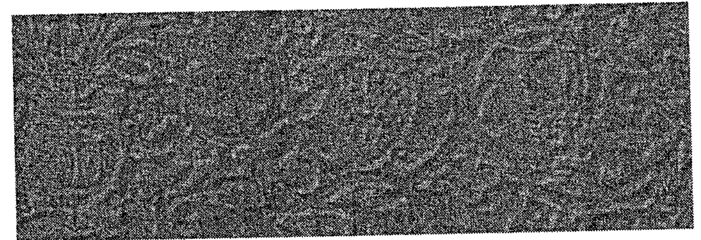
Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Northern Plains Conference on Earlier British Literature



Edited by Robert J. De Smith
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Introduction

On April 14-15, 2000, the Eighth Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature was held at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. Presenters and attendees from seven midwestern states gathered to read and hear papers on a variety of topics ranging from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century. Participants included area high school teachers, college students, graduate students, and professors. In its eighth year, the conference (earlier called the Dakotas Conference, among other variations) continues to be a place not only of lively scholarship but of genuine collegiality: many of us attend year after year because we find the conference a good place to be. As of this writing, the 2001 conference is being organized at Black Hills State in Spearfish, SD.

The featured speakers at the conference were Dr. Heather Dubrow and Dr. Andrew D. Weiner, both of the University of Wisconsin—Madison. Their willingness to participate, and their graciousness during the conference, helped to make the event an excellent one. Dr. Dubrow's presentation was titled "'Fain would I dwell on form': The Drama of Shakespeare's Non-dramatic Modes," in which she helped us reexamine both the motive and the expression of Renaissance lyrics by exploring intensely a number of Shakespeare's sonnets. Dr. Weiner's presentation was called, "'Die he or justice must': Justice and Mercy in Book V of *The Fairie Queene, Measure for Measure* and *Paradise Lost*." Could a one-hour talk range farther? Weiner's presentation was exactly fitted to a conference with a broad area of interest.

The conference could not have been successful without the help of numerous persons and organizations. Dordt College and Humanities Iowa supported the conference financially. I had invaluable help organizing the conference from a student, Laurie Hoogeveen. We were entertained by the Dordt College Kantorei (directed by Dr. Benjamin Kornelis) and by a string quartet of student players. In producing this volume, I had help from Fred Haan's crew at Dordt Press. Kristen Heerema, with help from Jake Van Wyk, designed the cover, using a motif from a seventeenth-century printer's device. My colleagues in English at Dordt supported me in every way

possible, and my family—especially my wife Rebecca—endured both my enthusiasm and my absences before and during the conference. To all, much thanks.

The ten papers in this volume represent well the range, consistently high quality, and key interests of the conference. I have arranged them in three sections. First, a set of papers (by Wheeler, Northrop, Alexander, and Youngberg) focuses on the interpretation of a variety of texts (and persons) from the 16th to the 18th century. There follows a set of three papers on Milton (by Wallerstein, Joplin, and Aronson). Finally, a set of papers (by Brandt, Ruud, and Benkert) focuses on teaching strategies. Readers will find the papers rewarding, and, I hope, the papers will stimulate continued interest in, and commitment to, a fine conference.

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"They heard a ruefull voice": Guyon's Agency and the Gloriana Framework in Book II of *The Faerie Queene*

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In the larger work of which today's reading is a part, I examine the ways in which Spenser's habitual modes of discourse, and his presentation of chivalric figures and actions in *The Faerie Queene,* cause the issue of human, agency to emerge as a factor in his exploration of Holiness, Temperance and Chastity in the three books of the 1590 poem. Spenser's use of the chivalric medium, which I see as the poem's most basic generic feature, highlights the qualities, possibilities and limitations of human agency; the virtues of each book are accordingly defined in relation to these qualities, possibilities and limitations. My subject in today's paper is the way in which the hero Guyon's knightly agency becomes an issue in Spenser's treatment of Temperance in Book II of *The Faerie Queene.* In Book II, agency as I define it will mean the ability to determine, initiate and execute virtuous action.

While working on my larger project I have become especially interested in a disjunction which exists between the origins of the knights' actions in the individual books of *The Faerie Queene* and the framework which the poet claims in the Letter to Raleigh to have in mind for the unwritten twelfth book of the poem, in which Gloriana assigns each quest to a knight at an annual feast. Many scholars choose not to make too much of this inconsistency, categorizing it with others in the poem as an unavoidable function of the size and complexity of Spenser's project or relegating it to the great unknown represented in the unwritten sections of the poem. As Jonathan Goldberg has suggested, though, the ever-deferred scene in which the quests of *The Faerie Queene's* knights will be gathered up into a culminating association with Gloriana has an intriguing impact on the nature of discourse in the parts of Spenser's text which were completed.[1] My sense is that this disjunction implies on some level a tension between the sources of knightly action as they are generated within Spenser's individual explorations of virtue in each book and the claims of the Faerie Queene, whom we know to represent the real royal object of Spenser's poem, Queen Elizabeth, to determine and authorize virtuous action. I will explore today the textual evidence for such a tension, in relation to the ways in which human and knightly agency emerges as a basic focus of Book II.

Book II defines Temperance as the ability to temper passion—extremes of behavior and emotion such as uncontrolled rage or sensual dissipation.[2] As in Book I, knighthood bears an interesting relationship to this quality precisely because of the intemperate possibilities implied by knightly action. Knightly action both requires forcefulness and involves devotion to female figures; basic human aggressions and instincts underlie both of these factors. Knight-hood, in fact, involves the invocating of ideals which control and channel action and aggression and sublimate sexual longing. A noteworthy feature of Book II is its multiplication of parodic figures which illustrate the necessity of knight ideals and explore their efficacy. Examples are raging or sensually dissipated knights such as Pyrocles and Cymocles and the character Braggadocio, an elaborate parody of knightly pride. The book's central quest revolves around a threat to knightly sexual temperance, the witch Acrasia. Acrasia, in the tradition of Homer's Circe and Calypso and Ariosto's witch Alcina in *Orlando Furioso*, lulls knights into a sensual captivity and a betrayal of their knightly endeavors.[3] Interestingly, though, the fact that Guyon's quest to capture Acrasia and remove her power over knights is the central quest of the book has the effect of associating Temperance with the protection of knightly action. Temperance, then, is defined as strongly in terms of the protection of knightly agency as with the control of knightly aggressions.

Guyon's quest is on behalf of a knight, Mordant, and his long-suffering wife, Amavia. It also benefits the young knight Verdant, who is in captivity at the time of Guyon's encounter with Acrasia and who becomes a representative of the dissipation of knightly energies through intemperance. Readers and teachers of Book II may remember the curious narrative loop or glitch surrounding the inception of Guyon's quest. The inception of this quest comes into conflict both with the framework provided in the Letter to Raleigh and with a scene in the second canto of the book in which Guyon describes to Medina and her household the granting of the quest by Gloriana at a "yearely solemn feaste" (II,ii,42). In both cases, the Palmer (who in Book II's narrative is Guyon's guide and companion throughout) comes to the feast bearing Mordant and Amavia's bloody-handed child and requests that a knight "redresse" the crimes wrought by the witch Acrasia. The Faerie Queene then assigns the quest to Guyon. The narrative of Canto I, however, presents in emphatic detail a personal encounter between Guyon and the couple whom he will champion which occurs outside the context of Gloriana's court and her assignment of quests. The meeting is first highlighted in the opening argument of the first canto of the book, where we read that Guyon "Findes Mordant and Amavia slaine / With pleasures poisoned baytes." The discovery described here is also positioned prominently in Canto I, immediately following an encounter between the Redcrosse Knight and Guyon in the

opening stanzas, in which the knight of Book I blesses Guyon's "pageant," the yet unspecified quest of Book II. This leads the reader to assume that Guyon's primary quest is generated by this meeting with Amavia and Mordant which shortly follows, and this assumption is borne out in the intensity and detail of the passage.

In addition to the initial mention of Guyon's discovery of the slain couple in the argument, and the placement of the episode near the beginning of the book, an even more important contrast is created with later indications about Guyon's quest because the knight's encounter with Mordant and Amavia is presented according to the romance convention of "aventure"—a seemingly chance meeting with a 'damsell in distress' while riding in search of knightly trials and battles. To illustrate this, let me read you stanza 35 of canto i:

> In this faire wize they traveild long yfere,
> Through many hard assayes, which did betide;
> Of which he honour still away did beare,
> And spred his glorie through all countries wide.
> At last as chaunst them by a forest side
> To passe, for succour from the scorching ray,
> They heard a ruefull voice, that dearnly cride
> With percing shriekes, and many a dolefull lay;
> Which to attend, a while their forward steps they stay.
> (II,i,35)

Amavia's "ruefull voice" (to which I refer in my title) provokes Guyon to dismount and "[rush] into the thicke," where he comes upon the dead knight Mordant, the dying Amavia, who has just plunged a dagger into her heart, and their living child, innocently dabbling in their blood. Taking in this scene, Guyon freezes in horror and is then overcome with empathy as "ruth and fraile affection did constraine / His stout courage to stoup, and show his inward paine" (II,i,43).

Though the narration of the pathetic tableau created by the trio and Guyon's interaction with Amavia might be read simply as a narrative ploy to elaborate allegorically upon the destructive power of intemperate passion as embodied in the witch Acrasia, I will illustrate in this paper reasons for believing that this narrative discontinuity is more significant, drawing attention to the issue of knightly motivation and distancing Guyon's knightly motivation and agency from the controlling rubric of Gloriana's assignment of quests. The confusion surrounding the inception of Guyon's quest can be seen, in fact, as a key to the book's meaning.

The tableau of Acrasia's victims is, first of all, presented in allegorical

terms which place the dangers of passion in relation to the issue of human will and agency, and it is to these issues that I will turn for the present. The destroyed family of Mordant and Amavia is representative, according to the lamenting Amavia, of the vulnerability of human beings in their fleshliness, the perils attendant upon them in the "living state" (II,i,37). Though Amavia has successfully rescued her husband from the witch, Acrasia has undone the couple by placing on Mordant a lingering charm. Interestingly, Amavia's will is also subject to Acrasia's destructive forces: because she loves Mordant so much, she cannot remain alive while Mordant dies. Her instinct for life, the root of her agency and will, becomes the perverse impulse toward death reflected in her actions as she "grovelling [throws herself] to ground, as hating life and light" (II,i,45). Acrasia and her Bower of Bliss, which will later be presented in terms more seductive to the reader's senses, are here presented by Amavia purely in relation to their effect on the human will. Acrasia drowns knights in pleasure and then "On them she workes her will to uses bad" (II,i,52). Amavia, in rescuing Mordant from entrapment in the Bower, "where him that witch had thralled to her will / In chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound" cures him through the antidote of "a better will, / Purged from drugs of foule intemperance" (II,i,54).

This presentation of will as both essential to the human state and vulnerable because of the human state falls in line with the general world view which has started to emerge in the poem. The existence of will is crucial to the human experience; in fact, it defines the human experience, according to the paradigms of quest and battle which Spenser has used in Book I. Though it is a warped reflection of the Divine Will, it represents the means by which humans function for the better and the worse. As pinpointed in Amavia's cure, the desired key to the will in Book II is to constantly engage in a process of 'recuring' oneself to a will guided by a higher principle, and to avoid traps of the will such as lust, or even, in Amavia's case, a love which is too firmly rooted in the temporal presence of its object. Mordant and Amavia's deaths represent the victory of such forces of danger over their wills; Mordant falls to the far-reaching magic of Acrasia and her Bower, and Amavia falls to her consuming temporal love for Mordant. She is so attached to him that she is even willing to abandon her child. The baby, who is to remain "in living state," bears witness to his own and his parents' mortality in the stains of their blood upon his hands, which cannot be removed (II,i,37).[4]

Guyon's reaction to the pathetic tableau which he encounters is very important here: it seals his sympathetic connection to the pair, reflects his similar vulnerabilities, and most importantly for my argument, acts as the spur to his will. The language of the passage maintains a focus upon the play of vitality, mortality and agency: Guyon's initial reaction upon seeing Mordant in his interrupted vitality is to freeze. The sight of the dead knight, "Now in his freshest flower of lystie hed, / Fit to inflame faire Ladie with loves rage, / But that fiers fate did crop the blossom of his age" temporarily denies Guyon his will, force and agency. "Whom when the good Sir Guyon did behold, / His hart gan wexe as starke, as marble stone, / and his fresh bloud did frieze with fearfull cold" (II,i,41-42). Then, in what seems to be a contemplation of the combination of power and compassion, Guyon the warrior is compared to a lion, a beast thought to have an innate sense of mercy. "At last his mighty ghost gan deepe to grone, / As Lyon grudging in his great disdaine, / Mournes inwardly, and makes to himself mone; / Till ruth and fraile affection did constraine / His stout courage to stoupe, and shew his inward paine (II,i,42). "Ruth and fraile affection" are here posited as potentially undermining to the courage of a warrior, but the simile of the inwardly groaning lion, and the tenderness with which Guyon attempts to save the bleeding Amavia in the following stanza, are presented so sympathetically that the reader is led to conclude Guyon's sensitivity is a necessary guiding and moderating influence upon knightly force. More importantly, Guyon's emotional response provides his motivation to act on their behalf. Guyon's reponse, and the narrative resolution of the tableau, emphasize independent knightly agency based on a kind of visceral sympathy, rather than the service of an ideal or of a sovereign.

Guyon's reestablishment of his knightly will and enterprise requires a chivalric ritual: a "sacred vow" to avenge their deaths. Maurice Keen, in his important 1987 work on the concept of chivalry and its contributing influences, discusses the centrality of vow-taking both in tournaments and in situations of battle. Keen's discussion makes clear the ways in which rituals of binding become central to such vow-taking, serving to symbolically bind the knight's will to the accomplishment of the service he has taken on. Guyon's vow enacts such a binding of the will.[5] The vow to avenge their deaths, which "none should aye releace" (II,i,60), represents a commitment to the action which will define his quest. Guyon emphasizes his commitment in the language of his vow, cementing it, so to speak, by raising the stakes of his oath to the extreme. He begs upon himself "such and such evill" from God and upon the orphan "worse and worse" pain if he fails, or "forbear[s]" (II,i,61). Such swearing carries an uncomfortable a hint of the profane, and also, because Guyon makes the oath in an attempt to "increace affection," a hint of problematic passion. At the same time, this passage illustrates how Guyon's knightly persona provides a mode of action, one which is potentially a mode of mere aggression, but which also contains the idealistic structures through which mere aggression may be channeled and shaped into virtuous action. The fully elaborated conditions of Guyon's methods and motives distance the claims of the narrative actuality of Book II from those of the

Gloriana framework.

Ultimately, the tensions regarding agency in the relationship of Spenser's allegorical knights to the Gloriana framework seem in Book II to reflect the complications of intention and authorship inherent in Spenser's fictional enterprise. Guyon's faulty recounting (mentioned above) in Medina's Castle of how he came to be the guardian and champion of the bloody-handed child of Mordant and Amavia is especially curious in its emphasis in attributing the quest to Gloriana's initiative. Guyon's references to his "glorious virgin Queene" (II,ii,40) also draw a parallel between knight and author which potentially extends the implications of the book's central ambiguity surrounding knightly motivation to the relationship between Spenser the poet and his Queen. Guyon's terms in describing the Faerie Queene are among the most exalted panegyric lines in the poem. Recounting the roots of his quest at the request of his hostess, Guyon begins with an elaborate tribute which draws a clear connection with the extra-fictional Elizabeth by using the terms which had become habitually associated with her. Responding to Medina's request, he says:

> This thy demaund, O Lady, doth revive
> Fresh memory in me of that great Queene,
> Great and most glorious virgin Queene alive,
> That with her soveraigne power, and scepter shene
> All Faery lond does peaceably sustene.
> In widest Ocean she her throne does reare,
> That over all the earth it may be seene;
> As morning Sunne her beames dispredden cleare,
> And in her face faire peace, and mercy doth appeare.
> (II,ii,40)

A traditional Elizabethan attribute, peaceful rule of her island kingdom, gives way in the following stanza to the elaborately mystified unitary persona which formed the basis for the Virgin Queen's hold over her subjects:

> In her the richnesse of all heavenly grace
> In chiefe degree are heaped up on hye:
> And all that else this worlds enclosure bace
> Hath great or glorious in mortall eye,
> Adornes the person of her Majestie;
> That men beholding so great excellence,
> And rare perfection in mortalitie,
> Do her adore with sacred reverence,
> As th'Idole of her makers great magnificence.
> (II,ii,41)

It is no accident that Guyon's panegyric is building to a statement of allegiance. It is at this moment that Book II's connections with the non-fictional experience of subjecthood under Elizabeth vibrate clearly out of the moral project of the definition of Temperance. Guyon's tribute echoes the chivalric framework through which the Letter to Raleigh brings the quests of *The Faerie Queene's* knights under the authority of Gloriana and makes a point of attributing his endeavors and status as a knight to her:

> To her I homage and my service owe,
> In number of the noblest knights on ground,
> Mongst whom on me she deigned to bestowe
> Order of Maydenhead, the most renownd,
> That may this day in all the world be found:
> An yearly solemne feast she wontes to make
> The day that first doth lead the yeare around;
> To which all knights of worth and courage bold
> Resort, to heare of straunge adventures to be told.
> (II,ii,42)

The following stanza more explicitly attributes the agency in redressing wrongs to the "Soveraine," presenting the alternative version of the Acrasia quest which will now stand in contradiction with the earlier narrative version:

> There this old Palmer shewed himself that day,
> And to that mighty Princesse did complaine
> Of grievous mischiefes, which a wicked Fay
> Had wrought, and many whelmed in deadly paine,
> Whereof he crav'd redresse.
> (II,ii,43)

The language of the next lines strikingly places virtuous action within the prerogative of the ruler: "My Soveraine, / Whose glory is in gracious deeds, and joyes / Throughout the world her mercy to maintaine, / Eftsoones devisd redresse for such annoyes" (II,ii,43). Most interestingly, the culminating lines of the stanza articulate a transference of agency from knight to sovereign. The knight who takes action based on noble "virtu," performing agency through intentional and in this case virtuous action, becomes the agent of the

Sovereign who "employes" him, and thus his powers must be muted: "Me all unfit for so great purpose she employes" (II,ii,43). "Virtu" and virtue are effaced by subjecthood as the knight is placed in relation to his Queen.

This striking metafictional articulation of allegiance, which stands so oddly in contrast with an important basis of Book II's narrative action, does not, I would argue, win out in the book's play of significances. Instead, it stands as one of the poem's many provocative and unresolved tensions, in this case drawing attention to the ways in which the claims of narrative and allegorical possibility, and indeed the human truths Spenser was seeking to explore, come into conflict with his desire to reverence Elizabeth as they emerge during the process of creation.

Notes

[1]See *Endlesse Work: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, UP, 1981.

[2]For a recent treatment of Spenser's delineations of Temperance, see Harold L. Weatherby, "Spenser's Legend of Εγκρατεια." Weatherby argues that what Spenser called Temperance in Book II is in fact closer to a modified Patristic notion of "Egkrateia," or continence, than to Aristotle's notion of Temperance.

[3]As Weatherby points out, Acrasia's name, which means "incontinence" rather than "intemperance," has contributed to a long-standing confusion and debate about Spenser's intention in Book II. See page 208.

[4]I am here setting aside other indications about the significance of the blood on Ruddymane's hands.

[5]See *Chivalry*, 212-18. In the case of tournaments, the vows have "erotic overtones" which further illustrate the vow as a voluntary taking on or acknowledgment of binding commitment. "The knight's determination to do honour to his lady and make himself worthy in regard to her is the inspiration behind his vow: the chains of his *emprise* symbolise the chains of love" (212).

