacular literature, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen scours legal and literary texts for definitions and examples of *nið*. In so doing, he finds in the *Law of Gulathing* that any one of the following three offenses constitutes *nið*:

> One is if a man says to another that he has given birth to a child. A second is if a man says of another that he is *sannsorðinn* (demonstrably used sexually by another man). The third is if he compares him to a mare, or calls him a bitch or a harlot, or compares him with the female of any kind of animal. (16)[15]

Unlike in *Locasenna*, a comic literary text wherein Oðinn commits all three of these offenses to the amusement of all except Loki, in Icelandic and Norwegian law, committing nið was deadly serious. Wrongful accusers and those guilty as charged were equally outlawed and therefore placed beyond the protection of the community. In a strict legal sense, it was lawful to kill them. Bearing all of this in mind, if we return now to the *Maldon* passage, the poet's linking of the three brothers with horses becomes a bit more explicable. Given the fact that we learn in the very first full line of the poem that Byrhtnoð commands the warriors to dismount and to drive their horses to the woods, for example, we can reasonably assume that the only horse on the battlefield belongs to Byrhtnoð himself. In order for Godric, Godwine, and Godwig to gallop away together, then, they must form the rather unseemly tableau of three men tucked up closely, one behind the other, on Byrhtnoð's horse. One needn't add gratuitous details absent from the poem, such as the inevitable rhythmical rocking motion of the horse as it runs, to see that the men's close proximity in this position subtly constitutes the simultaneous charge of passive homosexuality and incest. Both of these charges conform to Sørensen's extended definition of nið. Further, even if one suggests that Godwine and Godwig fled on foot, one must contend with the poet's choice of *ærndon* as his verb. In Old English, *ærnan* is a first class weak verb that means "to gallop." [16] Further, it is a *hapax legomenonB*a word used nowhere else in Old English verseBand it is the final word in the line.[17] Its choice, then, was not governed by the exigencies of alliterative meter, making its presence that much more conspicuous. Thus, if we accept that two of the brothers fled on footBsomething I am not necessarily prepared to doBwe are still faced with the fact that the poet metaphorically transforms them into horses by calling their means of flight galloping. That is, he makes *nið* against them.

     It may seem odd to suggest that an Anglo-Saxon poet employs a Scandinavian genre of insult, but when one considers the allusions to the Old Norse *Volsungasaga* in *Beowulf*, and to the Old Norse *Volundarkviða* and *Hjáðningavíg* in "Deor," it becomes abundantly clear that the Anglo-Saxons enjoyed some degree of literary commerce with their Scandinavian relatives. Further, for at least a century prior to the earliest possible date when *Maldon* could have been composed, England was a partially occupied nation under the Danelaw. The Danelaw began with a treaty between King Alfred the Great and the Viking Guthrum in the late ninth century, one which ultimately granted control of Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham, Stamford, and Derby to the Danes and which gave equal legal value to Danes and Englishmen alike.[18] Living side by side and often intermingled, these two cultures could not have helped but influence each other. Still, one needn't invoke other Old English poems or posit hypothetical cultural hybridization to see Scandinavian influence in *The Battle of Maldon*. Indeed, Richard North identifies several Old Norse loan words in *Maldon*, including *grið*, or peace, *dreng*, or warrior, and *upganga*, or "gangway up to land" (4). In addition to these direct borrowings, the *Maldon*-poet also uses the word *eorl* in reference to Byrhtnoð, a term which clearly derives from Old Icelandic *jarl*.[19] Given the

presence of these loan words, and several others, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the *Maldon*-poet would be familiar with other Danish and Icelandic words and customs as well.

This suspicion becomes much more acute as the poem progresses. After the three brothers' flight and the ensuing stampede of desertion which follows close upon its heels, the remaining retainers are in a bit of a bind. One can see them, standing around their lord who has been hacked to pieces; watching most of their allies flee to the woods; sensing the Viking hordes close in all around them. At this dramatically charged moment, and in true Anglo-Saxon heroic fashion, they do not leap right into the fray, as one might reasonably expect. Instead, they pause for speeches. The second of these speeches is perhaps most important for our purposes, for it falls to Offa, Byrhtnoð's prescient retainer who warned him of the likely flight of some of the fyrd. He is therefore most likely to be the voice of reason in the poem. After some preliminary words of agreement with Ælfwine, the poem's previous speaker, Offa remarks that,

> Us Godric hafaþ,
> earg Oddan bearn, ealle beswicene.
> Wende þæs formanig mann, þa he on meare rad,
> on wlancan þam wicge, þæt hit wære ure hlaford.
> Forþon wearþ her on felda folc totwæmed,
> scieldburg tobrocen. (237b-242a)

> [Godric, the *earg* son of Odda, has betrayed us all. Very many a man supposed,   when he rode on the horse, on
> that proud steed, that it was our lord. Therefore the people here on the field were divided, the shield-wall broken.]

In addition to the fact that Offa lays the blame for the rest of the fyrd's desertion squarely upon Godric's shoulders here, he also intensifies and makes explicit the *nið* that the narrator began some fifty lines ago. Central to this reading is the word *earg*, which virtually every editor of the poem glosses as "cowardly," and not without justification, for that meaning is well within the semantic range of the word. But *earg* is also a cognate of a Norse word, *argr*, one that means Apassive homosexual.@[20] In a heroic society, this is the most serious charge that one can level. According to Sørensen, a man who is *argr*

> is willing or inclined to play or interested in playing the female part in sexual relations. . . .[Another meaning of the
> word *argr*] is >cowardly, unmanly, effeminate' with regard to morals and character. This sense too can be considered as
> derived from the basic sexual meaning. The line of thought behind this association (which is not confined to the Old
> Icelandic world) is that a man who subjects himself to another in sexual affairs will do the same in other respects; and
> fusion between the notions of sexual unmanliness and unmanliness in a moral sense stands at the heart of *nið*. (18, 20)

That the word *earg* was understood in this dual fashion in Anglo-Saxon England is almost beyond doubt. Upon the death of Æthelred and Edmund Ironside in 1016, Cnut became the Danish King of England. Cnut was a savvy ruler, and one of his early acts was to cast into law some remarkably Danish rules. One of these reads as follows:

> Se man, þe ætfleo fram his hlaforde oððe fram his geferan for his yrhþe, si hit on scipfyrde, si hit on landfyrde,
> þolige ealles þæs þe he age 7 his agenes feores. (II Canute 77)[21]

> [The man who flees from his lord or from his companions because of his effeminacy, be it in the navy or be it in the
> cavalry, will lose all that he owns and his own life.]

In light of the fact that *argr* was such a loaded concept in Cnut's native Denmark, the presence of *yrhþe* in the passage above is very telling, for even if *earg* originally meant simple "cowardice" in Old English, it seems doubtful that Cnut would shave levels of meaning off of a familiar and powerful word prior to using it in an official capacity. Indeed, if the history of the English language teaches us nothing else, it is that linguistic influence tends to run from the top down.

In the rather caustic introduction to this paper I said that I would discuss humor in *The Battle of Maldon*. Now, however, it seems that I have instead proven that its poet was a closet homophobe. But that isn't the point, really, for viewed from the proper

perspective, *Maldon* genuinely *is* humorous. . .in a way. Perhaps if one examines the fallout from the period immediately following the actual battle of MaldonBthe period when this poem had to have been writtenBthings may come into sharper focus. In 994, Æþelred was forced to pay ten thousand pounds in Danegeld in order to persuade the Vikings to leave peacefully. Such payments increased in subsequent years until shortly before his death, Æþelred payed the staggering sum of forty-eight thousand pounds in Danegeld. Written in the midst of such craven foreign policy, perhaps the real point of the *Battle of Maldon* has less to do with brave men dying by their lord than with the timorous, effeminate men who fled and now help rule the country. This subtle dig at the government may cause no paroxysms of laughter in a 21st-century audience, but it likely caused a stray snicker to disturb the cloistered walls in 11th-century England where they clearly had a taste for understated humor, Anglo-Saxon style.

Notes

[1] All quotations of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are from *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, edited and revised by Charles Plummer and John Earl, unless otherwise specified.

[2] Gordon's edition was first published in 1937 by Methuen.

[3] See AThe Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son.@

[4] See Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron's edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, lines 674-683.

[5] For an excellent refutation of Tolkien, see T. A. Shippey's "Boar and Badger: An Old English Antithesis?"

[6] All quotations from the *Elder Edda* are from Neckel and Kuhn's *Die Lieder des Codex Regius Nebst Verwandten Denkmälern*, unless otherwise specified.

[7] All translations from Old Norse into Modern English are my own unless otherwise specified.

[8] Translated riddles are taken from Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology*, unless otherwise specified.

[9] All Tacitus quotations are taken from J. B. Rives's translation, unless otherwise specified.

[10] See Elliot's "Byrhtnoth and Hildebrand: A Study in Heroic Technique."

[11] See Clark's fine essay, *"The Battle of Maldon*: A Heroic Poem."

[12] All *Maldon* quotations are taken from J. C. Pope and R. D. Fulk's *Eight Old English Poems*.

[13] All translations from Old English into Modern English are my own.

[14] Unless, that is, one reads the poem as an accurate historical account.

[15] See *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society*.

[16] See Carol Hough's "The 'Battle of Maldon' Line 191b" for further discussion of *ærnan*. See also the *Toronto Dictionary of Old English*.

[17] See Bessinger and Smith's *A Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.

[18] All information about the Danelaw comes from *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*.

[19] See North, p. 4.

[20] In AGetting to Know the General in *Maldon*,@ Richard North mentions, though does not pursue, this possibility. See pp 5-6 of this outstanding article.

[21] All citations of Anglo-Saxon law are taken from Lieberman's *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*.

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Constructions of Feminine Desire and Sexuality
in the Thirteenth-Century *Ancrene Wisse*

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T he *Ancrene Wisse,* otherwise known as the "Anchoresses' Guide," was one of the few books of religious instruction written expressly for a female audience. Composed for three English noble lay sisters, the Guide specifically addresses anchoresses—women who for religious reasons retired into physical seclusion by permanently sealing themselves within an anchorhold. The anchorhold, a small chamber, narrow house or cell usually attached to parish churches, can be understood as a paradoxical space—confining yet, because of its impermeable nature, lending a certain level of autonomy to its inhabitants. Because anchoresses lived solitary lives, they had to learn to guard themselves against the stirrings of their own lust and to recognize that temptation strikes even the most experienced of recluses. The *Ancrene Wisse* echoes the prevailing beliefs of the Middle Ages concerning the frailty of the female flesh as the text strongly advocates the suppression of female sexuality, referring to various disciplines as remedies against these temptations; such cures include meditation, prolonged prayer, reading, fasting, vigils, and physical labor.

Since the 1980s, scholarly examinations of *Ancrene Wisse* have focused on constructions of gender in medieval women's spirituality, arguing that spirituality is represented differently in the medieval period for men than for women: men connect to their faith through spirit, while women relate through their bodies. Additionally, several of these critical works declare that negative attitudes toward sex during the Middle Ages tend to denigrate the female body particularly. In her article, "The Rule of the Body: The Female Spirituality of the *Ancrene Wisse*," Elizabeth Robertson relates that "the *Ancrene Wisse*'s peculiar style…was shaped by its author's culturally determined assumptions about women" and that the text "was governed by its male author's view of women as daughters of Eve, inescapably rooted in their bodies," whose spiritual potential was circumscribed and defined by their femininity.[1] Margaret Hostetler believes the representation of space is a discourse used by the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* to construct a particular form of women's religious experience, one where the anchoress, although sealed away, is depicted in various arrangements forcing her to view herself as the object of the public gaze.[2] Further, Anne Clark Bartlett argues that "Aelred's description of the corporeal manifestations of his sexual desire superimposes a model of male physiology on the anchoress's female body." By warning anchoresses against nocturnal emissions which, according to Bartlett, are a "characteristic concern of ethical treatises for monks,"[3] Aelred shows that he adopts constructions of female sexuality directly from male acculturated concepts. Overall, the assumption is that the *Ancrene Wisse* perceives humankind to be in a post-lapsarian state in which both the male and female body are innately sinful. However, in the Middle Ages, women were understood as more closely tied to their bodies than men and, as the argument goes, were therefore more easily corrupted and susceptible to sin. Many critics have theorized that this substructure of gender divisions originates in "Aristotle's formulations of the male principle as 'soul' or 'form' and the female principle as 'body' or 'matter'…[and the man's] was the 'active,' formative role, woman's the 'passive,' receptive role." This theory led to a belief that women were merely defective males and overall inferior beings.[4]

Within the scope of anchoritic scholarship, the female spiritual experience has been recognized as having major erotic undertones. Catherine Innes-Parker posits that the spirituality of the *Ancrene Wisse* should be contextualized within an emerging tradition: "The erotic spirituality which characterizes women's devotion in the thirteenth century is, in part, a development of the increasing devotion to the humanity of Christ that emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries."[5] Caroline Bynum Walker states that feminine mystical experience has the tendency to blur "the line between spiritual or psychological, on one hand, and the bodily

or even sexual, on the other."[6] Underlying this blur between body and soul was the fear of the scandals arising from one's submission to these natural sexual urges. Such fear is reflected in many medieval texts, and anchoritic works are no exception. Although it is true that the *Ancrene Wisse* author devised rules intended to curb the perils of corporeal manifestations of *female* sexual desire, Western monasticism had a long tradition of preaching against the vices of *male* sexuality. In addition to the perceived potential for sexual deviancy among male and female religious, there is evidence that the rules for women were derived from those already constructed for men. Various forms of fornication were deemed punishable by medieval ecclesiastical code. Such offences include heterosexual and homosexual acts, bestiality, and autoeroticism.

Despite recent scholarly focus on the misogyny that dominated medieval perceptions of female sexuality, it is important to keep in mind that rules governing female religious were founded on a very long history of sexual regulations directed at clergymen. While current focus on the sexuality of female religious of the Middle Ages unquestionably eclipses what has been directed toward male ecclesiasts, it is nevertheless evident that, regarding commitment to their own vows of celibacy, men were also held to intense scrutiny. Why was celibacy such a mainstay of religious vocation? According to Elizabeth Abbott, author of *A History of Celibacy*, there was a protracted and contentious fight over the right for clergy to maintain the right to marry. Essentially what ended the battle over clerical celibacy was a "fundamental component of 'good' Christianity." It was argued that celibate clergymen would thus distinguish themselves from lay people, be unencumbered by familial responsibilities and, therefore, be free to focus on their ministries.[7] Despite the controversy, the dispute ended relatively early; by the year 400, "sexual abstinence had been imposed on all major clerics in the Western Church."[8]

Predictably, the decree of mandatory celibacy did little to suppress the biological urges and sexual drives of the devoted, a reality made all too clear by St. Augustine's infamous plea: "Lord, give me chastity and continence, but not yet." Despite the fact that Augustine was undeniably influential in developing the fabric of Christian orthodoxy and, in particular, the subject of celibacy, he was nevertheless tortured by his own lust—and he communicated such distress: "At night his dreams betrayed him with sexual visions, and his tormented body responded so that he woke to find that, during the night, he had unknowingly ejaculated."[9] For Augustine and for many church fathers subsequently, sexuality was a reflection of Original Sin that persisted in the core of each human being.[10]

As Thomas W. Laqueur points out in his book, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation*, the fifth-century abbot John Cassian developed a three-tiered classification of fornication: first was the sexual act itself, second was stimulation without actually touching a woman (presumably masturbation), and finally, lustful thoughts and desire. He advocated that all these types of fornication be extinguished.[11] While all sexual offenses were sinful, a large number of them—"such as entertaining lascivious fantasies, masturbation, wet dreams, and the like"—were matters of conscience and the proper venue for dealing with these transgressions was within the confessional where the confessor was delegated the assignment of a suitable penance.[12] Although more grievous sexual transgressions existed, the convenience and frequent probability of autoerotic activities, although a lesser offence, must have made masturbation a common subject in the confession box.

What was considered so objectionable about masturbation? The sin of Onan, as Cassian defined it, had additional connotations besides the biblical account of *coitus interruptus*.[13] It came to be understood as a sexual activity not resulting in actual intercourse with reproductive impulse or goal. Sexual fantasies, harmful in and of themselves, had the danger of resulting in an array of autoerotic acts. And while "waking pollutions" were voluntary forms of self-pleasuring, nocturnal emissions were somewhat ambiguously classified, although, for the most part, they were understood as involuntary. Even though by nature these nighttime occurrences were uncontrollable and random, they still caused feelings of anxiety and guilt. It was thought that "the monk who suffers them…has a dark place, a hiding place, a place unobserved, which is revealed when his guard is down."[14] Strong concern

over how sexual fantasies and subsequent emissions—voluntary or involuntary—might affect one's chastity existed. In short, prurient thoughts had the potential to result in masturbatory acts, and masturbation was bad because it might lead to "normal" sex.[15]

Although more attention appears to have been given to masculine onanistic propensities, Dyan Elliott points out in *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, that "penitential literature of the early Middle Ages suggests that masturbation was a vice to which both men and women were prone."[16] James Brundage asserts that the penitential documents in general "treated female masturbation in much the same way as the male act, although they were more censorious of female sexual play that involved dildos and other mechanical aids."[17] Laqueur indicates that the canons of Theodore, a twelfth-century code of laws, were obscure about clarifying an appropriate penance particular to *female* masturbatory acts: "a penance for a woman who has 'had coition alone with herself [sola cum se ipsa coitum habet],' which may refer to masturbating using an object or to the act as practiced with the hand or in some other way," follows that of a woman fornicating with another woman.[18]

One of the factors leading to the difficulty of assigning an appropriate penance for female autoeroticism was that, between the late sixth and the twelfth-centuries, there was no separate word denoting masturbation.[19] In *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities*, Carolyn Dinshaw argues that medieval notions about female sexuality were generally nebulous; she believes that just what women *did* without the aid of a man was unclear, because a female's desire was constructed as only "activated by the phallus or its substitutes."[20] However, there is evidence pointing to the contrary. The thirteenth-century theologian, Albert the Great, wrote a commentary on prepubescent and adolescent girls, making plain that some forms of female masturbatory acts were imaginable:

> [With the first signs of puberty] a girl then also begins to enjoy her clitoris, but she does not emit [seed] in her desire: and the more she has sex, or even rubs herself with her hand, the more she wants sex, because through such rubbing the humor is gathered but not emitted, and with that humor, heat is attracted….And they rub [themselves] very often with their fingers or other instruments until, with the [seminal] paths widened through the heat of rubbing and coitus and spermatic humor goes out….Then the flux of menstruation also occurs and their pollutions are multiplied, both sleeping and waking: and then they press their legs together by folding one across the other, and so one part of the vulva scratches the other, because delectation and pollution arise from this.[21]

Despite claims to the contrary, Albert the Great's description reveals an awareness of the possibility for female sexuality unaccompanied by any male participation or phallic substitutes.

Indeed, all forms of celibate religious life posed problems for men and women in terms of maintaining vows of chastity. However, the extreme isolation and privacy that accompanied anchoritic life offered new and more formidable challenges to these enclosed individuals. If the space of the anchorhold was at once the site of privacy and freedom from the demands of the outside word, this same privacy and freedom also cultivated an autonomy that potentially could result in spiritual error. While the *Ancrene Wisse* expresses anxiety over female sexuality, the exact physical acts the Guide directs anchoress to suppress could sometimes not be openly addressed. The author states, "The Scorpiun of leccherie—thet is, of galnesse—haveth swucche cundles thet in a wel i-tohe muth, hare summes nome ne sit nawt for-te nempnin, for the nome ane mahte hurten alle wel i-tohene earen ant sullen cleane hearten."[22] ["The scorpion of lechery, that is, of lustfulness, has such offspring that the very names of some of them cannot properly be mentioned by a well-mannered mouth, since the name alone might damage all well-mannered ears, and soil clean hearts."][23] Sensitive to the susceptibility of the pure minds of his audience to corruption when new notions of sin are described, the author of the Guide thus employs sexual innuendo. Albert the Great shows that medieval society acknowledged the sexual stirrings of youth and the *Ancrene Wisse* makes the connection as well: "'Eadi is,' seith Davith, 'the withhalt hire on earst, ant tobreketh [to] the stan the earste sturunges, hwen the flesch ariseth, hwil thet ha beoth yunge."[24] ["'Blessed is she,' says David, 'who resists at the beginning and breaks the first stirrings against the stone.' The first stirrings are when the flesh rises up while she is young"].[25] These common lustful stirrings of youth were likely to be satisfied, as Albert the Great pointed out, by autoerotic stimulus.

Unable to address sexual issues directly with his female audience, the *Ancrene Wisse* author's concerns transform into an

obsessive preoccupation with the hands of an anchoress, which become disembodied symbols of her sexuality. Anchoresses are forbidden to place their hands out of their windows because this indicates accessibility, and can lead to kissing and things too horrible for the author to mention. In particular, much distress is expressed over the unoccupied, idle hand: "Hire-seolf bihalden hire ahne white honden deth hearm moni ancre, the haveth ham to feire as theo the beoth for-idlet."[26] ["Looking at her own white hands does harm to many anchoresses, who have them so fair because they are idle"].[27] The author may be referring to vanity that may arise within the anchoress as she admires her own unblemished skin. However, within this prohibition, there appears also to be a concern over what an anchoress may *do* with her idle hands. As a symbol of her sexuality, what the hand signifies to others may signify the same thing to the anchoress herself. In which case, her hand becomes dangerous not only for how it may touch others, but also for how it may lead her to touch herself.[28]

In addition to the hands of the anchoress, spaces in the *Ancrene Wisse* are metaphorically charged, the most obvious of these having to do with the windows of the anchorhold. Anchorholds were generally stipulated to have three windows: one was for light, but the other two—the squint and the quatrefoil—were connected to the church but covered with cloth. These windows were to be diligently guarded and the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* expresses his anxiety over the openings frequently: "For-thi mine leove sustren, the leaste thet ye eaver mahen luvieth ower thurles. Alle beon ha lutle, the parlurs least ant nearewest…Lokith thet te patlures [clath] beo on eaver-euch half feaste ant wel i-tachet"[29] ["My dear sisters, love your windows as little as you possibly can. Let them all be little, the parlor's the smallest and narrowest… Look that your parlor cloth is fastened on every side and well-attached"].[30] For the author, there is much emphasis on how well the windows are secured: "toutes les overtures de toutes voz fenestres, ausi come ci devant a la vewe de touz homes unt este closes, ausi soient ca en apres. Et si plus fermement poient, plus fermement soient closes."[31] ["In the same way as all the openings of all your windows have been kept closed from the view of everyone, so let them remain closed from now on—and the more tightly they can be closed, the more tightly they should be."][32]

There are numerous instances when the thirteenth-century text makes the connection between body orifices and anchorhold openings abundantly evident. Such boundaries can be perceived as holes, openings through which objects may be passed through. However, other types of hollows are functioning figuratively in the Guide for these recluses, among which are pits, tombs, wombs, caves, fox-holes and privy-holes. Significantly, in the Guide sexual temptation is regarded as a pit or entrapment—something for someone to fall into.

By transference, this pit becomes a synecdoche for the woman herself:

For-thi wes i-haten on Godes laye thet put were i-wriyen eaver, ant yef ani were unwriyen ant beast feolle ther-in, he the unwreah the put hit schulde yelden. This is a swathe dredful word to wummon thet schaweth hire to wepmones echne. Heo is bitacned bi theo thet unwrith the put—the put is hire feire ned, hire white swire, hirelichte echnen, hond, yef ha halt forth in his echye-sihte. Yet beoth hire word put, bute ha beon the bet i-set. Al yet the feayeth hire, hwet, hwet-se hit eaver beo, thurch hwat machte sonre fol luve awacnin, al ure Laverd 'put' cleopeth—this put he hat thet beo i-lided, thet beast th'rin ne falle ant druncni in sunne."[33]

[It was commanded in God's law that a pit should be always covered, and if anyone uncovered a pit and a beast fell in, the one who had uncovered the pit had to pay for it (Exodus 21:33-34). This is a most fearsome saying for a woman who shows herself to the eyes of men. She is symbolized by the one who uncovers the pit; the pit is her fair face and her white neck and her light eyes, and her hand, if she holds it out in his sight. And also her words are a pit, unless they are well-chosen. Everything to do with her, whatever it may be, which might readily awaken sinful love, our Lord calls all of it a pit. This pit he commanded covered, lest any beast fall in and drown in sin.][34]

As the text indicates, the pit is emblematic of the anchoress's fair face, white neck, light eyes and her hand. In order to avoid the blame of causing others to fall into this pit, she should always remain covered and conceal her features. Permeable boundaries and hollows function figuratively and are correlated with the potential for deviant female sexuality practiced by those enclosed within such boundaries.

Furthermore, by metonymic extension, the permeable boundaries of the anchorhold become analogous to female genitalia. This connection is made explicit in the correlation between the virginal body of Mary, Christ's mother, and the sealed state of the anchorhold:

> Theos twa thing limeth to ancre: nearowthe ant bitternesse, for wombe is nearow wununge ther ure Laverd wes recluse, ant tis word 'Marie,' as ich ofte habbe i-seid, spealeth 'bitternesse.' Yef ye thenne i nearow stude tholieth bitternesse, ye beoth his feolahes, recluse as he wes i Marie wombe. Beo ye i-bunden in-with fowr large wahes?—ant he in a nearow cader, i-neilet o rode, i stanene thruh bicluset hete-feste! Marie wombe ant this thruh weren his ancre-huses.[35]

> [These two things belong to the anchoress: narrowness and bitterness. For the womb is a narrow dwelling, where our Lord was a recluse; and this word 'Mary,' as I have often said, means 'bitterness.' If you then suffer bitterness in a narrow place, you are his fellows, recluse as he was in Mary's womb. Are you imprisoned within four wide walls?— And he in a narrow cradle, nailed on the cross, enclosed tight in a stone tomb. Mary's womb and this tomb were his anchorhouses.][36]

The metaphor of Christ's anchorhouse as designating Mary's womb, the cross and his tomb shows that the anchorhold is a sight of spiritual gestation. But the sealed permeable boundaries of the anchorhold are also representative of the uncorrupted female body: "Ye, went tu alswa of ba thine ancre-huses, as he dude, withute bruche, ant leaf ham ba i-hale"[37] ["You too will go out of both your anchorhouses as he did, without a break, and leave them both whole"].[38] Thus, just as when Mary gave birth to Christ, He exited her body leaving her hymen intact, so too shall the soul of the anchoress leave her uncorrupted and sealed body.

The *Ancrene Wisse* does not go so far as to align the literal genital orifices of the anchoress with the perfect body of the Virgin Mary. Unlike the mother of Christ, the vulnerably human anchoritic bodily openings have the potential to be corrupted through the earthly desires of the recluses, and the author of the Guide is quick to remind his readership of this: "Thi flesch—hwet frut bereth hit in all his openunges? Amid te menske of thi neb—thet is the fehereste deal—bitweonen muthes smech ant neases smeal, ne berest tu as twa prive thurles? 'Nart tu i-cumen of ful slim? Nart tu fulthe fette."[39] ["Your flesh—what fruit does it bear in all its orifices? Amid the nobility of your face, which is the fairest part, between the taste of your mouth and the smell of your nose, do you not carry as it were two privy-holes? Are you not from foul slime? Are you not a vessel of filth?"][40] The passage is obviously meant to chasten (and chastise) the female anchoritic audience because, according to Carolyn Dinshaw, in the medieval era, bodily purgation was thought to result in lecherous sexual activity.[41] Additionally, the use of the word "privy-holes," which Hasenfratz translates as "toilet-holes," is an interesting choice of term. These privy-holes, metaphorically the anchoress's nose and mouth as well as the apertures of the anchorhold—the quatrefoil and the squint—are literally bodily orifices such as the vagina and the rectum. All of these openings are vulnerable to the integrity of the anchoress because they are by nature pervious, and serve as avenues through which waste is managed and objects are passed.

While masturbation was believed to be a vice to which both men and women were susceptible, the act was deemed particularly hazardous for women because it not only threatened the personal chastity of the individual, but also challenged the prescribed axioms of gendered sexuality. Autoeroticism was distinctly a threat to the paradoxical space of the anchorhold precisely because it violated assigned gender roles and disrupted the contemplative life, which was based on the principle of passive reflection and penance. More covertly, female onanism is an act performed transgressively without men. What was so threatening about onanistic acts was the widely held perception that no matter how actively women sought out sex, they were nonetheless restricted to the passive role in generation itself, "offering the passive matter to be impregnated by the man's active, form-bearing seed."[42] In contrast, when a woman achieves sexual gratification without a male, by touching herself with her hand or some other object, she assumes the active function herself. This enjoyment of sexual gratification, independent of the participation of a male, violated the medieval period's construction of gender roles within any sexual activity, whether proscribed or permitted.[43] In essence, female masturbation was seen as disruptive because it was ultimately an empowering act reflective of a woman's personal autonomy;

through it she became the sole source of her own sexual gratification. To an anxious patriarchy, this assumption of (what was perceived to be) an exclusively male sex role by the female recluse was a dangerous appropriation of normative male authority and supremacy.

In the Middle Ages, Western monasticism had already established the general practice of preaching against the perils of human sexuality. While sexual thoughts and practices of both sexes who had undertaken vows of chastity were staunchly condemned, acts of female sexual transgression inspired particular concern within anchoritic texts. Many contemporary scholars have highlighted the constructions of feminine sexuality in the *Ancrene Wisse*; however, these examinations are mainly concerned with how the Guide reflects the conventional medieval belief that the human body was innately sinful and that women—more attached to their bodies than men—were especially susceptible to sin and corruption. Until now, the male author's concern with the potential onanistic acts of female anchoresses within the private, female-gendered space of the anchorhold had not been fully explored. In what is perhaps the earliest representation of one aspect of the interior life of the female recluse, the author expresses concern over how this privacy cultivates an autonomy that may potentially result in spiritual error. The voyeuristic imaginings found in the Guide which were meant as cautionary anecdotes, inevitably construct a private life that medieval enclosed females may (or may not) actually have experienced.

Notes

[1] Elizabeth Robertson, "The Rule of the Body: The Female Spirituality of the *Ancrene Wisse*," *Seeking the Woman in Late Medieval and Renaissance Writings: in Feminist Contextual Criticism,* ed. Sheila Fisher and Janet E. Halley (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989) 44, 45.

[2] Margaret Hostetler, "Designing Religious Women: Privacy and Exposure in the *Life of Christina of Markyate* and *Ancrene Wisse*," *Mediaevalia* 22:2 1999: 201-02, 215.

[3] Anne Clark Bartlett. *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) 48.

[4] Alcuin Blamires, Karen Pratt and C.W. Marx, eds. *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 2.

[5] Catherine Innes-Parker, "Fragmentation and Reconstruction: Images of the Female Body in *Ancrene Wisse* and The Katherine Group," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 26 1995: 32.

[6] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992) 190.

[7] Elizabeth Abbott, *A History of Celibacy* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1999) 108, 110.

[8] Abbott 110.

[9] Abbott 66.

[10] Abbott 66.

[11] Thomas W. Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York: Zone Books, 2003) 130.

[12] James A. Brundage, "Playing by the Rules: Sexual Behaviour and Legal Norms in Medieval Europe." *Desire and Discipline: Sex and Sexuality in the Premodern West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray and Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 26.

[13] The sin of Onan is illustrated in Genesis 38 9-10: "He knowing that the children should not be his, when he went in to his brother's wife, spilled his seed upon the ground, lest his children should be born in his brother's name. And therefore the Lord slew him, because he did a detestable thing" (*The Holy Bible*: Douay Rheims Version (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1971).

[14] Laqueur 134-35.

[15] Laqueur 139.

[16] Dyan Elliot, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 45. Elliott specifies that this is true with the exception of early eleventh century penitential writs that gave more of a balanced portrayal of male and female autoerotic activities.

[17] James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 167.

[18] Laqueur 141.

[19] Laqueur 141.

[20] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999) 88.

