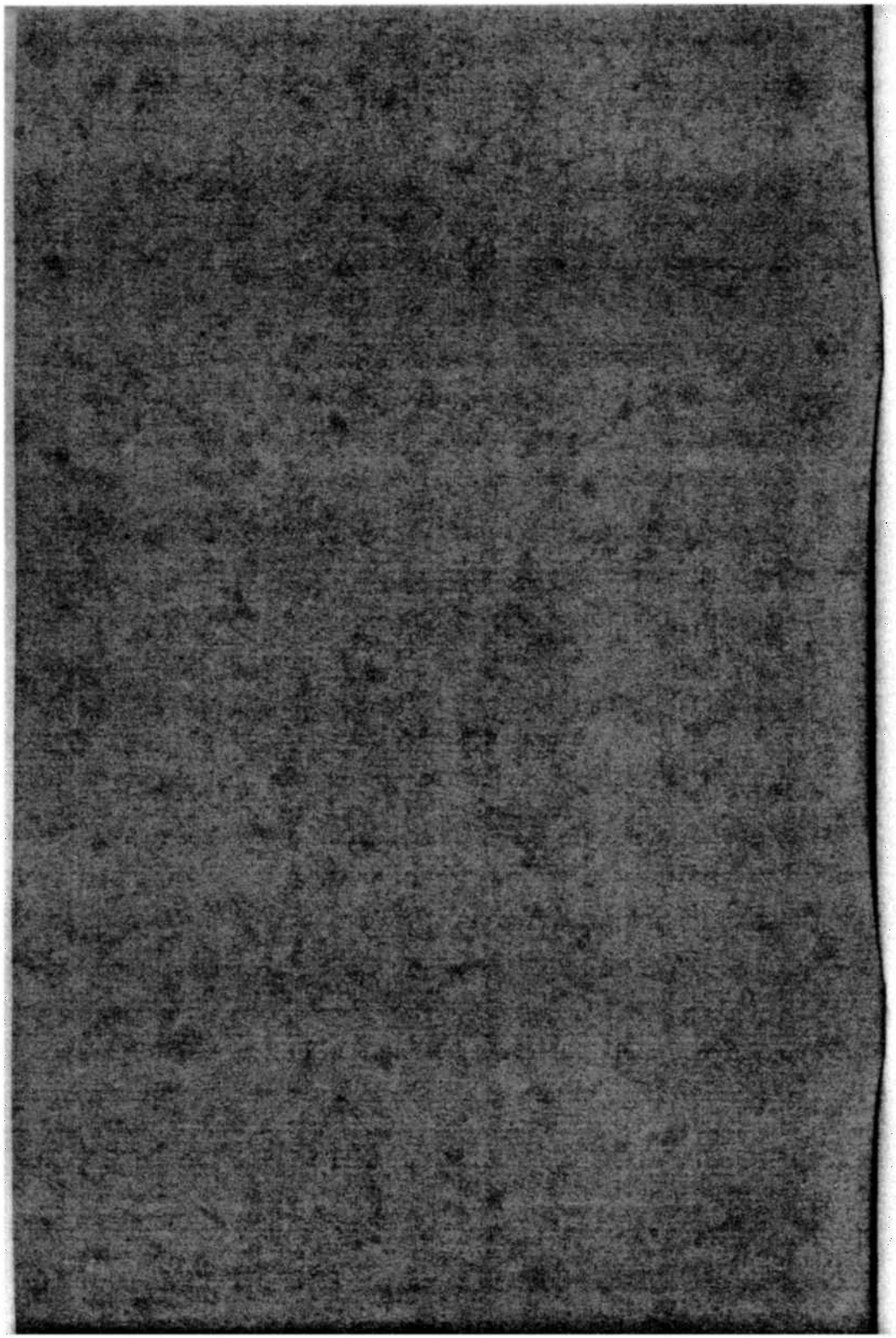

Proceedings of the

Tenth Annual

Northern Plains Conference on

Earlier British Literature

Concordia College

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Edited by

Barbara Olive and David Sprunger

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# Introduction

When scholars from across the upper great plains gathered at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN, in April 2002, the event was special for at least two reasons. The first was the annual pleasure of breaking the long winter with two days of stimulating papers and collegial comradery. The second reason was that the event marked the tenth anniversary of the Northern Plains Conference on Earlier British Literature.

Since Jay Ruud organized the first conference at Northern State University in October 1992, scholars from nine contiguous plains states have gathered each year to share current academic research and proven teaching insights. A review of the conference locales and host institutions demonstrates the wide support for the conference among colleges and universities of the northern plains:

1st: October 1992 – Northern State University, Aberdeen, SD (Organized by Jay Ruud)
2nd: April 1994 – Dakota State University, Madison, SD (Organized by John Laflin)
3rd: April 1995 – South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD (Organized by Bruce Brandt)
4th: April 1996 – Peru State College, Peru, NE (Organized by Bill Clemente and Mary Mokris)
5th: April 1997 – Jamestown College, Jamestown, ND (Organized by Phillip Hanse)
6th: April 1998 – Wayne State College, Wayne, NE (Organized by Andrew Alexander and Linda Kruckenberg)
7th: April 1999 – Northern State University, Aberdeen, SD (Organized by Jay Ruud)
8th: April 2000 – Dordt College, Sioux Center, IA (Organized by Robert De Smith)
9th: April 2001 – Black Hills State University, Spearfish, SD (Organized by Nicholas Wallerstein and Roger Ochse)
10th: April 2002 – Concordia College, Moorhead, MN (Organized by Barbara Olive and David Sprunger)

Looking ahead to spring 2003, a tenth institution, Minot State University, will join those listed above in hosting the conference.



In a year marked by the national trauma of September 11 and widespread distrust of Middle Eastern Islam, this year's conference offered timely exploration of the historical anxiety of the West over the Arab "other." Keynote speaker Dr. Glenn Sanders of the Oklahoma Baptist University history department described the current state of discussions on the Turk in early modern Europe and demonstrated, in particular, how distrust of Islam was easily incorporated into the political discourse of the English revolution.

The conference continued its attention as well to the teaching of earlier British literatures. A second keynote by Dr. Gordon Lell of Concordia College, together with student assistant Alicia Sutliff, demonstrated methods for incorporating film into the teaching of Shakespeare and provided tips on how to access video materials. One of the panels as well was dedicated to introducing novel strategies for teaching early British literature.

This volume of conference proceedings offers a rich sample of the papers shared at the tenth Northern Plains Conference. Papers in the collection range from comparative studies and studies of translations to those noting influences of earlier literature on twentieth-century texts. Some papers introduce texts and voices absent from or found only on the margins of the literary canon; others challenge readers to reevaluate more familiar texts. Together, the papers demonstrate an intellectual liveliness and love of earlier British literature alive on the northern plains. Read, enjoy, and learn.

David Sprunger & Barbara Olive

*Friday, April 12*

9:00-10:30 **Greeting:** James Forde, Academic Dean, Concordia

**Panel 1** **Moderator:** Muriel Brown, NDSU
Declaiming Chaucer to a Field of Cows: Three Twentieth-Century Glimpses of the Poet
—Jay Ruud, Northern State U
The Poetics of Mystical Space: Writing the Self in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*
—Ronald Stottlemeyr, Carroll College
Completing the Cycle of Past, Present and Future: New Testament Allegory in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
—Jennifer Zimmerman, U of South Dakota

11:00-12:00 **Panel 2** **Moderator:** Maureen Kelly Jonason, Concordia
Spenser's Faerie Court and Narrative Distance: "To heare of strange adventures"
—Marlo M. Belschuer, St. Cloud State U
The Lively Heroine: Eliza Haywood's Later Novels as Conduct Books
—Doug Northrop, Ripon College

1:30-3:00 **Panel 3** **Moderator:** John Sherman, MSUM
William Tyndale and the Power of Words
—Robert J. De Smith, Dordt College
Why Johnny Can't Translate: The 1611 Versions vs. Their Modern Equivalents
—Art Marmorstein, Northern State U
Richard Brathwait's *The English Gentleman* (London 1630) and Nicolas Faret's *L'honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* (Paris 1630): A Comparative Study
Christian Fantoni, Minot State U

3:30-5:00 **Keynote** **Moderator:** David Sprunger, Concordia
Teaching Shakespeare with Film
—Dr. V. Gordon Lell with Alicia Sutliff, Concordia

8:00 *The Tempest*
Frances Frazier Comstock Theatre, Concordia College



*Saturday, April 13*

8:30-9:30 **Greeting:** Linda Johnson, Academic Dean, Concordia

**Keynote** **Moderator:** Barbara Olive, Concordia
Current Research on the Turkish 'Other'
—Dr. Glenn E. Sanders, Oklahoma Baptist University

9:45-11:00 **Panel 4** **Moderator:** George Larson, Concordia
Redefining Desire: Sexuality and Conversion in Early Modern Drama
—Michelle M. Sauer, Minot State U
Castaways Old and New: The Robinson Crusoe Story in Our Times
—Andrew Alexander, Wayne State College
Epistolary Fiction: Subversion, Dominance and "Ownership" in *Clarissa* and *Evelina*
—Tamara Michelle Weets, North Dakota State U

11:15-12:30 **Special Panel on Teaching**
**Moderator:** Jill Frederick, MSUM
Making Room for Old English
—Janet Ericksen, U of Minnesota Morris
Teaching the Middle Ages with Arthur and Robin Hood
—Timothy S. Jones, Augustana College, Sioux Falls
Teaching Faust and Don Juan in an Interdisciplinary Setting
—Bruce Brandt, South Dakota State U

# Declaiming Chaucer to a Field of Cows: Three Twentieth-Century Glimpses of the Poet

*Jay Ruud*
*Northern State University*

A cursory look at the *MLA Bibliography* over the past couple of decades yields articles concerning the relationship of Chaucer to Conrad, Joyce (at least five articles), Faulkner, Yeats (four articles), Pound, Eliot (five articles) Hemingway (two articles), Fitzgerald (five articles), Bernard Malamud, John Fowles, John Gardner, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth (three articles), John Betjaman, Harlan Ellison, William Carlos Williams, and least surprisingly, Tolkien. Chaucer's influence on writers in the twentieth century may be less pronounced than it was in the fifteenth, but as this list demonstrates, it is undeniable. But influence is not the same thing as reputation or even reception. What I want to do with this paper is to look at what happens when three different twentieth-century writers take Chaucer as the subject of their poetry, and how this reflects the reception of Chaucer in the early, mid, and late parts of the century. This might tell us something about what modern poets have really felt about Chaucer, and how much that might influence, or be influenced by, the critical attitudes of modern readers.

## I.

Benjamin Brawley was the best known African American literary scholar of the early twentieth century, and was a legendary classroom instructor at Howard University and Morehouse College. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago in 1906 and an MA from Harvard in 1908, so it might be assumed that his literary sentiments were largely influenced by Victorian attitudes.[1] Most commonly, the Victorian view of Chaucer was colored by what has been called the "genteel tradition." John H. Fisher summarized the attitude this way:

> Chaucer as a poet of love was father to the courtly ideal as it shaded from the aristocratic into the genteel tradition: the patronizing Victorian and BBC1 tradition in which art is intended to indoctrinate the lower classes in the values and behavior of the gentility. The "moral" tales in the Canterbury collection and *Troylus and Criseyde* served this end. Chaucer's fabliaux were known and deplored. (157)



Brawley's own participation in this tradition is evidenced by his scholarship: while he championed young black writers, he was severely critical of Langston Hughes and others like him.[2] As one literary historian puts it,

> critics like Brawley were certainly aware of the fact that Negro life had its sordid aspects too, but they insisted that these should be kept under lock and key and away from public scrutiny, especially when the public was white. To Hughes's naturalism Brawley, the very incarnation of Comstockery and Victorian prudery, rejoined by citing Tennyson. (Wagner 402)

Brawley demonstrated the kind of poetry he thought black poets should be composing by publishing two poems in the 1922 volume *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, edited by James Weldon Johnson. One of these was a sonnet entitled "Chaucer."

The first quatrain of Brawley's poem uses the time-honored (one might say clichéd) metaphor of daylight chasing away darkness to represent knowledge and culture "civilizing" a time of ignorance and darkness. Probably it owes something to Longfellow's 1875 sonnet on Chaucer, where he calls him "the poet of the dawn." The image makes use of the old notion of the earlier Middle Ages as a "dark age," but the darkness is chased away by the knowledge and civilization brought about, Brawley's imagery implies, by the "renaissance"—a term in itself involving a similar metaphor of the rebirth of civilization after a period of dormancy. Brawley also uses the imagery of warfare, as ten thousand swords of light beat upon the "front" of night, driving it back and winning the field for the light. The fourth line is somewhat ambiguous, but certainly "welcome" is intended to be a verb parallel to "give" (not an adjective parallel to "dark"), so that the swords are "welcome light," and they give darkness back to the dark. The alliterative "s" sounds with their harsh sibilants give a kind of cutting quality to the lines, particularly the sudden jarring "bursts" of line two.

The second quatrain continues the action of the first, but takes

the general theme of darkness overcome and makes it more specific by focusing on the single figure who emerges as the leader of the army of the light: Geoffrey Chaucer. Apparently Brawley sees Chaucer as ushering in the new age of art and culture, as the "father of English literature." Chaucer is pictured as an "old man"—a curious detail, since we know he could not have been more than 57 or so when he died. But Chaucer is often pictured as old in some of these earlier descriptions—notably again in Longfellow's sonnet, which begins by describing Chaucer as "An old man in a lodge within a park." But old or not, Chaucer is pictured as actively leading the host, the army of light: he is "leading," "writing," and "telling" in successive lines. But this quatrain is far less martial than the first. Brawley takes a page from Wordsworth's book with his "gleams" of line 5, alliterating with the earlier "gold" and the "gilded" of line 7. The softer liquid *gl-* sounds, plus the long *e-* sounds at the end of each line, evoke a more tranquil mood here, as if Chaucer's chasing away the barbarous era replaces it with an age encouraging the civilized leisure suitable for artistic contemplation. Significantly, Brawley mentions that Chaucer writes "of dreams" (l. 7) and "of lovers" (l. 8). It is Chaucer the poet of the dream visions and of *Troilus* that leads the charge of the light brigade.

The third quatrain marks a major shift in the poem, so that it actually follows the format of an Italian sonnet with a closing sestet. Gone is the military metaphor. It is replaced by a catalogue of Chaucerian works, not presented as relics of the past to be studied by antiquarians as linguistic curiosities, but rather as if the characters themselves are real and exist in the present. *Still* Troilus hears Criseyde ask him to stay. The birds of the *Parliament of Fowls* are squabbling even *now*. The "motley pilgrims," here almost an afterthought, are involved, again in the present tense—let's hear them *now*! But what Brawley is most interested in are their stories of "old things"—stories like the Knight's Tale or the Tale of St. Cecilia, or the "Tale of Cambuscan bold" that Milton admired.

The concluding couplet continues this catalogue of Chaucerian poems as present realizations by bringing in the Eagle from the *House of Fame*, but gives the end a new twist by applying it directly to Brawley's poem. The Eagle, the same one that snatched up Geoffrey and flew him through space to the House of Fame, is described as "shining"—a glance back to the beginning of the sonnet



that associates the Eagle with the forces of light, those literary giants all of whom belong in the House of Fame. Brawley, depicting himself humbly as the author of "these lowly numbers," does see himself as following in the poetic tradition begun by Chaucer. In lines that recall Chaucer's own typically humble depiction of himself, Brawley too claims for himself a small corner in that house by this poem that attaches itself to the much greater reputation of Chaucer.

II.

The reputation of E.E. Cummings is somewhat greater than Brawley's and his mid-century tribute to Chaucer is quite different. Though not much younger than Brawley, fellow Harvard graduate Cummings studied under George Lyman Kittredge (Kennedy 63). It was Kittredge who set the tone for most twentieth-century Chaucerian scholarship when he posited that the Canterbury pilgrims "do not exist for the sake of the stories, but *vice versa*" (155). Kittredge, attributing the notion to Dryden, makes the realistic characterization of the Canterbury Pilgrims Chaucer's chief contribution. As Joseph Dane puts it, "The central organizing principle becomes one of character, first the fictional characters and finally the character of the author himself" (163). This is the vein in which Cummings writes his sonnet on the *Tales*.

*Xaipé*, the Greek title of the 1950 collection of Cummings' poems in which this sonnet appears, means "celebration," a term that applies to his assessment of Chaucer's achievement in the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer the poet is not mentioned at all in Cummings' poem—in the manner of New Criticism, the dominant critical point of view in 1950, Cummings focuses strictly on the work itself, and only "Geffrey," the pilgrim Chaucer, the Chaucer that exists in the text of the *Tales*, is mentioned (gone is the "old man" writing tales). Furthermore, it is the *Canterbury Tales*—the text played down by Brawley earlier in the century—that is the focus of Cummings' poem.

Like Brawley's, Cummings' poem is a Shakespearean sonnet, though in the tradition of the majority of twentieth-century poets it eschews rhyme for half-rhyme or pararhyme—"side" and "dead," "reve" and "alive," "most" and "dust." And in typical fashion, Cummings abandons standard English word order and sentence

structure in favor of meaningful juxtaposition, effective combinations of sound, and unusual metrical patterns of Hopkins-esque sprung rhythm.

The first line of the poem lists four moral qualities without punctuation, comment or context. "Honour" and "holiness" would generally be perceived as positive qualities, while "corruption" and "villainy" would be negative. Yet there is no order to the list here given, and no indication of a hierarchy (the two "bad" qualities are flanked by the two "good" ones). The effect is a nonjudgmental leveling, a suggestion that these qualities are somehow equal. The remainder of the first quatrain reinforces this as we are told all four of these ride side by side. They ride in springtime, as the images of fragrance, blossoming, and sunlight suggest, and they ride on a pilgrimage (the repetition of "riding" in emphatic positions at the beginning of lines reinforces this) not to the shrine of Thomas Beckett, but, we learn at the end of the quatrain, to Christ himself. And they go in joy, "singing," as who would not when he knows that "death shall be dead."

This reference to Christ's sacrifice catapults the poem into the second quatrain, where clearly the spiritual regeneration and pilgrimage to Canterbury of the General Prologue's opening is broadened, as it is in the Parson's prologue at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*, into the universal pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem. Again, all are equal ("Humblest" and "proudest" [l. 5]) in this quatrain because all are equally granted eternal life ("equally all alive" [l. 6]) through God's grace ("the gift of the earth of the sky" [l. 8]) and the forgiveness of sin brought about at Easter (the "forgiveness of spring" [l. 7]) through the miracle of Christ's resurrection (the "miraculous day" [l. 6]).

The third quatrain seems at first to continue the idea of the second but in fact sharply negates it: the Heavenly Jerusalem is part of the fictional world. Cummings introduces a shift in perspective—creating, as with Brawley's poem, more of an Italian sonnet structurally. The first two and a half lines give another catalogue, similar to that of the first line, this time of actual pilgrims rather than more general qualities. But again the list has no punctuation and no hierarchy, and lumps pilgrims with overwhelmingly good qualities—the Knight, Ploughman, and Clerk—with those who are clearly scoundrels—the Frere, Somnour, and Reve. Cummings even



includes the pilgrim Kittredge had called the "one lost soul" on the pilgrimage, the Pardoner. All are equally alive, and are alive forever, but this third quatrain takes that eternal life out of the spiritual context of the second quatrain and places it, instead, into an aesthetic one: the pilgrims come from the "never of when"—they have in fact never existed in reality, and so are born out of nothingness—only from the imagination of the poet. The "when" has become "now"—the immediate present of the reader. The "never" has become "forever"—the characters have become real and universal.

The final couplet moves from the Canterbury pilgrims to the actual people reading the tales, or reading Cummings' poem, or Cummings or Chaucer himself. The couplet, in typically Cummingsian jumbled word order, very deliberately contrasts the fictional and real characters. The word order places two alliterating words, "down" and "dust," in crucially emphatic positions, first and last in the couplet. The words suggest the grave—dust to dust we go down into the pit. The fictional pilgrims come up—the third quatrain uses "come" three times of the pilgrims, showing them as perpetually *arriving*. Real people of dust *go*—they leave, they go away. The "down" of line 13 should probably be coupled with "go" (l. 14). As in line 11 the pilgrims "come up," where the pilgrims are twice said to be "riding," and riding apparently to a particular destination. The real people in the couplet are "drifting" —they have no goal, no direction, but the alliteration of "drifting" with "down" and "dust" implies just where they are drifting.

Significantly, in the couplet people are drifting "crylessly," while the pilgrims in line 8 were "moving merrily." The "merrily" implies that joy, that singing wonder that the fictional pilgrims evoke, as the "eagerly wandering" of line 5 implies a passionate interest in life. The "crylessness" of the real humans suggests partly silence—they go down without a cry—and secondly not sorrow but a kind of emotional blank—the people are not sad because they are dust, the children of nothing, to which they return. In effect, the poem is a modern restatement of the classical *ars longa, vita brevis* trope (with which Chaucer opens the *Parliament of Fowls*).

Despite the tangled syntax, there are clues as to how we should rearrange the word order of the couplet. The capital W on "While" tells us where the sentence begins, and parallelism with

lines 7 and 11 (before and after the parentheses) suggests that the initial word order ought to be "While crylessly drifting through vast _____ of dust go down _____." An object for "through" is not clear. There is no adverbial phrase to follow "down." "Nothing's," a possessive, has only one possible referent, "children," the only noun in the sentence, which also must be the subject. The adjective "vast," in the position of "sweet" in line 7, must modify the object of "through" (as "sweet" modifies the object of "through"—"forgiveness"—in line 7). The other adjective, "own," must modify either "children" or "nothing," and it makes more sense to say "nothing's own children."