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The Role of the Narrator in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*

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Aphra Behn identifies herself on the title page of *Oroonoko* as Mrs. A. Behn. She signs her dedicatory epistle to Lord Maitland as A. Behn. Thus, we do not wonder who the speaker can be when the narration begins:

> I do not pretend, in giving you the History of this *Royal Slave*, to entertain my Reader with adventures of a feign'd *Hero*, whose Life and Fortunes Fancy may manage at the Poets Pleasure; nor in relating the Truth, design to adorn it with any Accidents, but such as arriv'd in earnest to him: And it shall come simply into the World, recommended by its own proper Merits, and natural Intrigues; there being enough of Reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the Addition of Invention. (57)

Behn is indeed insistent that we view the narrative in the context of her life. She declares that the history is from her life as an eyewitness or "from the Mouth of the chief Actor in this History, the *Hero* himself" (57). She speaks of coming to Surinam with her family, and identifies by name both her friends and enemies in the colony. This highly personal role in the history is, however, limited in some ways. First, as quoted above, Behn declares that there is no invention or artistic intrusion in the story. She is not claiming for herself imaginative powers or moral insight. This history will be a mere recital of facts. Her modest claim for her talent or abilities is repeated several times as when Behn ends her dedication by saying that she wrote the piece in "a few Hours . . . for I never rested my Pen a Moment for Thought" (56), or when she concludes the story by lamenting that there is not "a more sublime Wit than mine to write his [Oroonoko's] Praise" (119).

Similarly within the action of the story Behn plays a modest role: unable to protect Oroonoko or Imoinda from their tragic endings. Although she enjoys Oroonoko's confidence, she is finally unable to keep him from attempting to flee the colony. When Oroonoko leads the other slaves in an escape from their captivity, Behn, along with the other women, flees downriver. Again, when Oroonoko is tortured and executed, Behn is on a

three-day journey. Thus, she is absent at those critical moments that seal the fate of her hero.

Although the narrator seems to be modest, demure, and withdrawing, some qualifications are necessary. First, the narrator exercises absolute control over her material. Behn selects those incidents which further her story, and that story is by no means the simple tale of Oroonoko. She eschews the chronological approach from the beginning of her narrative, explaining: "But before I give you the Story of this *Gallant Slave*, 'tis fit I tell you the manner of bringing them to these new *Colonies*. . ." (8). Behn does no such thing, however, for she then goes into a two-page description of Surinam and the Edenic life of the natives. Beyond establishing the setting for the later part of her tale, this section also establishes her authority as a first-hand and knowledgeable observer. She is presenting her credentials, confirmed by her inclusion of her gift of feathers to the King's Theatre where they could be observed in a production of the *Indian Queen* (58). This information does not move the story forward, but both directly supports her claim for personal experience and indirectly confers authority and influence on the narrator.

Later Behn interrupts the narrative again, explaining: "it may not be unpleasant to relate to you the Diversions we entertain'd him with, or rather he us" (95). And again she does not go on immediately to these diversions, but presents us with more information about the country and her presence in it including a lengthy description of her residence, noting: "As soon as I came into the Country, the best House in it was presented me, call'd St *John's Hill*" (96). Once again it is two pages before she says, "But to our Sports" and goes on to the diversions she had earlier promised to describe. While there has been continued emphasis on the idyllic and Edenic nature of the country, including its "Eternal Spring," there is also continued, but indirect, emphasis on her status, knowledge, and authority.

In the midst of her account of these diversions, Behn tells the story of her visit to a Indian village. The stress throughout this account is on her curiosity and her bravery. The trip is planned despite an ongoing feud between the English and the natives. Behn notes that "Some wou'd, but most wou'd not venture" to go on the trip at all (100). Then, when they draw near the shore, "the Hearts of some of our Company fail'd, and they wou'd not venture on Shore; so we Poll'd who wou'd and who wou'd not: For my part, I said, If *Caesar* [i.e. Oroonoko] wou'd, I wou'd go . . . " (100). In the final approach to the village, it is resolved that only Behn, her brother, and her woman would go on alone to surprise the natives by the first sight of white people. Throughout the incident Behn is steadfast in the face of danger and wins the admiration of the natives and her companions. We should note,

however, when she concludes this digression on their expeditions, Behn emphasizes only Oroonoko's qualities although she has demonstrated the same qualities herself. She says: "Though this digression is a little from my Story, however since it contains some Proofs of the Curiosity and Daring of this great Man, I was content to omit nothing of his Character" (104).

Behn's personal authority with Oroonoko is frequently stressed, particularly on the topic of his impatience with his slave status. Behn comments on one occasion:

> Before I parted that Day with him, I got, with much ado, a Promise from him to rest, yet a little longer with Patience, and wait the coming of the Lord Governor, who was every Day expected on our Shore; he assur'd me he wou'd, and this Promise he desired me to know was given perfectly in Complaisance to me, in whom he had an intire Confidence. (94)

Thus, Behn has managed to convey to the reader, in spite of her direct statements of modesty and reticence, that she has courage in dangerous situations, has the respect of both the hero and other right-thinking people, and has knowledge of as well as status in the colony. Behn's position is thus deliberately contradictory; she has ability and authority, but disclaims it. Or perhaps more accurately she disclaims it in direct statement while urging her abilities upon us in other more subtle ways.

Let me give one more example of what we can call her hidden agenda. Early in the narration Behn describes her hero and lists off his qualities. She does not say that he possesses the four cardinal virtues, but she can be certain that her audience will know of them in one formation or another; they can all name justice, wisdom, prudence, and courage (or justice, prudence, temperance, and fortitude). What she does do is to describe Oroonoko three times in different contexts, each time naming four qualities of excellence appropriate to each context. Thus, in his personal life he has generosity, refined notions of honor, softness (making him capable of love and gallantry), and greatness of soul. In his courtly actions he demonstrates judgment, wit, sweet and diverting conversation, and greatness of courage and mind. And finally in the realm of political endeavor he is capable of governing well, possesses politic maxims, is sensible of power, and has a great soul (62-63). My conclusion is that Behn wishes us to recognize the connection to the four cardinal virtues as they are utilized in the three different contexts, but she does not want to tell us directly that she is using this structure. Thus Behn is showing us her strengths without her directly declaring them; she wishes to have art without declaring art; she is using

what we and her age would know as sprezzatura.

Nor is this technique limited to the story of Oroonoko. Jacqueline Pearson in an extensive study of Behn's use of narrrators concludes that the language of the narrators "is typically marked by apparent humility or self-deprecation, though this is often actually 'a means of self-assertion and a means of commenting upon the limited roles that women are expected to play'" (42).

Those limited roles created problems for women authors. Among them until quite recent times was the prevailing sentiment that women were to be silent. They were not to call attention to themselves for intellectual attainments. To be a writer was therefore to oppose this notion of what it was to be a woman. Several strategies were employed to overcome or to sidestep this barrier. One is to publish anonymously (Fanny Burney's attempts to conceal her authorship of *Evelina* are well documented), another was to use a masculine pseudonym (George Eliot is the best-known example). As Janet Todd says in *The Sign of Angellica*, speaking of Behn and 18th century women authors: "Understanding the exaggerated distinction betweeen sexual and linguistic expectations for men and for women, they often hid themselves under pseudonyms and anonymity, writing while firmly declaring their writing trangressive" (4).

A third strategy is to assert that one has no ability other than faithful transcription. Pearson explains: "Writing in a world where female authorship was the subject of a vigorous and largely hostile scrutiny by the representatives of the dominant culture, Behn has her female narrators humbly accede to the view that female creativity should be confined to certain fields, but this transparently ironic humility does not so much accept the conventional limitations as draw mocking attention to them" (43). Behn is using this third strategy quite clearly in *Oroonoko* when she makes the modest claim of being merely a recorder of incidents not a creator of them. This claim is reinforced by her insistence on the speed with which she transcribed the incidents: a few hours with no thought. It requires, however, very little analysis to reveal that considerable thought and undoubtedly much time went into the creation of the piece. It is not at all a simple tale, organized on the simplest principle of chronology. It is an artful construction, telling the readers one thing while persuading us of another. This contrast between self-deprecation and skill, between modest assertion and exemplary achievement, between visible nonchalance and hidden effort is at the heart of a courtier's skill as defined by Castiglione in *The Book of the Courtier* and is called by Castiglione, sprezzatura. Sir Thomas Hoby explains his understanding of the term in his 1565 rendition of *The Courtier* as:

> . . . to eschew as much as a man may, and as a sharp and daungerous rock, Affectation or curiosity and (to speak a new word) [In the Italian the new word is sprezzatura.] to use in every thyng a certain Reckelesness, to cover art withall, and seeme whatsoever he doth and sayeth to do it wythout pain, and (as it were) not myndyng it. (53)

George Pettie's 1581 translation of Stephano Guazza's book, *The Civil Conversation*, gets at the same quality; one character praises the other by saying: "You have swerved nothing at all in this discourse from the dutie of a perfect Courtier, whose property it is to do all things with careful diligence, and skilfull art: mary yet so that the art is hidden, and the whole seemeth to be doone by chance, that he may be had in the more admiration" (27).

This quality or style of sprezzatura meets the needs of women writers quite well. They can present themselves modestly, diminishing their conflict with the prejudice against women writers. And they can still use their talents and perhaps even have them recognized by knowledgeable readers. Dorothy Mermin, writing of women poets in the period, says: "The deliberate air of artless spontaneity and careless ease, which was prized equally . . . in Caroline, Restoration, and Augustan poetry, helped women avoid the appearance of writing for self-display" (340-41). Behn shows herself to be quite adept at such disguising of her skills and at combining modesty and achievement.

According to Peter Burke's masterful study in *The Fortunes of the "Courtier,"* there are no publications of *The Courtier* in England between 1619 and 1713 when Latin editions appeared, and no publications of English translations between 1603 and 1724. I would not argue for any influence from the publications in Latin; they were undoubtedly intended for the male audience who had learned Latin. But quite abruptly in the early 18th century two new English translations appear in England. Between 1724 and 1742 no fewer than six editions of these translations of *The Courtier* into English are published. Burke suggests that the translations, particularly that by A. P. Castiglione, "may well have been intended as a defence of court values at a time when they seemed to be threatened" (131). It may also be true that there is a growing reading audience, that much of that audience is reading primarily English because they are women, and that one of the things they are reading is Castiglione.

Let me offer as further evidence one of the most curious references to *The Courtier* that I have encountered. One notorious novel of the early 18th century, translated from the French and in the past attributed to Delariviere Manley, is *Venus in the Cloister or The Nun in Her Smock* (1725). It got the

presumed publisher, Edmund Curll, into trouble though he claimed he had only one copy for sale and did not know who published it.

It is the story of an experienced nun initiating an innocent young nun into the mysteries of sexual experience. One of those mysteries is what they call Venetian kissing, but which we call French kissing. In any case, on pages 117-18, Agnes, the innocent nun, says: "But tell me, my Dear, what dost thou think of these Caresses!" To which the more experienced nun replies:

> Think of? Why I'll tell thee the very same as some of the greatest and most learned Divines. No less a Man than Cardinal *Bembo*, a Man venerable for his Learning and exemplary Piety, as one may see related by *Castiglione*. in the Fourth Book of his COURTIER, made a most Excellent Oration of Love and Kissing to the Duchess of *Urbino*: wherin he says, -- O Lord, now I think of it, I have it here in my Pocket. This Book, thou must know, was wrote originally in Italian, and has for its Excellency been translated into all the Languages of Europe: This was made French by the Abbe Joyeuse.

Two lengthy quotations follow from Bembo's speech.

Not only did I not expect to find Castiglione cited in this novel of sexual exploration and titillation, I did not expect a nun to carry a copy of *The Courtier* in her pocket. The explanation is, I believe, contained in a footnote to the passage saying: "It [i.e. *The Courtier*] is now translated into *English*. and printed for *Mr. Curll*, over against *Catherine-Street in the Strand*." How Mr. Curll explained that a book of which he claims to have only a single copy carried an advertisement for another of his books, I can only wonder. He did indeed produce and sell the translation from which the excerpts are taken: *The Courtier. Written in Italian By Balthasar, Count Castiglione. in Four Books. Hic ist Ille. Translated from the Original.* London: Bettesworth, Curll, Battley, Clarke, Payne, 1724. Ralph Straus in a book called *The Unspeakable Curll*, cites Curll's autograph statement of defense when he is called before the bench about the publication of *The Nun in her Smock*. As part of his explanation Curll claims that the book is "a Satirical Piece exposing the intrigues of the Nunes and Fryars done out of French by Mr. Samber of New Inn. . ." (104). For our purposes it is relevant to note that the dedication to the 1724 edition of *The Courtier* is signed by Robert Samber. By 1729 when the translation of *The Courtier* is printed again, this time with only Curll given as the publisher, the title page proclaims that it is "Translated from the Italian. . . by Robert Samber." And the title has changed

in what I take to be a significant way. It now reads: *The Courtier: Or, The Complete Gentleman and Gentlewoman. Being a Treatise of the Politest Manner of Educating Persons of Distinction of Both Sexes, and the Qualifications requisite in People of all Ranks....*

It may be that *The Nun in Her Smock* is intended for the titillation of men and not the sexual education or titillation of women, but my reading of other 18th century novels suggests that women are at least a part of the expected audience. That Curll would advertise an edition of *The Courtier* in such a book leads me to believe that he thinks there is an audience of women who will find *The Courtier* of interest. The change in title for the 1729 edition seems to confirm that belief. It is worth noting that between 1723 and 1736 Curll also published texts by Jane Barker, Delarivier Manley, Ann Brome, Susanna Centlivre, and Eliabeth Rowe (Straus, list).

I am not arguing for any direct influence of *The Courtier* on Aphra Behn. If there is evidence, I have yet to uncover it. What I do want to argue for are three related points. First, that Aphra Behn developed in *Oroonoko* a narrative strategy which is like sprezzatura and which met her needs as a woman writer. Second, that the slightly later and substantial renewed interest in *The Courtier* may be fueled by a female audience. And third, that Behn's narrative strategy and Castiglione's concept of sprezzatura may have flowed together to provide a resource for women authors in the development of a narrative role for themselves in which they can speak with an authentic but acceptable voice. On this occasion I have advanced some arguments in favor of the first two points. I hope to pursue the third point in further research and in later papers.

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"That Young Politician": Mr. B and the Question of Authenticity in *Pamela*

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The initial controversy over Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* for the most part revolved, logically enough, around Pamela herself: her character, her motives, and her reward for being virtuous. The anti-Pamelists, most notably Henry Fielding in his parody *Shamela*, doubted that Pamela was ever really the virtuous servant girl that her letters depict her as being. Fielding's view in this regard is succinctly expressed on the title page of *Shamela*, which reads: "An apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, in which the notorious Falsehoods and Misrepresentations of a book called *Pamela* are exposed and refuted, and all the matchless Arts of that young Politician, set in a true and just light" (299). Fielding recasts Pamela as a conniving hypocrite, a gold-digger and social climber who acquires an interest in preserving her "virtue" only after she realizes that by doing so, she can become not simply the mistress of Squire Booby, but his wife.

Fielding's satire nicely captures many of the critical problems with Pamela's character, and with the novel itself, but it has always seemed to me only half the story—in two senses. First, *Shamela* is largely a parody of the first half of *Pamela*. Anyone who has read *Pamela* will instantly recognize its plotline and major characters in *Shamela* up to the marriage of Shamela and Booby. After that, however, Fielding's parody quickly loses much of its satiric energy as it diverges more and more from the original story. Second, by omitting so much of the second half, *Shamela* misses most of Richardson's intriguing but problematic efforts to make credible the transformation of Mr. B from rapist to husband. Fielding's Squire Booby remains throughout a libido-driven fool, easily duped by Shamela's professed interest in preserving her virtue before their marriage, and easily duped by her tears, threats, and schemes after it. That is quite unlike Richardson's Mr. B. He becomes quite a dominant figure in the second half of the novel, gradually asserting more and more patriarchal authority over his new wife, so much so, in fact, that one begins to wonder by the end what has happened to Pamela herself. For as Jerry Beasley has observed, in the second half of the novel Pamela's "voice modulates, losing the energy generated by her indignation and her passionate determination to preserve

herself. Inevitably, her separate worth diminishes" once she becomes Mrs. B (39-40). So *Shamela* can more accurately be called a partial parody of *Pamela*.

But even if Fielding himself does not do so, surely the questions he implicitly asks about Pamela's credibility can justly be asked about B. Is *he* a credible character? Are his statements about his feelings for Pamela sincere? Is his transformation from would-be rapist to devoted husband genuine? In my view, B's character is remarkably consistent throughout the story, more consistent, perhaps, than Richardson himself realized. That very consistency, however, raises doubts about the nature of his motivation and his professions of love for Pamela. Or, to put it another way, Fielding saw one "young politician" in Richardson's novel: the heroine; I see one more: the hero.

Critical assessment of Mr. B's motives has varied considerably. Many readers, probably influenced by Fielding's Squire Booby, have tended to dismiss his transformation into legitimate lover as an aesthetic failure. These readers can accept B as an inept rake, but as nothing else. B. L. Reid, for instance, argues that while B "is at least conventionally satisfactory as the baffled rake, [he] is in no way convincing as the complacent husband. . . . the reader sees too plainly that [B's] outright transformation is shoddily motivated and ridiculously complete. His absurd *gravitas* and airs of old age at twenty-six make him not a legitimately altered character but simply an unfamiliar man" (35; see also Watt 170-71; and Kinkead-Weakes 61-62).

A more sympathetic view has been offered by Roy Roussel, who sees B as driven less by sexual desire than by genuine emotional attachment to Pamela, an attachment, however, which is at odds with his social position and his desire for independence. Thus, when B assaults Pamela sexually, "he is not acting with the cynical callousness of a rake. . . . [but rather] is caught in a sudden flood of emotion which, in carrying him toward intimacy with Pamela, negates the separateness which is the foundation of his old self" (91). B's violence towards Pamela, then, is a misguided and futile attempt to wrench himself free from his own feelings. His inner turmoil ceases only after he acknowledges and gradually accepts that he loves Pamela. By insisting on the genuine nature of B's fondness for Pamela, Roussel sees B's transformation as entirely authentic and credible.

A third view locates B's motivation in a desire for power and control. Michael McKeon, for instance, notices that when B comes closest to raping Pamela at his Lincolnshire estate, he pulls back at the last minute, demanding, instead, that Pamela accept his earlier proposal of becoming his mistress: "I must say one word to you Pamela; you see that you are in my power! You cannot get free from me, nor help yourself: yet have I not

offered anything amiss to you. But if you resolve not to comply with my proposals, I will not lose this opportunity. If you do, I will yet leave you. I abhor violence. Your compliance, my dear girl, shall intitle you to all I offered you in my proposals" (242). For McKeon, this statement, coming when it does, "reveals that B's dominant motives are not strictly sexual but political, and that he takes power to consist in the ability to make others accept one's version of events as authoritative" (359). In this view, B's transformation is seen as credible since he gradually realizes that he can exercise the control he desires more effectively as a husband than as a rake. However, this reading obviously raises questions about the nature of B's love for Pamela.

My own reading builds on this third view. While I don't deny that B is sexually and emotionally attracted to Pamela (for he most certainly is), what stands out to me in the relationship between these two is B's obsessive desire for control and domination over Pamela: physically and sexually at first, socially later on, and mentally and emotionally throughout. But that is not all. A related feature of his character that deserves further attention is his sensitivity for his own reputation and public image.

We see this concern in the careful way in which B guards access to his own past. Though Pamela has been in service to B's family for some years, she is apparently unaware of two major incidents from his past: a duel he fought while traveling in Italy, and an affair he had while at college that resulted in an illegitimate child. Pamela's ignorance of these matters suggests that B has gone to considerable effort to conceal his past from his household. B's sister, Lady Davers, eventually reveals them to Pamela, and this provokes in B "a rage so violent," Pamela tells us, "that it made me tremble" (452). B explains to Pamela that he fully intended to inform her of his past indiscretions "at the proper opportunity, when I could have convinced you that they were not my boast, but my concern. . ." (452). Yet that he should react with so much outrage when information about these events leaks out without his authorization indicates an extraordinary concern for the self-image he projects, even within his own household. B's past misdeeds—dueling and philandering—are usually associated in eighteenth century culture with the character of the rake. B's anxiety about being known as a rake is evident not only in his anger towards Lady Davers, but also in his statement to Mrs. Jervis after one of his early attempts on Pamela. He tells her that Pamela "has made a party of the whole house in her favour," and that the only one he has harmed by his actions is himself, "for I raised a hornet's nest about my ears, that, as far as I know, may have stung to death my reputation" (97-98).