[21] Elliott 45-46 translated in full Albert the Great's passage, which in the original Latin reads: "Incipit etiam tunc puella desiderare coitum, sed in desiderio non emittit: et quanto plus coit, aut etiam manu se confricat, tanto plus appetit, eo quod per talem confricationem humor attrahitur, sed non emittitur, et cum homore attrahitur calor: et cum muliebre corpus sit frigidum, et clausuram patiens pororum, non cito emittit semen coitus: et haec esta causa, quot quaedam puellae circa annum quartumdecimum non possunt de coitu satiari: et si tunc non habent virum, tamen mente pertractant coitum virilem, et saepe imaginantur veretrum virorum, et forte saepe confricant digitis vel aliis instrumentis quousque laxatis viis per calorem confricationis et coitus exit humor spermaticus, cum quo exit calor: et tunc temperantur ipsarum inguina, et tunc efficintur castiores. Tunc etiam accidit fluxux menstrui, et multiplicantur pollutiones tam in somnis quam in vigilia: et tunc se comprimunt crura plicando unum crus super alterum et sic una partium vulvae scalpat aliam: quia ex hoc oritur delectatio et pollutio. See Albert the Great. *Animalium libri XXVI*, *Opera omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, Vols. 11-12 (Paris: Vives, 1890-99). Also see Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Danielle, Jacquart and Claude Thomasset. *Sexuality in the Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton, N.J. Princeton UP, 1988).

[22] Robert Hasenfratz, ed. *Ancrene Wisse* (Kalamazoo, MI. Western Michigan University Press for TEAMS, 2000) 228. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the text of *Ancrene Wisse* are from Hasenfratz's edition, with short citations to appropriate pages.

[23] Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, trans. *Anchoritic Spirituality:* Ancrene Wisse *and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991) 123. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of *Ancrene Wisse* are from Savage and Watson's edition, in short citations by authors and page. The early date and difficulty of the dialect of Middle English in which this text is composed suggest that translations might be useful for the general reader's comprehension of quoted passages.

[24] Hasenfratz 305. Psalm 136:9.

[25] Savage and Watson 156.

[26] Hasenfratz 154.

[27] Savage and Watson 91.

[28] I would like to thank Dr. Susannah Chewning of Union County College for pointing out the erotic implications of the anchoress's hands in a personal communication dated 28 April 2004.

[29] Hasenfratz 96.

[30] Savage and Watson 66-7.

[31] Hasenfratz 107.

[32] Savage and Watson 71.

[33] Hasenfratz 103.

[34] Savage and Watson 69.

[35] Hasenfratz 370.

[36] Savage and Watson 187.

[37] Hasenfratz 370.

[38] Savage and Watson 187.

[39] Hasenfratz 289-90.

[40] Savage and Watson 149.

[41] Dinshaw 71.

[42] Dinshaw 90.

[43] Although my analysis parallels Dinshaw's argument (90), there is a distinction between our interpretations. Dinshaw speaks exclusively about lesbian encounters while I examine autoerotic acts.

Girlz in the 'Hood: Maidenhood, Wifehood, and Motherhood—Searching for the Nature and Role of "Real" Women in Medieval Society

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"Of the numberless snares that the crafty enemy spreads before us the worst is woman, sad stem, evil root, vicious fount—honey and poison," writes Marbode, an 11th-century bishop of Rennes (qtd. In Williams and Echols 6). While this vitriolic assessment of women in the Middle Ages was a theme quite common in ecclesiastical literature, we also find less damning characterizations in the temporal works of poets such as the twelfth century French troubadour, Bertran de Born, who wrote that "no woman was 'so lovely and worthy'" as the noble lady he admired. He extols her "'rich, joyous body, 'her gaiety,' and her ''rich, true merit'" (qtd. In Hallissy 4). This "dual nature" as purveyed in both sacred and secular literature led to a conception of women that Marty Williams and Anne Echols describe as "occup[ying] either the pit of hell with Eve or the pedestal of heaven with the Virgin Mary" (3). This tension between opposing views of women echoes the "duality" of actual women in theory and practice in both the Middle Ages as well as today (think of the recent characterizations of Angelina Jolie and Jennifer Anniston). In the two extreme depictions of medieval womanhood, which are drawn by the predominantly male authors of the period, we can see that Eve's deception of her husband is as superficial a characterization of women as Mary's "virginity and rigidly pure spirit" (7) is an unattainable ideal. These "snapshots" of Eve and Mary cannot possibly reconcile a *real* woman's frailties, foibles, and flaws with her power, probity, and purity. Thus, we can find in neither model a true picture of the substance and reality of women's nature and role in medieval society. In contrast to their male counterparts, the small number of medieval women writers—along with a *few* renegade male authors—who write from both the sacred and secular perspectives, portray women in a more (shall we say?) *authentic* light. Furthermore, in the interrelated states of maidenhood, wifehood, and motherhood, we find not only the fundamental nature of the "real" medieval woman, but also her primary role within her society.

My first task, as I see it, is to explain why I have chosen these three conditions as representative of the "real" medieval woman and where the idea originated. Shulamith Shahar points to the eleventh century as the origin of the literary ideal of medieval society possessing three distinct categories of people: "Worshippers," "Warriors," and "Workers" (1) and then adds another classification—women—to what is commonly known as the "three estates of man." Shahar argues that women are almost always categorized separately from men, as a distinct class, and subdivided according to their socio-economic position (2). Further, the writers of the time also subdivided women "according to their . . . marital status, a division never applied to men" (2). Johan Huizinga corroborates this political as well as personal division between the sexes in his description of a Parisian printer's series of woodcut illustrations in the first edition of *Danse Macabre* (c. 1485). The pictures show a dancing corpse escorting forty living figures that symbolize the numerous classes and professions of men (145). "The success of his publication, however, suggested to the printer the idea of a dance macabre of *women*" (145 my emphasis). But depicting forty different professions for women was not possible, so instead, he "display[ed] the different states of feminine life: the virgin, the beloved, the bride, the woman newly married, [and] the woman with child" (196). Thus, by looking at medieval estate theory—which summarily excluded women—in a new light, I began to wonder how it might be altered slightly to include a new classification system for women: one that would classify them according to marital state. Just such codification is suggested by Etienne Fougeres concerning the accepted states for maids, wives, and widows (Shahar 3). Margaret Hallissy also uses the same categories as Fougeres in assessing women's position in medieval society in her book *Clene Maids, True Wives, Steadfast Widows*. How, then and why, did I choose a slightly different taxonomy to pursue my quest for the "real" medieval woman?

First, Katherine J. Lewis notes that Christine de Pisan essentially ignores the professional and perpetual virgins of the convent in her book dedicated to the instruction of real women, *Le Livre des Trois Vertues* (*The Book of the Three Virtues*). Lewis observes that "Christine is not truly concerned with nuns, or with women who will *be* nuns, but rather with those who will be *married*" (30 my emphsis). So nuns are out. Next, I began to think of the two icons of medieval femininity that had originally piqued my interest in this subject—Eve and Mary. What commonalities did these two images possess? Each woman was both a wife and a mother, so neither nuns *nor* widows fit into this classification. And although one may argue that the Church considers holy sisters "brides of Christ," nuns certainly do not constitute mothers. Likewise, widows, who obviously were wives at one time (and may yet be mothers), by virtue of the death of their husbands, they are no longer wives. But wifehood and motherhood only left me with two states, and in keeping with the spirit of the medieval mindset, I knew that in order to mirror the *original* estate theory, and because the number three is, in fact, a very special and "holy" number, I knew that I needed another category to complete my definition of the "real" medieval woman.

I based my final criterion as to the nature of women on a question implied by Shahar, "Was there *any* condition shared by all women in medieval society?", to which I answer, "Yes! *Chastity*!" According to Hallissy, this consummate feminine quality was "the medieval culture's very *definition* of female virtue." It also complements the idea of a continuum within the stages of a woman's life cycle: she begins life as a maid, becomes a wife when she marries, and then, ideally, bears her husband children as a mother. Equally important to my emerging taxonomy, chastity is also the nature of both Eve's and Mary's respective degradation and exaltation, thus conjoining all three estates. Admittedly though, a modern reader's idea of chastity (that of sexual abstinence), may not seem to relate to both Eve and Mary. However, while definitely a *part* of chastity's definition, sexual abstinence does not present a complete understanding that this term carried in the Middle Ages. Then, as now, *chastity* meant "morally pure in thought and conduct; decent and modest" (American Heritage Dictionary). Therefore, I reasoned, society expected *all* secular women to be chaste. So now I have my "girlz": maidens, wives, and mothers, and with the scope of my search thus narrowed in terms category, I now move on to my second objective, which is to discern the nature of and the role (or roles) within each of these estates as perceived by medieval society.

Beginning with the stage in which a woman begins her life, that of maidenhood, let us examine her four cardinal qualities: virginity, youth, beauty, and obedience. Medieval culture is rife with advice to its most valued and vulnerable members. Sermons, philosophical treatises, scriptural texts, didactic tomes, as well as songs, poems, and stories serve as oral as well as written repositories of appropriate female behavior. It is important to note, however, as Hallissy observes, that the code of conduct for women as presented in the literature of the time was "directed *toward* women" and yet "*controlled* by men" (xvi). Interestingly, the sheer amount of instruction given by men, especially to young women, underlines their importance within the male-dominated culture. True, this interest in a woman's purity was not so much a concern for the woman herself as it was for how her virginity was of utmost significance to both her family and her potential husband. But the emphasis on preserving a woman's virginity was a popular and reoccurring theme in the didactic literature of the day. Women learned that they might even expect to die in order to defend their chastity, as young Virginia did in Chaucer's "Physician's Tale." "[P]romiscuity was strictly forbidden for females, and young women of all ranks were exhorted to maintain their chastity for their husbands at all costs, especially if they hoped to achieve socially and financially 'good matches'" (Williams and Echols 92). Sexual misconduct also had far-reaching consequences for those women who did not heed the social dictums. If even a breath of scandal touched a medieval girl, her opportunities for a successful marriage were ruined, and she would be "condemned as promiscuous" and considered "spoiled" by society (192). This double standard even pervaded the religious and legal aspects of a woman's life. Williams and Echols note that within the church, "penance and punishments for sexual sins were much harder and more strict for women than men" (88). Additionally, in the courts,

"[a]dultery was usually considered just cause for the unfaithful wife to forfeit her property . . . " (92).

While virginity was certainly a key component in a young medieval maid's nature, several other qualities were necessary, as well. The first of these is youth. Kim Phillips describes the three major sources of evidence in medieval art and literature that point to the state of maidenhood as the "perfect age" in a woman's life: the virgin-martyrs, the Virgin Mary, and a poetical creation of ideal young womanhood referred to as the "Pearl Maiden" (8). Phillips points out that the "perfect" medieval maiden "is a woman past childhood but not yet a fully-fledged adult. . . . Moreover, she is "*young*," as well as "*virginal*" (5). Phillips concedes that the actual ages of the virgin-martyrs have warranted little scholarly attention, even though their lives have undergone more scrutiny as of late; however, she also notes that "[o]f those whose actual ages are given, . . . all are in their teens" (10). Similarly, the Virgin Mary—especially in depictions of the annunciation—is often portrayed with the unbound hair and garland "crown of a maiden on her wedding day" (12). Therefore, we can deduce from the visual evidence that a woman's youth is closely tied to the image of virginity.

The final example offered by Phillips as a "paragon of feminine perfection" ()5 is the Pearl Maiden. In the poem, a father who has lost his infant daughter is visited by an apparition of a young maid. Although the apparition's age is not explicitly stated, Phillips concludes from her detailed physical description that she is a young maiden in her teens (6). In associating the Pearl Maiden's physical virtues: white skin; long, loose, golden hair; grey eyes; her likeness to a rose; marvelous beauty; and fairness of figure, which Phillips notes, are all aspects of the courtly ideal of feminine beauty found in almost any youthful heroine of late-medieval English romance or courtly lyric, Phillips establishes the quality of youth as *essential* in a maid (6). That these three elements, virginity, youth, and now *beauty*, are inextricably bound together is evidenced by Phillips's observations that "it is most significant that youthfulness is a key element of this ubiquitous ideal of feminine beauty. Where the age of the beautiful woman is not stated, her youth is implicit in her figure, with its slender limbs, small high breasts, narrow waist and smooth white skin" (7). These attributes certainly describe the virgin-martyrs, most depictions of the Virgin Mary, and the Pearl Maiden.

The final element in a complete picture of the medieval maiden's nature is her attitude of complete obedience and submission to both her father and her future husband. Phillips observes that with minimal variation, the lives of the maiden saints follow a similar pattern. A Christian maid is pursued by and summarily rejects the advances of a pagan suitor. As a result, she is tortured in order to make her "renounce both faith and chastity, but she refuses to give up either. Finally, she is martyred, usually by beheading" (10). How, then, do I get *obedience* and *submission* out of a story fairly bursting with *defiance*? I see the maiden's obedience to her spiritual husband, Christ, in her refusal to give up her physical virtue as well as submission to her Heavenly Father in her death and martyrdom in order to preserve her chastity.

Similarly, the Virgin Mary is obedient to her Heavenly Father when He unexpectedly sends word that she's about to bear a child—and out of *wedlock*, no less! Further, her obedience to her new husband, Joseph, goes a bit beyond the call of duty when he plops her on the back of a donkey to make the trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem for a mere *census* when she is nine months pregnant. The fact that she then ends up going into labor and delivering her first child in a barn *clearly* indicates her submissive nature. In my estimation, only a woman of supernatural patience and compliant temperament could have endured such humiliation and discomfort. No wonder she was made "Queen of Heaven."

At the end of *Pearl*, we see the apparition's physical state as she enters heaven, whereupon she joins a procession and dances away to be joined to her heavenly bridegroom, described in medieval marriage symbols: she is crowned, dressed in white, and covered with pearls (a medieval symbol of purity). Clearly, she is a happy, yet dutiful, young bride!

As a final example of the ideal attributes of the medieval maiden: virginity, youth, beauty, and obedience, I offer Chaucer's Virginia (another young and beautiful maid), who submits willingly to her father's sword in order to preserve her chastity in "The

Physician's Tale." Yet, I do not mean to suggest that "real" medieval maidens succeeded in measuring up to such standards of feminine perfection. On the contrary, I suspect that many—if not most—young women of the Middle Ages often fell quite short of the ideal. However, earthly imperfection was no bar to presenting a standard by which to measure woman's humanity.

A maiden's *role* in medieval society, then, is inextricably bound up in her *nature* as a young, beautiful virgin who is completely obedient to her family. Her two most important functions are to preserve her virginity until she is given by her father in marriage to her husband, and in doing so, to attract a husband of good name, position, and standing in the community in order to maintain or even *increase* her (and possibly her family's) status. Hallissy points out that a woman and her virginity "belong" to her father and are bestowed upon her husband at marriage (435). John of Salisbury writes of a woman's place in the negotiation for a husband: "A daughter at all comely . . . is merchandise displayed for sale to attract the customer" (qtd. In Hallissy 43). In the Middle Ages, a woman's virginity was also of utmost concern for her new husband, because as Hallissy indicates, "only through the chastity of women was the integrity of the lineage guaranteed" (5). By protecting a woman's chastity, father and husband protected both the line of inheritance and the purity of bloodline (44). As I propose earlier, the ideal of chastity was a medieval woman's primary duty throughout her lifetime. Hallissy emphasizes the role that this archetypical virtue plays in a woman's life by suggesting how a maiden makes "her one rite of passage, a safe transition" from her father's house to her husband's, and how this "transition," if successful, leads to marriage (xvi), in which the "perfect maid will become the perfect wife" (54).

Williams and Echols observe that medieval women "played a variety of roles in the real world"; they were "daughters, wives, lovers, partners, victims *of* [men and mothers *to*] men," and as such, "every aspect of life that had an impact on medieval males was of some importance to females" (11). What feminine function, then, affected men more than the roles women played as his *wife* and the *mother* of his heirs?

Having established the importance of marriage in a medieval woman's life, we can next explore what medieval society felt were the primary attributes of a good wife. Although as Hallissy observes, "the virgin can be characterized by what she does *not* do . . .., a wife is characterized, positively or negatively, by [her] activity" (55). A wife's *actions*, then, can be seen as a direct outgrowth of a woman's *nature*, and to that end, Christine de Pisan directed much of her writing. Williams and Echols suggest that Christine believed that because women have a "noble nature," the medieval writer also "refuted male stereotypes of feminine mental [and moral] deficiencies" (8). Not only did Christine reflect on the ideal picture of womanhood, but she also "offered down-to-earth assistance to real medieval women" (11). Through her writing and the literary, ecclesiastical, and didactic attention, a wife's nature and role in society received from men, modern readers are able to piece together a fairly accurate picture of how women were regarded and how they functioned in the Middle Ages.

Marriage in general and a good wife in particular is "held in high regard in the Old Testament" (Hallisy 55). Further, Hallissy notes that on both practical and theoretical levels, marriage is a great benefit to men (55). According to Proverbs 31, a wife is useful, competent, busy, and her efforts are crucial to the domestic economy. She is a worker and a manager. She makes the household's purchasing decisions. Further, she is also tireless: she rises early, and goes to bed late, and because of her accomplishments, her husband's reputation is enhanced before his peers (Hallissy 59). Even the New Testament regards marriage highly by comparing in Ephesians 5:21-24 the relationship between a husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church. And finally, we see in the writings of Bartholomaeus Angelicus (c. 1250) a description of the duties of a wife and also a list of the qualities that she should possess:

> In a good wife the following conditions are necessary: that she be busy and devout in God's service, meek and obedient to her husband, gentle in word and deed with her servants, generous and liberal to strangers, merciful and friendly to the poor, mild and peaceable with her neighbors, circumspect and prudent in things to be avoided, strong and patient in things to be suffered, busy and diligent in her work, modest in her clothing, serious, in her conduct, careful in her speech, chaste in her looking, honorable in her action, sober in her walking, shamefast in public, pleasant with her husband, chaste in her private life. Such is a wife worthy of praise. (qtd in Hallissy 43)

Thus, as a distillation of the nature and roles of medieval wifehood, I propose that her fundamental characteristics are chastity, compliance, and camaraderie, while her chief functions are first, to provide the care for and ensure the well-being of husband, hearth, and home; second, to maintain her husband's good name through her diligence to her domestic duties and in her circumspect behavior; and finally, to manage the household finances and even in her husband's absence to administer his estate.

The three characteristics of a good wife, chastity, compliance, and camaraderie, seem well chosen to equip a wife to perform her fundamental role in the marriage: that of caretaker for husband, home, and family and promoter of domestic harmony. As Thomas of Cobham instructs the medieval husband, if his wife is "full of charity, faith, humility, rectitude and patience . . ., how great should be your mutual friendship" (qtd. in Williams and Echols 7).

Men also believed that a wife's second and "divinely appointed" duty, after caring for her husband, was to serve as keeper of the hearth (Williams and Echols 55). These two functions are vividly and wittily captured in an anonymous fifteenth century song:

> A woman is a worthy thing,
> She doth wash and doth wring,
> "Lullay! Lullay! She doth sing,
> And yet she hath but care and woe.
> A woman is a worthy wight,
> She serveth man both day and night;
> Thereto she putteth all her might,
> And yet she hath but care and woo. (Power 410)

Tania Bayard's translation of *Le Menagier de Paris [The Householder of Paris]* illuminates the amazing details that comprised a woman's responsibilities in running a large household in the sections of the book that deal with planting a garden, supervising servants, running the kitchen, and other "small" matters. The final chapter gives fascinating instructions from the banal to the clandestine in such recipes that describe how to "make three *pints* of ink" (134), and how one might "write on paper a letter that no one will see unless the paper is heated" (130).

Another concern for the medieval wife was preserving her husband's good name. Georges Dubois points out that "family honor *depended* on the behavior of womenfolk." Bayard's translation of *[The Householder of Paris]* gives excruciatingly specific advice on how a wife should behave in order that "honor will result, and everything good will come to you" (37). The list of instructions covers such topics as how to comport oneself at worship, when to arise in the morning, how to avoid sloth, matters of dress, speech, and of *utmost* importance, chastity. In the husband's touching prologue to his young wife's book of gentle instruction, he protests that:

> . . . knowing . . . you as I do, . . . I have complete confidence in your virtue. Nevertheless, although, as I said, no great
> service is due me, I want you to know a great deal about virtue, honor, and duty, not so much for my sake, [but because] .
> . . [t]he more you know, the more honor you will have, and the more praise there will be for your kinfolk, and for myself
> also, and for others around whom you have been raised. (Power 29)

A good wife's final duty was to manage the household finances and property of her husband while he lived—especially in his absence, and she oftentimes became the executrix of his estate while he lived, as well as his heiress, upon his death (Power 419). Toward this end, Christine de Pisan encourages medieval women to learn about the running of and daily operation within their husband's estates and other "home management" instructions for women of various socio-economic classes in her *Le Livre des Trois Virtues [Book of Three Virtus]*. In Charity Cannon Willard's translation of Christine's text, a modern reader sees the detailed advice she gives to royal wives as to how her finances should be managed (114-24). Further, Christine dedicates sections of instruction to women of descending rank—from ladies of the court, to wives of laborers in the fields—concerning matters not only of comportment but also of how to assist their husbands in conducting his business. Eileen Power enumerates several cases in which

a woman might have to take her husband's place, including a husband's absence due to military service, pilgrimage, and court or business obligations (417). In her husband's stead, the wife became the manager of the lands and household. It was a wife's duty to dispose wisely of her husband's resources according to his rank. Thus, we see that the chaste, compliant, and companionable nature of "ideal" as well as "real" medieval wives relates directly to their roles as helpmates, homemakers, and household managers.

The final estate of women—*motherhood*—is the most elusive category of my "real" women taxonomy to substantiate This is due, in part, to what Williams and Echols note is the scant attention paid to mothers and children in medieval art and literature. Yet it is important to remember that the art and literature of this age was created largely by celibate men who did not produce any progeny and whose concern for children probably did not extend beyond the importance of a ensuring a male heir to carry on a family name and to inherit land or property. However, it is difficult for me to imagine after having experienced motherhood, myself, that medieval women—regardless of class—were completely *disinterested* in the lives they created within their own bodies and the children they later suckled at their breast. But Williams and Echols give several reasons to explain why medieval mothers may have received so little attention in art and literature. First, parents often harbored quite utilitarian feelings about their children, especially those born to upper-class households who were supposed to be useful to their families. In addition, "parents often manipulated their offspring to obtain financial or political ends" (76). Conversely, instead of being a step up on the economic ladder, children born to lower-class parents (especially baby girls) were often the victims of infanticide "because they were seen as expensive to raise but less valuable as adults" than baby boys were (77). In addition, highborn girls also reduced the size of her brothers' inheritance with her dowry and could be viewed by their parents as a poor investment (81). Another reason a woman's position as a mother may not have been valued was due to the dearth of scientific enlightenment. In the Middle Ages, reproduction was thought to be a *male* function, while the mother's body simply *incubated* the baby for nine months (77). Once born, however, "the greatest impediment to close [maternal] bonding was the brevity of life expectancies for the young" (78). Disease, malnutrition, starvation, non-existent or inadequate childcare, and accidental deaths contributed to the frighteningly high (by modern standards) mortality rate among children (78). Thus, Williams and Echols note that "in all classes, some mothers *feared* a great emotional investment in offspring who held little better than a fifty percent chance of survival" (78). Finally, the practice among the nobility of fostering out one's children to be raised in other nobles' homes severely curtailed a mother's time to spend with her children (79).

Despite all indications to the contrary in art and literature, however, I believe that evidence of a strong mother/child bond *did* exist in the Middle Ages. Medieval sermons and other men's writings provide indirect proof that there was "frequently a huge gap between theory and practice in the relationships between mothers and their children" (82). For example, Williams and Echols observe that both lay and clerical advisors *constantly* admonish women not to grieve and cry when a child died. The orthodox position was that such a fate was *God's* will, and the youngster was better off in *heaven* than on earth. However, the mere fact that so many preachers and writers felt called upon to re-emphasize this advice indicates that *few* women actually remained calm when their children died (82). This position establishes a more logical assumption that despite the absence of maternal depictions in art and literature and in the face of the harsh realities of the parent/child relationship in medieval society, parents in general, and mothers, in particular, can be assumed to have had great affection for their children.

This lack of material concerning a mother's part in her children's lives is also a contributing factor in why I now deviate from the pattern I have heretofore established in explicating first the nature of a particular estate and then suggesting what roles are a natural outgrowth or consequence of those qualities. In my discussion of motherhood, I begin with concrete details as to a woman's role as a mother and then move on to a theoretical (for lack of concrete evidence) analysis of what attributes best befit a woman in carrying out her duties.

Christine de Pisan defines a woman's role firmly within the familial context. Ironically, however, Eileen Power notes that a

woman's duties as a mother were often *fewer* than her responsibilities as a wife (420). Whether her obligations to this estate were many or few, however, it is difficult to argue that one of a woman's *primary* functions was to bear children within the bonds of matrimony. Yet this task—at once a marvelous burden and a bitter joy—is elevated to virtual sainthood status by virtue of Mary's having born Jesus. That same fifteenth century poet who sympathetically lamented a woman's perpetual "care and woe" extols motherhood in what must be a preceding verse of the same song:

> I am as light as any roe
> to praise women where that I go.
> To oppress women it were a shame,
> For a woman was thy dame;
> Our blessed Lady beareth the name
> of all women where that they go. (qtd. in Power 409)

While from these lyrics we see that women's role as the bearers of children were valued, Williams and Echols observe that among *other* teachings, most clerics (like Chaucer's Parson) advised engaging in sexual intimacy *only* for procreative purposes, *not* for mere pleasure, and yet, "producing [legitimate] heirs was a *duty* for both men and women" (77). Fertility was also important because of the high mortality rate among infants and young children, and in the face of this reality, women were "encouraged to give birth frequently" (42). Williams and Echols explain a strange irony to this medieval emphasis on a woman's fertility in that while a "girl was merely a future child bearer for someone else's family"—and therefore not significant in her *own* right—she performed the most valuable service for her husband's family because in producing the longed for son, she provided the *heir* for her new family (181).

A mother's second role, after fulfilling her obligation to bear offspring, was to see to its raising and instruction. Williams and Echols report that Saint Bernardino of Siena was aware of the importance of this duty when he suggested that the sphere of women's influence was not simply that of the house as caretaker of her husband's domicile, but even more importantly, as the supporter and nurturer of those who resided *within* the home, namely her husband and her children (15). Christine de Pisan also advised men to "esteem women for their abilities and usefulness—as partners to their husbands and as protectors and educators of the young" (8).

Finally, we also see some hint as to what qualities in women might best befit a mother in Christine's works. Williams and Echols note that "praiseworthy feminine qualities such as devotion and generosity" are among these desirable characteristics (8). Additionally, Hallissy's theory on how chastity is embodied by a woman at *every* stage in her life cycle—from maidenhood to wifehood and on into widowhood—must therefore suggest that not only does motherhood become one of the major stops on most women's journey through life, but that chastity, if important to preserving a dead husband's honor in her widow years, must be all the more significant while her husband is alive and while she is actively raising and educating their children. As a result, I see in Hallissy's vision of the "clene" maid, the "true" wife and the "steadfast" widow, all the necessary attributes of the medieval mother. A mother would be "clene" or chaste in her behavior toward others as an example for her children. Similarly, she would be physically "true" or faithful to her husband in order to preserve the family lineage, but as a mother, she would also be "true" and constant in loving and caring for her children. And ultimately, a good medieval matron would be "steadfast," not only to her husband—to his household while he lived and to his memory after he died, but also to her children. She would be constant in her attention to their upbringing and education and devoted to ensuring and improving their position in life.

It is clear to me that my conclusions about the nature and role of women in the Middle Ages are neither profound, nor particularly original. However, for my own benefit, I am pleased to discover that according to Power, real medieval women played "an active and dignified part in the society of their age" (433). In my own childhood enchantment with the age of "knights in shining armor," I realize that I created my own "pit and pedestal" conceptions of life in the Middle Ages. And if, as a child, my heart created a romantic vision of courtly love and heroic knights rescuing imperiled damsels, my rational brain (as I devoured hundreds

of "bodice-ripper" romance novels in my later teens) eventually admitted that the harsh actuality of life in medieval times consisted mostly of death, filth, stench, back-breaking work, and living conditions that were unpleasant in the *best* of circumstances. And yet, my fascination with the time period and the people who lived in it continues.

An important caveat to my search for and discussion of "real" medieval women, is to emphasize that the perceptions and philosophies of the Middle Ages certainly may not reflect a modern reader's understanding of how society views women today; in fact, the contemporary and medieval beliefs are quite opposed in many respects. Certain "truths," however, have a way of transcending both time and culture. Even as we see numerous similarities between present-day men and women and the characters of, say, Shakespearean plays, so, too, I have discovered many parallels between "real" medieval women and the nature and roles of modern ones. As Williams and Echols acknowledge, medieval women played a variety of roles in the real world: they were "daughters, wives, lovers, partners, and victims of men, and as such, every aspect of life that had an impact on medieval males was of some importance to females" (11). So, too, I must conclude that while women in the Middle Ages did not experience the same freedoms in their lives and surely not to the degree that women do today, many similarities exist between their lives and ours. Like our medieval sisters, contemporary women live as loved and protected children of caring families, dream of what they will become when they "grow up," fantasize about falling in love, then, perhaps, actually fall in love, get married, and mayhap experience the joys and sorrows of raising a family. Despite some obvious differences, we are nevertheless connected in a sisterhood that transcends time.

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Consumption and Memory in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*

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I. Organic Composition and Decomposition

> For hit ful depe is sonken in my mynde,
> With pitous hert in Englyssh to endyte
> This olde storie, in Latyn which I fynde,
> Of quene Anelida and fals Arcite,
> That elde, which that al can frete and bite,
> As hit hath freten mony a noble storie,
> Hath nygh devoured out of oure memorie.
> (*Anelida and Arcite*, 8-14)

In these lines from Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, Chaucer aligns himself with tradition, yet recognizes, and plays with, the forces that threaten to destabilize the genealogy of poetic transmission. We see here the adoption of an infernal art—deriving from the notion of the aged god Pluto as devourer—which figures the destructive power of time as consumption. In this regard, Chaucer mirrors his Florentine predecessor Dante, who speaks of the throat of hell, and employs multiple alimentary images to trope the memorial terrain of *Inferno*.[1] In this paper, I shall attempt to give a sense of the infernal enterprise Chaucer undertakes in his *Parliament of Fowls*; ultimately, I will be interested in Chaucer's reflection on the devouring, dismembering aspects of the organic progression of literature.[2] I will offer a tentative reading of the *Parliament* as retracing Dante's authorial journey through *Inferno*'s opening cantos and culminating in a dialogue with *Inferno* 6, Dante's canto of gluttony.

Chaucer's suggestion that "elde" can erase (or nearly erase) a text from the collective memory points up a paradoxical situation that exists within the very concept of memory. Memory implies pastness, but must exist in the present. Memory is a pull toward that which no longer is; theoretically, surrendering to the lure of remembrance would leave one in a region of oblivion. The past cannot be fully recalled; otherwise the perceiver would no longer exist in the present.

Dante's *Commedia* displays typically profound meditation on this spectrum of remembrance and forgetfulness. In *Inferno* 9, at the Gate of Dis, the three Furies, servants of the infernal queen Proserpina, threaten to make Dante look at Medusa. Some early commentators on the poem saw this conflict as one between memory and oblivion.[3] Like the other souls in *Inferno*, who live primarily in the past, and who will only have access to days-gone-by after Judgment Day, Dante is at theoretical risk of not progressing intellectually into the present and future.[4] The stony threat of Medusa at this gate recalls the "hard" rhymes (*duro*) that Dante encountered at the gate to upper hell, where, in Dante's most famous line, the reader is bid to abandon all hope; that is to say, leave behind the possibility of futurity.[5] To state the obvious, the hard and stony in the parallel scenes emphasizes concretion. To fully enter the past is to become static.