Again, finding parallels in the previous lines, *someone* must be *merrily moving* and must *come up*, and the second quatrain tells us it is the "humblest and proudest." The parallel superlative in the couplet is "most" in line 13. But as we know that the "humblest and proudest" refer to the Canterbury pilgrims (knight and poughman, wife and nun), so we know that "most" here refers to most real, living human beings: "vast nothing's own children." Now the sentence reads, with a bit of Cummingsian parenthetical license, "While most (nothing's own children) crylessly drifting through vast ____ of dust go down." The only remaining crux is the absence of a noun to act as the object of the preposition "through." I would argue that that very absence is the object: a very literal nothingness toward which we all drift. Only in art is there substantive immortality. As one critic puts it,

> these characters forever "come" because they are literary figures, while real people—"children...of dust"—must "go" into "nothing's own nothing." The paradox, playing against our usual conceptions of reality and fiction, suggests that poetry produces characters who are forever "alive," while human existence produces readers who turn to dust. (Kidder 193)

## III.

The dust has not really settled on late twentieth-century critical perspectives of Chaucer, though a plethora of new approaches have been applied to the poet and his work. Interest in a new historical approach to medieval literature has sparked new interest in Chaucer's audience, the transmission of his texts, the



reception of his texts, and, on the likelihood that Chaucer read his poetry aloud to courtiers of his time, the performance of his texts. John M. Ganim, in his book *Chaucerian Theatricality*, argues "that meaning is generated in the act of reading and is more akin to theme than to statement. The Chaucer that results is one more conditional, more provisional, appropriating the improvisational and performative qualities of medieval theatricality" (4).[3] Dane points out, though, that this emphasis on performance owes at least as much to Donaldson and, through him, the Kittredgean tradition: "The essence of Chaucerian irony, to Donaldson, was to be found in the oral nature of Chaucer's text—the supposed fact that Chaucer read this text before his audience, acting out the role of the naïve narrator who was distinct from Chaucer himself" (167).

Ted Hughes, late British poet laureate, plays with ideas of audience and reflects just this kind of performative Chaucer in a poem included in his 1998 collection called *Birthday Letters*—a book of poems written over a period of twenty-five years, all but two addressed to his estranged wife Sylvia Plath after her 1963 suicide.

If we consider the context of Hughes' poem—a volume in which he spends a good deal of time answering charges made against him by Plath readers and critics over the years—it might be easy to read the situation allegorically: a herd of cows (no bulls among them) listen to the poetry coming from Plath's mouth without any real understanding, as the herd of female readers and largely feminist critics follow a herd instinct in vilifying Hughes, though that is not what Plath's words are really saying. The poem's narrator understands Plath's words as the cows do not. Hughes understands Plath's poems as the critical herd does not.[4]

But if, in an unabashedly anachronistic burst of New Criticism we decide that this poem ought to stand by itself, freed from its textual and biographical context/baggage, what would we find?

Hughes' poem begins as Chaucer's poem does, with the first two lines of the General Prologue. But by the third line we realize these lines are being spoken by the ostensible audience of the poem—"you." The setting, with the spring sky, new green on the thorns, even Zephirus' sweet breath blowing the flying laundry of clouds overhead, recalls the *reverdie* of the Prologue. The woman seems to have had a bit too much to drink—she has snatched a

bumper of champagne and she sways on top of a stile as her voice booms loudly over the fields. The poem's speaker says the voice "sounded lost" (l. 13). The voice has become the pilgrim here, but a pilgrim lost, unable to attain its goal.

In the remarkable second part of the poem (ll. 13-24), the voice finds an audience, the pilgrim reaches its shrine. The audience is a herd of cows. The cows, we are told, appreciate Chaucer. The vivid image of the cows surrounding the woman is memorable and ludicrous, but not unheard of, not even un-Chaucerian. Hughes may very well be thinking about Chaucer's short poem "Truth," a poem that is addressed specifically, in its Envoy, to Philip de la Vache, whose last name means "cow," a point that Chaucer turns into a pun when he reminds the reader that "Her is non hoom, her nis but wildernesse" (l. 17), that is, our life is a pilgrimage through this world, a message not unlike that of the Parson at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*. And Chaucer advises the reader to take the "heye wey" (hay way?), saying "Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal!" (l. 18).

If the cow could be addressed in Chaucer's own poem, why can't Chaucer's poetry be used to address cows, who are apparently particularly attuned to it, in Hughes' poem? The cows react in a way, though, that recalls not Chaucer but Coleridge: the way they form a circle around the "magical" speaker, yet keep their respectful, awed distance, recalls the end of "Kubla Khan," where the listeners surround the singer in awed reverence, and "Weave a circle round him thrice, / And close your eyes with holy dread, / For he on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise"(ll. 51-54). The singer here is "rapt," touched as by heaven. The audience is enthralled, charmed by the song, but with no real comprehension of the Wife of Bath, the singer's "favourite character in all literature."

The next section of the poem (ll. 25-29) turns darker. Where the singer originally charmed the beasts into "enthralled" attention, now the singer has become the thrall of the audience. There is no way to tell what will happen if the singer stops the song—the angry audience could turn nasty, could trample the singer. The singer has created a trap for herself.

The last section of the poem (ll. 30-37) does in fact disengage the singer-audience connection, but fails to tell us how it occurred. Here the singer's *other* audience, the speaker of the poem, inserts



himself into the action and we realize that what we have witnessed here is, to keep the Romantic connection, one of those "spots of time" or moments of "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling," clearly here being "recollected in tranquility." Hughes recalls vividly the enthrallment of the cows, but cannot recall how it ended. Wordsworth remembered the daffodils, but doesn't dwell on how he pulled himself away from that hill.

Ultimately, then, Hughes' poem "Chaucer" is, like "Kubla Khan" or "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," a poem about poetry—about the sources of poetry and the reception of poetry. As such, it is fully appropriate to name the poem after the father of English poetry, and to allude to his works.

The sources of poetry in the poem are twofold. There is, it appears, a kind of divine inspiration or illumination that powers the singer in her performance. But she is not composing the poetry, only performing it. The inspiration comes from the images that impress themselves indelibly on our minds, so that we remember them and then make poetry from them. There is a three-step process involved: the experience and the reflection, here performed by the speaker, and the performance—the publication of the poem in oral or in written form (Chaucer, of course, would have "published" his poetry in both ways). Here, the publication is years later in these Birthday Letters. But there is also a publication of Chaucer's lines in the form of the singer's performance.

Hughes' poem seems most concerned with reception. There are two audiences to the singer's performance: the speaker, and the cows, of whom there are far more. The chief difference is that the cows, though enthralled and appreciative, really don't understand the poetry. The speaker does, and he is, one suspects, the *real* intended audience for the singer, whose performance seems deliberately a kind of showing off for his benefit more than for the cows'. Compare this to Chaucer's poem "Truth." Imagine Chaucer reading it to his courtly audience of lower nobility and upwardly mobile middle class. They and we, the modern readers, understand the poem each in our own way, but not with the same personal interest as Philip de la Vache, whatever plight he may have been in to which Chaucer was responding in his poem.

Does not this apply as well to Hughes' poem itself? Plath, the "Vache" of his poem, would understand it in a special way that no

one else possibly could. The rest of the audience, including ourselves as readers, in the position of the cows, are overhearing the words but they may be Greek, or Middle English, to us.

The audience, then, can be dangerous to the poet in this poem. Their expectations may be unreasonable once one has actually got their attention, and their reactions may turn ugly if the poet stops feeding their expectations. To get back to the biographical interpretation that can't be ignored with this poem, the singer's performance also must allude to Plath's publication of her own poetry. Plath broke the connection with her own audience by her suicide—perhaps that in part is behind Hughes' failure to remember how it happens in this poem. Hughes helped sever Plath's audience connection by censoring her poems and by "losing" her final two journals (see Churchwell). The potential reactions of the cows—their turning angry and threatening harm—follow upon these actions. But perhaps those actions were taken to protect the singer. About that this poem is silent.

## IV.

Clearly, in the end these poems are at least as much about their individual authors and the literary and biographical ideas, aspirations, and prejudices of those writers as they are about Chaucer. Chaucer in all cases becomes the touchstone—the figure on whose shoulders their literary tradition rests, and so the figure to whom they make their appeal as to what poetry can and should be. The fact that what is important about Chaucer changes with each generation to reflect what is important to that generation is understandable and inevitable. Chaucer's adaptability to different contexts is part of what makes him a great poet. But it raises the question of whether we can ever see Chaucer through anything but the lenses of our own preoccupations.

## Notes

[1]Brawley's influence is neatly summed up in Arthur Davis: "Scholar, critic, great teacher, prolific writer of textbooks, biographies, and anthologies, Benjamin Griffith Brawley was an early minor Planter. Two of his works, *A Short History of the*



*American Negro* (1913) and *The Negro in Literature and Art* (1918), were pioneering efforts to encourage the young writer and to show America the Negro's historical and cultural contributions. Because of his many publications, because of his tendency to make all knowledge his province, and because of his insistence on standards, Brawley served as an inspiration to young Negro writers" (8). Blyden Jackson summarizes his remarkable career, but adds, "Brawley was a mulatto . . . and he was unalterably, in his sensitivities as a critic of literature . . . [for blacks of the 60s and 70s] the complete embodiment of every conditioned reflex of the black bourgeoisie which aroused their disapproval, their ridicule, their scorn, and, often, their incandescent rage"(431-32).

[2]Brawley's less than appreciative assessments of Langston Hughes are legendary. Arthur Davis says that "he was too much of a classicist and a puritan to appreciate certain important aspects of the movement: its emphasis on folk materials, such as the work songs and the blues, its emphasis on the seamier side of the life" (8). Chidi Ikonne quotes Brawley saying in 1927 that "While the freedom of the artist to choose his subject must be acknowledged, it is regrettable that 'many artists . . . prefer today to portray only what is vulgar. There is beauty in the world as well as ugliness, idealism as well as realism'" (101). Thomas Inge quotes another 1927 article in which Brawley "is outraged at the Harlem writers' 'preference for sordid, unpleasant, or forbidden themes,' and accuses them of being 'loafers' masquerading as artists. He calls . . . Hughes 'the sad case of a young man of ability who has gone off on the wrong track altogether'" (175). And Jean Wagner quotes Brawley's review of Hughes' *Fine Clothes to the Jew*: "It would have been just as well, perhaps better, if the book had never been published. No other ever issued reflects more fully the abandon and the vulgarity of its age" (400-01).

[3]Another fairly recent book exploring Chaucerian performance and reception is Betsy Bowden's *Chaucer Aloud*, in which she considers questions like "Is it not the case that every reader brings his or her own subjective experiences and expectations to a text? Is it not the case that interpretive agreement is based on shared education and culture, and that critical disagreements constitute evidence that a text can sustain more than one valid interpretation?" (3). Bowden explores these ideas in part through

examining how thirty-two Canadian and American Chaucer scholars actually read the text aloud.

[4]Sarah Churchwell reviews these kinds of difficulties when she discusses how, in his forward to her journals,

> Hughes made the (to many incredible) revelation that he had destroyed Plath's last volume of journals, kept up until her death, and that the second-to-last volume "had been lost." Finally we might note that all of these collected editions—letters, prose pieces, journals, and poems—were framed by introductions, all of which, with the exception of that in *Letters Home*, were written by Ted Hughes. . . . Thus if Plath's position in the public sphere cannot be separated from sexual politics, neither can it be disentangled from what we might call the politics of publication. (111-13)

Amy Hungerford, on the whole somewhat more sympathetic to Hughes, sees the book as "Hughes' effort, through the particular resources of poetry, to choose and shape that story [i.e., his and Plath's] and his own place in it" (100).

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# Completing the Cycle of Past, Present and Future: New Testament Allegory in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

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To state that medieval literature is filled with allegorical writing is not surprising to scholars of the time period. D.W. Robertson, Jr., in *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*, asserts that although modern literary criticism focuses on the text's actual language, in the Middle Ages what was implied in an allegorical sense was much more important (287). Robert Blanch and Julian Wasserman, in *From Pearl to Gawain,* admit that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is "primarily about the completed cycle of error and redemption/salvation" (5), and J.J. Anderson states in his introduction to the Everyman edition of the four *Gawain*-poet narrative poems that all four have "religious and moral emphasis" (ix). But because of the allegorical writing method of the Middle Ages, it is certainly possible that *Gawain* contains more—a biblical allegory. Robertson states that Christian allegory, furthered by St. Paul and illustrated extensively in his writings, involved "not only an external division among men, but also an internal obligation of the individual"; and the way that the individual fulfilled his obligations definitely related to his "ultimate destiny" (291). Paul's writings refer to Old Testament characters' actions giving meaning to New Testament principles that are based on Jesus' teachings (291). He continually refers backward to Old Testament allegory, illustrating its connection to the New Testament Christ, who fulfills the allegory, then applies it to human life in a larger sense. Following Paul's backward reference style, the *Gawain*-poet uses Gawain as an allegorical figure; Gawain, tested through his experience with the Green Knight and his wife, echoes the experience of the apostle Peter, who is tested on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion through his denial of Christ.



The first three poems of the four attributed to the *Gawain*-poet included in the Cotton Nero manuscript, *Pearl*, *Patience*, and *Purity*, all contain obvious scriptural allegory. *Pearl* is a man's journey into the acceptance of the death of a child. Although he is still not completely reconciled to his loss in the final stanzas of this poem, he clearly understands that there is life after death and that his child is secure and content in eternity. *Patience* is based on the Old Testament story of Jonah, who is directed by God to give a message to the Ninevites: they must repent of their sinful ways or God will destroy them. While the Ninevites listen to God and obey, Jonah questions the Almighty's wisdom in saving a wretched society and must endure a sojourn in the stomach of a whale for his disobedience. Clearly, God requires the righteous Jonah's obedience—patience—as well as the Ninevites'. The *Gawain*-poet concerns himself with giving the reminder that even "godly" people must be "patient" and "wait upon the Lord" (Isaiah 40.31) for His direction, carrying it out without question when he gives it. *Purity*, or *Cleanness* as the poem is also titled, is an encompassing survey of wicked Old Testament cities that are destroyed by God for their disobedience, juxtaposed with characters such as Noah, Abraham, and Nebuchadnezzar, who are rewarded for their willingness to live by God's law. The poem includes the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, and other examples to show the danger to a society when it denies God's sovereignty. Anderson notes that these three poems are "based firmly on the biblical text, in its Latin Vulgate version, which the poet must have had before him as he composed" (xvii).

*Gawain* seems at first glance to stand apart as an "other," simply an entertaining story of knighthood tested amid a colorful depiction of King Arthur's court. After all, the poem is simply a story that Anderson says "fits most obviously into a well-defined Medieval genre—that of Arthurian romance" (xviii). However, perhaps the poet had the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible before him as he wrote this poem, too. If, as Robertson asserts, one of the goals of medieval literature was to help in the understanding of the scriptures, then "Every myth had its physical or moral application" in allegory (289). To that end, using a popular legend such as King Arthur and Camelot would have created an engaging and straightforward method of teaching the lesson of faith versus human frailty and dependence on the world, although this in itself is paradoxical if

the poem is an allegory. Additionally, that the New Testament is noticeably missing from the narrative structure of the four poems is apparent if we take Paul's allegorical style into consideration. *Patience* and *Purity* represent the allegorical Old Testament, and hope for eternity is beautifully narrated in the allegorical *Pearl*, but there is no New Testament representation. The cycle is not complete, and the narrative's "endeles knot" (Anderson l. 630), not only of Gawain's pentangle, which is an interesting combination of his knighthood and his spirituality, but also of past, present, and future that ends the poem, is lacking until we fit Gawain into his allegorical context.

An important feature of the medieval allegorical form is that the whole story need not fit a pattern perfectly; medieval practice, in fact, uses details that mean nothing for the very purpose of highlighting those that are meaningful. This writing style is not simply literary; in a practical sense, it seems to be because often writers were working with an historical text and only certain details would flow into an allegory (Robertson 299). Hence, *Gawain* need not be seen as an exact reenactment of the apostle Peter's entire walk with Christ; instead, we can view Peter's denial of Christ coupled with Gawain's experience with the Green Knight as an allegory that illuminates the application to all humans of the futility of reliance on the false solidity of the self or the world.

Medieval author-poets wrote mostly for patrons, usually wealthy aristocrats to whom the author was either connected by land or currying for favor; this fact would definitely have affected an author's purpose and narrative. Robertson contends that we can only fully analyze literature of the past if we can place it "at least in momentary glimpses, as [it was] seen by [its] creators" (ix). It is, then, incumbent on us to take the context in which *Gawain* was written into perspective. There is a wealth of existing research and supposition regarding the date, setting, and authorship of *Gawain* and the three other narrative poems found with it, but for now at least, the poet/patron remains a mystery. What the research has shown, though, is that all of the candidates for patron of the *Gawain*-poet are identical in two crucial areas: he is likely to have staunchly upheld both the Chivalric code and Christian faith (Cooke and Boulton, Meyer).

The first noticeable likeness between the story of the Apostle



Peter and *Gawain* is in the personalities of the two characters. Although chosen as the "rock [on which] I will build my church" (Matthew 16.18), Peter is depicted in the Bible as decidedly impetuous. He is also, coincidentally perhaps, called the "son of Jonah," a reminder of *Patience*. In the New Testament gospels, Peter often asks inappropriate questions and displays rash behavior, such as climbing out of a fishing boat to meet Jesus, thinking nothing of the fact that he is walking on water until he is halfway across the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14.29-31). When the Roman soldiers come to arrest Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, in a misguided attempt to guard his Lord, cuts off the right ear of one of the High Priest's guards, a soldier named Malchus (John 18.10), completely disregarding the fact that this is an act punishable by death. And although Jesus has warned the disciples of the danger of associating with him, Peter immediately promises that others may fail, but he will never deny Christ, no matter the consequences (Mark 14.29).

In many texts that relate Arthurian folklore, Gawain exhibits similar impetuous behavior. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, for example, details Gawain's impetuous action of cutting off the head of one of the Roman Emperor's men. Gawain is provoked by the other men into creating an incident, and rashly chooses one that enrages the Emperor because the dead man is his nephew (241). In *Gawain*, the Green Knight has challenged any knight at the feast to the beheading test. All are silent, awed by both the Green Knight himself and his eerie challenge until finally King Arthur, angered by the Green Knight's taunts, accepts. Gawain is quick to step in front of King Arthur and ask to take the Knight's challenge instead, defending his king with no immediate thought to the danger into which he has placed himself (ll. 340-2). Indeed, the beheading challenge is anything but a forgiving one; Gawain understands perfectly that he must offer his neck to the Green Knight's axe exactly one year hence. This important fact, however, does not stop Gawain—at that moment—from accepting before he thinks. Certainly, both Peter and Gawain, full of raw potential as leaders in their respective social milieus, approach their given tasks with courage and faith, but that faith must be tested.

The people gathered around the temple fire are Peter's vehicle for testing, as is the Green Knight for Gawain. But neither the

crowd nor the Green Knight is as crucial to the understanding of the "testing of faith" as is the figure that we find behind these allegorical characters. Before Jesus is arrested, he warns Peter that "Satan has asked to sift you as wheat," and Jesus has apparently agreed, praying that Peter's faith will not fail and telling him that "when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22. 31-32). Satan will use a situation such as the temple fire to test Peter's faith. The obvious implication here is that Jesus is fully aware that though he has prayed, Satan's power will overwhelm Peter and his faith will fail. In Gawain's final moments with the Green Knight, Bercilak informs him that Morgan le Fay arranged the test "to assay, if such it were, the surfeit of pride / That is rumored of the retinue of the Round Table" (ll. 2457-8). This is not the first time in Arthurian folklore that Morgan le Fay is given a sinister, satanic persona. The allegorical implication apparent to those living in the Middle Ages when reading that Morgan le Fay is behind the test would have been that of Satan testing one's faith. Satan, a dark sinister creature, is often shown lurking behind other literary characters, either seducing them to his purpose or, unknown to them, using their actions to suit his nefarious purposes.

The lesson learned through allegory in *Gawain* includes an implicit directive to beware of seemingly innocent occurrences; the devil appears in many forms and situations. Indeed, Marie Borroff, in the introduction to her translation of *Gawain*, comments that although the temptation of the girdle is the ultimate test, it seems to be almost an afterthought—a "side issue" (ix)—in the larger theme of Gawain's obligation to the Green Knight. Likewise, even though he has been warned to watch for the possibility of Satan's hand at work, Peter's denial of Christ is not as immediately relative to Peter as is the fact that Jesus has been arrested and his crucifixion is imminent.

Gawain's test seems to begin in earnest when he sets off to find the Green Chapel. Hauntingly reminiscent of Jesus' words to Peter in the Gospel of Luke, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me" (22.34), the Gawain-poet's use of cycles of threes, more than anything else in the Gawain narrative, supports the conclusion that the poem is in fact an allegory for Peter's denial of Christ. Gawain cannot find the Green Chapel. He is in despair; he has made a vow to the Green



Knight, and his honor will be suspect if he does not appear at the Green Chapel on New Year's Day. Riding his horse Gringolet through the bitter cold woods, Gawain prays with all of his being for some help. He crosses himself three times and, miraculously, the fairy-tale castle appears (ll. 763-4). The test has begun.