B's concern for his own reputation is linked to his desire to control

Pamela through her writing. Pamela's letters to her parents provide a window through which a part of the community outside of his immediate household can measure B's private conduct against the public image he wishes to project. And given the discrepancy between his sexual desires and his reputation as an honorable gentleman, it is quite natural that he would see in Pamela's writing a threat, an activity that he must carefully monitor and, if possible, control. Many of his early conversations with Pamela reflect precisely this anxiety, for they revolve not just around what he wants or what he has done, but also around what she has written and, more importantly, whom she has written to. In one of their conversations, for example, B says, "When I was a little kind to you . . . in the summer-house, and you behaved so foolishly upon it, as if I intended to do you great harm, did I not tell you, you should take no notice of what passed to any creature? And yet you have made a common talk of the matter, not considering either my reputation, or your own" (61).

The absence of any other letter-writer, the fact that Richardson tells this story entirely through Pamela's correspondence, becomes less of a structural flaw when seen in this light. Traditionally, *Pamela* has suffered in comparison to Richardson's second novel *Clarissa*, in which many different characters all record and reflect on the events of the story as they happen. The single narrative voice in *Pamela* has often been seen as an early and unsuccessful attempt at doing what *Clarissa* does well. Mark Kinkead-Weekes, for example, points out what he sees as "the formal crudity" of *Pamela's* structure, noting that "There are several dramatic points of view, but only one of them 'writes' the novel; so Pamela has to tell us all there is to one tell and carry the whole burden of analysis" (59). As we have seen, however, the single narrator in *Pamela* is a major part of the story's conflict. If there were many correspondents writing about B's actions, his attention would presumably be less obsessively focused on Pamela than it is.

What we have, then, is a conflict that in some ways resembles that between a conscientious reporter and an ambitious politician: the reporter feels obligated to tell her readers the truth as she sees it; meanwhile, the politician frets over how this truth will affect his reputation in the community. The question is: how well does this hypersensitive and relatively inexperienced politician manage the press? At first, clumsily. If the first half of *Pamela* presents B as an inept rake, it also presents him as a thoroughly incompetent spin-doctor. For most of his efforts are aimed at controlling the shape of the story by controlling the daily life of its teller. He insists that Mrs. Jervis, the housekeeper, keep Pamela sufficiently occupied with other work so that she cannot write; he spies on her; he intercepts her letters; he tries to bully her out of her own version of events; and, in a revealing statement of his predicament, he threatens to dismiss her, telling Mrs. Jervis that if Pamela remains in the household:

> I find I am likely to suffer in my reputation by the perverseness and folly of this girl. She has told you all, and perhaps more than all; nay, I make no doubt of it; and she has written letters (for I find she is a mighty letter writer!) to her father and mother, and to others, as far as I know, in which, representing herself as an angel of light, she makes her kind master and benefactor, a devil incarnate. (67-68)

These tactics all prove futile. Pamela may be a servant, but in her letters she insists, even to her master, on her authorial prerogative of telling the story as she sees it, a point nicely demonstrated by the comment Pamela herself makes immediately following her record of the tirade quoted above: "O how sometimes people will, thought I, call themselves by their right names!" (68).

When it becomes clear that Pamela will never be bullied into changing her story, B next attempts a far more ambitious move: to interrupt Pamela's story and replace it with one of his own invention. The first step in executing this strategy is to silence Pamela. This he accomplishes, at least temporarily, by having her kidnapped and taken to his secluded Lincolnshire estate. There, her jailer Mrs. Jewkes informs Pamela that "it is in my instructions to see all that you write; ... I will let you have a pen and ink and two sheets of paper... but as I told you, I must always see your writing, be the subject what it will" (150). Thus, B orders Jewkes to engage in a more ham-fisted version of what he himself has tried earlier: controlling the story by sharply limiting the resources needed to produce it, by carefully monitoring its production, and by restricting its circulation to approved readers. The second step is to invent and disseminate an *official* version of events. This B endeavors to do through a letter to Pamela's father. In it, he recasts the earlier events as figments of a young girl's heated imagination; then, he informs Mr. Andrews that he has uncovered a secret love affair between Pamela and a young clergyman, and has had Pamela removed from his house to head off an elopement.

For a while, B's efforts enjoy moderate success. As McKeon notes, "For a brief time Pamela finds herself in a miniature anti-*Pamela*, complete with documentary historicity [in the form of letters] . . ." (360). Clever though it is, however, this strategy, too, is doomed to failure. Like an underground press in an authoritarian state, Pamela proves to be too zealous, too industrious, and far too resourceful to be silenced for long,

even by so vigilant a pair of jailers as B and Mrs. Jewkes. Pamela manages to get some of her letter out, using Parson Williams as a secret messenger; meanwhile, her fellow servants at B's Lincolnshire estate contrive to get a message to Pamela by means of a gypsy fortuneteller. Furthermore, B's new story meets with scant acceptance in the Andrews household, where the credibility of Pamela's version of events is never seriously threatened.

In short, B's strategy, which was designed to allow him the sexual license of a rake without its attendant stigma, instead produces the reverse: he now has the reputation of a rake without actually being one. And as long as he seeks to control Pamela's story through threats and demands on the author herself, his public image will never improve. His first realization of this occurs in a statement Pamela overhears him making to Mrs. Jewkes: "I have begun wrong. Terror does but add to her frost. But she is a charming girl; and may be thawed by kindness. I should have sought to melt her by love" (246). Pamela is wary of his new tactic, but her commitment to writing the truth begins to work to B's advantage here, for she must record his change of behavior in her letters. This produces a tone of doubt in her writing that we have not heard before. When he was acting like a rake, she knew exactly how to respond, but what is she to do when he acts like a gentleman? This doubt is evident when B first makes a vague proposal of marriage to Pamela. She expresses her skepticism about it, and he flies into a rage and tells her she is free to go home. Whereas his previous outbursts had only reinforced her conviction that she had done nothing to deserve such treatment, here she openly worries about being at fault, saying, "Yet I am sorry he is *so* angry with me! I thought I did not say *so much*" (278).

The first volume ends with Pamela in just this ambivalent state of mind, and it reflects a subtle but significant shift in power. From that point on, B assumes more and more control over Pamela's story and consequently over Pamela herself. He asks that she keep writing and that she allow him to see what she has written. It might seem odd that she so readily agrees to this, for she had previously been extremely reluctant to allow him any access to her letters. But that, of course, was when he stated his desire in the form of a command and backed it up with a threat; now that he couches it as the earnest request of an admiring suitor, she feels compelled to accede to it. To do otherwise would seem ungrateful. He also wants to circulate her letters among his neighbors as a means of preparing them for the introduction of Pamela as his bride to be, an event that he will also arrange and host. B's enthusiastic assumption of all these new roles—reader, editor, publicist, and stage manager—can be taken as a sign of the extent to which Pamela has triumphed, for they suggest how thoroughly B has capitulated to her insistence that he direct his desire for her along the

traditional path of courtship and marriage. But they can also be read quite differently: as roles which give B more authority and opportunity to direct the course of Pamela's story, and to cast himself in a role which he has always sought for his public persona—the benevolent patriarch. Or, as Tassie Gwilliam puts it, "B's new legitimacy as editor and coauthor of the heroine's text, while it brings B's identification of Pamela out from under ground . . . also reinforces Pamela's position as Mr. B's representative" (46).

Pamela's participation in the events of volume II often seems reluctant and half-hearted. She is not eager to assume the trappings and privileges of her new social position, not eager to meet B's neighbors in her new role, not even very eager to set a date for their wedding. She looks to B for direction and guidance on all of these matters, and seldom challenges any of his advice. We get only one glimpse of the old Pamela in volume II. It occurs when B's sister Lady Davers arrives, uninvited and unannounced, in order to break up a marriage that she regards as scandalous breach of social propriety. She upbraids and abuses Pamela (who is home alone at the time of the visit), treating her sometimes like a wayward servant, sometimes like a common whore. This treatment is outrageous enough to rekindle Pamela's old determination to resist class-based injustice, but only briefly. She escapes from the house as soon as she can and hurries to the neighboring estate where B is visiting. At that point he takes over, and she resumes her role as passive participant in a story that is no longer really about her, but about him.

In fact, Lady Davers's visit, and the outburst of temper it provokes in B, then becomes the occasion for perhaps the best example of the new relationship between B and Pamela: his lecture to her on the duties of a wife. Beginning as an explanation for the anger he directed at Pamela during his quarrel with his sister, this speech quickly turns into a long list of behavioral expectations. He tells her, for example, that a wife must never challenge her husband's views publicly, and must go along with his wishes even when she thinks them misguided; that she must bear with his faults and his friends, no matter how disagreeable she finds either; and that she must not criticize his faults too vociferously or use them as an excuse for her own. It is an extraordinary assertion of patriarchal authority, though perfectly in character for a man like B, especially his prefatory remark that "I hope I shall not be a very tyrannical husband" (462). More significantly, however, it reflects the extent to which B can now control and dominate Pamela without in any way jeopardizing the public image he so prizes, as well as the extent to which Pamela's ability to resist through her writing has been truncated. All Pamela can do is dutifully record the speech, note

the fatherly tone and benevolent intent of the speaker, and quietly express reservations about some of B's edicts. She ultimately describes his rules as "all very tolerable; since a generous man, and a man of sense, cannot be too much obliged" (470). Thus, her marriage has effectively muffled the voice that was so evident at the beginning of the book, and ensures, as Christine Roulston points out, "that she is never in a position to challenge class structures effectively. The structuring of marriage as a reward in fact ends up re-inscribing the very values that the rest of the text appears to have been questioning" (24).

In light of B's obsessive concern for his own reputation, his character is hardly the sex-obsessed stick-figure that Fielding's *Shamela* would make him out to be, but neither is he quite the devoted lover and husband that Richardson probably imagined. He is certainly not an aesthetic failure, but is, rather, a character that will likely seem strikingly familiar to the modern reader. Indeed, this is how many of my students have made sense of his character: as someone whose public image is everything, whose private desires are at odds with the public persona he wishes to project, and who is desperately trying to control his image by manipulating those who create and disseminate it. He is, in short, any politician, sports hero, movie star, or public figure in our celebrity-driven culture.

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The Sensitive Swift:
Coming to Terms with the Dean's Beneficent Satire

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The writings of Jonathan Swift have, ever since it was fashionable to read them, been synonymous with despondency over the human condition. Indeed, in his own time Swift's was characterized as a truly misanthropic vision and, even today, the study of Swift seems to focus on the dark satire that has been his hallmark. While this reputation is not entirely undeserved —for no responsible scholar could argue that it is not fitting in light of a basic reading of his work—it is also true that, at times, a warmer side of Swift shines through. If Swift is given the benefit of an honest and fair reading, he must also be accorded credit for some degree of optimism toward the human race. By his own admission, Swift was at times consumed by his satire and, possibly, too harsh in his judgment of mankind. Furthermore, while the instances may be sparse and obscure to a gentle study, there are points throughout Swift's poetry where the mask is dropped and a new sensitivity can be observed in his work.

The first issue a critic must come to terms with when pursuing this sort of thinking is the equilibrium characteristic to Swift's thought. Given the predisposition toward reason and balance extant throughout the 18th century, it is difficult to accept that Swift entertained a completely unilateral, misanthropic vision. Kevin Cope, in fact, argues in a similar vein when he claims that "Swift joins with Johnson in warning that any schematization of the world which will yield more good than evil must be broken off from the deficit-ridden objective world" (196). Cope's position says nothing of a world that will yield more evil than good since he believes that this is the precise condition that both authors see in the world. However, Swift—much the same as his contemporaries—is almost obligated to assume at least a semblance of balance between the forces of right and wrong, or risk hypocrisy because the idea of a balanced universe exists multifariously in Swift's writing.

Richard Rodino, in his "Motives and Structures of Swift's Poetry," cites "Verses Wrote in a Lady's Ivory Table-Book" as an example of the inherent attempt to align oppositions that occasionally occurs in Swift's writing. His claim is that this poem "exhibits a process of balance and synthesis: effusive love lyrics and the silly obsessions of fashionable ladies are sandwiched

between lines of hardheaded condemnation" (89). Through his peculiar juxtapositioning of opposites in this poem and others, Swift seems to be hunting for, if not affirming, a positive middle ground. While it is true that the middle ground Swift finds is not always completely appealing—as is the case with the confused admiration of the "gaudy tulips" at the conclusion of "The Lady's Dressing Room"—it is sufficient for this argument that it is allowed at all.

In addition to the balance and synthesis of ideas that one must assume exists in Swift's poetry, it is also necessary to understand the context of some of his works in order to recognize the scope of his positive attitude. Robert Uphaus observed that "the missing 'positive' . . . in *A Tale* [of a Tub] is continually present in Swift's poetry, but that positive performs a more personal than thematic function" (172). Furthermore, Arthur Scouten claims that if critics would read Swift's "unauthorized skits and riddles and occasional verses . . . they would be less likely to call the Dean a proponent of negativism or speak of his 'natural misanthropy'" (48). The point of both these arguments is that Swift must be examined within his own context before an accurate statement about his sensibility can be maintained.

The "Letters to Stella" especially vindicate an argument for Swift's positive rhetoric. It has been noted that the purpose behind writing this series of works was to avert the despair of Stella over her ailing medical condition (Fischer 80). Although Swift does achieve his ends through a curious sort of satiric railing and often distempered irony, the fact remains that, if these poems are examined contextually, there can be no mistaking for an affront the light-hearted and noble purpose. The critic is provided proof of these ends, and his successful achievement of them, by a birthday poem written for Swift by Stella:

> You taught how I might youth prolong,
> By knowing what was right and wrong;
> How from my heart to bring supplies
> Of lustre to my fading eyes;
> How soon a beauteous mind repairs
> The loss of chang'd or falling hairs;
> How wit and virtue from within
> Send out a smoothness o'er the skin. (qtd. in Fischer 80)

Swift also provides his reader with a happier vision in his public poems than is admitted by critics; however, in his public works, he forces the reader to search hard for a reward that is often fleeting. In his "Description of a City Shower" can be found this game of "hide-and-seek" that Swift

plays with his reader. In a general sense, it is significant that this poem tends to examine a phenomenon without an overt statement of culpability. While ideas about the degenerate and filthy condition of mankind are inherent to the poem, there is no frontal assault taking place as such. In addition, when Swift makes his "Triumphant Tories, and desponding Whigs, / Forget their Feuds, and join to save their Wigs"(41-42), he is tempering his affront with an almost endearing image. Moreover, as the poem ceases with the reader still amid the torrent, without a statement of conclusion, the possibility of a cathartic effect of the shower remains plausible. Since Swift claims that "Now from all Parts the swelling Kennels flow, / And bear their Trophies with them as they go," it is certain that after the rain has abated the city will be left clean—or cleaner at the very least.

Even in "A Description of the Morning" there exists an affective sense of unity, in spite of the satire, when the reader backs away from the specific lines and feels the entire image of the poem. This particular piece, when viewed from this broad angle, is reminiscent of Alexander Pope's sense of order in "An Essay on Man." In both works—though admittedly less poignant in Swift's—there is a sense of over-arching community that transcends the chaos of the smaller parts. Swift affords a panoramic view of the morning system not unlike the concerted workings of a clock's springs and wheels, and this vision is in no way displeasing as a whole.

"Cadenus and Vanessa" is, in a general sense, a continuation of the theme of an orderly universe in which things are as they are for a purpose. The poem, at times, seems to almost defend the sensibilities of man and woman, however perfidious they might be. The poem first points up the necessity for difference between men and women, even if the traits that distinguish them from one another are undesirable. Vanessa, who is made into the perfect combination of characteristics both masculine and feminine, fails equally to please either sex. The men deride her sense—although at times more reasonable than theirs—as such:

> Her hearers had no Share
> In all she spoke, except to stare.
> Their Judgement was upon the whole,
> —That Lady is the dullest Soul—
> then tipt their Forehead in a Jeer,
> As who should say—she wants it here. . . . (356-61)

Then, the women decry her lack of fashion sense and deride her beauty:

She's not so handsome, in my Eyes:
For Wit, I wonder where it lies.
. . . a Baby Face, no Life, nor Airs,
But what she learnt at Country Fairs;
Scarce knows what Diff'rence is between
Rich *Flanders* Lace, and Colberteen. (410-17)

One point, of course, is that when we see these lines at the end of the poem, we know that folly abounds equally in both sexes so that men and women can be contented with one another:

And were she [Venus] to begin agen,
She'd study to reform the *Men*;
Or add some grains of folly more
To *women* than they had before,
To put them on an equal foot;
. . . This might their mutual Fancy strike,
Since ev'ry being loves its *Like*. (872-79)

At the very least, Swift is providing his readers with a general sense that, though they are faulty, it is at times a functional fault.

Swift presents the critic with yet another example of balanced thought in his "Progress of Poetry." In spite of his incessant railings in this and other poems, Swift still maintains a high regard for writers. While the Dean admits freely to the faults of poets—he admits freely to the faults of everybody—he does affirm the quality of literature when he leaves us with these lines:

And up he [the poet] rises like a Vapour,
Supported high on Wings of Paper;
He singing flies, and flying sings,
While from below all *Grub-Street* rings. (43-46)

An examination of two more of Swift's poems yields a small sense of hope as well, although they require some extrapolation. Swift's "A Satyrical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General," while censuring pride and mocking the haughty upper class, can be seen as a message of hope for the lower orders of society. The message seems to be that one should not envy a general for, in spite of all his "ill-got honours flung, he, like all men, "Turn'd to that dirt, from whence he sprung" (31-32). Swift's message here is certainly more easily construed as hopeful than Gray's similar strain, for

example, in "An Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" (91-92).

Next, in "Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift," the Dean himself reminds the reader of his happy aim. He admits that he may have been somewhat harsh: "Perhaps I may allow, the Dean / Had too much satyr in his vein," and he also confirms that "His satyr points at no Defect, / But what all Mortals may correct" (463-64). These lines, then, are tantamount to an admission that humanity is not so bad that it cannot mend itself and, additionally, that the poet believed himself often unreasonable in his indictment of man through his writing. He admits further that he meant no harm and that his motives were pure with these lines: "Yet Malice never was his Aim; / He lash'd the Vice but spar'd the Name" (459-60). Furthermore, since this poem is generally considered as Swift's intended literary capstone, it is also significant that it ends positively by reversing the envy described at its introduction: "That Kingdom he has left his Debtor, / I wish it soon may have a better" (483-84).

What all this adds up to is the fact that Swift not only had the purest of intentions when he crafted his prescriptive rhyme, but he also maintained a positive range of thought that ran latent to his poetic works. Swift tended to drop his reader, like the scientist's mouse, into a maze of satire and then leave him to hunt for the prize at the end: one tiny morsel of hope and goodness amongst the distraction of vice assaulted.

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Judicial and Epideictic Rhetoric in Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle draws a distinction between three "species" of rhetoric. In judicial rhetoric, the speaker asks for a judgment to be made concerning a past action. In *deliberative* rhetoric, the speaker argues for the expediency of a future course of action. In *epideictic* rhetoric—traditionally used under ceremonial circumstances—the speaker engages in the praise or blame of someone or something.[1] George Kennedy argues that epideictic rhetoric is often added to the other two species of rhetoric:

> Although classical rhetoricians and most of their successors have taught that epideictic is a distinct species of rhetoric, it is also possible to speak of an epideictic style or color added to discourse of any species. Judicial or deliberative speech may display this color to the extent that attention is given to belief or attitude. (74)

All three of these species of rhetoric are central to the discursive dynamics of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. And indeed, Milton critics have long paid much attention to the rhetorical attributes of the poem, focusing, for instance, on the deliberative species of rhetoric found 1) in the great demonic debates in Books I and II, in which the fallen angels propose various courses of future action to either get revenge on God or to make their lot in Hell a better one; 2) in the debate between the Serpent and Eve in Book IX, in which the Serpent convinces Eve to eat the forbidden fruit; and 3) in the various debates between Adam and Eve, in which they argue, in Book IX for instance, on how best to tend to the garden.