It is important that Dante as poet resists this petrification through complicating the hermeneutics involved in both scenes. The writing above the upper gate is *duro*, not only lasting, but difficult to interpret. More tellingly, when Dante confronts the Furies at the gate of Dis, he dramatically steps outside the poem and addresses his readers: "O you who have sound intellects, marvel at the doctrine which is hidden beneath the veil of the strange verses".[6] For Dante, the human intellect (both poet and reader) avoids stagnation through interpretive progress.

As I have suggested elsewhere, the *House of Fame* parodies the eternal writing on Dante's gate with its own inscription of names on a rock of ice, which is literally hard (*duro*) while at the same time ephemeral.[7] Some of the names will remain, others will melt; as the poem goes on to illuminate, even the fame that remains lasts only in the form of "fals and soth compouned",[8] defying

stability of meaning and interpretation. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer evokes Dante's gate in an explicit and extended manner that similarly complicates the hermeneutics of the poem:

> This forseid African me hente anoon,
> And forth with him unto a gate broghte
> Right of a parke, walled of grene stoon;
> And over the gate, with lettres large y-wroghte,
> Ther weren vers y-writen, as me thoghte,
> On eyther halfe, of ful gret difference,
> Of which I shal yow sey the pleyn sentence.
>
> 'Thorgh me men goon in-to that blisful place
> Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
> Thorgh me men goon unto the welle of Grace,
> Ther grene and lusty May shal ever endure;
> This is the wey to al good aventure;
> Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of-caste,
> Al open am I; passe in, and hy the faste!'
>
> 'Thorgh me men goon,' than spak that other syde,
> 'Unto the mortal strokes of the spere,
> Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
> Ther tre shal never fruyt ne leves bere.
> This streem yow ledeth to the sorwful were,
> Ther as the fish in prison is al drye;
> Th'eschewing is only the remedye.'
>
> Thise vers of gold and blak y-writen were,
> Of whiche I gan a stounde to beholde,
> For with that oon encresed ay my fere,
> And with that other gan myn herte bolde;
> That oon me hette, that other did me colde,
> No wit had I, for errour, for to chese
> To entre or flee, or me to save or lese.
>   (*Parliament of Fowls*, 120-147)

The gate here presents two options "of ful gret difference"; the hermeneutic uncertainty regarding which valence will be activated upon entrance is playfully underscored by the narrator's claim to give us the "pleyn sentence" of the inscription. The gate's binary pronouncement is more deeply complicated by the dreamer's experience on the other side, where the garden incorporates the blissful *and* the violent and deathly, rather than confirming a choice made.

In addition to the overt infernal reference to Dante's gate, Chaucer turns again and again to the cyclical process of seasonal regeneration to image his authorial *descensus ad inferos*. As old plants (and bodies) fall and, through decomposition, enter the soil to serve as fertile nutrients for future life, so Chaucer penetrates the ground of textual memory to seek the nourishment of past texts as he fashions his own creation. At the beginning of the *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer makes one of the most programmatic statements of his organic poetics:

> For out of olde feldes, as men seith,
> Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere;
> And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere.
>   (*Parliament of Fowls*, 22-25)

This relationship between old and new in both poetry and the natural world implies the disintegration of the past into the soil, and a metamorphosis which takes place underground for the sake of new creation that always remains founded in the old. We see this

trajectory repeatedly in Chaucer's poems, but what is striking about the *Parliament* is its focus on the alimentary and decompositional in the dismantling of prior texts. The poem is replete with references to ravaging and tearing apart. In particular, the bird gathering in the concluding section comprises a great food chain, which ultimately pulls apart meaning rather than arriving at stability.

I will be suggesting a possible connection between the *Parliament of Fowls*, especially the birds' debate, and *Inferno* 6, Dante's canto of gluttony. Given the political nature of *Inferno* 6, where Dante the pilgrim meets Ciacco, a fellow Florentine who, for the first time in the poem, tells the poet's future in the context of the socio-political upheaval that will soon erupt in Florence, there may be a connection to be drawn with the socio-political discord amongst the birds and the traditional assumption that the *Parliament* is on one level addressing a disputed marital suit within the court.[9] My concern here, though, involves Chaucer's employment of the alimentary motif as a way to figure his organic poetic creation. I will proceed with a consideration of Chaucer's incorporation of the early cantos of *Inferno* to suggest a culmination in the canto of gluttony, and then discuss briefly the *Parliament*'s own use of eating and decompositional imagery.

II. *Descensus ad inferos*

As suggested earlier, Chaucer's persistent commitment to the limited range of human experience in his poetry bespeaks a philosophy which embraces the mutability and uncertainty of the sublunary region, the broader neoPlatonic underworld. In the *House of Fame*, Chaucer parodies the transcendent flights of Dante and others by having his narrator, Geffrey, claim to fly higher than anyone before him, despite the fact that the eagle which carries him doesn't pass the airy region below the moon. Similarly, in the *Parliament*, the Dream of Scipio sets up the possibility of a transcendent experience only to be deflated, first by the complicated dream theory in the poem, which most scholars agree places the narrator's vision in the category of *somnium animale* rather than vision, but also through echoes from one section of the poem to another.[10] Early on, the elder Scipio suggests that good souls will ultimately "come into that blysful place" (83) where the clear souls are. The narrator is offered the same possibility through the writing on the gate, which proclaims "Thorgh me men gon into that blisful place" (127), and Nature herself repeats the sentiment on the other side of the gate:

> This is oure usage alwey, fro yer to yeere;
> And whoso may at this tyme have his grace,
> In blisful tyme he cam into this place.
>   (*Parliament of Fowls*, 411-413)

In contrast with the grand vision presented by Scipio, though, the dreamer has remained very much down to earth. Further, it is worth noting that each of these references to "the blissful place" plays off of a rhyme with "grace". In the final section of the poem, Nature is "This noble emperesse, ful of grace" (319), an epithet that evokes Mary only to suggest Chaucer's refusal to move beyond the human through the *ora pro nobis* (as Dante does at the close of *Paradiso*), especially since the pleadings of the eagle-suitors are not granted. In the end, there is no end; the poem is surrendered to the yearly cycle invoked frequently in phrases like "yer to yeere", culminating in the formel eagle's deferral of a decision until the following year.[11]

While Chaucer maintains a worldly milieu for his dreamer's experience—within the broader infernal space—he also incorporates passages which evoke the narrower conception of underworld as hell. That the narrator's copy of the *Somnium Scipionis* treats of hell, earth, and paradise is an elaboration on Chaucer's part, as the *Somnium* contains no reference to hell.[12] The narrator's consideration of the nature of dreams is modeled upon a preface from Claudian that was incorporated into the *De raptu Proserpinae* in the Middle Ages.[13] This unfinished epic, one of Chaucer's most important infernal intertexts, is also the partial source for the lengthy catalogue of trees that the dreamer sees once through the gate.

Chaucer's most important authority on the underworld, though, is Dante, to whom, as we have seen, he alludes quite overtly in the *Parliament of Fowls*. Critical consensus has been that Chaucer does not in the *Parliament* carry on an extended conversation with Dante as he does in the *House of Fame*.[14] I think, however, that we can trace a path through the *Parliament* which re-covers the opening cantos of Dante's *Inferno*.

At the poem's commencement, the narrator recalls reading the *Dream of Scipio*, in which Scipio Africanus appears in a dream to his grandson and shows him the nine heavenly spheres. The book-induced adventure with the guide providing a moral layout of "hevene and helle / And erthe, and soules that thereinne dwelle" (32-33) parallels Virgil's appearance to Dante in *Inferno* 1 and his mapping of the three regions of the afterlife. Chaucer's formulation of the three realms—heaven, hell, and earth—suggests an identity between earth and Purgatory; perhaps, then, when Scipio Africanus tells his grandson that whoever on earth works for commune profit "shall not mysse / To comen swiftly to that place deere / That ful of blysse is and of soules cleere" (75-77), we are intended to hear the echo of Virgil's mention of the purgatorial souls in *Inferno* 1: "and you will see those who are content in the fire, because they have hope of coming, whenever it may be, to the blessed people".[15] Note Chaucer's typically playful shift from "coming, whenever it may be" to "comen swiftly".

Following this opening cosmological setting, Chaucer alludes to *Inferno* 2 as the dreamer begins the story proper of his dream:

> The day gan failen, and the derke night,
> That reveth bestes from her besinesse,
> Berafte me my book for lakke of light,
> And to my bedde I gan me for to dresse,
> Fulfild of thought and besy hevinesse . . . .
>   (*Parliament of Fowls*, 85-89)

Whereas Dante emphasizes that he alone is awake and about to endure battle ("and I alone was preparing myself to endure the war of the road and of its pity"), Chaucer comically evokes the Dantean moment only to have his own narrator fall asleep shortly thereafter.[16] Just as Dante proceeds to invoke the Muses, and proclaim the power of his own creative intellect, so Chaucer goes on, a few lines later, to invoke Venus in the hope that she will "yif me myght to ryme, and endyte" (119).[17]

From this invocation, we proceed to the gate modeled on that of *Inferno* 3. In the *Inferno*, Virgil comfortingly leads Dante through the gate: "and then with his hand placed on mine and with a cheerful expression, whence I took comfort, he took me inside the secret things".[18] Chaucer at once overturns and preserves this salutary guidance. Scipio simply grabs the narrator and shoves him in ("Me hente and shof in at the gates wide"—154), but a few lines later he takes him by the hand à la Virgil:[19]

> With that my hond in his he took anoon,
> Of which I comfort caughte, and went in faste;
> But, lord! so I was glad and wel begoon!
>   (*Parliament of Fowls*, 169-171)

The pagan *locus amoenus* that the dreamer enters is suggestive of the meadow the virtuous pagans occupy in *Inferno* 4. Whereas Dante finds himself in a forest of people as he enters this circle,[20] Chaucer's dreamer walks into an actual forest where he sees a host of allegorical figures; in the *Parliament*, Dante's figurative forest becomes concrete, and his concrete souls become figures. The narrator proceeds to the Temple of Venus, where he hears a wind of sighs reminiscent of the lamentations and infernal wind in *Inferno* 5, Dante's canto of the lustful:[21]

> Within the temple, of syghes hote as fyr
> I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne;
> Which syghes were engendred with desyr,
> That maden every auter for to brenne
> Of newe flaume . . . .

(*Parliament of Fowls*, 246-250)

In the temple, the dreamer sees painted images of several failed lovers, many of which are culled from Dante's catalogue in *Inferno* 5.

Thus, our readerly journey through the *Parliament* can be said to prepare us for an allusive interaction with Canto 6 of *Inferno* when the narrator leaves Venus' temple and comes upon the birds' debate.

IV. The Gluttony of Memory

If there is any merit in the intertextual trajectory I have proposed, it remains to consider what role gluttony and the alimentary play in Chaucer's *ars poetica*. Let me address first what may be at stake for Dante in *Inferno* 6.

Most scholars are uncertain what connection exists for Dante between gluttony and the Florentine politics of the canto. Robert Hollander, for one, suggests that there is no apparent connection, and that Dante simply introduces concerns at various points in the poem because he wants to.[22] It strikes me as possible that Dante is saying something about the worldly nature of the Guelph-Ghibelline strife that Ciacco and the gluttons reflect in their sensual attention to the body. When Dante inquires where some of his Florentine compatriots—ones he apparently admires—have wound up in the afterlife, Ciacco replies that they are all deeper in hell. One of the five is in the circle of the heretics, while two others are in the so-called circle of the sodomites. I'm interested in how Farinata, the heretic, believes the soul dies with the body, and how the two sodomites are in a barren domain that mirrors their failure to reproduce life through offspring. This neglect of fruition may be at the heart of Dante's treatment of gluttony in *Inferno* 6. (As if to emphasize the sterility of a life devoted to the body's most basic desire, Ciacco is, in fact, the only soul encountered in the episode, in a canto that is the second shortest of the entire *Commedia*).

Whether or not Dante was simultaneously saying something about the sterility of Florentine politics, it's clear that he was concerned with the generative nature of memory. The dialogue between Dante the pilgrim and Ciacco is crucial to the *Commedia*'s meditation on memory in a few ways. First, the afterlife has disfigured Ciacco (or we can say that he has disfigured himself through his incontinence); Ciacco bids Dante call him back to mind, but the pilgrim is unable to recognize him.[23] Second, Ciacco makes the first of many pleas in *Inferno* to be remembered (or not be remembered): "But when you are again in the sweet world, I pray that you bring me back to other's minds".[24] Third, also for the first time in the poem, Dante hears a prophecy about his political future. The contrasting of Dante's *mente* with Ciacco's *carne*, and of Dante's ability to return to the upper world and speak as opposed to Ciacco's falling back into the muck after he has pronounced that he will speak no more, highlight the philosophical importance for the poet of carrying a legacy of memory forward into the future rather than remaining figuratively stagnant in the past. The *gola d'inferno* threatens, like Chaucer's *elde* in *Anelida and Arcite*, to consume the present into a past from which there is no return. It is important, though, to keep in mind that Dante does not simply oppose his own trajectory to this alimentary threat; rather, he is insistent upon the necessity of traveling through the throat of hell himself, but to come forth re-made (as the poem rises again in the spiritual and botanical resurrection of *Purgatorio* 1).

If Chaucer creates intertextual links with *Inferno* 6, it is through antithesis. Whereas the gluttons are subjected to an incessant rain of hail, polluted water, and snow, Chaucer's dreamer finds himself in a sweet, green meadow where Nature herself shines like the sun. Dante the pilgrim confronts the savage barking of Cerberus, while the Chaucerian narrator is surrounded by bird song. In contrast with the barren atmosphere of *Inferno* 6, this section of the *Parliament* is devoted to the seasonal ritual in which birds find their mates. And whereas Dante's guide Virgil makes reference to the Great Judgment which will close off history, Chaucer's Nature winds up deferring judgment at the poem's end.

While these elements create an identity between the two poems only through contrast, *Inferno* 6 and the last extended portion

of the *Parliament* do share a focus on the alimentary. The birds gathered around Nature are presented as a great food chain:

> That is to sey, the foules of ravyne
> Were hyest set; and than the foules smale,
> That eten as hem nature wolde enclyne,
> As worm or thing of whiche I telle no tale;
> And water-foul sat loweste in the dale;
> But foul that liveth by seed sat on the grene,
> And that so fele, that wonder was to sene.
> $\qquad$ (*Parliament of Fowls*, 323-329)

Chaucer comes back with some frequency to the murderous violence that the birds of prey in particular enact:

> Ther was the tyraunt with his fethres donne
> And greye, I mene the goshauk, that doth pyne
> To briddes for his outrageous ravyne.
> $\qquad$ (*Parliament of Fowls*, 334-336)

But the destructive appetite of birds farther down the chain is similarly depicted. The swallow is the "mordrer of the flyes smale / That maken hony of floures fresshe of hewe" (353-354).

The social implications of this carnage are perhaps evident enough, with the upper classes feeding off the lower, and even destroying each other through rivalry.[25] There is something a little too disturbing in the isolated formel eagle quietly awaiting her fate amidst all these *foules of ravine*. Given the etymological family link with rapine and ravishment, we may think of how January in the *Merchant's Tale* simultaneously thinks of his new wife as a main course and daydreams of deflowering her. Even the postponement of the marriage choice in the *Parliament of Fowls* is portrayed as an "entremes", a dish served between courses.

The very conventions of discourse in which the poem locates itself are also dismembered. The royal tersel, in communicating the courtly code of romance that makes him the prime candidate, proposes

> And if that I to hir be founde untrewe,
> Disobeysaunt, or wilful negligent,
> Avauntour, or in proces love a newe,
> I pray to you this be my Iugement,
> *That with these foules I be al to-rent,*
> That ilke day that ever she me finde
> To hir untrewe, or in my gilte unkinde.
> $\qquad$ (*Parliament of Fowls*, 428-435; emphasis mine)

Similarly, the Macrobian core of the poem which has attracted so much critical attention—the notion of *commune profit*—comes under comic attack when the cuckoo offers to quickly put the dispute to rest in the interest of the "commune spede" (507). The cuckoo is explicitly referred to as a glutton later when he and the merlin mix it up:

> Tho gan the cukkow putte him forth in prees
> For foul that eteth worm, and seide blyve,
> 'So I,' quod he, 'may have my make in pees,
> I recche not how longe that ye stryve;
> Lat ech of hem be soleyn al hir lyve,
> This is my reed, sin they may not acorde;
> This shorte lesson nedeth noght recorde.'
>
> 'Ye! have the glotoun fild ynogh his paunche,
> Than are we wel!' seyde the merlioun;
> 'Thou mordrer of the heysugge on the braunche
> That broghte thee forth, thou rewthelees glotoun!
> Live thou soleyn, wormes corrupcioun!
> For no fors is of lakke of thy nature;
> Go, lewed be thou, whyl the world may dure!'

(*Parliament of Fowls*, 603-616)

That the bird singled out for the word glutton (twice) should be the one to put forth a solution for the *commune spede* is suggestive in our present context. As we can see, the cuckoo's proposal is a non-answer, the significance of which lies in Chaucer's own resistance to codifying reality. Chaucer pulls apart received notions just as the birds here dismember each other and the animals lower on the food chain. Just as the royal tersel is at risk of being *to-rent*, so is the *Somnium Scipionis* which generated the dream. Scipio the Elder commends the narrator for having done so well "In lokynge of myn olde bok totorn" (110) . . . not simply tattered, but dismantled through interpretation and poetic recreation.

We should not be surprised, then, that the dreamer's state forecasts the alimentary imagery so central to the debate. As in *The Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer depicts his loveless narrator as sick. In the *Parliament*, the elder Scipio links that illness with taste, when he claims that the narrator "hast lost thy tast, I gesse, / As seek man hath of swete and bitternesse" (160-161). In other words, the narrator as failed lover is a failed consumer. When he comes closest to Venus in her temple, she is flanked by Bacchus and Ceres, gods of drink and food. Notably, in the Claudianic catalogue of dreamers and dreams toward the beginning of the poem, the sick person dreams "he drynketh of the tonne" (104). The narrator notes the rivers and wells that he sees (one of which Cupid dips his arrows in), but, figuratively speaking, he does not drink. Of course, Chaucer as poet stands outside all this, drinking from the stream of Helicon, digestively breaking down the pageant of literature preceding him to create new flowers from the seeds of old plants. Embracing the organic nature of this creative process, he surrenders his own poem to the yearly cycle of consumption. Perhaps it is not trivial, then, to remind ourselves that the continued popularity of this poem derives in part from Chaucer's choice to time its action on the feast day of St. Valentine.

Notes

[1] At *Purgatorio* 21.31-32, Virgil speaks of the pilgrim Dante having been led forth from "l'ampia gola d'inferno" ("the vast throat of hell"). Translations from Dante's *Commedia* are my own.

[2] While I am not aware of other scholars approaching the *Parliament* specifically in terms of organic poetics, my remarks here are generally in sync with the line of scholarship, dating back at least to J.A.W. Bennett, which emphasizes the *Parliament*'s resistance to determinate meaning. See J.A.W. Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957). In more recent years, this tradition is perhaps best synthesized in the perspective of David Aers: "Chaucer's mode is utterly subversive of all dogmatizing fixities and finalities, subversive of all attempts to substitute impersonal knowledge and an absolute viewpoint for the complex process involving incarnate and historically specific knowers." See David Aers, "The *Parliament of Fowls*: Authority, the Knower, and the Known", *The Chaucer Review* 16 (1981), 1-17. For a discussion of this subversion specifically with respect to the texts cited within the poem, see Kathleen Hewitt, "'Ther it was first': Dream Poetics in the *Parliament of Fowls*", *The Chaucer Review* 24 (1989), 20-28.

[3] See, for example, Guido da Pisa, *L'Ottimo Commento*, and Benvenuto da Imola. More generally, Medusa is seen as a figure of terror, but the petrifying fear she causes becomes specifically linked with oblivion.

[4] In *Inferno* 10, Farinata explains that the members of hell have access to the past, and limited access to the future (until the Day of Judgment), but only the most obscure sense of the present (10.97-108).

[5] *Inferno* 3.1-12.

[6] O voi ch'avete li 'ntelletti sani,
mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
sotto 'l velame de li versi strani.

[7] 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.

[8] *House of Fame*, 1029.

[9] See particularly Larry D. Benson, "The Occasion of *The Parliament of Fowls*", *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (Kalamazoo: 1982), 123-144. Victoria Rothschild offers a compelling reading of the poem as an epithalamium in "*The Parliament of Fowls*: Chaucer's Mirror Up to Nature?", *Review of English Studies* 35 (1984), 164-184.

[10] More and more, scholars find the *Parliament*'s very dissonances to be the unifying thread yoking the poem's seemingly disparate sections. For a discussion of *contentio* as a unifying principle, see Denis Walker, "*Contentio*: The Structural Paradigm of

The Parliament of Fowls”, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*” 1985, 173-180.

[11] See lines 23, 236, 321, 411 (cited above), and 674. With regard to the inconclusiveness of the bird debate, Larry Sklute writes, “Chaucer never leads his readers to any conclusion about which claim is more just or more important”. See Larry Sklute, “The Inconclusive Form of The *Parliament of Fowls*”, *The Chaucer Review* 16 (1981), 126.

[12] It should be noted, though, that Charles Muscatine, in the explanatory notes to *The Riverside Chaucer*, suggests that this addition may have resulted from an error in Chaucer’s reading of the *Roman de la Rose*. See n. 32, p. 995.

[13] For the inclusion of the dream theory prologue in Claudian’s *De Raptu Proserpinae*, see R.A. Pratt, "Chaucer's Claudian", *Speculum* 22 (1947).

[14] For a recent treatment of this issue that examines Chaucer’s possible awareness of the commentary tradition on Dante’s poem, see Daniel Pinti, "Commentary and Comedic Reception: Dante and the Subject of Reading in The Parliament of Fowls", *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society* 22 (2000), 311-40.

[15] “e vederai color che son contenti
nel foco, perché speran di venire,
quando che sia, a le beati genti.”
                    (*Inferno* 1.118-120)

[16] Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
togliea li animai che sono in terra
da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno
   m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,
che ritrarrà la mente che non erra.

(The day began to depart, and the dark air took the creatures that are on earth from their work; and I alone was preparing myself to endure the war of the road and of its pity, [whose experience] the mind which does not err will retrace.) (*Inferno* 2.1-6)

[17] That Venus “with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest” may be an oblique naming of the Florentine poet, since Chaucer does use the spelling “Daunte” elsewhere (*House of Fame*, 450).

[18] E poi che la sua mano a la mia puose
con lieto volto, ond'io mi confortai,
mi mise dentro a le segrete cose.
                    (*Inferno* 3.19-21)

[19] I’m not sure anyone has noted this double entrance, but it underlines the dual possibilities inscribed on the gate, and already begins to confuse the notion of a choice.

[20] *Inferno* 4.65-66.

[21] See *Inferno* 5.25-33.

[22] See n. on *Inferno* 6.49-51 in *The Inferno*, tr. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander, Anchor Books, New York: 2000, 123-124.

[23] “O tu che se' per questo 'nferno tratto,”
mi disse, “riconoscimi, se sai:
tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto.”

E io a lui: “L'angoscia che tu hai
forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,
sì che non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai.”

(“O you who are drawn through this inferno,” he said to me, “recognize me, if you are able; you were, before I was unmade, made.” And I to him: “The anguish you suffer perhaps takes you out of my memory, so that it doesn’t seem I have ever seen you before.”)
                    (*Inferno* 6.40-45)

[24] “Ma quando tu sarai nel dolce mondo,
priegoti ch'a la mente altrui mi rechi . . . . ”
                    (Inferno 6.88-89)

[25] For a short bibliography of political treatments of the poem, see n. 2 in Jay Ruud, “Realism, Nominalism, and the Inconclusive Ending of the *Parliament of Fowls*”, *In Geardagum* 23 (2002), 1-28.

Constructing Chaucer in the Fifteenth Century: The Inherent Anti-feminism of the Paternal Paradigm

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English and Scottish fifteenth-century poets, most specifically John Lydgate and Robert Henryson, composed poetry that satisfied an audience seeking moral and political stability and also indicated their anti-feminist cultural agenda that perceived women as powerless objects. Their poetry attempted to complete or supplement that of Geoffrey Chaucer and co-opted his authority to provide influence for their moral message. In this paper I explore the fifteenth-century anti-feminist revisions of Chaucer's texts and investigate the ways these poets attempted to use Chaucer's authority to legitimate themselves and their texts. I argue that these fifteenth-century poets both constructed Chaucer as an authoritative father figure who bequeaths poetical inheritance and appropriated his texts to reaffirm and further spread the anti-feminist and hierarchal attitudes of their fifteenth-century audience. I assert that this paradigm of literary history, which appears relatively unquestioned, is masculinist in its exclusion of women from reproduction and from subjectivity as writers of texts.

The fifteenth-century poets relied on Chaucer's authority to further their own ideology, thus appropriating Chaucer for their purposes. This moral agenda appeared to be well-received by the fifteenth-century audience. The popularity of didactic poetry in this period was due in part to hesitation and tension resulting from the political instability of the Hundred Years War and the Wycliffite heresies: "There is much evidence . . . after the opening decade of the fifteenth century, of a growth in fear and intolerance. The determination to take shelter within a more rigidly defined orthodoxy against what were perceived as terrifying dangers to Church and state seems likely to have discouraged any further development of Chaucer's questioning attitudes" (Spearing 148). Retreat into didacticism was the fifteenth-century poet's attempt to reify the idea of political and religious stability. As paradigms that enforce specific social positions, these moral tenets assisted misogynist agendas by relegating women to a specific dominion.

Clear evidence for this conservative shift to orthodoxy can be discovered by examining which of Chaucer's works were especially popular in the fifteenth century. In any period, certain pieces resonate with the public; however, the subject, themes, and assumptions inherent in those texts are indicative of the ideas privileged by that audience and consequently, of the audience itself. Building on the research of Charles A. Owen, Jr. and Daniel S. Silvia that determines the popularity of individual Canterbury tales based on the frequency of their inclusion in editions of *The Canterbury Tales* or in separate anthologies, Paul Strohm concludes: "The tales popular in the fifteenth century tend instead to reaffirm *obeisance* and subordination to the authority of lord and husband (*The Clerk's Tale*) or to Fortune (*The Monk's Tale)* or to God (*The Second Nun's Tale*) or to the domination of one's own reason over unruly impulse (*Melibee, The Parson's Tale*)" (26-27). The popularity that develops from the circulation of these specific texts in the fifteenth century leads to ". . .thematic reaffirmation of divine, social, and inner hierarchies" (Strohm 27). This literary tradition, as one that appeared to be sanctioned by Chaucer, endorsed social and gender strata through forced compliance to authority.

Because of this desire for hierarchal stability, these fifteenth-century poets attempted to shape Chaucer's texts to sanction their projects and endorse their misogynist position. For example, John Lydgate continually advanced an anti-feminist project in his responses to Chaucer's writing, particularly in his *Troy Book*. Though this text attempts to provide historical context, Lydgate's work subtly reaffirms anti-feminist attitudes toward Criseyde. The rhetorical move is dexterous, as Lydgate's narrative voice professes innocence of condemnations of Criseyde, ascribing the disapproval to his source, the *Historia destructionis Troiae* written

by Guido delle Colonne in the late thirteenth century (Benson 228, 233). But this innocence is betrayed by the contents of the narrative itself: "As Gretchen Mieszkowski has fully explained, the joke here is not only that Lydgate's final 'defense'—that women are false by nature—is really the deepest insult but also that Guido's reported attacks against women, which the narrator pretends to disdain, are greatly expanded in the *Troy Book*, even by Lydgate's standards" (Benson 234). C. David Benson suggests that the tone taken by the narrative voice belies Lydgate's view of Criseyde when she acquiesces to Diomede's requests and abandons Troilus:

> When Criseyde finally betrays Troilus, Lydgate's pretended sympathy is more subtle and more nasty, reminiscent of the narrator's attitude toward May in the *Merchant's Tale*. . . . Humor has been left far behind . . .women change more easily than money in Lombard Street. . . .She has been taken back into the inexhaustible well of medieval antifeminism. Lydgate understands much of what Chaucer had done in *Troilus*, but not the remarkable sympathy for his fallen heroine. (234)

Lydgate persists in perpetuating an anti-feminist stance toward Criseyde.

Robert Henryson also responded to and appended *Troilus and Criseyde* with a late fifteenth-century poem, his *Testament of Cresseid*, which relates Criseyde's experiences after the ending of Chaucer's poem. She contracts leprosy, a development understood by numerous readers to be a signal of Henryson's negative perception of Cresseid. However, Benson insists that Henryson's depiction of Cresseid is much more complex and reminiscent of Chaucer's representation: "Some have seen the poem as bitterly critical of Cresseid (this is the way it seems to have been read by most in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance), but many modern interpreters have noted the number of open questions in the poem, including the role of the gods, the justice of Cresseid's guilt and punishment, and the extent of her moral growth before her death" (237). However contemporary scholars interpret the portrayal of Cresseid, it remains important to recognize the fifteenth-century response as "bitterly critical of Cresseid.

This response is certainly warranted in the final stanza of the *Testament of Cresseid*, Henryson's narrator belies his anti-feminist purpose by directly addressing only women and instructing them to learn from Cresseid's negative example:

> Now, worthie wemen, in this ballet schort,
> Maid for your worschip and instructioun,
> Of cheritie, I monische and exhort,
> Ming not your lufe with fals deceptioun:
> Beir in your mynd this schort conclusioun
> Of fair Cresseid, as I have said befoir. (610-615)

He expressly states that the poem was written to guide women's behavior. This didactic advice comes from a male writer in a prescriptive attempt to control women's actions.

As they construct Chaucer to affirm their cultural ideology of moral didacticism, the fifteenth-century poets simultaneously secured their social position by exulting Chaucer's authority and fashioning a gendered performance for him: the paternal figure of a national literature in English. Perhaps the most pernicious example of anti-feminist sentiment demonstrated by the fifteenth-century poets was their masculinist propagation of Chaucer as father. A desire for increased official association with Chaucer led to a construction of him as a poetic and linguistic father and hero. In this scenario, they could imagine themselves the trustees of the valuable literary inheritance of his texts (though without any directions for use stipulated in a will), that provide authority for further composition in their vernacular language. As heirs of Chaucer's texts and language, they also attempted to inherit his personal authority and clout and harness it through association for their misogynist cultural agenda.

This desire to be with, to be associated with, or to supplant Chaucer originated in the fifteenth century. Thomas Usk and Thomas Hoccleve both affirmed a form of relationship with Chaucer: "Each claimed to be a follower of Chaucer, and Hoccleve claimed to be a friend. While claims of special intimacy may have sprung only from a desire for legitimation, each was nevertheless much influenced by the example of Chaucer's poetry" (Strohm 14). As a vivid pictorial demonstration of this yearning to commune

with Chaucer and share in his authority, Stephanie Trigg cites an illustration from the BL MS Royal 18 DII, f. 148 manuscript of John Lydgate's *The Siege of Thebes,* which now adorns the cover of a paperback edition of *The Riverside Chaucer*: "The most seductive aspect of the Riverside cover is its combination of realism and wish-fulfillment. . . . As an emblem of the edition it introduces, it promises nothing less than a fulfillment of our unspoken and increasingly unspeakable desire to see and speak with Chaucer, to recapture an elusive, virtually forbidden moment of authorial presence" (XV). Her comments provide a fascinating juxtaposition of two very different periods that are separated by centuries. The use of an illustration found in a manuscript of a fifteenth-century poem, depicting only male pilgrims engaged in conversation while on horseback, subsequently approved as relevant for a twenty-first century edition of Chaucer's writing implies similarities between ideas of Chaucer in the two periods.