It is interesting to note here that we can see a direct reference to Peter in this portion of the narrative. It occurs during the scene of Gawain's entrance into the castle, and it humorously pertains to the allegory. Gawain approaches the mysterious castle and requests accommodation within its impregnable walls. To his request the porter replies, "Peter! [...] For my part, I think / So noble a knight will not want for a welcome!" (ll. 813-14). The porter is simply using a common symbol of St. Peter's guardianship of the gates of Heaven, but that the *Gawain*-poet chooses to include that particular colloquialism, the apostle Peter's name, to exclaim at Gawain's obvious knightly qualities and reassure him of entrance to the castle, is an ironic guidepost from the *Gawain*-poet that is amusing if one accepts the allegory.

Gawain enters the castle and meets the lord of the castle who, unknown to him, is the Green Knight. After securing the lord's promise to help reach the Green Chapel several days hence when he needs to go, Gawain agrees to a game with the lord to pass the time. The lord proposes that for each of three days, he will hunt and Gawain will remain at the castle; in the evening the men will exchange whatever they have gained that day (ll. 1097-1109). It seems to be an innocent, jovial activity between two knights at a celebratory time of year, but in the same way that Peter is insulted that Jesus would even suggest that he might deny his lord and thinks it an impossibility that he could ever be capable of such an action, both situations are deceptively innocent and simple, cloaking a situation that will prove to be much more dire.

Three blasts of the horn signal the first day of the mystery lord's hunt (l. 1141). While the hunt is on for deer—specifically a doe—Gawain is hunted by the lord's wife. Marie Borroff makes us aware that there are "thematic parallels" (ix) between the prey and Gawain on each day of the hunt. On this day, Gawain's defense against the huntress-mistress of the castle parallels the movements of the doe. He feigns sleep, acts shy and startled, and allows himself to be stalked. Similarly, when first asked—by a slave woman—in

the temple courtyard whether he knows Jesus, Peter very calmly and dispassionately replies, "Woman, I don't know him" (Luke 22.57). Gawain gains a kiss on the first day and bestows it on the lord when he returns laden with venison for Gawain.

Embedded in the center of Gawain's test is a direct reference to Peter, when on the second morning, "before the barnyard cock had crowed but thrice / The lord had leapt from his rest, . . ." to begin the hunt (l. 1412). Again, Gawain behaves much the same as the prey, a boar, and by its actions, the boar itself also reminds us of the allegory. The *Gawain*-poet writes that the boar throws three hunters down "at the first thrust" (l. 1443). Both the boar and Gawain are aggressive. Likewise, Peter is next approached—by a man, interestingly, following the Gawain hunting pattern also—and responds as aggressively as the boar and Gawain. To the comment, "You also are one of them," he replies, "Man, I am not!" (Luke 22.58). Noticeably, his second denial is grammatically denoted as an exclamatory statement. Gawain gains two kisses on the second day of the hunt and again bestows them on the lord when he returns laden with ribs for Gawain.

The sun rises in three distinct movements on the morning of the third and final hunt: "The sun rises red amid radiant clouds, / sails into the sky, and sends forth his beams" (ll. 1695-6). Gawain is the fox, called "thief" by the hunters (l. 1725), chased to his hole and flushed out by the temptation of the green girdle that the lord's wife offers him. Gawain, knowing that soon he must offer his neck to the axe of the Green Knight, latches on to the seductive and insidious promise of the green girdle, which is purported to have magical powers of physical protection. Although he claims to have faith in God, and even attends mass and confession after accepting the girdle (l. 1875), it is evident at this point from Gawain's dependence on the physical security of the promises of the girdle that he considers the girdle—not his faith—to be his saving grace during his forthcoming appointment at the Green chapel. Gawain gains three kisses and the girdle on the third day of the hunt (ll. 1868, 1936), but only bestows the kisses on the lord when he returns laden with "this foul fox pelt" (l. 1944), a comment reflective of Gawain's behavior.

Peter, too, is a fox, backed into a corner by the crowd in the temple courtyard. He is finally forced to definitively separate himself from Jesus. When not just one but several of those gathered



there accuse him, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean," Peter not only vehemently denies knowing Jesus, he also calls down curses on the onlookers (Mark 14.71). Although Gawain remains blissfully unaware that he has just denied his faith, Peter, seeing Jesus cross the courtyard, immediately realizes his failure with excruciating clarity. He leaves the holy temple area, where he no longer deems himself fit to be and, as told in Luke 22, "wept bitterly" outside (verse 62). Gawain, however, must learn of his fall at the Green Chapel.

Gawain's final test is again depicted through a cycle of three. Gawain, wearing the green girdle, finds the Green Knight. Though the agreement between Gawain and the Green Knight is for one axe blow each, the Green Knight halts his downward swing twice and deflects the third, after which the Green Knight finally tells Gawain of his failing.

We see Gawain's pain and shame, as vivid and wretched as Peter's upon the apprehension of the enormity of his actions, as the realization of Gawain's disastrous choice of the world over his faith washes over him:

> So gripped with grim rage that his great heart shook.
> All the blood of his body burned in his face
> As he shrank back in shame from the man's sharp speech.
> The first words that fell from the fair knight's lips:
> "Accursed be a cowardly and covetous heart!
> In you is villainy and vice, and virtue laid low!"
> (ll. 2370-5)

In the full throes of shame and despair Gawain confesses; the Green Knight excuses him, commenting on the frailty of humanity (lines 2389-93). However, forgiveness is not complete until Gawain returns to Camelot. The entire court is overjoyed to see Gawain (ll. 2490-3), who confesses his failure with no small amount of shame:

> With rage in heart he speaks,
> And grieves with many a groan;
> The blood burns in his cheeks
> For shame at what must be shown. (ll. 2490-3)

Gawain equates the green girdle to "the badge of false faith that [he] was found in there" (l. 2508). But Arthur comforts the knight, receiving his failure and shame and, together with the whole court, taking it on himself to share it with Gawain (ll. 2513-20). The

king's action serves to reaffirm his position at court as one of King Arthur's valued and beloved knights. Through this, the narrative begins to move toward a larger theme. The picture is very biblical and strongly suggests a theme of universal sin that is certainly not limited to Gawain, but is shared by all, and includes the forgiveness of the same sin.

Peter's story widens in focus, also. As the disciples are fishing, a stranger on the shore calls out to them to throw their nets over to the other side. Because these are the very words that Jesus used initially to call him as a disciple, Peter finally recognizes Jesus and rushes to shore. Jesus has a warm fire burning and a meal prepared to share—a sign of warmth, love, and acceptance that is a balm to Peter's weary, wounded soul. Christ again uses the cycle of threes in a final series of questions to Peter; quoting from the gospel of John, three times he asks, "Simon [Peter], do you love Me?" In answer to Peter's yes, Christ adds, "Feed my sheep" (21.15-18). Christ is allowing Peter to participate in the work of the church even after his failure, just as Gawain's return to Camelot is greeted with joy, humor, and acceptance even after his failure.

The final bob and wheel of *Gawain* is troublesome for Stephen Finley, discussed in his article titled, in part, "Closure and Indeterminacy in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.*" Although he sees the bob and wheel as "ambivalence of the poet toward sacramentally ordained integration of community with the mortal processes of nature and time" (448), it is anything but ambivalent. Finley asks, "Where is the ground between past and future, the time of the present that might suggest to us how to understand the great concluding motives of the poem?" (452). The *Gawain*-poet, rooted as he is in the forgiveness of sin offered by Christ in the New Testament and eloquently narrating the allegory of Gawain, shows through enduring Arthurian folklore that mortal time—the present—exists firmly on the continuum of past, present, and future and is, paradoxically, both necessary and meaningless to Gawain's—and our own—eternity. Thus, just as Donald Howard, referenced by Finley, comments, "'Gawain returns to the starting place, and however chastened, is greeted with laughter which dispels his sobriety'" (qtd. in Finley 446). Further, the poem returns to its beginning in narrative by repeating the opening historical segment. Also, in part through the use of the present tense of the narrative



voice throughout the bob and wheel, the poem is firmly placed in the "continuous present" that Finley seeks (301). The lingering lines in the final bob and wheel close the allegorical circle of Gawain and Peter.

> Many such, ere we were born,
> Have befallen here, ere this.
> May He that was crowned with thorn
> Bring all men to His bliss! Amen. (ll. 2526-30)

The reference to those who have fallen in the past encompasses Peter, the continuous present is represented by the reference to the earth, or "here" seen through Gawain's testing in the narrative itself, and the future is represented by the reference to Christ welcoming all into eternity. Further, the circle of past, present, and future is completed in a larger way by the finale of the *Gawain*-poet's four narrative poems; only in the final lines of *Gawain* do the Old Testament, the New Testament, and their contribution to eternity through the life of Christ come together to complete the "endeles knot."

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# The Lively Heroine: Eliza Haywood's Later Novels as Conduct Books

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Critics of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* agree that Elizabeth Bennet is presented to us as the ideal young woman while every conduct book until that moment (and for a long time after) would have clearly indicated Jane Bennet as the ideal of womanhood.[1] Elizabeth is certainly chaste, but in the realms of silence and obedience she falls far short of her older and presumably better mannered sister. The ideal woman, according to such popular guides to behavior as Fordyce's sermons or Gregory's advice to his daughters, was to be demure, sensitive, passive, accepting, modest, and affectionate (never passionate). Elizabeth Bennet is quite clearly none of these things, but then the heroines of *The Fortunate Foundlings* (1744), *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753) also departed in significant ways from the conduct book models as did many of the heroines of eighteenth-century novels when the novels were written by women.[2] Thus, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice* did not spring fully-grown from the head of Jane Austen; she has a lineage that is rich in suggestions for precedents. As attention has been increasingly given to the women writers who were Austen's predecessors in the eighteenth century, a clearer tradition of the development of the novel is emerging and an alternative standard of behavior for women can be explored through those *other* conduct books: novels by, for, and about women.[3]

Conduct books of the sixteenth century in England were primarily addressed to men. The only somewhat comparable books for women were concerned with huswifery or devotions and with examples of chaste, silent, and obedient behavior.[4] Robert Greene announces on the titlepage of *Penelope's Web* (1587) that he will present "a christall mirrour of feminine perfection" including "three speciall vertues, necessary to be incident in every vertuous woman, pithely discussed: namely obedience, chastity, and sylence."



Marriage books such as those by Edmund Tilney (1568, seven editions by 1587) and George Whetstone (1582) offered guidance on behavior leading to and during marriage. They follow the humanist elevation of marriage above virginity and urge friendship as the model for married life, but the role of the woman before, during, and after marriage has not changed significantly. Whetstone's conclusion is that marriage is a commonwealth with the husband as head. He is the provider, and the wife the maintainer exercising her housewifely duties.

In the seventeenth century new interests gradually appear in writers who address parallel books to the English gentleman and the English gentlewoman. In 1615 Gervase Markham, looking backwards, provides an excellent practical text on running a household. Markham covers the inward qualities of religion, temperance, and the other virtues including a woman's apparel and diet in seven paragraphs and then gets on to the important business of how she should care for her family and household for the rest of the book (*The English Housewife* [1615, rev. edd. 1623, 1631]). Just a few years later, however, Richard Brathwait, looking forward, provides the enlarged, or at least redirected, view of woman's responsibilities in *The English Gentlewoman* (1631; rev. edd. 1633, 1641). The eight "prime subjects" Brathwait names are apparel, behavior, complement, decency, estimation, fancy, gentility, and honor. All eight subjects are concerned with a broader range of women's behavior than earlier manuals. It is not enough to recommend that women stay at home; Brathwait devotes time to discussing their behavior in public and in company. Richard Allestree in *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts by the Author of the Whole Duty of Man, &c. The Sixth Impression* (1693; original publication 1673, 14 editions by 1700) devotes chapters to Modesty, Meekness, Compassion, Affability, and Piety, then in the second half of his book applies them to the stages of life for a woman: virgin, wife, widow. It is clear how the world of women has changed (and how much he regrets it), for Allestree calls housewifery and piety, the two topics which almost exclusively defined the role of women the previous century, "unfashionable themes" for the round of social visits done by persons of quality in his time (11).

The scope of behavior explored in these books addressed to women is larger than in the preceding century and includes more

attention to what we have come to call manners. It may reflect a changing sense of women, but it certainly reflects a changing sense of marriage emerging from the reconsideration of God's commandments to be one flesh.[5] Marriage was becoming less a question merely of merging estates or other economic relations and more an issue of compatibility and love.[6] The result is that women's behavior is more important and the requirements for it more complex in the courtship period as well as after marriage. While chaste, silent, and obedient has long been the standard of feminine excellence, now there are more specific issues which are important to a marriage and which will involve women's behavior in areas believed important to companionship.

In the course of the eighteenth century, as Anthony Fletcher has argued, women came to be seen not as inferior versions of men on the same continuum, but as distinctly different beings with separate abilities and realms of influence. Fletcher goes on to argue, however, that this differentiation of nature led to further and more complete subordination.[7] The conduct books of the period for women reflect both the expanded, differentiated role of women and their rigidly enforced submissiveness. James Fordyce's and John Gregory's works provide evidence by their popularity of a widespread view of women's appropriate behavior in the later eighteenth century. Fordyce's *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex* (1776) had two further editions that year. His *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) had 14 editions by 1814. John Gregory's *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters* was published in 1774 and had over thirty editions by 1828. It is, of course, Fordyce's *Sermons* that Mr. Collins chooses to read aloud to the Bennet girls in volume 1, chapter 14 of *Pride and Prejudice*.

Even such traditional commentators see the role of women as more complex than simple obedience; women must set a pattern of piety, charity, and Christian behavior which will reform men or at least help to keep the men from the sinful temptations of the world.[8] The women do not achieve this role, however, in the view of the men writing conduct books and preaching sermons, by high spirits and lively behavior. These lofty goals will be accomplished by "the lovely meekness and modest pliancy which ought always to characterize the sex" (*Character and Conduct* 78). In his *Sermons to Young Women*, Fordyce lists his idea of truly feminine qualities:



> modesty, meekness, prudence, piety, with all virtuous and charitable occupations, all beautiful and useful accomplishments suited to their rank and condition. These are the chief ornaments of their sex; these will render them truly lovely as Women; and as Christians, these will more peculiarly become them. (7)

John Gregory similarly finds "one of the chief beauties in a female character is that modest reserve, that retiring delicacy, which avoids the public eye, and is disconcerted even at the gaze of admiration." He recommends: "Be even cautious in displaying your good sense. . . . If you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men. . ." (*A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* 26, 31).

While the nature of women may have changed according to these sources, and the function of women expanded to include leading men to their eternal salvation as well as improving their manners, the means by which women were to fulfill their nature and to perform their function remained largely the same. Women were to be modest, retiring, demure, and delicate. At least the conduct books still urged these qualities as composing the ideal women. Alternate models are to be found in other sources: the novels written for women, particularly those written by Eliza Haywood.[9]

That Haywood intended her work to influence the thought and behavior of her readers is declared in the title page of *The Fortunate Foundlings* where she asserts: "The Whole calculated for the Entertainment and Improvement of the Youth of both Sexes." The Preface continues this position saying:

> . . . the Motive of their [the adventures'] Publication being only to encourage Virtue in both Sexes, by shewing the Amiableness of it in real Characters. And if it be true (as certainly it is) that Example has more Efficacy than Precept, we may be bold to say there are few fairer or more worthy Imitation.[10]

Similar comments appear at the end of *The Fortunate Foundlings* and *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*.[11]

It is the insistence on experience that most clearly differentiates Haywood's heroines from the models proposed in the conduct books. The goal of the conduct books is largely to protect the young woman from experience of any kind and thus to render

her incapable of judgment, assertion, or self-protection. For instance, Allestree urges: "Our tender blossoms we are fain to skreen and shelter, because every unkindly air nips and destroys them: and nothing can be more nice and delicate then a maiden-virtue, which ought not to be exposed to any of those malignant airs which may blast and corrupt it, of which God knows there are too many, some that blow from within, and others from without" (161-2). Not so in Haywood. The feminine foundling, Louisa, finds herself in an inn awakened at night by the manager, but before she unlocks the door she dresses herself and inquires closely what his business is. Only as the door is assaulted and would be broken in, does she allow him entrance. When her sexual enemy enters, claiming to be her husband and threatening rape after her refusal of his propositions, she defends herself with vigor and force, taking his sword at one point and fending him off with it while she unlocks the door and makes her escape (chapter 15). Sophia, in one of the incidents told to Jenny in her novel, is equally active in her own defense, again grabbing the sword of her attacker and keeping him literally at sword's point while she cries for aid (III.161-2). Thus the heroines' style is less tears and pleadings and more analysis and action.

Betsy in her history is also successful in avoiding rape with her struggles and presence of mind. Betsy will use her voice in argument, threat, or finally screams as well as her strength of body to prevent her violation. She encounters four potential rape situations (one in each volume of the book), and in each case she is active not passive, vocal not silent, and insistent on her dignity and position not submissive to his. Thus she is chaste by not being silent or obedient.

The Haywood heroine, then, is characterized by self-possession and by articulateness. She has a sense of her own worth and can express that sense in forceful terms when necessary. Her heroines also have fortitude; they are willing to take risks, to go out on their own. They are not dependent on their parents, guardians, or lovers. It is noticeable that there is a striking absence of parents in all three cases. Louisa is a foundling who later finds she has a living and would-be-protective parent. Betsy and Jenny are left without parents at age 14 and by age 18 are basically free of any guardian. Louisa in particular is praised for her fortitude in leaving the cloister and walking across Italy and France on her own to establish her



freedom.

Another of the abilities needed by the heroines is the skill to deflect the non-violent addresses of a male admirer. Two qualities are needed: first the virtue to be offended by liberties taken and second the experience of how the addresses are made and what their dangers are. Jenny's friend, Sophia, is taken in by the addresses of a handsome soldier. When reflecting on Sophia's unhappiness, Jenny considers in her defense: "she had convers'd little with the world, was entirely ignorant of the artifices which the villainous part of mankind are capable of putting in practice to deceive our sex, and had no friend to advise or warn her against the danger. . ." (III.227). Similarly, Louisa must learn "all the little policies which make up the art of what is called polite address, and which is not to be attained without an acquaintance with the court and great world" (50-1). For those without access to the court and great world, there were the novels of Eliza Haywood.

Clearly Haywood like Milton "cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue"; indeed some of her most scathing commentary is used in describing the cloistered life in *Foundlings*. Haywood rates the experienced heroine well above the innocent—in the sense of untested—one. Often the danger into which the woman comes is in part due to her inexperience of the world. The novels, then, fulfill a solid moral function, alerting the readers through imaginatively experienced adventures to the dangers, the possible responses to dangers, and the value of such knowledge.

Haywood's heroines possess virtues that set them off from the ideal that other conduct books enjoin. Her heroines are more articulate, have a stronger sense of their own value, have the ability to evaluate others justly, have stronger emotions and better control of them than women were presumed to have, but most of all have the fortitude to engage experience, to go out into the world and learn from their own experiences. Thus they had, and developed further in the course of the narration, the habits of mind and strength of character which made them independent to a degree not encouraged by the more traditional conduct books, but which made for a livelier narrative and led to a tradition of spirited heroines out in the world, full of confidence in their own views, and believing themselves capable of meeting whatever conditions arose.

It is possible to recognize that Elizabeth Bennet's sisters lack

one or more of these qualities. Jane has neither the strong sense of her own merit nor the expressive force to indicate to Bingley the quality of her affection. Mary lacks the wisdom to be articulate in conversation, limited as she is to aphorisms and predigested judgments. Lydia and Kitty seem to lack both the control of their emotions and the ability to evaluate others justly. Kitty, we are told in the final chapter, will have the advantage of spending time in her eldest sisters' households where she may gain that experience of society which Haywood has urged as a defense against flattery and misguided affection.

Gregory has based his advice to his daughters on his belief that women are "designed to soften our hearts and polish our manners; and, as Thomson finely says,

> To raise the virtues, animate the bliss
> And sweeten all the toils of human life."
>
> (6-7)

Elizabeth Bennet concurs with this goal. As she reflects on marriage to Darcy, she anticipates that "his mind might have been softened, his manners improved" (199), but it is by her ease and her liveliness, not her passive submission, that these goals would be reached.[12] Elizabeth's liveliness is precisely the quality Darcy admires the most. Elizabeth defines that quality perhaps from male-written conduct books' view as "impertinence," but Darcy corrects her from the view of the *other* conduct books. She says, "Now be sincere; did you admire me for my impertinence?" He responds, "For the liveliness of your mind, I did" (244).

## Notes

[1]As Maara A. Stewart points out: "Jane acts always as one who has perfectly internalized the behavior of the ideal young lady recommended by books of manners." *Domestic Realities and Imperial Fictions: Jane Austen's Novels in Eighteenth-Century Contexts* (Athens, GA: U Georgia P, 1993), p. 46. David Monaghan ("Jane Austen and the Position of Women." *Jane Austen in a Social Context*, ed. David Monaghan [Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1981], pp. 105-21) argues that all the heroines in Austen's novels depart from the passive roles prescribed for women in the conduct books. He points out that "Elizabeth Bennet behaves far



more admirably when she ignores decorum and tramples across muddy fields to visit the sick Jane, than does the young Fanny Price when she creeps timidly around Mansfield Park" (109).

[2]*The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* is available in several modern reprints. For *The Fortunate Foundlings* I used the edition of 1744 (London: T. Gardner), and for *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* the edition of 1753 (London: T. Gardner).