But not only have critics studied these debates, they have also studied the debates that take place between Adam and Eve soon after the Fall. I will argue that most critics have failed to identify the *species* of rhetoric involved in the debates after the Fall: they are primarily of the *judicial* and *epideictic* mode, for the primary purpose in these debates is to assess blame for past action. Thus, I believe that judicial and epideictic rhetoric have their own power and importance in the poem, and should be properly recognized. In particular, I will focus on Books IX and X, where—in Adam and Eve's

angry debates after the Fall—we find a highly-developed judicial rhetoric, one to which is added an angry, vituperative epideictic color or style, which takes the form of invective. I will suggest that the rhetorical maneuverings found here are emblematic of the moral failings of Adam and Eve, revealing a couple lost in the wreckage of their past actions, obsessed with placing blame for that wreckage, and seemingly unable to embrace any course of expedient future action that might redeem them. Indeed, the degeneration of Adam and Eve into a rhetoric of angry judicial pleadings and epideictic invective is illustrative of the degeneration of their very beings, on a moral, spiritual, intellectual, and psychological level.

But why the importance of properly identifying the change in the poem from a deliberative to a judicial rhetoric to which is added a negative epideictic color? Why not let the language stand on its own, without needing to identify the exact rhetorical species? Of the various answers that might be given to these questions, the most significant for our purposes would be to say that, in acknowledging the change in rhetorical species, we give proper respect to the fundamental place that rhetoric held both for Milton specifically, and for the Renaissance generally. Thomas Sloane, for instance, has said that

> rhetoricians, not aestheticians, still set the major tone for literary interpretation in Milton's day . . . and in the rhetorical view form is a detachable element in any discourse, one that should be carefully examined for its own special efficacy and impact. (307)

John Steadman echoes such an idea, and he too emphasizes the importance of rhetorical elements in Milton's poetry:

> . . . [W]e can accept the full implications of Milton's rhetorical training and experience, and their significance for his prose and poetry. . . . Poetry and rhetoric no longer seem antithetical, but rather complementary. And we have come to realize, gradually, that one reason why Milton was so successful a poet is that he was so accomplished a rhetorician. (68)

Clearly, then, Milton's use of rhetorical structure was often quite self-consciously developed. A close look at Books IX and X from the perspective of judicial rhetoric colored by invective will reveal Milton's deliberate rendering of the damage done to Adam and Eve's psyches by the Fall.

That the language of Adam and Eve undergoes a degeneration after the fall has been noted by several critics. Beverley Sherry, for instance, has

argued that the degeneration of Adam and Eve's speech is in accordance with the general Renaissance view that human communication was degraded by the Fall:

> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries several treatises (religious, philosophical, and rhetorical) discussed the Fall of Man as involving a corruption of mankind's speech. In *Paradise Lost* we witness a dramatization of that corruption. Adam and Eve lose what Thomas Wilson, in his *Arte of Rhetorique* (1560), calls the "Eloquence first giuen by God"; their speech is confounded. . . . This confounding of their utterance is particularly noticeable in Adam and Eve's speech rhythms, which in the context of *Paradise Lost* are transformed from a celestial to an infernal resemblance. (247)

Yet I would argue that the confounding of their utterance is not as much noticeable in Adam and Eve's speech rhythms as it is in the species of rhetoric Adam and Eve employ. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve, as I have noted earlier, employ a deliberative rhetoric, seen for instance in their debate concerning how best to tend the garden. In this section of the poem, the rhetoric remains civil, meditative, reasoned, all of it aimed at advocating the expediency of a future course of action. For instance, we read how Eve broaches the subject of the benefits of their separating to better tend the garden:

> Then commune how that day they best may ply
> Thir growing work: for much thir work outgrew
> The hands dispatch of two Gardening so wide.
> And Eve first to her Husband thus began.
> *Adam*, well may we labour still to dress
> This Garden, still to tend Plant, Herb, and Flour,
> Our pleasant task enjoyn'd, but till more hands
> Aid us, the work under our labour grows. . . .
> . . . Thou therefore now advise
> Or bear what to my minde first thoughts present
> Let us divide our labours. . . . (IX, 201-14)[2]

Here we see that the tone Eve adopts in order to plead her case is a tone that will most likely serve not to alienate her audience, Adam. Indeed, she deftly uses three classical modes of ethical appeal: 1) *Phronesis*, in which she shows sound sense (her plan of dividing the labor shows her efficiency);

2) *Arete*, in which she exhibits high moral character (her morality is seen in her taking responsibility for the care of the garden); and 3) *Eunoia*, in which she expresses concern for the well-being of Adam (by asking for Adam to "advise" her, she is presumably making sure that her plan would not be deleterious to him or be retrograde to his desires).

Adam's response exhibits an equally civil deliberative rhetoric, one that likewise displays *Phronesis*, *Arete*, and *Eunoia*:

> To whom mild answer *Adam* thus return'd.
> Sole *Eve*, Associate sole, to me beyond
> Compare above all living Creatures deare,
> Well hast thou motion'd, well thy thoughts imployd
> How we might best fulfill the work which here
> God hath assign'd us, nor of me shalt pass
> Unprais'd: for nothing lovelier can be found
> In Woman, then to studie houshold good,
> And good workes in her Husband to promote. (IX 226-34)

Here we see that his answer is "mild"; he commends her proposal; he praises her concern for "good workes." It is true that very soon in the debate, the two become upset with each other, when Eve refuses to take Adam's apparently very good advice that they not separate. (Indeed, their separation is a contributory cause to their fall, since it allows Satan the opportunity to engage in his own very effective deliberative rhetoric, talking Eve into eating the forbidden fruit). Yet even when they become upset with each other, they never descend into invective or engage in *ad hominem* attacks. They argue the issue; they do not attack each other. As Beverley Sherry has pointed out, Adam and Eve's discourse here may be seen as "a debate between two unfallen creatures, true eloquence versus true eloquence" (260).

However, after the fall, Milton has Adam and Eve eschew the mild and civil deliberative rhetoric of the prelapsarian debates, and quickly replaces it with a judicial rhetoric colored with a highly vituperative epideictic rhetoric. The fundamental essence or purpose of such a combination of rhetorical styles is blame, and Milton so infuses the end of Book IX and Book X with the language of blame that it is hard not to imagine that he consciously was indicating a shift from deliberative to judicial rhetoric and invective. Indeed, after one passage in which Adam scolds Eve for not following his advice that she not leave his side, we read a line introducing Eve's response: "To whom soon mov'd with touch of *blame* thus Eve" (IX, 1143; emphasis added). And her response itself is a response which throws the blame right back at Adam:

> Being as I am, why didst not thou the Head
> Command me absolutely not to go,
> Going into such danger as thou saidst?
> Too facil then thou didst not much gainsay,
> Nay didst permit, approve, and fair dismiss.
> Hadst thou bin firm and fixt in thy dissent,
> Neither had I transgress'd, nor thou with mee. (IX, 1155-61)

At this response, Adam begins to refer to her as "accuser" and says that she as "upbraided" him, and so it continues. Such angry and vindictive language leads Milton to close out Book IX with the following lines: "Thus they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning, / And of thir vain contest appeer'd no end" (IX, 1187-89).

Such "mutual accusation" remains at the heart of Adam and Eve's discourse deep into Book X. In fact, Milton reserves Adam's worst invective for near the end of Book X, when Adam's rhetoric of blame reaches perhaps its zenith, or more appropriately its nadir. After Eve attempts through "soft words" to quell the terrible passion into which Adam has been transported (X, 865), his anger becomes so overwhelming that he lashes out at Eve with a vituperation quite shocking in its proportions:

> Out of my sight, thou Serpent, that name best
> Befits thee with him leagu'd, thy self as false
> And hateful; nothing wants, but that thy shape,
> Like his, and colour Serpentine may shew
> Thy inward fraud, to warn all Creatures from thee
> Henceforth; least that too heav'nly form, pretended
> To hellish falshood, snare them. But for thee
> I had persisted happie, had not thy pride
> And wandering vanitie, when lest was safe,
> Rejected my forewarning, and disdain'd
> Not to be trusted, longing to be seen
> Though by the Devil himself. . . . (X, 867-78)

One could hardly imagine saying anything worse to Eve than calling her a serpent, i.e., devilish and indeed, in this context, satanic. But to add insult to injury, Adam continues to build up the invective in the passage by calling her hellishly false, fraudulent, hateful, serpentine, prideful, and vain, all within only nine lines. The reduction of Adam's rhetoric into such vile name-calling and *ad hominem* attacks can thus be seen as the diminution of his intellect, a diminution brought about by the Fall. And the same can be said for Eve. After

all, what would be most appropriate and useful at this point in the poem is not assessing blame for what has occurred, but to figure out how to achieve reparation for their sin, that is, how to pursue a course of future action that might mitigate their faults and their sufferings. Indeed, as we have seen, early on after the Fall, Adam and Eve avoid any deliberative rhetoric between them that might help to achieve this, and fall into a negative judicial rhetoric and invective that accomplishes nothing. This exemplifies the inner spiritual, moral, and intellectual turmoil that Adam and Eve experience after the Fall. As Beverley Sherry has pointed out, the reasoned discourse seen in the "true eloquence versus true eloquence" of the debate before the Fall has given way after the Fall to an atmosphere in which "[t]here is no communing, no refining of thought, enlarging of the heart, as Raphael would have wished. . . . [A] lonely and manifestly fallen conversation, always focused on the self" (260). Thus we see that by couching Adam and Eve's discourse after the Fall into the form of negative judicial and epideictic rhetoric, Milton is able to achieve his moral and intellectual purposes. And yet this is not merely to explain his theme. As Thomas Sloane suggests, in Renaissance writing "the form of a discourse could be used not simply to show the reader the content, or to get him to perceive it in a certain way, but also to 'prove' it, to get him to experience it" (308). The degeneration from deliberative rhetoric to invective does indeed allow us to experience Adam and Eve's degeneration into sin. And though it is true that, as Beverley Sherry has pointed out, Adam and Eve do "reestablish communication" and revive "reason and love" through their "reconciliation speeches" at the end of Book X (261), there can be no doubt that Milton moves to that point of reconciliation through deliberate shifts in rhetorical species. Form truly is then, as Sloane says, "an argument" (307).

Notes

[1] Aristotle's discussion of the species begins on page 33 of the Loeb edition of the *Rhetoric*, but continues on for many pages. See in general Book I, iii-xv, and Book II.

[2] All references to *Paradise Lost* will be from the Roy Flannagan edition.

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Empiricism and Doubt in *Paradise Regained*

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Critics have long acknowledged that uncertainty and doubt play a prominent role in *Paradise Regained.* Joan Mallory Webber asserts that the poem is "suffused with the language of doubt" (171)[1], and Barbara Lewalski writes that the Son faces uncertainty about his "mission as well as his nature" (164). More recently, Ashraf H. A. Rushdy finds "three forms of skepticism" in the poem, including the inability of humans to comprehend divinity, an intellectual skepticism that questions tradition, and Satan's "doubt of desperation" (98). Although these approaches and others similar to them go far to explain how doubt functions in the poem, examining the text from within the intellectual currents of its time casts new light on the issues. From this perspective, the poem presents a seventeenth-century alchemy of faith and doubt in constant need of bolstering through rational argument. Along these lines, characters in Milton's poem cannot know what God intends: all they can do is make predictions based on empirical observation within a context of their faith. This method of analysis captures the spirit of the seventeenth-century's skeptical debate in which theologians and philosophers struggled to accept the reliability of religion.

Richard H. Popkin explains that "the dramatic history of how the Western World lost its religious innocence is . . . closely bound up with the rise and flourishing of religious skepticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (*History* 248)[2], and that "the drama of seventeenth-century metaphysics had not only reinforced skepticism about man's natural and rational knowledge of the cosmos, but had also shaken his ability to accept any traditional faith as well" ("Introduction" 22). Christopher Hill speaks of an "historical skepticism" that arose from this intellectually tempestuous time: "In this intoxicating era of free discussion and free speculation nothing was left sacred. . . . Heaven and hell were declared to be states of mind, not places. The immortality of the soul was questioned" (179). William Chillingworth, "a liberal English divine," was a key figure who evolved a religious response to the skeptical crisis with a new approach called constructive or mitigated skepticism. Chillingworth's constructive skepticism justified religion "in terms of probabalism built on the

acceptance of an ultimate Pyrrhonism" (Popkin, *History* 146-47). He reasoned that although some types of knowledge could never be known, the conclusion "was not complete doubt on all matters, but rather, an acceptance of a lesser degree of evidence, moral certainty" (147). The lesser degree of evidence related to the probability of truth based on empirical observation rooted in rational analysis. Thus, according to Chillingworth's model, one could accept religious truths not because they could be proven in an absolute empirical sense, but because they could be viewed as highly probable through ratiocination. Popkin states: "This theory of Chillingworth's contains the seeds of a long tradition which was to develop later in the seventeenth century in England as the commonsensical practical solution to the sceptical crisis" (147).[3]

Just as Chillingworth and his colleagues had done, characters in Milton's poem use a rational process to staunch their doubt and thus affirm probability in the place of certainty. At the beginning of Book II, Andrew and Simon move from assurance to doubt as they become confused about the Son's intentions and subtly question just how powerful the Godhead is:

> Our eyes beheld
> Messiah certainly now come, so long
> Expected of our Fathers; we have heard
> His words, his wisdom full of grace and truth;
> Now, now, for sure, deliverance is at hand,
> The Kingdom shall to Israel be restor'd:
> Thus we rejoic'd, but soon our joy is turn'd
> Into perplexity and new amaze:
> For whither is he gone, what accident
> Hath rapt him from us? (31-40)

Language such as "certainly now come" rings with confidence, and the repetition of "now" linked with the prepositional phrase "for sure" asserts a single-minded conviction that "deliverance is at hand." But the Son's sudden absence challenges the disciples' confidence, which turns their former exuberance to "perplexity and new amaze." "Amaze" can mean "bewilderment and mental confusion" (*OED* def. 2), thus reinforcing their "new" state as one of uncertainty, perplexity, and confusion. Their reference to Jesus as having been "rapt" from them by "accident" suggests doubt about God's power. After all, how could an ostensibly divine and omnipotent Being be subject to an accident? Moreover, since the force "rapt" Jesus away, it must be more powerful than he is. If it is more powerful than Jesus, then the universe just might not be structured according to the disciples' convictions, which clearly maintained that God is omnipotent and all-powerful. The resultant doubt would foster anxiety, tension, and unrest—all of which were at the core of the period's quest for stability and certainty about metaphysical knowledge.[4]

Ratiocination, however, restores Andrew's and Simon's faith, although it is a nervous faith expressed in negative language:

> But let us wait; thus far he hath perform'd
> Sent his Anointed, and to us reveal'd him,
> By his great prophet, pointed at and shown,
> Let us be glad of this, and all our fears
> Lay on his Providence; he will not fail
> Nor will withdraw him now, nor will recall. (II.48-53)

The disciples conclude that they should remain confident in God only after rational argument justifies such a conclusion: God has sent his Anointed and revealed him to them; therefore, they should remain faithful. But remaining faithful takes on a different tenor. No longer are they making bold-faced assertions that "now, now, for sure, deliverance is at hand." Their new outlook is cast in a much more guarded language that tentatively suggests they can lay their "fear" on "Providence" and "he will not fail." This negative expression of their faith hardly constitutes confidence. Uncertainty causes their crisis, for they do not know what to expect. The disciples endorse God's power, cast their fear upon him, and hope Jesus will reappear. But exactly how, when, or where are only probabilities based on rational confirmation of God's power and promises.

Relying on rational argument to find certainty correlates with seventeenth-century methodology. Lewalski recognizes this principle throughout Milton's work: "[I]n prose and poetry he calls for the constant exercise of judgment, based on hard reasoning and a delicate weighing of evidence and claims, as well as for the constant effort to see new problems against a broad range of knowledge and experience, of all kinds" (161). But "hard reasoning" does not bring assurance. The best the disciples can manage are "predictions" based upon a review of their religious knowledge. Popkin explains that Petrus Gassendi, a seventeenth-century scientist, priest, and constructive skeptic, argued for a rational approach to knowledge. Gassendi thought that "careful reasoning" would lead to truth and that the "test as to whether . . . [one] reason[s] rightly and discover[s] true knowledge, lies in experience, through verifying predictions" (142). Joseph Glanvil and John Wilkins, two early members of the Royal Society, espoused similar ideas. They thought that "empirical science" could decide "human problems with

limits of "reasonable doubt," and that "by applying their probabilistic empirical method to religious questions they could justify a tolerant, latitudinarian form of Christianity" ("English" 454).

The Son further underscores the problem of certainty, but from a different perspective. He does not doubt God's power or ability, but rather what his nature is and what the Father wants him to do. Mary has told him, "Thou shouldest be great and sit on David's Throne, / And of thy Kingdom there should be no end" (I.240-41), and he has heard God proclaim him his "belov'd Son." Jesus believes Mary and accepts the baptism as a divine event, but he nevertheless remains confused about what to do. How is he to rule? When should he begin? What does ruling mean? He reveals his uncertainty as he enters the desert:

> O what a multitude of thoughts at once
> Awak'n'd in me swarm, while I consider
> What from within I feel myself, and hear
> What from without comes often to my ears,
> Ill sorting with my present state compar'd. (I.196-200)

A "multitude of thoughts" that "swarm" in his mind implies anxiety and uncertainty, as if ideas about his identity and destiny have overwhelmed him. The last three lines contrast the Son's present condition with his revealed destiny: "From within" the Son intuits his role as God's son and "from without" people such as John the Baptist have confirmed his identity, yet an image of being a savior and a king is "Ill sorting" when contrasted to his "present state." The Son clearly faces a quandary, for he cannot empirically reconcile how a person of his status can save mankind and rule God's people. Here we see the war between intuition and reason that comes to play such a prominent role in such thinkers as John Locke and David Hume.

Uncertainty over appearance occupied a prominent place in the seventeenth-century skeptical debate. Largely, this related to the idea that the senses and reason were fallible and therefore could not always lead to valid conclusions about appearances. In "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," Montaigne wrote that "[t]he unreliability of our senses renders unreliable everything which they put forward" (678) and that the "senses deceive our intellect" (673). Descartes also addressed the problem of relying on the senses. He suspected that an evil spirit or demon might exist which was "capable of distorting either the information we possess or the faculties that we have for evaluating it" (Popkin 178).[5] Thus, what appeared to be self-evident might be false. Considering the period's nervousness over appearance, we can more fully understand why the disciples and the Son struggle

to make sense of their circumstances. Andrew, Simon, and Jesus all demonstrate a seventeenth-century reluctance to accept experience at face value.

Doubt about God constitutes a theology of probability. While characters can have faith in God's power—even if it is a nervous faith—they cannot be confident about details concerning divine action. Put another way, the characters have confidence in God through a rational fideism that grapples with God in such language as "he will not fail." How, when, and where he will not fail are only probable events which must unfold through time, as the characters "wait." The poem's insistence on probability in place of certainty captures the spirit of the seventeenth-century's attempt to know religious truth. Such a system denies certainty, yet endorses religious truth based on probability arrived at through ratiocination. Although *Paradise Regained* does not view God's existence as a probability, it nevertheless does raise questions about his power and it views specific actions as probabilities instead of certainties.[6] Yet a larger issue at stake is the traditional Western dichotomy between mind and matter, which Descartes made famous or perhaps infamous. Milton comes out primarily on the latter side of the split, as his characters struggle to know their world through the head rather than the heart.