The enthralled reader of Chaucer also may hope not only to "see and speak with Chaucer" but also to emulate his inspiring qualities: ". . . the ideal position for reading Chaucer has often been to become as much like Chaucer as possible. Lydgate is the first to discern this advantage when he puts himself in Chaucer's place on the return journey to London, riding Chaucer's horse, as it were, in order to write his own Canterbury tale" (Trigg XVII). However, this illustration excludes a number of readers: ". . . as an image of an exclusively male company of pilgrims, it implies a male readership" (Trigg XVII). The image on both the Royal manuscript and the Riverside cover suggests and restricts this mimetic desire as masculine performance of gender. The image implies that studying Chaucer is a masculine tradition, a notion perpetuated by ". . . other instances of brotherly friendship in his fictions: Pandarus and Troilus, Palamon and Arcite, Aleyn and John. These also assist the male reader wanting to place himself close to Chaucer, wanting to imagine himself as a member of Chaucer's first audience of friends and fellow poets, sharing the poet's sensibilities and frames of reference" (Trigg XXI). Chaucer's textual fellowship, therefore, is extended only to those who can imagine being Chaucer, who could easily be similar to Chaucer, or who could join the convivial, masculine group surrounding him.

The type of relationship that developed among the fifteenth-century poets themselves and the one they attempted to establish with Chaucer corresponds to Heidi Hartmann's definition of patriarchy: "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (14). These men sought to create solidarity among themselves as literary sons of Chaucer. They also emphasized their connection to Chaucer as a man by labeling him as father, underscoring paternal virility and authority. The material base of their relationship was the text in various forms: Chaucer's writing, their poetic responses to it, and women. These male subjects view their texts as objects, and the women enclosed in the text are also objects defined by the writer/subject's intentions. Texts become feminized because both women and texts are objects. This solidarity among men in order to control women was demonstrated by overt misogyny in the fifteenth- century poets' depictions of women.

The fifteenth-century poets' projects attempted a type of collaboration with Chaucer's texts by supplementing and completing them but actually poach Chaucer's work. However, their actions demonstrate the sentiments of male collaborators that Wayne Koestenbaum describes: "I enter the mind of the writer who keenly feels lack or disenfranchisement, and seeks out a partner to attain power and completion.. . . I let his sought-after collaborator remain a shadowy, aloof figure . . ." (2). The fifteenth-century poet endeavoring to collaborate with Chaucer feels this "lack or disenfranchisement" in the wake of Chaucer's literary prowess and attempts to associate himself with Chaucer's authority by acquiring "power and completion." The fifteenth-century poets' collaborative efforts are compatible with Koestenbaum's paradigm of masculine literary collaboration: "men who collaborate engage in a metaphorical sexual intercourse, and . . . the text they balance between them is alternately the child of their sexual union, and a shared woman" (3). This theory of collaboration reveals the infantilization of women and once again, the establishment of men as subjects/writers and women as objects/texts that must be excluded from the agency of subjectivity. Koestenbaum discovers that collaborations are characterized by certain qualities that demonstrate anxieties over the metaphorical

sexual intercourse and the product of a union: "hysterical discontinuity, muteness, castratory violence, homoerotic craving, misogyny, a wish to usurp female generative power" (4).   Lydgate and Henryson's texts certainly demonstrate misogyny, and claiming literary and familial decent directly from Chaucer, without acknowledgement of a female role in reproduction indicates "a wish to usurp female generative power."

The paternal paradigm of literary inheritance is established explicitly by fifteenth-century poets. In his *Regement of Princes*, Thomas Hoccleve directly refers to Chaucer as a paternal, authoritative figure with the phrase: : "O maistir deere and fadir reverent, / My maistir Chaucer, flour of eloquence, / Mirour of fructuous entendement, / O universel fadir in science!" (1961-64). Trigg's scholarship demonstrates that contemporary literary criticism has not relinquished the objective of this paternal, ideal association with an author as an intimate and essentially masculine relationship that legitimates the reader in some way. Indeed, scholarship continues to praise Chaucer and authorize itself through a familial relationship with him. There appears to be not much questioning of the existing literary paradigms, which are inherently masculinist in their privileging of only fathers and sons, with no consideration of feminine agency, female writers, or even of a feminine role in procreation. In a description of a literary Chaucerian family tree, H. S. Bennett mentions only males, such as Hoccleve and Lydgate, though they fail to live up to Chaucer's genius: "But who can draw the bow of Ulysses? Both these writers could only take over the verse-forms, the diction, and the conventions used by Chaucer, and in their turn hand them on to their successors and pupils. The degradation of verse which was brought about by this progressive in-breeding can be estimated . . ." (125). Through a comparison of Chaucer to Ulysses, Bennett continues to apotheosize Chaucer, though as a god-like or heroic figure rather than a specific literary father. The use of the term "in-breeding" also implies a familial literary relationship. The "in-breeding" occurs amongst a masculinist Chaucerian literary community, with reproduction occurring without, or at least without acknowledgement, of female involvement. Spearing describes a similar descent as a model for literary history:

> There is ample precedent for seeing the authority of the literary precursor over his successors as analogous to the authority of the father over his sons. . . .As Dryden was to put it later, "we [that is, the poets] have our lineal descents and clans as well as other families," so that Milton could be seen as "the poetical son of Spenser," and Spenser in turn as a son "begotten" by Chaucer "two hundred years after his decease." Descent and inheritance from father to son provide a basic explanatory model for literary history, and the model retains its power (148)

However, this description is of a canonical, masculinist literary tradition. "Ample precedent" does not imply validity. Rather, it indicates an extensive tradition that may need questioning in light of more recent theoretical discussions. This representation of literary history neglects women, not only in the mystifying fashion in which these men produce offspring, but also by refusing to acknowledge the numerous female writers who engage in creative acts and produce texts. Women instead are being used as texts and excluded from authoring any texts because of the nature of the fifteenth-century poets' collaboration with Chaucer. As they engage in metaphorical sexual intercourse they produce a female text, a controllable object: ". . . collaborators enclosed the dreaded 'feminine' by imagining their shared text to be a woman, and by drawing on female procreative sexuality to describe their own writerly intercourse" (Koestenbaum 6). A generative paradigm for literary inheritance suggests a strong desire for a familial bond with the precursor or the fellow collaborator, who in this case is Chaucer. However, the desire is symptomatic of a masculinist assumption of women's rights, the casting of women as objects, and anxiety about maintaining control. To avoid the destabilization of their position as subjects of texts, the fifteenth-century poets restricted the agency and potential strength of women.

The persistence of Chaucer's construction as father is ironic, because Spearing suggests that Chaucer's appearance in his text depicts his desire not to be considered paternal:

> He is the first English poet to exist as an 'author,' the first to be known by name as the father of a body of work; and yet throughout his career he seems to be striving towards the culmination achieved in *The Canterbury Tales*, the relinquishment of his own fatherhood, the transformation of his work into a text. That paradox was already, I believe, a source of

embarrassment to Chaucer's immediate successors. (160)

Chaucer's apparent refusal to accept the paternal role constructed troubles for him and undoubtedly offends those who fashioned it. However, perhaps Chaucer refused a traditional position as a father who sires children and instead chose to be a writer or creator of his work. The fifteenth-century poets' desire to be the literary sons of Chaucer and to insist on his begetting of literary sons is also an example of heteronormativity, an attitude which pervades responses to Chaucer. Trigg cites the *Prologue* to *The Tale of Beryn* and William Scott Durrant's 1912 play, *Chaucer Redivivus,* as examples of the culturally homogenizing instinct of the responses to Chaucer and his texts, which obviously span across centuries. The *Beryn* poet refuses to allow the Pardoner's sexuality to remain ambiguous and attempts to normalize him by engaging him in a heterosexual experience with Kit the Tapster, while Durrant's drama ends with a marriage between the Host and the Wife of Bath (Trigg 105). The fifteenth-century poets' responses to Chaucer are consistently characterized by anti-feminist sentiments intended to reify masculinist perceptions of a hierarchical, heteronormative culture. These inclinations obviously persist and require close examination for the future of Chaucer studies.

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Social Consciousness and Religious Authority in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" and "Tale"

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As a widowed, secular woman, the Wife of Bath is the only Canterbury pilgrim who lacks a secure position in the medieval estates, a social schema that classified men according to economic, social, and political function and classified lay women according to their male relatives or marital status.[1] As such, despite the wealth the Wife would have accrued from her deceased husbands, underlying her bawdy behavior and licentious talk is a pressing need for her to remarry in order to regain her social status in medieval society. Chaucer clearly draws attention to this urgency in naming her the AWife@ (even though she is a widow) and in the subject matter of her Prologue and Tale, both of which, in the context of popular anti-feminist sentiments, take up the issues of gender relations in general and marital relations in particular. Thus, because of her singular nature and her particular focus, and because of the fact that her audience is overwhelmingly male, one brings a certain amount of expectation to the Wife: that she will either be a spokesperson for the plight of medieval women or that she will reveal Chaucer's lurking anti-feminist leanings. Certainly, scholars have made arguments on both sides, casting her either as an advocate for women's rights, especially as it relates to female sexuality, or as a tragic victim of misogynistic rhetoric and behavior.[2] However, while the Wife does deftly attack the oppressive underpinnings of anti-feminisism, she nevertheless openly endorses and routinely exhibits many of the characteristics of which her male opponents accuse her, and she therefore ultimately resists such clear-cut categorization. Yet, however imperfect a representative of women's rights the Wife may be, her Prologue and Tale both expose the hypocrisy of male rhetoric and include a feminine voice in the debate, and thereby serve as the conduits through which Chaucer initiates a conversation regarding the role of women and their desires in a decidedly male-dominated society. Further, Chaucer elevates the legitimacy of the Wife's arguments by directly linking her concerns to ongoing philosophical debates over such issues as religious authority and social hierarchy.

The Wife of Bath begins her lengthy Prologue[3] invoking the superiority of experience over authority as a means to understanding the "wo that is in marriage" (3). What follows is a rapid-fire attack on the male authority that has traditionally undermined women by controlling female social and sexual power. In keeping with her immediate interests, the Wife zeros in on arguments, most of which are scripturally based, that focus on the relative merits of celibacy versus marriage. Her primary target in this offensive is St. Jerome (c. 347-c. 420), one of the early Church fathers, who was a strong advocate of "monastic ideals" and wrote extensively on the virtues of chastity (Miller 415). One of his most popular works, *Adversus Jovinianum* (*The Epistle against Jovinian*), became a fixture in the anti-feminist anthologies that circulated widely in the Middle Ages, and centered on the notion that because women were sexually insatiable, they were a threat to male purity and spiritual salvation.[4] In *Adversus Jovinianum*, Jerome attempts to refute the heretical claims of a rebellious monk named Jovinian who argued that, "a virgin is no better . . . than a wife in the sight of God" (qtd. in Miller 415). To make many of his arguments against Jovinian, Jerome draws on the writings of another Church father, St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (specifically, I Corinthians 7:1-40) , in which the apostle explains Christian marital doctrine to the newly-baptized Christians, while simultaneously endorsing celibacy as the superior state.

Rather than refute her opponents directly, however, the Wife of Bath deftly exposes the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in their arguments and thereby questions the underlying authority of their claims. For example, the Wife reveals to her listeners that she has been married five times and then states:

> But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,
> That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis

> To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee,
> That by the same ensample taughte he me
> That I ne sholde wedded be but ones. (9-13)

Here the Wife is drawing on one of St. Jerome's more slippery arguments about marriage in which he claims, "By going once to a marriage, [Christ] taught that men should marry only once" (Miller 431). Yet the Wife clearly questions the validity of this interpretation, as she goes on to look at another biblical tale, that of the woman of Samaria to whom Jesus speaks at the well. Jesus says to the woman, who like the Wife has had five husbands, that "he whom thou now hast is not thy husband" (John 4:18). But, as the Wife points out, Jesus says nothing of the other four, nor does he specify an appropriate number of husbands to have had, signaling to the Wife that St. Jerome's argument has no firm scriptural foundation.

In another instance further down, the Wife questions St. Paul's authority to claim the superiority of celibacy over marriage when he himself admits that it is not an official commandment from the Lord but only his own enlightened opinion:

> Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy
> of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so
> to be. (I Corinthians 7:25-26)

The Wife's commentary on this scriptural passage is that

> Th'apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,
> He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.
> Men may conseille a womman to been oon,
> But counseillying is no comandement. (64-67)

As she did with St. Jerome when she cited a specific instance of Christ's teaching to illuminate the gaps in St. Jerome's exegetical practice, the Wife seeks a higher spiritual authority for St. Paul's claims as well. Here she implies that official commandments are what matter, and they come only from a much higher authority⸺God.

While the Wife exposes the flaws in St. Jerome's and St. Paul's scriptural interpretations, at the same time, she employs many of the same rhetorical techniques they use that ultimately skew textual interpretation in order to serve personal goals. In the example cited above, just as St. Paul inserts his own interests regarding celibacy into a discussion of marriage, the Wife alters St. Paul's focus from male to female virginity in order to place *her* own interests at the center. In a similar yet more dramatic instance, the Wife both alters the meaning of and deliberately truncates a portion of St. Paul's arguments regarding marital obligation as it pertains to sexual relations. Excerpts from St. Paul's letter read as follows:

> Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not
> power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.
> (I. Cor. 7:3-4)

> But if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble
> in the flesh: but I spare you. (I. Cor. 7:28)

In the hands of the Wife, however, St. Paul's sentiment of mutual marital duty that, nevertheless, engenders certain spiritual consequences⸺characterized as ⸢trouble in the flesh⸣⸺becomes a scene of chiefly masculine sexual obligation, or debt, that is paid, to the Wife's great satisfaction, through her husband's physical suffering:

> An housbonde I wol have⸺I wol nat lette⸺
> Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
> And have his tribulacion withal
> Upon his flessh, whil that I am his wyf.
> I have the power durynge al my lyf
> Upon his propre body, and noght he.
> Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,

And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel. (154-161)

In response to the way her own interests regarding marriage have been undermined by both St. Jerome and St. Paul, the Wife undermines male self-interest by completely eliminating mention of the wife's duty to her husband. In addition, as Lee Patterson argues, "She unlocks the letter to discover an irreducible carnality" (308). That is, she reveals the undeniable physicality of marital relationships, and turns into a form of torture the physical pleasure that men traditionally receive from such activity (that which celibates such as St. Jerome and St. Paul make a career of denying in the name of spiritual superiority). In so doing she mocks her adversaries' asceticism and fixes the discussion in physical terms that ultimately underscore her own sexual and social interests.

Yet even though the Wife triumphantly uses the skewed logic and self-interested rhetoric of religious authorities against themСthat is, she appears to beat them at their own gameСshe must resort to the very tactics which she openly critiques in order to expose them. And even more disconcerting, the Wife often concedes many of her opponents' points, such as when she admits that Аmaydenhede preferre bigamye@ (96). However, considering the social and intellectual environment in which the Wife finds herself, it seems unlikely that she would have had the tools to attempt a radical revision of either the arguments themselves or the nature of their expression. In general, medieval lay women such as the Wife were not educated, and would not have been able to read Latin or French, the languages of written discourse during this period. Furthermore, as Jill Mann points out, the rhetorical technique of "dissuasio," or letters, such as St. Jerome's to Jovinian, that were written in order to dissuade, was "a purely male affair . . . addressed to a man by another man (or men)" (51). In choosing a dissuasio to deconstruct, and by co-opting its rhetorical style for her own arguments, the Wife brings attention to their masculine bias, but she also reveals her own limitations. According to Patterson, "Try as she (and Chaucer) might, she remains confined within the prison house of masculine language; she brilliantly rearranges and deforms her authority to enable them to disclose new means of experience, but she remains dependent on them for her voice" (313). Yet in some respects, the Wife's inability to escape from this "prison house" offers a more realistic portrayal of the ubiquitous nature of the opponent that she faces than a miraculous and infinitely logical overpowering of male authority ever would.

The Wife's conflicts with male clerical authority, however, extend beyond abstract battles with texts and into her personal life. In the Wife's Prologue, we learn that her fifth husband, Jankyn, for "som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford" (527). And while she tells us that, of all her husbands, she "loved hym best" (513) we also learn that he has been physically abusive to her, as "he hadde [her] bete on every bon" (511) and, of course, he eventually hits her so hard that she becomes deaf in one ear. However, the Wife seems to take less issue with his physical abuse than with the emotional abuse she endures as he nightly recites anti-feminist propaganda to her from his book of "Wikked Wyves," the contents of which may have served, in part, as a primer during his tenure as a clerk. According to Ralph Hanna, books such as Jankyn's were used in universities to teach young clerks Latin grammar while at the same time instilling in them a "distaste for relations with females" (34). Thus the burning of Jankyn's book at the end of the Prologue takes on an additional symbolic attribute: not only does the Wife convince Jankyn to set aside his anti-feminist commonplaces in order to relate to her as an individual rather than as a type, but she also manages to send a more pointed message to her audience regarding specifically clerical attitudes towards women.

The beginning of the Wife's Tale continues this thread of anti-clerical sentiment in the Wife's attack on the Friar, who had rudely laughed at and mocked her at the end of her Prologue, (simultaneously revealing his own anxiety at its subtext). In the Tale, the Wife implies that, rather than protect the interests of women, friars prey on them, turning contemporary antifraternal sentiments, in which friars are often depicted as greedy lechers, against him, much as stereotypes of women had been used against her. Though, like her attack on Jankyn's book, her attack on the Friar also has roots in the literary and educational tradition that spawned much of the anti-feminist sentiment. Hanna points out that friars were in fact the largest disseminators of such texts and that "a good number of the surviving manuscripts like Jankyn's Book can be associated with the establishment of friars" (34). In part, the insertion of

friars into the Tale serves as a thematic link between the Prologue and Tale that would otherwise not exist, underscoring the origin of anti-feminist sentiment and one of the primary targets of her complaint.

However, by having the Wife of Bath both attack and expose the way male authority figures forward personal, anti-feminist agendas under the guise of spiritual or educational instruction, Chaucer may not have only been interested in raising an awareness of women's issues. Some scholars have argued that, through the Wife of Bath, Chaucer reveals sympathy with Lollardy, the religious movement initiated by John Wyclif in the latter half of the 14th century that openly denounced corruption among church officials (such as large ecclesiastical endowments), questioned the doctrine of transubstantiation as a means to salvation, and defended the rights of all people to have direct access to the word of God through scripture.[5] Alcuin Blamires makes the case that several aspects of the Wife's rebuttal to authority emphasize themes central to Lollard teaching. He points to her social status as a trades-person and to the fact that she lives near Bath as indicators of her potential association with Lollardy, which gained early support among artisans in regions such as Bath (225). He also links her multiple usage of the intensifier "expres" as it relates to "her insistence . . . on appealing directly to the Bible" with a uniquely Lollard vocabulary (226). But perhaps Blamires's most convincing argument surrounds the fact that Lollards challenged the orthodox opinion that only clerical figures were allowed to preach, insisting instead that any lay Christian personCincluding lay womenChad the right to proclaim the word of God (230). The early part of the Wife's Prologue, in which she invokes and interprets scripture, has often been characterized as a sermon, or mock sermon. And Blamires suggests that both when the Pardoner interrupts the Wife in line 163, ironically calling her a "noble prechor," and when the Friar, in his own Prologue condescendingly refers to her as a "dabbler in 'scole-matere,'" reveal the brewing tensions among clerical figures that allowing lay Christians, and in particular lay women, to preach were stirring up (230). For her part, the Wife is intent on raising sensitive issues, and in many respects, she seems to invite the critical commentary she engenders. But at the same time, it is the Pardoner's consecutive interruptions of the Wife that ultimately divert her from her exegetical practice and direct her toward what the Pardoner refers to as her own "praktike" (187). That is, Chaucer seems aware of the limits to which he should reveal Lollard sympathies (considering the risks involved in associating himself openly with their heretical views) and of the limits of a primarily male audience listening to a female expound on issues generally reserved for male consideration. As such, the rest of the Wife's Prologue, while it still draws on St. Jerome and other anti-feminist writings for its content, concerns itself with the specific details of her five marriages, keeping the conversation firmly grounded in the Wife's fictional reality.

The Wife of Bath does not simply unravel the incongruous and biased arguments of male clerical authority and artfully ridicule their hypocrisy, however, for in so doing she also puts a definitively female voice at the forefront of the debate that she orchestrates. To some extent, this works against her, as her verbal style and character traits often reinforce many of the stereotypes that anti-feminist literature propagates. In his survey of medieval misogyinistic literature, Howard Bloch notes that, on the whole, such texts portray women as Acontentious, prideful, demanding, complaining, and foolish; they are uncontrollable, unstable, and insatiable@ (3). Certainly, the Wife of Bath is all of those things, and what's more, she deliberately exploits these characteristics in herself and attempts to use them to her own advantage. She openly admits that she gained control of her first three husbands by humiliating them, taunting them with epithets such as "sire olde kaynard" (235) and "olde dotard shrewe" (291), and by deceiving them, as the following passage illustrates:

> I swoor that al my walkynge out by nyghte
> Was for t'espye wenches that he dighte;
> Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe.
> For al swich wit is yeven us in oure byrthe;
> Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive
> To wommen kyndely, whil that they may lyve. (397-402)

Later, when she is prematurely wooing Jankyn, she fabricates a vivid dream involving him, which serves as a veiled threat not to

dishonor her. She claims that the idea to deceive him in this way came from her Adames loore,@ playing into men's fears that the conspiracy to deceive men extends beyond the individual woman but to her mother and to all previous generations of women and mothers (583). In the Tale, too, the Wife seems to flaunt female stereotypes rather than to minimize them. When the Knight goes on his quest to discover what it is that "wommen moost desiren" (his punishment for having raped a maiden), the responses he receives from the women he meets (925-930) are almost identical to those that the Wife repeats to her husband as part of his anti-feminist rhetoric (257-261). But in much the same way that the Wife herself co-opts the rhetorical techniques of her male adversaries both to reveal their weaknesses and to illustrate her level of entrapment in male discourse, she skillfully uses the anti-feminist stereotypes to cow her husbands, while simultaneously showing her audience what kind of a woman such stereotyping begets. And in the case of the Knight, the onslaught of stereotypes that he is confronted with only make his situation worse, confusing rather than clarifying his search. In the end, the Wife entraps her male victims (along with herself) in a net of their own making.

Despite the Wife' s skill at verbally abusing her immediate male audience, she realizes that her options are limited when it comes to broader dissemination for her opinions. In medieval society, men (and particularly educated men), ultimately controlled the conversations about such topics as women's rights, marriage, and sex because they had the power to read and to write and to exchange ideas in a literary forum. She alludes to this when she inquires in her Prologue:

> Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?
> By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
> As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
> They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse
> Than al the mark of Adam may redresse. (696)

She is referring to a fable in which a lion and a man are arguing over which of them is better and the man points to a picture of a man killing a lion for evidence of man's superiority; however, the lion replies that the picture would look very different if lions could paint.[6] In this case, it is the man that controls the means to produce symbolic representation, and thus he controls the way that subject matter is perceived by the general public as well. As Jill Mann points out, "[w]omen, for the Wife of Bath, are in the same position as the lion: they are powerless to correct the distorted image of themselves produced by clerical misogynists and given all the weight of bookish authority" (72). However, despite her complaints, the Wife is in a unique position. She has the attention of some 29 men and, despite several interruptions, she has been given the opportunity to tell a story of her own. And in many ways, the Wife *does* tell a tale that gives women a prominent voice.[7]

In terms of literary style for her Prologue and Tale, the Wife selects genres that reinforce her female agenda. While we have already discussed the initial part of the Wife's Prologue at length, which draws extensively from scripture, the rest of her Prologue reads more like an autobiographical account.[8] As such, the Wife uses the opportunity to share details of her personal life she would not ordinarily have such an audience for, and even though she claims to be telling about her various husbands, we end up learning a lot about her as well. Perhaps more effective in light of her interests, though, is the genre of tale the Wife chooses to tell. Carolyn Dinshaw argues that Romance is suited to the Wife of Bath because it is an innately feminine form, employing such features as Adigression, dilation, and delay of closure [which are] in marked contrast to masculine totalizing@ (126). However, such claims, while popular among some feminist critics, are difficult to qualify as specifically feminine. In the context of the *Canterbury Tales*, one could argue that many of the *Tales* share the above characteristics, nearly all of which are told by men, and more often than not, are primarily about men. More likely is the fact that a romance, which usually involves imaginary events set in a faraway place and time, gives the Wife the freedom to indulge in the fantasy of female power seen both in the role of "[t]he queene hirself sitynge as a justise," and in the magic which the loathly lady wields over the knight (1028). In addition, using the quest motif in order to explore the question of what women most desire elevates the importance of this knowledge to a matter of life and death. And, perhaps even

more importantly, the nature of the quest ensures that the knight will have to seek out and *listen to* as many women as possible.

Throughout her Prologue and Tale, the Wife of Bath also objectifies men in much the same way that men traditionally objectify women. The Wife offers no names for her first three husbands, grouping them together as one, non-distinct entity. We learn only that these three Awere goode men, and riche, and olde@ (197). Likewise, the Knight in the Tale is not named and his hollow characterization suggests that he stands in as "every knight" or Aevery man." However, the one man whose name the Wife does mention frequently, her fifth husband Jankyn, the Wife tends to portray in terms of his sexual appeal. The first time she mentions him (which is during her commentary on her first three husbands), it is in the context of illicit sexual activity of which her husband has accused her, and she, suspiciously, lingers on Jankyn's physical details, describing "his crispe heer, shynynge as gold so fyn" (304). During her fourth husband's funeral she spies Jankyn and again zeroes in on physical characteristics, observing that Ahe hadde a paire / Of legges and of feet so clene and faire@ (597-98). She also makes it clear that she marries him for love, and not for money, though it is a carnal kind of love as her emphasis is that he was in their bed Aso fressh and gay@ (508). This theme of an older woman being overtly sexual toward a younger man (the Wife was 40 and Jankyn was 20 when they married) is repeated in the Tale, where the loathly lady forces herself sexually onto the Knight. Overall, the Wife's portrait of Jankyn and the Knight reverses the stereotype of the old, rich man preying on the young, attractive woman, though it is likely that her audience would have been deeply disturbed by such a reversal. Patterson points out that "of all the offenders, domineering wives and widows who remarried a much younger man were by far the most common target of community disapproval" (293). Thus the Wife would have been well aware that she was stirring up controversial gender-related issues surrounding who ultimately has the right to social and sexual power.

And the Wife pushes her agenda into the realm of textual power as well in the way that she limits and controls male speech. In her Prologue, aside from the Pardoner's interruptions, Jankyn's is the only male voice to surface, and aside from the texts that he reads to her verbatim from the book, he has only seven speaking lines, and in those he is begging for her forgiveness. The Knight is allowed more air time in the Tale; however, what comes out of his mouth is the kind of self-interested, sucking-up one might expect of a rapist trying to avoid paying for his crime. He acts the gentleman to those who might help him, addressing the old hag as "My levee mooder" (1005) and the Queen as "My lige lady" (1037), and acts the bastard when he believes he is off the hook, using the pejorative form of address and saying the following to his wife: "Thou art so loothly, and so oold also / And therto comen of so lough a kynde" (1101). However, the loathly lady ultimately uses her power to control the tenor of his speech with her own lengthy and eloquent speech on "gentillesse," lecturing him on the origin of virtue, which she identifies not as something one acquires from noble birth, (as the Knight's comments imply), but from an even higher originCGodCmaking it available to all who nurture it. At least on the surface, the Knight seems to have been transformed by her words, ultimately putting the power to decide his fate into her handsCgiving her mastery over him, the thing she claimed that all women desire most. At the same time, it seems appropriate that magic plays a large part in this transformation, considering the miraculous turnaround it would take for an otherwise unrepentant rapist to submit his power to an old hag. But regardless of the speech's effect on the Knight, its presence in the Tale is remarkable for both its superior quality and its egalitarian sentiment. After having endured all of the pseudo-philosophical and pseudo-religious arguments fed to us by the Wife and her male adversaries, the loathly lady's argument seems particularly convincing in its appeal to kindness and humility. In addition, its subject matter, which ostensibly questions the legitimacy of noble lineage as a means to determine inner virtue, has real resonance with the gender-related issues the Wife has been raising all along. Without overtly stating it as such, the old hag implies that, just as knights may be misconstrued as superior because of a false hierarchical system determined by worldly interests, so too might men be misconstrued as superior to females. Helen Cooper argues that because the sources for the speech, which include Dante and Boethius, place it outside of the Wife's limited literary references,

this speech "reflects Chaucer's convictions rather than the Wife's psychology; and we can, for once, be fairly sure of Chaucer's own views since he returns to the theme so often and so consistently" (162). To have deliberately included a female-led discussion of such issues in the midst of the Wife's Prologue and Tale, one which centers chiefly on gender relations, it seems likely that Chaucer would have wanted his audience to reflect on the direct correlation these two subjects would have.

As an aging, single medieval woman, the Wife is not in an enviable position. And she is well aware of this fact, as we see in the way her Prologue devolves into a melancholy meandering through her education in the school of hard knocks. And perhaps her manic monologue is due to this lost youth as much as to the entrenched stereotypes against which she battles. But regardless of whether she herself is successful in transforming the consciousness of her immediate audience (or indeed in securing for herself a future husband), we can certainly say that Chaucer brings attention to her plight, and, at the very least, initiates a debate on the subject of prevailing anti-feminist attitudes and their effect on social conditions for women in medieval society. Giving voice to the Wife's concerns, while at the same time raising broader, related issues, adds to the likelihood that, despite the Wife's tragically comic persona, Chaucer wished his audience to take her seriously.

Notes

[1] See Patterson 282.

[2] See Dinshaw for a pro-feminist reading and Hansen for an anti-feminist reading.

[3] At 856 lines, the Wife of Bath''s Prologue is the longest by far in the *Canterbury Tales*; the next longest Prologue is the Pardoner's at 462 lines. The Wife of Bath's Tale, by contrast, is only 408 lines.

[4] An example of such an anthology is Jankyn's "book of wikked wyves," which the Wife catalogues towards the end of her Prologue in lines 669-681.

[5] See McKisack 510-517.

[6] See Mann (71-72).

[7] The Wife's Prologue might also be considered a tale: she refers to it as such three times.

[8] Some scholars have characterized the latter portion of the Prologue as a "confessio," though Cooper convincingly argues that "its tone and purpose take it far away from any recognizable theological form of confession: it does not conclude with any submission to the will of God, or even of her husband, and she has not the slightest intention of changing her way of life" (140).

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A Victim of Flux: Self-Defeating
Death in Shakespeare's Sonnet 64

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Sonnet 64

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age,
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay—
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
That Time will come and take my love away.
  This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
  But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

S hakespeare's Sonnets 63, 64, and 65 are generally acknowledged as forming a sequence which argues for the power of poetry to defeat time by preserving within its lines the beauty of the deceased loved one. Sonnet 63 offers a goal of immortality; 64, the obstacle of death; and 65, the solution in poetry (Grimshaw 129). The optimism of the argument that death may be vanquished is clear in the closing couplets of both Sonnets 63 and 65:

His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green. (Sonnet 63)

O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright. (Sonnet 65)

Sonnet 64, however, poses a problem. It "surprises," as Joseph Pequigney notes (211); Paul Innes similarly comments that it fails to sustain the sequence's "rhetoric of immortality" (128). The focus of such criticism is the closing couplet:

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Here is no reference to the salving power of poetry, and the lines seem to indicate resignation to death, to its irreversibility and annihilation. A close reading of the sonnet, though, reveals that Shakespeare has neither denied the power of poetry to preserve the power of love nor has he succumbed to pessimism. Although the main focus of Sonnet 64, like its companion pieces, is the mutability of all life, the ambiguous couplet that brings this sonnet to its conclusion suggests that death, in fact, may be self-defeating.