[3]Reevaluation of the tradition of novel writing properly began with the work of B. G. MacCarthy, *The Female Pen: Women: Writers and Novelists, 1621-1818* (New York: New York UP, 1994), originally published in two volumes 1944, 1947. Janet Todd in the preface to this work also cites Joyce Horner, *The English Women Novelists and Their Connection with the Feminist Movement (1688-1797)*, 1930, and J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800*, 1932. A selective, but highly valuable, bibliography of critical works is published in David Oakleaf's edition of *Love in Excess* (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview, 1994). One work omitted by Oakleaf, but deserving special note is Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987). Editions of Haywood's works by Garland, Pandora, Broadview, Augustan Reprint, and Scholar Facsimile presses have made many of her works more widely accessible. A particularly detailed edition of *The Adventures of Eovaai* (1736) has been produced by Earla Wilputte (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 1999).

[4]Thomas Bentley, *The Monument of Matrones: Conteining the Seven Severall Lamps of Virginitie* (London: H. Denham, 1582), is an example of the devotional work. Robert Greene, *Penelope's Web* (London: T.C. and E.A., 1587). Edmund Tilney, *The Flower of Friendship: A Renaissance Dialogue Contesting Marriage*. Ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992). George Whetstone, *An Heptameron of Civill Discourses. Containing: The Christmasse Exercise of sundrie well Courted Gentlemen and Gentlewomen. . . . And herein, also, [as it were in a Mirrour] the Unmaried may see the Defectes whiche Eclipse the Glorie of Mariage: and the wel Maried, as in a Table of Housholde Lawes, may cull out needefull Preceptes to establysh their good Fortune* (London: Richard Jones, 1582).

[5]James Grantham Turner explains: "This erotic and

companionate doctrine of 'one flesh' in Calvin and his followers has persuaded many Miltonists that there is a distinct progressive Protestant theory of marriage, or even a 'Puritan Art of Love' that flourished particularly in England" (73). *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987). Turner goes on to express reservations about the distinctiveness of the puritans, but notes that "their marital applications of Genesis do dwell upon the importance of love—not just the love that should endear the performance of duties, but also the sexual love specific to the marriage-bed" (73). Valerie Wayne, editor of Edmund Tilney's *The Flower of Friendship*, argues that the puritans used humanist and classical sources for their views of companionate marriage and that from 1559 to the 1620s there were great overlaps in the humanist, the protestant, and the puritan positions.

[6]Eliza Haywood has one of her heroes reflect on this new perspective. Jemmy Jessamy in *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* says:

> "It is not," said he within himself, "it is not youth, beauty, wealth, nor even a mutual affection in the parties before marriage, that is sufficient to constitute their happiness, when once enter'd into that state . . . it must therefore be that a conformity of principles, a parity of sentiments and humours, and a certain sympathy of soul, ought to be the first links in the hymeneal chain; and without them, all the others fall to the ground and have no power to bind" (I.170-1).

[7]Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1995.

[8]Fordyce in *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex* argues that men seek the approval of women who thus are able to reform their manners and save their souls: "By an increasing susceptibility to the attractions of the softer sex, you are carried more and more into their company; and there, my brothers, your hearts and manners, your tastes and pursuits, receive very often a direction that remains ever after, and that will probably decide your destiny through the whole of your existence" (4-5). Or again, he concludes: "That, in the future state, many virtuous men will, with everlasting joy and gratitude, ascribe, under God, their confirmation and progress in virtue, chiefly to their having been conversant with female worth, I have no doubt" (90).



[9]Eliza Haywood's prolific output is emerging as central to the development of the novel, but she remains an enigmatic figure. Her writing extends over a period of almost 35 years (1719-1753) and includes a variety, indeed a mixture, of genres which perplexes analysis and defies classification. Little help comes from biographical information, as she was determinedly private. Perhaps the kind of assault on the Public Records Office that has characterized Shakespeare scholarship will fill out the lacunae in her life story. And perhaps sustained scholarly scrutiny will establish the body of her work with more assurance than we can have at present. Haywood certainly acted on the stage, wrote for the stage, published poems and essays, and wrote a variety of prose narratives. The final works that are assuredly hers are three narratives—*The Fortunate Foundlings* (1744), *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), and *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* (1753)—and a collection of letters, *Epistles for the Ladies* (1749). They provide consistent patterns of action and offer a source for an alternative model of behavior for the conduct of young women entering society and seeking marriage.

[10]The Preface is signed "The Editors," but it is in agreement with Haywood's declared and consistent policy and practice. In her novels precepts never change behavior, but experience and examples do.

[11]The concluding paragraph of *The Fortunate Foundlings* declares the moral of that narrative and the importance of example: "By these examples we may learn, that to sustain with fortitude and patience whatever ills we are preordained to suffer, entitles us to relief, while by impatient struggling we should but augment the score, and provoke fate to shew us the vanity of all attempts to frustrate its decrees" (352). Similarly, at the end of *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, Haywood concludes that Betsy had learned through her experiences what to value: "Thus were the virtues of our heroine (those follies that had defaced them being fully corrected) at length rewarded with a happiness retarded only till she had rendered herself wholly worthy of receiving it" (594). *The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy* is structured differently from the preceding two narratives; it tells of the almost picaresque explorations of the foibles and corruptions of others by two young people in love. They are mostly observers and commentators on the scenes. The conclusion is appropriately: "But our amiable Jenny had now done enquiring into the follies and mistakes of her sex, as she had seen enough of both to know how to avoid them. . ." (III.310). The moral and the narrative technique remain the same, however.

[12]Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1812). *The Novels of Jane Austen*. R.W. Chapman, ed. 3rd edition. London: Oxford UP, 1976.

# William Tyndale and the Power of Words

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This essay began in a strange way. While teaching the last act of Shakespeare's *Richard III,* I brought my class to Richard's memorable line, which he exclaims twice, "A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!" (5.4.7 and 12). In this brief scene—it is only twelve lines long and Richard's second cry ends it—Richard's despair, spiritual as well as physical, is emphasized by an allusion to Psalm 33, which came to me almost unconsciously in class. I quoted the Authorized (King James) Version of verses 16 and 17:

> There is no king saved by the multitude of an host;
> A mighty man is not delivered by his much strength.
> An horse is a vain thing for safety;
> Neither shall he [the horse] deliver any by his great strength.[1]

In as much as the allusion sticks, it comments on Richard, linking his experience to the Old Testament ethic that Israel, God's people, must rely on Him, not on their armies, horses, power, or schemes. Other verses in the Psalm are readily applicable to Richard as well: for instance, verse 10 says, "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect" (Richard is nothing if not full of this kind of "counsel"). On the other hand, verses 18-19 declare,

> Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;
> To deliver their soul from death.

Before Richard's final battle, we have seen him reject the fear of the Lord and His mercy, and this passage seems to lay out for him the consequences—soul death. Furthermore, in the eerie pageant of Act 5.3 in which a series of ghosts visits both Richard and Henry (Richmond), the two ways of the Psalm, the way of righteousness (vss. 1-5) and the way of unrighteousness—of faithfulness and of vanity—are contrasted.[2]

Cute, you may say, or intriguing, but just where does such a reading of this part *Richard III* come from? What habits of the mind, and of reading, foster it? Does it make sense to read Shakespeare in this way? Believe it or not, these were questions on the faces and tongues of my students as well: despite their tradition and their biblical training, they prefer not to mix the sacred and the secular unless absolutely necessary. Well, the short answer (it's one I'd like my students to hear) is that such readings come, at least in part, from the Protestant Reformation.



One way to describe the Reformation is to say that it was precipitated by, and facilitated, new ways of reading. One of the defining moments of the Reformation, Luther's recovery of the doctrine of justification by faith, was a reading moment. He writes that after struggling "with an extremely disturbed conscience" (Dillenberger 11) to reconcile himself to Paul's words in Romans 1:17,

> At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. (Dillenberger 11)

The picture Luther gives us is of his reading, studying, and meditating himself into a discovery (though Luther would say that this insight, like faith itself, was a gift), and he particularly emphasizes reading contextually, paying attention to the whole and not just a part of his text.[3]

In addition, crucial to the Reformation was the recovery of biblical texts, Greek and Hebrew, which allowed readers to get behind the Latin of the Vulgate, and the dissemination of those texts in vernacular translations to a reading public. Here is William Tyndale, the first translator of the New Testament and a good portion of the Old into English from its original languages,[4] explaining in his "Preface" to the Pentateuch the motive of his life's work: "I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to establish the lay-people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue" (Duffield 32).

Furthermore, as Tyndale's experience suggests, the Reformers aimed not just to have the words and doctrines of Scripture available

to every believer but to have those words apply to every facet of life. Of Tyndale, C.S. Lewis writes,

> He utterly denies the medieval distinction between *religion* and secular life. "God's literal sense is spiritual." Wiping shoes, washing dishes, nay, our humblest natural functions (he uses all these examples) are all equally "good works," and the ascetic life wins "no higher room in heaven" than "a whore of the stews if she repent." (190-91)

For many Reformers, this meant not only reading Scripture in new ways—essentially looking for contemporary and personal application—but applying the very words of Scripture to one's heart. Tyndale writes in his Prologue to *Genesis*, "As thou readest, therefore, think that every syllable pertaineth to thine own self" (Duffield 38). It is this habit of reading that gives us, a century later, John Bunyan, for whom the words of Scripture "seize" or "fall on" his soul.[5] It is this same habit which Thomas Hardy later parodies when his character Tess comes upon a man who spends his Sundays painting pious graffiti in red:

> [He] began painting large square letters on the middle board of the three composing the stile, placing a comma after each word, as if to give pause while that word was driven well home to the reader's heart—
>
> THY, DAMNATION, SLUMBERERTH, NOT.
>
> 2 PET.ii.3 (Hardy 128)

Critique aside, during the early Reformation in England, people were arrested and burned for their commitment to a book and its powerful words. One striking example is that of James Bainham, who after arrest and torture (at Sir Thomas More's home in Chelsea!) abjured, but later repented. Foxe writes that after his release, he

> was never quiet in conscience until he had uttered his fall to all his acquaintance and asked God and all the world forgiveness before the congregation in a warehouse in Bow Lane. The next Sunday after he came to St Austen's with the New Testament in his hand in English and *The Obedience of a Christian Man* in his bosom, and stood up in his pew, declaring openly with tears that he had denied God. (Williamson 96)



This act, as Bainham understood, meant re-arrest and certain martyrdom. The year was 1531, so the New Testament was Tyndale's. The other book he carried is also by Tyndale, published in 1528, though there is a double sense in which, symbolized by Tyndale's work on Christian living, what Bainham carried in his "bosom" was proper obedience to the gospel.[6] Books and words were taken to heart; they symbolized the doctrines they contain; they were identified with the beliefs they foster.

Having mentioned William Tyndale a number of times, I have tipped my hand, but this is what I wonder: whether Tyndale, who freshly brought the words of the Bible in the vernacular to England, did not have a role in creating new ways of using words and books—new ways of reading—that affect English readers not only of Scripture but of other texts as well. Or if at least his life and writings do not exhibit and foster these new habits. So my goal is to explore Tyndale and the power of words, looking first at some of his own words, then at the words of his Bible translations, and finally at his instructions for reading.[7]

To get to know Tyndale better, and to get a sense of the power of his own words, we must turn to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, without which we would know very little about Tyndale. Certainly, like the writer of *Acts* he was imitating, Foxe shaped his materials toward his end of witnessing to the spread of the gospel; nonetheless, he offers much accurate, eyewitness[8] information on his subjects. Tyndale[9] grew up in Gloucestershire, attended Oxford (and perhaps Cambridge), where he learned Greek and probably developed, or at least exercised, his evangelical tendencies: Foxes says he "read privily to certain students and fellows of Magdalen College some parcel of divinity; instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the Scriptures" (Williamson 119). He was ordained a priest and served as a tutor in the household of Sir John Walsh in the early 1520s. In that household, he translated Erasmus's *Enchiridion*, probably began his project of translating Scripture, and, according to Foxe, caused some stir in the neighborhood on account of his anti-clerical and reforming utterances.

Foxe relates a well-known incident that occurred at the Walsh's dinner table:

> Not long after, Master Tyndale happened to be in the company of a certain divine, recounted for a learned

> man, and, in communing and disputing with him, he drove him to that issue, that the said great doctor burst out into these blasphemous words, "We were better to be without God's laws than the Pope's." Master Tyndale, hearing this, full of godly zeal, and not bearing that blasphemous saying, replied, "I defy the pope, and all his laws;" and added that if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than he did. (121)

Tyndale's first statement here sounds Lutheran; his second, Erasmian (both are mentioned in Foxe's account[10]), suggesting a tension (if that is what it is) which seems to have motivated Tyndale throughout his career. With Erasmus, Tyndale was a humanist scholar—the best English-speaking scholar of Greek and Hebrew in his day—who linked his work with reform. With Luther, who was an important source for Tyndale's translations and prefaces,[11] Tyndale stood against the church and for the doctrine of justification by faith.

With something like Erasmian optimism, Tyndale says he sought service in the household of Tunstall, the Bishop of London, a man Erasmus had commended in his writings and who was an accomplished Greek scholar (Duffield 33; compare Williamson 121-22). But Tyndale was disappointed. A year in London convinced Tyndale "not only that there was no room in my lord of London's palace to translate the new Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England" (Duffield 34). Tyndale left England, probably in April, 1524, and never returned (Daniell, *Tyndale* 108). There is time to tell his story only in briefest form. After an abortive attempt to publish his New Testament in Cologne, he did complete it in Worms, in 1526. Between that time and his arrest in 1535, he mastered Hebrew, perhaps in Wittenberg, eventually settling in Antwerp where he published the Pentateuch, *Jonah*, and a revised New Testament, as well as a few doctrinal and polemical works, notably his *Obedience of a Christian Man* in 1528.

Two other words of Tyndale's fill out his story. The first is a Latin letter, not discovered until the nineteenth century, which he wrote from prison to his keepers (Daniell, *Tyndale* 379). Here is Duffield's translation:

> I believe, most illustrious sir, that you are not unaware of what has been decided concerning me. I therefore beg your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to stay here through the winter, you will ask the officer to be good enough to send me from my goods which he has, a warmer cap. I suffer greatly from cold in the head, and have a perpetual catarrh, which is made worse in this cell. A warmer coat too, for the one I have is very thin, and also a piece of cloth to patch up my leggings. My overcoat is worn out, and so are my shirts. He has a woolen shirt of mine, if he will be good enough to send it. Also he has my leggings of thicker material to go on top, and my warmer night caps. I am making request to be allowed a lamp in the evening, for it is tedious sitting alone in the dark. But most of all I earnestly entreat and implore you to ask the officer to allow me my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar and Hebrew Dictionary so that I may spend my time in those studies. And in return may you be granted your greatest desire, so long as it is consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if, before the winter is over, any other decision has been made about me, I shall be patient, abiding the will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen. W. Tindalus (401)

One is struck first of all by the humanity of this letter: Tyndale, who had been in prison for four months by this time,[12] is cold, wishes to do some sewing, wears a night cap, would like some light as the days shorten toward winter. But he also exhibits his single-hearted devotion, as a scholar, translator, and believer, to his work. We wonder, though, whether there is a humble boldness in Tyndale's request for Hebrew materials: wasn't he jailed for his translations? Perhaps, as a zek remarks in Solzhenitsyn's *One Day*: "The great thing about a penal camp is that you had a . . . lot of freedom" (177) —you can get away with things in prison that you cannot outside.

It is not difficult to see how a tradition grew that Tyndale translated a number of the Old Testament books while in prison, though this is unlikely (Daniell, *Tyndale* 380). Nor is it difficult to believe Foxe's account of Tyndale's imprisonment (recognizing Foxe did not know of this letter): Foxe writes, "Such was the power

of his doctrine, and the sincerity of his life, that during the time of his imprisonment (which endured a year and a half), he converted, it is said, his keeper, the keeper's daughter, and others of his household" (Williamson 130-31). Foxe evokes the model of St. Paul, who converted his jailor (Acts 16), and Tyndale's letter does as well, when he declares his patience in suffering and even asks for a coat and reading materials, as Paul did (2 Timothy 4:13). While this is a complex issue, perhaps Tyndale's movement from evoking the models of Luther and Erasmus to that of Paul summarizes his development as a Protestant believer, a reader of Scripture, and a person. This movement suggests that Greenblatt has missed a great deal in his chapter on Tyndale in his landmark book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

If you know anything about Tyndale, you know his dying words, words immortalized in a woodcut which appeared in the 1563 edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. "Lord, open the king of England's eyes," he cried just before being strangled and burned.[13] The irony of these lines, of course, is that Henry VIII was already well on his way to bringing about his break with Rome, and within a year of Tyndale's execution he had authorized the publication of the first complete English Bible, a folio edition compiled by John Rogers. This Bible was based on Coverdale's edition, which used Tyndale as far as his translations went: Coverdale finished translating the Old Testament, notably the Psalms. Roger's version was called "Matthew's Bible" for its pseudonymic translator, "Thomas Matthew" (a name with a nice apostolic ring to it!). And so while Tyndale's translations were in fact authorized, his name and contribution were hidden (the King's eyes were not opened to Tyndale).

Something must be said of Tyndale's translations themselves, of the power of his English words. Among Tyndale enthusiasts there is a mantra, "No Tyndale, no Shakespeare," which is meant to mark Tyndale's remarkable contribution to the English language. Tyndale's accomplishment was that he translated the New Testament and part of the Old directly from its original languages. He wrote that "the Greek tongue agreeth more with the English than with the Latin. And the properties of the Hebrew tongue agreeth a thousand times more with the English" (Tyndale 19), and it is hard to decide whether he was a better scholar or wordsmith. His



translations are with few exceptions accurate, direct, and clear. They are rarely quirky or awkward (though he calls the angels who appear to the shepherds in Luke 2 "heavenly soldiers" and tells us Pharaoh's "jolly captains" were drowned in the Red Sea). A brief example from the beginning of the Gospel of John (from Tyndale's revised New Testament) will illustrate how familiar—even how modern—Tyndale sounds:

> In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God: and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, and without it, was made nothing, that was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:1-5; Daniell, *New Testament* 133)[14]

It is estimated that nine tenths of his readings are taken over by the Authorized Version (Bruce 44). Indeed, Daniell shows a number of instances where the Authorized Version is less accurate and less clear than Tyndale, and Bruce points out that more often than not later revisions of the Authorized Version returned to Tyndale rather than departing further from his translations (44).

Tyndale coined a number of words, like *scapegoat, mercy-seat, passover*, and *Jehovah* as the English equivalent for the covenant name of God, and he used many more words in contexts which established their use in the language since, words like *swaddled* and *manger* in Luke, and *Mammon*, which he chose not to translate. More important are the hundreds of English phrases (or collocations) he contributed. Here's a short list: "And God said, let there be light"; "Am I my brother's keeper?"; "a law unto themselves"; "signs of the times"; "Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find, knock . . ."; "Let not your hearts be troubled" (see Daniell, *New Testament* ix-x for another list). Daniell also explains that Tyndale, working to translate the Hebrew possessive, "greatly extended" the use in English of Hebraisms like "the birds of the air, the fish of the sea" (*Tyndale* 3). As well, the loose, coordinate style Tyndale uses in his narratives influenced the English plain style. Here is an example, from Matthew 9:

> And as Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him crying and saying: O thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come to house, the

> blind came to him. And Jesus said unto them: Believe ye that I am able to do this? And they said unto him: yea Lord. Then touched he their eyes . . . and their eyes were opened. . . . And Jesus charged them . . . (Daniell, New Testament 32; see his *Tyndale* for another example).

To his first readers, Tyndale's Pentateuch was probably most striking, in large part because the recovery of Hebrew texts and the ability of Europeans to read them provided striking new insights into the biblical narrative and message. Tyndale's Genesis stories, for example, are vivid, even colloquial. For instance, when Eve tells the serpent (who is "subtler than all the beasts of the field") that God has told them they will die if they eat from the forbidden tree, he replies "tush ye shall not die"; a bit later "the woman saw that it was a good tree to eat of and lusty unto the eyes and a pleasant tree for to make wise" (qtd. in Daniell, *Tyndale* 286). Daniell explains, the Genesis stories "which would have been in part familiar . . . from references in sermons, from stained-glass windows, and sometimes from the mystery plays of the guilds, could now be read in full, in a way which made the text speak" (*Tyndale* 287).

Here is a good place to interject something I have been wanting to say: David Daniell carefully and copiously illustrates that when Tyndale speaks in his own voice, in his prologues and prefaces, as well as in his other works, his language is steeped in Scripture. Daniell says of Tyndale's *Obedience*, "he builds his sentences, paragraphs and pages out of the bricks of Scripture. Every phrase comes from a mind steeped in both Testaments" (*Tyndale* 226). This is perhaps the natural consequence of translating, but it is also for Tyndale intentional.[15] Especially, it expresses his goal of making Scripture the basis of one's thought and language so that it is a part of everything one does and says. In short, it is this habit of breathing in and exhaling Scripture that a Protestant reader following Tyndale's example would bring to any reading.