A diction of doubt prevalent throughout much of the poem further complicates the quest for certitude. The opening of Book I declares that Jesus is "by proof th' undoubted Son of God" (11). "Undoubted" carries the same negative impact as Andrew and Simon's assertion, "He will not fail." It shifts attention from affirmation to suspicion. Why would the poet refer to Jesus's identity in a negative term unless at some level he doubted the assertion? A little later Satan confirms that Jesus has come so that "Nations may not doubt" (I.79). In another instance, the poet refers to the Son as the "attested Son of God" (I.22). "Attested" is not a convincing endorsement. It suggests debate, as if someone might challenge the assertion.

Further, the Son's role is defined with a language that asserts the need for proof: "To show him worthy of his birth divine / And high prediction" (I.141-142); "to exercise him in the Wilderness" (I.156); "To earn Salvation" (I.167); and to "fully t[ry] the Son" (I.4). Such strong insistence on proof allows for failure. After all, the Son must be shown "worthy" of a "high prediction." A prediction, at best, is only probable, not absolutely certain. Consequently, the Son's position is subtly undermined as anxiety about identity builds. I am not suggesting that the poem doubts that Jesus is the Son, only that it does not declare certainty, and it is this holding back, as it were, that contributes to a texture of doubt.

More questions about the Godhead are raised in Book IV in a simile that deconstructs its obvious intention to show Jesus's position as rock-solid.

Satan's attempts to subvert the Son are described as flies swarming around a wine press or as waves crashing against a rock:

> [Satan's attempts are as a] swarm of flies in vintage,
> About the wine-press where sweet must is lur'd,
> Beat off, return as oft with humming sound;
> Or surging waves against a solid rock,
> Though all to shivers dash't, the assault renew. (15-19)

Like swarming flies, Satan is easily beaten off by a more powerful force, thereby attesting to the Son's ability to withstand Satan's attacks. But the image also strengthens Satan's position. The flies are only beaten off, not destroyed. Presumably, they can return as often as they want. Furthermore, the must nourishes the flies, which allows them to propagate and come back in even greater numbers. Has the temptation process somehow enlivened Satan in a similar way the must nourishes the flies? Can all the Son hope for is to repulse Satan momentarily the way one brushes away bothersome insects? The second image is more troublesome. The rock may appear solid, but appearance is deceptive. Over time wave action will wear it away. Does the spiritual fact behind this natural fact forecast the Son's gradual decay? These similes leave us wondering.

Such questioning and wondering about existential realities links the poem to the skeptical debate of its time. As noted above, Chillingworth based his idea of constructive skepticism upon "the appearance of an ultimate Pyrrhonism" (Popkin 147) and Gassendi "advocated total skepticism about the world beyond appearance" (144). So, if the poem questions aspects of God's nature, it does so at least in part because Milton has captured the spirit of his day.[7]

Like his contemporaries, Milton questions the reliability of knowledge about God, reality, and people's place in the cosmos. And his questioning and doubting, in the final analysis, arise from an attempt to know spiritual issues primarily through empirical channels. Be this as it may, we must remember that although *Paradise Regained* mirrors aspects of the religious unrest of its time, it nevertheless does affirm God's place in human experience. After all, skepticism is not synomonous with rejection. Rather it only questions the reliability of knowledge.

Notes

[1] Webber recognizes the uncertainty and confusion surrounding the Son's identity and mission: "[D]espite the clarity of the Son's credentials as

discovered by himself, attested by John the Baptist, and affirmed by God, no one around him, with the possible exception of his mother, understands what they mean" (171).

[2] For remarks about the importance of Popkin's work and its influence, see Terence Penelhum, *God and Skepticism* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983), 22.

[3] According to Popkin, Pyrrhonism dominated the skeptical views of leading thinkers at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Developed by Pyrrho of Elis in 360-275 B.C. and made known through the writings of Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonism is a philosophy of "complete doubt" that opposes "any assertion whatsoever," even that "all is doubt" (47). Since it "suspend[s] judgment on all propositions" (47), Pyrrhonism denies both religious and scientific knowledge. French and British thinkers such as Marine Mersenne, Petrus Gassendi, and John Wilkins responded to Pyrrhonism with mitigated or constructive skepticism. Although constructive skepticism allowed scientific truth, it maintained that religious truth could not be proven. For more information about constructive skepticism see Christopher Hookway, *Skepticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), 21-40; and M. Jamie Ferreria, *Skepticism and Reasonable Doubt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 1-40. Of particular interest in Ferreria is Chapter 2, "Unreasonable Doubt: the Seventeenth-Century Tradition: Wilkins and Locke," 10-40. For more on Pyrrhonism and Sextus Empiricus see Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes, *The Modes of Scepticisim* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), especially 1-18 which discusses ancient texts and their rediscovery in the sixteenth century. For readings on both Pyrrhonsim and other modes of skepticism see David R. Hiley, *Philosophy in Question: Essay on a Pyrrhonian Theme* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[4] See Davies, *Milton*, 173-74, for a discussion of the disciples' doubt after the Son disappeared. Davies asserts that the Son's withdrawal plunges his followers into "a quandary which mimes the insecurity of the remnant of the saints in 1660, pondering the apparent disappearance of Christ from a relapsed and recidivist history" (173). Davies' remarks show the uncertainty surrounding the Son and imply that his followers could only be reasonably certain about his actions.

[5] Descartes' idea of influence from an evil spirit or demon has obvious connection with Satan's temptations, for the Son must see through Satan's rhetoric. The Son refers to Satan's argument as being "dark, / Ambiguous and with double sense deluding" (I.434-35).

[6] Popkin explains that seventeenth-century skeptics believed in God:

> Since the term 'Skepticism' has been associated in the last two

> centuries with disbelief, especially disbelief of the central doctrines of the Judeo-Christian tradition, it may seem strange at first to read that the skeptics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries asserted, almost unanimously, that they were sincere believers in the Christian religion (xviii).

Popkin explains that for the seventeenth century, skepticism was a "philosophical view" that raised doubts "about the adequacy or reliability of the evidence that could be offered to justify any proposition"(xviii).

[7] In *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries*, Marilyn Butler discusses how authors capture the climate of their times: "We are regularly in danger of treating the relationship between author and text as a closed system, when really the process of literary production must be open at both ends. The writer takes in words, thoughts and structures from a babel around him, and his text is a giving back into the same discussion, part, in short, of social process" (9).

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Marvell and Milton: The Garden Experience

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At first glance, Andrew Marvell and John Milton seem far apart. At one extreme lies Marvell's metaphysical, lightly elegant wit versus Milton's deeply inspired, serious didacticism. However, closer study reveals that the two authors have much in common and so does their poetry.

Although it is not certain when the two men became acquainted, the "record starts in February 1653. . . . [when] Milton pushed Marvell as a possible assistant to him" (Hill 3). At age 45, Milton had recently gone blind, a condition which hampered his work as the English republic's Secretary for Foreign Tongues. Marvell's appointment was not immediate. "On September 2, 1657, Marvell finally was appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State, apparently co-equal to Milton" (Waddington 357). By this time, Marvell had joined Milton's circle, and the two men were destined to become "close friends for over twenty years" (Hill 17). Both men retained their political convictions; both men remained confident that the world could be changed by human effort; both men had a keen sense of humor; unfortunately, both men died poor. Thus, the personal and poetic lives of Marvell and Milton became intertwined. To compare and contrast their styles and philosophies provides insight.

First, Andrew Marvell's "The Garden" illustrates the poet's style and Edenic view. The poem, as a lyric piece, presents a theme of "withdrawal and emergence, characteristic of so much of Marvell's poetry" (Colie 141). Besides this ambiguity, the poet's philosophy remains veiled. Today, modernist works assume collaboration between reader and poet, but such a thing was unusual in the seventeenth century. Likewise, Marvell as a witty poet "plays with traditional thought and language. . ." (Colie 144). The gaps in the poem provide room for conjecture. In "The Garden," Marvell "strips down traditional language into brief references by which the argument of the poem is carried" (Colie 147).

The poem contains tight sentence structure and end rhyme using closed couplets, which pack a lot of punch into a small space. "All the words carry more than one meaning. Fortunately, . . . they do not come charged with all their meaning at once, but are hedged by the context in which they appear" (Colie 151):

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their incessant labor see
Crowned from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow-verged shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all flowers and all trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose! (Marvell 1-8)

Besides this tight structure, the poem uses iambic tetrameter and enjambment, which prevents the poem from becoming singsongy. The caesuras also vary the rhythmic flow of the lines.

The frequent puns add lightness and humor to the poem. Robert Wilcher explains the importance of this word play to the poem:

> "How vainly" establishes both tone of voice and point of view. It first passes moral judgment on those who feed their vanity by seeking acclaim for their achievements in war, public service, or the arts. (132)

In fact, "vainly" in line one denotes both pride and emptiness. This simple word carries a depth of meaning by the poem's close. "Amaze" carries the idea of wonder but also "a maze" or a labyrinth. This idea contributes to the thematic structure of the poem. These examples foreshadow the poet's use of puns throughout the poem. Rosalie L. Colie explains that "Marvell's aggregate punning in the poem results in an atmospheric blur of meanings" (151). The poem's theme concerns the contrast between experience and thought. The poet elevates thought because it allows human mental transcendence. Stanza six illustrates the key theme:

Meanwhile the mind from pleasure less
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade. (Marvell 41-48)

The poet argues that the human mind is free to retire into the happy state of the collective unconscious without the body's movement anywhere. In the soul, ideas remain separate, but within the universal mind, ideas unite

providing meaning for life. The last line condenses Marvell's argument: "To a green thought in a green shade" (Marvell 48). As a poem of retirement, the poet shows that "the garden state is a state of mind" (Klonsky 47). Sensuous pleasures are minimized, Platonic ideals are praised, and nature is glorified. The mind becomes a "Garden of Ideas" (Klonsky 47). According to Rosalie L. Colie, Marvell depicts "the vanity of human wishes and human expectations. Human effort, human fame, human love, all human experience, and all things are subject to time and in fact must pass away" (156). Only in the protected shade of the fertile mind can perfection and permanence be found.

Marvell proposes that this inner cohesiveness of the universal mind occurred before Woman was created in the Garden of Eden. In fact, Marvell implies that Man was androgynous and did not need a sexual partner. The poet explains this garden-state in the eighth stanza, using theological wit:

Such was that happy garden state
While man there walked without a mate:
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one
To live in Paradise alone. (Marvell 57-64)

Using paradox and hyperbole, Marvell perceives that the "contemplative life is superior to an active life because it is more like that of the unfallen Adam" (Leishman 308). This age-long debate was cited by such philosophers as Plato and Aristotle who recommended a life of "contemplation as better and higher" (Leishman 304). The reader questions whether Marvell believes that solitude is superior. His playful tone implies hyperbole. But according to William Empson, "The chief point of the poem is to contrast and reconcile conscious and unconscious states" (18). This meditative experience illustrates a facet of Christian Platonism in which the joyous and creative spirit expands into nature.

Marvell's "The Garden" presents a "fictional and momentary attempt to recapture what has been lost" (Summers, "Nature" 46). The poem recognizes man's alienation from nature. Yet, Marvell's poem offers hope for paradise regained. The use of "green" throughout the poem represents "hope, vitality, and virility: the fertile promise of life that man desires . . ." (Summers 47). This life is found in the garden of the mind because man's capacity for pure reason is Godlike. According to the Renaissance model,

pure reason places man with celestial beings. Marvell's argument opens with the concept of a moral judgment placed on those who feed their vanity by seeking acclaim. Yet, the poem ends with the concept of the sundial and time, an idea that places limitation on solitude. Perhaps, Marvell suggests personal solitude for momentary renewal, not permanent duration.

However, John Milton portrays the Garden of Eden in *Paradise Lost* with a deeply inspired, serious didactic style and a Christian humanistic philosophy. Instead of rhyming couplets like Marvell uses in "The Garden" Milton chooses epic blank verse. English prosody had been based on rhyme, but the power of blank verse lies in the fact that each verse builds on the previous one. According to F. T. Prince, "the addition of a second adjective, as an interjection or afterthought, to an already qualified substantive" becomes a trick in phrasing and meaning (154). A good example occurs in Book V: "High matter thou enjoin'st me, O prime of men, / Sad task and hard" (*Paradise Lost* V, 563-64). Milton's technique adds to the deliberately complex balance of the sonnet form. In the epic poem, "these patterns grow in complexity, since the adjectives or participles placed in this way may have attached to them qualifying words or phrases, and these in their turn may have a similar pattern" (Prince 156).
An example of Milton's technique follows:

> Belial came last, than whom a Spirit more lewd
> Fell not from heaven, or more gross to love
> Vice for itself: to him no temple stood
> Or altar smoked. (I, 490-93)

Thus, Milton's English diction shows both richness and delicacy because of the flexibility of his language.

Another technique of Milton's verse is the suspended or interrupted statement: Coleridge explains Milton's style in this way:

> The "logical" order of words is avoided in order to provide . . . phrasing that is suspended and diffused throughout a larger block of words, ... gaining the effect of emphatic, excited, or passionate modes of speech. This is the language of sublimated emotion and intellectual excitement. (qtd. in Prince 159-60)

According to F. T. Prince, Milton's poetic form displays unity of "matter, meaning, emotion, and method" (160).

Despite his didactic style, Milton, like Marvell, employs "verbal wit,

various forms of conceits, and puns" (Prince 169). These ingenuities provide surprise and suspense for the reader. The following passage illustrates:

> One gate there only was, and that looked east
> On th' other side: which when th' arch-felon saw
> Due entrance he disdained, and in contempt
> At one slight bound high overleaped all bound
> Of hill or highest, and sheer within
> Lights on his feet. (IV, 178-83)

Clearly, Milton adapts his diction to the freedom of Elizabethan English and creates a style that is fresh and new for his seventeenth-century readers. Both Marvell and Milton capture the audience's attention through innovative techniques.

Initially, John Milton's Eden appears quite different from Marvell's "Garden," although both paradises extol nature:

> A heaven on earth: for blissful Paradise
> Of God the garden was, by him in the east
> Of Eden planted:
> . . . .
> Out of the fertile ground he caused to grow
> All trees of noblest kind for sight, smell, taste;
> And all amid them stood the Tree of Life,
> High eminent, blooming ambrosial fruit
> Of vegetable gold, and next to life
> Our death the Tree of Knowledge grew fast by,
> Knowledge of good bought dear by knowing ill.
> . . . .
> A happy rural seat of various view
> . . . .
> Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
> Of living creatures new to sight strange:
> Two of far nobler shape erect and tall
> God-like erect, with native honor clad
> In naked majesty seemed lords of all
> . . . .
> He for God only, she for God in him.
> . . . .
> So hand in hand they passed, the loveliest pair (IV, 208-321)

Milton's Eden uses vegetable *gold*, not green. According to J. E. Cirlot, "gold is the image of solar light and hence of divine intelligence. Consequently, gold is symbolic of all that is superior" (119). While Marvell's garden offers hope, as seen in the color green; Milton's garden possesses the elusive treasure: God's intelligence. What a contrast!

Also, Milton's paradise shows a heterosexual pair in complete spiritual and physical harmony before the Fall. We don't know how long Adam and Eve enjoyed this idyllic state, but *Paradise Lost* implies that their innocence was brief. According to Varma, Marvell suggests that "man lost Paradise twice: first when Eve was created, and the second time when the actual Fall took place" (139). On the other hand, Milton's Eden follows the Biblical text that implies that Adam needed Eve: "And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet fit for him'" (Gen. 2:18 KJV). Herein lies a major difference between the two poet's paradises.

However, both poets accept similar positions regarding the need for a mental "garden-state" as a result of the Fall. As earlier noted, Marvell praises the superiority of the contemplative life. Interestingly, Milton addresses the mental "garden-state" in Book XII. He shows that the contemplative life is superior through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Raphael speaks in this section:

> The Spirit of God, promised alike and giv'n
> To all believers; and from that pretense,
> Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force
> On every conscience;
> . . . .
> Religion satisfied; Truth shall retire
> . . . .
> Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add faith,
> Add virtue, patience, temperance, add love,
> By name to come called charity, the soul
> Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
> To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
> A paradise within thee, happier far. (XII, 519-87)

Milton sees unity with self as dependent on revelation: God's revelation. Man discovers in the Fall that Paradise is not his home. Rather man's home is within, where he "internalizes the Divine" (Frye, *Return* 109). Milton views the Holy Spirit, given to man, as the umpire conscience and the power for living. According to Frye, "In *Paradise Lost* . . . it is Paradise itself that

is internalized, transformed from an outward place to an inner state of mind" (110). In *The Return of Eden*, the author explains:

> Eden is finally washed away by the flood, in order to show that for God there is no longer anything sacred which can be located in either outward space or in past time. The world we fell from we can return to only by attaining the kind of freedom to which all education, as Milton defines it, leads; and it is this freedom that is said by Michael to be a happier paradise than that of the original garden. (Frye 110)

Interestingly, both Marvel and Milton conclude that paradise lies within the human mind. However, Milton shows that God, not nature, leads mankind to restful solitude and individual contentment:

> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
> They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow
> Through Eden took their solitary way. (XII, 646-49)

Perhaps, this view illustrates the difference between Neo-Classicism and Christian humanism. According to Woodhouse, "The Classical recognizes only one order of existence, the natural, though it acknowledges gradations within this order; whereas, Christianity adds to the order of nature the superior order of grace, which holds the key to the enigma of life" (178).

In conclusion, both seventeenth century poets incorporated wit, puns, literary conceits, and Edenic views, while employing didacticism. Though both embraced Christianity, their philosophical views were slightly dissimilar. This fact explains the variation in each poet's garden experience.

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Teaching Spenser: The Three Graces[1]

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Exploring the iconographic tradition behind the image of the Graces dancing to the piping of Colin Clout in Book 6, Canto 10, of *The Faerie Queene* can be rewarding for students, leading to an increased appreciation of the cultural and historical contexts within which a literary work exists. Calidore's encounter with Colin Clout and the Graces occurs when, entranced by its natural beauty, he climbs Mount Acidale. Reaching the top, he hears music and dancing and decides to investigate:

Vnto this place when as the Elfin Knight
  Approcht, him seemed that the merry sound
  Of a shrill pipe he playing heard on hight,
  And many feete fast thumping th'hollow ground,
  That through the woods their Eccho did rebound.
  He nigher drew, to weete what mote it be ;
  There he a troupe of Ladies dauncing found
  Full merrily, and making gladfull glee,
And in the midst a Shepheard piping he did see.

He durst not enter into th'open greene,
  For dread of them vnwares to be descryde,
  For breaking of their daunce, if he were seene ;
  But in the couert of the wood did byde,
  Beholding all, yet of them vnespyde.
  There he did see, that pleased much his sight,
  That euen he him selfe his eyes enuyde,
  An hundred naked maidens lilly white,
All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight.

All they without were raunged in a ring,
  And daunced round ; but in the midst of them
  Three other ladies did both daunce and sing,
  The whilest the rest of them round about did hemme,
  And like a girlond did in compasse stemme :
  And in the middest of those same three, was placed
  Another Damzell, as a precious gemme,

Amidst a ring most richly well enchaced,
That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.

....

Those were the Graces, daughters of delight,
Handmaides of Venus, which are wont to haunt
Vppon this hill, and daunce there day and night :
Those three to men all gifts of grace do graunt,
And all, that *Venus* in her selfe doth vaunt,
Is borrowed of them. But that faire one,
That in the midst was placed parauaunt,
Was she to whom that shepheard pypt alone,
That made him pipe so merrily, as neuer none. (Stanzas 10-12, 15)

Calidore finally approaches the dancers to learn who they are, but they vanish as soon as they see him. Calidore then asks the unhappy Colin who they were:

Tho gan that shepheard thus for to dilate ;
Then wote thou shepheard, whatsoeuer thou bee,
That all those Ladies, which thou sawest late,
Are *Venus* Damzels, all within her fee,
But differing in honour and degree :
They all are Graces, which on her depend,
Besides a thousand more, which ready bee
Her to adorne, when so she forth doth wend :
But those three in the midst, doe chiefe on her attend.