The conscious artistry with which Shakespeare fashioned the first twelve lines of the sonnet produces an image of Time's omnipotence from which no escape seems possible. In the first quatrain Time's action is past action, having "defaced" former ages and "down rased" lofty towers. In the second quatrain that power is a present one. Time is currently at work allowing the sea to gain advantage and then allowing the shore to win back its loss. The third quatrain anticipates Time's power in the future when "Time will come and take my love away" (l. 12). Helen Vendler contends that what appears most disturbing to Shakespeare is that change here is no more than Time's "purposeless playing at ruin"; change is "meaningless" and without "purpose or end" (300-

301). As Richard Levin points out, the first twelve lines also logically develop the inescapability of Time's assault: "… the action of Time upon these objects becomes increasingly destructive: In the first quatrain it damages them, in the second it transforms them into something else, and in the last it annihilates them, for only here, where the object is living, can Time actually produce 'death' …." (Item 39). The pathos of line 12 is even more acute since Time's onslaught finally touches the personal life of the speaker, destroying his love. Although Time's power over the magnificent creations of humankind and over nature itself is impressive, it hardly seems congruous that Time should be concerned with the simple and private, but highly vulnerable, love of an individual. The elevated rhetoric of the quatrains ends in a whimper: "That Time will come and take my love away." Levin legitimately notes that here is a "special poignancy" that "no amount of rhetorical elaboration could impart" (Item 39). The images of cosmic decay suddenly are belittled by the gravity of personal loss.

At this point, one would expect Shakespeare to come to grips with Time's threat to mortal beauty and to challenge Time's superiority through the power of poetry. Such a reversal of thought, as typifies a Shakespearean couplet, would assert the poet's control over both the poetic form and his thoughts. Anne Ferry contends, however, that such a reversal does not occur, that Shakespeare's argument breaks down, and that his rhetoric fails, "overpowered by fact and also by feeling" (28).

In fact, though, Sonnet 64 presents no clear victor in the struggle between ruinous time and love's countenance. Images of perpetual give-and-take abound in the quatrains and build "until state (status) mingles with decay (process) in an all-encompassing flux" (Caldwell 176). Shakespeare's understanding that both conditions—stasis and flow—can co-exist belies a purely pessimistic reading of this sonnet. Stephen Booth points out that Shakespeare's description of the towers as "down-rased" (l. 3) carries with it an auditory sense of paradox (45). The idea that both tearing down and building up are embodied in one adjective is an early indication that Shakespeare is not ready to declare victory for either side. Line 4 makes this point even more strongly. Here flux occurs where mortal and immortal exist side by side, exchanging positions of predominance: "And brass eternal slave to mortal rage […]." The immediate sense is that, contrary to the expected arrangement, the indestructible metal is at the mercy and command of human and/or deadly fury. But mortality is not the clear winner. The line echoes the classical phrase of "nothing more lasting than bronze," resulting in an unsolvable paradox. As Murray Krieger argues, Shakespeare's choice of the word "mortal" is perfect here. Juxtaposed with "eternal," it "inverts the proper relation of master and slave," implies that "wielders of the rage that destroys the 'eternal' are themselves to be destroyed," and makes possible the contrast between "mortal" agency and the seemingly immortal powers of nature in the second quatrain (145).   The only surety of line 4 is the interchange of power within Time, the constancy of flux.

The second quatrain extends this idea to "matter's endless rotations," echoing the classical doctrine of universal revolution (Lee 57-58). As an islander, Shakespeare was undoubtedly acquainted with the advance of waters against the shore and the periodic reversal of this process. "Increasing store with loss and loss with store" (l. 8) is not merely a puzzling paradox but is yet another affirmation of the "mutual devouring" (Van Doren 119) that characterizes a world in a constant state of change. The "interchange of state" (l. 9) with which the third quatrain is introduced extends to the human realm, as well. The ruin that encroaches on the speaker's happiness is his rumination about his love's death (Kreiger 169), and, at least temporarily, Time has the upper hand.

Images of fluctuating power in a military sense also abound in the sonnet, indicating once again the temporary dominance of one force over another. The splendor of earlier ages lies buried and their high towers destroyed by a formidable enemy—Time. Jon Russ even suggests that the brass of line 4 refers to cannons which "do the bidding of man, of 'mortal rage,' and are the agents of Time (through Time's greater agent, man) frequently responsible for 'lofty towers … down rased'" (Item 38). Although Russ's reading may stretch the pattern of imagery, the succeeding line draws upon a conspicuously military phrase, "to gain advantage," which is reinforced by reference to the shore as a "kingdom." Nevertheless, the advantage is short-lived, as the closing lines of the

quatrain show:

> When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
> Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
> And the firm soil win of the watery main,
> Increasing store with loss and loss with store . . . . (ll. 5-8)

The strongly accented syllables of "firm soil win" set up the land as a bulwark against the attack of time" (Van Doren 119), and the sea's victory is not long-lived. It soon suffers defeat at the hands of the shore. The impermanence of military victory illustrates Shakespeare's concept of world flux where vanquished and victors are one. Thus, the "interchange of state" (l. 9) and the "state confounded to decay (l. 10) with which Shakespeare introduces the third quatrain curiously echo the "kingdom" of the second quatrain and the "buried age" of the first. The condition of the world (state) is not all that changes; the sovereignty of the world's forces vacillates as well.

The most effective imagery of fluctuating power, however, is captured in the money imagery of the sonnet. The susceptibility of wealth to the ravages of time and to mortal squandering is clear from the opening line. Time's hand acts to deface the coinage, stamping one representation of power over another, much as Roman coins were re-stamped with the image of successive emperors. Wealth provides no insurance against transfer of power. "The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age" (l. 2) calls forth the image of coins worn smooth through use and re-stamped by younger rulers. Yet the "brass" (a common general term for coinage) which served the owner as a slave, buying both worldly goods and position, eventually gains dominion over its master by surviving him. The ocean accumulates interest (gains advantage) on its loan to the shore and profits in its loss. Neither lender nor borrower has forever the upper hand. "Increasing store with loss and loss with store" (l. 8) carries the monetary imagery to its climax. Increase, as the process of enriching, brings only temporary accumulation of money (store) that will then give way again to loss. Such "interchange of state" indicates a reciprocal exchange of commodities, a giving and receiving which is inevitably the way of the world.

These recurrent images of flux, shifts in power, and interchange of wealth point to a closing couplet that accepts death as an integral part of life where loss and gain are inextricably bound. The key to understanding this paradox when extended into the realm of death is to identify properly the antecedent of "which" in line 13:

> This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
> But weep to have that which it fears to lose. (ll. 13-14)

In what James Grimshaw calls an "almost alarming agreement" (128) of scholars, the antecedent of "which "is most often considered to be "This thought," but such a reading would presume that the speaker wallows in grief and fear. The poet's acceptance of the impermanence of might and the temporality of power, which the preceding quatrains have developed, denies such a reading, however. Nor is such a reading in keeping with the sequential nature of Sonnets 63, 64, and 65. If "thought" serves as the antecedent for "which," a problem arises in justifying "thought" as weeping and fearing. This problem can be side-stepped by assuming, as does James Caldwell, that "the lover and his antagonist death are here strangely fused" (177) or by assuming as does Booth that the thinker, rather than the thought, weeps and fears (246). Neither explanation is satisfactory since each necessitates belief in the lover's regret for the love he feels.

A re-interpretation of the ambiguous couplet suggests that Shakespeare's intention may have been far different. Grammatically, "which" has as its antecedent the word "death," and it is personified death that weeps and fears. In its possession of the deceased, death confronts the same paradox of dominance that pervades all of life. Caldwell cites the couplet as the prime example of paradox in the sonnet: "Indeed the literal words have death weeping and fearing. As the lover weeps to lose, death weeps to have; the lover fears death, death fears life, or possibly fears to have what he must lose in the having" (177). Death, like

military conquerors, the wealthy, and even the sea, is constantly threatened by the loss of what is gained. Indeed, death can possess the loved one physically but cannot be assured of eternal possession of the soul. This Shakespeare has anticipated in Sonnet 63 and confirms in Sonnet 65. Death "cannot choose / But weep" (ll. 13-14) because the act of destruction is Death's final display of power, leaving Death at the mercy of a greater power—the pen of the poet. In the act of taking life, Death "exercise[s] completely the extent of its powers and, consequently, has lost its power over those objects it has gained" (Grimshaw 128). The closing couplet, therefore, neither cries out against nor denies mutability. It merely carries the sonnet to "its paradoxical limit—the mutability of death" (Grimshaw 129).

Thus, Sonnet 64 is not an exception to the pattern of reversal within the closing couplet. It is not a pessimistic and inconsolable resignation to ruin brought on by Time. The images of continual flux indicate throughout the sonnet Shakespeare's understanding and acceptance of the fragility of power in any form—material, natural, or human. Contrary to Caldwell's conclusion that in this sonnet "Hate lives, love dies. Flux is hateful" (176), flux is not hateful. It is life. The loss of one's love is inevitable but not final, for even death lies not beyond the reach of mutability.

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The Evolution of Shakespeare's Falstaff

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Had Juliet been referring to Sir John Falstaff when she asked AWhat's in a name?@ her question might have received three different answers. First, there is the Falstaff who, like Don Quixote or Don Juan, has taken on an existence of his own, an existence that transcends his role within the plays where he is found. The adjective AFalstaffian@ typically points to this usage, which tends to accentuate the exuberant and witty aspects of the character found in the texts, and to downplay his negatives. Next there is the evolving image of Falstaff that develops within *Henry IV*, Part 1, *Henry IV*, Part 2, and *Henry V*. Finally, there is the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. My goal today is to contribute to the discussion of how the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* correlates with the Falstaff of the *Henriad*. My reading reflects current assumptions that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was composed after *Henry IV*, Part 1 and before *Henry VI*, Part 2 (probably 1598, see Wells and Taylor 120 and Freedman 207-09), and what I will argue is that the frequently maligned Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not as distant from Shakespeare's initial conception of Falstaff as he is often said to be. David Bevington has summarized the perception of difference thusly: AFalstaff, the once resourceful and self-aware companion of Prince Hal, becomes the buffoonish wooer of two virtuously married women who thoroughly best him and subject him to a series of amusingly humiliating punishments@ (257). Bevington's response to those who are Adismayed by the falling off@ is that while our enjoyment of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* depends on our awareness of the portrayal of Falstaff and his crew from the histories, they Ashould not be judged against their counterparts in the history plays@ (257). From this perspective Shakespeare's treatment of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is similar to a science fiction writer setting a novel in an alternate universe. Certainly speculative fiction of various types does frequently use this concept, exploring ideas such as Awhat would have happened if the South had won the Civil War@ or Awhat would have happened if China rather than England had developed and maintained a world empire,@ and so forth. Applying this strategy to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, we would find that the continuing characters are in some sense the same characters, but that their past is different. Things that happened in one world (or set of plays) simply did not happen is this one. However, if this model works in the sense that it allows a modern reader or viewer to enjoy the play, it can not have been a model that Shakespeare consciously employed. One can find no English Renaissance analogs of such literature. It is more likely that Shakespeare's new play with Falstaff would have drawn upon his earlier conception. That is, the Falstaff that Shakespeare placed in Windsor would have reflected potentialities that he saw in the character he had created for *Henry IV*, Part 1. Thus, while I would agree with Bevington that the difference in genres requires a difference in the characterization, I would argue that the Falstaffs of Henry IV, Part 1 and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* evolve from a consistent artistic vision.

Let us begin by looking at the first and second of our three Falstaffs: the Falstaff who has transcended his literary roots and the Falstaff of the *Henriad*. When teaching *Henry IV*, Part 2, I frequently ask the class to debate whether we end up liking Falstaff more than we dislike him by the end of the play. Recently I have fueled the discussion with a pair of quotations giving strongly divergent reactions to Falstaff. The first is from Harold Bloom's best-selling *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*:

> Falstaff, to most scholars, is the emblem of self-indulgence, but to most playgoers and readers Sir John is the representative of imaginative freedom, of a liberty set against time, death, and the state, which is a condition that we crave for ourselves. Add a fourth freedom to timelessness, the blessing of more life, and the evasion of the state, and call it freedom from censoriousness, from the superego, from guilt. (Bloom 288)

The second quotation is from David Margolies' *Monsters of the Deep: Social Dissolution in Shakespeare's Tragedies*:

> Falstaff is the most obvious purveyor of degenerated form, the knight who fills the inherited forms of chivalry with a

new individualistic content, and who reasons that honour is no more than a word because he can find no material reality for it (1 *Henry* IV, V.i.129-41). But Falstaff is presented clearly and unquestionably as disreputable, which dissociates him from any admiration on Shakespeare's part; nevertheless his attitudes infect the hero and it is from Falstaff that Hal has learned how to interpret the world. (Margolies 49)

In the classroom, these two quotations work well together. Bloom acknowledges the negative understanding of Falstaff, but suggests that in performance or in imaginative reading Falstaff embodies desires that we would not normally act upon, or even consider possible: to kick over the traces, to take no heed for tomorrow, to act impulsively, to say or do things that others would disapprove of, and to feel no guilt. This, Bloom suggests, is the elemental appeal of Falstaff. Margolies, on the other hand, keeps his eye narrowly on Falstaff's dramatic function, on the role that he plays within the plays. In suggesting that Shakespeare has no admiration for a man without honor, he suggests that we should not. Falstaff's importance lies simply in what his behavior reveals to Hal about how the world works, and Hal's rejection should be ours. There is no temporizing here. Whatever we may have initially found attractive in Falstaff fades as we come, with Hal, to appreciate the truth. My students' initial response to these quotations is usually to consider the desirability of having Falstaff for a friend. They therefore tend to incline towards Margolies, finding it easy to agree that one would not like or want to be friends with someone who lies, steals, swindles people, abuses his authority, and consorts with prostitutes. A minority will suggest that Falstaff would be fun to go drinking with. They do not, at least at first, wrestle with Bloom's notion that AFalstaff@ is essentially an aspect of the human condition that we each can find in ourselves.

In discussing Falstaff in this way, Bloom, my students, and in many ways Margolies are grappling with a vision of Falstaff that derives from the three plays of the *Henriad* taken as a whole. Such a cumulative vision is surely not wholly antithetical to what Shakespeare intended. Each of the three plays builds on its predecessor, and on Shakespeare's stage the interconnections would have been reinforced by the fact that the characters would have been played by the same actor who had previously played that character. Our modern sense of the unity of the plays is probably even stronger than in Shakespeare's time. When we read the plays we are likely to read them one right after the other, and in performance we are frequently entertained by productions that conflate the two parts of *Henry IV* into one play. For these reasons, references to Falstaff by scholars and playgoers alike are typically to the vision of Falstaff as it has developed up to and including the speeches mourning his passing in *Henry V*.

Of course, in doing the close reading that classroom discussion demands, we ultimately focus more narrowly on the second of the Falstaffs, reminding ourselves that the image of Falstaff that we draw from the *Henriad* evolved as the plays were written. Among the more obvious differences are that the Falstaff of Henry IV, Part 2, is much strongly associated with disease than is the Falstaff of Part 1. This change is immediately evident. Falstaff first enters discussing his urinalysis (1.2.1), and within the same scene we learn that either the gout or the pox Aplays the rogue with [his] great toe@ (1.2.244). Still the clever rogue of Part I, he plots to profit from his infirmities by pretending to have been injured in the war. However, our image is darkened by the disease imagery. A similar difference can be seen in his response to the tricks Hal plays on him. In Part 1, having been outmaneuvered in the robbery that Hal and Poins have set up, Falstaff offers no real excuse for his behavior. Instead, he tells a fantastic story that grows more and more hyperbolic as he talks. He does not expect belief as the number of attackers he reports swells and swells. Rather, he carries the day by ignoring his cowardice and relying upon his witty ability to amuse and entertain. In the analogous scene in Part 2, where Falstaff has spoken derogatorily about Hal, who is present but disguised as a drawer. This time his defense is primarily a whining and cringing denial, ANo abuse, Hal@ (2.4.315). Hal and Poins goad him into a few insults against others, but he never takes the offense, never launches the barrage of wit that has endeared him to Hal in the past. Another decline is seen in his abusing his power to raise a company of soldiers by taking bribes. In Part I, he tells us what he has done, while in Part 2 we see him do it. What seemed funny in Part one now seems more obviously corrupt, so venal that it offends even Justice Shallow, who clearly is no stranger to favoritism and bribery. Falstaff is of course absent in *Henry V* except for being evoked by others in discussion.

Shakespeare had promised his return at the end of *Henry IV*, Part 2, but changed his mind. If he indeed died while reciting the 23rd psalm (as indicated by his presumed reference to Agreen fields@), then he dies a better death than we might have anticipated from *Henry IV*, Part 2, where he tells Doll, Ado not bid me remember mine end@ (2.4.233). The *Henriad* Falstaff was thus continually altered and changed throughout this sequence of plays.

Turning to the third of the Falstaffs, let us review the continuities and differences between Shakespeare's initial and highly successful creation of Falstaff in *Henry IV*, Part 1, and this character's adaptation for use in the Windsor setting. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* opens with an enraged Shallow complaining about Falstaff, for as we soon learn, Falstaff has Abeaten my men, stole my deer, and broke open my lodge@ (1.1.105-6). Additional accounts of petty theft quickly attach to Falstaff and his followers. Although Slender was too drunk for a positive identification, we know that Pistol, Bardolph or Nym has picked his purse. We also hear of a fan handle that Pistol has stolen from one Mistress Bridget and learn that Falstaff's share of the take was 15 pence. In short, to quickly put us in mind of the old Falstaff, Shakespeare has chosen to focus upon Falstaff as a rowdy scofflaw surrounded by a pack of lowlife ruffians. Though reported rather than being seen on stage, the poaching incident parallels Falstaff's behavior in helping to rob and bind the travelers at Gads Hill. Both actions reflect Falstaff's attitude toward the law, and in both he was able to physically overcome his victims—the travelers and Shallow's men. Additionally, even though there are no other such acts of theft in *Henry IV*, Part 1, the trait of petty thievery is used to characterize Falstaff throughout the play. It is, he argues, his vocation, and claims that A'Tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation@ (1.2.102-3). One aspect of his criminality is Falstaff's penchant for con games, seen most strongly in *Henry IV*, Part1, when Falstaff seizes the opportunity to enrich himself by taking bribes. The parallel in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is, of course, his plan to seduce Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page. His motive, we recall, is not love or sex, but money, for he has heard that both women control the purse in their households.

Despite his participation in the robbery, the Falstaff of *Henry IV*, Part 1 is a coward. Indeed, even the robbery is a set up so that Hal and Poins can be amused by Falstaff's cowardice, which is displayed when they in turn rob him. The theme runs throughout the play, culminating in Falstaff's feigned death on the battlefield. Shakespeare continues this with little change in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. To be sure, flight rather than fight is undoubtedly more appropriate when confronting a jealous husband rather than enemy soldiers, but Falstaff's behavior is not mere prudence: his fear is so palpable that Mrs. Ford suggests that Falstaff may have befouled himself from fright while hiding in the laundry basket.

Despite his physical cowardice, the Falstaff of *Henry IV*, Part 1, is remarkable for his bravado and effrontery. Within the confines of the tavern world, at least, he encounters few whom he can not face down. He may do so through sheer verbal aggressiveness, or through wit, as when he erases the disgrace of losing his takings from the robbery by telling a story so entertaining that the others begin focusing on the tale's amusing improbabilities rather than Falstaff's actual behavior. His behavior in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is similar. Though he is manifestly in the wrong, he aggressively dares Shallow and Slender to seek justice, suggesting that they will be laughed at. Likewise, despite his failures, he can continue to persuade AMaster Brook," a.k.a. Ford, that success is near at hand. To be sure, his witty expostulations are less prominent in this play: it is the wives' wit that drives the plot. Nonetheless, Shakespeare is clearly working with an extension of his initial vision of Falstaff. It is a sense of Falstaff that will change by the end of Henry IV, Part 2, and will not be much of a factor in the Falstaff who is eulogized in Henry V. However, that lies in the future. Here Shakespeare sticks with what he did before.

In both *Henry IV*, Part 1, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a major part of Shakespeare's vision of Falstaff is that he is a trickster who can be tricked. Thus, in the first play, the robbery in which he takes part has been designed solely to humiliate him. This aspect of Falstaff is carried even further in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Falstaff is covered with foul linen, dressed in women's clothes and beaten, and humiliated in the guise of Herne the Hunter. In neither case, we should note, does the humiliation

of Falstaff lead to rejection. Indeed, in *Henry IV*, part 1, Falstaff's story may even be better than the trick to which it replies, and despite Falstaff's recognition in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* that the others have made an ass of him, Mrs. Page indicates that he is included in the comedy's happy ending:

> Good husband, let us every one go home
> And laugh this sport o'er by a country fire—
> Sir John and all. (5.5.235-7)

The plays to come will in turn feature Falstaff's rejection and death, but that development has not yet occurred. The Falstaff of these first two plays is a forgivable rogue.

Other members of Falstaff's world are also evolving throughout these plays. Bardolph first appeared in *Henry IV*, Part I. He ultimately comes to loom large in our sense of Falstaff's world because of his expanded role in Henry IV, Part 2, and his execution in Henry V. However, in the first of the Henry plays his role is quite small. He has a bit of banter with Sir John, and he carries a message for the Prince. His role in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is of roughly the same size and importance. Falstaff's retinue is actually expanded in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It is here that we first meet Pistol, whose role will expand greatly over the next two plays, and Nym, who will reappear in *Henry V*. Shallow, whose primary role here is simply to have his deer poached and to attempt to further the marriage of his nephew Slender, will be much more richly imagined in *Henry IV*, Part 2, although he will remain in the role of Falstaff's victim. In some ways, the role most changed between the first two plays is that of Mistress Quickly, who in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not a hostess but the housekeeper for Doctor Caius. However, I would suggest that this change of profession seems more significant to us in the light of her characterization in *Henry IV*, Part 2 and *Henry V* than it would had we only read or seen *Henry IV*, Part 1. Her role is the last two plays is much enlarged, and her role of hostess encompasses bawd and apparently, given her reported death from a French disease, prostitution. Her relationship with Falstaff is going to grow much more complex. He has taken advantage of her, borrowing money and promising her marriage. Nonetheless, she clearly has come to have a soft spot for him, and the language of her mourning when he dies is both humorous and moving. Of what does her role consist in Henry IV, Part 1: She laughs when Falstaff and Hal rehearse what to say to Hal's father, she announces that the sheriff is at the door, and she responds angrily to Falstaff's refusal to pay his tab and his accusations concerning having his pocket picked. She is, in short, a relatively minor character who we enjoy because of her linguistic confusions. Wanting that same play with language, and needing someone who could logically go from person to person bearing messages, Shakespeare has given Mistress Quickly a different job and a larger role. However, her characterization remains essentially the same as in the first play.

I would certainly agree with those who prefer *Henry IV*, Part I, to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It has Hal and Hotspur, it provides more interesting questions for contemplation, and it has richer poetry. These are real differences. However, as I hope that I have shown, Shakespeare's essential understanding of Falstaff in these first two plays is remarkably consistent. The broader understanding of Falstaff that typically informs our vision of this character will evolve markedly in the next two plays.

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Whose Wit?: Margaret Edson's
Play and John Donne's Poems

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Margaret Edson's play, *Wit*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999—and the Mike Nichols film adaptation of it (2003) starring Emma Thompson—make compelling reading and viewing for literature students, particularly for those who are studying Donne's *Holy Sonnets*. Throw in some details about Edson's career (my favorite is that, according to Amy Gamerman, she "worked in an Iowa bar pouring drinks for hog farmers"), and you have an engaging set of materials with which to explore English as a profession, interpretation as power or as transforming truth, the medical profession, the power of reading, death and dying, Donne's poetry, "that *meaning-of-life* garbage" (Edson 61)—and, for good measure, themes including kindness, grace, and resurrection. If all this sounds too teacherly, I confess to being under the spell of Mark Edmundson, who in his book *Why Read?* laments the lack of opportunities for teachers to "write to each other about ways they've found to teach this or that book" (122-23). We will hear more from Edmundson later.

I will organize my exploration around three scenes from the screen adaptation of the play. The first portrays a student/professor conference between the main character, Vivian Bearing, and her mentor, E. M. Ashford. The next, a flashback like the first scene, depicts Vivian's memory of learning to read. Finally, in a scene which synthesizes elements from the previous two, Ashford visits Vivian late on the last day of Vivian's life.

But first, an introduction to the play, with some glances at teaching it in conjunction with the film and the poems. *Wit* tells the story of Vivian Bearing, an "overbearing" if "vibrant" professor of Early Seventeenth-Century Poetry, particularly the *Holy Sonnets*. Bearing is demanding, powerful, independent. But she is dying of ovarian cancer, a circumstance which causes her to lose her "bearings" (her direction, not her marbles, though in a sense that happens, too). In an interview, Edson says of her character,

> if Vivian Bearing had lived for 20 more years and had died suddenly of a heart attack at 70, she would have made it. She would have slipped through her life without ever having to open her heart. And she would have been safe, and she would never have noticed what she was missing. In a certain sense, that's a very efficient way to live. And she was great at it, and she knew it, and that's why it cost her so much to fall. But in her fall is her redemption, as usual. (Carter)[1]

Three movements give direction to the play. First, as she becomes sicker, Vivian reluctantly becomes more open to human kindness, symbolized in her primary care nurse, Susie. Vivian is forced to reconsider her insularity (one stage direction tells us Vivian is "*Uncomfortable with kindness*" 30), to meditate as it were (though this connection is nowhere mentioned in the play) on the text "No man is an island." John Sykes (invoking Donne's "Batter my Heart," a second text not mentioned in the play but which undergirds it) observes,

> Professor Bearing herself undergoes an inner religious drama remarkably like one portrayed in the sonnets in which she is expert. Her suffering during her ordeal with ovarian cancer and its treatment is, as Donne suggests, a means to correction, and ultimately salvation. (166)[2]

Secondly, Edson invites us to consider how Bearing's acquisition of scholarly knowledge is mirrored by the research team of doctors who study *her* as she endures an aggressive course of experimental chemotherapy. She finds (again, the allusion is mostly implicit[3]), "my physicians by their love are grown / Cosmographers, and I their map" (Donne, "Hymn to God" 6-7). A young intern, Jason, who took her college course as a challenge in order to pump up his résumé (19), provides a foil to Susie, while the Chief of Oncology (Dr. Kelekian—I leave his name symbolism to your imagination), a man whose age, attitudes, and

accomplishments put him on par with Bearing, foils her.[4]

The third movement, which perhaps I have given away too easily already, is how Donne's poetry—especially "Death be not proud"—frames Bearing's experience. On one level, we might expect that Bearing's dedicated study of Donne could have been the best possible preparation for confronting her own mortality. Why hasn't she got it? But it is human to miss applying to oneself insights easily admitted in the abstract. More importantly, Bearing has treated Donne's poetry entirely as an intellectual whetstone. She says, "Donne's wit is . . . a way to see how good you really are" (18). Bearing's interpretations of Donne are torturous. Is she—or is Edson—fair to Donne? How are we to respond to Bearing's—and Edson's—use of Donne?

One more note on the use of Donne, again which I have already implied, is that putting poems (and meditations) by Donne *not* mentioned in the play up against those that are mentioned—these are "Death be not proud," "If poisonous minerals," and "This is my play's last scene"—may be an effective way not only to explore the themes of Donne's poetry but to balance Bearing's use of Donne. These implied texts are his *Meditation* 17, "Batter my Heart," and "Hymn to God, My God." Edson seems to save some of Donne for our consideration, avoiding filtering them through Vivian's interpretation.[5]

There are many other delights, some of them grim, along the way in Edson's play as Bearing marshals her wit against the indignities of her treatment and, indeed, her dying.[6] Furthermore, the play presents opportunities to explore the nature of theatre because of its fluid structure and its metatheatrical technique. As to the former, the play has essentially one set—a hospital room localized on an empty stage—and orderlies wheel desks and IV stands in and out as needed (Edson 5). As to the second, Vivian frequently directs her address to the audience, letting us into her confidence and commenting on her condition. Early in the first scene, she confides, "It is not my intention to give away the plot; but think I die at the end," adding, "They've given me less than two hours" (8). At a key moment late in the play, she tells us, "These are my last coherent lines. I'll have to leave the action to the professionals" (57), setting up a conclusion that is powerful for its transcending of words.[7] If Vivian's observation here calls to mind Donne's "This is my play's last scene," then we have room to consider not only the theatricality of her experience but of Donne's sonnets.

The film adaptation does not simply reproduce the play's bare set: it moves us about the hospital and fills out the background with attendants, nurses, and hospital clutter. Still, there are just two exterior shots in the film (one is a flashback): the film, I would suggest, restricts its setting in a way that respects the play. Vivian's direct address to the audience is handled deliberately and effectively in the film as Emma Thompson turns conspiratorially, or even archly, depending on the moment, to the camera. These differences, as well as some rearranged scenes and some significant differences in the ending, can lead to useful discussions of the virtues of each medium.

Three related scenes from Nichol's film will help us explore Edson's use of Donne, as well as the relationship between the film and play. In what follows, the scenes are described and questions for classroom analysis are presented.[8]

Scene the First:
The Scholar Meets Her Mentor
[DVD ch. 3; 6:48; approx. 4 ½ minutes; *Wit* 13-15]

The Set Up
The first scene for consideration occurs quite early in the play and film. Reflecting on her career, Vivian says, "I know all about life and death. I am, after all, a scholar of Donne's Holy Sonnets, which explore mortality in greater depth than any other body of work in the English language" (13). Then she recalls her mentor "the great E. M. Ashford" (13). A stage direction says, "*Vivian suddenly turns twenty-two, eager and intimidated*" (13).

Summary
A college-aged Vivian enters the carefully-appointed office of her professor. Archly, Ashford returns to her a paper on

Donne, telling her it is unacceptable. "Do it again," she orders, adding that if she wants to continue in her hysterical vein she should take up Shakespeare! Ashford explains herself by discoursing on "Death be not proud," the poem Vivian has tackled in her paper. Ashford recites the poem, focusing on its original punctuation and declaring that the poem is not about "wit" but about "truth." She summarizes, "This way, the *uncompromising* way, one learns something from this poem" (Edson 15). Surprisingly, she changes topics, urging Vivian to forget the paper and enjoy herself. The scene shifts to outdoors as Vivian walks on campus, her voiceover reflecting on what she experienced. She concludes, "I went back to the library," and the scene returns to the hospital room.

Film Notes
- The most startling aspect of this scene is how the film breaks down the barriers of the hospital walls, not just shifting us, in imitation of memory, to another location but bringing the teacher into the hospital room. This is a technique Nichols uses more than once in the film. Here, it functions metaphorically, representing a breaking down of those "insuperable barriers" between life and death that Ashford has been talking about. The past and present do touch, as this scene illustrates: Vivian is at a turning point, both in the hospital and in her teacher's office. The separation between life and death is thinning out for Vivian, even as she remembers herself.

- A painting of St. Sebastian, shot through with arrows, hangs above a mantle in Ashford's office. Vivian has a postcard-sized version on her hospital bed stand. St. Sebastian, Christian martyr who miraculously survived an execution by Roman soldiers but was later stoned to death, is the patron saint of suffering (traditionally of those afflicted by the plague and of the dying; also of archers). Here his emblem immediately comments on the skewering young Vivian is undergoing at the hands of her teacher. It also points to her suffering from cancer and even suggests that such suffering may be redemptive, as it was for the saint.

- The punctuation point of the scene (sorry!) is Vivian's line, "I went back to the library": we feel she has explained her career—and her self—more profoundly than she realizes.

What about Donne? Questions for Analysis
- What do you think of Ashford's "uncompromising" interpretation of Donne's sonnet? Is the poem hysterical or quiet? Is it about wit or truth? Of course, the lines impinge on what is happening to Vivian, and the idea that only a comma (punning on coma? see Lamont) separates life and death is apt.

- I think that most of us would say that Early Modern punctuation practices are too broad and various to hang our interpretation on, but the play and film can bring us and our students to a consideration of the poem's tone and direction.

- What do you think of Ashford as a representative of what you do? I tell my students not to draw too close a comparison between her and me, though I worry when I invite them to consider details like punctuation. What I am most interested for the moment is her seemingly inconsistent shift from withering intellectual rigor to a Herrick-like urging of Vivian to enjoy the springtime. Does this shift make sense? Clearly it illustrates a genuine affection for her student—she wishes her well. So what if it is inconsistent? It's human.