Of course, some of Tyndale's translations were controversial, sparking his well-known and long-winded (on one side) printed debate with More. As Daniell aptly points out, the controversy "can be boiled down to his objection to Tyndale's translation of six words" (Tyndale xx). Where the Vulgate suggests *priest*, Tyndale



has *senior* (which he later revises to *elder*); for *church*, *congregation*; *charity* becomes for Tyndale *love*, and *grace*, *favour*; *confess* and *do penance* become *knowledge* (acknowledge) and *repent*. Here is a chart representing these word choices:

| Vulgate | Greek | More's word | Tyndale's word |
|---|---|---|---|
| maiores/ presbyterii | **presbyter (πρεσβυτεροσ)** | **priest** | **senior (later, elder)** |
| ecclesiam | **ekklesia (εκκλησια)** | **church** | **congregation** |
| diligeo | **agape (αγαπη)** | **charity** | **love** |
| charitas | **charis (χαρισ)** | **grace** | **favour** |
| paenitentia | **metanoeo (μετανοεω)** | **do penance** | **repent** |
| confessio | **homologeo (ομολογεω)** | **confess** | **knowledge** |

The Protestant doctrine of Tyndale's choices is clear. *Charity*, for instance, suggests giving that seeks to earn a reward, whereas *love* implies acting out of thankfulness. More understood that Tyndale's words were a direct threat to the church's authority, that they sought to overturn the established church's use of the Vulgate to interpret the faith. Were Tyndale's translations distorted? Most modern scholars of the New Testament would verify that his choices were based on a good understanding of Greek. What we see in Tyndale's use of these powerful words is two things: first, an acknowledgement that individual words matter, that they can be used as doctrinal missiles that get into one's heart and explode with new insight and meaning. Second, for Tyndale the head and heart must, and can, converge so that a new translation, based on the best available manuscripts, is not just neutral but bears the weight of new convictions.

There is a dilemma hiding here, I think, one that I find everywhere in Tyndale (don't worry, I'm not arguing for Greenblatt's fractured Tyndale!); it's a dilemma between the accessibility—or even the perspicuity—of Scripture, and the need to be led to see it rightly. It is a dilemma between speaking and letting Scripture speak. Is *repent* a clear, heart-opening word for the Greek *metanoia*, or a skewed, rhetorically-motivated choice? To direct this problem at Tyndale's life's work, what happens when you dedicate your life to translating the Scripture into something clear and readable, motivated by the belief that all anyone need do is get the clear, perspicuous words of the gospel into his or her hand and it will open both head and heart—and then, instead of seeing your country explode in gospel words and ways, you find that your books are being burned! How could this happen?[16]

We can get a sense of Tyndale's reaction when we compare the opening of his introduction to the Cologne fragment of his New Testament—the 1525 edition which was aborted when its printing was discovered—with a later revision of that introduction published separately as *A Pathway into Holy Scripture* (1530). The Prologue begins directly: "I have here translated, brethren and sisters, most dear and tender beloved in Christ, the New Testament, for your spiritual edifying, consolation, and solace" (Duffield 3, note 1). Here it is, he says, plain and simple. Five years later, he replaces those lines with these: "I do marvel greatly, dearly beloved in Christ, that ever any man should repugn or speak against the scripture to be had in every language, and that of every man. For I thought that no man had been so blind to ask why light should be shewed to them that walk in darkness. . ." (Duffield 3).[17] The Scriptures are plain, they are light in darkness, and that is Tyndale's first principle of reading. One should read the plain, literal sense of Scripture, avoiding allegory except as a help to the weak.[18] He writes, "Thou shalt understand therefore that the scripture hath but one sense which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err or go out of the way" (Tyndale 156).

But resistance to Tyndale's project, which for him was resistance to the gospel itself, led Tyndale to elucidate at least two other principles for reading Scripture.[19] The first is to read having been armed with what he calls in *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*



"the first principles of our profession" (Duffield 24). In other words, you have to know what to look for. Tyndale regularly identifies these as the (Lutheran) distinction between law and gospel, or rather as a process of law giving way to gospel in the stories of Scripture as well as in the story of all of Scripture. He often calls these "the keys which so open all the scripture unto thee, that no creature can lock thee out" ("Prologue to Jonah"; Duffield 100; see also 23). Here is Tyndale on Romans:

> The sum and whole cause of the writings of this epistle, is, to prove that a man is justified by faith only: which proposition whoso denieth, to him is not only this epistle and all that Paul writeth, but also the whole scripture so locked up, that he shall never understand it to his soul's health. (Daniell, New Testament 223).

The Scriptures are key to faith, but knowing that faith only justifies (which Scripture teaches) is the key to understanding Scripture. This is epistemologically complicated, but perhaps the more coherent if we remember that Tyndale begins to write only a few years after Luther nails his 95 Theses to a door in Wittenberg. These are utterly new insights, and they change everything.

This is what Tyndale means, I think, when he tells his readers, "Read God's word diligently and with a good heart, and it shall teach thee all things" ("Prologue to Numbers"; Duffield 78). If this way of reading sounds circular, Tyndale also emphasizes a process by which one engages with a book. Tyndale emphasizes making available the whole of scripture in the vernacular not only because Scripture interprets Scripture (a good Reformation principle) but because one needs to read the Bible, and individual books, in their entirety. This is what Tyndale calls "the process, order, and meaning of the text" ("Preface to the Pentateuch"; Duffield 32).[20] Again and again in his prefaces to books of the Bible, Tyndale rehearses the narrative or development of a book, its argument (Tyndale's "process"), in a particular way, that is, to illustrate how readers ought to follow the development of the text *in their own hearts*. Tyndale's habit is to use the imperative, as in his "Prologue to Genesis":

> As thou readest, therefore, think that every syllable pertaineth to thine own self, and suck out the pith of the scripture, and arm thyself against all assaults. First note with strong faith the power of God, in creating all of

> nought; then mark the grievous fall of Adam, and of us all in him, through the light regarding of the commandment of God. (Duffield 38)

For Tyndale, reading is experiencing and responding, particularly responding to the entire story of the Scriptures—which is his reader's story. This is particularly clear in the final paragraph of his "Prologue to the Romans":

> Now go to reader, and according to the order of Paul's writing, even so do thou. First behold thyself diligently in the law of God, and see there thy just damnation. Secondarily turn thine eyes to Christ, and see there the exceeding mercy of thy most kind and loving father. Thirdly remember that Christ made not this atonement that thou shouldest anger God again: neither died he for thy sins, that thou shouldest return (as a swine) unto thine old puddle again: but that thou shouldest be a new creature and live a new life after the will of God and not of the flesh. And be diligent lest through thine own negligence and unthankfulness thou lose this favour and mercy again. Farewell. W.T.
>
> (Daniell, New Testament 224)

This paragraph is a fair summary of the teaching of Paul's letter. But is it also an assertion that the letter, as Scripture, is not dead but alive: it does something to us and enjoins us to do something as we read. The power of these words is to tell us who we are, and even more, to tell us who to be. In Tyndale's terms, they are gospel, interaction, even a covenant or agreement. In this spirit, he calls the book of Jonah "an obligation between God and thy soul, as an earnest-penny given thee of God, that he will help thee in time of need, if thou turn to him" (Duffield 89). Tyndale enjoins his readers to be active, participating in the action of the text and applying the text to their hearts.

I wish I had time to apply these principles of reading to the text with which I began, Shakespeare's *Richard III* (or maybe I calculated my time in such a way so that I would not need to do the dirty work of application! Or maybe I need to write another paper, with this one as prolegomena). But for now, let's say this: Protestant readers, nursed by reformers like Tyndale, and growing up attuned to the power of gospel words, would have come to whatever they read in these ways: they would have come looking



for the plain, literal meaning; they would have come with their minds soaked in Scripture, probably responding in their minds, if not with their tongues, using the words of Scripture. Further, they would have come looking for the truth as they understood it—that is, for affirmation of the Protestant beliefs they had taken to heart, like justification by grace and the story pattern that leads from sin (or law) through salvation (or grace) to service (or works). And they would come with the habit of engaging their hearts in what they read.

## Notes

[1]Bibles are frightfully unclear about their copy text, but my version appears to be that of the Authorized Version, revised in 1881. For comparison, here is Coverdale's version from a copy of the first (1549) edition of the Book of Common Prayer which I found online:

> There is no king that can be saved by the multitude of an hoste:
> neyther is anye myghtye man delyvered by muche strength.
> A horse is counted but a vayne thyng to save a man:
> neither shall he deliver any man by hys great strength.

[2]To add two more examples, the play's politics may be caught up in the Psalm's "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (vs. 12a) and its view of providence may be glanced at in verses 13-15:

> The Lord looketh from heaven;
> He beholdeth all the sons of men.
> From the place of his habitation
> he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.
> He fashioneth their hearts alike;
> He considereth all their works.

[3]The persistence of this model of both reading and experiencing can be seen by considering John Bunyan, who, though writing more than a century later, consciously connects with Luther. In his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan writes,

> And now me thought I began to look into the Bible with new eyes, and read as I never did before; and especially the Epistles of the Apostle S. Paul were sweet and pleasant to me; and indeed, I was then never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation, still crying

> out to God that I might know the truth and the way to Heaven and Glory. (Bunyan 19)

[4]Tyndale published his New Testament in 1526, revising it in 1534. He published the Pentateuch in 1530 (revising Genesis in 1534), and Jonah in 1531. Probably he translated the historical books of the Old Testament through 2 Chronicles and, if we can believe Edward Hall's *Chronicle*, Ezra and Nehemiah as well, though these books were not published in Tyndale's lifetime (see Daniell, *Tyndale* 333-34, who quotes Hall; in his edition of *Tyndale's Old Testament*, Daniell publishes all the books mentioned here). Miles Coverdale completed translating the Old Testament (notably the Psalms), publishing the first complete English Bible in 1535. It incorporated Tyndale's version, slightly revised, whenever possible. This version is the basis of "Matthew's Bible," the first licensed English Bible, a folio published in 1537 by one "Thomas Matthew," a fictional name with New Testament overtones, which glossed over the contribution of the martyred Tyndale as well as the name of its compiler, John Rogers.

[5]See Strahanan (333) and Greenblatt (98).

[6]It is the same sense that Tyndale has in mind when he presents his revised New Testament (in 1534) to his readers in this way: "Here thou hast (most dear reader) the new testament or covenant made with us of God in Christ's blood" (Daniell, *New Testament* 3).

[7]It is true that Tyndale might seem infertile ground for learning how to read Shakespeare. After all, this is his take on the English history Shakespeare takes up in his plays: Tyndale says that their "fathers" failed to listen to Wyciffe, preferring "holy hypocrisy" to repentance. He adds,

> But what followed? They slew their true and right king [Richard II], and set up three wrong kings a row, under which all the noble blood was slain up, and half the commons thereto, what in France, and what with their own sword, in fighting among themselves for the crown; and the cities and towns decayed, and the land brought half into a wilderness, in respect of that it was before. (Duffield 94)

[8]For such a source behind Foxe's account of Tyndale, in the person of George Webb, see Daniell, *Tyndale* (61-62).

[9]For biographical information on Tyndale, I rely on Daniell, *Tyndale*, passim.

[10]"Master Tyndale sitting at the same table [i.e., Walsh's], did



use many times to enter communication, and talk of learned men, as of Luther and of Erasmus; also of divers other controversies and questions upon the Scripture" (119).

[11]When Tyndale's first attempt to publish his New Testament was discovered in Cologne, it was thwarted as "the Lutheran New Testament, translated into the English language" (quoted in Daniell, *Tyndale* 109). One of Daniell's themes is to disentangle Tyndale from Luther, recognizing Tyndale's indebtedness to the German reformer but also asserting his independence. See 113-15 for an example.

[12]Daniell, *Tyndale* dates the letter to September, 1535 (379). Tyndale had been arrested in May. He was condemned as a heretic in August of the next year and executed in early October (perhaps the 6th) (381-82).

[13]Daniell describes how the execution would have taken place (*Tyndale* 383).

[14]The AV (in my edition) is identical up until "made by it," where it substitutes "him"; the AV goes on "and without *him* was *not any thing made* that was made" (italics highlight changes from Tyndale). AV has "him" for "it" in the next clause ("In him was life"); it eliminates the article before darkness, and substitutes "and" for Tyndale's "but." Here for comparison is the NIV, a late twentieth-century translation:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

[15]Daniell suggests regarding the Scriptural phrases in Tyndale's *The Wicked Mammon*, "It is likely that in writing it Tyndale had in mind that for some readers these pages could have been a first encounter with New Testament words in English, and a first exposition of the New Testament doctrine of faith before works. Accumulation of New Testament reference and quotation has a confirming effect" (Tyndale 160). See also note 19 below.

[16]Daniell says Tyndale "never recovered" from the shock of having his New Testament burned and suggest that it produced a "sharp . . . alteration" in him (*Tyndale* 189).

[17]As further illustration, in 1525 the sentence leading up to Tyndale's "so blind to ask," which is in both versions, is this: "The causes that moved me to translate, I thought better that others should

imagine, than that I should rehearse them. Moreover I supposed it superfluous; for who is so blind. . ." (Duffield 3, note 1). By 1530 such arguments are not superfluous. Indeed, in his introduction to his *Obedience*, published in 1528, Tyndale offers an extended defense of the Scriptures in English (Tyndale 15-25).

[18]In his Prologue to Jonah, for instance, Tyndale has this to say about reading Jonah's time in the whale's belly as an allegory of Christ's death and resurrection:

> And that Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of his fish, we cannot thereby prove unto the Jews and infidels, or unto any man, that Christ must therefore die, and be buried, and rise again: but we use the ensample and likeness to strength the faith of the weak. For he that believeth the one cannot doubt the other. (Duffield 93)

See also Tyndale's discussion of allegory in his Prologue to Leviticus (Duffield 63).

[19]C.S. Lewis illuminatingly explains in his own summary of Tyndale's doctrine that one need not worry about which works of Tyndale one references:

> Tyndale's message is always the same and a single abstract would serve for nearly all his books. This repetition is intentional. . . . He never envisioned the modern critic sitting down to his Works in three volumes: he is like a man sending messages in war, and sending the same message often because it is a chance if any one runner will get through. (182)

I will take the same miscellaneous approach to Tyndale's writings. See also note 15 above.

[20]Tyndale uses numerous versions of this formula. In his "Pathway" he begins a summary by referring to the "order and practice of every thing afore rehearsed" (Duffield 13). In his *Obedience* he argues the "lay people" need the Scripture in their language so they can "see by the order of the text" whether an interpreter tells the truth or "juggleth" (Tyndale 16). A bit later he declares that "by the principles of the faith and by the plain scriptures and by the circumstances of the text should we judge all men's exposition and all men's doctrine" (22), and on the last page of his introduction to that work he invites his readers to judge his uses of Scripture "by the circumstance and process of them" (30).



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# Why Johnny Can't Translate: The 1611 Versions vs. Their Modern Equivalents

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"Sing, goddess, sing the wrath of Achilles son of Peleus, that accursed thing that laid countless sorrows on the Achaeans and hurled many souls of heroes to Hades, and turned the men themselves into a feast for dogs and vultures."

The opening lines of Homer's Iliad are a wonderful, magical, beginning to a great story—a story that has it all: Fighting, Torture, Revenge, Giants, Monsters, Chases, Escapes, True love, Miracles. A sure winner with students—or so one would think.

But in many of the translations students read, Homer's magical words are stripped of all their power to enchant. Students get opening lines like E. V. Rieu's "The wrath of Achilles is my theme" or, worse, W. H. D. Rouse's, "An angry man—there's my story." Gone is the invocation of the muse. Gone are the powerful verbs. There's nothing to entice students into realms of gold, nothing to make them stand silent on Darien.

Now something is bound to be lost in translation, but a good translator can often retain most of the strengths of the original—as George Chapman showed in his 1611 version of the Iliad. Chapman's beginning:

> Achilles' banefull wrath resound, O Goddesse, that imposd
> infinite sorrowes on the Greekes, and many brave soules losd
> From breasts Heroique—sent them farre, to that invisible cave
> That no light comforts, and their lims to dogs and vultures gave.

Chapman captures both the spirit and sense of Homer in a way that many modern translators don't. Except in a publisher's blurb, we'll probably never see a rhapsodic "On First Looking into Rouse's Homer." Or Murray's Homer. Or Rieu's Homer.



And while modern translators have had a difficult time trying to equal Chapman's Homer, they've had even greater trouble trying to match the other great translation of 1611—the King James Version of the Bible.

Now there are good modern translations. Richmond Lattimore and Bernard Fagels, for instance, do a fine job with Homer. But modern translators often seem to lack the skill that made Chapman and the King James translators so effective: the ability to recognize, appreciate, and retain the effective language patterns of the original versions.

In his *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase* (Salt Lake City, Gibbs M. Smith, 1982), Arthur Quinn lists sixty ways of using language effectively, giving examples from Spenser, Marlowe, Milton, Joyce, Johnson—and, most frequently, Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible. What's interesting is that in almost every instance where Quinn cites the KJV as an example of effective language use, the rhetorical technique he praises is already present in the original Greek or Hebrew. And what's even more interesting is the way in which some modern translators go out of their way to eliminate the very thing that Quinn says makes a particular passage effective.

Quinn, for instance, notes that asyndeton, the omission of an expected conjunction, can, on occasion, be very effective. Asyndeton can be used to suggest that listed objects are part of an inseparable whole (as with Lincoln's "of the people, by the people, for the people"), or to emphasize the swiftness of events (as with Caesar's, "veni, vidi, vici").

Quinn cites the King James Version of Exodus 15:9 as an example of effective use of asyndeton in the Bible: "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them."

The writer may be emphasizing the swiftness of the intended conquest and/or the unity of all those things involved in the spoiling of a defeated foe. But whatever the exact purpose of the asyndeton here, the King James translators did something absolutely right. They looked at the original Hebrew, and didn't find quite what one might have expected. But they still saw no point in tampering with

the original language. They came, they saw—and they left it alone.

Similar is the KJV treatment of I Corinthians 13:13. The King James' translators translate the passage, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Notice that there's no conjunction separating faith, hope, and charity. Again, this is simply a reflection of the original language. Paul didn't put the expected "kai" (and) into the sentence, and the KJV translators didn't see any good reason to supply it for us.

Modern translators aren't always so judicious. In the New International Version, for instance, the Exodus passage becomes, "The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword **and** my hand will destroy them.'" The Corinthians passage becomes, "And now these three remain: faith, hope **and** love. But the greatest of these is love." In both passages, the translators supply for us the deliberately omitted conjunction—and weaken the language. Nor are these isolated examples. The NIV translators are constantly "fixing" the asyndetons of the Bible. The KJV of Mark 7:21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." The list is given without the expected final conjunction in both the KJV and the Greek. But in the NIV we get: "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance **and** folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" The NIV translators apparently felt they had to supply the omitted "and," joining arrogance and folly. And I suppose that's appropriate: combining arrogance and folly is one thing modern translators do all the time and quite well. But notice that to make their fixit job work, the NIV translators had to take other liberties with the text. The KJV accurately reflects Jesus' original list: a series of plurals (adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts), followed by a series of singulars (deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, folly). The NIV translators convert all the plurals to singulars just so they can have a nice, consistent list.

Now I am going to pick on the NIV quite a lot in this essay, not because it is the worst of the modern translations, but because it



is the version of the Bible our students are most likely to read--and because the NIV translators so often seem to have a tin ear. They seem to have a particular problem with conjunctions, adding conjunctions that have no purpose, and omitting those that do.

In *Figures of Speech*, Quinn points out that, just as leaving out an expected conjunction might make language more effective, adding conjunctions might occasionally be effective as well. The use of extra conjunctions (polysyndeton) is a device much used by the Biblical writers. Quinn notes that polysyndeton is especially effective in creating an air of mystery and that, done properly, it has an almost hypnotic power (p. 12). Here's the KJV translation of Genesis 22:7-12:

> And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

Again, the KJV translators found conjunctions they didn't expect—a "vav," an "and," at the beginning of every phrase. But they saw no point in tampering with the text, and reflected the polysyndeton in their translation. Not so the NIV translators. Here's their version of the passage:

> When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Almost every conjunction is gone, and it doesn't seem to have even

occurred to the translators that the conjunctions might have been there for a reason.

Now classicists may occasionally be overly concerned with conjunctions, and the man who wrote his whole dissertation on Euripides' use of "de" was probably going a bit far. But arbitrarily inserting or omitting conjunctions may badly distort the original.

The King James' translation of Matthew 23: 5-11 retains the original conjunctions:

> But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, **and** love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, **and** greetings in the markets, **and** to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

The NIV gives us a choppier version:

> Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

The result of omitting the conjunctions (and, in this case, turning conjunctions into semi-colons) is a series of short, choppy, declarative sentences—the kind of writing we get from students who are so concerned about not making grammatical errors that they won't even try a complex sentence.

But the Greek New Testament is full of complex sentences, for example, Romans 2:14-16:

> For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

This is all one sentence in the KJV as it is in Greek! Now, in this instance, it might have been better to break up the big sentence into more manageable units, but to break up all complex sentences is to miss the careful and sometimes subtle distinctions the writers are trying to make.



Part of the problem with modern translators is their pedantic obsession with making language conform to the most common patterns of modern usage. But very often it is the unconventional use of language that makes a passage striking and memorable. Further, any work of lasting significance is filled with unconventional and unusual ideas—or at least unexpected ideas—and by smoothing out the language we take away the very thing that makes a work great.

An irony here is that modern translators (modern Bible translators in particular) argue that their versions are superior to the old translations because they are made from more accurate versions of the original text. But how have the modern textual critics gotten us closer to the original?

A very important rule of textual criticism is that, given a choice of readings, the more difficult reading is to be preferred. New Testament textual critics have abandoned the Byzantine textual tradition (the tradition that gives us the Textus Receptus and stands behind the King James Version) in large part because the Byzantine readings are too clear: the Byzantines fixed things that they shouldn't have fixed and left passages clearer than they should be. And so when modern translators "smooth out" passages to make them conform to modern usage, they are undoing one of the very things that they claim as an advantage for their "modern" versions.