They are the daughters of sky-ruling Ioue,
By him begot of faire *Eurynome*,
The Oceans daughter, in this pleasant grove,
As he this way comming from feastfull glee,
Of *Thetis* wedding with *Æacidee*,
In sommers shade him selfe here rested weary.
The first of them hight mylde Euphrosyne,
Next faire *Aglaia*, last *Thalis* merry :
Sweet Goddesses all three which me in mirth do cherry.

These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
Which decke the body or adorne the mynde,
To make them louely or well fauoured show,

As comely carriage, entertainement kynde,
Sweete semblaunt, friendly offices that bynde,
And all the complements of curtesie :
They teach vs, how to each degree and kynde
We should ourselues demeane, to low, to hie ;
To friends, to foes, which skill men call Ciuility.

Therefore they alwaies smoothly seeme to smile,
That we likewise should mylde and gentle be,
And also naked are, that without guile
Or false dissemblaunce all them plaine may see,
Simple and true from couert malice free :
And eeke them selues so in their daunce they bore,
That two of them still froward seem'd to bee,
But one still towards shew'd her selfe afore ;
That goode should from vs goe, then come in greater store. (Stanzas 21-24)

My students will have read several long extracts from *The Faerie Queene* by the time we come to this episode, and though spelling and syntax may still slow them down, they tend to find this portion of the text to be smooth sailing. The imagery is detailed and concrete, making it easy to visualize the natural setting of Mount Acidale, the actions of Calidore, and the two concentric rings of dancers with the fourth maid in their midst. The allegory is not hard to follow: the graces may be new to my students, but the idea of poetic inspiration is not. Similarly, the conceit of "Colin Clout" praising his "country lass" as another Grace, and indeed, placing her in the very center where we might have expected to see Venus herself, is easy for readers new to Spenser to appreciate.

A pedagogical benefit of focusing on the iconography of the Three Graces at this point is that it will build on and enrich the students' experience of the poem without contradicting the interpretation of the text that the students have been able to develop for themselves. The discovery that the image of the graces used by Spenser is a part of an ancient and yet clearly still vital tradition is in itself intellectually stimulating, it can provide an opportunity to introduce some aspects of Renaissance Neoplatonism to the class, and for students with little background in earlier art, learning that sculpture and paintings were once presumed to be vehicles for transmitting symbolic meanings which were readable by all who knew the "language" is in itself exciting. Moreover, once the outlines of the tradition have been examined, we can explore the ways in which the tradition continued to grow and change, we can discuss the ways in

which our traditions affect the way we see the world, and we can discuss in what ways this tradition may still be alive and meaningful in our own time.

The Classical Tradition

One way to proceed is to note that Spenser also refers to the Three Graces in the April eclogue of *The Shepherds Calender*, and that the gloss by "E.K." explains them in the same way:

> The Graces) be three sisters, the daughters of Iupiter, (whose names are Aglaia, Thalia, Euphrosyne, and Homer only addeth a fourth .s. Pasithea) otherwise called Charities, that is thanks. Whom the Poetes feyned to be the Goddesses of al bountie and comeliness, which therefore (as sayeth Theodontius) they make three, to wete, that men first ought to be gracious and bountiful to other freely, then to receiue benefits at other mens hands curteously, and thirdly to requite them thankfully : which are three sundry Actions in liberalitye. And Boccace saith, that they be painted naked, (as they were indeede on the tombe of C. Iulius Caesar) the one having her backe toward vs, and her face fromwarde, as proceeding from vs: the other two toward vs, noting double thanke to be due to vs for the benefit, we haue done.

Clearly Spenser is working with a well-defined tradition in mind, and it is one with ancient roots. As Wind notes, Chrysippus explained in the third century B.C. that the Graces represent the triple rhythm of generosity: giving, accepting, and returning. In the image he described, they link hands because this circle must never be interrupted. His book was lost, but the argument is preserved in Seneca. In the fourth century A.D., Servius added another moral: one grace is pictured from the back because for each benefit issuing from us two are supposed to return. The triple action of Chrysippus's vision does not match the dual action of Servius's issuing and returning, but as the passages from Spenser show, both had become a part of the Renaissance tradition (Wind 28-30). Another difference exists between the two streams of this tradition. Chrysippus and Seneca imagined the Graces as clothed in ungirdled, transparent garments, since benefits should be both unrestricted and seen. By the second century A.D., the Graces were being depicted as nude, which Servius explained as showing that the Graces must be free of deceit (Wind 30-31). As these traditions fuse, the primary pictorial image for the Renaissance is of the nude Graces, but Seneca weighs more

heavily in the iconography (Wind 31). Wind's text is accompanied by a large number of illustrations of the Three Graces, making it ideal to pass around the classroom during discussion. These figures include a Pompeian fresco, one of the earliest surviving images of the Three Graces (fig. 9). An illustration from Piero Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* illustrates a medieval variation on the positioning of the Three Graces which was designed to match the triple action of the Senecan tradition (giving, receiving, returning): one grace faces us, one faces away, and one is in profile (fig. 17). The same symbolism is seen in Corregio's painting of the Three Graces in the Camera di San Paolo at Parma (Wind, fig. 16).

Neoplatonism

No undergraduate should be asked to wrestle too deeply with the mysteries of Renaissance Neoplatonism. However, most students in Renaissance literature classes will have encountered the notions of *sprezzatura* and the ladder of love, and many may know that the white magic of Prospero in *The Tempest* and the existence of spirits such as Ariel reflect Neoplatonism. Thus, a little knowledge of Neoplatonism can not hurt, and all that one really needs to know to appreciate the Neoplatonic use of the Three Graces is that they symbolize love. As in any Platonic system, all that is emanates from the gods (or the One). For the Renaissance Neoplatonist, this emanation occurs because of love, and created beings, feeling that love, experience rapture and are drawn back to heaven. This process is readily equated with the giving, accepting, and returning of the Senecan interpretation of the Graces, and they became a central archetype of Neoplatonism (Wind 37-8). They also, because of this emphasis on love, become strongly associated with Venus and Amor.

Iconographic images reflecting this Neoplatonic understanding are abundant. Francesco Vanni (1565-1609) adds two Cupids to his painting of the Three Graces (Panofsky 169 & fig. 123). "The Music of the Spheres," an engraving from Gafurius's *Practica musice* (1496) depicts the Three Graces dancing under the direct guidance of Apollo while his music animates the spheres (Wind, fig. 20). A stucco depiction of the Three Graces from Raphael's Loggia depicts "offering," "enraptured," and "returning Graces" (Wind 45 & fig. 19). A more famous "Three Graces" by Raphael shows them holding golden apples, which characterizes them as the servants of Venus (Wind 80 & fig. 61). A medal of Maria Poliziana uses the Three Graces as a group to signify Concordia, an aspect of Venus (Wind, fig. 69-70). Students may enjoy the witty interplay between medals

designed by Pico della Mirandola and Giovanna Tornabuoni (Wind, fig, 10-13). Platonic lovers served an ideal lady, to whom they addressed amorous courtesies in emblematic language, and the lady would customarily accept the medal of the platonic lover. In this case the lady has answered with a medal of her own. Pico's reads "Pulchritudo-Amor-Voluptas," a formula adopted from Ficino. Tornabuoni's medal, clearly modeled on Pico's, responds "Castitas-Pulchritudo-Amor." To the idea that love springs from beauty and ends in desire, she answers that beauty combines chastity and love. Perhaps the most famous artistic Neoplatonic depiction of the Three Graces is in Botticelli's "Primavera." Interpretation of the painting has been much debated (Baldini 87-101, Gombrich 37-64, Wind 97-127). However, Neoplatonic readings find that the painting reflects the Senecan pattern of giving, receiving, and returning. The Zephyr Chloris-Flora grouping on the right shows love being impelled to earth by passion and transformed to beauty. Love is then converted to a higher plane in the dance of the Three Graces, and finally, guided by Mercury, love returns to the highest sphere. The clothing of the Graces recalls their description in Seneca.

The Tradition Continues and Evolves

As we move into the later Renaissance and beyond, painters and sculptors continue to engage the traditional image of the Three Graces, and photographs of many of these works are readily available for classroom use. Rubens's "The Three Graces" may have been influenced by his familiarity with a marble Hellenistic statue, approximately 90 centimeters high, which was discovered in Rome in the fifteenth-century (White 284-85, 287). However, the Hellenic figures, though linked by the arms, pay little attention to each other, while as White says, Rubens's Graces "look at and, with their arms entwined, touch one another, in an expression of mutual love" (287). The Graces in Baron Jean-Baptiste Regnault's "The Three Graces" (1793) are posed in the pattern seen in Valeriano and Corregio, but the Grace in profile stares directly at us, making us feel like intruders (Gowing, 651). The Graces in Antonio Canova's (1757-1822) neoclassic sculpture of "The Three Graces" again seem self-absorbed. They hold each other more closely than most versions of the Three Graces, for the Graces had come to symbolize friendship, a virtue important to both Canova and the Empress Josephine, who initially commissioned the statue (Honour 28). Canova's version became highly influential in its own right. Americans may be familiar with the copy

which William Randolf Hearst acquired for his castle at San Simeon.

Seeing the World Through the Veil of Myth

Through the Three Graces, students can explore the idea that the way we see the world reflects the way we are used to seeing the world. One image I like to share is William Blake's "Europe Supported by Africa & America," which was engraved on December 1, 1792, for Captain J. G. Stedman's *A Narrative, of a five Year's expedition, against the revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America, from the year 1772 to 1777* (Erdman, fig. 3). Stedman, an Englishman and hired soldier in the Dutch colony of Guyana, found himself in an ethically difficult situation. He was appalled by the brutality with which the slaves were treated. An English "man of feeling," he in fact fell in love with and married a slave whose freedom he could not afford to purchase. The book describes (and Blake illustrates) in great detail the horror of what Stedman witnessed (Erdman 213-14). Though the three women representing the three continents all face us, the triad is strongly reminiscent of the Three Graces. Europe, in the center, is supported by the other two, who wear slave bracelets while she wears pearls.

Blake thus draws on a traditional image in support of cultural change. Another pair of images shows Europeans trying to depict another culture and being bound by their own traditions. John White's "Indians Dancing," a watercolor circa 1590, depicts three figures inside a circle of dancers (Orgel, fig. 8, detail). Theodore de Bry's "Their Dances Which They Use att Their Hyghe Feastes," an engraving for Thomas Harriot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Frankfort, 1590) is based on White's picture (Orgel, fig. 7). However, as Orgel shows, de Bry has filtered the image through the European imagination. The figures in the center have become a traditional image of the Three Graces (Orgel 44). What we see is what we already know.

A Living Tradition

Browsing the internet for the Three Graces quickly makes it clear that while the name is still widespread in our time, it is often nearly devoid of content. It may be intended merely to signify grace or gracefulness: three trees arched by the wind, three little girls and a bunny rabbit, or (with ironic contrast) three aging and no longer graceful burlesque dancers. Some modern artists, however, not only use the tradition but require an audience

that is familiar with it. Robin Shores's plaster relief "Three Graces–Park Square" is part of a larger work, "Installation," which combines various fragments adapted from different cultures and periods (Jencks 348-350). In a setting which pointedly invokes images from the past, Shores's allusion to the Graces is clear. However, its interpretation not. These Graces, waiting for the bus in Boston's Park Square, are not nude, and all of them face away from us. Jencks suggests that interpretations of "Installation" stem from, and lead back to, the viewer, and the class may find that this is also true of this component of the larger work.

Nickolai Getman provides another arresting image of the Three Graces in his "A Search: They Find a Book of Esenin's Poetry" (Getman).[2] Getman served an eight-year term in the Soviet Gulag, and when released, he secretly produced a series of 50 paintings depicting life in the camps. This painting shows a group of three women who have been stripped and searched. The guards have discovered a book of poetry, which will greatly increase the sentences of the three. The image clearly evokes the Three Graces: two of the women face us while one faces away, and the forbidden book of poetry tellingly exploits the connection which we began exploring with Colin Clout's vision of poetic inspiration.

Conclusion

Images of the Graces have thus remained vital from ancient times to our own day. In one class period students will not have gone far in any of the directions I have suggested, but they will have seen a number of interconnections among a diverse spectrum of ideas from literature, art, philosophy, and history. Moreover, they will find that they have touched, if only briefly, on issues ranging from generosity and love and inspiration to slavery, colonialism, feminism, totalitarianism, and the value of poetry itself.

Notes

[1] This brief article is a précis of a presentation given at the Eighth Annual Northern Plains Conference on Early British Literature. The complete presentation both discussed these pedagogical ideas and modeled their use for the members of the conference by looking at some two dozen images of the Three Graces. To secure permissions to reprint so many pictures for these proceedings was deemed impractical. Instead I have referred readers to examples of these images in works that should be readily available at most academic libraries.

[2] I wish to thank Robert De Smith for bringing the Jamestown site to my attention.

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Medieval Woman Writing Medieval Woman: Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*

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More than any other period, medieval literature is international. The fact that literature written in Latin was available to anyone in Christian Europe and so exerted a profound international influence, and the fact that the conventions of "courtly love" became universal in western poetry, are testimony to the international nature of medieval literature. In England, that international flavor was intensified by the French-speaking nobility and the corresponding low status of literature written in English until well into the fourteenth century. The fact that Chaucer included among his strongest influences the great Italian writers of *trecento* as well as French and Latin sources implies that he thought of literature as international. By the end of the fourteenth century it was unclear what language would dominate literature in England. Indeed, it is no accident that Chaucer's contemporary John Gower hedged his linguistic bets by writing major works in French, Latin, and English.

In a course that surveys early British literature, then, is it not a disservice to students to give them the impression that British literature at this time stood alone and separate from the rest of Europe? For most of us, though, spending time on Chrétien de Troyes or the *Roman de la Rose*, or including sections of the *Divine Comedy* or the *Decameron*, is out of the question when so much material needs to be covered. Still, if some brief text—a troubadour lyric, for example, or a sonnet from Dante's *Vita Nuova*—could shed light on some major text being studied, like the *Canterbury Tales* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, then it seems to me it is not perverse to consider including that text as a complement to the other. This is the spirit in which I am suggesting that Christine de Pizan's last poem, the *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*, be used to supplement and complement the study of Chaucer and other later medieval writers in English. Christine was a major writer of her time, and her work was known in England—her *God of Love's Letter* was translated into Middle English by Thomas Hoccleve, for example. Furthermore, French and English cultures were so intertwined at the time of the Hundred Years' War that a discussion of Christine in the survey seems natural and appropriate.

There are two major ways in which Christine's poem complements students' appreciation of late medieval English literature and society. First is the figure of Joan herself: her life story gives students a more immediate awareness of the Hundred Years War than any more commonly taught English literary texts do; and her visionary experiences help show the context of English visionary women like Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe, as her trial for heresy puts into perspective the English Wycliffite heresy and its Hussite offspring. Second, Christine's career as a woman writer fighting against the misogyny of male writers culminates in her poem about Joan, the last work of her life. Joan fulfills for Christine her vision of a woman in public life who is as successful as—even more successful than—any man, much as Christine as a woman writer proves through her volume of work that she also has as much authority as—and when it comes to the representation of women, more authority than—any man.

The key to all of this must be the Prologue to the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Recently this has been the widest taught of the tales in college courses, because it most clearly raises profound feminist issues. Here Alison's fifth husband is depicted reading to her incessantly from his "book of wicked wives," a compilation of the opinions of "learned clerks" from centuries past concerning the nature of women. The misogynist pronouncements of the clerkly establishment are punctured by Alison's cutting "Who painted the lion?" remark. Had women been the authors of books, they would have fared far better.

Against the censures of St. Paul, St. Jerome, and Matheolus Chaucer places Alison. In large part she is the embodiment of everything that the clerks had said about women for hundreds of years: she is lustful, passionate, quarrelsome, vain, and domineering. But she is also fascinating, earthy, witty, and optimistic, and like anyone else makes use of what God has given her to make her life comfortable and profitable—her sexual capital when she is young, her wits and experience when she is older. She dramatizes the position of women in medieval Europe, and their necessity to be indirect and manipulative in order to accomplish anything in this society. She is Chaucer's answer to clerical misogyny—an ironic affirmation of the clerkly stereotype of women, that is at the same time an affirmation of women despite their faults.

Still, this is a male author's stereotyped view of a woman, and though the Wife complains that it is men who have done the writing, the fact remains that she is a character created by another man—the lion still is not really doing the painting. As Lynne Dickson puts it, "Feminine discourse remains a possibility that the text is willing to admit, but only in imaginary terms; feminine speech is ultimately left unaffirmed, imagined but not actualized" (63).

One approach that might be taken to supplement the Chaucerian view of women is to take a look at Chaucer's contemporary, Julian of Norwich, or their younger contemporary Margery Kempe. Julian's depiction of the motherhood of God, and her assertion of herself as one who has experienced direct "showings" from the deity, do passively, in what might be called a very feminine way, insist that women are worthy in God's eyes. Julian's constant acknowledgments of the authority of the church do not diminish her status as one who has received truth directly from God, and this experience gives her, a woman, an authority equal to that of any male clerk.

Margery Kempe also claims a personal relationship with Christ, whose private reassurances to Margery establish her legitimacy in her own mind. Her confrontation with the Bishop of Leicester casts her in the role of Christ before Pilate, and she depicts herself as victorious in this confrontation. Still, her authority is a very feminine one: Margery's public weeping as well as her outlandish white garments subject her to public scorn, but she is told that in suffering through this contempt she will merit God's grace. Thus both Julian and Margery attack the problem of clerkly authority in indirect, oblique, "feminine" ways: they do not directly confront the stereotypes of clerical misogynists, but rather demonstrate indirectly that God values women and may give them authority to speak his word as well as men.

Christine de Pizan, on the other hand, is another matter completely. In *The God of Love's Letter*, Christine, like the Wife of Bath herself, had complained that women had not written books, and as a result had been unfairly depicted by writers since antiquity. Lynne Dickson calls Christine "one of the first women to open a space for women to resist patriarchal discourse, at least in literary terms," and says that "her objections find perhaps their most mature articulation in her *Book of the City of Ladies*" (63). In the *Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine describes her encountering the slanders of male clerks while reading in her father's library. Through her reading she has come into contact with the tradition of misogyny fueled by the works of St. Paul, of Tertullian, of Jerome, of Jean de Meun in the *Roman de la Rose*, and is particularly affected by Matheolus's *Lamentations*. She depicts herself as depressed after perusing this text: she knows she should respect the authority of these learned men, but is unable to reconcile what they say about women to her own experience of women that she knows and of her own soul. But she is confronted by three allegorical women—Reason, Rectitude, and Justice—who through tales of virtuous women (learned women, warrior women, saintly women) help Christine build the

walls of a city to protect women from such slanders. The difference between Christine and the two English mystics is clear: Christine makes a direct, "masculine" argument that confronts clerkly authority on its own terms. Though written in French, it is an excellent text to help provide the context of Julian, Margery, and the Wife of Bath. But it is too long to use in a survey course, except perhaps a fragment of the beginning of the work, and so is impractical as a choice in a semester focused on British literature.

But the sentiments expressed in the *Book of the City of Ladies* reach their final expression in Christine's 1429 poem on Joan of Arc. In the *City of Ladies*, Christine must, as Judith Laird says, "reshape the stories of women as told by men" (59). When Joan of Arc appears, though, Christine does not need to deconstruct a woman's story already constructed by literary men—she can give the first shaping to Joan's story, and shape it as she wills: as Christine McWebb writes, Christine can this time "present her hero as a female hero, not yet contaminated by masculinist mythification" (136).