- But more importantly, Ashford has not reversed herself. If she is right that Donne is about "truth," then he should tell us how to live. Mark Edmundson writes, "The question we would ultimately ask of any work of art is this: "Can you live it?" (129). Here that means, I would suggest, living in wholeness, not separating our lives into intellect and emotion, wit and wisdom. Oddly (but in truth), understanding the meaning of Donne's poem should urge the young Vivian to embrace life. Ashford says, "Use your intelligence. Don't go back to the library. Go out" (15). Intelligence and enjoyment are—but Vivian cannot see it yet—"*connected*" (15). This moment in the play and film helps to raise this question, which could be turned to Donne or Edson with equal—to use the play's word—"rigor."

Scene the Second:
The Scholar "Meets" Her Father (or Learns to Read)
[DVD ch. 10, and just before cut to 35:50; approx. 3½ minutes; *Wit* 35-37]

The Set Up
   This scene is another flashback, occasioned by the medical terminology thrown around during what are called "Grand Rounds." Vivian recalls learning to read and finds herself sounding out a Beatrix Potter book in the presence of her father (played by playwright Harold Pinter). It is a powerful, shaping memory for her, one that gets behind the college student we saw in the last scene, explaining how she got there.

Summary

    The scene deftly shifts from the hospital room to a reading room and between the hospitalized Vivian, who imitates her former self, and a child reading on the floor in a full-length sleeping gown. It even brings her father into the hospital room. Her father is reading a newspaper and pauses to encourage her to sound out the word "soporific." The adult Vivian comments, "The illustration bore out the meaning of the word, just as he had explained it. At the time, it seemed like magic" (37).

Film Notes

- This scene's technique links it with the earlier scene in Ashford's office not only by its similar breaking down of location barriers but by similar contrasts in lighting and scene design (the two remembered rooms are warm, full of wood and reading material, though the bright, austere lines outside the hospital window are repeated outside the Bearing reading room). These connections suggest how parental/mentor figures have been important to Vivian. Her tears in the film suggest, among other things, her memory of how eager she was to please her father, how she cherished being in the same room with him (Do you think he's warm or too formal with her?). They also remind us that she is alone (when her medical history was taken, we learned her father had died "suddenly, when I was twenty, of a heart attack" 21).

- In *Falling into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature*, David Richter juxtaposes two essays on why we read. The first is Helen Vendler's address to the MLA Association, "What We Have Loved, Others Will Love," in which she says, "It was in those innocent days that our attachment to literature arose" (32); the second is Gerald Graff's "Disliking Books at an Early Age," in which he explains, "What first made literature, history, and other intellectual pursuits seem attractive to me was exposure to critical debates" (42). Edson is clearly in Vendler's camp; indeed, the playwright has become famous for eschewing the spotlight for the more important work of teaching kindergarten. In an interview, she says, "Learning to read—that's the biggest thing you learn in your whole life. . . . Alphabet letters represent sound, text maps speech—once you learn that, that's the hardest thing. It's the thing that opens your mind the most, that gives you the most power" (Gamerman). The scene offers an opportunity to explore the "magic" of early reading experiences with students—and particularly the connection of those experiences with their current practices and interests.

What about Donne? Questions for Analysis

- This scene forms a kind of lynch pin for the play: the word "soporific" comes back, as does a children's book. The scene reminds us that Vivian, who is dying, is using her memory (an aspect, we recall, of formal meditation, Donne style) to review her life—and possibly to renew it.[9] Thus her recollections of human closeness, as well as of the essence of the reading experience, are important. The play suggests that Vivian needs to divest herself—that her dying is such a divesting—of much, including the layers of sophistication that keep her from seeing the truth in Donne's poetry.

- Donne is mentioned only at the end of this scene (continuing her remarks quoted above, Vivian says, "So imagine the effect that the words of John Donne first had on me" [37]). The hope is that Vivian can integrate her earlier experiences with her later ones.

Scene the Third:
The Scholar Meets Her Maker (or "An Allegory of the Soul")
[DVD ch.18; 1:21:50; approx. 9 minutes; *Wit* 61-63): cue to 25:06 (reading), 4 min in.]

The Set Up

    This is a lengthy, patient, moving scene (3 pages of text in the play become nearly 9 minutes of film) in which Vivian's mentor visits her. Vivian has recently shared a very warm moment with her nurse Susie over Vivian's use of the word "soporific" to describe the effect of morphine. Clearly, Vivian will die soon (in the scene immediately before this one, we are told "She's out of it. Shouldn't be too long" 61). Also in that scene, Jason and Susie talk about Donne's poetry and "that *meaning-of-life* garbage" (61), suggesting at least part of our scene's concerns. Susie remains to care for Vivian, rubbing her hands with baby oil. The scene dissolves into a hallway shot into which Ashford walks. One of the film's recurrent musical themes—soft piano music, with a somber bass line—overlaps.

Summary

    Vivian has been given a morphine drip (we think, "And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well" [Donne "Death be not proud" 11]) but surfaces for a last moment of coherence. Vivian is embarrassed by the visit, but Ashford (who calls herself "Evelyn") cuts through this by slipping off her shoes and getting into bed with Vivian.

    Ashford offers to recite something by Donne, but Vivian moans, "Nooooo!"; Ashford then pulls out a copy of the children's book *The Runaway Bunny* which she has purchased for a grandson. She reads it like the scholar she is, noting things like publication date, but while reading observes, "Look at that. A little allegory of the soul. No matter where it hides, God will find it.

See, Vivian?" (63). When she finishes, the scholar of Donne chooses Shakespeare for her parting words, "And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

Ashford's visit brings closure to Vivian's life and struggle. This is, in fact, the penultimate scene. In the next (we jump cut to Jason walking towards us), Vivian is discovered to be unresponsive, an abortive attempt is made to resuscitate her (against her wishes), and a final moment of grace is suggested (more of this later).

Film Notes

- You have to enjoy Ashford's very "*uncompromising*" (it's her word, 15) and sensitive way of reading. She is precise about authorship and publication dates; she is sympathetic to allegory, yet her heart is open to being moved by simple truth. A model scholar?

- Eads suggests that this scene must be a "morphine-induced" dream, that Vivian could not possibly surface for a final moment of clarity followed by rest. But it seems to me crucial to Edson's purposes that Vivian does just that. Edson has said that Vivian's "redemption is delayed through her own efforts. . . . she keeps putting if off and putting it off and putting it off, and finally there's a breakthrough, and it happens in the last ten seconds of her life, which is plenty of time" (Carter). Her final moment of clarity leading to peace in this scene signals to us that what Edson suggests is happening to her (or soon will). It signals that Ashford's wisdom (in the "foolishness" of a children's book) is available to Vivian.[10]

- The scene is instructive for anyone who must make the kind of visit Ashford does: talk about the weather, show empathy, bring a book, commit a rule-breaking bit of kindness. Just be there (I know, harder to do than to say, but one of the virtues of the scene is that it shows us how).

- In this scene, the smallest things take on the largest significance, as indicated by Ashford's reading. When Vivian says, "I feel so bad," she means she's in pain, but also that she's embarrassed to be so unpresentable before her mentor (she addresses her as "Prof. Ashford"). We might say that her embarrassment here reprises her desire to be tough, in control, powerful.[11] Can we also see Vivian as confessing her regret at her self-sufficient ways?

What about Donne? Questions for Analysis

- What should we make of Vivian's rejecting a recitation of Donne for a reading from *The Runaway Bunny*? Well, Ecclesiastes' "To every thing there is a season" (3:1) comes to mind. As Vivian said earlier, "Now is not the time for verbal swordplay, for unlikely flights of imagination and shifting perspectives, for metaphysical conceit, for wit. . . . Now is a time for simplicity. Now is a time for, dare I say it, kindness" (55). The scene displays both simplicity and kindness, as the "great E. M. Ashford" (13) sloughs off her shoes and climbs into bed. This is the time for bedtime stories.

- While some critics complain that Donne is left behind in this scene—that he's reduced to so much dry, intellectual play that has no bearing on life (see Iannone and Wheeler)—it seems to me Donne is all over the scene. To state it as succinctly as possible: Vivian's journey has its parallel in the processes of Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, and yet a simple but profound insight from a children's book (mentored by someone whose vigorous attention to detail leads to insight) is at the same time an antidote to Donne's complexity and a fulfillment of what his poems seek—rest in God's irresistible grace.[12]

- Ashford's own choices confirm Vivian's. We recall that Ashford had earlier disparaged Shakespeare as too dramatic, yet as she parts she uses Shakespeare's words to send Vivian off. There might be, in fact, a time for hysterical punctuation, for raging against death—as an audience, we might be experiencing one of those times. But the scene embodies Ashford's earlier insight, gleaned from Donne, that the jump from life to death (rather the jump, which is death, from life to life) is a small, quiet one: "One short sleep past, we wake eternally" [Donne, "Death be not proud" 13]).

A Conclusion about a Conclusion

The conclusion of the play has elicited some critical debate, debate enhanced by the subtle but significant differences between the play's and film's final moments. Edson writes it in double columns. On the right, Jason is responding in grief and embarrassment to his mistake of calling the Code Team in to revive Vivian (she has signed a DNR order). He is being ridiculed by the team. Eads suggests that his brokenness is a good sign: he may be "on the road to redemption" (249). On the left column, stage directions tell us that Vivian gets up and begins to move away from the bed toward a light. She lets fall her cap, hospital bracelet,

and finally her overlapping gowns: "*The instant she is naked and beautiful reaching for the light—Lights out*" (66).

The film version's ending is quite different. Vivian is stripped to the waist by the Code Team, but here her nudity is simply clinical—mere flesh—almost the opposite of the effect Edson seems to have in mind. After the commotion of the Code Team, Susie, having called them off, covers Vivian's body, shielding her with a powerful gesture of fierce, protective love. The same musical theme we have heard in the previous scene begins, a soft piano, and Vivian's voice is heard, reciting "Death, be not proud," calmly, deliberately. Susie's ministrations dissolve into an overhead close shot of Vivian's bald head—a kind of death mask that may call Donne to mind. The camera moves slowly in to a tight close up, and the light on Vivian's head gets brighter and brighter, then a bit warmer. A form dissolve replaces Vivian's bald head with a black-and-white photograph of a healthy Vivian: she has hair, bright eyes, a slight smile. Her voiceover inserts the comma between "Death" and "thou shalt die," and at that moment the scene fades to black, so that the last phrase talks back to the darkness.

This ending is well shot and has its virtues. It is calm and resolved. But while what we hear points to hope after the "short sleep," the final image—a photo we imagine came from Vivian's home—suggests that Vivian lives on only in memory, or, we might say, in those who cared for her. The ending in the play, however, is designed to be an emblem of resurrection, of waking "eternally." Edson says, "By the end of the play—and when it's staged, it's so unlike the rest of the play that it's shocking—as Vivian drops her bracelet and drops her cap and drops her gown and crosses the stage, she lets everything fall away from her" (Carter)—and, the implication is, she is united with God.

Lamont finds the final image of the play a striking and a "seamless amalgam of mortality and sensuality" (570), while Wheeler calls it "a dubious physical transfiguration" and a "theatrical lie." Even Eads, writing for an audience that would affirm the fact of life after death, says, "Certainly, many Christian viewers will find here only a vague and secular salvation" (249). Sykes, who most thoroughly surveys this problem, suggests,

> Vivian's renewed and transformed body is neither a happy fantasy nor an ill-conceived image of a soul's ascension into heaven. Rather, it is an emblem of hope base upon faith that Jesus' resurrection has accomplished, in Rowan William's words, "A restoration of the world's wholeness" (72). The process of redemption now begun will be completed in the future which Christ's resurrection has revealed. (172)

This analysis makes a lot of sense to me. I tell my students, I am not sure that what I want to see is glorious nudity on stage, but I prefer its gesture as more pure, more transcendent, than the film's more material ending. But I am less concerned here to solve these problems for you than to suggest that considering them with your students may give you opportunities to explore how theater works, how film differs from it, how belief and ideology inform the artistic choices we make, and how Donne's views of death and redemption may be articulated and explored in a contemporary play.

Notes

[1] When asked if she knows anyone like Bearing and where the character came from, Edson replied, "I made her up. That's my job" (Carter).

[2] He adds, "Just as it is difficult for modern sensibility to accept Donne's drastic metaphors in 'Batter my heart,' so audiences resist the suggestion that Vivian Bearing's ordeal might actually be a needed antidote to that form of sin Donne knew so well, pride" (166).

[3] There are hints of Donne's poem when Bearing, describing "Grand Rounds" says the experience reminds her of a graduate seminar "With one important difference: in Grand Rounds, they read me like a book. Once I did the teaching, now I am taught" (32), and she says she likes to know the terms they are using when they "anatomize me" (37). So Donne in his "Hymn" prepares himself at the entrance to new life. Later, Bearing says she has become "Ultimately sick" (43), calling to mind the finality of "*per fretum febris*, by these straits to die" (10), and she adds that to her doctors she has become "just the specimen jar, just the dust jacket, just the white piece of paper that bears the little black marks" (43). See Sykes's discussion of this poem (163-65).

[4] In the play's list of characters, Edson suggests that Kelekian and Vivian's father "should double" (6); in the film, they are played by different actors (Harold Pinter taking the small role of the father). This is an interesting difference for classroom discussion. Does it suggest Kelekian is a father figure?

[5] Iannone complains that in the play not only does Vivian need to be "cut down to size; the great John Donne . . . must be cut down as well." Later, she adds, "as the play progresses, the idea takes root that Donne is a wordsmith, a puzzlemaster, a man with nothing to say to a heart in pain." Separating Bearing's and her internist's readings of the poems from what these other poems suggest resolves this difficulty.

[6] For example, when Vivian is asked her name by medical staff once too often, she laconically replies "Lucy, Countess of Bedford" (16). When asked as part of her medical history if she is having sexual relations, she quips, "Not at the moment" (24; her wit here shields the fact that she has indeed been alone most of her adult life—the undercurrent of the entire interview).

[7] Brustein, commenting on the commonplace that in modern theatre language is no longer a key element, says this about the play's final scene: "It is a little disconcerting that the most powerful moment in this eloquent play is a wordless one. But the emotional wallop of that final image would not have been possible without the language that preceded it."

[8] When his paper was presented, the three scenes were screened, after which I made some remarks. I have included details for locating the scenes on the DVD edition and added brief descriptions of the scene.

[9] Edson says the play is "about one person's attempt to put her life together as she sees it coming to an end. And if she would relax a little bit, she would realize that she doesn't have to work so hard, she doesn't have to make it such a struggle. But instead of relaxing a little bit, she tightens up even more and makes it harder for herself" (Gladstone).

[10] Eads writes, "Although Vivian cannot respond articulately to Professor Ashford's analysis of the children's book, her acceptance of its message is implicit. Having lost her independence, her voice, and even consciousness itself, Vivian has finally learned to see more than wit in a literary work. Death and *The Runaway Bunny* are helping her grasp what lay in Donne all along— the promise of irresistible grace" (251).

[11] Edson says, "Well, I wanted her to be someone very powerful, very strong and very secure and so accomplished that she's alone" (Gladstone).

[12] This formulation borrows insights from Eads and Sykes, and from Edson herself. Eads says that Ashford is "a woman whose keen scholarship enables her to see in Donne's complex poetry lessons about life and eternity, God and the human soul" (250). On "irresistible grace," see note 10 above and Sykes' observation (166), quoted on page 2 of this paper. On Ashford's interpretation of Margaret Wise Brown's story, Sykes writes,

> The message for Vivian is twofold. First, this simple tale is an antidote to the anxiety-producing complexity of Donne and the competitive interpretative hubris to which Vivian and her medical counterparts have fallen prey. . . . But secondly, the book offers a directly theological affirmation. Prof. Ashford sees in this tale, "A little allegory of the soul" (80). Thus the hopefulness of the book springs not from human kindness, but from trust in God's overriding mercy. Not only is the manner of the story contrary to Donne, but its content provides an answer to the fearful sonnet explicated earlier by Prof. Bearing: it is impossible to hide from God, but also unnecessary. One has only to relinquish one's defenses to find the security they could never provide. (169-70)

Edson says, "A lot of us spend all our time making things more complicated than they have to be, especially when we try to understand grace" (Gladstone).

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Adversative and Concessive
Constructions in Milton

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T he inspiration for this article on adversative conjunction in Book 1 of Milton's *Paradise Lost* comes from two similar studies of adversative conjunction—one on Chaucer and one on Spenser, both published in the early 1980s. E. Talbot Donaldson got the ball rolling with his article "Adventures with the Adversative Conjunction in the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*; or, What's before the *But*?" Judith H. Anderson, in a *festschrift* for Donaldson, celebrated Donaldson's novel idea with a study of adversative conjunction in Spenser, titled "What Comes After Chaucer's *But*: Adversative Constructions in Spenser." Anderson's article uses Donaldson's linguistic approach to analyze Spenser's sixth Proem. Both studies are focused on the curious phenomenon of the mixing of logical and illogical uses of *but*. My article is a natural extension of these two studies because, in just the same way that Donaldson was intrigued by logical and illogical uses of *but* in Chaucer, and Anderson likewise in Spenser, I am interested in similar occurrences in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost*.[1]

To begin with, Donaldson makes it clear—as does Anderson implicitly—that the primary form of *but* in question is the form defined in the *O.E.D.*, *but* 25: the adversative used in a way so as to introduce "a statement of the nature of an exception, objection, limitation, or contrast to what has gone before" (304). In his article, Donaldson cites numerous examples of logical and illogical uses of *but* 25 in Chaucer. As just one example, regarding the evil Pardoner's portrait, Donaldson quotes these lines:

> "This Pardoner hadde heer as yellow as wex,
> But *smoothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex."*
> (357; Donaldson's emphasis)

Donaldson proceeds to analyze the *but* in the following way:

> Why the *but*? Is there a rule that hair as yellow as wax may not hang as smooth—as straight—as a hank of flax? Must all technically male blonds be, like Absalon in the Miller's Tale, *crul*, curly? No, this *but* indicates some sort of emotional response to the Pardoner and to his hair—the narrator himself has become the adversative. (357; Donaldson's emphasis)

Indeed, Donaldson maintains that, generally, such illogical uses of *but* stem from the following condition:

> [T]he adversative relationship does not result as much from observed or stated fact as from a premise present in the speaker's mind but not necessarily shared by his auditor; the usage may thus seem perfectly logical to the speaker, but illogical to the hearer; furthermore, since the premise in the speaker's mind may itself be the result of an emotion, the adversative clause may be formally illogical, being wholly disconnected from what can be observed by or known to the most attentive listener. (357)[2]

It is my contention that what we can see in analyzing adversative conjunction in Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* is that, most usually, logical *buts* emanate from the narrator, and illogical *buts* emanate from the fallen angels. It is, as it were, as if the use of *but* by the demons in Hell is emblematic of their fallen state: their physical, psychological, spiritual, and intellectual ruin can dramatically be seen in their ruined adversatives.

The first three *buts* in *Paradise Lost* illustrate the point that the narrator uses the adversative logically:

>   he [Satan] with his horrid crew
> Lay vanquisht, rowling in the fiery Gulfe
> Confounded though immortal: *But* his doom
> Reserv'd him to more wrath . . . (51–54)

>   yet from those flames
> No light, *but* rather darkness visible . . . (62–63)

> where peace
> And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
> That comes to all; *but* torture without end
> Still urges . . . (65–68)[3]

Here there is no logical disconnect between the information before and after the *but*. In fact, the "exception, objection, limitation, or contrast to what has gone before" to which the *O.E.D.* refers is here so acutely and precisely logical as to signal the very essence of the Miltonic narrator's understanding of divine justice. These, indeed, are *God's buts*, and thus their rationality is pure, perfect, pristine.

However, a dramatic shift occurs with the fourth *but*, which just so happens to come out of the mouth of Satan in his very first words after the Fall from Heaven, when he is speaking to Beelzebub:

> If thou beest he; *But* O how fall'n! how changed
> From him, who in the happy Realms of Light
> Cloth'd with transcendent brightness didst out-shine
> Myriads though bright . . . (84–87)

How does this *but* logically qualify what has gone before it? It doesn't. In fact, how can it, when what has gone before it is itself irrational? Roy Flannagan has pointed out that the phrase that precedes the *but* ("If thou beest he") is a figure of speech with important logical implications: "Satan's beginning mid-sentence, his anacoluthon in leaving out a main clause, may indicate his moral confusion" (357, n. 41). What Flannagan can help show us is that Satan's *but* is qualifying a statement that has *no main clause*. How can one logically qualify or contrast with a nonexistent clause? We must therefore conclude that what exactly is being qualified remains unknown—and possibly not even known to the speaker, Satan, since the anacoluthon represents apparent "confusion." The *but*, therefore, *points up* Satan's confusion—in fact, it intensifies it. To be sure, we may be able to *conjecture* what is being qualified—the context seems to suggest that Satan is noticing a dramatic physical change in Beelzebub—but it would remain mere conjecture nonetheless. Besides, in considering Satan's deliberations on Beelzebub's ruined physical condition, one might well be tempted to ask, has *Satan* looked in the mirror lately? This thought lays bare how illogical—and insane—Satan's *but* is.

The next *but* returns us to the narrator, and thus to the logical use of *but*. The narrator gives the following commentary on Satan's foregoing speech:

> So spake th' Apostate Angel, *though* in pain,
> Vaunting aloud, *but* rackt with deep despare . . .
> (125–26; my emphasis of *but* and *though*)

Here the adversative construction is reinforced by a concessive construction, *though*. Both constructions contradict or qualify profoundly what has come before. This is especially true of the second construction, where we have the deep contrast between what comes first, Satan's boasting ("vaunting") aloud, and what comes after, his being tormented ("rackt") with intense hopelessness. This is what could be called the "adversative deflationary." The first half of the line majestically inflates Satan to epic proportions. The second half, after the *but*, deflates him to his God-given proper place: despair. The same sort of effect occurs with the first (concessive) construction, where, though less dramatically, but as clearly, the first half of the line inflates Satan ("So spake th' Apostate Angel"—a grand image, with its alliteration and elision), but the second half of the line deflates him to, again, his God-given proper place: "in pain," a belittled, collapsed condition. The double deflation—given in exquisitely parallel structure—serves to intensify the effect of the adversative and concessive constructions. It is a rhetorical *tour de force*.[4]

This same combination of adversative and concessive constructions occurs again, with the very next *but* (and *though*), given in Beelzebub's first speech:

> for the mind and spirit remains
> Invincible, and vigour soon returns,
> *Though* all our Glory extinct, and happy state
> Here swallow'd up in endless misery.
> *But* what if he our Conquerour . . .
> . . . .
> Have left us this our spirit and strength intire
> Strongly to suffer and support our pains,
> That we may so suffice [satisfy][5] his vengeful ire . . .
>   (139–143; 146–48)

Here we see that the first construction—with the concessive *though*—is once again deflationary, and thus inherently illogical. That the demons remain invincible and vigorous is a heroic notion, but is deflated by the acknowledgment that all their glory has been extinguished and that they must remain in eternal misery. If they remain invincible and vigorous, it would only stand to reason that all their glory has *not* been extinguished and that they must *not* remain in eternal misery. But their glory *has* been extinguished and they *must* remain in eternal misery. Again, we have a mind rife with confusion, just like Satan's. This confusion is compounded by the *but* that follows. What this *but* logically qualifies is dubious. Beelzebub's argument seems to be: we are fully invincible and vigorous; we have extinguished glory; but God left us fully invincible and vigorous to make us fully suffer. Beelzebub's argument fails because it would make no sense that a being devoid of glory could fully suffer since it could not be fully invincible and vigorous. Either the demons are fully invincible and vigorous, and thus have glory, or because they don't have glory, they aren't fully invincible and vigorous. One side has to go.

Further compounding the logical problem is that Satan seems utterly to miss Beelzebub's point. His response—which give us our next two *buts*—contradicts Beelzebub's claim that the demons remain fully invincible and vigorous:

> Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable
> Doing or Suffering . . . (157–58)

Satan is here saying either that it's better to be fully invincible and vigorous (and thus fully suffer), or that he has mistakenly thought Beelzebub has claimed the demons to be weak, not at all fully invincible and vigorous. Neither makes sense. But even worse, on a logical level, is the statement appended to these lines:

> Fall'n Cherube, to be weak is miserable
> Doing or Suffering: *but* of this be sure,
> To do ought good never will be our task,
> *But* ever to do ill our soul delight . . . (157–160)

The first *but* is what we might call the "adversative dismissive." Satan is essentially using the *but* not to qualify anything but merely to tell Beelzebub he's a weakling (at best), and perhaps to belittle him intellectually. Also, the *but* does not qualify or contradict on a logical level. This is so because there is no logical connection between misery, doing, or suffering and Satan's plan never to do anything good. Must not doing good naturally contradict the act of suffering? I see no reason to think so.

The second *but* is also of questionable logicality since it suggests that, rather than be weak, the demons should gain delight out of doing ill. First, one cannot logically gain delight out of pursuing its opposite, ill. This is a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron. Second, Satan's second *but* is as disconnected to that which it would contradict as his first *but*. In fact, Satan seems to be using these two *buts* to do nothing more than change the subject. Shall we call it the "adversative red herring"? In other words, these two *buts* do nothing but move Satan conveniently on to his real plan, which is to pervert God's newly-minted humans—this is the way Satan will only ever "do ill." Beelzebub's argument has been an inconvenient detour on the road Satan has already chosen to travel: perverting mankind to make them share in Satan's ruin.[6]

One more example of the combination of adversative and concessive constructions will reinforce Milton's technique of

undermining demonic logic. Later in Book 1, after Satan and the other demons have moved from the burning lake to the burning land, Satan begins a speech yet again marvelously grand and heroic, but one that will yet again be undercut by *but* and *though*:

> O Myriads of immortal Spirits, O Powers
> Matchless, *but* with th' Almighty, and that strife
> Was not inglorious, *though* th' event was dire [the outcome
>   was catastrophic],⁷
> As this place testifies, and this dire change
> Hateful to utter: *but* what power of mind
> Foreseeing or presaging, from the Depth
> Of knowledge past or present, could have fear'd,
> How such united force of Gods, how such
> As stood like these, could ever know repulse? (621–29)

The first *but* is actually not an adversative conjunction but a preposition; however, it serves the same basic function as many of the adversative *buts* we have investigated thus far: to deflate what has come before it. The Satanic heroic voice rings out loud and clear, with its majestic language of "myriads" of spirits and powers in all their "matchless" glory . . . until the *but* once again intrudes with all its matter-of-factness to deflate the demonic swelling: the demons are matchless indeed—except with God. Logically, something is either matchless or not matchless. There can be no compromise, no middle ground. These matchless legions are, in fact, not matchless. The *but* introduces the sad reality that no matchless myriads exist. Another lie has been perpetrated, and it is a lie exposed by the illogical *but*.

The concessive *though* comes next, revealing another logical inconsistancy. Satan's boast that the war in heaven was "not inglorious" is an example of dramatic understatement, or *litotes*—that figure so popular in Old English poetry, especially the epic *Beowulf*. "Not inglorious" could be roughly translated as something a tad below (making room for the understatement) "magnificent" or "splendid." Let's try "impressive." So what the *though* clause reveals is that this impressive war was, in fact, an utter catastrophe. Satan's logic is therefore once again called into question: can an event that was an utter catastrophe really be called impressive? Clearly not. The deflation is swift and sure.

The second *but* in the passage is a classic *but* 25, and one whose antecedent is classically dubious. We shall use it as our final example of an illogical adversative. Thus we must ask one more time: what is this *but* qualifying or contrasting with? Let's look at it this way: The not-inglorious war and the catastrophe of the event—and the "dire change" that they brought on—precede the *but*. Then the *but* introduces a clause which basically says, how could we have known that our combined forces would be so utterly beaten? This is indeed a strange line of thought. In fact, what makes this *but* inherently illogical is that the question itself is utterly unnecessary. For it presupposes that the fallen angels had no knowledge of God's omnipotence. This is absurd. Perhaps we can make sense of this situation by again turning to Donaldson and one of his most insightful analyses.

In his article, Donaldson speaks of the "guiltiest *but* in the history of the adversative conjunction," which he finds in Chaucer's portrait of the Prioress:

> The narrator, describing the Prioress, has told us about her smiling, and swearing, and singing, and French-speaking, and has regaled us with ten lines of prodigiously exquisite table manners (and other social graces), when he seems suddenly to recall that he is talking about a nun: "But, for to speken of hire conscience." (360)

Donaldson explicates the situation in this way:

> [W]ith this Prioress the narrator becomes aware somehow that the rails [that run parallel in the portraits of the Knight, Squire, and Yeoman] are diverging, that the woman and the nun are no longer running parallel. Hence he has to make a sudden leap from one rail to another, from the Prioress' womanliness to her nunliness. Nothing could better reveal the deficiency in the nun's conscience than the narrator's belated—and in the event totally unsuccessful—attempt to find a footing on it. . . . Ultimately the narrator settles for the assertion, against all evidence, that *all* was conscience. (361; Donaldson's emphasis)

If Donaldson is correct that the Prioress's *but* is the "guiltiest *but* in the history of the adversative conjunction," I would contend that Satan's *but* is the most moronic. And it is also the most impious, for it presumes that God's omnipotence was up to that point unknown in Heaven. Satan's combination of impiety and idiocy is the cornerstone of his metaphysic—a combination wrapped up in that one defining *but*. Donaldson concludes his article with the following observation: "Perhaps the refusal of the truth to be located more precisely than somewhere between what precedes the *but* and what follows it is itself the truth about people in general on their pilgrimage" (365). As the Father of Lies, it would seem fitting that Satan steadfastly refuses to locate the truth neither before nor after the *buts* he uses. Indeed, his refusal remains emblematic of a mind utterly depraved, and one whose alienation is not merely a separation from God, but a separation from logic as well. Satan's *buts* reveal both these forms of alienation and betray the rhetorical inflation that he so desperately clings to yet cannot hang on to.

Notes

[1] Like Anderson's assessment of the lack of commentary on the recurrence of *but* in Spenser's sixth Proem (107), I have not run across any detailed analysis of adversative construction in *Paradise Lost*—this despite the vast amount of rhetorical analyses of the poem, and particularly Books 1 and 2. I shall resist the temptation to offer a survey of rhetorical analyses of the poem, to save space and to avoid covering material that is well known to Milton scholars.

[2] For a comprehensive linguistic analysis of adversative conjunc-tion in poetry, see my article "*Adversative Conjunction:* The Poetics of Linguistic Opposition."

[3] All references to Book 1 of *Paradise Lost* are to Roy Flannagan, ed., *The Riverside Milton.* All emphasis of *but* will be my own, except for those already present in quotes from Donaldson.

[4] It should be noted that Anderson's article also shows the efficacy of combining adversative and concessive constructions. See, for instance, p. 106.

[5] Flannagan's gloss.

[6] Flannagan suggests several times in his notes that Satan's plan to pervert mankind is in place long before Beelzebub suggests it during the Demonic Debate in Book 2. See, for instance, p. 391, n. 83.

[7] Flannagan's gloss.