Now a translator can't always provide a word-for-word translation, especially when translating from the Greek.

Greek is a highly inflected language, and the original writers had more flexibility in their choice of word order than we do in English. Verbs, adjectives, subjects, objects, participles, etc., can be put almost wherever the author wants. The subject of the sentence might be first, last, or somewhere in the middle. An adjective clause doesn't have to be anywhere close to the noun it modifies. The authors lead us through a sequence of impressions, and there's often a very good reason for the particular order they choose to give us.

The first lines of the *Iliad* show us the problem this presents for translators. "Menin aeide thea"—wrath, sing, goddess. Three powerful ideas, in the order Homer wants us to absorb them. Well, we just can't leave it like that in English. But Chapman shows what we can do, at least keeping the "wrath, sing, goddess" order.

The King James' translators, since they don't have to worry

about rhyme or meter, have an easier time than Chapman in maintaining the original word order, and, generally, they stick as closely as possible to Greek and Hebrew. They render Ezekiel 16:23, "And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the LORD GOD;) that thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street."

The NIV translators give us instead "'Woe! Woe to you, declares the Sovereign LORD. In addition to all your other wickedness, you built a mound for yourself and made a lofty shrine in every public square." Again, it doesn't seem to have occurred to them that there was a reason for the original order.

Quinn explains that the KJV version of this passage (and, of course, the original Hebrew that provided this order in the first place) is a special example of what he calls tmesis, the breaking of a word, sentence, or phrase into parts. When a whole sentence is used to create the break, the figure is called (for obvious reasons) a parenthesis. Quinn notes that a parenthesis can serve a variety of functions: it can be an aside *sotto voce*, a kind of commentary on what's happening. Or it can show an author "so overcome with emotion that he must express it before finishing a sentence" (p. 46). It seems to me that the latter is exactly what's happening in the Ezekiel passage, and that the KJV translators were very right to leave the "Woe, woe, unto thee" phrase in exactly the place they found it.

The King James' translators likewise retain Paul's long parenthesis in Colossians 2:20: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?"

The NIV gives us "Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings." No trace of the original parenthesis. Pedantry at work again, reducing a striking passage to banality.

Notice also that the while the King James' translators twice use the word "world," the NIV translators replace the second world



with an "it." The KJV reflects the original Greek, which gives us "kosmos," world, in both the first phrase and the second. Since Greek is an inflected language, unclear pronoun references aren't often a problem, and the second "kosmos" is technically unnecessary. But Paul here is employing another type of effective use of language common in the Bible, *repetitio*, repetition.

There are lots of ways to use repetition effectively. Quinn notes especially what he calls polyptoton, the repetition of a word or root with a different grammatical form or function. The Bible is filled with examples—at least if you're reading the Greek, the Hebrew, or a faithful translation. There's Genesis 9:25, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," in the KJV. But in the NIV we get only, "Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers."

Another example of polyptoton is Ephesians 4: 8, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," in the KJV. But in the NIV? This is what it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

Now on occasion, the NIV translators will retain polyptoton. Their version of II Timothy 3:13 reads, "While evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Why do they keep the polyptoton here? Perhaps because deceiving and being deceived contrast enough that the translators don't notice the repetition. Or, maybe, the contents of this particular verse make them shy away from deceptive translation. Or (most likely) it's because this kind of polyptoton doesn't violate the pedantic stylistic rules they seem to be following throughout. Notice that they can accept polysyndeton too (extra conjunctions) as long as the conjunctions are "ors" or "nors," conjunctions that our high school grammar teachers didn't forbid us to use in series.

Many of the modern translations struggle to give us correct grammatical forms, but the result is sometimes a bit odd—especially when the efforts are incomplete. The New Revised Standard Version gives us this rendering of John 20: 14-15: "When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?'" We get the ostentatiously correct "whom" at the beginning of a sentence that ends with a

preposition. And this is supposed to be the way Jesus, the Word of God, handles language? Very strange, if you ask me.

Also disturbing is a kind of prissiness among the modern translations. In the KJV, I Kings 21:21 reads, "Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall." Well, it's not the kind of language I generally use, but that's what the Hebrew gives us. The NIV makes God speak in a more gentlemanly fashion, "I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel."

Most of the modern translations (including the New American Bible and even the usually-literal New American Standard Bible) likewise bowdlerize the passage:

> I am bringing evil upon you: I will destroy you and cut off every male in Ahab's line (NAB).
>
> Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male (NASB).

Not nearly as memorable as the KJV version.

And then there's Philippians 3:8, rendered in the King James, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."

The NIV has instead, "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Now "skubalon" can mean either trash or feces, but "rubbish" is far too weak a word for the context—and far less memorable.

The modern translations sometimes reflect an odd prudishness about sexual imagery as well. Note what they do to John 3:16. The King James Version translates, " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Apparently, the modern translators have difficulty with this. The Greek "Monogenes" becomes "only" or "one and only." The NIV is typical, as "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Again, a possible rendering, but a weaker, less memorable one.



Now there are, of course, a great many modern scholars who explain that "monogenes" doesn't mean "only begotten," insisting that it derives from "genos" (kind) rather than "gennao" (begotten). But whether derived from genos or gennao, "monogenes" is an unusual, striking adjective—and it's clearly an adjective that John uses for some specific philosophical and theological point: it's a technical term of some sort. "Only begotten" alerts us: we're getting a theology lesson here. "One and only" doesn't.

Or, maybe, we are getting a theology lesson here. The NIV translators (following the lead of the RSV in this particular passage) step into a theological controversy and, by the way they handle the passage, tilt toward one side. Note the sharp (and deliberate) break with the Nicene Creed's, "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made."

Now it's not easy to produce a theologically-neutral translation, but it seems to me that the translation method adopted by the NIV translators leads to particular problems in this area. The NIV translators call their method "dynamic equivalence," and claim they are giving us a thought-for-thought, meaning-for-meaning translation rather than a word-for-word translation. But, obviously, one can't provide a meaning-for-meaning translation, unless one first decides exactly what a passage means.

But how well does "dynamic equivalence" work? In the case of classical translations, not as well as one might hope. Now if anyone could have produced a true "dynamic equivalent" to Homer, it would have been Chapman—and, in part, he tried. Chapman made fun of pedantic attempts to translate with mechanical precision:

> Their word-for-word traductions (where they lose
> The free grace of their naturall Dialect
> And shame their Authors with a forced Glose)
> I laugh to see. . . . (p. 10)

But Chapman saw also the problems with too free a rendering. The above continues:

> . . . And yet as much abhorre
> More licence from the words than may express
> Their full compression and make clear the Author.

Now Chapman produced a pair of fine translations. And yet, rightly, we refer to these translations as Chapman's Homer. It isn't Homer's Homer.

In the preface to his own translation, Alexander Pope notes how far Chapman sometimes strays from the original:

> Chapman has taken the advantage of an immeasurable length of verse, notwithstanding which, there is scarce any paraphrase more loose and rambling than his. He has frequent interpolations of four or six lines, and I remember one in the thirteenth book of the Odyssey, ver. 312, where he has spun twenty verses out of two. (*Preface to the Iliad*)

Pope himself tried to come up with a more faithful poetic translation, but it didn't satisfy lovers of the original Homer and wasn't better than Chapman's. Samuel Johnson records this reaction from Richard Bentley, "'It is a very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer'" (Samuel Johnson, *Life of Pope*).

So how do we get to Homer's Homer? The general direction of modern translation has been to move away from anything like the "dynamic equivalence" idea and move toward the "word for word."

Here's Lattimore: "Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians, hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls of heroes."

Fagles' rendering is very close to this, following the general recent trend toward literal translation.

It's ironic that, while translators of the Iliad are striving more and more for fidelity to the original words, Biblical translations are moving in the opposite direction. The concept of "dynamic equivalency" opens up the way for versions like Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, a "translation" that drifts so far into paraphrase that it is sometimes hard to see how it connects with the original. John 1:14 becomes "The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood." And then there's this passage:

> Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything. They spread their ideas through empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions of spirit beings. But that's not the way of Christ. Everything of God gets expressed in him, so you can see and hear him clearly. You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him.

It's hard to even recognize Colossians 2:8 here.



Peterson excuses his simplifications and paraphrases by saying that Jesus' "listeners didn't have to read a commentary to figure out what he was saying."

Well, John 3 indicates that Nicodemus, a learned man among the Jews, had trouble understanding what Jesus was saying. John 6:60 makes it clear that Jesus lost disciples who found his teachings difficult. And the Gospel of Mark over and over again tells us that the disciples didn't understand. Jesus was often so difficult to understand that his disciples were surprised when they did understand: "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb" (John 16:29).

And note what II Peter has to say about Paul's writings:

> And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. (II Peter 3:15-16)

Peter should have mentioned also those who are learned and unstable, I suppose.

Now what difference does all this make? Why does it matter that people use the NIV or *The Message* rather than a more literal translation?

The King James Bible has had a positive and lasting effect on English usage. Any translation that, like the KJV, retains some of the power of the original Greek and Hebrew can be a positive model for our own writing. But when the beautiful words of the Bible are turned into modern mush—well, the translators tread on dangerous ground. To sin against language comes very close to being the unpardonable sin, and the sins of the modern versions may be enough to hurl many souls of translators to Hades—and leave the translations themselves on the intellectual battlefields, a banquet for dogs and vultures—and, perhaps, an occasional history professor.

# Richard Brathwait's *The English Gentleman* (London, 1630) and Nicolas Faret's *L'honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* (Paris, 1630): A Comparative Study

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*The English Gentleman* by Richard Brathwait, published in London in 1630, and *L'honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* by Nicolas Faret, published in Paris in 1630 also, are two courtesy books of the seventeenth century.

They follow a series of important civility books published in the sixteenth century, and they were greatly influenced by them. These sixteenth century books are, in chronological order: *De civilitate morum puerilium* by Erasmus, published in 1530, and known in English by the title *On Good Manners for Boys*; *Il Galateo*, known as *Galateo* in English, by the Italian humanist Giovanni Della Casa, published in 1558; and *La civil conversatione* by another Italian, Stefano Guazzo, published in 1574 and known in English under the title of either *The Civile Conversation* or *The Art of Conversation*, depending on the edition one uses. The three of them became best-sellers. They had many editions and were translated in different languages soon after their publications. All three, however, were influenced by another best-seller of the time, *Il cortegiano* (known in English as *The Book of the Courtier*) by Baldassare Castiglione published in 1528. While this book was directed primarily at courtiers, its tenets of good social behavior soon reached everyone who wanted to mend one's manners. The influence of Castiglione on Faret is obvious. In fact, his work shows very little originality, and it is fair to say that it is only a paraphrase.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that three of these books were composed by Italian writers, one by a Dutch man, Erasmus, Prince



of humanists, one by an English man and another one by a French man, shows the importance that Europe gave to good manners in those days. It is not a national trend, but a European one.

The two books that I am considering now, are basically manuals of good behavior in society. There is a big difference, however, between them. While Brathwait's book concerns the behavior of a gentleman in any circumstances, Faret's scope is more limited: his recommendations are aimed only at the man who wants to be successful at court and gain the esteem of the king.

In both cases, however, the authors deal with good social behavior. The concept of civility was already found in the writings of Aristotle and Cicero, and it was absolutely central to their thought. For them, and for our authors, good manners had their foundations on moral goodness. Æsthetics and ethics were not separable. Instead, the favorable public image that one gave of oneself was a reflection of the virtue of the inner self. Erasmus put it this way:

> I do not deny that external decorum is a very crude part of philosophy, but in the present climate of opinion it is very conducive to winning good will and to commending those illustrious gifts of the intellect to the eyes of men. It is seemly for the whole man to be well ordered in mind, body, gesture, and clothing. But above all, propriety becomes all boys, and in particular those of noble birth. Now everyone who cultivates the man in liberal studies must be taken to be noble. Let others paint lions, eagles, bulls and leopards on their escutcheons; those who can display "devices" of the intellect commensurate with their grasp of the liberal arts have a truer nobility.[1]

Erasmus, who laid out a beautiful program of human dignity for us, links training in liberal arts with display of good manners. The virtuous man conceived by Erasmus is both cultured and civil, not either or. That man reaches the summits of the human condition and shows in it what is greatest, most accomplished and worthiest. For Erasmus, civility comes from a sound understanding and a good application of the sciences that deal with human culture, the sciences to which the Renaissance humanists referred as *bonae litterae*, that is to say, the good letters or sciences, the *litterae humaniores*, the

sciences that told one how to be a better man. His vision is shared by both Brathwait and Faret.

There are many forms of social interaction. Braithwait, of course, is much more complete than Faret in his evocation of circumstances where good manners ought to be used. He also emphasizes that training should be started at a very young age, for "youth, being indeed the philosophers rasa tabula, is apt to receive any good impressure, but spotted with the pitch of vice, it hardly ever regaines her former purity." A good education of course was given to the children of the nobility. Let us not forget that Brathwait entitled his book *The English Gentleman*, for he considers that a gentleman should be a model of virtue for all to see. Greatness comes from a person, not from his birth: "Vertue the greatest Signall and Symbol of Gentry: is rather expressed by goodness of Person, than greatnesse of Place." For both Brathwait and Faret, the gentleman is a good man. And his goodness, his good inclinations are passed on to the next generation. It is not due to chance that Faret begins his book by addressing the topic of birth:

> I will say first that it seems to me very necessary that he who wants to enter this great commerce of the world be born a gentleman, and stemmed from a house that has some reputation. I do not mean to banish those to whom nature refused this good fortune. Virtue belongs to everyone, and many are the examples of some who, from a lowly birth raised to heroic actions and became great. Nevertheless, one must confess that those who were born in a noble family usually have good inclinations, which the others have only rarely, or only by chance.[2]

Of course, not every young nobleman shows himself worthy of his ancestors. That's why greatness comes from a person, not from his birth. That meant also that one of humble descent could become great.

I would like to examine more closely now some of the rules of civility expressed in these books. It is essential to use qualities such as moderation, good judgment, consideration, adaptation, conciliation, self-control. The gentleman or *l'honnête homme* is a man who does not offend, who does not shock. His main quality is the golden mean, that classical ideal known in Latin as the *aurea*



*mediocritas*, that is to say a middle road between excesses. This is what Aristotle had in mind when he wrote in *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Now feelings and actions are the objects with which virtue is concerned; and in feelings and actions excess and deficiency are errors, while the mean amount is praised, and constitutes success; and to be praised and to be successful are both marks of virtue.[3]

Cicero was greatly indebted to Aristotle in his evocation of the golden mean in his book *De officiis*, known in English under the title *On moral Duties*. There he wrote:

> We have next to discuss the one remaining division of moral rectitude. That is the one in which we find considerateness and self-control, which give, as it were, a sort of polish to life; it embraces also temperance, complete subjection of all the passions, and moderation in all things. Under this head is further included what, in Latin, may be called *decorum* (propriety).[4]

The notion of the golden mean is very important both to Faret and Brathwait, who writes: "It is safer chusing the Middle-path, than by walking or tracing uncouth wayes, to stray in your journey." Moderation is to be applied constantly and in all activities, whether its recreation (sports and games), or daily social contacts with others, in speech, opinions, actions and clothing. Brathwaith writes the following lines in favor of moderation:

> In the whole progresse of mans life, which is nothing else, but a medley of desires and fears; we shall finde, that there is no one vertue which doth better adorne or beautifie man, than Temperance or Moderation; which indeed is given as an especiall attribute to man, purposely to distinguish him from brute beasts, whose onely delight is injoying the benefit of Sense, without any further ayme.

The courtier also will display moderation of behavior. For example, one will talk about oneself with modesty, but praise others, when they deserve to be praised. Particular attention will have to be paid in presence of the king.

Brathwait and Faret agree on such virtues as meekness, munificence, fortitude, humility, compassion, sobriety of speech, good judgement in all things, but in particular in acquaintances.

The gentleman will choose his friends carefully, as the courtier will avoid people of bad reputation and associate with respected and virtuous men. Of course, reputation is at stake, but also one can learn a lot from socializing with good men. It is not exaggerated to say that this gentleman was a work of art, for beauty was also to be found in behavior, as Cicero had already said:

> For, as physical beauty with harmonious symmetry of the limbs engages the attention and delights the eye, for the very reason that all the parts combine in harmony and grace, so this propriety, which shines out in our conduct, engages the appropriation of our fellow-men by the order, consistency, and self-control it imposes upon every word and deed.[5]

Finally, both authors emphasize that a good behavior is above all a religious behavior. The gentleman is a religious man, who cares about God and who reminds himself constantly of the word of God. Brathwait, especially, quotes the Bible and gives numerous examples of good and bad behavior. His book is four times longer than Faret's book, 456 pages compared to 104. He covers more ground and quotes the Bible and books on antiquity hundreds of times. I will choose a passage from Faret, however, to illustrate my point :

> Thus it is the fear of God, which is the beginning of this genuine Wisdom, which comprises all the precepts that philosophy gave us in order to live well: it is this fear that makes us bold in dangers, that strengthens our hopes, that leads our designs, that straightens our customs, and make us loved by virtuous people, and disliked by wicked people.[6]

Thus, the actions of this world ought to be checked by the word of God, who, in the end, remains the reference of the gentleman.

Behaving well is difficult to achieve of course, in that it requires moral goodness. The danger lies in the separation of good manners and moral goodness, when of the couple esthetics and ethics, there only remains æsthetics. It is precisely of this separation that Brathwait and Faret warn us. Because what is left then is a society that takes pleasure in the contemplation of its own refinement. A conversation becomes the occasion for one to show his talent as a story-teller, for example, or to demonstrate one's wit.



Such behavior opens the door to vices, like affectation, duplicity, simulation, hypocrisy. The fragile balance required by civility has disappeared in this case. It is against that society that both writers took a stand. That society existed, at court, for example, where gentlemen of whom I have been talking were rare, especially at court, where the temptations are so many. Such gentlemen, however, Faret argued, did exist, and could remain virtuous in the midst of sin. That was indeed no small achievement.

## Notes

[1]Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium*, translated and annotated by Brian McGregor, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 25, Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 273-274.

[2]Faret, *L'honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour*, published by M. Magendie, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints (1970): 9-10. The English translation is mine.

[3]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, with an English translation by H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press: II, VI, 12: 93-95.

[4]Cicero, *De officiis*, with an English translation by Walter Miller, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press: I, XXVII, 93: 95-97.

[5]Cicero, *De officiis, id.*: I, XXVIII, 98: 101.

[6]Faret, *L'honnête homme, op. cit.I: 33.*

# Castaways Old and New: The Robinson Crusoe Story in Our Times

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Four years ago, at this very conference, Bruce Brandt made a number of sensible observations regarding what he called the "interplay of source and text." One of his remarks seems especially relevant to my topic today, so I want to begin by summarizing it briefly. Brandt identifies several types of textual interplay and allusion, but notes that for the modern world "the most common place for us to experience such interplay between text and source is in film, which has often found its source material in literature, especially the novel. However, with film there is usually no presumption that the audience will know the original novel, and never an assumption that the moviegoer's experience will be richer for such knowledge" (53). Only on rare occasions, Brandt notes, are there "works that significant parts of the audience does know and care about . . . [where] expectations may clash" with the film-maker's adaptation of the work (53).

The recent movie *Cast Away* provides a good illustration of Brandt's point. The movie was a success at the box office, and generally received favorable reviews from the critics. Many critics were impressed by Tom Hanks' portrayal of Fed Ex manager Chuck Noland, particularly in the scenes in which Noland finds himself marooned on a deserted island after his plane crashes. If critics tended to be unhappy with any part of the film, it was the ending, which some found anti-climactic. In short, their responses were very much what one would expect from reviews written for a mass audience.

What I found notable about the reviews, however, is that they hardly ever mention what I took to be a fairly significant point: that the movie is a re-telling of Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*. Relatively few reviewers saw this connection as worthy of any comment whatsoever; those that did seldom went beyond a passing reference to it. And, as I discovered myself, these reviewers know



the audience for whom they write. I asked several of my own students—all English majors, incidentally—for their reactions to *Cast Away*. All liked it, mostly for the same reasons the critics did, but again, none of them, even when prompted by hints from me, had anything to say about any connection with *Robinson Crusoe*. Like the vast majority of critics and moviegoers, my students apparently either did not know or did not care about the novelistic origins of this film.

One could argue that both critics and audience are taking their cue on this matter from the movie itself. It contains no explicit allusions to Defoe or Crusoe. There is no post-modern moment of acknowledgement, no point in which Chuck Noland realizes that he is re-enacting the drama of one of Western literature's best known characters. The ending credits do not say "Based on a novel by Daniel Defoe." Indeed, to the extent that the film alludes to any other source, it is to a decidedly more contemporary one—the 1960s' television series *Gilligan's Island*.

What are we to make of the film's silence about its source material? Though it is possible that no allusion to the Crusoe story was ever intended, it seems to me inconceivable that a story about a man stranded for years on a deserted island could *not* be referring, however obliquely, to *Robinson Crusoe*. A simpler, more pragmatic explanation is the one suggested by Professor Brandt's earlier observation. The movie-makers knew that *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel seldom read anymore. If the average movie-goer knows the story at all, it is only in the vaguest, most general terms, as little more than an image of a man isolated on an island. Given that reality, it makes little sense to engage in explicit or sustained allusion, which would be lost on most of the audience anyway.

Yet what I have said so far would not apply to *Cast Away's* entire audience. A small minority of viewers was familiar with Defoe's novel, and did assume that the movie was alluding to it in some significant way. These viewers illustrate how, as Brandt puts it, "expectations may clash" in the interplay between source and text, for many of them seem to have anticipated far greater fidelity to the source than what they found in the text.