Certainly Christine's poem is not one of her best,[1] but it is of great historical interest. Theresa Ballet Lynn calls it

> a powerful piece of propaganda as well as an intense personal statement of one woman in praise of another. In it, we find summarized Christine's political beliefs in legitimacy, justice, mercy, and a leading role for women. (155)

Though Christine had retired to a convent and had written nothing for years, the advent of Joan of Arc in 1429 seemed an affirmation of everything she had advocated in her other works: like Christine a woman who succeeded in a world of men and by using masculine methods, Joan was a confirmation that women had equal authority and equal value in the sight of God, for Joan did what thousands of men could not do when she raised the siege of Orleans. As Charity Cannon Willard writes,

> Here was the incontrovertible proof that she [Christine] had been correct in her assumption about feminine potentialities and the evidence that what had been possible in the past, as demonstrat ed in *The Book of the City of Ladies*, could also be accomplished in the present. (206)

That Joan of Arc should be of interest in her own right to a class

studying medieval English literature may not be immediately apparent. It is useful in a literature class to first consider the relationship of Joan herself to the English figures that students might already have considered: to Chaucer, Julian, and especially Margery. The common bond that links all four theologically is the specter of Wycliffitism. This is not the place to discuss a whole history of Wycliffe and the Lollards, but consider these literary connections: Wycliffe, we know, was a contemporary of Chaucer's and was supported, for a time, by John of Gaunt, Chaucer's friend and patron. His unorthodox opinions having been condemned by the Pope, anyone expressing remotely similar opinions might well come under suspicion of being a Lollard and therefore a heretic. Among these heretical views were ideas that threatened the power of the church, like Wycliffe's contention that sacraments performed by a priest in a state of sin were not legitimate. Controversy over this notion is in part behind the *Pardoners Tale*, and the Pardoner's claim that, though he is a sinful man himself, he can win others from sin. In any case this and other Wycliffite practices and beliefs, such as the translation of the Bible into English and the denial of transubstantiation, were a danger to priestly authority. Thus the threat that someone like Julian of Norwich could pose to the authorities: here was a woman who claimed to have direct knowledge of God, not to be interpreted by a priest but experienced directly by a woman. No wonder Julian so vigorously announces in her text that she submits herself in all things to the authority of the church. It was the only safe thing to do: "In all thing I beleue as holy chyrch prechyth and techyth" says Julian, emphasizing that she will not accept anything in her visions that contradicts the doctrine of the Church (323).

Margery was even more suspect. By the time of her spiritual awakening and pilgrimages, Wycliffe's doctrines had spread to central Europe and become a practical threat to the established church. The connections between England and Prague made possible by King Richard's marriage to Anne of Bohemia had put Wycliffite texts into the hands of Jan Hus, and his reforms threatened the church hierarchy.[2] But the English Parliament, anxious to suppress heresy, enacted a law in 1401 that provided for the trial and punishment of heretics. Trial was to be by ecclesiastical authority, and the ultimate punishment for one found guilty was burning at the stake (Boyd 113).

Margery's interview with Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, which takes place about 1413, is therefore not a friendly visit—he is feeling her out for heresy. More serious is her trial and detention at Leicester in 1417.

> Than ther cam a preste to hir and toke her be the hand and browt hir beforn the abbot and hys assessowrys, syttyng at the awter, the wheche dedyn hir sweryn on a boke that sche schulde answeryn trewly to the artyculys of the feyth, lych as sche felt in hem. And fyrst thei rehersyd the blysful sacrament of the awter, chargyng hir to seyn ryth as sche belevyd therin. (234)

By this time the Council of Constance had burnt Jan Hus at the stake and had exhumed the body of Wycliffe to burn it as well. Margery is questioned about her specific understanding of the Lord's supper—a major bone of contention with the Hussites as well as the Lollards—and it is clear that the mayor of Leicester is in favor of Margery's burning, though the bishop finds her innocent.

By the time Joan of Arc is placed in the hands the English by her Burgundian captors in 1430, the church is in the midst of one of their five unsuccessful crusades against the Hussites—and significantly Marina Warner has mentioned that there were rumors among the French in Joan's lifetime that she was a Hussite (178). The English, embarrassed by the spread of their home-grown heresy and needing orthodox allies in their war against France, and buttressed by that anti-heretical statute passed by Parliament in 1401 that is also law in English-occupied France, are acting within that law when they try Joan by an ecclesiastical court and burn her for heresy. Many of the questions directed to her during the trial have to do with the same kinds of concerns about the Eucharist and priestly authority that characterized Margery Kempe's earlier trial. Ultimately it is failure to recognize the authority of the Church that condemns Joan, and it is a Church in fear of the Hussite challenge to its authority, and an English Church wishing to emphasize its orthodoxy, that burns her at the stake.[3]

But all of this is far from the mind of Christine de Pizan when, at the height of Joan's triumphs, she writes her last poem in celebration of the Maid of Orleans. For Christine, two things are clear: the first is that Joan is chosen by God to do great deeds in his name; the second is that Joan is the perfect contemporary exemplum of Christine's argument for the virtue, courage, and intelligence of women.

Thus part of her task in the poem is to argue Joan's stature as God's champion. It is useful here to compare Christine's method of arguing with the Wife of Bath's. In the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon had delineated three ways that the human mind can find the truth: one is through experience, another is through the arguments of authority, and the third is by direct divine revelation:

> For there are two modes of acquiring knowledge, namely, by reasoning and by experience. Reasoning draws a conclusion and makes us grant the conclusion, but does not make the conclusion certain . . . unless the mind discovers it by the path of experience. . . . [B]ut this experience does not suffice him . . . and does not touch at all on things spiritual. It is necessary, therefore, that the intellect of man should be otherwise aided, and for this reason the holy patriarchs and prophets, who first gave sciences to the world, received illumination within and were not dependent on sense alone. (Bacon II, 583-85)

Since divine revelation was a special case and did not occur under normal circumstances, the scholastic clerk must rely on experience and authority in establishing the truth of an argument.

The Wife of Bath begins her argument this way:

> "Experience, though noon auctoritee
> Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
> To speke of wo that is in marriage" (ll. 1-3)

What follows is an argument based on biblical authority in opposition to the likes of St. Jerome and St. Paul, and an examination of Alison's own experiences in five marriages. It is less an argument proving the "woe that is in marriage" than it is a spirited defense of sexuality and by exten-sion women. But in making the argument, Alison imitates the style of clerical dialectic, a style that she presumably learned from her fifth husband, the clerk. Kevin Brownlee has written that "the clerkly voice was by definition male, linked to Latin as father-language and to the dominant association of Latin learning with exclusively male social institutions" ("Discourses" 200). But Alison here steps vigorously into a clerkly, male-dominated discourse.

When Christine became a professional writer, she too, like Alison, had in many ways to adopt the style and voice of the male writers whom she was joining. In her autobiographical *Livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, Christine describes her mutation into a man as she becomes a professional writer: in order to assume, as Christine McWebb puts it, "a marginalized position as a writer in an antifemale literary community dominated by clerics" (134), she must adopt the speaking voice of the male gendered writers of her age. Kevin Brownlee describes how Christine, in some of her earlier works, particularly the debate on the *Roman de la Rose*,

> expertly employs clerkly discourse to confront the single most authoritative clerkly figure in the medieval French literary canon: Jean de Meun. In so doing so she expands the very terms of the clerkly discursive system in such a way as to authorize her own identity as clerkly speaking subject. ("Discourses" 221)

And so Christine, like Chaucer's Wife of Bath, becomes a woman speaking in the male-dominated discourse of the clerks, but does so in a real, not a fictionalized, setting—and does so more successfully. Christine's argument, proving Joan's divine mission and, by extension, the value of women, thus also uses experience and authority, the evidence for truth in masculine scholastic dialectic, but adds Bacon's third path to truth: divine revelation, a path to truth that by the early fifteenth century was more likely than not to use the feminine voice. It was through divine revelation that Julian, Margery, and Joan of Arc herself had claimed authority.

Thus the chief purpose of Christine's poem seems to be to argue convincingly that Joan is God's divine representative, and a secondary purpose seems to be to create for Christine the role of seer and prophet, to give her the female authority of contemporary mystic or the historical sybil.[4]

Experience, empirical evidence, is the first source of truth for the argument. Joan's victory at Orleans is the chief action that proves her divine mission, as Christine sees it:

> Oh, how clear this was at the siege of Orléans where her power was first made manifest! It is my belief that no miracle was ever more evident, for God so came to the help of His people that our enemies were unable to help each other any more than would dead dogs. It was there that they were captured and put to death. (st. 33)

But the example of Joan's personal faith, obvious to all those who meet her, equally supports Joan's claim to divine inspiration:

> And, in truth, the beauty of her life proves that she has been blessed with God's grace—and for that reason her actions are more readily accepted as genuine. For whatever she does, she always has her eyes fixed on God, to whom she prays and whom she invokes and serves in word and deed; nowhere does her devotion ever falter. (st. 32)

Joan's success is nothing short of miraculous, and it puts her into the category of other heroic women chosen by God to accomplish great feats: Christine compares Joan to the biblical figures of Esther, Judith, and particularly Deborah—indeed, as Deborah Fraioli points out, the poem echoes Deborah's hymn in Judges 5 in that it is a song of victory "marked by joy, by thankfulness to God . . . and by enthusiastic anticipation of the enemy's annihilation" (816).[5] So much for the argument from experience.

As for authority, Christine can cite specifically the authority of the clerical establishment. She refers to Joan's examination at Poitiers by the King's appointed commission, an examination that Joan passed successfully before being sent to Orleans:

> Her achievement is no illusion for she was carefully put to the test in council (in short, a thing is proved by its effect) and well examined, before people were prepared to believe her; before it became common knowledge that God had sent her to the King, she was brought before clerks and wise men so that they could find out if she was telling the truth. (st. 29-30)

The Aristotelian tag "a thing is proved by its effect" reinforces the idea that Christine is using the discourse of clerkly dialectic here and systematically arguing through authority for Joan's divine mission.

Authority for Christine comes mainly in the form of prophecy. As Brownlee puts it, she "explicitly utilizes the discourse of prophecy to authorize the unfolding present" ("Structures" 378). She cites the prophecies of Merlin, Bede, and the sybils, which had, at least by the time of Joan, been interpreted to suggest that a virgin would come to destroy the English:

> But it was found in history-records that she was destined to accomplish her mission;
>
> for more than 500 years ago, Merlin, the Sibyl and Bede foresaw her coming, entered her in their writings as someone who would put an end to France's troubles, made prophecies about her, saying that she would carry the banner in the French wars and describing all that she would achieve. (st. 30-31)

Along with these prophecies, Christine is also aware of another prophetic tradition. Within the genre of French patriotic literature of the sort written by Eustache Deschamps, whom Christine admired, a prophecy of the "Second Charlemagne" had become current. French patriotic literature purported

that the French were God's elect people (evidenced by earlier rulers, particularly Charlemagne). By extension, it was prophesied that a second Charlemagne would arise, "Charles, son of Charles," who would "expel the enemy from the kingdom, conquer Rome and achieve peace as emperor of all Christendom" (Faioli 827). Christine, even at times using Deschamps'own words, sees Joan's coronation of Charles as helping to bring this about.[6]

In addition to the arguments from experience and authority, though, Christine also engages in argument from divine revelation. That is, it is not only the authorities of other prophets to whom Christine alludes in the Ditié that are offered as evidence for Christine's argument. Christine implies that she has had direct revelation about Joan's future. Thus Christine, like Julian of Norwich, like Margery Kempe, like Joan of Arc herself, in part supports her authority in the way other women of her time did: not through experience or literary authority but rather through revelation. As Maureen Quilligan asserts, "Christine uses prophecy in the Ditié to authorize her own celebration of Jehanne's advent" (280).

Anne D. Lutkus and Julia M. Walker point out how the poem's opening, the "Je, Christine" of the first stanza of the poem, "invokes the authority of no muse or patron saint; she claims authority to speak as coming directly from God" (151). Within the poem, Lutkus and Walker note that Christine includes two types of prophecy, which they call "subjunctive and declarative." Verses dealing with Charles suggest that he *may* be the fulfillment of prophecy, but verses dealing with Joan assert that she definitively *is* the fulfillment. Lutkus and Walker assert that Christine has constructed the poem very deliberately with the intent of making herself appear to have prophetic powers, suggesting that the date with which the poem ends: "composed the last day of July 1429," is almost certainly not accurate. Charles had signed a two-week truce with the Burgundians after his coronation, and that truce had not yet expired by July 31. Taking Paris had not become an issue until late August or early September. Christine's predictions about the Maid's attack on Paris are probably written during Joan's attempts to take the city in early September.

> Written during late August or early September, the verses would have the force of political immediacy. In that case, the poem draws upon the construct of historical prophecy by being dated in July. Christine de Pizan, like the oracles she cites, constructs herself as knowing what must happen in the future. (Lutkus and Walker 149)

Christine's most obviously prophetic stanzas occur particularly in her predictions that Joan will destroy the English, will restore the Church to unity and wipe out heresy (remember Christine writes while the "Great Schism" is just being healed, and while the Hussite wars are raging), and will reconquer Jerusalem and bring peace to Christendom.

> She will restore harmony in Christendom and the Church. She will destroy the unbelievers people talk about, and the heretics and their vile ways, for this is the substance of a prophecy that has been made. Nor will she have mercy on any place which treats faith in God with disrespect.
>
> She will destroy the Saracens, by conquering the Holy Land. She will lead Charles there, whom god preserve! Before he dies he will make such a journey. He is the one who is to conquer it. It is there that she is to end her days and that both of them are to win glory. It is there that the whole enterprise will be brought to completion. (st. 42-43)

It should be stressed that Christine, as she assumes her prophetic voice in the poem, presents herself not only as seer, as new Sibyl,[7] but as a divinely -inspired prophet. She has presented her argument like a clerk by experience and authority, but now offers it like a visionary—like Julian, Margery, or Joan herself—in fact, like a prophet of the Old Testament, whose truth comes from direct divine revelation. This in part explains why the poem is structured as it is, with direct addresses to various constituents, friends and foes of Joan. In her addresses to the various enemies of Joan and the King, Christine adopts the discourse of the prophetic oracles of doom spoken by Old Testament prophets. Like Amos (see esp. 1-2), she foretells doom for the enemies of the Lord. The English, for their aggression against the French, face destruction:

> And so, you English, draw in your horns for you will never capture any good game! Don't attempt any foolish enterprise in France! You have been checkmated. A short time ago, when you looked so fierce, you had no inkling that this would be so; but you were not yet treading the path upon which God casts down the proud. (st. 39)

The Burgundian party, to Christine's eyes French traitors who turn their backs on their true King, will be struck down:

> Oh, all you blind people, can't you detect God's hand in this? If you can't, you are truly stupid for how else could the Maid who strikes you all down dead have been sent to us?—And you don't have sufficient strength! Do you want to fight against god? (st. 47)

And Paris, if it resists the Maid, will be humbled:

> Oh Paris, how could you be so ill-advised? Foolish inhabitants, you are lacking in trust! Do you prefer to be laid waste, Paris, rather than make peace with your prince? If you are not careful your great opposition will destroy you. I would be far better for you if you were to humbly beg for mercy. You are quite miscalculating! (st. 55)

Christine further utilizes the discourse of the Old Testament prophets when she addresses the soldiers who fight alongside Joan. Like the "saving remnant" of Isaiah 10:20-22 they will regain the promised land; and like the remnant of Isaiah 11:10-16, they will conquer the enemies of the Lord:

> And you trusty men-at-arms, who carry out the task and prove yourselves to be good and loyal, one must certainly make men tion of you (you will be praised in every nation!) and not fail to speak of you and your valour in preference to anything else,
>
> you who, in pain and suffering, expose life and limb in defence of what is right and dare to risk confronting every danger. Be constant, for this, I promise, will win you glory and praise in heaven. For whoever fights for justice wins a place in Paradise—this I do venture to say. (st. 37-38)

Indeed, like Zephaniah (3:8-10) and Zechariah (14:16-21), Christine foresees a day of the Lord as a time when the whole earth will be subdued and worship God, and like Isaiah, Christine sees the chosen people—the French with Joan as their leader—acting as a "light to the nations, that my [God's] salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49: 6, NRSV). For Joan "has not yet accomplished her whole mission! I believe that god bestows her here below so that peace may be brought about through her deeds" (st. 44).

The woman's voice has, in the authorial voice of the Ditié, reached the same stratospheric heights of discursive authority that Joan herself has

reached in the political sphere. More than any Old Testament hero—Moses, Gideon, Joshua (see stanzas 23, 25, and 27)—Joan has miraculously achieved God's will. More than any Old Testament prophet—Amos, Zechariah, Isaiah—Christine has spoken God's word in this poem. Whether Christine lived to see Joan's capture and execution and her own prophecies proved false, we do not know. One would hope not. But the authoritative voice that Christine creates for the female writer through texts like this one does not crumble with Joan's ashes, but ultimately surpasses that of Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, or even the Wife of Bath in its claim to authority. Christine not only plays the clerks' dialectic game and wins, but plays the female mystics' inspirational game as well. Her voice and Joan's story serve as worthy counterbalance to the clerical male authority of most medieval texts. They belong in a medieval literature classroom.

Notes

[1] Though it is difficult to judge the quality of the poetry in an English prose translation, Kennedy and Varty take time in the introduction to their edition of the poem to describe the abrupt sentence-structure, "dislocat[ion]" of "normal verse patterns," grammatical flaws, and "slips in rhyme and versification" that, in their view, are evidence that the poem was composed very quickly, probably mainly between July 23 and July 31 of 1429 (17).

[2] Queen Anne is popularly thought to have owned a Lollard Bible. How much the queen herself contributed to the spread of Lollardism, in England or her own country, is a matter of debate. For an objective discussion of the matter, see Andrew Taylor, "Anne of Bohemia and the Making of Chaucer," who asserts that "if [Anne] not only owned a copy of the Wycliffite Bible but also let this be widely known, it would have been patronage of the most powerful order" (105). But Taylor concludes that, simply, "We do not have enough information to make such confident judgments" (106).

[3] Beverly Boyd, in "Wyclif, Joan of Arc, and Margery Kempe," discusses the relationship between Margery's trial and Joan's, and the relationship of both to Lollardism, in some depth.

[4] Harry F. Williams is, it seems to me, surely emphasizing the wrong aspect of the poem when he says that Christine's "main intent was to record for posterity the historical importance of events in the year 1429" (234). Anne D. Lutkus and Julia M. Walker must be closer to the truth when they say that the poem is "political propaganda presented as poetic prophetic

history" (145), asserting that the poem is not so much for posterity as it is for the immediate audience of the time. Kennedy and Varty insist that "Christine's central theme" is "the miraculous intervention of Providence, and the transformation which this has brought about in her own and France's fortunes" (10). Two subsidiary emphases that they stress are "that God has espoused the French cause and positively wills the defeat of the enemy" (14) and "that Joan is to be seen as an outstanding, representative member of the female sex" who has "brought honour and glory to all womankind" (15). Alan P. Barr emphasizes Christine's use of Joan as an exemplum in the ongoing *Querelle des Femmes* that Christine had begun, and that "Joan is to be seen as the manifestation of God's grace and as the woman He has chosen to manifest it" (6). My own view is that Christine sees Joan as divine sanction of the French cause, but more specifically a divine vindication of the female sex, including the author herself.

[5] Faioli details the history of these comparisons, not original to Christine. They had begun apparently with the Poitiers commission itself, which first examined Joan after her initial visit to the Dauphin in 1429, and were repeated in three treatises written in 1429, including one known as *De quadam puella*, thought to be the work of Christine's friend Jean Gerson (Faioli 811-16).

[6] For a detailed account of these prophecies and where they came from prior to Christine's use of them in her poem, see Faioli's article.

[7] Kevin Brownlee, in "Structures of Authority in Christine de Pizan's *Ditié de Jehanne d'Arc*," gives a good summary of the importance of the role of the Sibyl "as authoritative female figure of religious and political prophecy" in Christine's earlier works, including the *Letter from Othea, The Path of Long Study*, and the *Book of the City of Ladies* (380-83) and notes that by stanzas 42-43, "Christine has become a new, Christian sibyl with regard to Joan" (385).