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Paradise Lost Books 1 and 2:
Milton Predicts the Restoration

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I. Milton's Politics in 1658

A significant, often overlooked question about the politics of *Paradise Lost* concerns the non-impact on the poem of the monarchical restoration. There is no radical disjuncture between the books written before and after the monarchy's restoration. Furthermore, scant evidence suggests that Milton substantially revised "easy . . . unpremeditated Verse" (9.24) that he believed to have been given to him by the Holy Spirit. After his narrow escape, Milton himself insists that "in darkness, and with dangers compassed round" he sings "unchanged" (*Paradise Lost* 7.27,24).[1]

In light of a political revolution that would seem to indicate a profound misreading of the divine plan, Milton's refusal to change his tune would appear to have been a profound error. How are we to explain the poem's success, especially as an ideological document, in light of the poet's apparent refusal to acknowledge political reality? The old standard answer—the poem, if not the Restoration Milton, is apolitical—clearly is wrong. *Paradise Lost* is intensely political. Many of the scholars who have established the poem's political contexts have also pointed out that "long before 1660 Milton had to face the fact that God's kingdom was not to be established in England yet": ". . . the restoration of Charles II in 1660 was only the last and greatest of the many disasters which had befallen the Cause" (Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* 347). Hill locates these disasters in the 1650s, contrasting this period with "the heights of 1644 and 1649-50" (390). Others, citing Milton's *History of Britain* and its MS Digression, have argued that Milton's political disillusionment had certainly developed by the late 1640s (von Maltzahn).[2] And for still others, Milton's "interest in probing history to reveal the causes of national and ecclesiastical failure was . . . already manifested in his first polemical work" (Loewenstein 94).

What has not been recognized is what would seem to be a corollary to Milton's consistently expressed political skepticism, a corollary that perhaps explains the monarchical restoration's failure to impact *Paradise Lost*: Milton's long awareness of the probability, if not inevitability, of a monarchical restoration.[3] As early as February 1649 Milton had publicly warned against the perils of a restoration. Denouncing "doubling Divines" and the rest of those "Who Of Late So Much Blame Disposing [Charles I] . . . The Men That Did It Themselves," Milton admonishes the Presbyterians about "an old and perfet enemy," who will execute his "destind revenge upon them, when they have servd his purposes": "Let them, feare therefore if they be wise . . . and be warn'd in time they put no confidence in Princes whom they have provok'd, lest they be added to the example of those that miserably have tasted the event" (*Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, *CPW* 3: 198, 238-39). Even Milton's triumphant *Defenses* hammer away at this theme. Aloof from "the corrupt designs of his Masters," Milton "little less than Prophetically, denounc'd the Punishments due to the abusers of that Specious name" of "Liberty" in the "Perorations at the close of those Books" (Darbishire 30). This is from the anonymous biography of Milton that was probably written by John Phillips. If so, Phillips' insistence that Milton prophesies—a strong word—the monarchical restoration was perhaps based not only on expedient hindsight but on a close knowledge of his uncle's beliefs.

Whether or not Milton in his *Defenses* actually prophesies a restoration, these works clearly reveal Milton's skepticism about establishing a republic. In each tract he targets the vices that he had cited in his Digression as the sources for political reversal— "self-seeking, greed, luxury, and the seductions of success" (*First Defense,* February 1651, *CPW* 4.1: 535,) and "avarice, ambition, and luxury" (*Second Defense*, March 1654, *CPW* 4.1: 684):

> Unless your liberty is . . . of that kind alone which, sprung from piety, justice, temperance, in short, true virtue, has put down the deepest and most far-reaching roots in your souls, there will not be lacking one who will shortly wrench from you, even without weapons, that liberty. . . . (*CPW* 4.1: 680)

The dim hopes that the English will indeed retain their liberty is apparent in Milton's salute to England's liberator. This no longer is the English people—or at least the people whom Milton previously had credited with having performed "it themselves." In the *First Defense* he tells the English that God "has wondrously set you free before all men" (*CPW* 4.1:535). And in his *Second Defense*, though Milton ostensibly is still defending "an entire nation" that has been liberated by God (*CPW* 4.1: 685), he focuses on God's instruments. These—in addition to Milton himself—consist of the radical, especially army, leaders (*CPW* 4.1: 674-78). The chief of these men is Cromwell: "Cromwell, we are deserted! You alone remain. On you has fallen the whole burden of our affairs. On you alone they depend" (*Second Defense, CPW* 4.1: 671).

This would seem to be a gloomy political situation indeed, since "a short but scandalous night of interruption of . . . English liberties" had already commenced with Cromwell's scornful dismissal of the Parliament (*Likeliest Means*, *CPW* 7: 274). Not that Cromwell himself was to blame. The invincible Protector represented the best hope that the English would have the opportunity to develop a republic under divine supervision (*Second Defense, CPW* 4: 1. 536, 550, 557-58). But no single person or Army—"not even Cromwell himself, nor a whole tribe of liberating Brutuses"—can successfully establish a republic (*CPW* 4.1: 682). A republic must be created by a sufficient number of virtuous citizens. Consequently, Milton lectures on the political consequences of self-enslavement, especially to the vice of "luxury." To avoid this self-enslavement, the English are not exhorted to retain their virtues but to rid themselves of their vices, to "drive" from their "minds the superstitions that are sprung from ignorance of real and genuine religion": "Unless you expel avarice, ambition, and luxury from your minds, yes, and extravagance from your families as well, you will find at home and within that tyrant who, you believed, was to be sought abroad in the field—now even more stubborn" (*Second Defense, CPW* 4.1:680). He concludes, "You therefore who wish to remain free, either be wise at the onset, or recover your senses as soon as possible . . . . learn to obey right reason, to master yourselves" (*CPW* 4.1: 684).

Milton's insistence that political liberty depends upon spiritual liberty explains why Milton was increasingly seeing himself as the single person who could salvage the Cause. Englishmen make good soldiers, but Milton apparently saw few in whom he could recognize a worthy comrade in the spiritual wars. Even before the *Second Defense* had been published, Milton had failed "to support . . . the Saints in their stand for those state principles he believed in most passionately" (*CPW* 4.1.242). Milton's cultural isolation is explicitly announced in the *Defensio Pro Se* (August 1655). Disregarding several defenses of the commonwealth (4.2.698n), Milton declares, "Against you ["Englishmen"], then, the fury and the violence of the enemy have left off their raging; for me, as it appears, for me alone, it remains to fight the rest of this war" (*CPW* 4.2.698). Anticipating the comments in the anonymous biography, Milton writes, "I foresaw even then [1649], Englishmen, that your war with the enemy would not be long, but that mine with the fugitives and their hirelings would be almost endless" (4.2.698).

The acerbity of this comment is disguised by the implication that "Englishmen" refers to those who had physically resisted the king, and that Milton engages against royalism in a different, intellectual and spiritual, warfare. Yet it remains a deeply pessimistic comment on a people that lacks the ability "to govern justlie & prudently in peace" (MS Digression, *CPW* 5:451). And perhaps the bleakest comment of all is Milton's subsequent silence. After announcing his role as the republic's chief hope, Milton's public activity, including publication, virtually ceases for nearly four years. By 1657, Milton's "influential friends" were "very few" since he remained "nearly always at home—and willingly" ("Letter 36, to Peter Heimbach," *CPW* 7:507). In October 1658, he republishes his *Defensio,* adding the concluding claim that, like Cicero, he too could swear "that by his efforts alone he had saved the city and the state . . . calling on God and men as my witnesses" (*CPW* 4.1:536). Yet a year later, he writes that his support for the commonwealth has been reduced to his "prayers for them that govern" since neither "God or the publick required" his services

(*CPW* 7: 324).

Though he had published his *Treatise on Civil Power* in February 1659, not until August 1659, with his *Likeliest Means*, did Milton resume the "war" against a monarchical restoration that was to occur in less than a year. This work—along with *Brief Notes* and especially *Readie and Easie Way*—appears to many readers to have been composed by someone whose idealism blinded him to the political realities of Dec 1659-May 1660. But whatever was impractical about the proposals contained in these tracts just as easily could have been produced by political skepticism. Milton, recognizing the futility of arguing for an English republic, declines to offer practical political counsel to his countrymen, instead choosing to act the one just man, denouncing the errors of a wayward nation wandering back to Egypt. A passage in his *Brief Notes* (March 1660) is especially illuminating in relation to Milton's previous silence and the epic that he was then writing:

> But that a victorious people should give up themselves again to the vanquishd, was never yet heard of; seems rather void of all reason and good policie, and will in all probabilitie subject the subduers to the subdu'd, will expose to revenge, to beggarie, to ruin and perpetual bondage the victors under the vanquishd: then which what can be more unworthie?" (*Brief Notes upon a Late Sermon*, *CPW* 7:482).

Though this passage will appear to many readers the "most surprising" (as well as the most "interesting") in the tract (*CPW* 7:482n), it not only echoes Milton's admonitions of ten years earlier but summarizes the epic that he was at that moment writing. Indeed, it summarizes the epic much better than it does Milton's political analyzes. Avenging his military defeat, Satan despoils Adam and Eve of their pastoral paradise, subjecting men to hard and itinerant labor. However, Milton did not believe that a restored monarchy would create material beggary and ruin for his countrymen. On the contrary, Milton argued that Englishmen could pursue the austere virtues of Milton's de-organized republic or the lucrative vices of a royal empire:

> Unless you be victors here [in the virtues of peace], that enemy and tyrant whom you have just now defeated in the field has either not been conquered at all or has been been conquered in vain. For if the ability to devise the cleverest means of putting vast sums of money into the treasury, the power readily to equip land and sea forces, to deal shrewdly with ambassadors from abroad, and to contract judicious alliances and treaties has seemed to any of you greater, wiser, and more useful to the state than to administer incorrupt justice to the people, to help those cruelly harassed and oppressed, and to render every man promptly his own deserts, too late will you discover how mistaken you have been, when those great affairs have suddenly betrayed you . . . ." (*Second Defense, CPW* 4.1: 681).[4]

Pursuing "wealth and honors," the English will reveal themselves to be "royalists." As the MS Digression clearly indicates, Milton believed this choice had been made long before 1660.

II. The Politics of Restoration in Books 1 and 2

Milton's political skepticism points to one answer to why the monarchical restoration did not substantively change the politics of *Paradise Lost*. Milton's poem does not have to react to the monarchical restoration because Milton anticipates and even predicts it in his epic. A thin political allegory coheres in the poem's biblical-epic narrative: scheming royal devils, the leaders of a military force that had could only have been defeated by God, successfully plot to reacquire a kingdom by subverting a newly created "happy state" (5.536) from its nascent allegiance to God. The broad message of this political allegory is that just as the devils must escape from hell and reestablish a monarchy on earth, so the royalists, vanquished by God, will return to reestablish the monarchy in England. The royal imagery that characterizes the devils has been extensively documented. Yet one unsettling fact has been overlooked. The motifs and themes that were soon to celebrate and legitimize the restored Stuart monarchy in 1660/61 are used to characterize Milton's devils—in 1658/59.[5] Our first glimpse of Satan recalls and anticipates the motif—or, in Milton's view, idol—that was leading the procession back to Egypt: the image of the martyr-king. Charles I "was an important actor, not only on the scaffold, but in his son's restoration" (Potter 243). Bishop Burnet comments that the king's

serious and christian deportment in it [his execution] made all his former errors be entirely forgot, and raised a compassionate regard to him, that drew a lasting hatred on the actors, and was the true occasion of the great turn of the nation in the year 1660. This was much heightened by the publishing of his book . . . ." (93)[6]

Scheming to re-attain a throne that will enslave his subjects, Satan is characterized by the images and arguments with which Charles I represents himself, especially as a martyr, in *Eikon Basilike*: a "fixed mind" (1.97) in refusing to repent or relent; a reliance on craft when force has failed; a claim to a divine right of power that opposes God; a justification of a war to defend a status quo that preserved true liberty, and, above all, a tactical exploitation of his status as martyr-savior to reestablish his royal status (Davies 106-07; Bennett 33-58).[7] Yet Satan is neither a mere commentary on the nature of kingship nor an unconscious product of Milton's memory of King Charles. Satan embodies the immediate perils of the divine aura of kingship that was preparing the way for monarchical restoration in 1658. Even the lines that for many readers seem to speak Milton's defiance of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, are more readily related to Milton's view of the king's defiance of a triumphant parliament in 1649:

> To bow and sue for grace
> With suppliant knee, and deify his power,
> Who from the terror of this arm so late
> Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,
> That were an ignominy and shame beneath
> This downfall. (1.111-116).

These lines, almost certainly written before 1660, point not to Milton's futile opposition to a monarchy that been restored, but to his subversion of the enormous emotional appeal of monarchy to oppose a restoration that will occur. Satan, citing his own divine right, assumes a "royal seat" in Heaven "in imitation" of the Son's kingship, "affecting all equality with God" (5.756, 763-64). The false kings of earth continue this satanic tradition, inaugurated on earth by Nimrod, whose name derives from the Hebrew for rebellious, as Milton frequently pointed out (Davies 39). The terrible cultural onus of rebellion is then transferred to worldly kings, revealing "the fallacy of the royalist claim that rebellion against kings is rebellion against God, by showing that kings and aspirants to kingship are the true rebels. They usurp a role that belongs to God and take his place as false idols" (Lewalski 154; *CPW* 4:227-28). On the other had, to obey false kings is to disobey God, and Satan's defiance of God parallels the defiance of Parliament by a king who refused to alter his divine claims despite his divinely ordered deposition. Satan, like Milton's king, locates his "ignominy and shame" not in the "fixed mind" that seeks to restore his monarchy, but rather in the divinely-ordered defeat that has deprived him of the throne. And lamenting his defeat, Satan royally misrepresents the facts. God clearly did not doubt his empire. On the other hand, godly Englishmen during the civil war were in continual doubt and "terror" until the royal armies were defeated by a divinely favored New Model. And the "fraud or guile" (1.646) of resurgent royalists in 1658 was an even more imminent peril in a land that was had been deprived of the divine protection of Oliver Cromwell.

The throngs that heed Satan's call to resurrection immediately reveal why the devils—like royalists—are "not lost / In loss itself" (l.525-26): it is God's will to preserve them, especially to try a humanity in need of temptation (l.210-12, 241, 366). These epic losers repeatedly subvert God's people because of the devils' identification with epic themes of love and war—"lust hard by hate" (1.417)—and the establishment of empire that perpetuates these vices. This sequence, of course, not only anticipates the courtly seduction of Eve (and Adam), but succinctly rehearses Milton's explanation of why, defeated on the battlefield, a monarchy will eventually triumph. Englishmen—men—prefer license to liberty, and this self-enslavement causes them to forfeit their God-given liberty to an imperial, satanic monarchy that will sate their appetite for wealth, luxury, and sensual indulgence.

Moloch, literally "king," leads this procession of devils. The emphasis on drums, bloodshed, and "human sacrifice" (l.393), especially of the young, points not only back to "the man of blood" who had caused the civil war, but forward to the man of flesh who in 1658 was being identified as the essential player in the scheme for imperial expansion. Indeed, Moloch's future empire—like

England's—dazzles. But, as Fowler points out, Milton is "ostensibly magnifying Moloch's empire, yet simultaneously pointing to his eventual defeat" (Fowler 85n). Moloch, freshly defeated by God, will continue in the role of divine loser, as Moloch's cities will be conquered by David. Nevertheless, the defeated devil will seduce the perennial embodiment of kingly wisdom Solomon, who was as early as 1660 used by "mercantile writers" as "a biblical exemplar of the sort they wished Charles II to become" (Hoxby 165). Royalist panegyrists were soon to identify Solomon with Charles II because of his purported wisdom and, more substantively, his many mistresses. "The wisest heart / Of *Solomon*"—"beguiled by fair Idolatresses" (1.445)—is "led by fraud" to embrace the violence of Moloch (1.401), transforming "the pleasant valley of Hinnom" into a "type of hell" (1.404-05).

Moloch is explicitly linked, "lust hard by hate" (1.417), with "Chemos, the obscene dread" (l.406).[8] He too will also acquire an extensive empire, as again a losing devil subverts God's people. Is Milton suggesting that the failure of republican culture was due in part to the failure of Englishmen to sustain the gloomy rigors of puritan abstinence or even the mild limitations of Milton's wholesome program for marital sex? Satan's royal and perverted eroticism is frequently opposed to the perfect sexual relations of Adam and Eve; and it plays no small part in his courtly seduction of Eve, as she seeks a "happier state" (4.775).[9] Yet nowhere in his prose does he explicitly argue this position. But the lusts of the flesh (concupiscence) and of the eye ("vanity") were commonly seen as pillars of the luxury that perverts public virtue, a truism embodied in contemporary accounts of ancient Rome. Warning against the seductions of "luxury," Milton himself points to "the ancient Romans, once they had been corrupted and dissipated by luxury" in his *Second Defense* (4.1.283). In the epic, Chemos-Peor entices "Israel in Sittim on their march from Nile / To do him wanton rites; which cost them woe" (1.413-14). Yet Moloch and Chemos are no match for humans directed by God. They will be driven to hell, again, by "good Josiah" (418).

Lust, hate-violence, and a people beguiled by conquering losers form the account of Baalim and Ashtaroth. These can "either sex assume" to

> execute their airy purposes
> And works of love or enmity fulfill.
> For those the race of Israel oft forsook
> Their living strength, and unfrequented left
> His righteous altar, bowing lowly down
> To bestial gods; for which their heads as low
> Bowed down in battle, sunk before the spear
> Of despicable foes. (1.424, 430-37).

Astoreth and Thammuz again configure lust, violence, and apostasy. The irony of the defeated devils embodying imperial militarism is here enhanced by the fact that the devils are fertility deities who have been sexually incapacitated: ". . . the price of warring against omnipotence is impotence" (Kermode 114).[10] A god and goddess thwarted by a boar, in a fertility myth with strong connotations of sexual mutilation, generate a blood-soaked "love-tale" that "infected Sion's daughters with . . . heat," producing "the dark idolatries / Of alienated Judah" (1.452-53, 456-57). Dagon also suffers sexual mutilation, his upper members "lopped off," his lower parts transformed into a fish. Yet he too attains a worldly empire, "dreaded through the coast / Of Palestine." And, again, a defeated devil seduces "his sottish conqueror . . . to adore the gods / Whom he had vanquished" (1.472-76). Milton does not elaborate the violence-lust-empire dialectic of "Osiris, Isis, Orus and thir Train" since they are so closely identified with an archetype of this configuration, "fanatic Egypt and her priests"—which points to Milton's usual ironic inversion of contemporary values (l.478-80). Priestly and "fanatic," Egypt was the spiritual home of Milton's monarchical England; and not surprisingly a "rebel king" (another ironic inversion) leads his people to seek these "wandering" and "bleating gods" (l.481, 489).

Belial, at last, appears:

> . . . to him no temple stood
> Or altar smoked; yet who more oft than he

> In temples and at altars, when the priest
> Turns atheist, as did Ely's sons, who filled
> With lust and violence the house of God.
> In courts and palaces he also reigns
> And in luxurious cities, where the noise
> Of riot ascends above their loftiest towers
> And injury and outrage: and when night
> Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons
> Of Belial . . . . (1.492-97)

Even in 1658 Belial was a popular embodiment of the cavalier (Fowler 90-91n): irreligious, violent, dissolute, omnisexual, aimless, and lazy (which is perhaps why he comes last). Belial, like the king in exile, lacks a single permanent residence. Indeed, even his thoughts—according to report, like the king's—are defined by wandering. But he works his powerful magic on all from a distance, preparing them for his reign of corruption, especially of religion. Though the "sons of Belial" were perhaps scarce in England in 1658, Milton deftly suggests an ominous turn of political events with his enjambment, "And in luxurious cities." London, rich and populous, was intent on becoming even richer by welcoming home its wandering king and his courtiers. To represent the consequences, Milton rewrites the eclipse imagery that so frequently represented the death of Charles I and the misfortunes of his wandering son. In the darkness caused by a restored "reign" of the sons of Belial, another wandering will commence through the streets of London, characterized by the infernal/imperial vices of luxury, "lust and violence."

In Book 2, Satan, loser to the forces of God, plots to regain through subversion what he had lost on the battlefield. Not surprisingly, he summons a Parliament, and "high on a throne of royal state" (2.1) functions not as Charles I during the years of personal rule, but as the king in Parliament, an enormously popular concept in the England of the late 1650s. Indeed, Hell—in 1658—is "a monarchy in the making, with royalist politics, perverted language, perverse rhetoric, political manipulation, and demagoguery" (Lewalski 151). "Princes, potentates, / Warriors, the flower" of the land (1.315-16) convene an infernal court that strongly resembles "a House of Lords controlled by a monarch" (Lewalski 152). In images that recall "the unholy glitter of Stuart finery" (Davies 12), every devil seems to be an "exiled" king (4.106), or sultan, or emperor, one of Satan's "throned powers" (128, 360). With these exiled princes defeated on the battlefield, "peace / And rest can never dwell" until they regain their "happy state" (1.65-66, 141).

Yet, ringing with exquisite political rhetoric, the demonic council also clearly is characterized by the vices that Milton and others frequently attributed to the Long Parliament, the Commonwealth, and the Protectorate. Indeed, Satan and his peers encompass all those—royalist or Parliamentarian—who had destroyed the opportunity to establish an English republic under God's protection (Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* 366-75). To explain this destruction, Milton restates the historical dialectic of Book 1. Wealth and empire are embodied in a Satan who is restored to a throne that "far / Outshone wealth of Ormus and of Ind . . . where the gorgeous east with richest hand / Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold" (2.1-4). "*Moloch*, sceptred king" advises first, a spokesman for a military force that could have been defeated only through God's intervention. Accordingly, he strongly resembles Milton's view of Charles I as the Man of Blood ("horrid king besmeared with blood / Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears" (1.392-93). Charles preferred death—and war—to any compromise of his divine right. Moloch strove "with the eternal to be deemed / Equal in strength, and rather than to be less, / Cared to be not all" (2.46-48). Though he claims to be "Of wiles, / More unexpert" (2.51-52), his speech reveals that he—like Milton's Charles I—is a crafty rhetorician, though he turns to words, again like Milton's king, only when force has failed. Echoing Satan, Moloch's stirring account of his sufferings and imprisonments recalls contemporary accounts of the captivity of Charles I (Bulstrode 176, Herbert 165, 167). Moloch also royally misrepresents historical fact, accusing God of inventing heavenly artillery. His plan, too, echoes that of a king who, as long as he remained alive, would ensure that no peace would reign in England until he reattained his "native seat" (2.76, 55-56): "Millions . . . stand in arms, and

longing wait / The signal to ascend."

The political allegory slackens with Belial. Milton's experience with Charles the Martyr was extensive and intense. His comments on "the younger Charles and that profligate crew of vagabond courtiers" were few.[11] But he characterizes Belial in terms that uncannily echo—and anticipate—assessments of Charles II and his courtiers, widely reputed to be lazy and preoccupied with mistresses: ". . . his thoughts were low; / To vice industrious, but to Nobler deeds / Timorous and slothful" (2.115-17). Belial, like the court-in-exile, abandons any hope of a successful military invasion to reacquire power because 1) it would fail, and 2) the royal rebels would be killed, imprisoned, or persecuted by a renewed campaign to exterminate them completely. Indeed, impregnable Heaven, "scorning surprise" with its perpetual "armed watch" and scouts (2.130,134) resembles the England of Cromwell and Thurloe. But Cromwell in October 1658 was dead; and Milton recognized that the royalists' "change / Worth waiting" had occurred (2.222-23). Yet Milton believed that many of the king's courtiers were lazy if not cowardly and that they would "perplex and dash / Maturest Counsels," delaying but not averting a restoration (2.114-15).

Mammon was not one of Satan's twelve disciples. Perhaps as "the least erected spirit that fell," he would have been as out of place among fertility deities as Presbyterians would have been among the "sons of Belial." Nevertheless, he represents the final phase—"led them on"—in a political cause that was ripe for success. King Charles I was dead, Charles II was in shabby exile, but the City Presbyterians were powerful political figures still in England. Whatever their religious noise, "even in heaven"—1639/40?—their "thoughts / Were always downward bent, admiring more / The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold, / Than aught divine" (1.680-83). Yet this very love of wealth has prevented them from too zealously opposing the Cromwellian state. "Riches grow in hell" too (l.691), and London, even without a monarch, "wants not her hidden luster, gems and gold" (2.271). On the other hand, any attempt to change "the settled state" (2.279) is dangerous if it fails:

> Suppose he should relent
> And publish grace to all, on promise made
> Of new subjection; with what eyes could we
> Stand in his presence humble, and receive
> Strict laws imposed, to celebrate his throne
> With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead sing
> Forced alleluias; while he lordly sits
> Our envied sovereign, and his altar breathes
> Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers
> Our servile offerings? (2.237-46)

Standing, singing (even hymns and hallelujah), altars, incense, and offerings—not for these Presbyterians, not even in Hell. A "nether Empire" (2.296) is better than no empire, so Mammon with much applause states the prevailing wisdom—for generations---in the City: anything but another civil war. "Such another Field" the devils, ironically like the City men, "dreaded worse than Hell" (2.292-93).

The imperial demons conflict with one another because they have advised how to oppose God, which within the poem's tenuous political allegory correlates to opposition to God's political instrument, the New Model. This context radically shifts with the embodiment of statesmanship, Beelzebub, the only devil that is not satirized (an omission that is perhaps the poem's sharpest political satire). Using the "royalist vocabulary of praise" in 1660 (Hoxby 152), Beelzebub refocuses from the God who has dethroned the devils to the humans who will restore them. Beelzebub points out that the devils in hell are not secure from God's power—no more, perhaps, than the court-in-exile—whether in France, Germany, the United Provinces, or in Spanish territory—was beyond Cromwell's reach. Rejecting the "vain empires" (l.378) of hellish exile, Beelzebub proposes a genuine empire to be gained by conquering the "puny inhabitants" of a "new world" (2.403): those "like to us, though less / In power and excellence." (2.349-50). This points, not to Greece, Rome, or the Middle East, but to contemporary England poised on the threshold of the vast

commercial expansion attendant upon an empire made possible by a restored monarchy: the human weakness for luxury will in turn prey upon the human weakness of technologically primitive societies. Hearing this scheme, "Devil with devil damned / Firm concord holds" (2.496-97)—as firm as the concord that will soon form between the Monck-led army, the court-in-exile, and the Presbyterian city men, as they restore an "imperial Sovereignty" that will provide their "happy isle" with the wealth/luxury of an empire on which the sun will never set (2.446, 410).

III. The Politics of Restoration: Books 1 and 2—and 11 and 12

Books I and II were almost certainly completed before the monarchical restoration—and perhaps even before the political turmoil that preceded the restoration of a monarch who, while he was not merrily encouraging the sons of Belial, was luxuriously presiding over the initial great expansion of the British Empire. The poem's political-ideological structures, especially its historical dialectic, would have appeared to Milton to have been spectacularly validated rather than tragically questioned by the events of 1660-61. Little wonder, then, that the monarchical restoration failed to alter the poem. It is surprising that Milton did not place a headnote to his epic—or at least to the first six books: "In this epic the author narrates Satan's conquest of paradise. And by occasion foretells the restoration of the king and his court, then in their exile." Many "commentators have quite rightly noted similarities between the unhappy world of Michael's history and the opening books of the epic" (Loewenstein 99). In Book 11, "Milton's whole sequence . . . seems to parallel the sequence in the procession of fallen angels in Book 1" (Fixler 172). This sequence is Milton's historical dialectic of empire based upon lust and violence. In Book 11 Adam can see "wherever stood / . . . the seat / the seat / Of mightiest empire" (11.385-87), and the narrator compares Adam to Jesus when he was tempted with "all earth's kingdoms and their glory" (11.384). The ensuing catalogue of empires seems an inappropriate preface to Cain's murder of Abel until we realize that Milton is restating his explanation for the origin of empires, including that of Solomon, "the only biblical ruler mentioned" (Fowler 619n). Cain, like Moloch, is closely identified with the violence that produces "parents' tears" (l.393). Death caused "by violent stroke" (11.471)—how an empire is acquired—is quickly related to the fatal sufferings caused by the "luxury" that an empire provides, enumerated in the catalogue of diseases that are caused by gluttony/intemperance. "Lust hard by hate" emerges full-blown in the next scene. "His race / Who slew his brother" produces the "fair female troupe" that seduces those "whose lives / Religious titled them the sons of God" (11.608-09,614, 621-22). The vicious cycle of lust and war, of "peace to corrupt no less than war to waste" (11.784), is ended by the Flood.

As Book 12 begins, "the archangel paused / Betwixt the world destroyed and world restored" (12.2-3) before quickly giving us Nimrod, the founder of divine right monarchy, who has been identified with Charles II and Charles I (Fowler 647n). The world after the flood is often used to describe Milton's perspective after the restoration. In Noah's land, as in Milton's, the "sons of God" have fatally succumbed to temptation, along with those who because of "piety feigned" have lost their freedom and consequently their virtue (11.799). "Cooled in zeal," these people "practice how to live secure, / . . . on what their lords / Shall leave them to enjoy; for the earth shall bear / More than enough, that temperance may be tried" (11. 801-05). Yet, Milton was more comfortable as a dissenter, in this case as the rare upholder of true authority among a wayward, image-doting people. Accordingly, Book 12 is even more optimistic than the pre-restoration Book 2. In Book 2, Satan prepares to corrupt the one just man and woman as he restores his monarchy, supported by the imperial demons of violence and lust/mammon of Book 1. But this revival is overshadowed by the devils' future failures, which are represented in Book 12. In Book 12, Satan is the Pharaoh of a world in Egyptian darkness, and Milton focuses on his overthrow by God, supported by the heirs of the one just man that are introduced in Book 11. As Book 12 begins, we learn that God personally thwarts Nimrod—to "great laughter . . . in heaven" (12.59). Enoch and Noah are followed by "a nation from one faithful man to spring" (12.113). Led by Moses and Aaron, this nation defies the archetypal king. Pharaoh. And

this nation shall produce one in whom "all nations shall be blest" (12.277). There are setbacks, but even these confirm divine wisdom. Michael repeats that when a people succumbs to sin, God "deprives them of their outward liberty / Their inward lost" (12.100-01). And, eventually, even these setbacks will disappear because of the primary consequence of Satan's restoration: God will become man to accomplish a true restoration of the human race. Assessing the consequences of Satan's restoration, Adam wants to "rejoice" rather than "repent" (12.474-75). And perhaps Milton felt similarly as he viewed a Stuart restoration that would force men and women to abandon attempts to construct a political Eden and instead to create a paradise within.

Indeed, the poem's political messages—whatever their tensions and conflicts—appear with the sublime calm that for centuries have deluded readers into thinking that Milton's justification of God's ways lacked any connection with the tumultuous political world of 1640-1660.[12] *Paradise Lost* represents not only why a monarchical restoration will take place, but why it should take place, in light of Milton's political experiences 1640-1658. Englishmen are as unfit to participate in a Milton's paradisal republic as Adam and Eve to remain in Eden; and it is better that they, like Adam and Eve, are relocated to the satanic world in which they have chosen to live. The English "corrupted and dissipated by luxury" are best ruled by a king: "It is not fitting, it is not meet, for such men to be free" (4.1.683). And the process—based on conflict, struggle, and opposition—by which the English people can make themselves fit to be free is optimized in a "history" characterized metaphorically by the activity of Milton's fallen and divinely–used devils.

The definitive fact about the "victors"—king and devil—is not that they are resurgent, but that they have to revive at all—and then to assume a status that falls far short of their former glories. The demonic restoration is as false, shabby, and incomplete as the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, during which Charles I's grand claims of divine right—and the diabolical appearance to fulfill those claims—gives way to the raucous, raunchy court culture of the "merry monarch" and the birth of the political party system. Degraded restoration is epitomized in Satan's final appearance in the poem. Satan is defined as an imperialist, returning as a "great adventurer from the search / Of foreign worlds" (10.440-41). The awaiting devils "appear like merchants or investors" intent on receiving a report on their investment (Hoxby 153). Satan returns as the "plebian angel militant," recalling Charles II and his ragged army's service to the Spanish, 1656-1660. Now, as a king should, Satan reappears on his "high throne . . . in regal luster" as a sun emerging from an eclipse—though reduced to a "permissive glory" (10.445-451). He informs his "great consulting peers" (10.456) that the success of his monarchical restoration—like all monarchical restorations—can be traced to an "apple" (10.487). They now will "rule, as over all he [Adam/"Man"] should have ruled" (10.493-94). He concludes by asserting the imperial imperative in peculiarly mercantile terms: "A world who would not purchase with a bruise, / Or much more grievous pain? . . . what remains ye gods, / But up and enter now into full bliss" (10.500-03).