Diane Ravitch, for instance, argues (rather improbably, in my view) that *Cast Away*'s popularity can only be explained by the fact that people no longer read *Robinson Crusoe*, and "therefore lack

proper grounds for comparison." As Ravitch sees it, the movie is an example of political correctness triumphing over the traditional literary canon, to the detriment of art and morality. While "Crusoe's story is a classic of trial and redemption, Chuck Noland's story has no meaning because Chuck learns nothing, except that he needs to look for a new girlfriend. Chuck is truly a man of our times, lacking any inner life, having little to think about other than a lost love. He has no sense of religion and is utterly incapable of seeking meaning in his experience or his life." Like Ravitch, Gregory Benoit notices the distinct absence of any religious theme in the movie. For him, the primary difference between Robinson Crusoe and Chuck Noland lies in the reaction of each man to his predicament:

> Crusoe clings to the trust that God is completely in control of all the events of his life . . . that whatever the tide brings in will be in his best interests because the tide is merely one small tool in the hands of God. But Noland believes that the tide *is* the God . . . one to which he cannot appeal or pray, and this leads him to despair. . . . [H]e has no hope whatsoever that there is any intelligent being who is responsible for what comes in. Therefore Noland tries to kill himself, for with such a loss of hope one is left only with despair. (27)

Steven Garber echoes the same complaint, describing Crusoe as "a man whose desire for moral autonomy comes crashing down upon his soul, and who by amazing grace begins to see himself and the world in relation to the Creator of the cosmos"; Chuck Noland, in contrast, is simply "a man hurrying to nowhere, a human being lost in the cosmos" (10). Garber sees this difference as crucial in evaluating the two works: "Crusoe's pilgrimage rings true in a way that *Cast Away*'s shallow secularism simply does not, and cannot" (11).

Clearly what these critics all see and admire about Defoe's novel are the spiritual autobiographical elements to it. For them it is not simply the story of physical survival under trying circumstances, but also (and more profoundly) the story of spiritual transformation, the story of a sinful man who comes to know God's grace, the story (so familiar to English Protestants) of *Grace Abounding* and of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Not finding that story in *Cast Away*, these viewers came away disappointed, believing that the movie had



betrayed the essential truth of its source. For them, the movie is, at best, an unintentionally accurate comment on the modern world, a world (like Chuck Noland himself) so far removed from traditional Christian doctrine that it is incapable of telling any story of humanity's spiritual life, even when it attempts to do so.

These critics are certainly correct in noting that *Cast Away* lacks the explicit commitment to Protestant Christianity that is so evident in *Robinson Crusoe*, and correct, as well, in noting that this difference reflects a larger difference between Daniel Defoe's world and our own. Nonetheless, I think these critics are overstating the differences between the film and its source in this case. For one thing, their view implies that the religious ideology of a work trumps every other feature of it, such that the only legitimate use of a source is one which leaves its religious views undisturbed. That may be one legitimate consideration in judging the use of a source, but to make it the only one strikes me as too narrow. Moreover, these critics place *Robinson Crusoe* firmly within the tradition of spiritual autobiography and Protestant conversion literature. Doing so is, again, entirely appropriate, but, by itself, overly reductive. If the novel does depict a man coming to terms with God's Providence, it also depicts a man making his fortune in the material world. The two plotlines are intertwined, and to emphasize the spiritual features of the story while ignoring its material and worldly features is to miss some of its richness and complexity. I believe that if one understands the novel in a different thematic context and judges its cinematic use by a slightly more generous criteria, one finds that the movie shares more with its novelistic counterpart than these critics realize.

Let us start with *Robinson Crusoe*. The desire for material wealth is at least as central to the protagonist's character as the desire for salvation. It is Crusoe's "original sin" in that it leads him to take risks that result in misfortune, the worst of which is his being shipwrecked on the island. Crusoe acknowledges what he calls a "wild and indigested notion of raising my fortune" in his character (20-21), and laments at one point that "I could not be content, but I must go and leave the happy view I had . . . only to pursue a rash and immoderate desire of rising faster than the nature of the thing admitted" (42). Paradoxically, however, the same desire is the source of Crusoe's greatest virtues—his resourcefulness and

ingenuity, his industriousness and perseverance. These qualities, always present, become most apparent on the island. We watch Crusoe salvage everything he can from the ship, stow it carefully away in his cave, and, through a slow and laborious process of trial and error, ultimately find a use for almost all of it. Here Crusoe's restless desire to improve his situation becomes not a vice but a virtue, the means by which he builds a life for himself out of the wreckage of the ship.

Crusoe's inability to be content with his lot in life never abates. It is as strong a motivation at the end of the novel as it was at the beginning. We leave Crusoe not content to have returned to England safe and sound, but inventorying his assets, calculating his profits, and then heading back to the island to make sure that the men he left there are not mismanaging his property. Of course, Crusoe believes that he has been transformed by his religious experience on the island: before it happened, his desire for wealth was evidence of sin and judgment; afterwards it is evidence of salvation and grace. But whether Defoe is endorsing or satirizing his protagonist's view of himself is not clear, just as it is not clear whether the ending is a celebration of Crusoe's spiritual transformation or simply a catalogue of his financial success. Some critics, such as Ian Watt, have seen the story not as a spiritual autobiography at all, but as a kind of economic allegory: Crusoe "has a home and family, and leaves them for the classic reason of *homo economicus*—that it is necessary to better his economic condition. . . . Crusoe's 'original sin' is really the dynamic tendency of capitalism itself, whose aim is never merely to maintain the status quo, but to transform it incessantly" (65). Others, like William Halewood and Michael McKeon, do not dismiss the spiritual elements of the novel, but do see them in constant ironic tension with its economic elements. Halewood, for example, observes that "the discontinuity between [Crusoe's] religious attitudes and his practical behavior is greater than he knows," and sees Crusoe as forever "divided between earth and heaven, between accumulation and renunciation, action and contemplation" (86-89; see also McKeon 278-79).

I am inclined to agree with the view that Defoe was being ironic, for I find it hard to imagine that he was unaware of the discrepancy he was creating between his protagonist's religious



convictions (which urged contentment and acceptance of God's will) and his temperament (which insisted on actively creating one's own destiny). But this issue is, to an extent, getting beyond the scope of this paper. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that though *Robinson Crusoe* may well draw some of its narrative and thematic features from the tradition of spiritual autobiography and conversion literature, one need not see the novel solely in those terms. There is more to it than that. In particular, there is an extended examination of how one's economic interests affect one's values and choices. It is the same examination Defoe later carries on in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, so it seems reasonable to me to see it here as well.

Seen in this light, *Robinson Crusoe* has clear thematic connections with *Cast Away* since both works feature a protagonist who is presented as a kind of representative economic man, and whose flaws are very much tied to economic concerns. The nature of the economic world each man reflects is different, of course. Crusoe represents the colonial economy of the early eighteenth century, a world peopled by merchants, traders, and small landholders. Chuck Noland represents the corporate capitalism of our times. He is the ambitious corporate executive, marching briskly and confidently through a life framed by the imperatives of the global economy. Even his name—Noland—suggests a world where transnational corporations like Fed Ex have replaced any distinct sense of place. An "original sin" is also apparent in both men, but it is altered from the desire to get rich quick to the desire to control time. Chuck Noland seems less obsessed with making a fortune himself than with making sure that not a single minute of his entire life is idly or unproductively spent. He is, as Kenneth Turan observes, " the ultimate can-do company man who lives and dies by the clock. 'We must never allow ourselves the sin of losing track of time' he roars at befuddled Muscovites [for whom he is setting up a new Fed Ex office]. No problem is unsolvable for a man who does whatever it takes to get a package delivered" (F1).

In both the novel and the film, this market-oriented attitude produces sinful actions. For Crusoe, it is the flouting of parental authority and of God's Providence. His desire for wealth leads him to believe wrongly that his destiny is in his own hands, not God's. For Chuck Noland the desire to control time is a problem not in divine, but in human terms. It poses no challenge to God's

authority, but it does create a barrier to emotional intimacy between Noland and everyone else. He is comfortable relating to people only as a part of his job: as bosses and employees, as customers and suppliers. But he finds it difficult to see people in any other terms. One revealing exchange occurs early in the film when Noland learns that a colleague's wife is suffering from cancer. The only response he can think of, after an awkward silence, is to offer to arrange for her to see a specialist he knows. Thus he reduces the man's family tragedy to an issue he is comfortable dealing with: the practical challenge of scheduling an appointment.

This problem is also apparent in the relatively low priority Noland assigns to his girlfriend Kelly Frears (played by Helen Hunt). Though he seems very attracted to her, he is so consumed by his work that their lives are for the most part quite separate, and their time together is brief and unsatisfying. Even at Christmas dinner Noland is most at ease talking about business, least so, when someone brings up the question of whether he and Frears will marry. And of course the dinner must be cut short because Noland has a plane to catch that evening. He tells Frears that they can "do Christmas" in the car, and two of his gifts to her are, fittingly, a pager and a journal.

What we see in Noland, then, is the sin that contemporary society should recognize immediately: that of letting one's job obliterate all other facets of one's life. It is at this point that Noland, like Crusoe, ends up on the island, suggesting a kind of punishment for his sin. And like Crusoe, he divides his time between learning how to survive physically, dreaming of escape, and reflecting on his past. In the novel this reflection involves an extended dialogue between Crusoe and his conscience. Crusoe asks "Why has God done this to me? What have I done to be thus used? My conscience presently checked me in that inquiry . . . and methought it spoke to me like a voice: 'Wretch! Dost thou ask what thou hast done? Look back upon a dreadful misspent life and ask thyself what thou has not done; Ask, why is it that thou wert not long ago destroyed?'" (94). The reflection in the movie is less explicit, but no less evident. One sees evidence of it in Noland's invention of a friend, the volleyball he names Wilson. If Noland's problem was his inability to connect to people outside the workplace, in a sense his penance is to develop that skill in isolation from work. He succeeds as is clear from his



frequent conversations with Wilson, and more dramatically from his desperation and grief when Wilson is lost on the ocean. One also sees progress in the memorial he etches into a rock on the island. He identifies his presence not by his work or his corporation, but by an expression of his love for Frears.

As I mentioned earlier, Robinson Crusoe's restless desire to improve his situation never disappears, even under his rigorous self-scrutiny. Instead, it is transformed to a virtue by which he builds a life for himself on the island. Similarly, Noland never ceases to be interested in time and productivity, or in his job. He carefully preserves one of the packages from the plane, a reminder to himself, in part, that he is still working for FedEx and still has the obligation to make a delivery. Moreover, we eventually learn that he has carved a calendar into a rock and has kept careful track of the island's winds and tides. When an opportunity arises four years later to escape, he goes about building a raft in the methodical, systematic, and efficient manner that was so prominent a feature of his old self. He even catches himself talking about the "sin of wasting time." And the same memorial that expresses his love for Frears also indicates the number of days he has been stranded on the island: 1500.

The return home is the point of greatest divergence between novel and film. Crusoe's return is one pleasant surprise after another as he discovers that he has become, in his own absence, a wealthy man. These triumphs, however, much like his decision to return to the island, do little to quell any doubts we might have about the extent of Crusoe's spiritual regeneration; indeed, as I mentioned earlier, they seem to further undermine the sincerity of Crusoe's expressions of piety. Noland's discoveries upon being rescued are decidedly mixed, but they leave a different impression of his character. He is welcomed back to FedEx with great fanfare and can presumably take up his old job as soon as he feels ready. In that respect, time has halted for him. For someone as wedded to his work and as determined to control time as Noland was, this should be good news. But he also learns that Kelly Frears has long since concluded that he was dead and has married someone else, and his response to these pieces of news suggests the extent of his transformation. He is utterly unmoved by the company's homecoming celebration and uncomfortable around the people he

worked with. The only one he seems to want to speak to is the man whose wife had cancer, to whom Noland apologizes for "not being there" for him. More significantly, he is terribly sad to have lost Frears, a loss he regards as conclusive proof of how badly distorted the priorities of his life had been before the crash. Thus, if Crusoe's return seems to invite an ironic reading of his experience, Noland's seems to invite a tragic understanding of his.

My reading of these two works, then, suggests an odd reversal of the critics' judgment. They argue that *Cast Away* fails because it ignores the Christian doctrine of its source, and thus presents us with a protagonist who is not really transformed by his experience of isolation. I agree that the nature of the conversion experience is different in the two works, but I think both are offering that experience as part of a broader critique of the extent to which the mentality of the marketplace shapes character and destiny. What is genuinely different about the interplay of source and text here is that the film is actually more hopeful than the novel on which it is based about the possibility of resisting the influence of the market. Robinson Crusoe claims, somewhat unpersuasively, to be saved; Chuck Noland claims, more convincingly, to be waiting for grace. What truly distinguishes *Cast Away* from *Robinson* Crusoe, then, is less the absence of God than the absence of irony.

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# Epistolary Fiction: Subversion, Dominance, and "Ownership" in *Clarissa* and *Evelina*

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Patricia Klindienst observes that "authority founded upon the suppression of knowledge and free speech relegates both the silenced people and the unsayable things to the interstices of culture" (619). In the eighteenth century, the silenced people who fit into Klindienst's definition were primarily women. Caught between duty and attempting to find happiness with their place in society, women longed to give vent to their emotions as well as to find someone who might share in their anxieties.

Paralleling the rise of assigned societal roles for women came the rise in the novel, and specifically the epistolary style of writing. Novels such as Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and Fanny Burney's *Evelina* explored the psychological realism of women's issues. Since, as Klindienst has noted, dominated people find their voice within the interstices of culture, the question arises as to how this style of novel allowed for the reaffirmation or subversion of contemporary ideology. A thorough examination of the discourse created in the epistolary form of these novels in light of John Locke's theory on property and self-representation reveals the ways in which letter-writing allows for a powerful feminine discourse as well as provides a venue for subverting the patriarchal ideology that predominated in eighteenth-century culture.

In both *Evelina* and *Clarissa*, the main characters form their versions of the world based on their reactions to their experiences in it. Utilizing letters as their forum for communication, Clarissa and Evelina attempt to "read" their world; creating an emotionally ensconced discourse, their perceptions are based on reaction and reflection, not action. Consequently, the most basic premise of letter writing—the epistolary form—is that it forces the writer and the reader to focus on their emotions both through interpreting the event itself as well as refracting their emotions and thus writing about



them.[1] Reliving experiences requires enacting them in the imagination. Because of the stress on the private, emotional realm of writing, it becomes an act of ultimate trust to write a letter that is to be read by another.[2] The language, then, is infused with the highly emotional, perhaps even what we may call feminine, style of discourse.

The draw of epistolary novels, then, was the reader's ability to access others' emotional realities. Reading these novels provided a sense of shared experience. Concurrently, epistolary novels provided moral grounding for women readers—a sort of conduct-book code for the issues women had to deal with, such as courtship and marriage.

With these ideas in mind, in this paper, I would like to focus on the discourse presented in Evelina and Clarissa's letters to illustrate the successful subversion in Richardson's novel and the reaffirmation of the status quo in Burney's.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin asserts that

> [L]anguage, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. (35)

Through writing letters, Clarissa and Evelina attempt an "ownership" of their own. Infusing their letters with emotion and the anxiety of women's issues, Clarissa and Evelina create an internally persuasive discourse, one that acknowledges the authority of the male but works to subvert it through accessing the individual consciousness of the reader. Evelina and Clarissa seek new meanings that will exist for them outside the boundaries of patriarchy. The recipients of the letters must assimilate the discourse and interpret it. Through the very nature of reading letters, others must seek meaning in them. Because letter writing allows for the intimate detailing of one's life, it also opens up the discourse for reader appropriation.[3]

Since we've established the possibilities of reading epistolary texts and the discursive empowerment that exists within that venue of writing, it's important to explore the possession of those ideas.

Who owns the words and ideas that we write? According to John Locke's writings on the natural rights personality theory of property, established in *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*,

> individuals' rights to property are based upon their natural and inalienable right to their own person. . . . The labor of his body and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. . . . For this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough and as good left in common for others. (Tucker par. 3-4)

Accordingly, then, as Irene Tucker points out, "Locke . . . posits a model of property in which the self represents itself in the form of its productions and then owns these productions" (Tucker par. 5). Thus, the letters Clarissa and Evelina write (i.e. produce) are meant to represent their authors, and they have "ownership" over them.

In regard to owning discourse, Evelina owns her voice through self-representation in the form of letters. It is through them that we realize that Evelina's views of marriage seem ambiguous. Upon receiving the letter from Rev. Villars granting his person for her marriage, Evelina writes:

> Open it, indeed, I did;—but read it I could not,—the willing, yet aweful consent you have granted,—the tenderness of your expressions,—the certainty that no obstacle remained to my external union with the loved owner of my heart, gave me sensations too various, and though joyful, too little placid for observation. Finding myself unable to proceed, and blinded by the tears of gratitude and delight which started into my eyes, I gave over the attempt of reading, till I returned to my own room: and, having no voice to answer the enquiries of Lord Orville, I put the letter into his hands, and left it to speak both for me and itself. (404)

Many of the phrases in this passage can be analyzed to represent both Evelina's trepidation in regard to the state of marriage such as "aweful consent" (read awful consent), "unable to proceed," and "blinded with tears." Much more important though is the idea that once granted permission to marry, Evelina turns over ownership of the letter to Lord Orville, allowing Rev. Villars' words to "speak



both for me and itself" (404).

In seeming alignment with the patriarchal ideology of the time, Evelina attempts to do her duty to her father figure. She writes, "I have no wish but to act by your direction" (350). Part of Evelina's absence of connection may be due to her foundling status, because of which she searches for her birth father in order to be recognized by him. In the end, she reaffirms the status quo of the social system by seeking security through marriage. While her letters are her own property, much of her voice seems to be dominated by Rev. Villars. She asserts, "[A]s to me,—I know not what to say, nor even what to wish . . . think for me, therefore, my dearest Sir, and suffer my doubting mind, that knows not which way to direct its hopes, to be guided by your wisdom and unerring counsel" (115). With these words, Evelina relinquishes her voice to the authoritative discourse of Rev. Villars and throughout the novel suffers other moments of self-imposed silence. Late in the novel, Villars advises Evelina to steer clear of Lord Orville when he thinks Orville's false love letter threatens Evelina's prudence: "Awake, then, my dear, my deluded child, awake to the sense of your danger. . . . Make a noble effort for the recovery of your peace. . . . You must quit him!—his sight is baneful to your repose, his society is death to your future tranquility" (309). However, Evelina rejects his advice in an attempt to strike out on her own—in effect asserting her identity and independence. Ultimately, though, as her breathless, final letter proves, she gives over ownership of her discourse to Lord Orville who is merely a replacement for the father-figure/spokesman Rev. Villars.

Similar to Evelina, Clarissa possesses her own ideas of marriage, laden with anxiety and ambiguity toward the duty of women in marriage. She writes:

> To be given up to a strange man; To be engrafted into a strange family; To give up her very Name, as a mark of her becoming his absolute and dependent property; To be obliged to prefer this strange man to Father, Mother,—to every body:—And his humours to all her own. . . . To go no-whither: To make friendships perhaps; all at his pleasure, whether she think it reasonable to do so or not. (239)

Through her own words, we recognize Clarissa's view of the

establishment.[4]

As we know, Clarissa and Evelina both write prodigiously. Clarissa writes out of anxiety/isolation and out of rebellion against her parents and all those who wish her to simply marry Solmes in dutiful response to her parents' wishes, as well as for the greedy acquisitioning of her brother, James. Evelina writes in an attempt to share her experiences with Rev. Villars and to seek advice for the social gaffes she longs to avoid while in London: "Unable as I am to act for myself, or to judge what conduct I ought to pursue, how grateful do I feel myself, that I have such a guide and director to counsel and instruct me as yourself!" (Burney 160).

Not surprisingly, further evidence of Evelina's transference of discourse ownership is evident in her letters to Villars. For instance, in her first letter to Rev. Villars from Howard Grove (and of note, the first time we hear her voice in the novel), Evelina writes, "My dear Sir, I am desired to make a request to you. I hope you will not think me an encroacher; Lady Howard insists upon my writing!—and yet I hardly know how to go on; a petition implies a want,—and have you left me one? No indeed" (23). Curiously, Evelina has been asked by someone else to write to Villars. She does not do it of her own volition. We don't hear her voice writing out of will, rather out of request. When Lord Orville requests to marry her, Evelina awaits Villars' letter before agreeing, even though, as a foundling child, she technically belongs to no one. She writes, "I told Lord Orville I was wholly dependent upon you [Villars], and that I was certain your opinion would be the same as mine, which was that it would be highly important should I dispose of myself forever so near the time which must finally decide by whose authority I ought to be granted" (370). Evelina identifies herself as an object that needs to be transferred between owners. In this way, as well as through her silence before the marriage, Evelina grants the property of her letters and the power of her voice to the men in the novel.