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Using Science to Teach Fiction: Computers in the Literature Classroom

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Over the course of my teaching career I have slowly integrated technology into my classes. Most notably, I have increasingly relied on computers to supplement normal classroom activities. When I started, I believed computers would be able to help out with several problems I have encountered with my students, and the technology has mostly done what I have asked of it. However, the technology has also raised its own set of problems. The most obvious failing is, of course, that technology doesn't always work. A less obvious, and less expected, drawback is that the technology demands that I surrender a certain measure of control over my classes—both over the students and over the content—that I had always fancied myself to have. What I would like to do is to share with you what I had hoped to accomplish, what I did to reach those goals, and how I both reached and fell short of those goals.

When I first started using computers in my classes, it was on a fairly simplistic level. I was scheduled to teach my composition course in a computer lab, and so I had the students use the computers to do directed freewrites and revision workshops in class. This worked pretty well, and really was the only way I chose to use computers in my classes for a long time, because I was pretty much a technophobe.

After a few years, I began to explore other options. When I got to Northern State University, they were using software in their composition classes that allowed students to conduct on-line, real-time conversations. This, I thought, was a great idea, because getting freshman to talk in class is about as easy as teaching a cat to swim. I began using this software two or three times a month as a supplement to regular class discussions in order to include students who would not normally speak up in a large-group discussion.

From here, I expanded my computer use. I began a save-paper campaign and started e-mailing assignment sheets to my students instead of handing out copies. Then I learned how to post a web page and posted my syllabi and reading lists. This is when I first started to use computers in conjunction with my literature classes. Again, it started out on a very simple level. I posted the reading list for my Shakespeare course on a web site and I e-mailed copies of study questions instead of giving out photocopies.

Shortly after this my computer projects multiplied when the school began teaching us how to use a web program called WebCT. WebCT allows the user to set up a set of password-protected pages that can be tailored to fit the needs of an individual course. In these pages, a course designer can include such things as course content or lectures, pictures, links to outside web pages, single pages of information, a chat room, a bulletin board, a course grade book, simple quizzes, a course calendar, and a course dictionary. All of these are accessible only to students enrolled in the course, or to whom the instructor otherwise allows access. The first illustration shows the home page I designed for one of my Shakespeare courses, and gives a general idea of some of the program's possibilities (fig. 1).

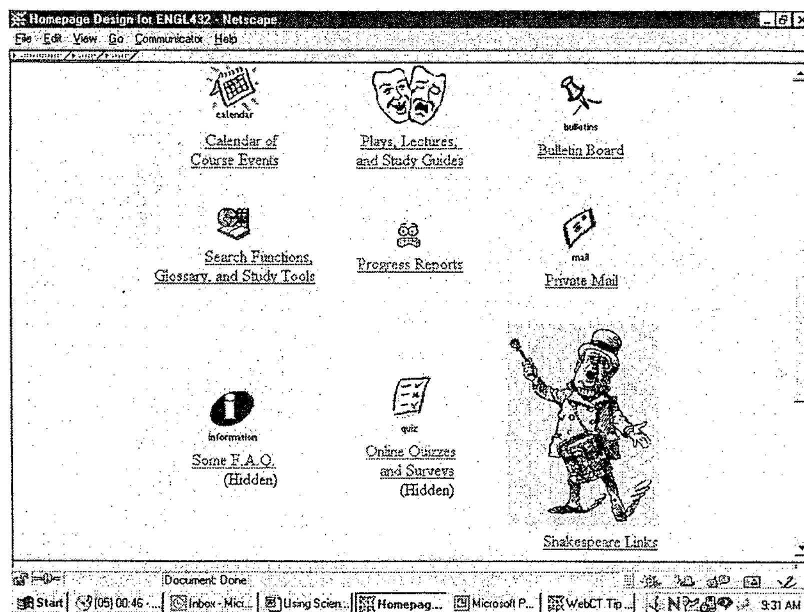

Fig. 1: WebCT Homepage for Shakespeare II, The Tragedies and Romances

I became sold on the technology immediately. Obviously I had overcome my technophobia of earlier years, and now I threw myself wholeheartedly into the project. I believed that this would solve several problems that I encounter on a perennial basis. First, I had hoped to limit the strange communication breakdown that occurs somewhere between my mouth and the students ears, that results in their hearing something very different than what I may have said. In my Shakespeare course, this often results in the students writing on an exam that Shakespeare was born in 1588, or started

writing plays in 1558.

Secondly, I wanted to address the limitations of a structured class discussion. Class discussion inevitably centers around my interests and my textual concerns (logically enough). Student interests are necessarily subordinated to my concerns because I'm the one who sets up the parameters for our conversations - we use my discussion questions and my lectures, and my textual selections are the ones used to guide groupwork and large discussion. This is not inherently a bad thing, because there are certain things that I want to make sure the students see, and I want to model a method of critical reading for them. However, this does to a certain degree stifle alternative readings. Even though I try hard to foster an open atmosphere in which students feel comfortable to voice their opinions and argue for alternative interpretations, the structure of the classroom cannot help but limit the parameters of what is discussed.

WebCT had the tools to address these concerns. The first set of course pages I set up were for a Shakespeare course on the tragedies and histories. To address the first problem, my goal was to upload the outlines of all my class lectures and a set of study questions for each play, which I "revealed" to the students as I assigned the readings. This would allow the students to double check their notes with mine before they wrote a paper or sat for a mid-term. This would, I hoped, bridge the communication gap before they wrote on a test that Desdemona and Cassio really did have an affair and that was why Othello killed her.

To address the second problem, I decided to require the students to use the course bulletin board outside of class instead of having them keep reading journals. Once a week the students were to log on to the bulletin board and post a message - either an original message or a message in response to someone else's post. I didn't care what they said, as long as it was substantive (writing "I agree" in response to someone else's post was deemed insufficient) and it was about Shakespeare. Preferably, the messages would relate directly to the plays we were reading that week. The second image shows the bulletin board from this course (fig. 2).

This semester (Spring, 2000) I expanded my plans. For my Introduction to Literary Studies course, I set up a set of pages that I would build with the students during class time. This is the "gateway" course for beginning English majors and minors, so my goals are pretty simple ones: introduce them to the various genres, build a common vocabulary through which we could discuss those genres and improve the students' reading and writing skills in the process. Rather than posting lecture notes as I had done for Shakespeare, I decided to try and improve the interactivity of the pages. I wanted to use the bulletin board in class rather than outside of class, and I

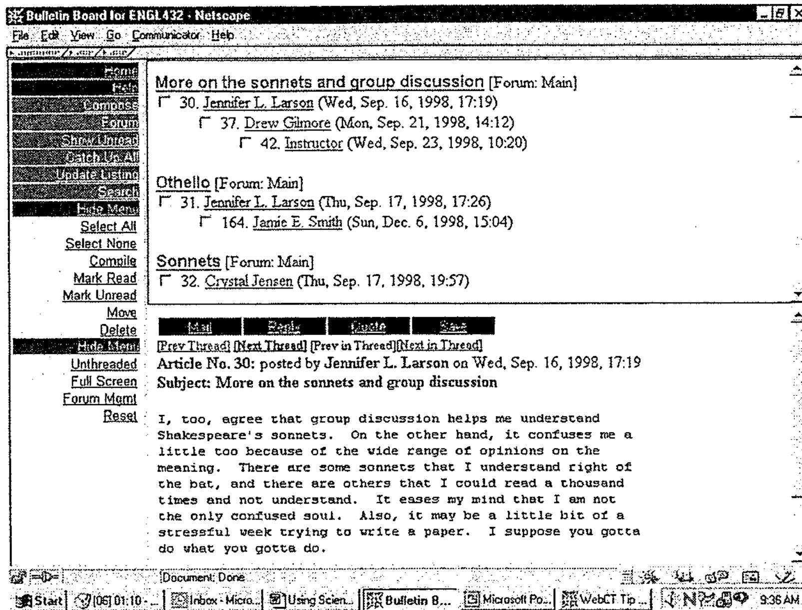

Fig. 2: A sample bulletin board message from Shakespeare II

wanted the students to build their own literary dictionary on line. I hoped that this would accomplish three things. First, to include more students in the class discussions—these folks were painfully shy except for a few upperclassmen who just happened to put off taking the class until their junior years. If I was to get the true freshmen and sophomores to speak in class, it was going to have to be silently. Secondly, I thought that using the bulletin board would improve their writing skills as well. They would have to think carefully about what they were going to write on the bulletin board and they had to explain themselves carefully enough that the rest of the class could understand. Thirdly, I hoped that by writing their own definitions and explaining them through their own examples in an on-line dictionary, those definitions would be much more meaningful than if I supplied the definitions and asked them to repeat them for me on a test.

In many ways, the technology has answered my expectations in both Shakespeare and the Introductory class. Class participation does improve when the students discuss on line. When shy students no longer have to hear the sound of their own voices, they feel more free to add to the discussion. In both my writing and my literature courses, this has been the case. The quality of the students' responses also markedly improves over the course of the semester, as long as they don't get lazy or complacent. They explain

themselves more thoroughly as they realize that other students cannot understand what they mean without some explanation. In the Shakespeare course, students did check out lecture notes and some actually cite these pages in their papers and projects. The glossary also seemed to answer all of my expectations, especially when I was able to ask the groups to go back and correct definitions that were incorrect, or insufficiently explained, or when the examples were inappropriate.

However, my technological journey has not been without potholes, and I have encountered problems that I did not originally anticipate. The biggest problems are the ones I should have expected. The time commitment in creating these pages is fairly big. I spent many hours over the summers creating these pages, and then during the semester I spent many more hours trying to keep them updated. This was especially a problem with the Shakespeare course, because I do not type my lectures—I write them out by hand. This meant that in order to upload them, I had to type them into the computer. As a result, the amount of material I have for the first few plays is far more substantial than for the last ones.

The second problem, again, is something I should have anticipated—the inherent unreliability of any technology on which one has come to rely. Halfway through the semester of the Introductory course, the WebCT server crashed. I had no backup, because I assumed the server administrator was keeping regular backups. She was not. As a result, I lost all of the studentgenerated material for the Intro class. All of our bulletin-board discussions and, more significantly, our entire dictionary. I have still not decided how to remedy this second loss this semester, though I do know that I will never go without backing up my courses regularly ever again.

These, however, are technical problems that can (or at least should) be anticipated. What I had not anticipated, and what I am still trying to wrestle with, is the loss of control that electronic environments promote. When I hand out an assignment sheet, I know that even if a student loses it the second they leave the room, that I have seen it rest in her hands and she has at least glanced at it. In a similar way, when I give a lecture, or lead a class discussion, or even have the students discuss something in small groups, I have a certain degree of control over what happens. Of course, the degree of control varies with each of these activities, but I do exercise some influence, even when the students are in small groups. I usually move from group to group and answer questions, or prode the students to look at specific passages in the works, or push them to think a little more deeply about their answers to my questions.

However, if I simply post an assignment sheet on line, I never know if the student ever actually goes to look at it. Even if I go over the sheet in

class, I have lost a measure of control over whether they will see that handout. I have had students who have gone the entire semester without actually finding out what the paper assignments were; they just sort of guessed from class discussion and asked a few vague questions, but the specifics were left mostly to chance. In the same way, students never have to access the course calendar, or look at any of the other cool supplements that I have spent so many hours constructing. It is simply out there, and requires that the students put forth the effort to look it up. This drives me crazy, and short of going back to Xeroxing everything I have no solution to it. I suppose you could argue that these are the students who would end up losing the handouts, anyway, so what does it matter if they don't look at a web site, since they wouldn't look at the handout, either? But somehow the handout gave me the illusion of control.

The second question, however, presents a greater challenge to me. The bulletin board on WebCT seems to be a great leveller. I can post an initial question, but I cannot make the students read my follow up questions or my responses to their own posts. Even if they do read my responses, they are in no way obligated to respond to those responses. The authority evoked by my physical presence during a group discussion is apparently erased in an electronic environment. As a result, if the students get offtrack, or if they start reducing the material to simplistic moralizations, or if they are, in my humble opinion, completely missing the point, it is much more difficult for me to re-direct the conversation.

Let's just take a look at an extreme case of this. In late March, my Introductory course was reading *The Tempest*. I had been working with a high school teacher in Watertown, and we thought it would be interesting if we could have our classes discuss the work together over WebCT. So, I input her students' names and we scheduled a day on which both classes would log on and discuss the play on the computer. I initially posted three or four questions just to get things started. The first question dealt directly with characterization. The day before, my class had talked about "classifying" the characters: students talked about whom they might label "good guys" and who they would call "bad guys." In the course of this, the students in my class began to see that these are problematic categories. The initial questions I posted in the bulletin board were designed to build on that original discussion. The third image shows what I posted to start our joint discussion (fig. 3). This set off a fairly extensive conversation, and resulted in 37 related postings.

This would seem to be a wholly good thing, until we look closely at what happened. At first, we get some thoughtful responses, as you can see in the fourth image (fig. 4). Jennifer has clearly read the play carefully and

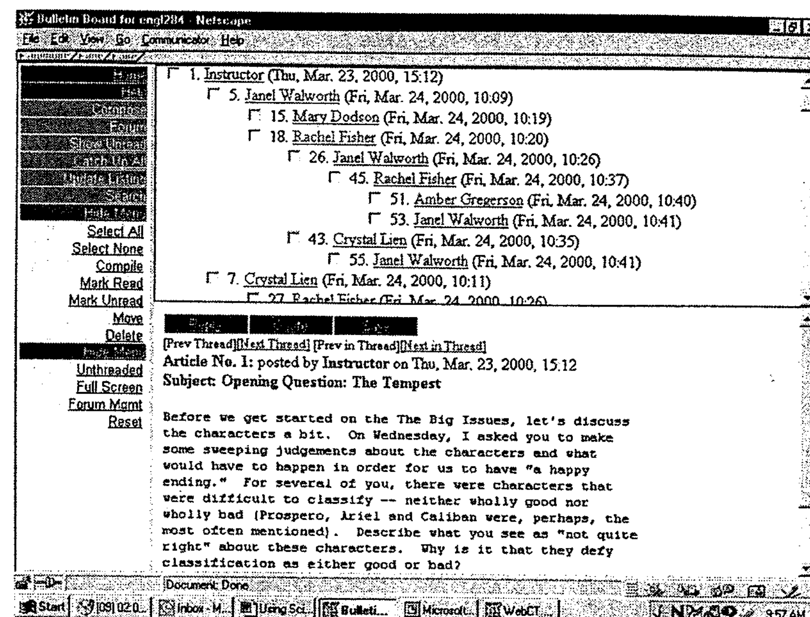

Fig. 3: Initial discussion question for *The Tempest*

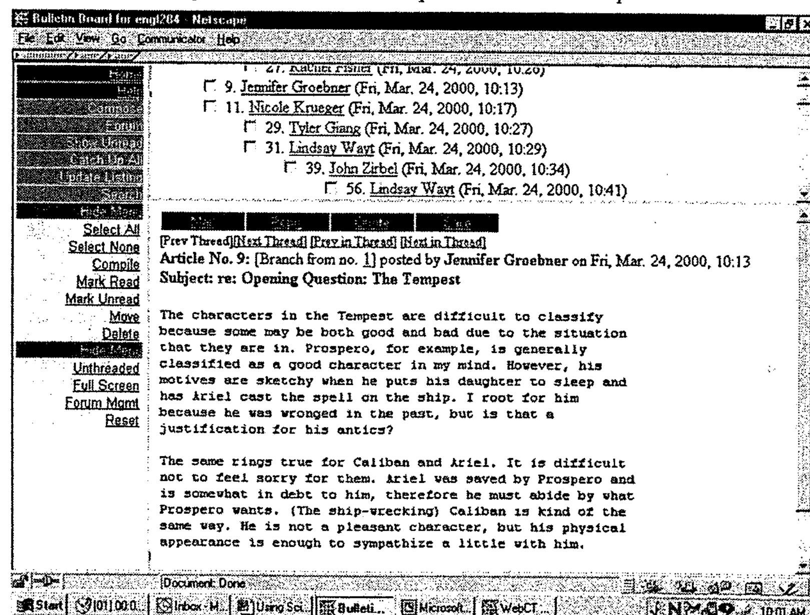

Fig. 4: An early response in the play discussion

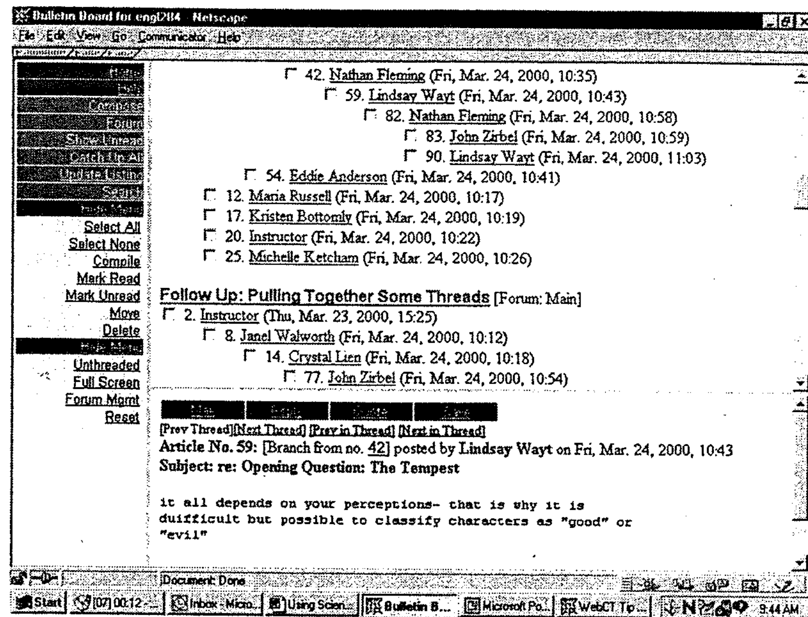

Fig. 5: Discussing "good and evil" in *The Tempest*.

is wrestling with its implications. But look at what has already happened. My original language has been mutated in a significant way from "good and bad guys" to "good people and evil people"—phrases that more fully polarize the distinctions we had been discussing. The fifth image compiles several responses, and shows how the thread seems to get stuck on this question of classification (fig. 5). The discussion became unable to get beyond simple statements to look at the implications of these classifications or the inadequacy of classification. Even later in the discussion, students kept returning to this notion.

The problem, here, of course, is exaggerated, because many of these students were not mine, in the sense that I did not give them grades at the end of their term, and because I was not actually in the room with them. Also, the Watertown students are still in high school, which necessarily affects the shape of the conversation in a number of ways. It does, however, highlight something that has frustrated me about other on-line discussions I have held, and it gets to the heart of a very important question about teaching. How much control do I need to have, and is that the same thing as how much control I want to have? I suppose the answer to the second question is "probably not." But what about the first question? I find that I am uncomfortable giving up the control that I believed myself to have in the

classroom, and I find myself frustrated as a result.

These frustrations have lead me to ask myself about the balance in my classes between student-driven and instructor-driven agendas. When I was in graduate school, composition instructors kept talking about the need to give up control, to introduce a little constructive, student-driven chaos into our classes in order to give the students ownership of their education and the writing process. This is one goal I thought might be achievable through computers—I thought that computers might encourage students to express their own views about their readings, to open up the range of possible directions a discussion about a given work could take—something I had initially tried to address through out-of-class bulletin-board posts. Yet, I find myself being frustrated with just this opening up, and I find that I am looking for ways to limit once again or to shape more closely those discussions.

I hope that, as I become more comfortable with the technology and as I take part in more of these discussions, that I will learn how to balance my impulse to circumscribe with my desire to let go. At this point, however, even as I plunge ahead with this project, I find myself in the unfamiliar position of wanting more authority after working for many years to deny it.

List of Contributors

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