"Full bliss," however, is what neither king nor devil will ever regain. Their restorations are "dead sea fruit." The political context is evident in Milton's satirizing the most famous tree-climbing incident in British history. Charles II, disguised as something like a "plebeian angel militant," famously ascended Royal Oak after the Battle of Worcester: "The six weeks during which Charles II was on the run were as important to his view of himself as the masques of Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones had been to his father" (Ollard, *Image* 85). Royal Oak was a prominent motif of the coronation festivities, the symbolic climax of the king's restoration and "visible sign of the failure of the parliamentary forces" (Backscheider 17). The Royal Oak backgrounded the figure of Charles II atop the eighty-foot First Triumphal Arch, inscribed with the *Adventus Augusti I* of Virgil, inviting comparisons of the king's restoration with "Octavius's return to Rome after the civil wars of the triumvirate" (Ogilby 18, 21). Imitating the Roman tradition of hanging "the Arms of the Conquered Enemy" in a tree, the Royal Oak bore "Crowns, and Scepters, instead of Acorns" (Ogilby 22, 37). Nor were absent representations of the "Commonwealth-men." "Rebellion" announced herself as "*Hell's Daughter*, Satan's *Eldest Child*," who hangs "men in their Beds, / With Common-wealths, and Rotas fill their Heads" (Ogilby 47):

On the North-side, on a Pedestal before the Arch, was a Woman personating REBELLION, mounted on an Hydra, in a Crimson Robe, torn, Snakes crawling on her Habit, and begirt with serpents, her Hair snaky, a Crown of Fire on her Head, a bloody Sword in one Hand, a charming Rod in the other. (Ogilby 13)

Milton appropriates these images to deride the imperial celebration of "an economic paradise expressed in terms of the traditional golden age" (Ogilby 39). His emphasis on flaming Sodom not only echoes Milton's views on court sexuality but again glances at the uncontrollable appetite for luxury to which Milton attributes the pursuit of empire. The imperial "world" is a "purchase" for those rich as "Lords" to "possess" (10.500, 466-67). Yet the purchase is a bad bargain. Serpentine and royal devils consume the dead sea fruit, succumbing to the allure of the origin of all political evil, monarchy. The ensuing "soot and cinders" not only sneers at the fugitive king's disguise in the tree (Ollard, *Escape* 27) but at the flaming Sodom that the king eventually possesses, or is "plagued" with, literally and metaphorically (10.569, 572). And, indeed, especially for the old cavaliers, their triumph turned to shame as they "chewed bitter ashes" (10.566), watching the fruits of victory distributed to those who had negotiated the restoration: former Cromwellians, powerful Presbyterians, former Parliamentarians, and City-men. Even the king discovered that "not the touch, but taste / Deceived" as he attempted "to allay / his appetite with gust" (10. 563-65). Charles II, like the devils, annually observed his "humbling" (12. 576), which also was publicly commemorated as Oakapple Day (Ollard, *Image* 86). But the king's cherished design "to found a new order of knighthood, the Royal Oak, for the most distinguished of the King's old adherents was mysteriously dropped, presumably to avoid offence to former parliamentarians" (Hutton 145).

Conclusion

I have argued that *Paradise Lost*, reflecting Milton's political skepticism, anticipates the monarchical restoration, containing a tenuous political allegory in which royal devils subvert a freshly-created, divinely sanctioned, "happy state." In conclusion, I would like to suggest that this reading provides a fresh perspective on one of the oldest, most vexed questions about Milton's epic. Why does Satan, if a negatively conceived character, defy God by often echoing Milton's own political rhetoric? Certainly Milton would have recognized the articulation of his own political views, such as in 5.772-802, and so Satan's republican rhetoric is deliberately included. Yet, Satan is not a republican with whom Milton's sympathizes. On the contrary, he is a republican—and a royalist and Presbyterian and Major-General among many other things (Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* 366-75)—to whom Milton (like Abdiel) objects most vehemently because his views diabolically counterfeit Milton's own arguments. Indeed, few circumstances could reveal as clearly why Milton retreated from public activity from 1655 until 1659. Milton recognized that his authentic revolutionary voice had been co-opted and perverted by public discourse, that the devil—and the army men, and the Rumpers, and the Parliamentarians, and the king—could quote Milton and scripture, putting "best things to worse purposes" as they, like the demonic council, harmonize in the political processes that will restore monarchy.

Milton then recognized that his "warning voice" (4.1) was predetermined to the same failure—and success—as Raphael's against the archetypal "plotting" enemy (5.240, 6.901). Raphael, like the epic's poet, fails to avert the restoration of satanic monarchy, which is predetermined to succeed at the time his "warning" voice is heard. Yet Raphael, like Milton, triumphantly provides a pre-restoration commentary on Satan's defeat in his war against God. And this defeat, if not Raphael's poetic re-creation of the defeat, predetermines the shabby nature of Satan's restoration. Similarly, Milton's (anti-)epic itself, or at least its political allegory, does not attempt to avert a restoration, but rather to subvert by anticipating and indeed even creating it according to Milton's own keenly republican, skeptical, sensibility. If *Paradise Lost* is the weapon that the solitary Milton chose, in 1655, to preserve his Cause, and to wage war against the divine right monarchy as embodied in Charles I, he chose the right type of warfare. *Paradise Lost* emerges as arguably the most visible monument to Milton's idea of the Good Old Cause. Far from becoming either a majestic relic of the Renaissance or the disappearing paradise created by a defeated Saint, the intensely contemporary poem

immediately exerts its enormous force on English culture, shaping, and being shaped by, and a larger cultural matrix of contexts, crises, currents and (ex)changes that cause the monarchical restoration itself. And these forces ensure that 1) the old monarchy, as embodied in Charles I, is not restored; 2) the monarchy that is restored would be reduced to the Hanoverian succession; and 3) Milton's epic becomes the most influential poem in England during the 200 years that follow its publication. Nevertheless, it is an England that opts for political empire over civil virtue.

Notes

[1]Citations to Milton's poetry, cited parenthetically within the text, will refer to Fowler.

[2]Parker Comments, "Milton took a cynical and disillusioned view of the national character, a view unquestionably influenced by the confusion of his own times and the general atmosphere of pessimism in 1648" (1: 327). Worden writes, "Throughout his work there runs a doubt, not about the healthiness of republican rule, but about the fitness of the English people to sustain it" (233). Hamilton comments that "we might do well to consider the pessimism of the *History* alongside Milton's *Of Reformation*, a work which, though printed nearly three decades earlier, recounts a pattern of failures in England's past in such a way as to communicate little cause for optimism" (246).

[3]As the monarchy was restored, Milton neglected safely to retrieve his investments in government securities. This delay indicates, to many scholars, that Milton, more poet than politician, refused to face political reality. Yet, Milton would have been the more reluctant to salvage his investment, the more he recognized the futility of the political situation or, perhaps, his impending execution. Certainly, Milton would not have approved of a preoccupation with personal finances at a time when the nation was, one last time, rejecting God's plan. He certainly did not approve of it in those who sought to "hucster the common-wealth" in 1641 (MS Digression, *CPW* 5:445). Citations to Milton's prose, cited parenthetically within the text, will refer to the Yale edition of Milton's *Complete Prose Works* (*CPW).*

[4]Hill links the republican failure with the fact that "the men of property refused to advance money to any government they did not control" (Hill, *God's Englishman* 253).

[5]See Knoppers and Achinstein especially for the poem's critique of the monarchical restoration.

[6]According to Clarendon, *Eikon Basilike* "was an army, and did vanquish more than any sword could" in forwarding a restoration (qtd. in Knachel, xxxii).

[7]Chains were prominent on the scaffold where the prone king laid his head on a block barely six inches high. For comparisons of Charles to Christ in 1646-49, see Lacey 29-33. The prone Satan too is represented in terms that are deeply sourced in traditions of the crucifixion of Christ: "nine times the space that measures Day and Night," "Dungeon horrible," "Adamantine chains," "torture," "darkness visible," "rood," "Head up-lift," "leviathan," "Anchor," "spires," "spear," "mast," *Stygian* flood," "sole of unblest feet," "Red-Sea Coast," *Busiris*," "Azazel," "shout that tore Hell's Concave," the Golgotha of hell, Satan's abandonment by his father, the devils' physical alteration, Satan's taunting the suffering, fallen angels, and his subsequent liberating of them. For a fuller discussion, see Daniel, "Crucifixion Imagery."

[8]Embodiments of self-enslavement, "Moloch and Belial are complex developments of the two royalist types that Salmasius had held up for admiration because of their reaction to Charles's fall" (Bennett 56).

[9]Hill writes that Satan's "approach to Eve is a parody of the rituals of courtly love at Henrietta Maria's court" (*Milton and the Emglish Revolution* 366).

[10]See also Daniel, *Death in Milton's Poetry* 26-48.

[11]This description is from the *First Defense* as translated in the Columbia edition of Milton's works (549). The Yale edition translates it as "the younger Charles and his damned crew of emigrant courtiers" (4.1.534).

[12]Christopher Hill points out that "Milton . . . is the first to turn to the story of the Fall to explain the failure of a revolution" (*Milton and the English Revolution* 352). He writes that "England in 1659-60 re-enacted as macabre farce the tragedy of the Fall" (344): "Not to grasp the magnitude of the disaster which had overwhelmed the poet would be a serious failure of imagination" (356). But the poem was begun, and its blueprint had taken shape, by autumn 1658. And "the calm and distanced effect of *Paradise Lost*"—"astonishing, remarkable"—that Hill attributes "to Milton's art and sense of decorum" is, rather than "deceptive," more readily attributed to Milton's triumphant sense that he was right.

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Reading *The Female Spectator*

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During the period 1744-1746, Eliza Haywood published *The Female Spectator*. It came out in monthly segments for over two years, but since two months were missed, it totaled 24 issues. At the end of the run the issues were collected together into a four-volume edition which had considerable popularity, reaching seven editions by 1775.[1] Prior to the publication of the entire 24 issue edition in 2001, three selections had appeared, all in the 20th century.[2]

Selecting from *The Female Spectator* raises issues of how to select and what principles should be used. "Representative" is a complex term, for it makes assumptions about what has been represented. As *The Female Spectator* has long been thought a miscellany, one could select from the topics one considered most relevant or significant. Even then, it is clear that the different editors had different senses of what topics deserved reprinting. Until the 2001 publication of the whole work little attention had been given to the political, religious, and scientific issues and arguments of the publication. Even now, very little attention has been paid to the question of overall structure and unity.

1929

In 1929 the first of three 20th century selections from *The Female Spectator* appeared. It was "chosen and edited by Mary Priestley with an Introduction by J. B. Priestley and Decorations by Constance Rowlands" (TP).[3] It was exactly what it intended to be: delightful, whimsical, and entertaining. There is no effort to be scholarly; the selections are not placed in the order of the original; unacknowledged omissions occur within selections; and in one case an unacknowledged addition is made. Yet, for all its disarming charm, the book does present what at least one editor thought was important about Eliza Haywood, the publication, and the 18th century.

There is a harmony of interest among the introducer, the illustrator, and the editor. J.B. Priestley puts the original in the context of modern women's magazines, from the glossies we know as Vanity Fair to the more humble such as *Good Housekeeping* (vii). He concludes, "how pretty and charming her times look to us" (xv). The illustrations, revealingly called "decorations," continue the attitude. They are delightfully whimsical and offer no effort at realism. The selections themselves are chosen to highlight the points where the age is lightheartedly different from the modern day of 1929; political arguments are totally ignored, the reported researches of the women into nature are limited to the casual, the stories of love are the least exemplary, and the most bizarre examples of behavior are included. All of these selections are presented without consideration of the context in the essays which might help to explain their function in the overall purpose of the publication. Haywood reveals in a passage in the final essay in the 24th book (of course, not included in this selection, nor, more surprisingly, in either of the other two) that after the first three books she has deviated from her "entertaining method" and "become more serious" (XXIV, 411).[4] It is revealing then that of the 38 labeled selections included by Mary Priestley in her edition, 15 of them are from the first three books. There is clearly no effort to represent the more serious side of *The Female Spectator*. I do not mean to suggest that the selection is not pleasant or entertaining; however, it is not useful as a reliable, balanced insight into Eliza Haywood, *The Female Spectator*, or the 18th century.

1993

In 1993 a much more broadly based and thoroughly scholarly selection appeared, edited with an introduction by Gabrielle M. Firmager.[5] Careful and valuable research has gone into the production of this volume. The introduction summarizes the most recent findings about Haywood's life and publications, Firmager's assessments of Haywood's life and work are judicious, the editing and printing are carefully done, and the notes are accurate and helpful. This is the kind of edition on which scholars have depended until quite recently. Yet, it is still possible to explore the principles on which the selection of materials was made and to understand that other principles are possible.

Firmager acknowledges the earlier selection by Priestley and notes that that selection emphasizes "the more frivolous aspects of Mrs. Haywood's work, and the Introduction is more than a little patronising" (13). Firmager concludes that "few comparisons can be made with modern women's magazines" (12). She concurs with James Hodges that the periodical belongs in the category of conduct literature: "a medium of courtesy counsel for the proper behavior of ladies and would-be ladies of mid-eighteenth century England" (quoted approvingly from Hodges 154 on p. 14).[6] Thus *The Female Spectator* is placed back into the context in which it was seen by its contemporaries, that of the *Spectator* and similar publications seeking the reform of private manners. Firmager states that about one fifth of the total content is included in her selection and that "An attempt has been made to extract a representative selection from the essays and stories to give an insight into the mores and manners of the eighteenth century as perceived by a woman" (12).

On the topic of politics, Firmager says "From her other writings there appears to be little doubt about Mrs Haywood's political persuasions," but she continues, "By the time she was writing *The Female Spectator*, however, Mrs Haywood appears to have adopted a more equivocal stance . . ." (7).[7] When Firmager presents Haywood's defense against the accusation that she has neglected the political sphere, she cites Haywood's comments about battles and about private virtue, but she does not cite her concerns about censors or limits on the liberty of the press nor does she include in her selections any part of the debate between the Hanoverian lady and the English lady which ranged broadly over the relationship of George II to his British subjects and over the involvement of Britain in the continental war. This debate is Haywood's fullest excursion into politics where with delicacy and irony the flaws of the Hanoverian position are revealed. Nor is there anything equivocal in the position Haywood takes in these passages; she may be layering the context to avoid legal problems, but her stance is as clear here as it is behind the allegories of *Eovaii*.

The second significant omission from Firmager's selection is the topic of religion. The arguments in *The Female Spectator* about the immateriality and therefore the immortality of the soul do seem strained and archaic to the modern ear, but the importance of religious conviction, particularly of the existence of an imperishable soul, to Haywood's arguments for virtue is weakened if some attention is not given to her religious concerns and discussions. In Haywood's thought religion is not a separable topic from virtue; indeed she argues quite specifically that it is essential to honor and to manners.

The third area of omission is the topic of science. Science for Haywood is the whole realm of natural philosophy, balanced by and interactive with the complementary realm of moral philosophy. There is little point in including the letter on the importance of education for women or the letter on how the French ladies are educated through enlightening conversation with men, if one doesn't include the discussions of snails, caterpillars, grafting, microscopes, telescopes, astronomy, and astrology, all of them topics of which Haywood believed the education would consist. Priestley will include more of these topics because they are so clearly outdated as to provide entertainment for her more educated age, but she will not include the educational, moral, and religious context that makes the topics relevant to the character and development of an 18th century young woman. Her goal is to show their

irrelevance. Priestley will even include the discussion of flying machines (XIX, 244 ff.) and their impossibility unless God ordains them, but will juxtapose it to the comment on the dangers of the imagination although the episodes are from different books.

The connection of flying machines and God's providence indicates once again how the various concerns of Haywood are integrated in her awareness. Whether man could fly is connected to religious beliefs, as is the question of whether there are other worlds and other creatures on them. The structure of snails and the wonder of butterflies all proclaim the providence of the Creator. Religion is as important to natural philosophy as it is to moral philosophy. Indeed, what is particularly missing from Firmager's selection is the sense of the interrelatedness of all the topics considered, or a sense of the overall structure and focus of *The Female Spectator*.

1999

In 1999 Patricia Meyer Spacks edited another group of selections from *The Female Spectator* for the *Women Writers in English, 1350-1850* series. The edition is in paperback, and it has brief, but helpful, footnotes at the bottom of the page for the general reader. The Foreword to the series declares that "The editions are aimed at a wide audience, from the informed undergraduate to professional student of literature, and they attempt to include the general reader . . ." (viii).[8] This edition seems to be perfectly in line with those overall intentions. The introduction covers the essential information about Eliza Haywood and places *The Female Spectator* in the context of the patriarchal society of the time.

The selections present almost one third of the original text. They were "chosen to indicate the range of Haywood's concerns and methods" (xxi). The selections are distributed among the four volumes with Volume Two rather more lightly represented and Volume Three rather heavily represented. No reference is made by Spacks to either of the preceding collections. While Priestley has looked for the charming and the frivolous, emphasizing the distance between Haywood's presentation of women and that which Priestley believes dominates in 1929, Spacks is more interested in the insightful and enduring, emphasizing the continuity between Haywood's view of women in1745 and her own view of women in 1999. The conclusion of Spacks' introduction stresses the relevance of Haywood's essays to our time; she points out Haywood's "awareness of how social and personal concerns intersect and complicate one another. It is a kind of understanding that extends far beyond the eighteenth century" (xxi).

Spacks, like Firmager, accepts Hodges' argument about the central purpose of *The Female Spectator*; they see that purpose as improving private morals and manners, and especially those of women. They are sure that the subjects will be limited to private matters since the author is a woman and the publication is addressed to women. Thus, they will both dismiss the political, religious, and scientific passages of the publication. Firmager quotes Haywood's purpose as "To check the enormous Growth of Luxury, to reform the Morals, and to improve the Manners of an Age" (8). Spacks agrees and commends Haywood for recognizing the limitations of her influence and working cogently and practically within those limits. Spacks goes a step further in trying to define the overall impact and even the structure of the publication; she says: "The governing idea of the *Female Spectator* is the urgency of experience for middle-class women" (xiii). Thus, we see that Spacks' selections will be controlled by her sense of what pertained to the manners and morals of an eighteenth century woman, emphasizing the practical quality of the insights and lessons and being sensitive to the possible continuity of concerns with those of women in 1999. It is revealing to note that Spacks includes all but the last two pages of the Haywood's comments on women's education. Haywood's final comment in those omitted pages is that fashion is dictated from the social classes above and others follow blindly. The only hope for reform, she says, is for leadership from eminent persons.[9] Educational reformers in 1999 are unlikely to ask the aristocracy to set a pattern for reformation. Spacks, interested in the continuity of concerns, excludes that differentiating issue.

Thus the three editions have included and omitted passages according to their declared or implicit interests. Each seems to be concerned with being somehow representative and informing us what Eliza Haywood and her era were about. Each selection has particular, though widely different virtues, and each calls our attention to different qualities of the original.

Coherence as Courtesy Book

James Hodges has argued that the proper context for *The Female Spectator* is the tradition of courtesy books written from the 16th century into the 18th. Indeed, Hodges presents parallel passages from Haywood and the other courtesy books on a range of topics including love, marriage, parent-child relations, education, morals and manners, and brief treatment of religion, medicine, and the theater (listed in Hodges 176). He also argues, however, that despite appearances of coherence, the individual books and thus the publication are a miscellany of topics: "Mrs. Haywood shapes each number of her journal into an omnibus essay in which a diversity of matter is set forth in a variety of literary forms . . . . In each issue she kneads all together so skillfully as to leave the illusion of a single, uninterrupted essay" (155). He is perhaps following the conclusion of Haywood's early biographer and assessor of her writings, George F. Whicher, who illustrates his point by citing three of the four topics from one of the apparently least unified books: "In a single paper are jumbled together topics so diverse as the degradation of the stage, the immoderate use of tea, and the proper choice of lovers" (142)[10] The reference is to Book VIII, which has in fact a fourth topic, the charge that *The Female Spectator* has failed to fulfill its promise of intelligence about political affairs.

The Structure of Book VIII

Book VIII consists mostly of four letters to *The Female Spectator*. The first letter addresses the present state of the theater, but concentrates on the question of censorship (licensing), which Haywood concedes she can neither explain nor remedy. It remains "extremely strange that it should be a Crime to represent on the Stage those Transactions which are in History, and everybody has the Privilege of reading and commenting on in any other kind of Writing" (VIII, 280).

The legal problems of writing are again central in her discussion of political topics. The writer of the fourth letter criticized *The Female Spectator* for first declaring to do more than woman should and then for failing to fulfill that apparently empty brag. He finds she has entertained her readers "with Home-Amours, Reflections on Human Nature, the Passions, Morals, Inferences, and Warnings to your own Sex;—the most proper Province for you, I must own, but widely inconsistent with the Proposals of your first setting out" (VIII, 293). Spectator's defense is multiple. She notes that some of the topics (battles) are best handled in newspapers; others (the passions that move the wars) are self-evident. But her answer goes further: there are topics it may be lawful to consider, but it is not expedient to do so, and the reverse is also true; it may be expedient, but not lawful. She concludes: "If either of these should happen to be the Case, the Silence of the Female Spectator may very well be pardoned" (VIII, 296). She "will not pretend to measure what Extent of Power the Guardian Angel entitled the *Liberty of the Press* may yet retain" (VIII, 296). Her basic position and prime motivation is "To check the enormous Growth of Luxury, to reform the Morals, and improve the Manners of an Age, by all confess'd degenerate and sunk" in the hope "that the better we regulate our Actions in *private Life*, the more we may hope of *public Blessings*, and the more we shall be enabled to sustain *public Calamities*" (VIII, 296).

While these comments conclude her defense, she has hardly finished with the topic (VIII, 296). Once again the right of inquiry is declared: "The meanest Person has also an equal Right with the greatest, to expect a satisfactory Account in every thing relating to the Common-Wealth," and the dangers involved in its operation are recognized: "But tho' this Curiosity be not only pardonable but laudable also, there may be Reasons which render it improper, as I said before, for any one to take upon themselves to satisfy it, even tho' they were possessed of the most sure Materials and greatest Abilities" (VIII, 298).

Thus, the beginning and ending letters propel the Spectator onto dangerous ground where legal issues are raised. What better way to disarm those issues than to have the letters bracket two apparently innocent even humorous topics of tea drinking and husband choosing? The innocence may, however, be more apparent than real. Even the letter concerning the choice of husbands has a political overtone neither we nor her contemporary readers should miss. The young woman who writes the letter dislikes her first suitor because when he looks at the sea in her company, he discusses the sad loss of Admiral Balchen rather than telling her she is as beautiful as Venus rising from the sea. The context of the whole letter and the Spectator's response recommending this suitor as the most admirable contains an implicit criticism of such young women for their failure to recognize the relative merits of admirals vs. their beauty. One dimension of Haywood's criticism of George II's policies is that he is putting Britain's resources into the army to fight on the continent rather than into the navy to protect Britain's trade and her colonies. While these middle letters raise issues that the Spectator can turn to good purpose, they appear to be safe and well within the expected sphere of woman's competence. Haywood consistently provides an entertaining or disarming cover for the points she presents to her attentive readers. The unity of Book VIII, therefore, is rather to be sought in its rhetorical strategy than in its similarity of subject matter.

Overall Structure and Coherence

In a similar way the overall structure of the four volumes and 24 books of *The Female Spectator* is to be found in rhetorical strategy rather than selected topics. We can be confident of the conscious and deliberate use of such strategy by the explicit declaration of Haywood. She has the Spectator point out in the final book that she has heard complaints that she has "deviated from the entertaining Method I set out at first –That since the Second or Third Book I have become more serious. – That I moralize too much, and that I give them too few Tales," and she confesses:

> In the first Place it was necessary to engage the Attention of those I endeavoured to reform, by giving them such Things as I knew would please them: Tales, and little Stories to which every one might flatter themselves with being able to find a Key, seemed to me the most effectual Method, and therefore began that Way, and proceeded by Degrees to more grave Admonitions. (XXIV, 411)

Thus, the movement from volume to volume is toward more complex issues and toward less guidance for the reader.

The final volume places considerable demands on the reader to explore difficult topics and to penetrate complex disguisings. Haywood can reasonably conclude that she has achieved her end by motivating and encouraging the reader to move sequentially through the twenty-four issues or books. We have had an education in the range of topics important to Haywood's sense of a woman's role, we have been invited if not compelled to reflection, and we have met the requirements to achieve fortitude.[11]

Firmager quotes the seminal passage from Book VIII where Haywood declares her purpose: "To check the enormous Growth of Luxury, to reform the Morals, and improve the Manners of an Age, by all confess'd degenerate and sunk, are the great Ends for which these Essays were chiefly intended" (Firmager 8; VIII, 296), but the passage, indeed the sentence goes on:

> and the Authors flatter themselves that nothing has been advanced, but may contribute in a more or less Degree to the accomplishing so glorious a Point.—Many little Histories, it is true, are interspers'd, but then they are only such as serve to enforce Precept by Example, and make the Beauty of Virtue, and Deformity of Vice sink deeper into the Reader's Mind.—When we would strike at any favourite Passion, it requires the utmost Delicacy to do it in such a manner as shall make the Person guilty of it ashamed of being so, without being angry at the Detection; and no way so likely to succeed, as to shew him the Resemblance of himself in the Character of another. (VIII, 296)

While the goal of the essays is to reform the morals and manners, the method used is declared in the final book: "To awaken the Soul, and rouse it to a proper exertion of its Faculty of Discernment, has been the chief Aim of these Lucubrations" (XXIV, 391). To understand the structure of individual books and of the whole publication it is necessary to focus on this later quotation, to see the importance of discernment and reflection, to understand the content of the education needed in all its dimensions, and to accept

the centrality of the immortal soul to the method used and the purpose sought. Her emphasis on the power of women to influence society will be repeated in later courtesy writers such as Gregory and Fordyce, but they will not have the same conception of how a woman should be educated or what the content of that education should be as the basis of their argument.[12]

Thus, including the political, scientific, philosophical, and religious issues as they were understood and presented at the time is important to our understanding of the overall unity of the work. We can then see how Haywood has developed a rhetorical strategy and employed it in the parts and in the whole to achieve her goal. On this understanding we can expand our conception of courtesy and of courtesy books, for Haywood has not guided her readers only toward improved manners in the narrow sense, but has presented an educational program leading to a reformed society.

Notes

[1] The figures cited are from the British Library catalog. Kathryn R. King, using the forthcoming bibliography of Patrick Spedding, says "A collected edition in a four-volume format came out in 1748 and went through a further nine issues and editions over the next thirty years" (1). Eliza Haywood. *The Female Spectator* in *The Selected Works of Eliza Haywood II*, Volumes 2 and 3. Ed. Kathryn R. King and Alexander Petit. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001).

[2] King notes one earlier work had printed essays from *The Female Spectator*, but the number is so few it cannot be called a selection. Rather it is a selection of essays from a variety of periodicals. Nathan Drake, *The Gleaner: A Series of Periodical Essays; Selected and Arranged from Scarce or Neglected Volumes. . . .* (London: Suttaby, Evance, and Co., 1811).

[3] *The Female Spectator*. Being Selections from Mrs. Eliza Heywood's Periodical (1744-1746). Chosen and edited by Mary Priestly. With an Introduction by J. B. Priestly and Decorations by Constance Rowlands (London: The Bodley Head, 1929).

[4] Quotations from *The Female Spectator* are from the edition by King and Petit in *The Selected Works of Eliza Haywood*. Reference will be made parenthetically to the book and page number. The pagination refers to the two volumes of *The Selected Works*, but the 1748 edition was in four volumes, which have some coherence. Book I to VI were in Volume One, VII to XII in Volume Two, XIII to XVIII in Volume Three, and XIX to XXIV in Volume Four.

[5] Haywood, Eliza. *The Female Spectator*: Being Selections from Mrs. Eliza Haywood's Periodical, First Published in Monthly Parts (1744-6). Edited with an Introduction by Gabrielle M. Firmager (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993).

[6] Hodges, James. "The Female Spectator, a Courtesy Periodical," *Studies in the Early English Periodical*. Ed. Richmond P. Bond (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1957), 151-182.

[7] Firmager may be influenced by a seminal article by Helen Koon who contrasts the *Spectator* with *The Female Spectator*, insisting that *The Female Spectator* is dedicated to women and their interests which apparently did not include politics in her view. "Eliza Haywood and *The Female Spectator*," *HLQ* 42(1978): 43-55.

[8] *Selections from* The Female Spectator *by Eliza Haywood*. Edited by Patricia Meyer Spacks. *Women Writers in English*, 1350-1850. General Editors: Susanne Woods and Elizabeth H. Hageman (New York: Oxford UP, 1999).

[9] "It is not from below we are to expect any illuminous Emanations, nor would they have the necessary Influence; but when darted upon us from above, all see their Light and partake of the Blessings they bestow. Virtue, tho' adorned with all the Graces, in mean Persons is no more than a dark Lanthorn giving Light only to him that carries it; but those who sit aloft wear a Sun upon their Breasts, which all behold, admire, and are ambitious to follow" (X, 367).

[10] George Frisbie Whicher, *The Life and Romances of Mrs. Eliza Haywood* (New York: Columbia UP, 1915).

[11] Women's failure to exercise their power "is wholly owing to the want of a due Reflection" (XII. 432), which links the topics of education, reform of manners, and society together. What is significantly lacking in the education of women is philosophy, the reflection on experience. They are denied both natural and moral philosophy in their education, and thus the ability to reflect on what they experience and to draw out and understand the principles of behavior and knowledge. It is reflection that turns wit into wisdom and that allows the natural inclinations toward goodness to be based on strong foundations. The second volume has explored the dimensions of this topic: how difficult it is to understand ingratitude if the principles of it are not clarified; how important it is to understand principles in political argument or analysis; how revealing it is to understand that jealousy is not based on an excess of love. The other element added to this general consideration is religion, for Haywood argues in Book XI particularly but throughout *The Female Spectator* that religion is necessary for control of the passions, and religion is based on the immortality of the soul. She declares in Book X that honor is unreliable unless accompanied by religion, and will conclude in Book XXIV that religion is essential to good manners.

The education of women, then, is not just a general tropic, but is an essential step in Haywood's conception of a better society. Women need to have an education in moral and natural philosophy, such as the topics and arguments presented in *The Female Spectator* provide. This education will give them the power of reflection and will enable them to use their natural inclinations for their own virtue and will allow them to exercise the power they have through their beauty and wit to influence others toward virtue. Haywood has consistently argued for, and her whole method of presentation supports, the practice of leading the listener or the

reader to virtue through the pleasures of anecdote, of graceful statement, of irony and laughter, and through all the uses of aesthetic pleasure.

[12] Fordyce and Gregory do not see growth in reflection through education in philosophy as the means for women to improve society, but urge that women's influence on men will be accomplished by "the lovely meekness and modest pliancy which ought always to characterize the sex" (James Fordyce, *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the Advantages to Be Derived by Young Men from the Society of Virtuous Women*. London: T. Cadell, 1776, 78). In his *Sermons to Young Women*. in Two Volumes. 3rd edition, corrected. London: A. Millar and T. Cadell, 1766, Fordyce lists his idea of truly feminine qualities: "modesty, meekness, prudence, piety, with all virtuous and charitable occupations, all beautiful and useful accomplishments suited to their rank and condition. These are the chief ornaments of their sex; these will render them truly lovely as Women; and as Christians, these will more peculiarly become them" (7). John Gregory similarly finds "One of the chief beauties in a female character is that modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration." He recommends: "Be even cautious in displaying your good sense. . . . If you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men. . . . " (*A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*. London: W. Strahan, T. Cadell,1774, 26, 31). [This footnote is slightly revised from a longer argument on the difference between Haywood and more traditional 18th century doctrines of courtesy presented as "The Lively Heroine: Eliza Haywood's Later Novels as Conduct Books," Tenth Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature. Morehead State University, 2002.]