If we look at the words Clarissa chooses to voice her thoughts on a marriage that is repugnant to her, we see that she finds it unbelievable that women should constantly seek to preserve the peace, of which they are *constitutionally* fond (could be read as patriarchally-established ideas) yet which she knows will result in the loss of her happiness in exchange for the fruition of her brother's ambitious plans to increase the Harlowe wealth: "What is it, as she



[Clarissa's mother] says, that *she* had not sacrificed to peace?—yet, has *she* by her sacrifices always found the peace she deserved to find? Indeed No!—I am afraid the very contrary" (Richardson 105). This constant battle between duty and self-sacrifice resonates throughout the course of the novel.[5] Perhaps not so strangely, Clarissa's thoughts are expressed in fragments, themselves an indication of her frame of mind, and evidenced in her letter through ellipses.[6] In Letter 295 to Miss Howe, Clarissa attempts to share her distorted sense of self after the rape:

> But no more of myself! my *lost* self. You that can rise in a morning to be blessed and to bless; and to rest delighted with your own reflections, and in your unbroken, unstarting slumbers, conversing with saints and angels, the former only more pure than yourself, as they have shaken off the encumbrance of body, you shall be my subject as you have long, long, been my only pleasure. And let me, at awful distance, revere my beloved Anna Howe, and in *her* reflect upon what her Clarissa Harlowe once was! (974)

Through the lasting impression of her story, we find trace elements of a strong woman who attempts to assert her self-hood even as she copes with living in a patriarchal society.

Clarissa refuses to be swayed by the rational views of the church and doctors and opts instead for a discourse steeped in sensibility. For example, in Letter 427, Reverend Dr. Lewen suggests to Clarissa, "In a word, the reparation of your family dishonour now rests in your own bosom: and which only one of these two alternatives can repair; to wit, either to marry, or to prosecute him at law" (1251). Clarissa, however, chooses not to prosecute Lovelace and instead advocates publishing her story in her own words, eschewing others from framing her history.[7] Though she dies unmarried and without her virtue by societally assigned standards, she is able to write her self in a way that reinstates her virtue.

Even in death, Clarissa eludes the prescriptive patriarchy and has her own story heard by the female public:

> Having been pressed by Miss Howe and her other to collect the particulars of my sad story, and given expectation that I would, in order to do my character

> justice with all my friends and companions: but not having time before me for the painful task, it has been a pleasure to me to find, by extracts kindly communicated to me by my said executor, that I may safely trust my fame to the justice done me by Mr Lovelace in his letters to him my said executor. And as Mr Belford has engaged to contribute what is in his power towards a compilement to be made of all that relates to my story, and know my whole mind in this respect; it is my desire that he will cause two copies to be made of this collection. (1418)

Clarissa's death signifies a sweeping refusal of patriarchal and sexual oppression.[8] Lovelace may have raped her in order to gain power over her—forcing her to compromise her virtue and naming her a fallen woman. However, she appropriates the power by reworking the discourse in her favor: "I shall find out all your villainies in time—Indeed I shall. . . . Ah! Villainous man! what have you not to answer for!" (896)

Her experience enables Clarissa to write not only a new self, but also take on a new, powerful voice, one that is heard even beyond the grave. By the end of the novel, she has affected a moral transformation of Belford, effeminizing him in a way by heightening his goodness. Technically, then, it would be correct to say that Clarissa's power comes after her "deflowering."

Belford writes the conclusion of *Clarissa*, and in it we find a reinforcement of the strength of Clarissa's voice. Through her posthumous letters, Clarissa lives and so does the power of her Self, one that she defines through her own writing.

Though Evelina certainly avoids scandal in her relationship to men, she also loses the ability to control her own story. The novel closes with Evelina's quickly dashed note to Rev. Villars as she moves from one realm of patriarchy to the next: "All is over, my dearest Sir, and the fate of your Evelina is decided! This morning, with fearful joy, and trembling gratitude, she united herself forever with the object of her dearest, her eternal affection. I have time for no more" (Burney 378). We can infer from this letter that the voice we have heard up until this point will be silenced in the realm of marriage. Not only does she refer to herself in the third person, which divorces her even further from her own story, Evelina has



now become the property of Lord Orville. As Mrs. Orville, Evelina will no longer write in the discourse of a single woman, since women's property (including letters) technically became their husband's property upon marriage. Hence, Evelina's voice would have been silenced by the patriarchy through the dispossession of her letters.

With their writing, Clarissa and Evelina teach us how to read them. Through her journey toward prudence, Evelina attempts to frame her letters with the significance of her experience, though at the end, her voice dwindles to merely an echo, symbolic of her loss of "ownership." Clarissa, however, *lives* through our reading and interpretation of her text. Her interpretation of the world exists as long as her letters are being read and assigned meaning by the readership—her family, friends, and female readers of the time. As such, her text resonates with the power of the female voice.

## Notes

[1]For a more complete examination of this issue, refer to Elizabeth Campbell's work on "Re-Flection" in epistolary novels by contemporary women.

[2]Ruth Perry theorizes on emotional realities and the way they complicate writing in her study *Women, Letters, and the Novel*.

[3]Paula Backscheider, Terry Castle, and William Beatty Warner, in their respective texts, deal with the issue of reader appropriation of discourse and the struggle for interpretation, especially in the realm of epistolary writing.

[4]In regard to women and their place in the eighteenth-century marriage market, Paula Backscheider examines the issue of "liminal spaces" which she feels allow for women's establishment of power. For further reading on this, refer to her text *Revising Women: Eighteenth-Century "Women's Fiction" and Social Engagement*.

[5]In the forward to her book, *Nobody's Story*, Catherine Gallagher reflects on women writers' attempts to create a space for themselves in the marketplace of the novel, studying especially their "cultural desire to have that experience [dispossession] articulated" (xxi). This laboring to provide a story that can be shared by reader appropriation is the aim of Clarissa and Evelina's narratives.

[6]Terry Castle argues that Clarissa's fragmented narrative creates great difficulty in comprehending the story while Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clémont posit that it is in this fragmentation that women's power exists.

[7]Gina Campbell contends that publishing private writing prescribes it to a moral realm of authority thus providing a barometer for testing virtue.

[8]In their writing, both Mary Martin and Ruth Perry examine Clarissa's ability to shift the power paradigm by allowing the rape to name her, thus frustrating Lovelace's plot.

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# Teaching Faust and Don Juan in an Interdisciplinary Setting

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This paper discusses briefly a course on the Faust and Don Juan myths that I have now been able to offer four times, surveys some earlier analogues of Faust, looks at the rationale behind my choices of what to include in the course, and finally, offers suggestions for other versions of such a course. My desire to teach a course centered on the Faust and Don Juan myths grew out of my interest in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Reading more and more of the subsequent Faust literature, I become intrigued by the possibility of a course that would use this tradition as a vehicle for a focused overview of the changes and developments in our literary and cultural heritage from the Renaissance to the present. Faust has become, after all, an archetype of Western culture. He embodies our search for knowledge and our desire for freedom. In him we see the Western struggle to transcend the apparent limitations of human life, to redefine the nature of our being, and to struggle against the mundane and ordinary. Don Juan is frequently referred to in the scholarly literature on the Faust myth, so including him not only seemed natural, but I felt that adding him might pique the interest of students. As Eric Kahler describes him, "Don Juan, who is commonly seen as a kind of merry, carefree playboy, a lady-killer and a libertine, is actually a very serious, indeed a tragic figure. Whether one sees in him the personification of man's insatiable drive, or the humanized devil, . . . or the seeker of the inexhaustibly new—he is the transcendent transgressor, the breaker of human boundaries" (75). Don Juan's myth, in short, comes to embody the same concerns and struggles addressed by the Faust myth.

My university offers a perfect venue for the course. One of the interdisciplinary area studies programs at South Dakota State University is European Studies (others are Latin American Area Studies, Native American Studies, and Women's Studies). The



European Studies Program has seen highs and lows over the years. At times there was funding to advertise classes, though now there is not. For a short while there was a small honorarium for guest lecturers, though at first and at present such participation was and is again simply voluntary. When I first developed the course, great emphasis was placed on the interdisciplinary component of European Studies classes, and the governing committee worked hard with the instructors to help identify potential guest lecturers. I valued this aspect of the course, and often found myself learning along with my students. Indeed, while I am sure that I could now competently cover the entire course without outside help, I would not want to do so. A real value exists for students in being exposed to multiple points of view and to the perspectives of disciplines in which they would not otherwise take course work.

Needless to say, there are difficulties in coordinating such a course: one wants the students to feel that they have encountered a variety of ideas and approaches within a unified framework, and not simply some crazy quilt of a course. One thus needs continually to keep the larger picture in the students' minds, and as much as possible one must strive to give the guest speakers a sense of how their topic fits into the whole. The class is not team taught; the guest lecturers will not hear the other speakers or be in attendance for other portions of the course. Without sufficient guidance, I have found that there is a tendency for each speaker to sound as if he or she were introducing Faust or Don Juan to the class for the first time. And one is always surprised. A guest once gave what I thought was a remarkably successful presentation, perfectly pitched to where we were in the class at that moment. I asked her to repeat the presentation at the course's next offering, saying simply to do exactly what she had done before. I failed, in short, to sufficiently jog her memory, and her presentation was pitched too low, repeating too much information that we already knew about Don Juan. I have also learned that many people are reluctant to say no, and that a person who does not respond enthusiastically to the invitation is best let off the hook. Many people will jump at the opportunity to teach something from an area of expertise that they may not normally get to teach, but others do so reluctantly. Early on I had two clear disasters involving reluctant volunteers. One arrived and proceeded to give the most eccentric and rambling presentation that I have ever

heard. It was, I think, his way of telling me not to ask again Another presenter arrived with a clearly superficial preparation that included several assertions about stage practice that were clearly contradicted by the introduction to the play in our text.

On the whole, however, I have felt blessed by the people who have worked with me. The assigned reading and the guest speakers varied each time the course was taught, but many of my colleagues signed on for more than one offering of the course. Our Department of Modern Languages included a French teacher with a profound knowledge of Moliere, Spanish teachers willing to help with Tirso de Molina and Zorilla, and German teachers with a love of Goethe and a passion for Thomas Mann. Our Speech Department included an individual with deep expertise in Sartre. In Theater I found a person who had not only directed *Man and Superman*, but had constructed a stage setting for a performance of Goethe's *Faust*. In Music I found a violinist who had actually toured with a production of Gounod's *Faust* and an opera singer who was willing to discuss *Don Giovanni*. Colleagues in English have spoken on Byron and Da Ponte. From Philosophy I found a speaker who led us through the implications of Kierkegaard's theology. These speakers did not necessarily cover their topics in their entirety. For example, my syllabus assigned four class periods to Goethe's *Faust*, but only one was given over to our guest speaker.

The literary lives of Don Juan and Faust clearly begin in the Renaissance with Tirso de Molina's *El Burlador de Seville* and the publication of the German *Faustbuch* and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Early in the course, before launching into these works, I like to spend a class or two on some earlier analogues to the Faust myth. Both Don Juan and Faust have some prehistory, for as King Lear tells us, "nothing can come from nothing." However, the folklore motifs that one can identify in *El Burlador* (tales with talking skulls and so forth) are not in themselves very interesting, and Tirso's combination of these elements seems truly to have brought something new into the world. The case is different with Faust, and earlier analogues of this character and his bargain are worth spending class time on. To purchase knowledge at great price is an ancient motif. We find it in the story of Prometheus where the theft of divine fire saves humanity and establishes civilization, but at the cost of eternal pain and torment for Prometheus. We see it in



Adam and Eve, who succumb to the desire for the knowledge that will come from eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. We see it in Icarus, who carelessly misuses the fruits of his father Daedalus's science and plummets to his death. Icarus thus prefigures what we will come to call the Faustian bargain, in which the forces we unleash have unintended and disastrous consequences.

One interesting early precursor to Faust is Simon Magus, the converted sorcerer described in the *Acts of the Apostles* (8:9-13 & 18-24) who offered to pay Peter and John for spiritual power (the sin of simony is named for him). His story was fleshed out in Christian apocryphal literature, such as the fourth century *Clementine Recognitions*, *The Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul*, *The Teaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome*, and *The Golden Legend*. The magical struggle between Peter and Simon climaxes in a showdown at Rome in the presence of the Emperor Nero. Simon tries to escape by flying away, but Peter's prayer forces the devils who are holding Simon up to drop him.

Another magician from this literature is St. Cyprian, who lusted after St. Justina. Three times he sends his demonic emissaries (in various guises) to convince Justina to listen to his wooing, and three times she makes the sign of the cross, which repulses the demons and preserves her virginity. Realizing that there is a force greater than the Devil, whom he has been serving, Cyprian converts to Christianity, and ultimately becomes a Bishop. After many years, he and Justina both blissfully suffer martyrdom. They survive boiling and are beheaded.

I also like to tell the story of St. Theophilus of Adana, which is the earliest extant story of selling one's soul to the devil as well as being one of the earliest tributes to the Virgin Mary. Theophilus was a steward (administrator) of the church at Adana. He was a humble man, and when the position of bishop was offered him, he refused it. The new bishop then discharged him from his position for no good reason. Hurt and embittered, Theophilus signed a pact with the Devil, selling his soul in exchange for being reinstated to his position in the church. He later repents, and after fasting for forty days asks the Virgin Mary to help him, which she does, asking her son to show mercy to this sinner. She then appears to him in a vision, and he awakes to find that his pact has been returned to him. In class I emphasize that signing the pact has not made repentance

impossible.

The earliest analogue to the Faust story in English has the same moral. It appears in Ælfric's homily on the life of St. Basil. In brief, a young man falls in love with a woman he cannot marry because she has been dedicated to God by her father. The young man signs a written pact with the devil, relinquishing his soul for marriage to this woman. Immediately after the marriage, however, the woman realizes that something is wrong because her husband refuses to go to church with her. She turns to St. Basil for help, and he wrests the story from the young man. He is repentant, but is near despair because of the document that he has signed. St. Basil locks him away, visiting him three times. After fourteen days the young man says he has had a dream in which Basil defeats the Devil. The saint begins a vigil which involves a sort of spiritual tug-of-war for the young man's soul. After several hours the pact falls from heaven, and the young man begins living an exemplary Christian life. Although the devil here and in Ælfric's sources insists that the pact is valid and binding, the point is that repentance is what counts, and not the signature.

After looking at these analogues, we turn to the historical Faust, a man named either George or Johann Sabellicus, who called himself Faustus. He may have been born around 1480 at Knittlingen, although no fact of his life or doings is beyond dispute. Following Dabexies, Bockstael suggests that he must have been a learned man, but also something of a rogue and charlatan. He was apparently popular with common people and students and earned the patronage of princes and church officials (35). As surviving letters testify, he was also hated by scholars and humanists, and was often in trouble with the law (see the selection of documents in Bockstael, 37-53). Within a few years of his death numerous improbable and folklorish adventures had been attributed to him, and it was impossible to separate fact from this embellishment of fiction. These adventures were published in a series of Volksbuchs, the first of which to be printed was published by Spies in 1587. Usually called the German *Faustbuch*, its theology is Lutheran, and it is simply a moral exemplum. It is the story of a sinful man who deservedly goes to hell and from whom we should learn not to do likewise.

The Historie of *The Damnable Life and Deserved Death of*



*Dr. John Faustus*, an English translation of the Spies *Faustbuch*, is dated 1592, although there have been arguments that there was a slightly earlier edition. Although a reasonably faithful translation by sixteenth-century standards, the translator (known only as P.F.) significantly alters the spirit of the original. As a recent editor of the *English Faustbook* has expressed it, the translator "possessed three qualities notably lacking in the German author: a flair for pungent expression, a vivid visual imagination and a taste for ironic humor" (Jones 12). There is an attractiveness to Faustus's aspiration and zest for knowledge that one does not find in Spies. This is the book that Marlowe transformed into *Doctor Faustus*, and for the class I have used Barnet's edition of *Faustus* since it contains extracts from the English *Faustbook*.

This background leads us to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Tirso de Molina's *El Burlador de Seville*. Each appears during the Renaissance when traditional moralities conflict with a new sense of human potential, and our discussion of these plays attempts to relate them to the larger issues posed by Renaissance and Reformation. When we turn to Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, I have found that one preconception invariably needs to be addressed. My students tend to begin with the assumption that Faustus must be damned because he signed a contract and cannot renege on it. They are, after all, Americans, and their high school reading has likely taught them that if you make a bad deal with the devil, your only hope is a sharp lawyer like Daniel Webster. However, the scholars and the Old Man in Marlowe's play understand that this is a spiritual matter and not a legal one. Mephistophilis and Lucifer may claim that there is no way out, just like the devils in the story of Theophilus or Ælfric's homily, but they are not to be trusted. The issue is despair, the sin of not repenting because one believes that one's sin will not be forgiven. Protestant emphasis on predestination gave special point to despair as people began to worry about if they were or were not among the elect. Hence, whether one reads the play as a Christian exemplum or as an emblem of Renaissance aspiration, it clearly reflects the religious-theological conflicts of its day.

Emphasizing the theme of despair in Marlowe leads to an interesting contrast when we take up *El Burlador de Seville*. Tirso de Molina's Don Juan is no atheist and is never opposed to repenting his sins; he simply believes that he has plenty of time and plans to

do it later. His sin is the sin of presumption, the failure to repent because one assumes that mercy and forgiveness will always be available later on. It was a sin of greater concern in Catholic Spain than in Protestant England. Since students tend to have strong preconceptions of what a Don Juan is, it is important to look closely at the characteristics of our initial Don Juan. He is a womanizer, as they expect, but he is not a seducer. Rather than courting these women, his sexual escapades emphasize trickery and deceit. He is, after all, the *Burlador*, the Trickster, of Seville. Students are sometimes surprised to find that in other ways he adheres to his culture's code of honor.

Which of the hundreds of other works featuring Faust and Don Juan should one pick? For undergraduates, I want major and influential works that students will enjoy reading, and I want to distribute our selections in a way that will help them to appreciate the changes as the Renaissance gives way to the Age of Reason, which in turn yields to the Romantic emphasis on the isolated individual. I want them to appreciate how the metamorphoses of these figures have allowed them to become emblematic of the twentieth century's struggle to understand itself in existential terms and have helped us to grapple with such realities as the Holocaust and the potential for nuclear destruction.

My Don Juans have always included Moliere's *Dom Juan ou le Festin de Pierre*, Mozart and Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni*, Byron's Don Juan (although some scholars do not see him as truly a part of this tradition), and Shaw's "Don Juan in Hell" from *Man and Superman* (I initially included the entire play); and my Fausts have always included Goethe's *Faust*, Gounod's *Faust*, Byron's *Manfred*, Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, and a short poem, Karl Shapiro's "The Progress of Faust." I twice ended the Fausts with Sartre's *The Devil and the Good Lord*, dropping it only because no paperback edition was available. I twice used an extract from Paul Valery's *Mon Faust*, but replaced it with the last two acts of Max Frisch's more interesting *Don Juan or the Love of Geometry*. I added Zorilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* to the second offering of the course and have retained it, and I have added Grabbe's *Don Juan und Faust*, in part because it contains both characters in contention with each other. I once tried including short extracts from Kierkegaard and Otto Rank that focused on Don Juan, but for students to appreciate



these thinkers' reactions to Don Juan means spending more time on them and their other works than I want to take. The works I continue to include have all proven very teachable with the exception of Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, which is very, very long. I originally assigned it as a whole and warned the class repeatedly that it was long, which didn't work very well. I have since tried assigning a few chapters at a time and spreading it out over the semester, a method I had seen suggested for teaching Victorian novels (which often had first been published as serials). The next time my intention is to assign only selected chapters.

One could use many other works, of course. If it were to become available in an inexpensive format, I would be tempted to include George Sand's *The Seven Strings of the Lyre*, published in English some years ago as *A Woman's Version of the Faust Legend*. Because of my course's inclusion in the European Studies program, American versions of these myths have by definition been excluded. However, similar courses might well include many American works. For example, one might include Louisa May Alcott's *A Modern Mephistopheles*, one of her pseudonymous adult novels. Garrison Keillor has created a humorous story about Don Giovanni in *The Book of Guys*. Modern Science Fiction offers many possibilities: Michael Swanwick's *Jack Faust*, John Brunner's *Players at the Game of People*, and Roger Zelazney's "For a Breath I Tarry." There are no non-Western works on my list, and I would argue that these two myths both derive from and are representative of Western culture. Other cultures have demons and magicians and men of great sexual appetite, but we can extend the label of Faust or Don Juan to them only in a very superficial way. I would agree with the argument of Yokota-Murakami, whose survey of traditional Japanese characters who have been given the Don Juan label concludes that such comparative literature is Eurocentric, privileges Western categories as being more universal than those of non-Western cultures, and marginalizes less dominant cultures.

In the works that we have looked at, the students will have found that although "Don Juan" in common usage suggests a seducer or a Casonova type, his literary manifestations have been diverse. He begins as a man who enjoys sex, but who particularly enjoys the trickery that sexual escapades may entail. He then becomes a freethinker before becoming the compulsive womanizer

of his present reputation. We will have also seen a Don Juan who is saved by love, and we will have seen two Don Juans who are pursued by women, but who are not much interested in sexual adventures. In Faust, students will have again and again confronted the cost of human aspiration—for what will one sell or wager one's soul? Knowledge and power seemed possibilities in the Renaissance. Goethe suggests banking everything on a belief in human striving. Mann suggests that creativity may do the trick—that now one might risk or sell one's soul for musical genius (His metaphorical signing of the contract is the deliberate contracting of syphilis, an exchange of reason for a period of creative madness). Sartre thought that we would have to create for ourselves the God with whom we could then pretend to wager. Reflecting their moments of time, the answers vary, but the questions are good to teach: who are we, what do we want, what price will we pay?

## Selected Bibliography

This selected bibliography lists only the works cited plus some important overviews of the Faust and Don Juan traditions. Some of the primary texts are available in many editions, but I have indicated here the texts ordered for the class. The enormous body of critical work that these texts have engendered is not touched on here.


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